

Dear parents and carers,

It is a real pleasure to welcome your child back to Birch Wood School as we begin a new term together. We hope you had a wonderful summer and are ready for the exciting learning opportunities ahead. Below, you'll find an outline of what we have planned for this term:

Our themes this term will be:

Autumn term (first half)	<p>'In a Material World'</p> <p>This term our theme is <i>In This Material World</i>, inspired by <i>The True Story of the Three Little Pigs</i>—but with a twist! We'll be looking at the story from the wolf's perspective and discovering that maybe he was just a little misunderstood. Students will dive into the tale through immersive sessions such as sensory story, Write Dance, sensory cooking, and Attention Autism. Along the way, they'll get creative with mark making using a variety of materials, develop problem-solving skills through construction and play, and enjoy hands-on sensory fun with straw, sticks, bricks, and even messy, muddy pig-inspired food play.</p>
Autumn term (second half)	<p>'The Show Must Go On'</p> <p>This term our theme is <i>The Show Must Go On</i>, inspired by <i>The Greatest Showman</i>. Students will step into the magic of the circus and explore the world of performance, imagination, and creativity. We'll bring the story to life through theatrical experiences such as puppet shows, role play, music-making, and movement and dance activities that let every student shine like a star in the spotlight. Alongside this, students will enjoy hands-on creative opportunities, taking part in messy, sensory, and captivating sessions that spark curiosity and encourage self-expression.</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: Introduce or encourage simple Makaton signs for everyday words (e.g., "eat," "drink," "more") during routines and play.

My Thinking and Problem Solving: Build towers or houses from everyday materials (cups, boxes, blocks) to encourage balancing and joining.

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

My Well-being: Use emotion cards or visuals to name and discuss feelings

My Play and Leisure: Play simple turn-taking games and encourage cooperative building and imaginative play.

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

Mary Hall
Class Teacher