Inclusion Strategy 2026-2029

The strategic shift

Woodlands moved from a model in which additional needs are primarily responded to once they become evident, to an inclusive-by-design model: anticipating commonly occurring barriers, strengthening high-quality universal provision, intervening earlier and providing targeted support before children have to fail, disengage or wait for diagnosis or statutory assessment. We place inclusion at the heart of the things we do, explicitly and implicitly. This strategic shift, has set the conditions for our successful Specialist Inclusion Base development and expertise in mainstream early identification (from 9 months), support and inclusion.

Why this strategy now?

DfE requires every mainstream school to publish an Inclusion Strategy for 2026-27, on their website, by 31 December 2026. It must identify barriers to learning and participation, funded activity, budgeted costs and intended outcomes. Governors should scrutinise it and it will be part of the discussion with Ofsted when they are evaluating inclusion.

Woodlands: our starting point

Woodlands already has substantial SEND expertise, including (but not limited to) our four specialist inclusion base (SIB) rooms. The next step is to further strengthen that expertise in our mainstream practice and externally with other schools. Some pupils arrive with previously unidentified needs because of limited prior early education, recent arrival into the English education system or needs that only become apparent within school demands. The successful 2025-26 Reception “Burrow” provision showed that timely regulation/breakout support can protect learning and help pupils build the skills needed for mainstream participation, allowing adults to assess need and deploy resources accordingly.

2026-27 investment architecture

Funding	Allocation	Purpose in this strategy
Inclusive Mainstream Fund	£21,500	Additional evidence-informed activity to strengthen universal and targeted inclusion.
Inclusive Early Years Fund	£3,261.19	Whole-setting early identification, communication, staff capability and early intervention in EYFS.

Funding	Allocation	Purpose in this strategy
Devolved Formula Capital	School DFC allocation	Capital conversion/adaptation of the new KS1 Inclusion, Regulation and Readiness-to-Learn Room. IMF will not fund capital works.*
Core / notional SEN budget	Existing school budget	Sustains staffing, ordinarily available provision and the wider graduated response.

Inclusion Strategy - Woodlands Primary School

This statement details our school's approach to delivering inclusive practice for all children, including those with SEND, funded by our core school budget (including the notional SEN budget) and the inclusive mainstream fund (IMF).

Strategy overview

Detail	Date
Academic year/years that our current Inclusion Strategy covers	2026-2029 (reviewed annually)
Date this statement was published	To be inserted following governor approval; no later than 31 December 2026
Date on which it will be reviewed	September 2027
Statement authorised by	Governing Body, Woodlands Primary School

Statement of intent

At Woodlands Primary School, inclusion means ensuring that every child can belong, participate, learn and thrive as a valued member of our school community. Our ambition is to be increasingly inclusive by design: anticipating commonly occurring barriers to learning and participation, removing these wherever possible through high-quality universal provision, and providing timely, evidence-informed targeted support where children need something additional.

Woodlands has considerable experience of meeting complex additional needs. Alongside mainstream provision, the school has four specialist inclusion base rooms, with a fifth planned for September 2027, and a workforce with significant expertise in autism, communication, regulation and complex need. Our intention is for this expertise to strengthen practice across and beyond the whole school, rather than sit separately from our mainstream education.

We recognise that some children arrive at Woodlands with needs that have not previously been identified. This may include children with little or no prior nursery or pre-school experience, children new to the English education system, pupils with emerging communication and interaction needs, and children whose developmental, sensory or emotional-regulation needs only become apparent within the demands of formalised school. Our approach is therefore needs-led rather than diagnosis-led: children do not have to wait for a formal diagnosis, statutory assessment or crisis before reasonable, proportionate support is provided.

During 2026-27 we will strengthen early identification and intervention; high-quality adaptive teaching; communication-friendly practice; regulation and readiness to learn; targeted support that increases successful participation in mainstream education; transition between Early Years and KS1; staff expertise; partnership with families and external professionals; and pupils' attendance, participation and belonging.

The strategy is funded through the school's core budget and notional SEN budget alongside an IMF allocation of £21,500, an Inclusive Early Years Fund allocation of £3,261.19, and separate capital investment including DFC. Governors will scrutinise implementation, expenditure and impact annually. This 2026-29 strategy will be reviewed and republished each academic year.

Barriers to learning and participation

This details the key barriers to learning and participation that we have identified amongst our pupils, necessitating inclusive universal approaches and targeted support.

	Detail of barrier to learning (including notable trends or themes over time, such as a growing prevalence or increasing complexity)
1	Increasing and emerging complexity of need. Woodlands is seeing increasing diversity and complexity of additional need, including communication and interaction difficulties, sensory needs, developmental delay and emotional regulation difficulties. Some pupils arrive without previously identified need because of limited previous early education, recent arrival into the English education system, or because needs only become evident within school expectations.
2	Communication, language and access to learning. Speech, language, communication and vocabulary difficulties can affect children's ability to understand instruction, express needs, build relationships, regulate emotions and access the curriculum. This is particularly relevant in Early Years and KS1 and for pupils with emerging SEND, EAL or limited prior early-education experience.
3	Regulation, emotional resilience and readiness to learn. A small but significant group require support beyond the mainstream classroom at particular points to regulate, communicate, recover from dysregulation and build the skills needed for successful classroom participation. Without timely support, difficulties can lead to repeated loss of learning and reduced inclusion.
4	Consistency of inclusive practice. Woodlands holds considerable specialist SEND expertise. The next stage is to ensure adaptive teaching, visual support, communication strategies, sensory understanding, regulation approaches and reasonable adjustments are consistently embedded in ordinary classroom practice across the whole school, and beyond.
5	Transition and continuity. Transitions can disproportionately affect pupils with additional needs. Children whose needs emerge during EYFS require continuity of successful strategies into KS1, rather than an abrupt reduction in scaffolding when they move phase or class.
6	Attendance, participation and belonging. For some pupils, SEND/additional need interacts with attendance, emotional wellbeing, behaviour, family circumstances and participation in enrichment or less structured aspects of school. For a small number of pupils, anxiety, regulation, sensory or other additional needs can also create barriers to the daily transition from home into school and readiness to engage in learning once they arrive. These factors need to be understood collectively rather than addressed in isolation.

Activity in this academic year

What activities will we prioritise this academic year to alleviate the above barriers to learning and participation faced by pupils with additional needs and SEND? Activities may strengthen the universal offer, targeted support, or both. The budgeted costs below identify the IMF contribution and other relevant funding. Core staffing and notional SEN expenditure remain within the school's existing budget and will be reported through normal school financial monitoring.

Description of activity (noting evidence and barrier numbers addressed)	Activity type (universal / targeted)	Total budgeted cost
Whole-school inclusive teaching and workforce development. Strengthen consistent adaptive teaching, communication-friendly classrooms, visual scaffolding, regulation and sensory-aware practice through training, coaching, modelling and implementation monitoring. Evidence base: DfE IMF best-practice guidance; EEF Inclusive Teaching; EEF Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools. Addresses barriers 1, 2, 3 and 4; principles 1, 2, 3 and 7.	Universal	£5,500 IMF contribution, alongside existing core/notional SEN staffing and CPD budget.
Early identification and evidence-informed intervention. Strengthen assess-plan-do-review, targeted observation and early intervention for commonly occurring communication, language, attention, regulation and developmental needs. Include SENCO/inclusion-lead implementation time, specialist advice where appropriate, and approaches that do not require children to wait unnecessarily for diagnosis or statutory assessment. Addresses barriers 1, 2 and 5; principles 2, 3 and 6.	Universal + targeted	£4,500 IMF contribution, alongside core/notional SEN budget. EYFS early-identification activity also supported separately by £3,261.19 IEYF.
KS1 Inclusion, Regulation and Readiness-to-Learn Provision. Establish the educational model surrounding a separately capital-funded infant-site room, building on the successful 2025-26 Burrow approach. Provide planned or responsive short-term support for regulation, communication and language, sensory need, emotional development and readiness to learn, including where barriers arise from emerging SEND, limited prior early education, EAL or significant short-term emotional need. Pupils remain members of their mainstream classes; the purpose is to increase successful participation in mainstream education, not create a separate destination. Access is needs-led and may also support assessment of emerging SEND. IMF activity includes staff development, implementation/release time, intervention resources, specialist input, referral/review processes, reintegration planning and impact evaluation. Addresses barriers 1, 2, 3 and 5; principles 2, 3, 5 and 7.	Targeted	£7,500 IMF contribution for eligible non-capital activity. Capital adaptation/conversion funded separately through the school's DFC allocation.
Belonging, attendance, transition and family partnership. Strengthen transition, pupil and family voice, identification of SEND-related barriers to attendance, coordinated planning with wider	Universal + targeted	£4,000 IMF contribution, alongside existing core pastoral/SEND staffing.

Description of activity (noting evidence and barrier numbers addressed)	Activity type (universal / targeted)	Total budgeted cost
services and equitable access to enrichment, trips, clubs and wider school opportunities. Addresses barriers 3, 5 and 6; principles 4, 5 and 6.		

IMF allocation accounted for above: £21,500.

Intended outcomes

This explains the clear, realistic outcomes we want our inclusive approaches to achieve by the end of our inclusion strategy, and how we will measure whether they have been achieved.

Intended outcome	Success criteria
1. Needs are recognised and supported earlier.	Pupils presenting with commonly occurring barriers receive appropriate support without unnecessary dependence on diagnosis or statutory assessment. Assess-plan-do-review is evident for targeted pupils. EYFS-KS1 transition identifies emerging needs and successful strategies clearly. Staff confidence in identifying and responding to emerging need improves.
2. More children successfully access mainstream classroom learning.	Target pupils demonstrate increased successful participation in classroom learning over time. Use of the KS1 inclusion room has individual starting points and review measures. Time out of class is purposeful, monitored and supports increased inclusion. Where needs remain significant, evidence gathered supports timely escalation through the graduated response.
3. Inclusive practice is increasingly consistent.	Learning walks, pupil observation, planning and work scrutiny demonstrate agreed adaptive and communication-friendly approaches across year groups. Visual, communication and regulation strategies are used where needed. Teachers retain responsibility for pupils with SEND and specialist expertise is increasingly transferred into mainstream classrooms.
4. Regulation, belonging and participation improve.	Target pupils show improved regulation, engagement and participation from their individual starting points. Repeated dysregulation or lost learning reduces where this is an appropriate measure. Pupil and parent voice indicates that children feel safe, understood and part of their school community. Access to enrichment is equitable.

Intended outcome	Success criteria
5. Attendance barriers are identified and addressed.	Attendance of pupils with SEND/additional needs is routinely analysed. Persistent or emerging absence, patterns of lateness and difficulties with the daily home-to-school transition are considered through an inclusion lens. Where appropriate, individualised transition arrangements, reasonable adjustments, family support and multi-agency action are implemented, recorded and reviewed. Impact will be evaluated through improvements in attendance and punctuality, successful transition into school, reduced distress associated with arrival, and increased engagement in learning.

Review of the previous academic year

This is the first year of the new Inclusion Strategy and IMF reporting requirement, so a formal previous-year review is not required in 2026–27. Baseline evidence from 2025–26 has nevertheless informed this strategy. In particular, the successful use of The Burrow as a small regulation, breakout and targeted-support space demonstrated improved emotional regulation, engagement, confidence and access to learning for pupils experiencing a range of barriers. This included pupils with emerging or complex SEND, sensory and regulation needs, EAL and children experiencing significant short-term emotional or personal circumstances.

School evidence identified improved engagement with learning, increased confidence and independence, improved management of sensory and emotional needs, successful reintegration into whole-class learning and, for some pupils, accelerated academic and language progress. The provision also supported a calmer learning environment for the wider class.

Importantly, The Burrow was not used as an alternative destination to mainstream education. Its purpose was to provide timely, proportionate support that enabled pupils to regulate, develop skills and return successfully to learning alongside their peers. This evidence has directly informed the development of the KS1 Inclusion, Regulation and Readiness-to-Learn Provision for 2026–27.

Further information

Woodlands' inclusion model is a continuum. High-quality adaptive teaching remains the first response for all pupils. Where universal provision alone is insufficient, targeted support is provided according to need and reviewed through the graduated response. The school's four specialist inclusion base rooms provide significant expertise in autism, communication, regulation and complex need; during this strategy period that expertise will increasingly inform mainstream practice through modelling, coaching, shared approaches and transition support.

The KS1 Inclusion, Regulation and Readiness-to-Learn Room will sit within this continuum. It is not intended as a separate destination or permanent alternative to classroom learning. Its purpose is to support pupils to develop the communication, regulation, emotional resilience and readiness-to-learn skills that increase successful participation in mainstream education. For some pupils, carefully documented use of the provision may also help the school and external professionals understand emerging need and determine whether further assessment or specialist support is required.

The school's Inclusive Early Years Fund allocation of £3,261.19 will be planned and accounted for separately from the IMF. It will strengthen whole-setting early-years inclusion, including early identification, communication and language, staff capability, inclusive environments and transition. It is additional to, and does not replace, other early-years SEND funding such as EYiF.

Capital conversion/adaptation of the new KS1 room will be funded separately through the school's DFC allocation. IMF funding will be used only for eligible non-capital activity associated with strengthening and implementing inclusive practice.

Key evidence and guidance informing this strategy

- Department for Education (2026), Inclusive mainstream fund: support for school leaders (updated 7 August 2026).
- Department for Education (2026), Inclusive mainstream fund for schools: conditions of grant 2026 to 2027.
- Department for Education (2026), Inclusion bases in schools.
- Department for Education (2026), Inclusive early years fund: best practice guidance for local authorities (updated 22 July 2026).
- Education Endowment Foundation, Inclusive Teaching and Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools guidance.

Governor and Staff Assurance Note

Supporting the published Inclusion Strategy - not intended for the website

What every member of staff should be able to explain:

- At Woodlands, inclusion means removing barriers so that children can belong, participate and learn.
- We do not wait for a diagnosis before responding to an evident need.
- Our first response is high-quality adaptive teaching in the mainstream classroom.
- Where that is not enough, we provide timely targeted support, including the KS1 regulation and readiness-to-learn provision, with the aim of increasing successful participation in mainstream learning.
- Our specialist SEND expertise strengthens practice across the whole school rather than operating separately from it.

How governors should test implementation

- What are the most common barriers to learning and participation in our current cohort, and how do we know?
- How is the £21,500 IMF expanding or strengthening inclusive practice rather than subsidising pre-existing activity?
- How is DFC being kept financially separate from IMF while supporting the same strategic inclusion objective?
- How do we know the KS1 room is increasing mainstream participation rather than becoming a place that pupils are routinely removed to? Leaders will track entry rationale, frequency/duration of access, individual starting points, intervention provided, progress in regulation/communication/engagement, successful reintegration and changes in mainstream participation over time.
- What does the evidence show about progress, attendance, regulation, participation and belonging for target pupils?
- How is specialist expertise from our existing inclusion/SEND rooms being transferred into ordinary classroom practice?
- What has changed as a result of family, pupil and staff voice?
- What will we stop, adapt or scale if monitoring shows an activity is not having the intended impact?

Governance cycle

When	Focus	Evidence
Autumn 2026	Approve strategy, expenditure principles and baseline measures.	Cohort/barrier analysis; finance plan; staff/pupil/family evidence; implementation plan.
Spring 2027	Check implementation and early impact.	Learning walks; intervention reviews; attendance/behaviour/engagement data; case sampling; spend to date.
Summer 2027	Evaluate impact and agree priorities for 2027-28.	Outcome measures; pupil/family voice; successful mainstream access; expenditure; lessons learned and sustainability.