



Dear parents and carers,

Welcome back!

I hope you have all had a wonderful Summer. It is lovely to welcome your young person back to Birch Wood School for another exciting year of adventure. 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>During Autumn term we will be exploring the imaginative topic 'In This Material World'. In My Play we will be using all of our tactile senses, exploring wet and dry, hot and cold, hard and soft through different tuff trays. We will be using our imagination in junk modelling, building towers, castles, cars, robots, wherever our imagination takes us, using recycled card board. We have an exciting refurbished outdoor area comprising of a sand station, water station, role-play shed, sensory wall and access to scooters and bikes.</p> <p>During our sensory story sessions, we will be exploring 'The Three Little Pigs'. Hearing the story of how the pigs used different materials to build their houses before the big bad wolf blew them down! We will also explore the story 'The Wizard of Oz' awakening all of our senses whilst listening about Dorothy's journey to Oz. During sensory cooking, we will be exploring a variety of food with our fingers, mouths, noses, eyes and ears! We will be introducing different and exciting foods to explore however we would like.</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 have also started Physibods. The structures sessions last about half-hour and comprise of fun and interactive physical activities based around body basics, singing and developing co-ordination skills, balance and movement. For a lot of learners, it a fantastic opportunity for intensive interaction and is a perfect opportunity to relax and wind-down. There are lots of fantastic examples online of Tac-Pac and Physibods which may give a further explanation.</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> <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.</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">The Show Must Go On!</p> <p>During the second half of Autumn term, our theme will be moving to ‘The Show Must Go on!’ where we will experience all wonderful things that will sparkle and shine. Our continuous and enhanced provision areas will comprise of sparkly lights, festive colours and festive crafts. We will enjoy making items for the annual Christmas market and decorations for the Christmas Tree festival. In My Play we will enjoy exploring the dressing up box to role-play for our ‘show’. We will enjoy decorating the Christmas tree as a class and making decorations for it.</p> <p>We will continue to explore our exciting outdoor area, with icy water, experiencing the change of seasons, rainy days and soggy sand. So please can we ensure the students have appropriate clothing for exploring whatever the weather.</p> <p>During our sensory story sessions we will be exploring stories based on lights and theatrics. Using all of our senses to enjoy the look, smell, taste and feel of different festive traditions. Such as the strong smell of cinnamon and twinkly lights on the tree, the bitter cold at Winter.</p> <p>We will continue our weekly sessions of Tac-Pac and Physibods. We will also continue our therapeutic interventions such as Hydrotherapy and Rebound therapy.</p> <p>This term our school calendar will be full of celebration. On the 5th November we have Bonfire Night. So we will be exploring this event making our own firework pictures and edible sprinklers using breadsticks, chocolate and sprinkles in sensory cooking. On the 11th November we will be exploring Remembrance Day. We will make our own tissue paper poppy crafts and decorate poppy biscuits using decorative icing. Then we will have our ever so exciting Christmas celebration. We will be making Christmas crafts, celebrating Save the Children’s Christmas Jumper Day and having our delicious Christmas Dinner.</p> <p>Throughout the Autumn term we will also continue Forest School with our Forest School teacher, Maria. The class will be exploring the outdoor area with a vegetable patch for digging, herb painting, ice smashing and bubble making. Eventually we will have our Forest School fire, where we will toast marshmallows. These sessions are always super fun and messy, so please ensure we have spare clothes just in case!</p> <p>Please do not hesitate to email me should you have any questions about our themes. This is a super exciting term full of exploration and opportunities that I cannot wait to share with our students.</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.



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

My Thinking and Problem Solving: Developing our early number skills through number songs (five little speckled frogs, ten green bottles etc).

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

My Well-being: Exploring our feelings using the Zones of Regulation, what do different emotions look like? Look in the mirror and make different faces for 'sad' or 'happy'

My Play and Leisure: Opportunities to initiate independent play, using our imagination to play with toys how we would like.

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

Holly Wright (Class Teacher)