

This week's diary is another wonderful illustration of just how much goes on across Woodlands in a single week. Alongside the visible business of lessons, assemblies, clubs, sport and music, there is an enormous amount happening behind the scenes: specialist SEND support, safeguarding supervision, staff development, governor meetings, parent meetings, training and planning for the continued development of our school, not to mention a random nursery Ofsted inspection thrown in for good measure!

Of course, our fabulous children remain firmly at the centre of all of it.

📅 Before School, After School and Everywhere In Between!

I was particularly struck this week by the number of additional learning opportunities our staff are providing.

Before the school day has even officially begun, children are attending academic clubs in maths, SPaG, writing and reading comprehension; after school there are further clubs supporting phonics, reading, maths and times tables, alongside our dance provision with Vara.

These aren't about creating an endless school day for children! They are deliberately targeted opportunities to give children some additional time and attention in particular areas, build confidence and consolidate important knowledge and skills. I am enormously grateful to the staff who give their time to provide them, as I am sure you all are.

There is plenty beyond academic learning too. Year 5 and 6 children represented Woodlands at tag rugby, Year 3 continued with judo, our KS2 Breakfast Club had archery, Year 4 continued swimming, Year 3 had their violin lessons and Year 5 continued their visits to Hope Farm Library.

That breadth matters enormously to me. School should help children discover what they are good at, but also give them opportunities to discover things they didn't yet know they might enjoy.

🌱 Inclusion in Practice

There has also been a great deal happening within our inclusion work this week; staff attended the Early Years SEND Network, our Specialist Inclusion Bases have been visited by cognition and learning specialists, and children have received support from our Speech and Language Therapy, Deaf and Hearing Support and Visual Impairment services. We also had SEND reviews and specialist work taking place throughout the week.

One really interesting piece of professional development this week was a SPOTTS Steps to Eating workshop. Eating can actually be incredibly complex for some children. Sensory differences, communication needs, anxiety and developmental needs can all affect children's relationship with food, so having adults who understand those barriers is another important part of being genuinely inclusive.

This is the work that families don't necessarily see when they look through the school gates, but it represents a huge part of what happens at Woodlands every week.

👤 The Adults Keep Learning Too

Wednesday saw maths professional development taking place across school, including First4Maths training in EYFS and maths development for staff from Years 1–6. Our EYFS team were also involved in the EYFS Improvement Cluster Programme, in which staff received specialist training around working with two-year-olds. Computing development continued, and we had another staff member undertaking leadership training.

Inevitably we continue our Ofsted preparations, although I routinely say to staff that the way to prepare isn't about suddenly doing things for Ofsted. It is about making sure that we understand our school extremely well, can explain why we do what we do and, most importantly, can demonstrate the difference it makes to children. Given the press coverage of the impact of inspections on school staff, I believe it would be remiss of me not to prepare our staff well for what to expect in order to mitigate for the pressure often felt in schools. We do what we do, with children at the heart of our decision making, and when Ofsted come, and they will, they will see what we do and grade us against the criteria of the day – which may change with the years. What will not change is our commitment to one another

in school to the children and our community. Joey Fontana, one of our governors, visited school on Tuesday with a member of his Early Years Leadership to review our practice in Hedgehogs and was 'blown away' by his experience in the room, which was just as well because we had the call that Hedgehogs were being inspected by Ofsted on Thursday and welcomed the inspector into school today, which was a real pleasure, genuinely! We fully anticipate a whole school inspection before the end of term, under the new framework you will all have heard about, I am sure. Paul McLoughlin (maths Paul), one of our governors, came in yesterday to speak to me about the IDSR, a rather lengthy, complex and, at times, potentially confusing document, containing rudimentary data about our school – he said he need a lie down afterwards but he will come back next week for a second look and a discussion with a colleague of mine, also a Headteacher, who will challenge me, as I challenge him, to describe and explain certain elements of it. Paul is our link governor for achievement so this is all part of his on-the-job training!

Our Full Governing Body also met this week. Governors play an important role in the strategic leadership of Woodlands: supporting us, asking questions, providing challenge and ensuring that the decisions we make remain focused upon children's education, safety and wellbeing and we will shortly be asking for someone in our parent body to volunteer to undertake this important role and one of our parent governors has recently stepped down.

Safeguarding Never Stands Still

There has been, as ever there is, a great deal of safeguarding work taking place behind the scenes this week. Members of the SLT have undertaken safeguarding supervision, alongside the many meetings, reviews and professional discussions that form part of supporting individual children and families.

We also had Team Teach training, supporting more and more staff across school to understand behaviour, regulation and safe, appropriate responses when children need additional help.

Safeguarding isn't one policy, one member of staff or one annual training session. It runs through everything we do: attendance, online safety, behaviour, allergies and medical needs, SEND, children's emotional wellbeing, the curriculum and the way in which we help children understand and navigate the wider world.

That brings me to an important national safeguarding update this week.

Keeping Children Safe: An Update to National Prevent Guidance

You may be aware that the Department for Education has published updated guidance for education settings last week relating to the Prevent Duty (which I shared with you in the first week of term).

Prevent forms part of the safeguarding responsibilities of all schools, as you will be aware. Its purpose within education is to help protect children who may be susceptible to radicalisation or extremist influence, in the same way that schools remain alert to other circumstances which may place a child at risk of harm.

At Woodlands, our safeguarding and Prevent arrangements have already been reviewed and updated for the new academic year in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026. Following the publication of the latest DfE guidance, our safeguarding team will now check our existing arrangements against the new material and incorporate any relevant updates into our ongoing staff training and safeguarding practice.

An important message within the updated guidance is that concerns should always be considered carefully, proportionately and in context. Schools should not make assumptions about children because of their background, faith, ethnicity, identity, special educational needs or neurodivergence.

This reflects the approach we already take at Woodlands, but it does no harm to ensure our parents are appraised of this information, also.

Our role is not to tell children what to think or which political views to hold. Through our curriculum and wider safeguarding work, we help children learn how to keep themselves safe, recognise harmful influences, think critically, understand different perspectives and treat others with respect.

Where a member of staff has a safeguarding concern about a child, this is considered by our trained safeguarding team alongside the wider information we hold about that child. Where necessary, we seek advice or support from the appropriate safeguarding professionals.

As with all aspects of safeguarding, we continually review our practice as national guidance develops. This latest publication therefore forms part of that ongoing process rather than representing a change to the inclusive, balanced and child-centred approach we already take at Woodlands.

Keeping children safe is everyone's responsibility, and safeguarding remains at the heart of everything we do.

British Values – What Do We Actually Mean?

That safeguarding update also provides a useful opportunity to begin something I am going to return to over the next few weeks: Fundamental British Values.

You may hear that schools use this phrase quite frequently, but what does it actually mean?

For me, the fundamental British Values are more than simple democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty, and mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs, they are based on simply being a good human being who lives in a developed country and acknowledges their luck at having rights denied of many.

These aren't something we suddenly “do” to tick a box, nor are they simply words on a display board. They run through our curriculum, assemblies, behaviour expectations, safeguarding work and the everyday experiences we give our children.

At their heart, they are about preparing children to live successfully alongside other people in modern Britain: having a voice, understanding rights and responsibilities, respecting the law, making informed choices and recognising that other people are entitled to beliefs, cultures and opinions that may differ from their own.

There is an important connection here with the Prevent update above. Helping children to think critically, listen to different perspectives, challenge prejudice and misinformation and disagree respectfully is an important part of their education.

It is equally important to be clear about what this doesn't mean. Our role is not to tell children which political opinions they should hold. We educate children so that, as they grow, they have the knowledge, confidence and critical-thinking skills to form their own views.

Over the next few weeks, I'll take one of the British Values at a time and explain what it looks like in everyday life at Woodlands so that you are all as aware as the children.



This Week: Democracy

For a primary-aged child, democracy begins with something wonderfully simple: understanding that their voice matters - but so does everybody else's.

At Woodlands, children encounter this through pupil voice, class discussions, debate, voting, representation and opportunities to contribute their ideas to school life. We have a pupil parliament, managed by Miss Woodland, and will hopefully have a visit from Justin Madders MP for children to discuss with him how this is comparable to the way parliament runs in our country. But there is another very important lesson within democracy too, democracy doesn't mean “I get what I want.”

For children, this is as important as it is for adults. Democracy means that I have a right to express my opinion and have it listened to. Somebody else has exactly the same right. We can disagree without being unpleasant to one another. We listen, discuss and consider different perspectives, and ultimately a decision may be made that isn't the one we personally wanted.

That's quite a sophisticated lesson for children - and, arguably, not a bad reminder for the grown-ups occasionally either! 😊 We want Woodlands' children to know that their voices have value, while also understanding that being part of a community brings responsibilities as well as rights. Next week, I'll share another of our fundamental British Values: the Rule of Law.



Another Week at Woodlands

So, another remarkably busy week. Children have been reading, writing, calculating, swimming, dancing, playing rugby, practising judo, learning violin and even trying archery, not to mention designing Litter posters, bless the 3 Litter Crew members who have been leading the way with all things community. Meanwhile, adults have been learning too: improving maths teaching, developing expertise in SEND and Early Years, undertaking safeguarding supervision, working with external specialists and continuing to prepare our school for whatever comes next.

Our three PGCE students remained with us this week, learning alongside experienced Woodlands colleagues and getting a rather authentic introduction to the reality of primary-school life!

There is an extraordinary amount happening behind the scenes of every school day. Much of it will never be visible at the gate after 3pm, but all of it contributes to creating a school in which children are safe, included, challenged, supported and given opportunities to thrive.

Thank you, as always, to our wonderful staff for everything they do, to our children for throwing themselves into another busy week, and to our families for working alongside us - particularly in reinforcing those important messages around being a good citizen, safety and allergies.

Have a lovely weekend.