



# Chestnut Class Newsletter

September 2025

## Welcome



Hello and we hope that you have had a lovely Summer! We are really looking forward to welcoming the pupils back in and getting started with all of the exciting work we have planned. We did a lot of transition work with the pupils before the holidays, to help them settle into the new class groups.

Our classroom has had work done on it in the summer, to enable us to have a larger space for pupils to be out of their chairs, to explore their environment and interact with their friends. We will also be having work done during this term to upgrade our heating and windows.

Have a read through this newsletter to find out about what your child will be learning this year. We hope to see you soon! Jo, Yuki and Laura.



## Meet the Team!



L-r—Laura, Jo and Yuki

Jo Baker is Chestnut class teacher and Yuki and Laura are the wonderful TA's who will be working with our pupils. We are also supported by a team of ancillary staff, HWSA's and NHS complex care team in class.

We look forward to working with your child this year and

getting to know their families better too. We are planning a coffee morning on **Wed 24th September at 10am**, so you can come in and meet us!

## EfL

This year I am going to be using EfL for our daily news diary, so you can see what your child has done in the day and then we will only put messages in the book as needed. This means that we can add more information about the activities we have done, rather than a heading of the lesson, add personal comments about the learning your child has done, and where possible, add some photos too!

We also love seeing what the pupils get up to at home—it gives us so much that we can talk to them about and they love showing photos to their friends too.

Please upload photos on to Evidence for Learning and look regularly at the things your child gets up to in school! If you have any queries or require assistance getting on EfL; please do not hesitate to contact us via your child's home school book or email [office@saxon.set.org](mailto:office@saxon.set.org)

## Drinks and snacks

Please send in snacks and squash for your child, if needed. Drinks of water are available throughout the day and we stop for drinks and snacks in the morning and drinks in the afternoon. You can send squash in daily or we can store bottles of concentrate and then let you know when running low. Please remember to send in thickener as required. We are only able to use for 2 months, once opened.



## Communication

We have a wide variety of methods of communicating in class and this is modelled by staff throughout the day. This includes Intensive Interaction, core-word PODD, Makaton, switches and tactile signing.

Each morning we have a Communication, Language and Literacy session. This always starts with our pre-phonics activity, before moving on to the next activity.

## Pre-Phonics

Each morning we have a 15 minute pre-phonics session. This enables pupils to explore and recognise different sounds and encourages them to create their own sounds. Lessons include sensory exploration, using switches with sounds recorded on, mark making and play. Pupils show great engagement in this and make great progress. This term we are exploring environmental and instrumental sounds.

## Core-word PODD

We have introduced core-word PODD during last year to Chestnut class. These are personalised to each pupil to meet their needs. Core vocabulary is so powerful because it gives a way for our learners to communicate with a limited amount of words. For example, the words want, like, not and go give many opportunities to communicate in different situations. Staff wear symbol sheets so they can model at all times.

## Sensory story

A sensory story is a version of a well-known story that incorporates different movements, actions and sensory stimulants to help tell the story. This term our sensory stories this term are going to be, "Adam & Eve" and "Pinocchio".

These stories offer an inclusive storytelling experience that develops the imagination and brings the tales to life for our pupils. We encourage them to explore, respond to the stimuli, communicate their preferences, and as we repeat the story weekly for a half term, develop anticipation of what happens in the story.

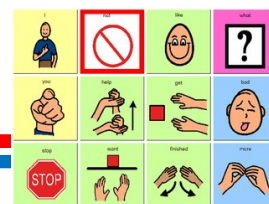
## Playbox

During Playbox sessions, we will be focussing on our core-word communication through highly-motivating Playboxes.

These include EXPRESSIVE-ATTENTIVE PLAY: bubbles, spinners, click clack car, lights, shakers

GOAL DIRECTED PLAY: pull back car, stacking toys, jigsaw

IMAGINATIVE PLAY: dolls, play doh, animals, dress up.



## Story massage



We all love stories. When combined with the benefits of simple massage strokes, stories present wonderful opportunities for creative fun and interaction. Sharing positive touch offers great scope for imaginative activity and learning for children of all ages and abilities. Benefits include: Improved calmness and concentration. Increased self-confidence, self-awareness and self-esteem. Improved social skills. Increased engagement in activities. Better communication. Building respect and positive relationships. This term our story massages include fairytale & even a story about making a pizza!

## Intensive Interaction

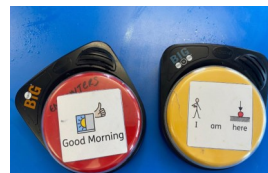
Intensive Interaction is an approach to help pupils who are in the early stages of developing communication and social skills.

It's about watching closely how a pupil responds to different situations through their body language, voice and facial expressions – and responding to this.

Intensive Interaction is two-way communication and can be used at all times in all environments. We have also been using a similar approach with small groups of pupils, which has led to amazing responses and interaction between pupils.

## Thinking & Problem Solving

During daily Thinking & Problem Solving activities, we encourage creative and critical thinking skills, develop problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities. We foster curiosity, experimentation and investigation.



## Positive Looking

Pupils work on personalised learning goals to support their vision, cognition and understanding of the wider world around them and how they see and experience it.

Some activities include colour tent therapy, using light boxes to explore objects, mirror play to increase understanding of self and others, time in the sensory room or tent, developing an awareness of lights and cause and effect by using switches to operate them. We will also use technology, such as iPads, the whiteboard and the eye gaze machine, for cause & effect, games and communication. We benefit from watching "Marvin's Story Time Adventure" too, accessing stories through visually stimulating characters.



## Treasure baskets

Exploring items in a treasure box is a great way for pupils to experience and investigate different objects. It's also a fun way to help them to understand the world around them.

Pupils use all their senses to explore an object, which can help them build brain connections. Treasure basket play is an excellent way of developing concentration skills and attention span. Pupils lead their learning, with staff available to facilitate pupils access to the objects. Staff describe and name objects and model playing with them, developing role play and imagination. Treasure baskets can help pupils start to think about objects mathematically. By focussing on properties such as weight and size, they can begin to experience and link new words to abstract concepts.



## Starbox

Starbox is based on Tacpac, an activity of communication through touch and music. Starbox draws together touch and music to create a structured activity of sensory exploration between two people. Music and textures relate to our topic and help develop an awareness of the world around them, builds anticipation and communication skills.

## Resonance boards

A resonance board is a board that you can sit or stand on to feel the vibrations of sounds.

It's made from a thin piece of plywood that is raised slightly from the floor by a wooden frame. Any movement on the surface of the board will produce amplified sound and matching vibrations.

Playing on a resonance board can also help pupils develop an understanding of how their actions can affect other things.



## Maths massage

Sensory maths massage is a fantastic way for pupils to "feel the maths"! Similar to Stabox and Dance massage, pupils experience a range of mathematical concepts, such as positional language, numbers, speed and size, through music and touch.

## Topic

Our focussed topic for this term is "All about my body". We will be learning about the names of different parts of our body and what we can do with them, independently or with support.





## Community & the Wider World

During daily Community and the Wider World, we foster an understanding of diverse cultures, perspectives and global issues. We promote active citizenship and engagement in local and global communities.

community

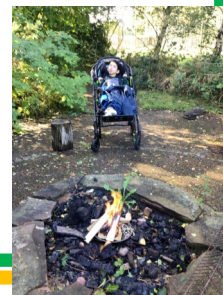


### Sensory explore

In sensory explore lessons we will be exploring the environment around us. We will be following tactile sensory trails around class, school and outside. We will find sensory stimuli that are highly motivating and develop our communication to express our preferences and what we want to explore.

### Forest School

Chestnut class will take part in Forest School on alternate Wednesdays, when Isobel Jellyman has them all day, with art in the afternoon. Please ensure pupils have warm clothes suitable for being outdoors and you don't mind getting dirty! It is a great opportunity for pupils to explore the natural environment



creative

### Creativity

During daily Creativity sessions, we cultivate creativity, imagination and artistic expression.



### Music with Matthew

We are lucky enough to have a weekly music lesson with Matthew, our very talented music teacher. We explore a wide range of musical instruments and genres, for a half term, building on awareness, anticipation, persistence and realisation. This is a favourite activity!

### Art

Isobel Jellyman takes Chestnut class for art every other week, developing skills to express themselves in a range of different mediums. Pupils will have opportunities to express themselves through artistic means throughout the week.

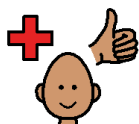
## Independence & Wellbeing

In Independence and wellbeing activities, we empower students to become independent thinkers and decision-makers. We promote physical and mental wellbeing, through healthy habits and self-care practices. We cultivate resilience, adaptability and self-confidence. Our topic in PSHE is different types of relationships, including family, friends and people who help us.

### Sensology

Sensology's aims are to wake up the five basic senses plus movement related sensory systems: the vestibular and the proprioceptive. The senses are stimulated and introduced individually and a familiar song/rhyme is used to cue in the session as well as children looking at themselves in a mirror.

wellbeing



### Laughter Yoga

Laughter yoga involves gentle stretching, chanting, clapping, eye contact, and body movements. Breathing exercises prepare the lungs for a good bout of laughter. Exercises combine acting, visualization techniques, and playfulness. We get a lot of vocalisations and interactions with their peers in this activity.

### Dance massage

Dance massage combines massage, music, and movement to create a sensory-rich experience. It's a form of non-verbal communication. The approach involves interactive, gentle massage movements synchronized with music, often incorporating colours and specific actions to enhance the sensory experience.

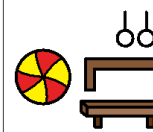
### Personal Care

During personal care activities, pupils will develop their awareness of their body and how to keep it clean. Pupils will communicate their preferences for personal care products and how they look.

## Physical Skills & Fitness

During Physical Skills and Fitness, we enhance gross and fine motor skills, through physical activities and exercises. We promote physical independence, an active lifestyle and physical fitness. In Chestnut class, we are working on pupils personalised physical programmes and targets throughout the school day.

physical & fitness



### Postural Care

Pupils are supported in their own individualised postural care profiles, to enable them to access their learning, whilst managing their positioning. If you would like more information about postural care, we can put you in contact with Sarah Clayton from Simple Stuff Works.

### Physiotherapy

Staff in class work with a pupil's named physiotherapist and with the family to follow individual physiotherapy programmes. For some pupils this will be in standing frames or others it might be stretches. Physios monitor and check in periodically

### Rebound Therapy

Our weekly rebound therapy sessions will be **Thursday mornings**. Rebound therapy is a great way for pupils to develop their physical skills and have fun, with gentle bouncing. We can only take pupils that have completed signed permission forms returned and risk assessments put in place for those conditions it applies to.

### Hydrotherapy

Our hydro session is **Tuesday afternoon!** To give each pupil a meaningful session in the water, we work on a rota. Please ensure that your child has their swimming costume, swim pad and towels with them each week. Pupils work on their individual physical targets, in warm water, with Reach & Rescue trained staff, as well as class staff too.

### Sensory Circuits

A sensory circuit is a structured series of physical activities designed to help pupils regulate their sensory input and achieve an optimal level of alertness for learning and other activities. These circuits typically involve three stages: alerting, organizing, and calming, and are incorporated into our daily routines, for pupils that need it.

### My Body My Movement

My body, my movement, is our sensory PE scheme of work. Each term, we focus on a different part of the body. For this term, we will focus on feet and then arms. Pupils explore different textures, materials and objects that are highly motivating, to encourage independent movement.

### Physibods

Physibods is a much loved physical activity, that supports body movement and sensory awareness through physiotherapy and music.

### Soundbath

A sound bath is a meditative experience where pupils are immersed in soothing sounds and vibrations produced by instruments like gongs, singing bowls, and chimes. Pupils really enjoy this session, relaxing and clearly communicating their likes and dislikes during the session.

I hope that you have found this guide to the activities that your child will be participating in during the week, helpful. During these activities, pupils will be working on their EHCP targets. On Fridays, pupils will be participating in activities that include spiritual development, social and moral development, cultural development and personal development. Every other week they will also join the rest of the primary classes for singing and music session with Matthew.

If you have any comments, questions or queries, please don't hesitate to get in contact with me.