

Birch Wood Area Special School  
**The Hummingbirds**  
 Autumn 2023  
 Curriculum Newsletter



Dear Parents and Carers,

Welcome to the autumn term in The Hummingbirds Class! We hope you have all enjoyed the summer break and that you are just as excited as us to be back at Birch Wood for a new term.

As we move into KS2 as part of our learning journey, we will be following a combination of the Engagement and Independence pathways. The Engagement pathway is an extremely pupil centred and individualised curriculum focusing on five key areas, incorporating essential therapies. The five key areas of the Engagement Curriculum are “My Communication”, “My Thinking”, “My Movement”, “Myself” and “My Enrichment”. The Independence Curriculum offers a similar level of personalisation but includes more discrete subject specific teaching in areas such as literacy, maths and science.

We will continue to use Kinteract as our primary method of observations of your child’s progress as they work towards their EHCP outcomes and other curriculum opportunities.

Our themes this term will be:

	<b>During these themes’ pupils will;</b>
<b>Autumn Term 1</b>	<p><b>Harvest for the World (Farm)</b></p> <p>We will be getting muddy with our new topic Harvest for the World! We will be immersing ourselves in messy, sensory tuff trays, Growing and digging our own harvest vegetables and engaging with farming sensory stories such as ‘A Squash and a Squeeze’ by Julia Donaldson. We will also be discovering the story ‘What the Ladybird Heard’ by Julia Donaldson and making cross-curricular links in our learning with Literacy.</p>
<b>Autumn Term 2</b>	<p><b>The Show Must Go On!</b></p> <p>During the second Autumn term we will be ready to sparkle and shine with our vibrant topic ‘The Show Must Go on!’ We will be preparing for our Christmas performance. This topic will give opportunities for children to engage imaginatively with different sensory spaces and environments. Where possible we will use the immersive room and a range of sensory and tactile resource in class to create these environments.</p>



**Communication:** At every opportunity we encourage our students to communicate through their preferred means, which could include pictures, communication devices, spoken sounds and words and Makaton. We use a 'Total Communication' approach, which means that all communication attempts are valued and recognised. Students are given opportunities to make choices and express preferences frequently. All students will take part in small group or individual communication sessions as indicated in their health care plans. We encourage students to partake in our 'good morning' and 'good afternoon' sessions where we model and encourage students to communicate with both staff and peers. We also encourage communication at snack time, where the students are encouraged to use their snack boards to choose their snack.

**Reading and Phonics:** All students engage with phonics at the appropriate phase. Activities include listening to sounds, making sounds, differentiating sounds, learning phase one letter sounds and some students are beginning to blend and segment, whilst reading books with specific sounds linked to their phase. When ready students will begin to read and write CVC (consonant, vowel, consonant) words with sounds learnt previously. Reading is incorporated in to lots of sessions including, cooking, sensory story and theme through the use of symbols and objects to support pupils to read their environment as well as words. This term our theme-based book include; What the Ladybird Heard, A Squash and a Squeeze.

**Literacy:** This term in Literacy we will be looking at the story 'what the ladybird heard' by Julia Donaldson and linking this to our topic. We will be immersing ourselves into the fictional story, exploring what a farm is and exploring the main characters of the story.

#### My Thinking - Maths and Science

**Number:** We will be looking at counting, reading and writing number using tactile, immersive tools such as rhymes and songs. We will also be looking at addition and subtraction of numbers.  
**Science:** We will focus on animals and plants in our local environment, particularly focussing on farm animals and the plants that are grown in harvest season and how we can grow our own plants.

#### My Movement - PE

**Daily Provision:** By creating games and providing opportunities for play both indoors and outdoors, we support students to develop their core strength, stability, balance, spatial awareness, co-ordination and agility.  
**PE:** The students have a weekly PE slot with their PE teacher once a week where they will focus on their personal targets.  
**Swimming:** All student have the opportunities to have therapeutic hydrotherapy sessions in the Hydrotherapy pool here at school or they will have swimming lessons at Water field Leisure Centre in Melton Mowbray where students work towards their Otter swimming badges and this is something we are hoping to start as soon as possible.

#### Myself -RSE

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**Daily Provision:** We focus on tools for regulation every day in Hummingbird's. We facilitate this through daily interactions and through building positive relationships, using co-regulation strategies that suit pupil's needs, providing sensory diets for pupils based on their initial sensory assessment and encouraging pupils to engage with sensory or chosen activities that help them to self-regulate. We encourage emotional literacy through emotion cards and Chirpy Board. We encourage the students to engage in Tac-Pac after lunch to regulate and prepare themselves for learning.

**RSE:** Some students will take part in small group or paired activities looking at the areas of Self Awareness. We will identify the things that make us special, what we are good at and celebrate ourselves and others.

#### **My Enrichment**

Throughout the curriculum, we want to promote resilience, kindness and creativity. This could be through stories and themes, assembly, engagement with community groups as well as taking part in larger fundraising and charity events. Pupils develop a sense of belonging through visits and events within the wider school as well as community trips and visits linked to themes or for weekly swimming. Where possible, we arrange for community members to visit school and talk to us about theme related topics. We use arts to encourage self - expression and appreciation of the world around us.

**Art and Design:** In Art we will exploring simple mark making with a variety of materials and using a variety of textured, sized and coloured paper. We will be drawing from observation, imagination and experience, taking inspiration from famous artists such as Van Gough and Da Vinci.

#### **Things you could do at home**

**My Communication:** Give choices at every opportunity to encourage communication, particularly during a motivating activity such as snack time or leisure activities.

**Number:** Model counting at home, sing counting songs (Jack Haartman on Youtube is a fantastic one!) encourage the children to point whilst your counting how much change is in your purse or how many socks you have to hang on the washing line. Count at every opportunity!

**Reading:** Display behaviours for reading, model turning the page, pointing to the words, describing the pictures and encourage your children to do it too. Spread a love of reading and reading for pleasure in your home.

If you are unsure about anything, please email me at [wright@birchwoodschool.co.uk](mailto:wright@birchwoodschool.co.uk)  
I will happily answer any question that you may have, so please do not hesitate to contact me.

I am overjoyed to be joining the Hummingbirds class and both I and the team are very much looking forward to working with you this term. I also look forward to seeing all the amazing progress your children will make in their learning.

Kind regards,  
Holly Wright (Class Teacher)