

Woodlands School Recruitment Information Pack



Meal Time Assistant (MTA)

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Information about the school

Woodlands School is an inspiring place to work.

At present there are 99 pupils on roll, aged 2 to 19. These young people have a range of complex needs, both physical and with their learning.

In September 2025 we opened a 10 place Assessment Nursery for children ages 2-4 years old.

Over the years we have realised that it takes versatile people to support our pupils, as no two days are ever the same. Our specially developed curriculums adapt to the changing needs of our young people and this, along with their health and care needs, provides the focus of the day.

Our motto is that we **‘create empowered lives’** and we aim to do this for everyone who meets us. We strongly believe that education, coupled with high quality support, leads to people being able to take control of their own lives and destinies. To this end, we are constantly developing to meet the needs of each young person by training our staff as specialists, using research led practice and innovation whilst also offering an exciting, enjoyable learning experience.

In 2019 we celebrated our centenary. Our longevity coupled with a modern, state of the art environment makes us a truly unique place.

To find out more about Woodlands, including where to find us, please visit our website at www.woodlands.plymouth.sch.uk

The Role – Meal Time Assistant (MTA)

As a Meal Time Assistant, you'll play an essential role during the lunchtime period by:

- Supporting pupils with eating and drinking needs (full training provided)
- Encouraging independence, confidence, and positive behaviour
- Communicating using a variety of approaches, such as visuals, simple sign language, or communication aids (we'll teach you!)
- Helping to create a calm, nurturing and inclusive lunchtime experience
- Working alongside a friendly, supportive team who will welcome you from day one

Full training is provided—including communication strategies, manual handling, feeding support, and safeguarding—to help you feel confident and supported in your role.

Job Description – Meal Time Assistant (MTA)

Reports to:

Health, Safety & Care Manager, School Business Manager, Head Teacher

Location:

Woodlands School – purpose-built environment supporting pupils with complex physical and learning needs

Job Purpose:

To support pupils with a range of physical, communication, and learning needs during lunchtime, ensuring their safety, well-being, comfort, and inclusion. The role involves assisting with personal care, feeding, supervision, and promoting positive behaviour in dining and outdoor environments.

Key Responsibilities:

Pupil Support

- Assist pupils with eating and drinking, using specialist equipment and supporting individuals on a 1-to-1 basis where needed (training provided).
- Encourage positive eating habits, independence, and appropriate table manners.
- Use effective communication strategies such as sign language or communication aids (training provided).
- Carry out safe manual handling, including transferring pupils into/out of chairs, walkers, standing frames, or Acheeva beds.
- Provide personal care during lunchbreak when required.

Health, Safety & Behaviour

- Ensure the safety, welfare, and appropriate conduct of pupils in line with school policies and procedures.
- Respond calmly and positively to challenging behaviour.
- Promote safeguarding and report concerns promptly following school guidelines.

Supervision

- Supervise pupils in the dining hall, playground, and other lunchtime locations.
- Circulate to monitor pupil behaviour and ensure all pupils are supported and included.
- Ensure playground equipment is used safely and stored correctly.

Environment & Hygiene

- Keep the dining area clean, tidy, and hygienic, including wiping tables between sittings and managing spillages.
- Move dining furniture where required in line with manual-handling guidance.

Team Contribution

- Demonstrate duties to new staff members as required.
- Work collaboratively with teaching and support staff.
- Undertake any other duties appropriate to the grade of the post.

Person Specification

Experience & Knowledge

- Understanding of children's needs, particularly those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND).
- Awareness of safeguarding and child protection responsibilities.
- Basic knowledge of hygiene, health, and safety in a school or care setting.

Skills & Abilities

- Ability to support pupils during mealtimes, including feeding assistance where required.
- Good communication skills to interact effectively with children, staff, and parents.
- Ability to work as part of a team and follow instructions from teaching/support staff.
- Patience, empathy, and sensitivity to individual needs.
- Ability to manage challenging behaviour calmly and positively.

Personal Qualities

- Caring, approachable, and supportive attitude.
- Reliable, punctual, and flexible in approach.
- Respectful of confidentiality and professional boundaries.
- Commitment to promoting inclusion and independence for pupils.

Demands:

- Prolonged periods of standing and walking throughout lunchtime.
- Regular lifting and moving of pupils and dining room furniture (training provided).
- Exposure to high noise levels, inclement weather, and bodily fluids.
- Occasional emotional stress due to safeguarding or welfare concerns.
- Need for sustained alertness to ensure pupil safety in dining and playground areas.

Working Conditions:

- Work takes place in dining halls, bathrooms, classrooms, outdoor areas, and lunch clubs.
- Frequent contact with pupils who may present challenging behaviour.

Support for the School:

- Comply with policies relating to safeguarding, health & safety, behaviour, and confidentiality.
- Contribute to the overall ethos and aims of the school.
- Engage with training and development as required.

Woodlands School – Working Well

At Woodlands we believe in supporting our staff to do a good job.

We offer comprehensive training in specialist areas as well as more general topics. This training is delivered by external agencies as well as our own staff. We have five training days per year, including two medical days Woodlands is dedicated to staff learning and development.

All staff at Woodlands School follow a Code of Conduct developed from our Staff and Governors' Behaviour Policy. It highlights the standards of behaviour we expect from everyone to ensure that we are excellent role models for the young people at Woodlands.

In addition to the Code of Conduct, our Competencies Framework gives guidance on how staff should carry out the tasks that they are asked to do. Support staff have a Performance and Appraisal meeting at the end of each term to ensure they are working effectively, whilst feeling challenged and supported.

Our Performance and Appraisal Management system allows us to achieve a 360-degree process of review, support, training and development.



Woodlands School – Competencies precis

INFORMED	1. Seeing the Big Picture
	Having an in-depth understanding and knowledge of how your role fits with, and supports the school's objectives, the wider needs of our young people and our stakeholders. Focussing your contribution on the activities which will meet Woodlands goals and deliver the greatest value.
	2. Changing and Improving
	Taking the initiative, being innovative and seeking out opportunities. Learning from what has worked, as well as what has not, being open to change and improvement, and working in "smarter", more focussed ways.
PROFESSIONAL	3. Making Effective Decisions
	Using sound judgement, evidence and knowledge to arrive at accurate, expert and professional decisions and advice. Being careful and using this knowledge to make the right choices to support pupils and colleagues.
	4. Communicating
	Showing pride and passion for Woodlands, communicating with clarity, integrity and enthusiasm. Supporting the principles of fairness of opportunity for all; engaging with people in a straightforward, truthful, and candid way.
AWARE	5. Collaborating and Partnering
	Being a team player. Working collaboratively, sharing information appropriately and building supportive, trusting and professional relationships with pupils, colleagues and a wide range of people within and outside the school.
	6. Continuing to Learn
	Having a strong focus on continuous learning for oneself, others and the school. Being open to learning, and keeping one's own knowledge and skillset current and evolving.
	7. Delivering Value for Money
	The efficient, effective and economic use of taxpayers' money in delivering a service. Being aware and mindful to ensure good value for money is achieved across the school.
	8. Providing a Quality Service
	Valuing and modelling professional excellence and expertise to deliver the school's objectives whilst taking account of the diverse needs of the pupils, colleagues and wider stakeholders. Planning, organising and managing time and activities to deliver a high-quality service to all.
	9. Delivering at Pace
	Focusing on delivering timely performance with energy and taking responsibility and accountability for a quality service. Working to agreed goals and objectives and dealing with challenges in a responsive and constructive way.

Guidance for Applicants

If, after reading all the background information, you think you'd like to join the Woodlands team, then we suggest you carefully follow the guidance below.

All applicants must complete the relevant application form. We do not accept CV's or letters of application.

An application form means we treat everyone fairly and equally.

Make sure you complete all the necessary parts of the application form and give us as much relevant information as you can, as this is what we use to shortlist applicants for interview.

- Read the instructions on the application form carefully before completing it.
- Read the Job Description and Person Specification. If you don't meet the essential criteria for the post, then it is highly unlikely you will be shortlisted.
- Use the Person Specification as your guide. We would suggest you write your supporting statement in the same order as the Person Specification. Tell us about the knowledge, skills and experience you have that is relevant. Give lots of examples from work and outside if it's appropriate.
- Make sure we can read your application if you are handwriting it.
- Use extra sheets if you have lots to tell us, just attach them to your application.
- Remember, if you conceal or misrepresent relevant information at any stage you will be disqualified from appointment or, if appointed, may be dismissed without notice.
- If you are shortlisted for interview you will need to bring the relevant documents with you, full details of what is required can be found on the front of the application form.
- Come and visit the school, a role here may not be for you and you'll only find that out by seeing for yourself.

Check the application closing time and date, late applications will not be considered.
It is your responsibility to ensure it reaches us on time.

Headteacher: Mrs Andrea Hemmens M.Ed

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