



Dear parents and carers,

We hope you all had a wonderful Easter break and are looking forward to a new term full of more adventures...and hopefully more sunshine too! We are excited to share with you the topics and the therapies that your child will be accessing in Merlin's provision this Summer 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:

'Enchanted Forest	
Summer term (first half)	<p>We will start this half term with a topic that sees us heading into an 'Enchanted Forest.' Pupils will be exploring the multi-sensory aspects of nature, as well as delving into the world of Shakespeare with his play 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'. Through the medium of sensory story, we will tell a simplified version of this tale, exploring the smells of the forest, tracking the colourful fairy wings, the taste of King Oberon's potion and the feel of Bottom's new donkey head! Write dance this half term will involve mark making in woodland colours, with paints scented with various herbs and flowers. During our sensory cooking sessions, we will join the Midsummer fairies, foraging for ingredients traditionally found in the forest to touch, smell and taste (as appropriate). We will then use a latch switch to mix these ingredients into smoothies and juices which we can all explore.</p> <p>During our ICT sessions, we will further develop our cause and effect skill by expanding on our proficiency with 'targeting' skills, initiating games and music via the interactive whiteboard's touchscreen and engaging with touch-based activities on classroom iPads. Additionally, some students will utilise BIGMack control switches for one to one interactions with an adult, such as enjoying favourite songs and shared toys like bubbles or balloons. Furthermore, we'll employ control switches to operate various devices including switch toys, a bubble machine, or a foot spa. As appropriate, students will utilize eye gaze to effect changes and 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 theme of forests and woodland areas. This term in RSE we will focus our work on the theme of 'My Body is Changing'. These sessions will be tailored to need within the Mini- Merlin's and Merlin's class and will be delivered using the vehicle of sensory stories.</p> <p>Our music sessions will continue to 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. In our music sessions, we will continue to explore how we can alter the auditory landscape, but with an 'Enchanted Forest' twist! We'll continue to explore loud and quiet, fast and slow and high and low pitch sounds that can be produced with different musical instruments or with our bodies/voices. We will also start to work with iPads using the 'Thumb Jam' app and the pentatonic scale.</p> <p>At the end of this half term, we will be visiting a forest/woodland, where we will have an open-air performance of our Midsummer Night's Dream story, surrounded by nature! We are currently looking into the most accessible options for this and will contact you about this shortly!</p>

'All Creatures Great and Small'	
<p>Summer term (second half)</p>	<p>Our 'All Creatures Great and Small' topic will see us delving into the animal kingdom! Our write dance sessions will incorporate a variety of colours and textures to create animal prints with our hands and feet. Our Dance massage sessions will focus on animal themed songs and music and our Story massages will include songs, poems and stories based on a wildlife theme too. 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 animals and the foods they eat; 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.</p> <p>Our RSE topic for the half term is personal hygiene, which we will explore using our 'Party Time' sensory story. This story is a great chance for your child to show preferences as we explore different kinds of soaps, wash cloths, deodorants, perfumes and toothpastes. It also gives every learner a chance to explore their own hygiene and personal care with as much independence as possible.</p> <p>We will also continue to work on our ICT targets, using animal 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 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 go and visit some animals...watch this space!</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
<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, HOP, 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>



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 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: Please continue to send in your child's **news switch**. The use of these in class has been incredibly successful! Pupils are so excited to listen to parents/sibling's voices and it's a great starting point for our communication sessions. If you have misplaced your switch, please do let us know as we have spares and will gladly send you home a new one.

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@birchwoodschoo.co.uk or curranb@birchwoodschoo.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
Merlin's Class Teachers