

Woolton High School

Frequently Asked Questions

How do you support children who may be catching up on emotional and/or behavioural development?

That is our bread and butter work. The best answer is that we build up trusting relationships over time and take every day as it comes with understanding, support and a caring approach to meeting the individual needs of every one of our learners.

Do you accept that early experiences may continue to have an impact on emotional and behavioural development?

Absolutely, without a doubt. This is now known as ACES (Adverse Childhood Experience) and we are very familiar with this concept.

Have your staff accessed any attachment training?

We do work in an attachment aware way as the staff here have accessed a great deal of mental health training and have a lot of first-hand experience in dealing with traumatised children over many years. The challenge that we are faced with is to about the balance between providing a non-judgemental and supportive environment for children with a range of mental health needs, whilst preparing pupils for adult life and helping them to develop the resilience to cope with the demands of college / employment post-16.

Has the school any current or previous experience of looked after or adopted children?

Yes

How do you deal with bullying?

We challenge every incident of unacceptable behaviour at school, including any behaviour considered to be bullying behaviour, and we work in a restorative manner to educate children about why certain behaviours happen. We do also reserve the right to exclude in circumstances deemed serious enough to warrant exclusion.

What would you do if a child was refusing to go to school?

This is a challenge that we do regularly encounter. We treat every case as individual and so a 'one size fits all' approach isn't necessarily pertinent. Instead, we work to identify what might best fit each pupil and work in partnership with families / carers to try to move the matter forward in the best possible way. We are also bound by the need to follow National guidance regarding attendance and will therefore work closely in partnership with parents / carers and the Education Welfare Service to promote positive attendance.

How do you communicate with parents? How would you let me know if there was anything that concerned them about my child's wellbeing in school? How would I let school know if something wasn't going well for my child?

Staff have ongoing contact with parents on a daily basis if required. Some children need less contact if they are attending daily and not experiencing any difficulties. Others require much closer home/school contact. Our Nurture class staff have daily contact with all of their pupils. We use a 'Text to Parents' package called ParentApp that enables us to keep good contact with parents and carers on an ongoing basis.

Are you aware of the Pupil Premium for adopted and looked after children? How are these funds currently being used?

Yes, we are aware of pupil premium funding. We publish our pupil premium funding on the school website so please feel free to have a look.

Which outside agencies do you work with to help children who need extra support?

We have a range of external agencies that we work with to support our children. We have regular Team Around the School meetings to coordinate this multi-agency work, which is well attended by CAMHS, YPAS, Schools Family Support Service, Education Welfare Service, SEN, School nursing Service, Targeted Services for young people and other agencies as required.

What strategies do you use to help a child feel safe and happy in school?

Our overall aim as a school is to keep every child, Safe, Happy, Healthy and Learning and everything we do is with this goal in mind.

How exactly do you provide nurture to a child in your school? Do you follow any recognised approaches (e.g. Thrive, PACE or Nurtured Heart?) How are these approaches integrated into the student experience?

We have two staff members that are Thrive trained practitioners and all staff have attended Thrive training, which is woven into our overall methodology for the development of Emotional Well-being for every member of the school community. We have two Nurture group settings called TEC1 (Y7,8+9) and TEC 2 (Y10+11). TEC stands for 'The Engagement Centre'. We do not use PACE or Nurtured Heart.

How do you gauge and meet a child's sensory needs in school?

Some of our learners have a Sensory diet daily, these tend more so to be pupils in our TEC 1+2 Nurture base settings.

What is your behaviour policy?

We use a system of Choice, Chance, Concern – the concern element being a period of reflection at the end of each day whilst everyone else enjoys Options activities. The length of time that a child is in Reflection is proportionate to the behaviour issue that arose.

How do you deal with undesirable behaviours?

We challenge all examples of unacceptable / undesirable behaviours and link this to the school's Behaviour policy as described above. We also monitor every child's progress in school using our ABC's (A=Attendance at lessons, B=Behaving appropriately and C=Commitment to learning). We have a raffle each week for each of these areas and pupil can earn cash prizes for each of these areas.

Do you have an exclusion policy?

Yes, as a Secondary school with older pupils, we do use suspension / exclusion when required for serious breaches of the school's behaviour policy (including assault, criminal damage or a serious bullying situation). All sanctions issued at school are proportionate and reasonable, whilst at the same time balancing the need to understand individual needs and circumstance, as well as preparing our pupils for the realities of life post-16. We are very experienced in supporting a range of behavioural needs in a school setting and we do tolerate more than most. However, we do reserve the right to terminate a placement for any child if we conclude that, following the use of all of the resources, strategies and interventions at our disposal, we are unable to meet that child's needs. This generally only applies to a very small number of pupils, but placement breakdown does happen in extreme cases. In such circumstances, the child would be referred back to the SEN Placements Panel for removal from our school roll and for consideration of another educational setting.

Do you use restraint?

Yes. All staff are trained in the use of Safe Handling and Physical Intervention. Please refer to the policies section on the school website where you will see our Safe Handling Policy and all other school policies.

How many children are there in each class? How many staff - Teachers, TA's?

We have 7 classes in all and approximately 10 pupils in each class. Each class has a 'Following TA' who shadows the whole group from lesson to lesson, supporting children to get to every lesson on time. 5 of those classes are our Main School classes (Years 7,8,9,10+11) 2 of those classes are for our Nurture Base children. These children often have needs that require more of a 'Primary' curriculum approach, with all lessons being taught in the same class group. One Nurture Base is KS3 (Y7, 8+9) and the other is KS4(Y10+11).

What percentage of the pupils you admit have Moderate Learning Disabilities?

We do have a proportion of children with MLD, but their needs are predominantly met in our Nurture groups. In our main school classes, we do have a range of ability, but the curriculum is designed to allow access for qualifications for the more able learners. This includes GCSE (Level 2) qualifications in Maths, English and ICT, with BTEC qualifications offered in PE and Business Studies. We also offer a number of Functional Skills (Level 1) qualifications including English, Maths and Science, as well as opportunities to experience Vocational Learning activities, without qualifications attached to this learning. Certificates are awarded in school for completion of unit of work in these vocational areas.

What percentage of your current year 7 cohort access the national curriculum?

All of our children access a broad and balanced curriculum, within which the Ofsted Framework encourages us to develop a curriculum that is appropriate to the needs of all learners. That said, we do not offer up to 8 GCSE's as would be the case in a mainstream school setting because that would not be appropriate to the needs of our learners.

In particular, how many in the previous year 11 achieved at least 5 GCSE's graded 4 and above?

This is a very good question, but should be seen within the context of your child's own needs, start point and predicted flight path. We do have a number of very able 'high functioning' pupils whose needs prevent them from achieving what would reasonably be expected from a child in a mainstream setting that does not have any identified Neurodevelopmental conditions or other needs. So our % of children achieving 5 Grade 4's or above at GCSE level will always inevitably be very lower than that of children in a mainstream environment. This can also change dramatically with such small cohorts year on year. That said, we do have children that leave school with up to 5 Level 2 qualifications (GCSE or equivalent) with good grades (Grades 4 or above / equivalent in BTEC qualifications)

If admitted, how would you ensure that my child has access to the National Curriculum and also appropriate differentiation?

All work covered on our school curriculum is differentiated to the ability level of each learner, within the confines of what is reasonably pragmatic given the needs that our children can present with.

Do you have pupils that have ADHD?

Yes, we do. We have met the needs of children with ADHD for many years. We find that if a child has a diagnosis of ADHD and follows an appropriate medication regime, they are better placed to concentrate in class, manage impulsive behaviours and better regulate their emotions. We do understand that parents often don't want their child's personality to be affected by taking medication, or might be concerned about the possible side effects (such as headaches, weight loss etc') but we do also recognise that at in their later years with us, pupils will need to sit up to 2-hour GCSE papers in silence. This is incredibly challenging for a young person with ADHD without the support gained from using prescribed medication for their diagnosed condition. As an extra level of reassurance, Alder Hey hospital run a monthly ADHD clinic in school to enable the use of medication to be very closely monitored.

Do you meet the needs of children with ASD?

Yes, we do. The majority of the pupils that attend Woolton High School have a diagnosis of ASD, or are on the ASD Pathway for assessment. We work in an ASD friendly manner and have received a great deal of support and training over the years regarding how to support the needs of children on the spectrum.

Do you offer a variety of practical based GCSE's e.g. Design and Technology, IT, etc.?

We do not offer D&T as a qualification subject, but we do offer lots of Vocational experiences. We are only a small special school (similar in size to Hope School and Ernest Cookson School) and therefore only have a very small teaching staff team of 9 teachers in all. The teachers and TA's at school provide access to Vocational Learning in a range of different Vocational areas.

What visual strategies do you use in school?

We use lots of visual strategies in school, from visual timetables to large, state of the art interactive screens.