



Dear parents and carers,

Welcome back!

It is lovely to welcome your child back to Birch Wood School. Below is an outline of what we have planned for this term.

Our themes this term will be:

	In This Material World
Autumn term (first half)	<p>Throughout this theme, we will immerse ourselves in a world of diverse materials designed to engage and stimulate all five senses. This half term, we have chosen two sensory stories that focus on the use of different materials: The Three Little Pigs and The Wizard of Oz. We will explore these stories through a variety of textures, materials, and sensory stimuli such as straw, cake, a drum, and ice. Each have been carefully selected to prompt sensory engagement and enrich learning experiences.</p> <p>In My Play we will continue engaging our senses to explore materials and textures in different contexts. Pupils will have the opportunity to explore messy play tuff trays including hot & cold, hard & soft and wet & dry textures with the intention of developing exploration and fine motor skills. In our construction zones pupils will engage in junk modelling activities that allow their imagination to influence their creations. These may include cars, towers, castles or robots, pupils are free to follow wherever their imagination takes them! Our refurbished outdoor area comprises of brand-new sand and water trays for our pupils to enjoy and explore. This area will also support the development of gross motor skills as pupils will have the opportunity to access bikes, scooters, stepping stones and toy cars.</p> <p>We will be starting our Autumn Term Tac-Pac which will run up until the end of Autumn term. For those unfamiliar with Tac-Pac, Tac-Pac is a communication approach that uses the alignment of touch and music to create a structured, half-hour sensory experience for learners. By combining every day textures objects with specifically composed music. Tac-Pac promotes sensory alignment, helping to build communication skills, trust and a feeling of wellbeing. This terms objects for Tac-Pac includes foil, a glove, water spray, fan and chain. Each student has their own individual bag of objects for each session.</p> <p>This term we will also be engaging in Physibod sessions. These sessions comprise of different songs and physical activities/movement all based around our bodies. Pupils will be encouraged to engage with the different songs and develop their balance, co-ordination skills and movements such as stomping their feet. Physibods encourages lots of 1-1 intensive interaction and creates a perfect opportunity for pupils to unwind and relax with the comfort of beanbags, mats and cushions.</p> <p>We are very excited to be taking part in Forest School over the Autumn term. Maria has planned some amazingly engaging and immersive sessions for our students take part in. Forest school is often set in an outdoor, forest like environment and fosters a child-centred approach to learning. The sessions aim to provide regular, hands-on experiences, fostering confidence, self-esteem, and holistic development through play, exploration, and supported risk-taking.</p>

	<p>This term we will also be celebrating Diwali. We will be exploring colour and light to recognise how Diwali is the celebration of light over darkness. We will enjoy vibrant tuff trays full of coloured rice, pasta and spaghetti that prompt the use of our tactile senses.</p> <p>We will continue to provide our weekly therapeutic interventions, such as Rebound Therapy, Hydrotherapy and children under Speech and Language, OT and Physio will continue their valuable sessions. We will continue to work closely with professionals and utilise the skills learnt in therapeutic sessions in class.</p>
Autumn term (second half)	<p style="text-align: center;">The Show Must Go On!</p> <p>Moving into our second Autumn term we will be immersing ourselves in all things sparkle and shine as we delve into 'The Show Must Go On!'. During our sensory story sessions, we will continue to interact with exciting resources and stimuli that engage all five of our senses. These resources will comprise of sparkly lights, coloured fabric and all things glitter.</p> <p>Our classroom will be filled with twinkly lights, festive colours, and a variety of seasonal crafts to explore. As part of this theme, we'll be creating handmade items for the annual Christmas Market and designing decorations for the Christmas Tree Festival.</p> <p>In our 'My Play' sessions, the children can have fun exploring the dressing-up box and puppet theatre, using role play to bring their very own 'show' to life. This may be through exciting costumes or festive puppets. Our sensory play areas will consist of lots of tactile resources such as sparkles, lights and fabric to represent our theme. We'll also come together as a class to decorate our Christmas tree and make festive decorations to display.</p> <p>As we move into the colder months, we will be continuing to embrace our wonderful outdoor space. The children will be encouraged to explore icy water play and muddy puddles, whatever the weather! As we explore the change of the seasons from sand castle play to rainy days. It would be fantastic if pupils could have the correct clothing, so they can explore comfortably and safely.</p> <p>We'll also continue our regular enrichment sessions, including Tac-Pac and Physibods, as well as our therapeutic activities like hydrotherapy and rebound therapy. These sessions are a vital part of our curriculum, supporting physical, sensory, and emotional development in a fun and engaging way.</p> <p>We're also thrilled to be continuing our Forest School sessions into the second Autumn Term. Each week, we will explore the outdoor Forest School area through a range of sensory-rich activities like digging in the vegetable patch, watering the plants, smashing ice and blowing giant bubbles. As the term progresses and the weather gets colder, we'll gather around our Forest School fire to toast marshmallows. This is always a favourite moment! As I'm sure you can imagine, these sessions can get very messy, particularly if it has been raining! Therefore, we ask that students have a spare set of clothes in school wherever possible.</p> <p>There's lots to celebrate this term! On the 5th of November, we'll mark Bonfire Night by making colourful firework art and edible sparklers with breadsticks, melted chocolate, and sprinkles during sensory cooking. Then, on the 11th of November, we will commemorate Remembrance Day by creating tissue paper poppy crafts and decorating poppy-shaped biscuits with icing. As we move into December, we'll be getting ready for Christmas by making festive crafts, celebrating Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day, and sitting down together for a delicious Christmas dinner.</p>

Our class will be following the Adventurer Curriculum Pathway. This is a pupil-centred and play-based curriculum, focusing on five key areas; My Communication, My Thinking and Problem Solving, My Independence, My Well-being and My Play and Leisure. Learning within each area will centre around carefully crafted play opportunities and sessions, informed directly from your child's Engagement Profile. These profiles help us identify how your child likes to learn, what motivates and engages them and what this will look like for your child. There will be a coffee

morning/drop-in evening to explain the Adventurer Pathway and the Engagement model in more detail, so we hope you can join us for that.

My Communication

This area of the curriculum focuses on developing communication skills, enabling us to express our wants and needs and experience the joy of interacting with others. Our everyday practice will feed into this, with lots of communication and interaction opportunities embedded within our play. Our classroom is a total communication environment where we utilise Makaton signing, Intensive Interaction, photos, symbols, PECs (Picture Exchange Communication Systems) and other augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) methods, such as communication books or high-tech devices. There will also be specific sessions that help us develop these fundamental skills, such as sensory stories, story massage, Tac-Pac, Dance Massage and Write Dance.

My Thinking and Problem Solving

This area of the curriculum focuses on developing the Engagement Model areas of attention, realisation, anticipation, perseverance and initiation. Through carefully planned play activities, we will develop our awareness of cause and effect within our environment, whilst also promoting problem-solving and choice making skills. Daily sessions such as Attention Autism, sensory cooking, ICT and messy play, will focus directly on developing these skills.

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 during play, both in timetabled sessions and during personal and intimate care activities e.g. eating and drinking, using the toilet and washing. This area extends beyond independence whilst at school and looks at how we can become more independent within our communities through travel training and community visits.

My Well-being

This area focuses on both our emotional and physical well-being. Through our 'Myself' sessions we will focus on identifying and labelling our emotions so that we can link them to our Zones of Regulation. By doing this, pupils can start to identify how they are feeling and make their own self-regulation choices. When we are happy and regulated, we can access our play and learning, so this is crucial. With timetabled sessions such as Sensory Circuits, rebound therapy, hydrotherapy and PE, we can develop both our emotional and physical well-being.

My Play and Leisure

This area of the curriculum emphasises the importance of play, both for learning and social interaction. Our play activities are both continuous and enhanced, meaning that pupils have the reassurance that resources and activities will always be there, with extra activities that add layers of challenge and tasks linked directly to their learning intentions. Areas of play within the classroom will include the exploration of sand and water, construction, small world play, role-play, as well as writing, reading and maths. These activities will be structured with staff acting as facilitators and your child taking the lead. Through play, we can develop pupils' play profiles so that they become more social and cooperative as well as developing their play schema.

Things you could do at home

My Communication: Intensive Interaction <https://www.intensiveinteraction.org/>, Tac-Pac sessions <https://youtu.be/ON9FS6B31yo>, story massage, dance massage and sensory stories (see Birch Wood YouTube channel).

My Thinking and Problem Solving: Construction activities are a fantastic way of developing thinking and problem-solving skills. Many of our young people enjoy stacking and building activities, it would be fantastic if you could continue developing this at home. This could be stacking books, blocks or teddies and is also a fantastic way of introducing number through counting.

My Independence: Opportunities for practising our self-help skills, especially during meal times and personal care routines.

My Well-being: It would be fantastic if we could continue encouraging our young people to interact with the zones of regulation. This may be through looking in the mirror and recognising sad or happy faces or naming these emotions and talking about how we feel throughout the day.

My Play and Leisure: Encouraging your children to take part in both independent and shared play. Encourage turn taking and using their imagination to interact with toys, books or dressing up outfits.

If you are unsure about anything in the Adventurer's Curriculum, please don't hesitate to contact me robertse@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!

Eve Roberts

Chiffchaffs Class Teacher