



Dear parents and carers,

Happy New Year! We hope you all had a wonderful Christmas break and are looking forward to a new term full of more fun and adventure. We are excited to share with you the topics and the therapies that 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 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:

'Ch... Ch... Changes'	
<p>Spring term (first half)</p>	<p>We will start this half term with our topic of 'Ch...Ch...Changes.' We will explore the theme of change taking a multi-sensory approach to all of our sessions. This term's sensory story will find us following the story of the Town Mouse and the Country Mouse. We will be experiencing the journey the two mice take as we explore the differences between town and country and the changes they encounter along the way. Write dance this half term will involve mark making in various paints as we experience mixing different colours together and exploring the changes we can make. During our sensory cooking sessions, we will be exploring fresh ingredients in their natural and raw forms and then by operating a latch switch to mix smoothies and juices which we can smell, taste or explore how the ingredients have been changed by the process.</p> <p>We will be continuing our development of cause and effect skills and our ability to create 'change' during our ICT session. We will continue to build on our work on 'targeting' skills, activating games and music on the interactive whiteboard's touchscreen as well as touch based work on class iPads. Other pupils will use BIGMack control switches to engage with an adult in 1:1 play, eg sharing in favourite songs and shared toys like bubbles or balloons. We will also be using control switches to operate devices including switch toys and the bubble machine or foot spa. Where appropriate students will be using eye gaze to make changes to activate musical and visual rewards on the screen.</p> <p>During our story and dance massage sessions, we will explore different poems, rhymes and stories and various genres of music which explore the idea of 'change' especially the idea of environmental change, whilst developing our body awareness and proprioception.</p> <p>This term in RSE we will focus our work on our emotions and exploring how we feel whilst continuing our ongoing work around giving and withdrawing consent. This is something which underlies all our work throughout every school day and is acknowledged in every session. We place a high value on our students developing their own ways to communicate whether they consent to an activity or withdraw it.</p> <p>Our music sessions will explore ways in which we can make changes to how music sounds; explore loud and quiet, fast and slow and high and low sounds through song and instrument exploration.</p>
'True Colours'	
<p>Spring term (second half)</p>	<p>Our 'True Colours' topic will take us on a magical rainbow journey! Our write dance sessions will incorporate a variety of music as we use our hands and feet to make marks using textured and scented paint, resulting in a rainbow display. Our Dance massage sessions will focus on colourful songs and music, and our Story massages will include songs, poems and stories based on colour. During these sessions all pupils are invited to communicate preference for favourite songs, poems and stories.</p>

	<p>Our sensory cooking sessions will contain further exploration of colour as we 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 colourful cause and effect games as well as switch toys, touch screen activities and Eye Gaze technology where appropriate.</p> <p>Our RSE theme this term is How my body changes, so we will be looking at growth and changes we experience through multisensory approach.</p> <p>Towards the end of the term, when the weather is warmer we hope to make a farm visit.</p>
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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
<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>
My Thinking
<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>
My Movement
<p>Movement is a huge part of the curriculum in Merlin’s class. On a daily basis we follow our pupils’ physiotherapy and positioning programmes, incorporating these into daily activities. Where appropriate each child has a personalised 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 pupils’ MATP (motor activity training programme) targets. These targets focus on developing each pupil’s individual 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>



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 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: By sending in your child's news switch with any news from the weekend/holidays to share with the class. We will send the switch home on a Friday to share highlights of the week.

Intensive Interaction <https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/>, Tac-Pac sessions <https://youtu.be/0N9FS6B31yo>, 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 over 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