



Dear parents and carers,

Welcome back!

I am so excited to be working alongside your amazing children again this New Year and I wanted to share the topics we will be exploring in The Herons this spring term. I 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: ‘All creatures great and small’ and ‘Superheroes’

<p>Spring Term 1</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>All Creatures Great and Small</u></p> <p>This half term our topic will be linking to the story – ‘The Highway Rat’. In this topic we will be learning about different animals, their habitats and where they live in the world. 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 listening to animal related pieces of music. In our sensory cooking sessions, we will be creating simple recipes such as ‘snake’ smoothies, animal biscuits and butterfly cakes. In our music and movement sessions we will be exploring different types of musical instruments, learning how to use our mouths and bodies to make music and enjoy some animal related pieces of music.</p>
<p>Spring Term 2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Superheroes</u></p> <p>After half term our topic is Superheroes linking to the story – ‘Supertato’. In this topic we will be learning about Superheroes and what different superpowers they have. We will also be learning about what makes us like a superhero. We will 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. In our sensory cooking sessions, we will be creating simple recipes using a variety of different kitchen appliances, such as a blender, whisk and an oven. In our music and movement sessions we will be exploring different types of musical instruments, learning how to use our mouths and bodies to make music.</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</p>

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 blowing up balloons, and blowing through straws 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. Some of us will be exploring books from the library and reading with an adult and our friends.

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, where we will be learning about different animals and where they come from in a very sensory and engaging way. 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 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 our feelings and how we grow from babies to adults. 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. Promoting independence is an imperative part of the Herons and we as a team encourage each student to be as independent as possible to help them to thrive in their future lives.

Throughout the year we have opportunities to visit our local community. This will give the pupils the chance 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. This

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coming term we are planning to visit the local town park and the country park to explore a new environment and have fun with our friends in a social setting.

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 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: Reading favourite books can help with phonics knowledge and communication

My Independence: Help your child to become independent at making their own drink and/or breakfast.

My relationships: Turn taking activities can help develop relationships

My thinking and problem solving: Exploring puzzles, memory games, treasure hunts and building towers

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

Myself and the Herons team are really looking forward to continuing to help your child achieve the very best in their education and have all the fun along the way!

Kind regards,

Kate Spicer