Sense of Belonging Strategy

2026-27

Our belonging entitlement

Every child at Woodlea is entitled to feel known, welcomed, accepted, safe, connected and valued - and to know that their voice, participation and contribution matter.

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1 Purpose and context

Belonging is central to life at Woodlea: it enables children to feel safe, included and valued so that they can participate, learn, contribute and flourish.

This strategy sets out how Woodlea deliberately creates, protects and monitors a strong sense of belonging for every pupil. It brings together our work across safeguarding and pastoral care, SEND and inclusion, attendance and behaviour, PSHE/RSE and wellbeing, pupil voice, play, enrichment, transition and family partnership.

National context and DfE alignment

The Department for Education policy paper Every Child Achieving and Thriving (2026) states that every school should be a safe, calm and caring place where every child feels they belong and are seen. It sets an expectation that by 2029 every school will monitor pupils' sense of belonging and engagement, including factors such as safety, inclusion, relationships with teachers and peers, motivation and how much pupils value school.

Further to this, Woodlea's approach should be read alongside Working Together to Improve School Attendance (statutory guidance, updated July 2026), Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the revised statutory Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance in force from September 2026, Behaviour in Schools guidance, and the DfE Enrichment Framework for Schools and Colleges (2026).

Strategic status

This document brings those strands together into a coherent Woodlea approach. It supports, but does not replace, the school policies and statutory procedures that govern safeguarding, attendance, behaviour, SEND, equality and RSHE.

Purpose	At Woodlea
What this document shows	A clear whole-school definition of belonging; the entitlement for every child; universal and targeted practice; early identification; monitoring and evidence of impact.
Strategic alignment	Belonging supports Woodlea priorities for Personal Development, Inclusion, Attendance and Behaviour, safeguarding, SEND, wellbeing and enrichment.
How it should be used	As a live strategy and policy for staff, governors and families, reviewed as pupil voice, participation, attendance, behaviour and pastoral evidence develop through the year.

2 What we mean by belonging

At Woodlea, belonging means feeling genuinely accepted, valued and connected to the school community while being able to be yourself.

Belonging is different from simply fitting in. A pupil may appear to be part of a class or friendship group while feeling that they need to change, hide or suppress aspects of themselves in order to be accepted. Genuine belonging combines connection with acceptance.

Element	What it means
Connection	Having positive relationships and feeling part of a group, class, team or wider community.
Acceptance	Feeling valued and respected for who you are, rather than feeling pressure to become more like others.
Participation	Having real access to learning, play, clubs, trips, leadership and wider school life.
Contribution	Knowing that your ideas, strengths and actions can make a positive difference to the community.

There is a place for me here

For children, belonging may be experienced through a trusted adult, friendship, class identity, club, leadership responsibility, sports team, performance, shared interest, outdoor experience or community project. Different pupils may connect in different ways.

3 Vision, values and intent

Children are at the centre of every decision we make.

Our ambition is that every pupil develops a secure sense that there is a place for them at Woodlea. Our school values provide a shared language for how we build that community together.

Woodlea value	Belonging in practice
Kindness	Notice others, include people, show empathy and build caring relationships.
Curiosity	Take an interest in other people, cultures, identities, experiences and ideas.
Courage	Feel safe to speak, participate, try new things and be yourself.
Determination	Persevere and understand that difficulty or setback does not remove your place in the community.
Resilience	Manage challenge, seek support and repair relationships when things go wrong.
Teamwork	Listen, cooperate, contribute and recognise that everybody has something valuable to offer.

Our ambition for every child

The children in our classrooms today will become the creators, carers, scientists, artists, engineers, leaders, neighbours, parents and citizens of tomorrow. Our responsibility is, therefore, greater than preparing children for the next test, year group or phase of education. We want to prepare them to participate confidently in a rapidly changing world and to believe that they have something valuable to contribute to it.

Childhood is changing. Technology and artificial intelligence are transforming how children access information, communicate and understand the world around them. At Woodlea, this strengthens rather than reduces the importance of secure knowledge, critical thinking, communication, curiosity and human connection.

We want our pupils to be active participants in their education: asking questions, debating ideas, pursuing curiosity, solving problems and increasingly taking responsibility for their learning.

Our ambition is high for every child. Background, disadvantage, additional need or previous attainment should never determine the limits of what a pupil is encouraged to achieve. Children who need additional support should receive it early and effectively; children who are already succeeding should continue to be stretched, challenged and inspired.

Above all, children should leave Woodlea believing that education is something in which they have a stake: they belong within it, they can succeed within it and they can use what they learn to shape their future.

Our intent

- Ensure every child is known well by adults and has access to trusted relationships.
- Build a culture in which difference is respected and pupils do not need to change who they are in order to be accepted.
- Teach the social, emotional and relationship knowledge pupils need to connect successfully with others.
- Give pupils authentic voice, responsibility and opportunities to contribute.
- Identify disconnection early and respond before difficulties become entrenched.
- Remove barriers so that pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils and other vulnerable groups participate fully in school life.
- Strengthen the connection between school, families and the wider community.

4 The Woodlea belonging entitlement

Every pupil is entitled to experience eight elements of belonging.

Entitlement	What every pupil should experience
I am known	Adults know me as an individual - my strengths, interests, relationships, needs and experiences.
I am welcomed	My presence is noticed. I experience warm, predictable interactions and feel that I matter here.
I am accepted	I can be myself and difference does not make me less valued.
I am safe	I feel physically and emotionally safe and know what to do when something does not feel right.
I am connected	I have opportunities to build positive relationships with adults and peers.
I am heard	I can express my views, raise concerns and see that adults take my voice seriously.
I am included	Barriers to learning, play, clubs, trips, leadership and enrichment are identified and addressed.
I am needed	I can contribute. I understand that I do not simply attend Woodlea - I help make Woodlea what it is.

5 How Woodlea creates belonging every day

Belonging is primarily built through repeated everyday experiences rather than occasional special events.

Staff understand that apparently small interactions accumulate over time. A greeting, conversation, invitation to join an activity or adult noticing that something is wrong can significantly affect whether a child feels that they matter.

- Greet and acknowledge pupils warmly and use their names.
- Learn about pupils' interests, strengths, important relationships and experiences.
- Model kindness, curiosity, active listening and respectful disagreement.
- Notice changes in behaviour, friendships, participation or emotional presentation.
- Create opportunities for pupils to work and play with different peers.
- Actively include children who may find joining groups difficult.
- Teach and model the skills needed to form and maintain relationships.
- Recognise effort, contribution, character and improvement as well as attainment.
- Ensure curriculum materials, books, displays and experiences reflect a diverse society.
- Challenge prejudice, discrimination, bullying and deliberate exclusion.
- Help pupils repair relationships when things go wrong.
- Provide meaningful choice, responsibility and leadership.
- Make reasonable adjustments so that pupils can participate successfully.
- Ensure every child knows which adults can help them.

6 Teaching children how to belong

At Woodlea, we actively develop belonging by teaching and practising the skills children need to build positive, healthy relationships.

Through PSHE, RSE, myHappymind, assemblies, Religious Education/World Views, online safety, restorative conversations and wider curriculum experiences, pupils progressively learn how relationships and communities work.

- How healthy friendships are formed and maintained.
- How to listen actively, take turns and show interest in others.
- How to enter and sustain play and group activities.
- How to cooperate, compromise and work towards a shared goal.
- How to recognise feelings in themselves and others.
- How to manage disagreement and repair relationships.
- How to include others and recognise deliberate or accidental exclusion.
- How to recognise bullying, prejudice and discriminatory behaviour.
- How to celebrate similarities and differences.
- How to ask for help and how to support others appropriately.

Shared wellbeing language

myHappymind supports this work through emotional vocabulary, character strengths, active listening, perspective-taking, self-regulation and strategies for relationships and conflict. The aim is for pupils to use this learning in real situations, not only during taught sessions.

Online relationships and belonging

Belonging extends into online spaces. Pupils learn that the same expectations of kindness, respect and inclusion apply when communicating through games, messaging and other digital environments. They are taught to recognise online exclusion, bullying, pressure and harmful group behaviour, understand the impact of their own actions and know how to seek help.

7 Friendship, play and peer connection

Friendship is a significant source of belonging, but friendship skills come more naturally to some pupils than others.

Woodlea deliberately creates varied opportunities for pupils to connect around play, interests, creativity, leadership and shared goals. Staff support pupils who need help to enter play, manage conflict or establish positive peer relationships.

Opportunity	How it can strengthen belonging
OPAL and purposeful play	Creates choice, shared experiences, cooperation, independence and opportunities to connect across different types of play.
Play Leaders	Support inclusive, active play and help pupils who may otherwise remain on the edge of groups.
Clubs and interests	Bring pupils together around authentic shared interests and give pupils additional communities within school.
Sport and performance	Develop teamwork, collective identity, confidence and the experience of working towards a common goal.
Outdoor and woodland learning	Provides different contexts for connection, regulation, exploration and success.
Residentials, visits and projects	Strengthen relationships through shared experiences, challenge, independence and teamwork.

8 Pupil voice and contribution

Belonging is strengthened when children believe that their presence makes a difference.

Pupil voice, therefore, goes beyond asking children what they think. Pupils have authentic opportunities to influence and contribute through School Council, House Captains, Happiness Heroes, Play Leaders, Digichamps, Junior Road Safety Officers, Librarians, Year 6 responsibilities, environmental projects and other leadership opportunities.

Leadership is understood as service rather than status. Its value is in what pupils contribute and how they help shape the experience of others, not simply in holding a badge or title.

A key belonging message:

I have something valuable to contribute here.

Staff also seek informal pupil voice. Some of the most useful information about belonging comes from conversations in classrooms, corridors, playgrounds and pastoral sessions rather than formal surveys alone.

9 Inclusion, identity and difference

Every pupil should experience belonging without having to become more like everybody else.

Woodlea recognises and values difference in culture and heritage, faith and worldview, family, language, SEND and neurodiversity, interests and talents, personality, communication, life experience and other aspects of identity.

Our curriculum teaches pupils about protected characteristics and prepares them to participate respectfully in a diverse society. Adults challenge stereotypes, prejudice, discriminatory language and behaviour.

Reasonable adjustments are made so that equality of opportunity means meaningful participation rather than simply offering every pupil exactly the same experience.

This approach supports Woodlea's duties under the Equality Act 2010, including eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Inclusion principle

Some pupils need more adult support to establish relationships, communicate, regulate emotions, access social situations or participate confidently. The aim is not to make the child fit the environment; adults also consider what can change around the child.

From side-lined to included: high expectations for every child

Belonging and ambition go together.

Inclusion at Woodlea does not mean expecting less. It means understanding what may be preventing a pupil from participating, achieving or thriving and taking purposeful action to remove those barriers while maintaining high expectations for their learning and development.

We are determined that no child should become side-lined from the full experience of school because of disadvantage, additional need, difficulty with attendance, previous attainment, family circumstances or because they have not yet found where they feel successful and connected.

This includes children who require significant additional support and children who may appear to be doing well but are capable of achieving even more.

Our aim is therefore to move pupils from:

- disconnected to connected;
- passive to participating;
- unheard to heard;

- excluded from opportunity to fully included;
- uncertain about their potential to ambitious for their future.

Leaders look beyond whether a child is simply present in school. We consider whether they are attending regularly, participating actively, forming positive relationships, accessing wider opportunities, experiencing success and increasingly seeing themselves as someone who can learn and achieve.

Some pupils may face greater barriers to this than others. This can include pupils with SEND, disadvantaged pupils, care-experienced children, young carers, children with a social worker, pupils experiencing attendance difficulties, children joining the school outside usual transition points, pupils affected by bullying or discrimination, and any child whose circumstances place them at risk of disengagement.

National evidence also highlights poorer educational outcomes for some white working-class pupils. Woodlea considers this alongside its own pupil information and local context rather than assuming that any child's experience or outcome is determined by membership of a particular group.

Our response is always rooted in knowing the individual child: what are their strengths, what are the barriers, what does success look like for them and what can we change to help them participate, achieve and belong?

10 Identifying pupils who may not feel that they belong

Children may not always be able to express when they feel disconnected or that they do not belong.

Staff, therefore, remain alert to patterns that may indicate a pupil is becoming disconnected. No single sign automatically demonstrates poor belonging; staff use their knowledge of the individual child and consider change over time.

Area	Possible signs	What staff consider
Relationships	Repeated isolation, friendship breakdown, conflict, difficulty joining play or feeling unwanted.	Who does the pupil connect with? Are difficulties isolated or recurring?
Attendance	Rising absence, lateness, reluctance to attend or anxiety linked to parts of the school day.	Could safety, relationships, SEND, sensory or emotional factors be contributing?
Behaviour	Withdrawal, dysregulation, increased conflict, refusal, disruption or marked changes in presentation.	What is the behaviour communicating and when does it occur?
Participation	Avoiding clubs, trips, performances, group work, play or leadership opportunities.	Is there a practical, social, financial, sensory or confidence barrier?
Learning	Reduced engagement, reluctance to contribute, fear of error or loss of confidence.	Does the pupil feel psychologically safe enough to participate and take risks?
Voice	Statements such as “nobody likes me”, “I do not fit in” or “no one notices”.	What is the pupil experiencing, and who is their trusted adult?

Belonging and safeguarding

Belonging information never replaces safeguarding procedures. If a pupil's words, behaviour or response to pupil voice indicates that they may be at risk of harm, experiencing bullying or discrimination, or otherwise raises a safeguarding concern, staff follow Woodlea's safeguarding procedures immediately and record/report concerns in accordance with the school's policy. Pupils are never promised confidentiality where information needs to be shared to keep them safe.

11 Pupils who may be vulnerable to disconnection

Belonging is monitored for every pupil, while recognising that some circumstances can create additional barriers to connection.

- Pupils with SEND, including pupils whose communication, sensory or social needs affect participation.
- Disadvantaged pupils and pupils who may face financial barriers to wider opportunities.
- Children who are looked after or previously looked after.
- Young carers and children with significant caring responsibilities.
- Children with a social worker or whose family is receiving wider support.
- Pupils experiencing attendance difficulties or extended absence.
- Children with social, emotional or mental health needs.
- Pupils affected by safeguarding concerns, family change, bereavement or significant life events.
- New pupils, including pupils joining outside normal transition points.
- Pupils experiencing bullying, racist abuse, discrimination or repeated friendship difficulties.
- Pupils returning after illness, suspension, prolonged absence or another period away from school.

Do not assume belonging from outward success

Quiet, compliant, popular or academically successful pupils can also experience loneliness or disconnection. Belonging must be understood through relationships and pupil experience, not behaviour or attainment alone.

12 Our graduated response

Woodlea responds proportionately: 'ordinarily available provision' for all, early action when concerns emerge and targeted or specialist support when needed.

Layer	What it looks like	Examples
Universal	A culture and curriculum designed to build connection and prevent avoidable disconnection.	Positive relationships; inclusive teaching; myHappymind/PSHE/RSE; purposeful play; enrichment; pupil voice; school values.
Early response	Adults seek to understand the pupil's experience and remove emerging barriers.	Trusted-adult conversation; parent/carer contact; friendship support; supported play; check-ins; group/routine adjustments; invitation to a club or activity.
Targeted	Planned support for pupils with persistent or additional social/emotional needs.	ELSA; social-skills work; emotional-literacy programmes; personalised wellbeing support; SEND adjustments; sensory provision; planned peer support.
Specialist/partnership	Coordinated support where needs are significant, complex or persistent.	SENDCo/DSL involvement; family partnership; external agencies; multi-agency planning where appropriate.

The response question

What does this pupil need - and what can we change in the environment, relationships, routines or provision so that connection is more possible?

13 Belonging and attendance

Attendance and belonging influence one another.

Being in school helps pupils maintain connection with learning, friendships, trusted adults and wider school life. At the same time, pupils are more likely to engage positively when they feel safe, valued and connected.

Where attendance becomes a concern, Woodlea therefore seeks to understand the pupil and family experience rather than considering attendance information in isolation.

Questions leaders and staff ask

- Does this child feel safe here?
- Do they have a trusted adult?
- Do they have positive peer relationships?
- Are there particular parts of the day they find difficult?
- Are SEND, sensory, communication or emotional needs affecting participation?
- Have there been changes in friendships, family circumstances or wellbeing?
- What practical or relational support could make attending or returning to school more manageable?

Attendance support is relational and undertaken in partnership with families. Understanding belonging and barriers forms part of Woodlea's attendance response; it does not replace the school's statutory attendance responsibilities, monitoring, escalation processes or appropriate formal intervention. Attendance practice follows Working Together to Improve School Attendance and the school's Attendance Policy, alongside safeguarding responsibilities.

14 Transitions and new beginnings

Belonging can be particularly vulnerable during periods of change.

Additional attention is therefore given to starting Reception, joining Woodlea during the school year, moving between year groups, changes of teacher or support staff, returning after extended absence and transition to secondary school.

- Establish relationships before and during transition wherever possible.
- Familiarise pupils with key adults, peers, spaces, routines and expectations.
- Identify a trusted adult and, where helpful, supportive peers.
- Use visual or personalised transition support when appropriate.
- Share relevant SEND, safeguarding, pastoral and relationship information securely between staff.
- Check how well pupils are settling rather than assuming transition has been successful.
- Provide additional support for pupils whose anxiety or communication needs make change more difficult.

In Reception, belonging is understood through developmentally appropriate pupil voice alongside observation of relationships, play, confidence, communication, emotional regulation and children's engagement with the environment, consistent with the EYFS framework.

For younger pupils and children whose communication needs make direct questioning less reliable, leaders draw particularly on observation, supported pupil voice and knowledge from adults and families. Indicators may include willingness to separate from parents/carers, seeking help or reassurance from trusted adults, exploring the environment, joining play, communicating needs, forming relationships and returning to a regulated state with appropriate support.

15 Families belong too

Children's sense of belonging is strengthened when their families also feel welcomed, respected and able to participate in school life.

Woodlea aims to develop trusting relationships with families through respectful communication, listening, accessible opportunities to participate and early discussion when concerns arise. Families help us understand what makes their child feel connected or disconnected.

Our ambition is not simply for children to attend Woodlea, but for children and families to feel invested in school life: pupils participating actively in their education and families recognising themselves as valued partners in their child's learning, development and success.

- Warm, respectful communication and approachable adults.
- Clear routes for parents/carers to raise worries or share information.
- Family learning and opportunities to contribute to curriculum or enrichment.
- Performances, celebrations, community events and intergenerational experiences.
- Partnership when attendance, friendship, SEND, behaviour or wellbeing concerns emerge.
- Active attention to barriers that may make participation difficult for some families.

Community partnerships and local experiences help children see Woodlea as part of a wider network of people and places to which they can contribute.

16 Belonging beyond the classroom

A pupil's strongest sense of connection may not come from academic learning.

Our enrichment entitlement has an important role in belonging. Sport, music, performance, art, woodland learning, environmental projects, clubs, residentials, community service, careers experiences and leadership enable pupils to discover interests, experience success, develop relationships and be recognised for different strengths.

Enrichment area	Examples at Woodlea
Arts and culture	Music, art, dance, drama, performance, literature, cultural experiences, artists, authors, museums, theatre and opportunities to create and exhibit.
Civic engagement and community	Pupil leadership, School Council, democracy, fundraising, volunteering, care-home links, environmental action, community partnerships and opportunities to make a positive difference.
Sport and physical activity	Clubs, competition, festivals, dance, active play, cycling, outdoor activity and opportunities to discover forms of physical activity pupils enjoy.
Nature, outdoors and adventure	Our woodland environment, OPAL, gardening, environmental projects, sustainability, residential experiences, outdoor learning and opportunities to explore and connect with the natural world.
Wider life and future skills	Careers encounters, employer experiences, enterprise, financial literacy, digital skills, STEM, cooking, problem-solving, communication and opportunities that prepare pupils for their next stage and later life.

Woodlea approach	Belonging impact
Broad enrichment entitlement	Every child has repeated opportunities to experience different communities, interests and forms of success.
Clubs and talent development	Pupils can connect with peers through authentic shared interests.
Leadership and service	Pupils experience being trusted, useful and able to make a difference.
Community experiences	Children develop connection beyond the school gates and see themselves as contributors to a wider community.

Reasonable adjustments and funded access	Barriers are addressed so that participation is meaningful rather than theoretical.
Participation tracking	Leaders identify who may be missing out and act when patterns emerge.

Check benefit, not only attendance

Leaders ask not simply “Did the pupil attend?” but “Did they participate, connect and benefit?”

17 Belonging through an irresistible curriculum and play

At Woodlea, we want children to want to be here. Our ambition is to create an irresistible experience of school through both an engaging, ambitious curriculum and rich, purposeful playtimes.

An irresistible curriculum

We want children to experience learning as something they participate in, not something that simply happens to them. Knowledge provides the foundation from which pupils can question, debate, reason, create, investigate and form increasingly well-informed views.

Our ambition for an irresistible curriculum is therefore not simply that lessons are enjoyable. It is that pupils become intellectually curious: they want to know more, make connections, ask questions and pursue ideas beyond the immediate lesson.

Through the curriculum, pupils build secure knowledge alongside the wider skills they need to participate confidently in school and in later life. This includes opportunities to develop:

- Confident speaking, listening and oracy.
- Reading, writing and mathematical fluency.
- Critical thinking and problem-solving.
- Digital and media literacy.
- Financial understanding.
- Citizenship and understanding of the wider world.
- Creativity and cultural awareness.
- Collaboration and communication.
- Environmental awareness and responsibility.

Learning extends beyond lessons through visitors, practical experiences, educational visits, performance, outdoor learning, community links and opportunities to apply knowledge in authentic contexts.

Our curriculum also helps pupils encounter people, cultures, beliefs, experiences and perspectives beyond their own. Pupils should be able both to see themselves reflected in school life and develop curiosity about the lives of others.

Curriculum and belonging

An irresistible curriculum contributes directly to belonging: pupils experience success, discover interests and talents, develop their voice and recognise that there is a place for them within learning.

Irresistible playtimes

Playtimes are an important part of children's experience of belonging. A significant proportion of a child's school week is spent at play, so Woodlea wants these times to be irresistible: active, inclusive, creative, sociable and enjoyable, with opportunities for every child to find something and someone they can connect with.

Through our developing OPAL provision, outdoor environment and pupil leadership, children are supported to:

- Make and sustain friendships.
- Play with children beyond their immediate friendship group.
- Develop independence and creativity.
- Negotiate, cooperate and solve problems.
- Take appropriate risks and manage challenge.
- Discover new interests.
- Be physically active.
- Contribute ideas and take responsibility.
- Experience enjoyment and connection with others.

Staff observe social times carefully and support pupils who may find unstructured periods more difficult. Play provision is adapted where needed so that pupils with SEND, sensory differences, physical needs or social and emotional needs can participate meaningfully.

Our ambition:

Curriculum time and playtime reinforce one another: children come to Woodlea knowing that there will be opportunities to learn, explore, play, connect, contribute and succeed.

18 Restorative practice and belonging after things go wrong

Belonging does not mean that children never experience conflict, boundaries or consequences.

Strong communities have clear expectations. Staff maintain boundaries while helping pupils understand what happened, who was affected, what needs to happen next, how relationships can be repaired and how the pupil can successfully rejoin the community.

A relational and restorative approach does not mean lowering expectations. Clear routines, boundaries, consequences and appropriate sanctions remain important in maintaining a calm, safe and inclusive community and are implemented in accordance with Woodlea's Behaviour Policy and current DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance.

- Behaviour is addressed clearly and proportionately.
- Adults separate the child's value from the behaviour that needs to change.
- Pupils are supported to understand impact and take responsibility.
- Where appropriate, restorative conversations help repair trust and relationships.
- Adults consider whether unmet SEND, emotional, communication or belonging needs contributed to the incident.
- Following consequences, adults actively support successful reintegration.

Our restorative message:

The behaviour may not belong here; you still do.

19 Monitoring belonging

Belonging cannot be measured through one survey or a single data point.

Leaders triangulate information to understand both whole-school patterns and individual pupil experience.

Evidence source	What it can tell us
Pupil voice and belonging questions	Whether pupils feel known, safe, connected, accepted, heard and able to seek help.
Attendance and punctuality	Patterns that may indicate barriers, anxiety or disconnection and whether support is making a difference.
Behaviour and restorative records	Recurring contexts, relationship patterns and successful repair or reintegration.
Bullying/discrimination records	Whether pupils are experiencing exclusion, prejudice or unsafe peer relationships.
Safeguarding, SEND and pastoral information	Individual barriers, changing needs and the effectiveness of coordinated support.
Clubs, enrichment and leadership registers	Who participates, who is under-represented and whether adjustments/funding increase access.
Play/social-time observation	Who is connecting, isolated, repeatedly dysregulated or struggling to enter play.
Parent/carer and staff feedback	Changes in confidence, relationships, attendance, participation or willingness to attend school.

20 The Woodlea Belonging Measure: core questions

Woodlea uses a small number of consistent questions so that leaders can establish a baseline, identify pupils and groups at risk of disconnection and evaluate whether action is improving experience.

The domains deliberately reflect the factors identified in the DfE's 2026 policy direction for pupil engagement: belonging and safety, inclusion, relationships with teachers and peers, motivation and how much pupils value school. Questions are adapted to age and communication need and are never interpreted in isolation.

Domain	Core question	Strong evidence
Known	Do pupils believe adults know them and notice when they need help?	Pupils identify trusted adults; staff can describe strengths, interests and current needs.
Safe	Do pupils feel physically and emotionally safe?	Pupil voice is positive; concerns are identified and acted upon promptly.
Connected	Do pupils have positive relationships with adults and peers?	Friendship/play observations and pupil voice show connection rather than recurring isolation.
Accepted	Do pupils feel able to be themselves and respected for who they are?	Difference is respected; bullying/discrimination is challenged; pupils report acceptance.
Heard	Do pupils believe adults listen and respond?	Pupil voice influences action and individual concerns lead to appropriate response.
Included	Are all groups participating meaningfully?	Participation gaps are small or reducing; reasonable adjustments and targeted invitations have impact.
Contributing	Do pupils have opportunities to make a difference?	Pupil leadership, service and community contribution are broad and authentic.
Supported	Do pupils know where to go when relationships or emotions become difficult?	Pupils can name routes to help and targeted provision is timely.
Engaged	Do pupils feel motivated to participate in learning and wider school life?	Pupils show willingness to participate, contribute and persevere; changes in engagement are noticed and explored.
Value school	Do pupils feel that school matters to them and that being part of Woodlea is worthwhile?	Pupils can describe positive reasons for being part of the school community and experiences they value.
Responsive	Can leaders identify pupils becoming disconnected and show what	Case studies and review evidence demonstrate action, adaptation and improved experience.

	changed?	

21 Measuring impact

Strong impact is demonstrated through what pupils experience, know, do and contribute - not through the existence of provision alone.

Woodlea establishes a whole-school belonging baseline and reviews belonging across the year. Pupil voice is adapted according to age, SEND and communication need. Leaders analyse responses alongside attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, SEND, pastoral and participation information, including patterns for vulnerable pupil groups.

Where an individual response raises concern, this is followed up promptly by an appropriate trusted adult. Where patterns emerge across a class, group or aspect of school life, leaders identify actions and review their impact. Findings contribute to termly leadership and governor review and inform the School Evaluation Form and Academy Development Plan.

Pupil experience

- Pupils increasingly report that they feel safe, known and accepted.
- Pupils can identify adults they trust and know how to ask for help.
- Pupils report positive peer relationships and opportunities to participate.
- Pupils believe their views matter and they have opportunities to contribute.

School evidence

- High and equitable participation across clubs, enrichment, leadership and community opportunities.
- Early identification of pupils at risk of disconnection and evidence of timely response.
- Positive or improving attendance, behaviour and pastoral outcomes for supported pupils.
- Reduced repeated isolation or unresolved friendship difficulties.
- Successful transitions and reintegration after absence or difficulty.
- Examples of pupils independently including, supporting and encouraging others.

22 Roles and responsibilities

Who	Responsibility	Examples of evidence
Senior leaders	Embed belonging across school improvement, inclusion, attendance, behaviour, safeguarding, enrichment and pastoral provision.	Termly review; pupil/group analysis; priorities and actions; governor reporting.
SEND/safeguarding/pastoral leaders	Identify pupils facing additional barriers and coordinate support.	Case reviews; reasonable adjustments; family/external-agency collaboration.
Curriculum/PSHE leaders	Ensure pupils encounter diverse experiences and are taught the knowledge and skills needed for relationships and participation.	Curriculum monitoring; pupil voice; assessment; staff support.
Teachers and support staff	Build relationships, notice pupils, model inclusion and respond when a pupil appears disconnected.	Daily practice; check-ins; family contact; adjustments; restorative work.
Lunchtime/play staff	Help social times become a source of connection, safety, choice and successful play.	Play observations; supported entry to activities; communication with class teams.
Governors	Provide strategic challenge about whose voices are heard, who participates and what evidence shows impact.	Minutes; monitoring questions; scrutiny of trends and case studies.
Pupils	Practise Woodlea values and understand their responsibility for how others experience school.	Leadership, peer support, inclusive behaviour and pupil-led action.
Families	Share knowledge of the child, identify barriers and work in partnership when concerns emerge.	Feedback; attendance/pastoral planning; transition and support reviews.

23 Strategic priorities for 2026-27

During 2026-27 Woodlea will make belonging increasingly visible, measurable and responsive.

1. Include explicit belonging questions within pupil voice and safeguarding/wellbeing conversations.
2. Identify and follow up pupils whose responses indicate weak connection, safety, acceptance or access to trusted adults.
3. Monitor participation in enrichment, clubs, music and leadership by pupil group and respond to gaps.
4. Embed OPAL as a vehicle for friendship, inclusion, independence, social development and enjoyment.
5. Strengthen links between attendance analysis and pastoral/belonging information.

Success measure	What leaders will look for
Pupil voice	More pupils report feeling known, safe, connected, accepted and able to seek help.
Participation	SEND, disadvantaged and other vulnerable groups participate fully, with no unexplained significant gaps.
Early response	Concerns about isolation, friendship, attendance or disengagement lead to timely action and review.
Play and enrichment	Pupil voice and observation show broader connection, purposeful participation and enjoyment.
Leadership/community	More pupils experience authentic responsibility, service and contribution.
Governance	Governors can describe how leaders know which pupils belong strongly, which may not, and what is being done in response.

National review trigger

This strategy will be reviewed when the Department for Education publishes its Pupil Engagement Framework or any subsequent statutory guidance that materially changes expectations around pupil belonging and engagement. Woodlea will compare its Belonging Measure with the national framework and adapt questions, monitoring or reporting where this strengthens practice.

24 By the time pupils leave Woodlea

We want every Year 6 pupil to leave Woodlea with the knowledge and confidence to find, build and contribute to healthy communities.

By the time pupils leave Year 6...

I know who I am. I know that difference is valued. I know how to build and repair relationships. I know how to ask for help. I know that my voice matters. I know how to include other people. I know that I can contribute to a community. I know that there are places where I belong - and I can help create that feeling for others.

25 Success statement

A strong sense of belonging at Woodlea will not be demonstrated by a poster, programme or survey score alone.

It will be visible in relationships.

It will be heard in pupil voice.

It will be evident in who participates.

It will be reflected in how adults respond when a pupil begins to withdraw.

It will be experienced by pupils who need additional support.

It will be seen in children taking responsibility for one another and their community.

Our end goal

Pupils know that Woodlea is somewhere they are known, accepted, included and valued - and somewhere their presence makes a difference.

Documents and sources informing this strategy

- Woodlea Personal Development, Wellbeing & Enrichment Strategy 2026-27.
- Woodlea safeguarding, SEND, behaviour, attendance, equality and RSHE policies and procedures.
- Department for Education: Every Child Achieving and Thriving (policy paper, published 23 February 2026; updated 27 April 2026). This includes the expectation that every school monitors pupils' sense of belonging and engagement by 2029 and the planned Pupil Engagement Framework.
- Department for Education: Working Together to Improve School Attendance (statutory guidance, updated 9 July 2026).
- Department for Education: Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (statutory guidance in force from 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education: Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education (revised statutory guidance in force from 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education: Behaviour in Schools - advice for headteachers and school staff (current DfE guidance).
- Department for Education: The Enrichment Framework for Schools and Colleges (non-statutory guidance, published 15 June 2026), including the enrichment benchmarks and focus on equitable access, participation and impact.
- High Speed Training: "Creating a Sense of Belonging in School" (Rachel Gordon, 6 February 2026), particularly its emphasis on acceptance, authentic connection, shared interests and adult modelling.

Review principle

This is a live strategy. Leaders should adapt provision when pupil voice, participation, attendance, behaviour, pastoral evidence or family feedback indicate that a pupil or group is not experiencing the belonging entitlement consistently. The document will also be reviewed against new national guidance, including the forthcoming DfE Pupil Engagement Framework.