



Dear parents and carers,

Welcome back! We hope you all had a wonderful Christmas break. We are excited to share with you the topics we will be exploring and the therapies your child will be accessing in Merlin's this Spring 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 have not yet managed to access Kinteract, please let me know and I will pass this onto our IT support.

Our topics this term will be:

<p>Spring term (first half)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“Watching the Garden Grow”</b></p> <p>We will start this half term by “Watching the Garden Grow”. We will experience all the different elements of gardens and the great outdoors; the different smells, textures and tastes through our multi-sensory sessions. We will immerse ourselves in the sensory story of “Jack and the Beanstalk”, watching how tiny magical beans can create a giant plant which grows up into the sky. Write dance this half term will involve lots of mark making in different scented paints such as lavender, mint and thyme.</p> <p>In our sensory cooking sessions, we will be operating a latch switch to mix smoothies, made from fruits and leafy vegetables we might find in our gardens or allotments. We will be further developing our cause and effect skills during our ICT session. During these sessions, pupils will work on their “targeting” skills, activating games and music on the interactive whiteboard’s touchscreen as well as class iPads. Pupils will also control switch toys and devices such as bubble machines and foot spas, using a latch switch box. During our dance massage sessions, we will explore different genres of music with the theme of ‘gardens’, whilst developing our body awareness and proprioception.</p> <p>We will finish our topic with a garden party...more details to follow soon!</p>
<p>Spring term (second half)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>“I Like to Move it!”</b></p> <p>Our “I Like to Move it!” topic explores transport in all forms; planes, trains, boats, diggers, cars etc! We will be writing our own multi-sensory story, which will enable our pupils to experience aspects of travel using lots of different vehicles. Our dance massage sessions will focus on music relating to different vehicles as well as exploring our musical preferences and communicating through touch.</p> <p>Our sensory cooking sessions will continue to focus on the exploration of different foods and cause and effect work; using latch switches to mix and blend our foods relating to transport e.g. a muddy tractor smoothie! 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.</p>

Our class will be 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 overleaf for more details on each area.

<p><b>My Communication</b></p> <p>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.</p>
<p><b>My Thinking</b></p> <p>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.</p>
<p><b>My Movement</b></p> <p>Movement is a huge part of the curriculum in Merlin's 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 have weekly 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 to roll out the MOVE programme this year. 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. I will be inviting parents for assessment meetings for this where applicable this term. If you have any questions, please do contact me about this.</p>
<p><b>Myself</b></p> <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. There will be a coffee morning this term to discuss RSE and how it will be delivered to your child. More details to follow soon.</p>
<p><b>My Enrichment</b></p> <p>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.</p>



### 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 me on [omarah@birchwoodschool.co.uk](mailto:omarah@birchwoodschool.co.uk). I am 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 Clare Griggs  
**Merlin's Class Teachers**