



Welcome to Woodcroft School

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About Woodcroft School

At Woodcroft we work continuously to improve what we do in order to make every placement a success. The school opened in 1963 and is a family owned independent special school, registered and inspected by Ofsted and approved by the Department for Education. As a primary day school with a Key Stage 3 transition group, we are registered to take pupils up until the age of 13. The National Autistic Society accredits our provision. We are proud of our school and appreciate your interest.

Woodcroft is set in beautiful surroundings on the edge of Epping Forest with daily school transport links to London. We are close to local shops, a library and other services, so pupils can enjoy many activities within the wider community.

We have an experienced, committed and approachable team of teachers, therapists and support staff. We work in partnership with parents and local authorities to offer a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum, as well as practical support and care.

Woodcroft School works flexibly to meet the needs of its pupils. We provide a high staff to pupil ratio wherever needed – whether a child requires extra support in a mainstream school, or is likely to make more progress at a special school. With intensive therapy and support, Woodcroft aims to prepare pupils to continue their education within their local authority.

Dual placement, where a pupil stays on roll at two schools, and transition support linked to a mainstream school, may also be available for some pupils. Further details of these and other ways we can help are available from the head teacher.

Our ethos

Woodcroft's ethos is based on putting the needs of its pupils first. Our approach is child-centred and practical, providing flexibility to adapt to pupil needs and to fit in with local authority services.

We believe that children should be treated with dignity and respect and given equality of opportunity. We believe in raising pupils' self-esteem by treating them in a positive way. Some children have very special difficulties, but acceptance, understanding and intensive help can bring about change.

Our aims

- to offer a safe and supportive environment within which pupils can develop to their full potential and live healthy, satisfying and independent lives within society;
- to maintain a positive school culture where pupils are motivated and challenged by high expectations and success is consistently celebrated;
- to support parents and local authorities by providing innovative and flexible services that ensure each pupil's education is adapted to their needs;
- to be widely recognised as a specialist centre where information, training and support is shared with parents, other schools, professionals and the wider community.

Admissions

The school welcomes enquiries at any time and arrangements to visit can be made for pupils, parents and representatives from local authorities. The basis for admission is that the child's needs are met by the provision at Woodcroft and that there is a vacancy in an appropriate class group. Following a referral by the pupil's local authority, the head teacher makes a decision on suitability in consultation with senior management.

The provision for education and welfare described in this website is aimed at ensuring that the requirements of Education, Health and Care plans and assessment placements are fully met. Provision for pupils for whom English is an additional language is available on request from the head teacher.

Fees are the responsibility of the local authority and are payable one term in advance. Authorities wishing to transfer a pupil to another school must give one term's notice in writing.

More details are available from the school office on request. We are happy to answer any questions you may have.

Autism accreditation

Woodcroft has worked with pupils on the autism spectrum for over fifty years. We have been pioneers of many successful strategies during that time, taking a flexible approach that reflects our understanding that all pupils are different.

We were first accredited by the National Autistic Society in 2009 and positive provision for autism is firmly embedded across the whole school.

2019 accreditation

Woodcroft was reaccredited by the National Autistic Society in June 2019. Particular strengths included our focus on children, documentation, transition (including our transport service), multidisciplinary working and support for families.

The inspectors also highlighted community-based learning, sensory activities, assessment, the bespoke curriculum, professional development, the therapists and our excellent reputation with sending authorities.

Autism Accreditation Excellence Award

In 2017 Woodcroft won the National Autistic Society's Autism Accreditation Excellence Award for our transport service. You can read more about the award on the *Transport* page of our website.

Ofsted

Woodcroft is approved by the Department for Education and inspected by Ofsted. We had a very successful Ofsted inspection in June 2019. The inspectors judged us to be a good school and noted our outstanding provision for personal development and welfare. A copy of the report can be downloaded from our website.

Here is the inspectors' *Summary of key findings for parents and pupils*:

- Leaders work assiduously to continue to improve the school. They have ensured that all the independent school standards are met.
- The head teacher and directors have created a caring and supportive environment where pupils are safe and extremely well cared for.

- The ethos of meeting pupils' individual needs is at the heart of the school. Pupils thrive because the provision for personal development and welfare is outstanding.
- Teachers plan lessons that are closely matched to the needs of the pupils. Activities are interesting. As a result, pupils enjoy their learning.
- Most pupils make at least good progress in a range of subjects. Sometimes, pupils are given work that does not sufficiently challenge their ability, because it does not give them the opportunity to take responsibility for their learning.
- Transition arrangements for pupils entering and leaving the school are a strength.
- Behaviour management is a strength. Staff know the pupils well and use their knowledge to effectively support pupils to manage their behaviour.
- Pupils follow an inspiring curriculum that is well matched to their academic, social and emotional needs. However, in some academic subjects, there is not a clear sequence of learning that allows pupils to deepen their skills or understanding.
- Pupils' communication abilities are developed well.
- In some subjects, the most able pupils are not making the progress of which they are capable when they lose interest in their work.
- Safeguarding is given high priority and policies and procedures are followed rigorously by all staff. However, some of the documentation related to staff training is not kept up to date.
- Parents value the work of the school and are highly complimentary about the difference the school is making to their child's life.

School life

At Woodcroft, small classes are grouped according to pupil needs. Each has a teacher and a team of trained support staff. Our therapists work with all pupils in class, group or individual sessions. The timetable contains a full curriculum and plenty of opportunities to develop social skills.

Woodcroft promotes a healthy lifestyle wherever possible. We have weekly activities available for all pupils including swimming, tennis, trampolining, pony riding, yoga and forest walks. There are also visits to the gym, sports centre and adventure playground.

A healthy food policy supports the healthy living goals of the school curriculum.

Information and communication technology is in use across all areas of our work. Sensory impairment, speech and language disorders, challenging behaviour and physical disabilities are addressed by trained staff.

The school council meets regularly to discuss whole school issues and is attended by pupils representing each class group.

Accessibility

Pupils with disabilities are catered for in all aspects of school life. Our admission assessments and specialist support enables pupils with disabilities to access all curriculum activities. Enhancing provision and accessibility for pupils with disabilities forms part of our *School improvement plan* and is recognised by the board of directors as a central element of Woodcroft's work.

Help with access to the school's services, buildings and publications can be arranged through the school office.

Transport

Woodcroft's award winning transport service is operated by our own drivers and travel assistants with the support of classroom, maintenance and administrative staff. In 2017 we were singled out by the National Autistic Society for our work with children who find it hard to travel. The Autism Excellence Award shows our commitment to helping with issues affecting children's education beyond the classroom. The service is a real team effort, so congratulations and thanks to everyone involved.

At Woodcroft we recognise that travel is an important part of each pupil's day. It provides opportunities for learning through social interaction and useful contact between home and school.

Unlike most schools, we operate our own daily home to school transport service for some of our sending authorities. We introduced this pioneering idea in the 1970s (initially with a green vw camper van) and continued until local authority and independent transport services took over in the 1980s. Circumstances are changing again within some local authorities, and in response we have reintroduced our own service.

We always aim to work closely with local authority and independent transport services, providing free training, where required, and sharing strategies for individual pupils.

Our transport team also supports our many off-site activities throughout the day.

Curriculum

At Woodcroft School we believe that our curriculum should be broad, balanced and relevant to the needs of all our pupils, whatever their ability. It is built around the requirements of the National Curriculum, physical activity and therapeutic experiences.

There are principally three curriculum routes followed by pupils: Pre-formal, Semi-formal and Formal. Opportunities to move from one route to another exist at every stage of a child's time at Woodcroft. We offer a range of learning experiences that challenge, stimulate and promote thinking and learning. Many of our pupils benefit from learning broken down into very small achievable steps, with lots of opportunities to repeat and practice each skill before becoming independent with it.

Our curriculum is the totality of our pupils' learning experiences and is highly differentiated for each pupil. This includes social skills, communication skills, sensory experiences, self help, problem solving, independence and self management of behaviour and emotions. Please see the *Curriculum policy* on the *Policies* page of our website for more details.

Pupil independence

Education in the community is essential to prepare pupils for the opportunities, experiences, enjoyment and responsibilities of adult life. To help achieve this all pupils have opportunities to use public facilities and learn about behaving in a socially acceptable way. As pupils progress and gain independence skills the amount of time spent in the community is increased. We aim to gradually reduce the level of staff support in order to increase pupil independence and self-confidence.

Inclusion programmes

Some pupils have part-time inclusion in local mainstream primary schools with which Woodcroft School has strong, established links. Other pupils are able to participate in gradual inclusion programmes in their neighbourhood mainstream

or special school, with a view to taking up a full-time place in the future. In all cases a member of Woodcroft staff is provided as support.

Religious education

Pupils are encouraged to build relationships based on mutual respect and trust, to value the world around them and thus to come to an awareness and understanding of spiritual and moral values. Religious education is addressed across the curriculum with emphasis on helping pupils to develop self-awareness and appreciating other people and their needs.

All religions are respected and holidays and feast days are acknowledged. Non denominational assemblies include collective worship and provide opportunities for celebrating religious festivals.

Pupils may be withdrawn from assemblies at their parents' request.

Relationship education

Relationship education, including sex education, may be provided after discussion between parents and staff as to what may be appropriate in view of the child's needs and stage of development.

The National Curriculum

At Woodcroft we have regard to the National Curriculum and the associated guidance as to its use. Where appropriate, pupils may be entered for SATS, in particular Key Stage 2 testing and assessment.

As the academic performance of many of our pupils is outside national expectations, Woodcroft uses the PIVATS v (Performance Indicators for Value Added Target Setting) approach to help inform what constitutes good progress. The regular use of PIVATS allows the school to build a picture of each individual child's progress.

Assessment

Each pupil's progress at Woodcroft is documented so that parents and the professionals involved in their education can be kept up to date.

When starting, pupils are assessed by our experienced multidisciplinary team in a variety of ways that form a baseline from which progress is measured. These assessments include home visits, classroom observations and discussions with

pupils, parents and colleagues. Pupils are then regularly assessed and their progress recorded and collated.

Woodcroft has established a regular assessment cycle, which provides feedback on progress, informs future planning and creates a record of pupils' achievements.

The types of assessments we use depend on a pupil's needs. Some are based on key skills rather than subjects. Highly trained professionals, such as speech and language therapists, help with the assessment profile of each pupil.

Every Woodcroft pupil has a Statutory Annual Review, which is held at the school. During this meeting the pupil's progress and development in key skills and cross curricular areas, are assessed in depth. The pupil's current needs and Woodcroft's provision is also thoroughly reviewed. Parents are asked to contribute by attending this review and commenting on and helping to implement their child's Education, Health and Care plan. Pupils are encouraged to contribute in whichever way suits them, supported by teaching or therapy staff.

Academic performance

Particulars of the school's academic performance during last year, including the results of any public examinations, are available from the head teacher on request.

Therapies

The therapy programme at Woodcroft has been developed over many decades to improve our pupils' ability to communicate their feelings and needs, as well as to address difficulties understanding the communication of others.

Our therapy team works directly with pupils, giving specialist advice and training to the teaching and support staff and planning each pupil's therapy programme. Pupils may have individual sessions or take part in classes or groups where therapists work alongside the class teacher.

Woodcroft has an eclectic approach to therapy, just as it does to other aspects of school life. The following are very brief outlines of some of the approaches we use.

- The SCERTS model focuses on Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports.
- The TEACCH (Autism) framework focuses on physical organisation, individual schedules, work and activity systems and visual structure of materials.

Speech and language therapy (saLT)

At Woodcroft we employ a speech therapist who is based on-site. Her work relates to an individual's understanding, expressive abilities, learning potential, emotional well being and independence. Eating and drinking ability is covered too.

How saLT works

We work with the child and the community around them to formulate a Learning Journey based on shared aims. Assessment involves observation, discussion and formal and informal appraisal with the child. There is always consideration of the community and settings of the pupil's daily life. The Learning Journey is jointly set with the determined aim of giving the child and those around them a better quality of life. It is important that the Learning Journey impacts where it is needed most.

Stage 1 – Universal Support

This forms the base of a triangle of support: looking at the environment the child is living in, identifying what works most effectively and deciding how to build on this. Universal support also involves studying relevant adults' interaction styles and sharing what works for the child. Once this is achieved we move onto stage 2.

Stage 2 – Targeted Support

This identifies the child's areas of strength and establishes a Learning Journey to build on these skills.

Stage 3 – Specialist Support

This requires more specialist saLT intervention, which is approached with greater urgency.

The SCERTS framework

SCERTS stands for Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactional Supports. *Social Communication* is the interaction with those around you.

Emotional Regulation is how you understand and cope with your feelings.

Transactional Supports looks at the environment and the interaction style of those around you.

SCERTS is having an increasing effect in the world of autism. It now shapes how we work with children who have been diagnosed with autism as well as providing elements of therapy for those who haven't. It is a framework that looks at a child's strengths and then aims to build on them. An individualised programme that

seamlessly integrates with other approaches is a perfect fit for the holistic, educational ethos at Woodcroft. The Woodcroft saLT team feels that SCERTS addresses the need to look at the world around the young person and helps them gain not only academic skills but also an emotional wellbeing that is vital for their future happiness.

What you can expect from saLT at Woodcroft

- Joint working
- To feel supported
- To be kept informed
- Evidence based practise
- Training
- Modelling of approaches
- Resources
- Home visits
- An integrated approach
- A forward thinking service that is constantly evolving

Indirect saLT input

Indirect input is not face to face with the young person, for example:

- Training for staff and community around the young person
- Expert parent/carer programme
- Opportunities to network with other parents
- Accredited training e.g. Elklan approved training
- Off site visits/support
- Regular meetings
- Resource making

Direct saLT input

Direct input involves direct face to face contact with the young person, for example:

- Assessment
- Using good examples of communication
- Therapy embedded into curriculum areas

One to one input

The saLT team offers one-to-one therapy when a new skill that is specific to the individual is being addressed and an adult working on a daily basis with the young person is present. This skill will then quickly be introduced to the young person's daily routine and the one-to-one approach faded out. This encourages generalisation of skills outside of one isolated setting.

Occupational therapy (OT)

'Occupation' refers here to the practical activities that allow a child to be independent and develop a sense of identity. Paediatric occupational therapists (children's therapists) work in a variety of treatment settings including schools and local authority managed Child Development Centres.

At Woodcroft the occupational therapy team is focused on developing skills that enable the pupils to handle day-to-day tasks such as self-care, work, play and leisure. We have an experienced occupational therapist on-site each day and our therapy assistant works in conjunction with the rest of the interdisciplinary team and the child's family to support and optimise each pupil's functioning within all areas of the school day. This support is also aimed at helping the child to thrive at home and in the wider community.

What does the occupational therapy service at Woodcroft offer?

The OT aims to use a wide range of approaches to plan, deliver and monitor occupational therapy with all pupils attending the school.

The holistic, mostly class based approach to planning and delivering therapy takes into account the physical, social, emotional, sensory and cognitive abilities and needs of the pupils. In this, as in all our work, we view the individual as a potential part of the wider school community and aim to maximise the child's opportunities to participate as fully as possible.

Therapeutic interventions and simple strategies that can be easily adapted by school staff or families, are aimed at helping the children stay calm and focused whilst alert and ready to learn.

The OT uses school wide frameworks such as SCERTS, ABA and TEACCH, which are briefly summarised in the therapy introduction page. Alongside these are SPELL

(an evidence based framework developed by the National Autistic Society) and therapeutic approaches based on sensory integration theory. The various strategies are used where a need is indicated by the OT and colleagues around the school.

Occupational therapy aims

Woodcroft's OT service aims to develop pupils' functional and motor skills, such as fine and gross motor skills, postural stability, visuomotor (hand to eye) coordination and bilateral skills. Alongside this, the emphasis will be on sensory and emotional regulation and access to learning. This helps pupils to achieve their potential and participate as independently as possible.

Other areas of focus are: participation, social communication and group skills (such as turn taking, waiting and sharing); increasing motivation; catching and maintaining attention and focus; as well as building self-esteem and confidence.

A team-working approach

Another important aspect of the occupational therapy input at Woodcroft is to work with the class teams and families to help the child to self-regulate and monitor their own levels of sensory processing, behaviour and emotional need. To do this we provide an environment and suitable supports or equipment that effect such development.

The eventual aim is for children to be able to do this self-regulation and monitoring as independently as possible, or start to identify and communicate these needs appropriately.

Sometimes joint working with other members of the therapy or peripatetic team is also undertaken, and as a result groups may be set up and run in conjunction with them.

Other areas within the remit of the OT at Woodcroft

- In some cases liaison with occupational therapy colleagues at the pupil's Child Development Clinic may be indicated in order to provide the optimum service to the family and child.
- The occupational therapist will accompany pupils and families to appointments if required and appropriate, and liaise with colleagues regarding therapy programmes or transition plans.

- Home visits, both before admission to the school or whilst a pupil is on role are also available.
- The occupational therapist is happy to advise on activities and equipment that can be used out of school, although sometimes it may be more appropriate to refer a pupil on to an occupational therapist at their local clinic or housing department, when adaptations to the home or larger pieces of equipment are required.
- The occupational therapist is also available to give advice or guidance on form filling and application for certain grants or entitlements, such as the Disability Living Allowance.
- The current occupational therapist and therapy assistant deliver and monitor our sessions at a local sports centre.

Typical OT input for a pupil attending Woodcroft

- Small weekly group occupational therapy sessions.
- On going assessment and observation.
- Sensory profile and personal 'sensory diet' devised and monitored by the occupational therapist.
- Input to assessment and planning.
- Advice on or provision of equipment as required, including programmes of use and safety aspects.

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy is a movement science which aims to promote and enhance health, lifestyle and quality of life. Paediatric physiotherapists are specialist practitioners who work with children, and use therapeutic interventions to optimise the child's development and well being. In addition they may inform or support families and others involved with the child to enable them to deliver appropriate care and education.

Woodcroft employs a Health Professions Council (HPC) registered consultant physiotherapist on a part-time basis, the frequency of which is dependent on the cohort of pupils attending the school at any one time.

What does the physiotherapy service at Woodcroft offer?

The physiotherapist provides direct input, advice and assessment, with an emphasis on the development of motor skills, co-ordination and posture. Programmes are individualised and pupil friendly and are carried out by school staff during the day, and where appropriate, and as advised, at home by the pupil's primary carers.

The physiotherapist advises the school on appropriate equipment and exercises for individuals or groups and will organise the purchase or loan of equipment as needed. In addition, they will work with small groups or advise on group activities that can be integrated within the school day or curriculum areas, such as during play time, PE sessions, swimming lessons and pony riding.

Support

Woodcroft recognises the importance of support before, during and after a child's placement. This section outlines some of the ways that our experienced staff team can enhance and support each pupil's education.

Supporting pupils and parents

A working partnership with parents is essential to support pupil learning. We welcome visits from parents and aim to keep them fully informed of pupil progress and school events. Parents receive day-to-day information and support in a variety of ways, including telephone contact, pupil diaries and home/school books. Social events, the parents' support group, a parent forum, workshops and regular bulletins and/or newsletters all help to provide closer links between home and school.

A number of commonly requested and statutory policies can be found on the *Policies* page of our website. In accordance with independent school regulations, the number of any complaints registered under the formal procedure last year are available from the head teacher on request.

Safeguarding

At Woodcroft we are committed to pupil safeguarding in its widest sense. From child protection to health and safety, confidentiality to personal wellbeing, we expect all those who work with us to share this commitment.

The school's designated safeguarding officers hold safeguarding and wellbeing team meetings every half term. At these, they discuss the wellbeing of each pupil attending at the school and follow up specific concerns that may have been raised and acted on between meetings. The team also monitors and develops safeguarding, health and safety practice and policy.

Links are maintained with local authority safeguarding professionals on a case-by-case basis.

The head teacher is the senior designated person responsible for safeguarding and is the first point of contact. The head teacher and safeguarding team will, in the event of raised concerns, act in accordance with the current safeguarding guidelines issued by Essex County Council, as our local safeguarding authority. This will involve working with safeguarding teams within pupils sending authorities where necessary.

We take account of guidance issued by the Department for Education in our policies on safety and wellbeing as well as in the recruitment and training of staff. Senior managers trained in safer recruitment are involved throughout our staff recruitment procedures.

Our *Safeguarding policy* outlines the responsibilities and procedures that will be followed.

Woodcroft has adopted the AJG SchoolShare programme to assist in the implementation of its health and safety policy.

Medical support

With the support of our multi-disciplinary team, complex medical conditions can often be dealt with in school. The team can provide contact for parents on a daily basis and can help with making and attending specialist appointments. A care plan is prepared for each child on entry to the school.

The school ensures that staff holding first aid certificates are available to each class group.

Behaviour support

It is the policy of the school that all pupils are treated with care and respect. Behaviour support plans are discussed, agreed and monitored regularly. Classroom staff are trained in Team Teach behaviour support strategies. These promote de-escalation in order to reduce risk and restraint and promote positive relationships.

Other positive behaviour management strategies are also used, including praise for achievement and the recognition of positive effort. Our behaviour support team provides support across the school and off-site. The team also monitors and responds to incidents of challenging behaviour. An Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) consultant is available where required.

Woodcroft is committed to making placements a success and to providing support to ensure attendance at school wherever possible. However, some forms of extreme disruptive behaviour may require preventative measures, such as physical intervention or temporary or permanent removal from class or school. Such extreme behaviours include those causing serious or persistent risk to the welfare of pupils themselves or others, serious damage to property, or severe disruption of learning.

Policies

The policies referred to in this document can be found on the school website:
www.woodcroftschool.net

A copy of the school's complaints procedure is available from the school office on request.