



Dear parents and carers,

It is wonderful to welcome you all back to school after our summer break! We are excited to share with you the topics we will be exploring in Goldfinches this autumn term. In the first few weeks, we will be focusing on each young person's well-being and re-adjustment back into school. We have moved into a new classroom and will therefore be spending time familiarising ourselves with our classroom surroundings and new friends and staff within the Goldfinches class. We will take time to settle back into school life ensuring all young people are happy as we get back into a good routine. We will be liaising closely with you throughout the school year and are keen to discuss any areas of concern or any "Wow" moments you may have experiences or wish to share with us.

Our themes this term will be:

<p>Autumn Term 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Clean Up!</p> <p>Our theme this term is 'Clean Up!' During this theme we will explore aspects of cleaning and tidying up. Through our Sensory Story – Mr Messy, we will have opportunity to explore mess together and then also experience tidying and cleaning up, including opportunity for latch switch control. Our Write Dance, Dance Massage and Story Massages will also take on music and stories linked to our theme. For those young people following the Independence Curriculum, this theme is linked to our accredited AIM award scheme – working towards the AIM module in Cleaning at Entry Level 1. During our AIM specific sessions these young people will develop awareness and skills relating to cleaning up different areas, e.g. washing up, making beds, laundry, mopping and will demonstrate some understanding of which equipment and products to use to help them clean up.</p>
<p>Autumn Term 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dancing Queen!</p> <p>Our theme this term is 'Dancing Queen!' During this theme, we will explore different genres of dance and music. Throughout our Sensory Stories, Write Dance, Dance Massage and Story massages we will explore types of dance using music and stories linked to our theme. For those young people following the Independence Curriculum, this theme is linked to our accredited AIM award scheme – working towards the AIM module in Exploring Dance at Entry Level 1. During our AIM specific sessions these young people will develop awareness and skills relating to dance e.g. making moves similar to those demonstrated in Ballet, Flamenco, Tinikling, Irish and Highland to name but a few!</p>

Our class will be following a combination of the Engagement Curriculum and of the Independence Curriculum. We will be focusing on an extremely pupil centred and individualised curriculum focusing on five key areas. 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 teaching in areas such as literacy, maths and science. For our young people following the Independence pathway there is also opportunity to work towards the accredited AIM Award scheme. See the table below for more details on each area.

My Communication – Reading, Literacy

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 of reference, communication switches and photos/symbols to help make choices and develop intentional communication. 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.

For those young people following the Independence curriculum we will also be developing reading and writing skills taking a personalised approach, i.e. reading texts together, extracting meaning from what we have read, creating sentences through writing and colourful semantics (symbols).

My Thinking - Maths

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, switch toy work, latch switch control sessions, cause and effect games on the interactive whiteboard and in our immersive room. Where appropriate, our young people will be presented with personalised learning tasks relating to their own understanding of number, money, time, shape, space and measures to further their own understanding of problem solving within a learning for life context.

My Movement - PE

Movement is an important part of the curriculum in Goldfinches. On a daily basis we follow our young people's physiotherapy and positioning programmes, incorporating these into daily activities. Where appropriate, each young person has a hydrotherapy programme and will access the hydrotherapy pool. We also have weekly Rebound Therapy sessions for each pupil on our trampoline with a trained therapist. Every Monday afternoon we have a session in the hall with our PE lead Connie, where we will work on pupil's MATP (motor activity training programme) targets. These targets focus on developing pupil's movement needs. Young people following the independence curriculum will also work on physical skills such as co-ordination, agility or balance during a range of social games and activities by playing Boccia and other team games.

Myself - PSHE

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.

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.

My Enrichment

This area encompasses lots of different motivating therapies and activities, many carried out by therapists, which help our pupils to develop in all of the other areas of the Engagement and Independence curricula. 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 themes as well as visiting theatre groups such as Bamboozle Theatre Company, who specialise in sensory drama experiences.

Birch Wood Area Special school
Class Goldfinches
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Curriculum Newsletter



Things you could do at home

My Communication: When your child is feeling happy, secure and relaxed take the opportunity to engage in intense interaction. This means mirroring the vocalisations, movements, and actions of each other. These interactions don't need to last long but can be a fun way to feel fully connected with each other in the moment.

Myself: Share photos, videos and comments posted on Kinteract together with your child. This will give you a chance to celebrate success together whilst offering your child the chance to communicate their own feelings and memories of their experiences in school.

My Movement: Find opportunities to move together; this might be playing music and dancing together; swimming or exploring water play; rolling, throwing or kicking a ball.

If you are unsure about anything, please email us on curranb@birchwoodschoo.co.uk or humphreysh@birchwoodschoo.co.uk We are always happy to help you with any questions you may have about your child or any aspects of our school day.

Many thanks and we all look forward to an exciting term ahead.

Helen, Becky and the Goldfinches Team