



Shaw
Education
Trust

Sapphires Class Newsletter

Working together to

inspire nurture empower

Spring 1 January 2026

Hello & Updates



Dear Parents and Carers.

A very Happy New Year to you all! This half term, we're taking an exciting journey into the vibrant culture of China! Through sensory stories, music, and creative play, children will explore Chinese traditions in a fun and engaging way. Our core book is **The Dragon Dance by Joan Holub**, which will be brought to life using a multi-sensory approach to support communication and engagement. In PSHE, our focus is on **Healthy Lifestyles**. Children will enjoy a relaxing and imaginative dance massage, guiding them through the sights and sounds of a bustling Chinese food market. During Cognition, we'll be exploring China-themed objects to help children develop their understanding of 'making something happen' through cause and effect activities. Keep an eye on Evidence for Learning (EFL) to see all the wonderful moments captured



Key Concepts and Skills

This term, pupils will be immersed in a rich and exciting range of activities as we explore the vibrant culture of China. In Communication, children will express their preferences through gestures, vocalisations, symbols, and for some, Eye-Gaze technology—all while enjoying sensory stories and songs that bring language to life. Our Cognition sessions will include hands-on exploration of China-themed objects such as lanterns, dragons, and traditional Chinese food, alongside cause-and-effect activities like pressing buttons to activate lights, sounds, and movement. As part of our PSHE focus on Healthy Lifestyles, pupils will learn about wellbeing through engaging, sensory-rich experiences. We'll also be supporting Physical Development with Gross motor activities like dragon dancing and reaching for lanterns, and Fine motor opportunities such as exploring Chinese ingredients, unwrapping red gifts, and making marks in sensory materials. We're looking forward to a joyful and sensory-rich term full of discovery, movement, and creativity as we journey through China together!



Reminders / additional information



This half term our hydro days are **Tuesday** and **Wednesday** but please send in your child's kit at the beginning of the week as we may take them in whenever there is a space, please include a costume/trunks, 2 towels and some body wash/shampoo. Our Library day is **Friday** so please send in your child's library book so they can change it each Friday. Please remember to send in a change of clothes for your child each day, as we love to get messy in Sapphires! Thank you.





Cognition and Maths

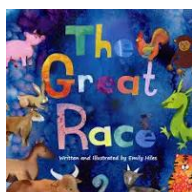
- **Sensory Lantern Exploration.** Create or use paper lanterns with different textures (e.g. crinkly paper, foil, fabric). Add lights inside and encourage your child to press a button or switch to make the lantern light up.
- **Chinese Food Sensory Tray.** Fill a tray with cooked noodles, rice, or dried herbs like star anise and cinnamon. Let your child explore the textures and smells. You can hide objects inside for them to find, encouraging curiosity and exploration.
- **Listen to Chinese music.**
- **Fill red envelopes** (used in Chinese New Year celebrations) with different sensory items like feathers, foil, or scented cotton balls. Help your child to open them to discover what's inside.
- **Water Play with Floating objects.** Use a shallow tray of water with floating lotus flowers or small Chinese-themed toys. Encourage your child to touch or move the water to make things happen.
- **Make marks and patterns in rice.**



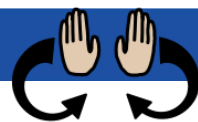
Communication



Reading 'China' themed books with your child encourages shared enjoyment and communication. Using sensory props and expressive storytelling helps pupils to engage, respond, and connect with the story in their own way. Create a story about a magical dragon who dances through the streets during Chinese New Year. Use a dragon puppet or scarf to mimic the dragon's movements, encouraging children to follow along with waving, stretching, or bouncing. Listen to audio stories.



PSHE



As part of our PSHE focus on Healthy Lifestyles, pupils will take part in a dance massage experience that guides them through the sights, sounds and sensations of a bustling Chinese food market. This calming and imaginative activity combines gentle movement with sensory exploration, helping children to relax, engage, and connect with the theme in a meaningful way.

Physical Development



- **Noodle Play** - Use cooked noodles (dye red or yellow for extra fun!) in a tray. Children can squish, stretch, and pull the noodles—great for strengthening fingers and exploring texture.
- **Rice Sensory Tray**
- **Chinese Calligraphy Marks.** Offer thick paint or shaving foam on a tray and let children make marks using their fingers or tools like chopsticks or paintbrushes.
- **Chinese Spice Exploration.** Let children smell and touch spices like star anise, cinnamon sticks, or dried orange peel. These can be placed in small containers or sensory bags for safe exploration.

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