Ethos and Culture Guide

Henry David Learning

Woodland Rise School



1. Our Core Purpose

Woodland Rise exists to provide transformative education for children and young people with SEND through nature-based learning, craftsmanship, therapeutic developmental pathways and calm, structured classroom learning that builds access to the formal curriculum.

Our purpose is to help every pupil:

- Reengage with learning through meaningful, hands-on experiences
- Rebuild confidence, self-belief and emotional stability
- Reconnect with nature, community and themselves
- Reimagine their future through purposeful skill development
- Develop the focus, regulation and readiness needed to participate successfully in classroom-based literacy, numeracy and wider curriculum learning

We believe that growth happens through relationships, rhythm and real work. Our school culture is built on the idea that children thrive when they feel safe, seen and valued. Our way of learning is rooted in the living world. It's supported by classroom teaching that provides clarity, structure, and academic progression.

We support pupils to move from avoidance or dependence towards independence and self-directed action. Developing agency, responsibility and the belief that their actions matter.

Our Mission is to meet each child where they are and walk with them as they rise.

Vision: **RISE** **R**espect, **I**ndependence, **S**trive, **E**quity

Respect: valuing themselves, others and the environment

Independence: Agency, self-regulation, autonomy

Strive: Never give up, try again, resilience, ok to fail

Equity: remove barriers, be fair, enabling equality, level playing flield

---

2. Philosophical Foundations

Our ethos draws from Waldorf-inspired principles and practice, adapted for SEND:

- Rhythm and routine create security and predictability
- Beauty in the environment supports calmness and attention
- Hands-on learning builds cognition through movement
- Story, craft, and nature nurture imagination and emotional regulation
- The whole child — head, heart, and hands — is always considered
- Formal learning is introduced when the child is developmentally ready, ensuring the learning is achievable, meaningful and safe
- Craftsmanship as a therapeutic and developmental tool
- Land-based learning to build resilience, focus and self-worth
- Real tasks with real outcomes

Woodland Rise uses these approaches to build a trauma-informed, nature-centred curriculum that includes structured indoor learning spaces, where pupils practise core academic skills with clarity and support.

---

3. Our Cultural Pillars

3.1 Relationship First Practice

Warmth, respect, attunement and clear boundaries underpin every interaction. Staff model emotional regulation, curiosity and kindness. Pupils learn that adults are predictable, safe and consistent.

3.2 Nature as Teacher

Our woodland, gardens, outdoor classrooms and potential animals are core pedagogical tools. They provide regulation, engagement and meaningful responsibility.

Nature teaches patience, responsibility, and interconnectedness.

3.3 Craft, Skill & Purpose

Craft is a developmental pathway into formal learning. Through woodwork, gardening, textiles and cooking, pupils build executive functioning, resilience and pride.

Craft and nature-based learning help pupils:

- Regulate their nervous systems
- Develop sustained attention
- Build confidence through real outcomes
- Experience success before tackling more abstract classroom tasks

These experiences prepare pupils for the cognitive and emotional demands of formal learning.

3.4 Calm, Order & Beauty

Indoor and outdoor environments are intentionally designed with natural materials, soft colours, clear organisation and minimal visual noise. This supports sensory regulation and readiness for learning.

3.5 Therapeutic Learning Culture

Trauma-informed practice, co-regulation, somatic awareness, restorative approaches, gentle discipline, and predictable rhythms underpin our culture.

Some pupils need to revisit and reinforce earlier developmental stages before formal learning can take root.

---

4. The Woodland Rise Way

4.1 How We Teach

Teaching and Learning at Woodland Rise blends:

- Structured indoor classroom and outdoor learning
- Nature-based and craft-based developmental pathways
- Therapeutic relational practice
- Individualised formal learning

Indoor classrooms provide:

- Calm, ordered spaces for literacy, numeracy and wider curriculum subjects
- Predictable routines that reduce anxiety
- Opportunities for focused attention and progression

4.2 How We Support Behaviour

Behaviour is understood as communication. We respond with curiosity, calmness, clear expectations, consistent boundaries and repair.

4.3 How We Build Community

Shared meals, collective tasks, seasonal festivals, celebration of craft and achievement build belonging and pride.

---

5. Curriculum Ethos

Our curriculum is:

- Nature-based
- Craft-rich
- Therapeutic
- Holistic
- Individualised
- Vocationally meaningful
- Age/developmentally appropriate

Curriculum Strands

- Nature and Land-Based Learning
- Craft and Practical Skills
- Core Literacy and Numeracy
- Movement and Physical Development
- Social, emotional, moral, cultural and spiritual Learning
- Life Skills and Independence
- Creative Arts and Storytelling

All subject areas are covered via the strands above. Including: Geography, history, science, PSHE (Personal, social, health and Economic), RSHE (Relationship, Sex and Health education)

Indoor classroom learning provides:

- Explicit teaching of reading, writing and maths
- Opportunities for practising new skills in a calm, predictable environment
- Access to formal curriculum content
- A structured pathway into academic achievement

Craft and nature-based learning provide:

- Regulation
- Engagement

- Motivation
- Cognitive readiness
- Real-world application

Together, they form a balanced, SEND appropriate pathway for our pupils

---

6. Staff Culture & Expectations

Staff are expected to be warm, calm, relational, reflective, practical and comfortable outdoors. They are also expected to be skilled practitioners who can deliver structured learning, following the Woodland Rise Way, so that it is accessible, gentle and attuned to SEND needs.

Staff always:

- follow our polices and approaches
- use flexible teaching styles
- use a low demand approach
- ensure environments are conducive to learning

Staff wellbeing is essential. Adults model steadiness, balance, care for themselves and the environment. They know they are the pupils role models.

---

7. The Environment

Our site includes:

- Woodland learning areas
- Outdoor classrooms
- Gardens and polytunnels
- Potential areas for animals
- Craft spaces
- Quiet sensory spaces
- Indoor classrooms designed for calm, structured learning
- An amphitheatre (Communal space)
- Seasonal celebration areas (pizza oven/fire area)

Indoor spaces are as important as outdoor ones: they provide the stability, clarity and focus required for formal learning.

---

8. Our Promise to Pupils

Every pupil will:

- Be known deeply
- Be treated with dignity
- Grow at their own pace
- Experience success
- Learn through nature, craft, relationship and classroom teaching
- Build a sense of belonging
- Discover their strengths and identity

We meet each child where they are and walk with them as they rise.

---

9. Our Promise to Families/Carers

We commit to clear communication, genuine partnership, respect for family/carers expertise, transparency and a welcoming, non-judgemental culture.

Families/Carers are part of our community.

---

10. Our Long-Term Vision

Woodland Rise will grow into a nationally recognised centre for:

- Nature-based SEND education
- Craft-led therapeutic practice
- Land-based vocational pathways
- Waldorf-inspired developmental learning
- Trauma-informed relational culture
- Integrated formal and practical learning pathways that prepare pupils for adulthood

Our long-term aim is to offer a transformative educational experience rooted in nature, craft, human connection resulting in lifelong learners.