



Dear parents and carers,

Welcome back! We hope you all had a wonderful Summer break and are looking forward to the new school year. We are excited to share with you the topics and the therapies your child will be accessing in Merlins this Autumn term. We will continue to use Kinteract as our method of recording observations of your child as they work towards their learning intentions. If you are having any difficulties accessing Kinteract, please let us know and we will pass this onto our IT support. Our topics this term will be:

<p>Autumn term 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">‘Harvest for the World’</p> <p>We will start this half term with ‘Harvest for the World’ We will explore the theme taking a multi-sensory approach to all our sessions. Our sensory story will take us on a farmyard adventure as we follow ‘Farmer Duck’! We will be experiencing the work on a farm; milking the cows and mucking out the stables through multi-sensory exploration! Let’s hope we can help the lazy farmer see the error of his ways! Write dance this half term will involve mark making in various paints including scented paint mixed with bubbles, crushed shreddies, and feathers.</p> <p>During our sensory cooking sessions, we will be exploring fruits and vegetables and operating a latch switch to mix smoothies, juices and soups, which we can taste or smell. All with a farm theme! We will be further developing our cause and effect skills during our ICT session. Some pupils will work on their ‘targeting’ skills, activating games and music on the interactive whiteboard’s touchscreen as well as class iPads. Other pupils will use big mack control switches to engage with an adult in 1:1 play, e.g. requesting silly hats, sharing in favourite songs and shared toys like bubbles or balloons. We will also be using control switches to operate devices such as bubble machines and foot spas, using a latch switch box and where appropriate students will be using Eye Gaze technology to make changes to activate musical and visual rewards on the screen. During our story and dance massage sessions, we will explore different poems, rhymes and stories and various genres of music with a harvest and farm theme, whilst developing our body awareness and proprioception. Our RSE theme this term is ‘Friends and Family’ which we will explore through a sensory story about friends and a story massage about different families.</p> <p>During this topic we hope to make a visit to a local farm. More information about this will follow soon!</p>
<p>Autumn term 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">‘The Show Must Go On!’</p> <p>Our ‘The Show Must Go On!’ topic will take us on a journey through musical theatre with a little bit of panto – oh yes it will! Our multi-sensory story, will have us singing and dancing, as we journey through a variety of musical shows together. Our Write Dance will incorporate a variety of music as we use our hands and feet to make marks using textured and scented paint. Our Dance massage sessions will focus on show and theatre related songs and music, and our Story Massages will include songs, poems and stories based on some of our favourite musical shows. During these sessions all pupils are invited to communicate preference for favourite songs, poems and stories.</p> <p>Our sensory cooking sessions will continue to focus on the exploration of different foods; experiencing a variety of texture, taste and smell. Using latch switches to mix and blend our foods will continue developing our understanding of cause and effect. We will also continue to work on our ICT targets, using themed cause and effect games as well as switch toys, touch screen activities and Eye Gaze technology where appropriate. Our RSE theme this term is ‘How do you feel today?’ We will explore different feelings through a multi-sensory approach.</p> <p>Of course, towards the end of this term there will be some time dedicated to working towards our Christmas performance, which will immerse us all in more musical fun!</p>

Our class will continue to follow the Engagement Pathway. This is an extremely pupil centred and individualised curriculum focusing on five key areas, incorporating essential therapies. Much of our curriculum is delivered through sensory exploration. The five key areas of the Engagement Curriculum are “My Communication”, “My Thinking”, “My Movement”, “Myself” and “My Enrichment”. See the table below for more details on each area.

My Communication
This area of the curriculum focuses on developing the ability of our pupils to be able to communicate, interact and to make their needs known. Whilst everything we do on a daily basis feeds into this, there are specific therapies and sessions which help us to develop these key communication skills. Our classroom is a total communication environment where we use Makaton signing, body signing, personalised objects or reference, communication switches and photos/symbols to help make choices. We carry out communication sessions on a daily basis such as intensive interaction, story massage, sensory stories, sensory drama, Tac-Pac, Dance Massage, Write Dance and communication games.
My Thinking
This area of the curriculum focuses on developing our pupils’ attention and anticipation skills and awareness of cause and effect in their environment. It also promotes problem solving skills and making choices. Daily sessions within class include Sensology (Hello Senses), Eye Gaze technology, sensory cooking, resonance board work, switch toy work, latch switch control sessions, cause and effect games on the interactive whiteboard and in our immersive room.
My Movement
<p>Movement is a huge part of the curriculum in Merlins class. On a daily basis we follow our pupil’s physiotherapy and positioning programmes, incorporating these into daily activities. Each child has a hydrotherapy programme and will access the hydro pool. We also look forward to the return of Rebound Therapy sessions for each child on our trampoline with a trained therapist. Every Thursday morning, we have a session in the hall, where we will work on pupil’s MATP (motor activity training programme) targets. These targets focus on developing pupil’s movement needs.</p> <p>We will continue our hard work on the MOVE programme this term. The MOVE Programme is an activity-based practice that enables young people with physical additional needs to gain independent movement. It uses the combined approach of education, therapy and family knowledge to teach the skills of sitting, standing, walking and transitioning between. The aim of the MOVE Programme is to offer these movement opportunities to young people with complex physical additional needs, opening up and transforming the world around them, creating an accessible, interesting and educational world full of opportunity and choice. Parents will be invited for assessment meetings for this where applicable. If you have any questions, please do contact me about this.</p>
Myself
<p>This area of the curriculum focuses on empowering our pupils, giving them every opportunity to make progress towards fulfilment and independence. We incorporate opportunities to work on independence skills throughout the school day in areas such as eating and drinking, dressing and personal care needs e.g. toileting and washing. This will look different for each pupil, but the goal is to give every opportunity to increase independence and to make choices about their daily routines. Part of this curriculum also focuses on pupils exploring their own preferences and having a greater awareness of their own bodies and the space around them.</p> <p>As a part of our RSE curriculum, we will be creating sensory sessions based on the themes of personal care, friendships and relationships and body awareness. We will also have an overarching focus on consent, ensuring that our young people understand that they always have a choice to opt in or out of touch-based activities. We also seek to give pupils greater independence with their personal care, from pupils choosing who carries out their personal care to independent toileting.</p>
My Enrichment
This area encompasses lots of different motivating therapies and activities, many carried out by therapist, which help our pupils to develop in all of the other areas of the Engagement curriculum. Some pupils will have access to Music Therapy, Pet Therapy and Horse Riding in accordance with their EHCPs. In class, we will have sensory cooking and art activities as well as music and movement sessions. Throughout the year we usually have educational trips linked to our class topics as well as visiting theatre groups such as Bamboozle Theatre Company, who specialise in PMLD sensory drama experiences.



Things you could do at home

My Communication: Intensive Interaction <https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/>, Tac-Pac sessions <https://youtu.be/ON9FS6B31yo>, story massage, dance massage and sensory stories (see Birch Wood YouTube channel).

My Thinking: Cause and effect activities <https://www.ianbean.co.uk/senict-members-resource-portal/>, iPad cause and effect videos and songs <https://www.priorywoods.middlesbrough.sch.uk/page/?title=Switch+%2F+Touch+Screen+Videos&pid=231>, switch toys and multi-sensory light up toys and sensory exploration.

Myself: Opportunities for practising our self-help skills, especially during meal times and personal care routines. Giving your child opportunities to consent to all touch based activities and using hand under hand, rather than hand under hand.

My Movement: Following physio and positional programmes, practising skills such as head control, supported and independent sitting, crawling, standing for table top activities etc.

My Enrichment: Exploring musical instruments, singing favourite songs, listening to different genres of music and noting preferences, exploring paints and other mark making or messy play stimulus together.

If you are unsure about anything in the Engagement Curriculum, please email us on omarah@birchwoodschool.co.uk or curranb@birchwoodschool.co.uk We are always happy to help you with any questions you may have about your child.

Many thanks and we all look forward to an exciting term!

Hannah O'Mara and Becky Curran

Merlins Class Teachers