



**WOODLANDS PRIMARY SCHOOL HEDGEHOGS NURSERY & SUNBEAMS CLUB
SEND AND INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY
2026-27**

“Every child belongs, participates, learns, achieves and thrives.”

Our commitment to SEND and inclusive education

Woodlands is committed to an inclusive education system in which every child is welcomed, known, valued and supported to belong, participate, learn, achieve and thrive. Inclusion is not a room, intervention or responsibility delegated to a specialist team: it is a whole-school responsibility and a core feature of leadership, curriculum, teaching, culture, environment and partnership with families.

We have high ambitions for all children, including those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), while recognising that equality does not mean treating every child in exactly the same way. Some children require reasonable adjustments, adaptations, targeted support or special educational provision in order to access education, participate fully and achieve their full potential.

Woodlands inclusion principle

We ask first: “What is getting in the way of this child’s learning, participation or belonging, and what can we change or provide to remove or reduce that barrier?” A diagnosis is not required before appropriate early support can begin.

Every teacher is responsible and accountable for the progress and development of the pupils they teach, including where pupils receive support from teaching assistants, specialist staff, a Specialist Inclusion Base or external professionals. The SENDCo is a member of Woodlands SLT and provides leadership, coordination, advice and challenge; responsibility for inclusive practice remains shared by all staff.

Status, legal framework and current national guidance

This policy reflects the statutory framework currently in force. The SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years remains statutory guidance. Woodlands will distinguish between existing legal duties and emerging SEND reform proposals; proposed reforms will not be treated as statutory requirements until they take legal effect.

Children and Families Act 2014, including the duties to use best endeavors to secure special educational provision and to publish SEND information.

Special Educational Needs and Disability Regulations 2014 and the requirements relating to the SEN Information Report.

SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (January 2015).

Equality Act 2010, including the duties not to discriminate and to make reasonable adjustments for disabled pupils.

Education Act 1996 and relevant education legislation.

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.

Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers, in force from 1 September 2026.

Supporting pupils at school with medical conditions (current statutory guidance), together with current statutory allergy-safety requirements.

DfE Inclusive Mainstream Fund (IMF) conditions of grant and school-leader guidance for 2026-27.

DfE Inclusion Bases in Schools guidance (June 2026).

DfE SEND and inclusion training for mainstream schools (September 2026), alongside evidence-informed inclusive teaching guidance.

The 2026 Inclusive Mainstream Fund guidance is non-statutory guidance except where requirements arise through the conditions of grant. Woodlands is required to publish an Inclusion Strategy Statement for 2026-27 by 31 December 2026. The SEND Policy, SEND Information Report and Inclusion Strategy are separate but mutually reinforcing documents.

Aims

- embed ambitious leadership and governance that places inclusion at the heart of school improvement;
- provide high-quality inclusive and adaptive teaching as the starting point for every pupil;
- identify barriers and emerging needs early and respond without unnecessary delay;
- ensure pupils with SEND access a broad, balanced and ambitious curriculum and the wider life of the school;
- use evidence-informed universal, targeted and specialist provision proportionately;
- work in genuine partnership with pupils, parents/carers and other services;
- secure appropriate special educational provision through the graduated approach and EHCP processes where required;
- promote belonging, attendance, participation, independence, wellbeing and successful transitions;
- develop staff expertise and share specialist knowledge across mainstream and specialist provision;
- evaluate inclusion through outcomes and lived experience, not simply through the quantity of intervention.

Understanding need: additional need, disability and SEN

A child has SEN where they have a learning difficulty or disability which calls for special educational provision to be made for them. Special educational provision is educational or training provision that is additional to, or different from, that made generally for others of the same age. Disability and SEN overlap, but they are not synonymous; a disabled child may or may not have SEN, and a child may have SEN without meeting the Equality Act definition of disability.

Factors such as attendance, English as an additional language (EAL), being disadvantaged, trauma, bereavement, health needs or social-care involvement can affect learning and participation but do not automatically mean a child has SEN. Equally, these factors must not obscure an underlying special educational need. Staff will consider the whole child and the interaction between needs, strengths, environment and experience.

The four broad areas of need

Woodlands retains the four broad areas in the statutory SEND Code of Practice. They are a helpful overview, not labels into which children must fit:

- communication and interaction;
- cognition and learning;
- social, emotional and mental health;
- sensory and/or physical needs.

Areas of development

Alongside the statutory broad areas, staff will increasingly use the DfE's 2026 "areas of development" framework as a practical lens for understanding barriers and planning inclusive classroom practice. This does not replace the statutory broad areas or the legal definition of SEN. The national materials are being released in phases and Woodlands will use the current published modules as they become available.

Inclusive teaching and Woodlands' universal offer

Inclusive teaching is the first response to pupil diversity. It combines ambitious curriculum expectations with evidence-informed universal approaches, adaptations and additional support. Staff will seek to remove predictable barriers through curriculum design, classroom routines, communication, relationships and the learning environment before assuming that difficulty sits solely within the child.

In line with current DfE IMF guidance, our universal offer is informed by seven principles of inclusion:

- ambitious leadership and governance that embeds inclusion;
- evidence-based support prioritising early intervention;
- high-quality adaptive teaching with curriculum designed for all learners;
- enriching provision beyond the classroom that all children can access;
- a safe and respectful culture fostering belonging, attendance and participation in learning;
- strong partnerships with families and wider services;
- inclusive environments with continuous improvements to accessibility.

Reasonable adjustments and inclusive strategies may include changes to presentation, communication, task design, scaffolding, explicit instruction, pacing, sensory environment, routines, equipment, recording methods, grouping, physical access, assessment arrangements or adult support. Adjustments will be purposeful and reviewed for impact; they should increase access and independence rather than inadvertently narrow opportunity.

Early identification and the graduated approach

Woodlands is committed to identifying emerging barriers early. A child does not need a diagnosis, EHCP or placement on the SEN register before staff can adapt teaching, provide reasonable adjustments or deliver appropriate early intervention.

Where a pupil is not making expected progress or participation is causing concern, the class teacher will consider attainment and progress alongside communication, development, attendance, wellbeing, behaviour, regulation, sensory/physical needs, health, pupil voice and family information. The quality and accessibility of teaching and the learning environment will also be considered.

Assess - Plan - Do - Review

Where SEN Support is required, Woodlands will use the graduated approach:

- **ASSESS:** build a rounded understanding of strengths, needs, barriers, progress and participation using school assessment, pupil and parent views, observation and specialist advice where appropriate.
- **PLAN:** agree clear, meaningful outcomes; the provision, adjustments and strategies to be used; responsibilities; and a review date. Pupils and parents/carers will be involved.
- **DO:** the class teacher remains responsible for the pupil's learning and for implementing the plan, even where interventions or specialist support are delivered by others.
- **REVIEW:** evaluate impact against agreed outcomes and the pupil's experience, not simply whether provision took place. The cycle is refined, intensified or stepped down as appropriate.

Woodlands will use an Early Alert process to coordinate monitoring and support before or alongside formal SEN Support. This is not itself a statutory SEN category. Placement on the SEN register will be based on whether the child requires special educational provision that is additional to or different from provision made generally for others of the same age.

Pupil voice and partnership with parents/carers

Children are experts in their own experience. We will seek to understand what helps them learn, communicate, regulate, participate and feel that they belong. Communication will be adapted so that children who communicate non-verbally or differently can contribute meaningfully. Pupil views will inform plans and reviews in an age- and developmentally-appropriate way.

Parents and carers bring essential knowledge of their child. Woodlands will communicate openly, listen to concerns, explain decisions and involve families in planning and review. Agreement will be sought wherever possible, while the school remains responsible for fulfilling its statutory duties and exercising professional judgement. Parents will be signposted to Cheshire West and Chester's Local Offer and SEND Information, Advice and Support Service (IASS).

Targeted and specialist provision

Where inclusive classroom provision is not sufficient, pupils may receive evidence-informed targeted or specialist support. Provision will be matched to assessed need and intended outcomes rather than to a label alone. It may include small-group or individual intervention, specialist advice, therapeutic input, assistive technology, communication support, sensory/regulation support or adapted resources.

Intervention should complement, not replace, access to high-quality teaching and the wider curriculum. Withdrawal from class will be purposeful, proportionate and reviewed. Staff will consider whether gains made in intervention transfer into everyday classroom learning and participation.

Inclusion Bases and Resource Provision: inclusion both ways

Woodlands operates Local Authority-commissioned Specialist Inclusion Base (SIB) provision within its mainstream school. In line with current DfE Inclusion Base guidance, these spaces form part of the school's inclusive continuum and are not separate islands within it. Admission to commissioned Specialist Inclusion Base provision follows the relevant Local Authority process and, where required, the pupil's EHCP and consultation arrangements.

Inclusion both ways

Specialist provision should increase connection with the wider school, not reduce it. Pupils accessing the SIB should access mainstream teaching, peers, spaces, enrichment and community life wherever this is appropriate and beneficial. Equally, specialist expertise, strategies and resources should flow outward to strengthen mainstream practice.

Some mainstream pupils may access SIB spaces, expertise or short-term support where this is purposeful and planned. Such access does not in itself mean that the pupil is placed in specialist provision or has SEN. Capacity, group composition, safety, intended outcomes and the needs of commissioned pupils will be considered. Staffing and group size will be determined through commissioning arrangements, pupil need and risk assessment rather than treated as a universal entitlement or fixed model within this policy.

The school will monitor movement between specialist and mainstream provision, access to the wider curriculum, relationships, participation, progress, independence and pupil voice so that inclusion is judged by meaningful participation and outcomes rather than location alone.

Education, Health and Care needs assessment and EHCPs

Where, despite relevant and purposeful action through SEN Support, a pupil has not made expected progress and the school considers that provision may be required through an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP), the school will consider requesting an EHC needs assessment. Parents and young people also have statutory rights to request an assessment.

Woodlands will provide clear evidence of needs, strengths, outcomes sought, the graduated response, provision made and its impact, pupil and parent views, relevant assessments and specialist advice. The Local Authority is responsible for deciding whether to undertake an assessment and whether an EHCP is necessary.

Where a pupil has an EHCP, Woodlands will use its best endeavours and fulfil the provision for which the school is responsible. EHCPs will be reviewed at least annually in accordance with statutory requirements, with the child and family central to the review. Transition reviews will be planned early, particularly at phase and school transfer points.

Early years and early intervention

The principles of this policy apply across Woodlands' early years provision, including Hedgehogs Nursery, subject to the statutory EYFS framework and the different legal and funding arrangements that apply to early years children. Early identification will be developmentally informed and will avoid unnecessary "wait and see" approaches where support can reasonably begin.

Practitioners will work closely with parents/carers and relevant professionals, including around communication and language, physical development, personal/social/emotional development, sensory needs, toileting and self-care. Developmental difference will be considered carefully and support will be based on need; diagnosis is not a prerequisite for inclusive practice.

Medical needs, disability, allergy and intimate/personal care

Medical needs do not automatically constitute SEN, although some pupils have both medical needs and SEND and some medical conditions meet the Equality Act definition of disability. Pupils with medical needs should be supported to access education, educational visits, physical education and the wider curriculum wherever this can be achieved safely with appropriate planning and reasonable adjustments.

Where relevant, provision will align with the pupil's Individual Healthcare Plan, Allergy Action Plan, Intimate Care Plan, risk assessment or other individual plan. Staff will follow the school's Administration of Medicines, Allergy Safety, Intimate Care, Safe Touch, Educational Visits and Attendance policies. A child should not routinely be excluded from education because reasonable medical, continence, allergy or personal-care arrangements have not been organised.

Attendance, belonging, behaviour and safeguarding

Attendance difficulties, dysregulation or behaviour may be an indicator of unmet need but do not automatically establish SEN. Woodlands will seek to understand the function, context and barriers involved, including SEND, communication, sensory, emotional, health, safeguarding and family factors. Attendance and behaviour systems will operate alongside, not instead of, the duty to make reasonable adjustments and provide appropriate SEND support.

Where Emotionally Based School Non-attendance (EBSN) or other barriers to attendance are present, staff will work collaboratively through the school's attendance and graduated-support processes. Safeguarding concerns will be acted on promptly in accordance with KCSIE 2026 and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Transitions, admissions and access to the wider curriculum

Pupils with SEND will be admitted in accordance with the school's Admissions Policy and statutory admissions arrangements. Woodlands will not discriminate against disabled pupils and will make reasonable adjustments where required. For pupils with EHCPs, statutory consultation and placement arrangements apply.

Transitions into, within and beyond Woodlands will be planned proportionately to need. Information will be transferred securely and promptly. Enhanced transition may include visits, visual information, social stories, meetings between staff, pupil passports/profiles, parent meetings and liaison with external professionals.

SEND or disability will not in itself be a reason to exclude a pupil from educational visits, clubs, enrichment, performances, residential opportunities or other aspects of school life. Staff will consider reasonable adjustments and individual planning in accordance with the relevant school policy.

Accessibility and the physical environment

Woodlands will meet its duties under the Equality Act 2010, including reasonable adjustments, and will maintain and review its Accessibility Plan in accordance with statutory requirements. Accessibility includes the curriculum, information and the physical environment. The school will consider current DfE guidance on inclusive education estates when planning improvements and will seek to reduce physical, sensory, communication and environmental barriers over time.

Workforce expertise and continuing professional development

Inclusion is sustained through workforce expertise rather than dependence on a small number of specialists. Leaders will identify staff-development priorities from pupil need, monitoring, evaluation and school improvement priorities. Teachers and teaching assistants will receive appropriate training and coaching, and specialist staff will share expertise across the school.

Woodlands will draw on the DfE SEND and inclusion in-house training package for mainstream schools, published from September 2026, and other credible evidence-informed resources. Current modules include supporting every child to achieve and thrive, inclusive teaching, areas of development and speech, language and communication. Further modules will be incorporated as they are published and judged relevant to the school's needs.

Staff working with pupils requiring specialist medical, physical, communication, sensory or behavioural support will receive role-appropriate training. Training will be evaluated for impact on practice and pupil experience, not merely recorded as attendance.

Funding and the Inclusion Strategy

Woodlands will use its core budget, notional SEN funding, high-needs/top-up funding where applicable, Inclusive Mainstream Fund and other relevant funding strategically to improve provision and outcomes. Funding decisions will be based on cohort need, evidence, statutory duties, impact and sustainability rather than on diagnosis alone.

For 2026-27, Woodlands will meet the conditions attached to the Inclusive Mainstream Fund, including publication of its Inclusion Strategy Statement by 31 December 2026. The strategy will identify commonly occurring and predictable needs and barriers, planned activities and approaches, budgeted costs and intended impact. Governors will scrutinise the strategy and use of funding. The strategy will complement, not replace, this SEND Policy or the statutory SEND Information Report.

Roles and responsibilities

Governing Body

- hold leaders to account for statutory SEND and Equality Act duties and for the ambition and impact of inclusion;
- ensure appropriate SENDCo arrangements and sufficient capacity for the role;
- scrutinise the SEND Information Report, Inclusion Strategy and use of relevant funding;
- consider data and evidence about participation, outcomes, attendance, exclusions/suspensions, accessibility and pupil/parent experience;
- ensure SEND is considered within school improvement, safeguarding, curriculum and workforce development.

Headteacher

- has overall responsibility for the strategic leadership of SEND and inclusion;
- ensures the policy is implemented coherently across mainstream, early years and specialist provision;
- ensures appropriate resources, staffing, training, safeguarding and governance information;
- works with the SENDCo and senior leaders to evaluate impact and address barriers or disproportionality.

SENDCo / Inclusion lead

- coordinates SEN provision and the graduated approach;
- provides professional leadership, advice, coaching and challenge to staff;
- maintains appropriate SEND records and oversees statutory processes;
- liaises with pupils, parents/carers, Local Authority services and external professionals;
- supports transitions, EHCP processes and annual reviews;
- contributes to strategic evaluation of inclusive provision and workforce development;
- promotes transfer of specialist expertise into mainstream practice.

Class teachers

- remain responsible and accountable for the progress, participation and development of every pupil they teach;
- provide high-quality inclusive/adaptive teaching and implement agreed reasonable adjustments;
- identify and respond to emerging barriers, work with the SENDCo and communicate with families;
- lead the day-to-day implementation of SEN Support plans and evaluate impact;
- deploy teaching assistants purposefully while retaining responsibility for teaching and assessment.

Teaching assistants and specialist support staff

Support staff work under the direction of teachers and relevant leaders to promote access, learning, communication, regulation and independence. They contribute valuable observation and expertise, but should not become the sole source of teaching or relationship for a pupil unless this is specifically necessary and planned.

Monitoring, evaluation and accountability

Woodlands will evaluate inclusion through a balanced range of evidence. Leaders and governors will consider, as appropriate:

- progress and attainment, including from individual starting points;
- attendance and persistent/severe absence;
- suspensions, exclusions, restrictive interventions and patterns of dysregulation;
- participation in mainstream learning, enrichment, trips and wider school life;
- movement between Inclusion Bases/Resource Provision and mainstream opportunities;
- pupil voice, belonging, wellbeing and independence;
- parent/carer experience and complaints/themes;
- effectiveness of reasonable adjustments, interventions and specialist provision;
- identification patterns, including any disproportionality between groups;
- quality of inclusive teaching and impact of staff development;
- successful transitions and preparation for the next stage.

Provision will not be judged effective simply because an intervention has been delivered or adult support allocated. Leaders will ask whether barriers have reduced, participation has improved, learning has strengthened and the child is increasingly able to succeed and belong.

Records, confidentiality and information sharing

SEND information will be recorded and stored securely in accordance with data-protection requirements and the school's information-management arrangements. Information will be shared with staff and professionals on a lawful, proportionate, need-to-know basis so that children can be supported safely and effectively. Relevant SEND information will be transferred promptly when pupils move setting.

Complaints

Concerns about SEND provision should be raised as early as possible so that they can be understood and resolved. Parents/carers should normally begin with the class teacher and/or SENDCo. Where a concern is not resolved, the school's current Complaints Policy applies. Statutory rights relating to EHC needs assessments, EHCPs and SEND Tribunal processes are separate from the school complaints procedure. Families will be signposted to the Local Authority and IASS where appropriate.

Related policies and documents

- SEND Information Report
- Inclusion Strategy 2026-2027
- Accessibility Plan
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Positive Handling Policy
- Administration of Medicines Policy
- Allergy Safety Policy
- Intimate Care Policy
- Safe Touch and Appropriate Physical Contact Policy
- Educational Visits and Local Area Visits policies
- Admissions Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Equality information and objectives

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, national SEND reform or significant changes to Woodlands' provision require it. The SEND Information Report will be reviewed annually and updated during the year where necessary. The Inclusion Strategy will be published and reviewed in accordance with current DfE funding requirements.

Appendix A - Staff quick guide: inclusive response to emerging need

Question	Staff response	Escalate / coordinate when...
What is the barrier?	Listen, observe, use assessment and family/pupil information. Consider teaching, environment, communication, health, sensory/regulation and context.	Concern persists, is complex, affects participation/safety, or may require specialist assessment.
What can I change now?	Use universal inclusive strategies and reasonable adjustments. Do not wait for diagnosis.	Adjustments are insufficient or provision may need to be additional to/different from that generally available.
Is SEN Support needed?	Discuss with SENDCo; use Assess-Plan-Do-Review where special educational provision is required.	Progress/participation remains limited despite relevant purposeful action.
How will we know it works?	Set meaningful outcomes and review impact on learning, participation, independence and belonging.	Provision is not improving outcomes, needs have changed, or statutory assessment may be required.
Who must be involved?	Child, parent/carers, class teacher and relevant staff; specialists where appropriate.	Multi-agency, EHCP, safeguarding, medical or Local Authority processes are indicated.

Appendix B – as at October 2026

The policy should be read against the current versions of the following national sources. Where guidance is updated, the current published version takes precedence over a dated description in this policy:

- DfE, SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years (statutory guidance).
- DfE, Inclusive mainstream fund: support for school leaders (published 25 June 2026; updated 7 August 2026).
- DfE, Inclusive mainstream fund for schools: conditions of grant 2026 to 2027.
- DfE, Inclusion bases in schools (published 25 June 2026).
- DfE, SEND and inclusion training for mainstream schools (published 24 September 2026), including inclusive teaching and areas of development.
- DfE, Early Years Foundation Stage statutory framework for group and school-based providers (in force 1 September 2026).
- DfE, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026; Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Equality Act 2010 and current DfE advice on equality and accessibility for schools.