



Dear parents and carers,

Welcome back! We hope you all had a wonderful summer break and are looking forward to the new school year. We are excited to share with you the topics and the therapies your child will be accessing in Merlins this Autumn term. We are no longer using Kinteract as our method of recording observations of your child and in the short term we will send photos to you via email when we capture moments that we would like to share with you. We look forward to giving you more information about our new observation platform in the near future.

Our topics this term will be:

	<b>‘Material World’</b>
Autumn term (first half)	<p>We will start this half term with ‘Material World’. As always, we will explore the theme taking a multi-sensory approach to all our sessions. Our sensory story will be based on the Wizard of Oz whereby we will follow Dorothy on her adventures down the yellow brick road, making friends along the way with the Scarecrow, Tinman and Lion. During our story and dance massage sessions, we will explore different poems, rhymes and stories and various genres of music with either a material theme or linked to the Wizard of Oz, whilst developing our body awareness and proprioception.</p> <p>During our sensory cooking sessions, we will be using the latch switch to mix smoothies and juices which we can taste or smell. Each week we will explore a different texture of foods, eg crunchy, fluffy, slimy or smooth. As always, our ingredients will be wild and wonderful offering opportunity to touch, smell and taste as we continue in our quest to make the best smoothie ever!</p> <p>We will continue to develop our cause and effect skills during our ICT session. Some pupils will work on their ‘targeting’ skills, activating games and music on the interactive whiteboard’s touchscreen. Other pupils will use Big Mack control switches to engage with an adult in 1:1 play, eg requesting fun with shared toys like bubbles or balloons. We will also be using control switches to operate devices such as bubble machine, fairy lights, music and fans. This year we are very excited to develop our switch learning as we explore the use of our brand new Drivedeck; a comprehensive system which enables pupils to independently move their own wheelchairs through switch use!</p> <p>Our RSE theme this term is Friends and Family which we will explore through a sensory story about friends and a story massage about different types of families.</p> <p>This school year we will all have opportunity to participate in Forest School activities. These sessions will take place on Monday afternoons and will be run by Becky and supported by class staff. We will be using a multisensory approach as we explore autumn changes and the weather, Harvest and Halloween. During our sessions we will access the school Forest School area and our own outdoor area, and indoors if weather restricts us.</p>
Autumn term (second half)	<p><b>‘The Show Must Go On’</b></p> <p>Our sensory story for ‘The Show Must Go On!’ topic will find us embracing favourites from musical theatre with a little bit of panto thrown in for fun– oh yes it will! The story will incorporate music, dancing, costumes and lights! Our Dance massage sessions will focus on show and theatre related songs and music, and our Story massages will include songs, poems and stories based on some of our favourite musical shows. During these sessions all pupils are invited to communicate preference for favourite songs, poems and stories.</p> <p>During our sensory cooking sessions we will create smoothies related to our favourite musicals, eg Shrek’s swamp juice, Simba, the Lion King’s savanna smoothie. We will be experiencing a variety of</p>

	<p>texture, taste and smell throughout. Using the latch switch to mix and blend our foods into a super smoothie we will continue developing our understanding of cause and effect.</p> <p>We will also continue to work on our ICT targets, using themed cause and effect games as well as switch toys, touch screen activities, the Drivedeck and Eyegaze technology where appropriate.</p> <p>Our RSE theme this term is How do you feel today? We will explore different feelings through a multisensory approach of music, movement and props.</p> <p>Of course towards the end of this term there will be some time dedicated to working towards our Christmas performance, which will immerse us all in more musical fun!</p>
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Our class will follow the Explorer Pathway (previously known as the Engagement Pathway), which 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 Explorer Curriculum are “My Communication”, “My Thinking”, My Movement”, “Myself” and “My Enrichment”. See the table below for more details on each area.

<b>My Communication</b>
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.
<b>My Thinking</b>
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), sensory cooking, ICT and switch toy work, latch switch control sessions, cause and effect games on the interactive whiteboard and use of the Drivedeck.
<b>My Movement</b>
Movement is a huge part of the curriculum in Merlins class. On a daily basis we follow our pupils’ physiotherapy and positioning programmes, incorporating these into daily activities. Each child has a hydrotherapy programme where appropriate, and will access the hydro pool. We also look forward to the return of Rebound Therapy sessions on our trampoline with a trained therapist. We will work on pupils’ MATP (motor activity training programme) targets, which are based on individual movement needs.
<b>Myself</b>
<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> <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 our feelings. 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.</p>
<b>My Enrichment</b>
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 and Rebound Therapy 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:** 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). We also have home/school switches which you can record short messages on and then send into school to share, and vice versa.

**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, hand 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 foods and other mark making or messy play stimulus together.

If you are unsure about anything in the Explorer Curriculum, please email us on [curranb@birchwoodschoool.co.uk](mailto:curranb@birchwoodschoool.co.uk) or [omarah@birchwoodschoool.co.uk](mailto:omarah@birchwoodschoool.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!

Becky Curran and Hannah O'Mara  
**Merlins Class Teachers**