



Dear parents and carers,

Welcome back, I hope you have all had a great holiday! I am so excited to be working alongside your wonderful children this year and I wanted to share the topics we will be exploring in The Herons this autumn term. We will continue to use Kinteract as the method of recording observations of your child as they work towards their learning intentions.

Our topics this term will be: Food glorious food and ch-ch-changes.

<p>Autumn Term 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Food glorious food</u></p> <p>This half term our topic is food glorious food linking to the story – ‘a tiger who came to tea’. In this topic we will be exploring a variety of different foods, textures and tastes. We will also be doing a twice weekly sensory story session that will allow the pupils to engage in a story in a sensory, fun and tactile way. During write dance we will be listening to different pieces of music whilst strengthening our fine motor skills and exploring different food messy plays such as custard, tomato puree and rice pudding. In our sensory cooking sessions, we will be creating simple recipes such as bread, fruit smoothies, soup and biscuits. In our music and movement sessions we will be exploring different types of musical instruments whilst listening to songs all about food.</p>
<p>Autumn Term 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Ch-Ch-Changes</u></p> <p>After half term our topic will be ‘Ch-Ch-Ch- Changes’. We will be learning all about different weathers and seasons through the use of multi-sensory stimuli and interactive and engaging sessions. During our sensory story we will be learning about all about the different seasons starting with Winter then Spring, Summer and finally Autumn. During our cooking sessions we will be following simple recipes such as soups, mince pies, hot chocolate and ginger bread men. In the around the world sessions we will be learning about R.E and linking this to Harvest festival and the Christmas period, whilst having a running theme of seasons and weathers. In our self-care sessions we will be learning about suitable clothing for different weathers and how to keep ourselves cool in hot temperatures and warm in colder temperatures.</p>

Our class will be following the Independence Pathway. This curriculum is pupil centred and promotes independence throughout, focusing on six key areas. The six key areas of the Independence Curriculum are “My Communication”, “My Independence,” “My Relationships,” “My Wellbeing”, “My Thinking and Problem Solving” 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, 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, sensory stories, Tac-Pac, Write Dance and communication games. Each day we will have a phonics session and this will give the pupils an opportunity to blend sounds of letters together to help them decode unknown words to help them sound them out. We start off by taking part in simple pre-phonics activities such as</p>

blowing bubbles, feathers and windmills to strengthen those all-important mouth muscles to help form the sounds, letters and words. We will also be engaging in simple listening games with our friends. We will then explore different sounds fortnightly and take part in reading and writing activities. Our last 'my communication' session is sensory sounds and this will allow the pupils to learn about different environmental sounds, by listening to different pieces of music and exploring a variety of multi-sensory stimulus. It is a really engaging way to help and develop those all-important listening and attention skills.

My Thinking and Problem Solving

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 our Hello Senses good morning session, sensory cooking, numeracy, ICT and exploration. In numeracy we will be focusing on numbers and in exploration we will be learning all about shapes and how to problem solve through the use of puzzles, cause and effect toys and various sensory stimuli. During the world around me we will be engaging in sessions related to geography, science, R.E and history. In geography we will be learning about different habitats, climates and foods in a very sensory and engaging way. During science the pupils will have the opportunity to experiment and make predictions and get very messy! We will be making eruptive volcanos, float or sink predictions and rain cloud experiments. In history we will be learning all about our families and creating a whole class family tree and also diving into the world of dinosaurs! During R.E we will be taking part in harvest festival and Christmas related activities which will be very creative and engaging. The pupils will also have the opportunity to join in with Attention Autism and this session encourages engagement and focus on turn taking, sharing attention, being aware of others, listening, and attention.

My Relationships

Developing positive and strong relationships is a key part of the Herons curriculum and each student is encouraged to positively share their space and interact with each other through a variety of fun and engaging sessions. My play gives the pupils the opportunity to join in with adult- led and structured games and help facilitate sharing, turn taking and building those all-important friendships. We will also be having three soft play sessions a week where the pupils will again be able to develop their physical skills and their relationships with their peers in a fun and exciting environment. Throughout all sessions in the Herons, the pupils will be encouraged to build positive and co-operative relationships with their peers.

My Wellbeing

As a part of our PSHE 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 each pupil understands 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 and beginning to use the toilet more independently. During our PSHE sensory story and behaviour for learning sessions we will be learning all about kindness and unkindness and keeping ourselves safe. P.E is another important part of our curriculum and our P.E teacher James will be helping the pupils work on developing their overall fundamental movement skills, such as running, jumping, throwing etc. As well as embedding rules, routines, and expectations for PE. The pupils are also developing their skills in team games, such as rules of the game, working/turn-taking with others, and applying physical skills learnt in PE to differing activities. Taking part in physical activities plays a crucial role in helping the pupils to boost their self-esteem whilst learning new skills and challenging themselves.

My Independence

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 hands. 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.

In our self – care sessions we will explore teeth brushing, personal hygiene, dressing and undressing and engaging in activities related to our bodies. We will again be focusing on consent during this session ensuring all pupils understand that they have a choice to involve themselves or opt out of these activities.

Birch Wood Area Special school
Class – The Herons
Autumn 2024
Curriculum Newsletter



Throughout the year we have opportunities to visit our local community. This will give the pupils the opportunity to build their independence and life skills whilst exploring the local area. We will visit different areas of the community ensuring that all pupils have the opportunity to explore new places and gain new experiences.

My Enrichment

This area includes 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 Independence curriculum. In class, we will have sensory cooking and art activities as well as music and movement sessions. During Art the pupils will be given the opportunity to express themselves and create their own unique art work. Throughout the Christmas period we will be having a weekly drama session where the pupils will have the chance to showcase their acting skills in our annual Christmas production! Throughout each session the pupils will be exploring many different types of sensory stimuli related to each individual session. This will allow the pupils the opportunity to engage in a range of stimuli in order to develop an array of regulation aids and widen their knowledge and skills.

Things you could do at home

My Communication: to encourage and develop phonics knowledge- simple letter puzzles, sharing stories, looking and beginning to sound out simple words on signs in our environment.

My Independence: encourage your child to help with dressing and putting on/taking off shoes and/or independently brushing teeth.

My Relationships: Encourage engagement in simple turn taking games

My Thinking and Problem Solving: engage in threading activities or puzzles to support your child to independently begin to problem solve.

If you have any questions, please do email me- harrisonk@birchwoodschoo.co.uk. I am always happy to help you with any questions you may have about your child.

Myself and the Herons team are really looking forward to working with your child and seeing all the amazing progress they will be making this term!

Kind regards,

Kate Spicer