



**Woodend Farm school**  
Kindness comes in many forms

### **Juniper pathway curriculum intent.**

At Woodend Farm School, our aim is to provide all our pupils with a broad, rich, sensory curriculum that embeds essential skills and knowledge, whilst broadening our pupil's window of social and emotional tolerance, by adapting to the needs of the individual. Our demand avoidance pupils suffer from anxiety which makes the traditional learning model ineffective for them. Demand avoidance is characterized by a "can't not won't" approach, meaning that these pupils are unable to comply with demands due to overwhelming anxiety, rather than simply refusing to do so. This can have a profound impact on their well-being, leading to increased stress and feelings of inadequacy.

The Juniper curriculum is designed to create a nurturing atmosphere where every student feels safe, valued, and understood. Through personalised learning plans, sensory activities, and flexible teaching methods, we aim to build self-awareness, self-esteem, and emotional resilience. By celebrating achievements and providing consistent support alongside the Thrive approach, we help students develop the confidence and skills necessary to thrive both academically and personally.

In the Juniper Pathway, each stage is designed with three distinct levels to support and guide students through their learning journey; the stages are informal, semi-formal and formal. The first level, "Entering" (the pathway) focuses on helping students acclimate with the expectations of learning in the stage as well as new concepts and skills. At this level, students are introduced to foundational skills and given the support they need to build confidence and understanding. The second level, "Engaging," encourages students to actively participate and deepen their learning. Here, students apply their knowledge through hands-on activities and critical thinking exercises, fostering a more profound engagement with the curriculum. The third level, "Approaching," (the next stage) prepares students for the transition to the new stage. This level emphasises mastery of current skills and knowledge, encouraging students to reflect on their progress. By structuring each stage with these three levels, the Juniper Pathway ensures a comprehensive and supportive learning experience that promotes progress through continuous growth and development.

### **Implementation and teaching styles.**



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## Informal

The informal stage is play-based, providing a nurturing and engaging environment for learning. Learning through play is a powerful approach, especially for demand avoidant pupils. Play-based learning creates a low-pressure environment where children can explore, experiment, and engage with the world around them in a way that feels safe and enjoyable. For pupils with demand avoidance, this method reduces anxiety by removing the perception of demands and expectations. It allows them to develop essential skills such as problem-solving, communication, and social interaction at their own pace. Additionally, play fosters creativity and imagination, helping children to build confidence and resilience. By integrating play into the curriculum, we can support the emotional and social development of demand avoidant pupils, making learning a positive and rewarding experience.

## Entering Semi-Formal

In the "Entering Semi-Formal" stage, learning is one-to-one and adult-led, structured as short bursts with lots of breaks. Each half term revolves around a topic chosen by the child, integrating cross-curricular, skills-based learning with a focus on maths and English. This approach fosters a love for learning, builds essential academic skills, and manages sensory overload, ensuring each child progresses at their own pace in a supportive environment.

## Approaching formal

In the "Approaching Formal" stage, teaching emphasises cooperative activities with peers and small group work. Students engage in longer adult-led sessions that build on their foundational skills and encourage deeper understanding. This approach fosters collaboration, communication, and social interaction, helping students to develop teamwork and leadership abilities. By working together on projects and tasks, students learn to share ideas, solve problems collectively, and support each other's learning. The extended sessions allow for more comprehensive exploration of topics, ensuring that students are well-prepared for more formal learning environments.

## Formal

In the "Formal Learning" stage, pupils join other classes for certain lessons to engage with the school-wide curriculum, fostering a sense of community and broadening their learning experiences. Additionally, they participate in group work with peers, which enhances collaboration and social skills. This approach helps build confidence as students interact with a wider range of classmates and adapt to different teaching styles. By balancing individual and group activities, pupils develop the resilience and readiness needed to engage in the next stage of their education. This comprehensive learning environment ensures that students are well-prepared for future academic challenges and opportunities.

## Assessment



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We assess the informal curriculum through observation of skills in a play-based setting. By watching children as they engage in play, we can gain valuable insights into their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Interaction during play allows us to see how children communicate, solve problems, and collaborate with their peers. This method of assessment is non-intrusive and helps create a relaxed environment where children can naturally demonstrate their abilities and skills. Observations are documented and added to Evidence for Learning, ensuring that each child's progress is tracked and supported effectively.

The semi-formal stage is a blend of teacher assessments and observations, aimed at providing a comprehensive understanding of a student's development. Practitioners use assessment for learning and observations to assess pupils and gauge student progress. Observations play a crucial role, allowing practitioners to capture real-time insights into student learning, engagement, and learning styles. Learning is documented and added to Evidence for Learning, ensuring that each child's progress is tracked and supported effectively. Through these assessments, we can identify and evaluate a range of skills, ensuring that each child's development is supported in a holistic and engaging manner.

The approaching formal stage is characterised by a shift towards more structured assessments, with a greater emphasis on practitioner and teacher assessments. Practitioners use assessment for learning to evaluate pupils and gauge their development. While observations still play a role, the focus is increasingly on systematically documenting learning outcomes. Evidence for Learning enables practitioners to record assessments and monitor each child's progress effectively. Through these assessments, we can identify and evaluate a range of skills and determine their next steps for learning, ensuring that each child's development is supported in a holistic and engaging manner.

The formal pathway includes more structured assessments, in line with the assessment policy used by the other pathways. Practitioners use assessment for learning to evaluate pupils and gauge their development. While observations still play a role, the focus is increasingly on systematically documenting learning outcomes. Evidence for Learning enables practitioners to record assessments and monitor each child's progress effectively. These assessments help identify and evaluate a range of skills, as well as determine the next steps for each child's learning, ensuring their development is supported in a holistic and engaging manner while preparing students for their next stage of learning.

## Impact

The Juniper Pathway has been instrumental in reducing pupil anxiety by creating a flexible learning environment that prioritises student well-being. By offering a skills-based curriculum that grants pupils autonomy over their learning, the pathway empowers students to take control of their educational



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journey. This autonomy fosters a sense of ownership and confidence, allowing students to engage more deeply with their topics. The flexibility of the Juniper Pathway ensures that learning is tailored to individual needs, promoting steady progress and positive outcomes. As a result, students not only achieve academic success but also develop essential life skills in a supportive and personalised setting.



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