



Dear parents and carers,

Welcome back!

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

Our themes this term will be:

	<p style="text-align: center;">Material World</p> <p>This half term our theme is Material World, which we will be exploring throughout our curriculum. Students will have rich opportunities to explore and investigate a wide range of materials through continuous and enhanced play provision. These opportunities are carefully planned to support individual play schemas (such as transporting, positioning, and rotation) and to deepen students' engagement and learning experiences. By connecting activities to the Engagement Model, we will focus on how students explore, initiate, persist and show enjoyment in their learning.</p> <p>In Sensory Story, we will be sharing The Iron Man by Ted Hughes. Students will use a variety of sensory stimuli to engage with the story, bringing the text to life and supporting comprehension through sound, texture, light and movement. This multi-sensory approach enables students to access the story in a way that is meaningful and memorable.</p> <p>Our Music sessions this half term are inspired by Stomp. Students will experiment with everyday materials such as oil drums, bins, pans, and newspaper to explore rhythm and sound. They will have opportunities to work both individually and collaboratively to create sound patterns and compositions, developing creativity, communication and turn-taking skills.</p> <p>During Sensory Cooking, we will be exploring textures, smells, and tastes while working with different ingredients. Students will use their senses to explore how materials change when combined and cooked, with the exciting outcome of making Iron Man biscuits.</p> <p>In ICT, students will focus on developing cause-and-effect understanding and early problem-solving skills. They will operate the interactive board to play music and games, and use remote-control toys to explore movement and direction. These activities provide opportunities for exploration, persistence, and achievement, all of which are key areas within the Engagement Model.</p> <p>In our Myself sessions, the theme is Friendship. Through the story You've Got a Friend in Me, students will learn about what it means to be a good friend, exploring kindness, turn-taking and cooperation. These sessions are designed to build emotional understanding and strengthen social relationships. Our Community Visits will provide opportunities to practise these skills in the wider community. We will be visiting the local park where students can explore play opportunities together, strengthen friendships and develop social communication in a fun, engaging environment.</p> <p>This half term promises to be full of exploration, creativity, and new experiences as we continue to support every student's progress through meaningful engagement and play.</p>
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<p>Autumn term (second half)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">“The Show must go on”</p> <p>This half term our theme is The Show Must Go On, where we will be exploring the colourful and exciting world of the circus. Students will have opportunities to experience the sights, sounds, smells and tastes of the circus through continuous and enhanced play provision. These experiences will be linked to individual play schemas (such as trajectory, enclosure, and transformation) and will be carefully designed to support curiosity, persistence, and enjoyment through the Engagement Model.</p> <p>In Sensory Story, we will immerse ourselves in circus-themed tales, bringing them to life with props, light effects, sounds, and textures. Students will engage with the story through all their senses, exploring the magic and wonder of the big top.</p> <p>Our Music sessions will be full of circus spirit! We will experiment with rhythm, beat, and dynamics to recreate the lively atmosphere of circus parades and performances. Students will have the chance to use a variety of instruments and everyday objects to create soundscapes, encouraging creativity and collaboration.</p> <p>During Sensory Cooking, we will explore circus-inspired foods. Students will investigate textures, smells, and tastes while making fun treats such as popcorn and candy-floss inspired snacks.</p> <p>In ICT, our focus will continue to be on cause and effect and problem-solving. Students will use interactive technology to play circus-themed games, operate remote-control toys, and explore sound and movement, building persistence and engagement.</p> <p>In our Myself sessions, we will be exploring different emotions and learning strategies to help us regulate. Students will use stories, role play, and sensory activities to identify feelings such as happiness, sadness, anger, and excitement.</p> <p>This half term will be full of excitement, performance, and discovery as we explore the magic of the circus and support every student’s progress through meaningful play and engagement.</p>
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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.

<p>My Communication</p>
<p>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.</p>
<p>My Thinking and Problem Solving</p>
<p>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.</p>



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/0N9FS6B31yo>, story massage, dance massage and sensory stories (see Birch Wood YouTube channel).

My Thinking and Problem Solving: Exploring cause and effect toys. Continue exploring buttons, remote-control toys, or light-up objects at home, talking about what happens when your child takes an action.

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

My Well-being: Opportunities to explore different emotions and different regulation tools.

My Play and Leisure: Engage in different play opportunities at home.

If you are unsure about anything in the Adventurer's Curriculum, please email marriottp@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!

Poppy Marriott
The Owls Class Teacher