

Birch Wood Area Special school
Class: Goldfinches
 Summer 2023
 Curriculum Newsletter



Dear parents and carers,

I hope you have had a restful Easter holiday, and we are looking forward to continuing to work with your child in school for Summer Term 1. Our staff team consists of myself as the Class Teacher, Helen Humphreys, our Senior Teaching Assistant, Carley Scarborough and Laura Iron as Learning Support Assistants, and Caroline O'Reilly as our Personal Care Assistant. We are really excited to be working with your child in this coming term, and supporting them to make progress across their relevant curriculum areas, where students will be following a new and more personalised timetable for their corresponding pathway.

Our themes this term will be:

<p>Spring Term 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Mr Blue Sky</p> <p>Our wider theme this half term is titled 'Mr Blue Sky'. In this topic, students will explore songs, stories and areas of their curriculum, that link to the outdoors. This term students will take part in Outdoor Learning sessions, in which they will build their awareness and understanding of their outdoor environment. Students will also have the opportunity to take part in outdoor pursuits, both in the Leicester Wheels accessible cycling session, and in a community trip this half-term.</p>
<p>Spring Term 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Dedicated Follower of Fashion</p> <p>The theme for Summer 2 is titled 'Dedicated Follower of Fashion'. Students will learn about the clothes that they wear, and continue to practise how to wash and care for them in their life skills learning. We will explore different fabrics and materials in our sensory sessions.</p>

Our class are following a combination of the Engagement and Independence pathways. The overlap in pathways enables us to personalise the learning for the pupils in our class. 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 teaching in areas such as English, Maths, Science, PSHE and Art. The Engagement pathway have specific sessions to work on their MAPP targets, as well as access to the Immersive Room for their enrichment.

<p style="text-align: center;">My Communication</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, Attention Autism, Sensory Stories (linking to RSE) Tac-Pac, Dance Massage, Write Dance, Dough Disco and communication games.</p>

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), sensory cooking, switch toy work, cause and effect games on the interactive whiteboard and in our immersive room. We also encourage students to select a song of their preference during lunch times, and in music sessions, by allowing them to touch the song on the screen they would like to play.

My Movement

Movement is a huge part of the curriculum in Goldfinches. 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. Every Monday we have a session in the hall with our PE teacher James, where we will work on pupil's MATP (motor activity training programme) targets. These targets focus on developing pupil's movement needs. Students also may access horse riding or Rebound therapy, to build co-ordination and balance.

Myself

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 allowing students to take part in sensory sessions based on the themes of personal care, friendships and relationships, emotions 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, which help our pupils to develop in all of the other areas of the Engagement curriculum. In class, we have sensory cooking and art activities as well as music and movement sessions, such as whole school singing assemblies. 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: Continuing to encourage choice making at home, between two snacks, or two videos on a tablet. You could also do some messy play, painting or play-dough at home- encourage your child to choose between two colours, for example.

My Thinking: When out in the community or around the house, encouraging students to press buttons e.g. at road crossings, or on the blender when cooking. What's going to happen next?

My Movement: Taking your child to the park to go on different apparatus, building gross motor skills and balance. On a rainy day, you could put some music or Just Dance videos on for your child to move and dance to.

Myself: Continuing to encourage independence when dressing and during personal care.

My Enrichment: Taking your child out and about in the community, experiencing different environments outdoors, such as the country park.

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It has been truly wonderful getting to know your young person at Birch Wood School, and how they interact and learn. I am excited to continue to work with them and yourselves, to provide many opportunities for them to make meaningful progress, and build their independence and life skills for their future. I am always happy to help you with any questions you may have about your child, please email me on bottrillg@birchwoodschoo.co.uk

Grace Bottrill, Class Teacher