

Appendix 1: Inclusive Early Years Fund 2026–27

Purpose

Woodlands Primary School has received an Inclusive Early Years Fund (IEYF) allocation of £3,261.19 for 2026-27.

The IEYF forms part of the Department for Education's £47 million additional investment in Early Years inclusion for 2026-27. The fund is intended to:

- help providers adopt setting-wide inclusive practices;
- reduce reliance on individual child-based funding applications; and
- enable earlier intervention for children with SEND.

Cheshire West and Chester Council (CWAC) has allocated the funding to eligible providers using its locally determined formula, based upon Universal Entitlement PTE and deprivation.

The IEYF is additional to existing Early Years funding and complements, rather than replaces, other sources of support including SEN Inclusion Funding (SENIF), Disability Access Funding (DAF), High Needs Funding and the setting's core Early Years funding.

Woodlands' approach

This investment forms part of the wider Woodlands Inclusion Strategy 2026–29 and supports our ambition to be increasingly inclusive by design.

Woodlands recognises that children's needs may emerge or change over time and that some children enter Early Years with previously unidentified needs, limited previous experience of nursery or pre-school, English as an Additional Language (EAL), developmental differences or barriers relating to communication, regulation, sensory processing or emotional development.

Our approach is therefore based upon early identification and timely response to need. We seek to strengthen high-quality universal provision while ensuring that additional support can be provided promptly where barriers emerge, without children having to wait unnecessarily for diagnosis, statutory assessment or individual funding.

The 2026-27 IEYF allocation will be used to strengthen whole-setting capacity rather than being attached to individual children. Investment will focus on sustainable improvements in:

- Early Years SEND knowledge and leadership;
- early identification and assessment;
- communication and language;
- social and emotional development and regulation;
- transitions and understanding of routines and expectations; and
- partnership with parents and carers.

The activities complement existing Woodlands Early Years and SEND provision and are intended to benefit both current and future cohorts.

Planned activity and expenditure

1. Developing Early Years SEND expertise and leadership

Planned investment: NCFE CACHE Level 3 Award for SENCOs in Early Years Settings

Indicative cost: £299

Woodlands will invest in additional specialist SEND knowledge within the Early Years workforce through an accredited Early Years SENCO qualification.

The purpose is not solely to develop one member of staff, but to increase sustainable SEND capacity across the setting. Learning will be shared through coaching, modelling, professional discussion and staff development so that increased expertise influences the quality and consistency of provision throughout Early Years.

This will support practitioners to recognise emerging need earlier, understand the graduated response, work effectively with families and professionals and make appropriate adaptations to provision.

Intended impact:

- increased Early Years SEND expertise and leadership capacity;
- increased practitioner confidence in identifying and responding to emerging need;
- greater consistency of inclusive practice;
- earlier and more appropriate intervention; and
- dissemination of specialist knowledge across the Early Years team.

2. Communication, Language and EAL Assessment and Tracking

Planned investment: specialist assessment/tracking resource

Indicative cost: approximately £500

Woodlands will strengthen the assessment and tracking of communication and language, particularly for children entering the setting with EAL and/or limited previous Early Years education.

EAL is not, in itself, a special educational need. Effective assessment is therefore important in enabling practitioners to establish accurate starting points, monitor language acquisition and distinguish appropriately between expected additional-language development and indicators that a child may also have an emerging speech, language, communication or other additional need.

This will support earlier and better-informed decisions about universal provision, targeted intervention and, where appropriate, progression through the graduated SEND response.

Intended impact:

- more accurate identification of children's communication and language starting points;
- improved monitoring of language acquisition and progress;
- reduced risk of SEND being overlooked because difficulties are attributed solely to EAL;
- reduced risk of EAL being incorrectly interpreted as SEND; and
- earlier targeted intervention where assessment identifies an additional barrier.

3.1 Social Stories and Visual Support Library

Planned investment: development of a reusable library of social stories and associated visual resources

Cost for 3 in total: £1,054.53 (Story sacks for school, £509.86; Story sacks for home, £315.74; Emotional book library, £228.93).

Woodlands will establish a reusable whole-setting library of developmentally appropriate social stories and visual resources.

Resources will support children to understand and navigate commonly occurring situations including:

- starting or moving through Early Years;
- separation and transition between home and the setting;
- changes to routines;
- emotions and emotional regulation;
- friendships and social interaction;
- unfamiliar experiences;
- expectations and routines; and
- situations which may cause anxiety or uncertainty.

The library will enable practitioners to respond quickly to emerging needs without waiting for diagnosis or individual funding and will support communication, predictability, emotional literacy, regulation and successful participation.

Resources will be available across the setting and reusable with successive cohorts.

Intended impact:

- improved understanding of routines, expectations and transitions;
- improved emotional regulation and confidence;
- reduced anxiety or distress associated with unfamiliar situations or change;
- increased successful participation in Early Years provision; and

- greater consistency in the visual and communication approaches used by practitioners.

3.2. Communication and Language Story Sacks – Early Years Provision

Reusable Story Sacks and associated communication/language resources

Cost: as above.

Woodlands will develop a bank of high-quality, language-rich Story Sacks and associated practical resources for use throughout Early Years.

Resources will support shared reading, play and interaction and will be selected to develop:

- vocabulary;
- receptive and expressive language;
- listening and attention;
- comprehension;
- interaction and turn-taking;
- narrative and sequencing; and
- confidence in communication.

The resources will strengthen high-quality universal communication practice while enabling practitioners to provide additional structured opportunities for children presenting with emerging speech, language and communication needs.

Intended impact:

- increased opportunities for high-quality language interaction;
- improved vocabulary and communication from children's individual starting points;
- increased practitioner confidence in supporting communication and language through play and shared reading;
- earlier targeted response to emerging communication needs; and
- reusable resources benefiting successive cohorts.

3.3 Communication and Language Story Sacks – Home Lending

Planned investment: lending resources and supporting materials for parents/carers

Cost: as above.

A proportion of the Story Sack resource will be developed specifically as a home-lending library, enabling families to reinforce communication and language approaches beyond the Early Years setting.

Families will be able to borrow carefully selected resources supporting shared reading, vocabulary, communication, interaction and turn-taking. Where appropriate, simple guidance and modelling will help parents and carers use the resources confidently.

This will strengthen continuity between home and school and recognise families as important partners in children's early communication and development.

Intended impact:

- increased family engagement in children's communication and language development;
- increased opportunities for language-rich interaction at home;
- greater continuity between approaches used at Woodlands and at home;
- increased parental confidence in supporting communication and language; and
- improved transition and partnership between families and the setting.

Financial overview

Activity	Planned IEYF expenditure
Early Years SENCO qualification	£299.00
Communication, Language and EAL assessment/tracking tool	c. £500.00
Social Stories and Visual Support Library	£1,054.53
Communication and Language Story Sacks – setting	
Communication and Language Story Sacks – home lending	
Associated implementation/release time and/or further eligible inclusive resources, where required: forest school	£1407.66
Total available IEYF allocation	£3,261.19

Final expenditure will be recorded against the activities above and will not exceed the school's £3,261.19 IEYF allocation.

The school may adjust the balance between individual activities in response to identified cohort need, availability and procurement costs, provided that expenditure remains consistent with the purposes and conditions of the IEYF.

Monitoring and evaluation

The impact of the IEYF will be evaluated as part of Woodlands' wider Inclusion Strategy monitoring arrangements.

Leaders will consider evidence including:

- practitioner confidence and development of SEND expertise;
- assessment and identification of emerging need;
- children's communication and language progress from individual starting points;
- children's engagement, regulation and successful participation;
- transition into, through and beyond Early Years;
- use and impact of targeted resources;
- parent/carers engagement and feedback; and
- evidence that successful inclusive approaches are becoming embedded within ordinary Early Years practice.

Individual children's outcomes may provide useful evidence of impact, but evaluation will also consider whether the investment has strengthened the capacity of the setting as a whole.

Accountability and assurance

Woodlands will retain appropriate financial evidence of IEYF expenditure and a proportionate record of how funded activities have strengthened inclusive practice.

The funding will be used for additional inclusive-practice activity and will complement rather than replace the school's existing core Early Years provision or other SEND funding streams.

All IEYF expenditure will be completed within the required funding period and by 31 March 2027.

This appendix will be reviewed alongside the Woodlands Inclusion Strategy and will inform the school's evaluation of its 2026–27 inclusion priorities and future Early Years development.