

15th October 2026

Rivertree News



**Rivertree
Free School**
Dream • Discover • Develop

Amazon

Amazon Class have had a great start to the year. We have settled back in well and are becoming familiar with our class routines again. It has been lovely to see everyone reconnecting after the summer holidays, continuing to build relationships with familiar adults and peers, while also forming new relationships with pupils and staff who have joined us.

This term, we have been exploring our new topic, "The Me Project." In Art, we have used mirrors to look closely at ourselves, identifying our hair colour and creating paper plate faces. In PSHE, we have been learning about different parts of the body. In communication, we have also been exploring different methods of communication. In Cookery, we have enjoyed tasting frozen fruits and communicating which ones we like and dislike.

A definite highlight for Amazon Class is Monday! We

begin with travel training, taking the bus into the local community. We might visit the park or travel around Bedford, becoming familiar with local landmarks. In the afternoon, we go swimming, which continues to be a firm favourite! We end the day in the role-play room.

Imogen loves getting our swim bags ready throughout Monday, showing us just how much she looks forward to swimming.

Dillon has particularly enjoyed exploring our sensory tuff trays each day.

Ottie can request which video she would like next during choosing time in the immersion room and proudly self-registers as excited every morning!

We are incredibly proud of everyone and look forward to seeing what the rest of the term brings.



Brosna

In Brosna class we have been working hard at settling back into our routines in our new timetable and classroom.

In English we have been enjoying our stories; 'Give me Back my Bones' and 'Little Acorns'. We explored the names of the different bones and parts of the body and the life cycle of an Oak tree to help us sequence a story. There have been lots of fine motor activities, such as play dough disco and tracing premark making patterns. A lot of lessons have included using colour semantics to form simple and extended sentences, as well providing opportunities to work on answering simple who and what questions about an

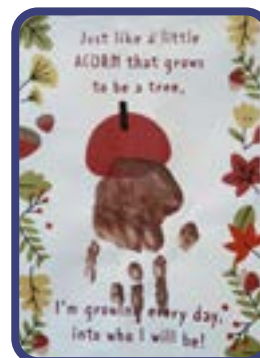
image or story. We then made some lovely artwork based on the story. Bailey says 'I liked painting. I liked writing'.

In maths we have been building up our understanding of place value, with some of us working to 1000! A key part of this has been recognising numbers using different ways of representing them, such as counters, base 10 or real life objects.

In My Travel Training we have been practising moving around the school safely in small groups, stopping when told by an adult. We've had great fun playing the stop, go game!

In Science we have been looking at the 5 senses, exploring the different parts of the body and what we can sense with them.

In PSHE we have been looking at recognising what should be private and what should not be. We've enjoyed looking in mirrors at our faces and exploring emotions through facial expressions too.





Bueno

Bueno Class have had a wonderful start to the new academic year. Our Bueno family has grown by one as we welcomed Babnit to join Rivertree Free School and Bueno class who has settled in superbly. It has been joyous to hear everyone's lovely summer holiday news with sharing of tales from all over the world.



It has been heart warming to see how the young people in Bueno class have missed each other over the summer holidays based on their excitement to reconnect and even stronger friendship bonds already in place.

Bueno Classroom had some 'sprucing up' during the holidays – the children have enjoyed adding their own touches during the first couple of weeks of term; artwork, birds for our reading den canopy; final touches to our class shop.

Bueno Class have been thoroughly enjoying weekly travel training and outdoor learning; Ampthill Forest is our favourite for foraging Autumn goods to bring back for our art / science lessons and sensory tray. **Ethan**, who found the world's largest stick, said he loved finding the tree snails and exploring the log dens. **Keanu** was extremely relaxed laying on a large log and listening to the sounds of the forest.



Mia-Rose also had an exciting trip on 29th September to the Higgins Museum - Art Gallery to locate her winning artwork which has been on display throughout the summer season. This artwork she completed in a school art workshop last academic year, well done!

We are super excited for the upcoming Halloween disco and pumpkin party which we (alongside Tisa class) are planning for the whole school including creating posters, shopping for decorations, resources, decorating and delivering the whole school celebration. **Mikael** stated, "I will be the DJ and photographer like last year".

We are very proud of everyone in Bueno Class this half term; their efforts, participation and enthusiasm. Well done and thank you!



Mekong

We have had a busy start to the new academic year in Mekong class and have been learning new class routines. We are beginning to recognise what happens at different part of our day.

Sensory regulation

We are having a focus on choosing tools to help us with our sensory regulation in the classroom and at school and are trying a number of tools and strategies to support us including: peanut ball, trampette, spinning chair, a tunnel, cushions and blankets, exercise ball, stepping stones, body sock, having a snack and going for a walk outside or around the school.

The children are beginning to select their own preferred tool in the mornings as they transition into class.

Good Morning routine

We are introducing new symbols and visuals to the children to help support them in understanding the routine of the day. One of the tools we have introduced is our 'Good Morning' symbol, which is shared between an adult and each of the children as part of our circle time routine. The children also look forward to our Hello song and Days of the week song too.

Attention Autism

One of our favourite times of the day is our Attention Autism session. We enjoy finding out what is in the bucket and then have a sensory attention grabbing activity using the tuff tray. This is helping us to develop our attention and focus during adult led activities.

Travel Training

Our travel training this term is focussed around calmly transitioning around different areas in school. We are always very excited when visiting different parts of the school such as the swimming pool, sensory room and immersion room. We are supporting the children to walk calmly next to an adult during these transitions. A particular walk the children enjoy is our outside routes which usually end up with a play in the MUGA.

We have had a busy start to the year and are looking forward to seeing what we learn next.



Limpopo

Pupils in Limpopo are settling in extremely well at their new school and new classroom!

We are enjoying the outside area and exploring tactile stories together from the Living Paintings Library. Gruffalo Granny book is becoming a favourite! [About Living Paintings - Living Paintings for Blind Children and Adults](#)

We are enjoying visitors from other classes practising their travel training. I and S enjoy interactions with pupils and visiting staff offering wide smiles!

H is getting back to physio and bench sitting at a table with an adult.

G has begun using the tablet to play songs independently using the App Smule piano.

E has been really engaged with our call and response resonance board activity of 'We're here at Rivertree!' by making movements with her hands, smiling, vocalising and snorting! (which of course we all find hilarious!)



Danube

What a fantastic first half term we have had in Danube, filled with new experiences, exciting learning and lots of opportunities to get to know ourselves and each other!

We have had a great start to the school year, and everyone has settled in really well. We have been getting used to our new lessons and routines, and those of us who are new have done brilliantly getting to know our new school setting.

This half term, our topic has been The Me Project, which has been all about exploring who we are and getting to know ourselves. We have enjoyed lots of fun and sensory activities along the way! In My Cookery, we have had great fun making and tasting different fruit smoothies. In My Art, we have been getting creative by exploring large mark making on the floor. We have also enjoyed some wonderful All About Me sensory stories, using mirrors to explore our reflections and learn more about ourselves.

We are so proud of how well everyone has settled in and embraced all the new experiences this half term. Next half term, our new topic is Celebrations! We are really looking forward to exploring different celebrations through lots of exciting, creative and sensory learning experiences.

Pupil voice: What do you like at school?

Noah – 'Zog!'

Leon – 'I like it' 'don't like (pointed to an orange)'

Azaya - 'Drawing!'



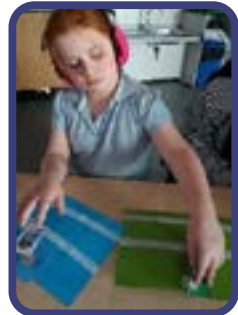
Sepik

It has been lovely to welcome the students back to school. In Sepik class we have been working on being comfortable as a group again and beginning to access lessons.

As part of our settling in we have been working on transitioning to different parts of the building as well as taking the bus out for drives around Bedford.

In lessons we have been working on our communication, requesting more, using stop and go with moving toys.

During circle time we have been working on identifying our own pictures and sharing how we are feeling.



Nile



All About Me – Settling In and Exploring Our World

What a fantastic start to the term we have had! The children have settled into school routines really well and it has been wonderful to see them becoming more confident, familiar with their surroundings and comfortable within their new routines.

Our topic this term has been “All About Me”, giving us lots of opportunities to explore ourselves, our bodies, our senses and the world around us. We have particularly enjoyed our “All About Me” sensory story, which has encouraged the children to explore different sights, sounds, textures and smells in a fun and engaging way.

During RSHE, we have been learning about our bodies and recognising different body parts. We have continued this learning through Art, creating colourful and imaginative pieces inspired by ourselves and the people around us.



We have also enjoyed lots of opportunities for outdoor learning. The children have been developing their confidence and independence through travel training walks around school and into the local community. These walks have helped us practise important skills such as following instructions and staying safe.

A particular highlight has been our visits to the park, where the children have enjoyed exploring, being active and spending time together outside of the classroom. These experiences have been fantastic for building confidence, communication and independence.

It has been lovely to see the children grow in confidence already and we are so proud of how well they have settled. We are looking forward to continuing our learning, exploring new experiences and watching the children flourish throughout the term!

Shinano



What a busy first four weeks we have had! The children have worked incredibly hard to settle into life in Shinano Class and learn our new classroom routines. We have been practising important skills such as good listening, following instructions, taking turns, working alongside our friends and becoming more independent. Already, we can see the children becoming more confident and comfortable within their learning environment, and it has been lovely to see new friendships beginning to develop.



Our first topic, ‘All About Me’, has been the perfect way for us to get to know each other and celebrate everything that makes us unique. Our English lessons have been linked to a range of texts that celebrate individuality, encouraging the children to think about what makes them special and recognise that everyone is different. We have used these stories as a starting point for lots of discussion, sharing ideas and developing our writing. The children have enjoyed writing about themselves, their personalities, their feelings and the things that are important to them.



Our Art learning has continued the ‘All About Me’ theme, with the children exploring different and creative ways of representing themselves. One of our favourite activities has been creating alternative self-portraits, encouraging the children to think beyond a traditional picture

of themselves and use their creativity to show their individual personalities. It has been wonderful to see the children's confidence grow as they express their own ideas and learn more about their classmates along the way.

We have also enjoyed taking our learning beyond the classroom whenever possible. Making the most of the recent good weather, the children took part in outdoor Maths activities, applying and developing their skills in a practical and engaging environment. Learning outside provided a fantastic opportunity to work collaboratively, solve problems and enjoy a different approach to our Maths lessons. As part of our independence and life skills learning, the children also enjoyed creating their own fruit smoothies. They worked together to prepare ingredients safely, make choices about flavours and follow instructions carefully, developing important skills whilst having great fun.

We are incredibly proud of the positive start everyone has made. Over just four weeks, we have already seen growing confidence, independence and a real sense of belonging within Shinano Class. The children have approached new experiences with enthusiasm and resilience, and we look forward to seeing them continue to flourish throughout the rest of the year. We cannot wait to see what the rest of the term brings!



Rhine



In Rhine class we have been settling into our new environment and learning our daily routine.

We have been working hard on all our physio and OT exercises as well as going in our walking frames and standing frames.

IM is showing lots of smiles when walking around the school meeting new people and having lovely interactions.



Rhine Class have been joining with Limpopo Class to have a sensory story about our bodies, where we are using our different senses to explore different stimuli. **MS** has shown a big interest in the lights and looking in the mirrors.

YA has been enjoying TacPac and shown this with body language and vocalisations.

The class have also been taking advantage of the good weather and spending time outside in our garden area, listening to the environmental sounds.

MA has liked listening to the classes in the garden next to ours. PE and Music lessons have been fun **EH** has shown some smiles when hearing the music played.

We are looking forward to the rest of this term and all the exciting things planned for next term.

Zambezi

Zambezi Class has had a brilliant first term in school, and the children have settled in really well. We are so proud of how they have adapted to their new environment and routines, building positive relationships with staff and friends.

This term, our topic has been All About Me. The children have enjoyed exploring different parts of the body through a range of practical and sensory activities. We have looked in mirrors to identify our features, explored body parts through songs and games, and developed our understanding of ourselves and others.

In Art, the children explored making marks with their bodies. They enjoyed using different body parts to create patterns and marks, experiencing a variety of sensory materials and textures. We have also been looking at our likes and dislikes, helping the children to make choices, communicate preferences, and learn more about themselves.

We have also begun our travel training sessions and have enjoyed going on bus trips into the local community. The children have been learning how to travel safely, sit appropriately on the bus, and explore different places in our local area. We are looking forward to visiting the park as part of our travel training adventures this term.

It has been a fantastic start to the year for Zambezi Class. The children have shown growing confidence, curiosity, and enthusiasm in their learning. We are incredibly proud of all they have achieved and look forward to seeing their continued progress throughout the year.

Pupil Voice:

Remmi confidently identified different body parts and repeated their names during our All About Me activities. **Mustafa** enthusiastically joined in with Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes, singing along and engaging with the actions.

Harry was excited during our body painting activity, jumping up and down with delight as he used his feet to make colourful marks.



Tigris

What a fantastic start to the year!

The pupils in Tigris Class have settled back into school brilliantly and we have had a wonderful first half term filled with learning, laughter, exploration and play. We are incredibly proud of how hard all of our pupils have worked. They have shown great determination when engaging in a wide range of lessons and activities and are making steady progress every day.

Communication Focus

This term, a focus has been communication, which has been taught through lots of fun, motivating and practical activities. Students have been learning and developing their communication skills through:

- British Sign Language (BSL)
- Core word symbols
- Core word songs
- Intensive Interaction
- Attention Autism
- Stories and sensory play
- RISE sessions
- Playtimes, snack times and lunchtime interactions
- Travel training and outdoor learning

Students have been practising important communication concepts such as stop, go, more, finished, I, want, yes, no, like, as well as developing their turn-taking and social interaction skills.

It has been particularly lovely to see students showing a growing interest in each other's play. Many of our learners are now actively trying to involve their peers in activities and are communicating with one another using gestures, BSL, symbols, facial expressions, body language and speech.

Celebrating Our Pupils

Aurora has continued to engage with communication activities and is developing her interactions through play and shared experiences. Always trying to encourage others to get involved in her play and communicating with her peers and staff in a wide range of ways (BSL, symbols, gestures and verbally).

Joel is making fantastic progress with communication. He is now making requests using full sentences, such as "Miss Garcha get spinney chair, please." He has also shown great improvement with turn-taking, verbally identifying whose turn it is and patiently waiting for his own turn.

Ariah is confidently communicating her wants and needs using full sentences, for example, "I want pink bubbles, please." She can recognise and read many of our communication symbols and is increasingly using polite language such as please, thank you and sorry independently.

Arlo is using his voice much more frequently to communicate with both staff and peers and is making excellent progress using BSL.

Eduard has been working hard on naming body parts and shapes and is using his voice more often to request items. He is showing increased confidence in initiating interactions and is independently saying "no, no" to decline activities or communicate that he does not want something.

Hamdan is doing an amazing job attempting to copy **sounds** and words. He is also independently using a growing range of BSL signs including want, I, more, finished, colours, no, jump and stop.

Kiyzer has been thoroughly enjoying his Intensive Interaction sessions and is making fantastic eye contact. We were especially proud when he signed "more" in his own adapted way several times during our visit to the park.

Leo is able to recognise and say lots of phonemes and is becoming increasingly confident communicating his wants and needs using BSL and symbols.

Mila is making excellent progress by independently pointing to and naming a range of items throughout the school day.

Zendaya is beginning to recognise several communication symbols, is thoroughly enjoying Intensive Interaction, is making fantastic eye contact and is starting to attempt copying words.

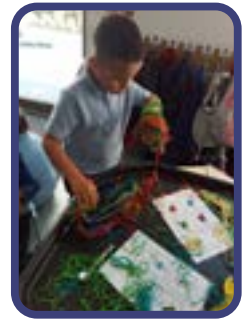
We are incredibly proud of all the children in Tigris Class and look forward to seeing their communication skills continue to flourish throughout the rest of the year!



Yarra



Yarra Class have had a busy and exciting first term. As part of our About Me topic, we have explored a range of creative activities, including creating self-portrait collages and paintings, sensory all about me stories. Using mirrors, photographs and visual supports to investigate facial features and developed their understanding of what makes each person unique. Priya smiled as she looked at her reflection in the mirror then waved the mirror in the air.

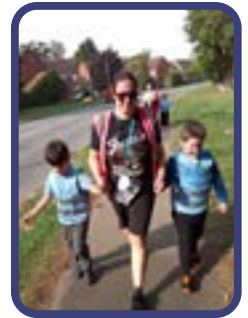


In Art, we explored colour through a variety of engaging sensory experiences. Experimenting with different materials and tools, including colourful spaghetti, rollers, stampers, paintbrushes, and their hands and fingers. Through these activities, they investigated how colours can be mixed and changed, encouraging curiosity, creativity and sensory exploration. **Ozair** smiled and vocalised as he used a paint brush to make lines on the bubble wrap.

We also enjoyed our first class community walk, where we explored the local area around school, wearing our high-visibility jackets and practised safe walking skills by holding hands with supporting adults. During the walk, we observed signs of seasonal change, collecting and examining leaves of different colours, finding pinecones of various sizes, and listening carefully to the sounds around us, including birds, passing vehicles and the crunching of leaves beneath our feet. **Kobe** waved his motivator and vocalised on the walk to show his engagement going on our first walk.



In our independence and cookery sessions, we have been learning about healthy and less healthy foods using a range of kitchen utensils to chop, mix and blend ingredients while making fruit smoothies, sandwiches and fruit salads. Beginning to develop an understanding of food items and their parts by matching pieces of pretend food together to create whole fruits and other food items. These activities have supported the development of independence, fine motor skills and early food preparation skills.



Yukon

Yukon Class are thoroughly enjoying our learning based on the theme The Me Project.

In English, we have been exploring an All About Me sensory story and learning about our senses, including tasting contrasting flavours and textures. During our sensory activities, **Alima** exclaimed, "Sour!" when tasting a lemon.

In Maths, we have been focusing on our number skills, including counting, representing numbers, and counting forwards and backwards. We have also been learning number rhymes through our fun and engaging Messy Maths sessions.

We have been practising our travel training both around school and in the local area. We are learning important road safety skills such as how to cross at a zebra crossing safely.

In Phonics, we have been working hard to learn our letters and sounds, practising letter formation and enjoying our weekly rhymes and songs.

We have been enjoying our swimming lessons, where we have been learning how to float on our backs, enter and exit the pool safely and join in with songs and rhymes. **Luca** sings "If you're happy and you know it, turn around!" as he practised turning in the pool.

In Food Technology, we have been following instructions to make delicious fruit smoothies. The class especially enjoyed turning on the blender and listening to the loud sounds. **Tommy** names the ingredients, saying, "Blueberries!" and "Milk!". He excitedly watched the blender mix everything together.

We are very proud of all the hard work, enthusiasm, and enjoyment Yukon Class have shown in their learning this half term. Keep up the fantastic work, Yukon Class!



Thames



In Thames class, we have been learning our topic 'All about me' through lots of play and fun, messy activities. We have created our names using paint, cut and stuck our own self-portraits and drew different emotions on a face using cornflour. We also created our own colour monsters after we enjoyed the story altogether.



We have also looked at likes and dislikes with lots of different types of food including adding cinnamon or ginger and other toppings to our Greek yoghurt, as well as trying lots of different fruits.

We have been trying very hard to use more communication boards to select what we want to play with and when we want more or we are finished. One of our favourite toys at the moment is Mr Potato head and learning the names of all the different body parts. We have also enjoyed going into our new role play room, which is currently set up like a house to help us practise our life skills.



We have been practising our travel training around school, going on colour hunts, toilet hunts and then venturing outdoors for a leaf hunt. We got to create some Autumn collages and leaf people from our natural finds. We have even been practising crossing the road safely, ready for when we go to the park. Our favourite place to visit is the big mound in forest school as we like to run up and down it.

Finally, we have all enjoyed growing in confidence in the water during swimming time and bouncing on balls during our physical wellbeing lessons.

Thames has had a good and exciting first half term. Well done



BILTT Pupil Fun Day



On Thursday 9 September, pupils and staff from across the trust came together at Grange Academy for an unforgettable day of fun and celebration!

The day was packed with exciting activities including inflatables, a bouncy castle, face painting, bubbles, an ice cream van, and special visits from Spiderman and Supergirl.

Pupils also enjoyed spending time with the animals at the Grange Academy farm, creating plenty of smiles and lasting memories along the way.



A huge thank you to everyone who helped make the day such a success. It was wonderful to see our trust community coming together to share a fantastic day of fun, friendship and laughter.

Wellbeing for Schools Award

As you may be aware, we are continuing to work towards achieving the Wellbeing for Schools Award. As part of the assessment process, we are keen to gather feedback from our school community to help us reflect on our strengths and identify any areas for development.

Before half term, we will be sending out a parent questionnaire and would greatly appreciate your participation.

We are also looking for a small number of parent volunteers to act as a parent voice contact as part of the award process. If you are interested in supporting this work, please let us know.

Rfs.safeguarding@bilft.org
01234 745200

Thank you for your continued support as we work towards enhancing wellbeing across our school community.



Family Support



For those families who may not know me, I would like to introduce myself. My name is Miss Bancroft, and I am the Family Support Worker here at Rivertree.

My role is to support pupils and their families by offering help within school and, where appropriate, by signposting or referring to external agencies, including food banks. I am also able to provide supporting letters for grant applications and other forms where additional support may be needed.

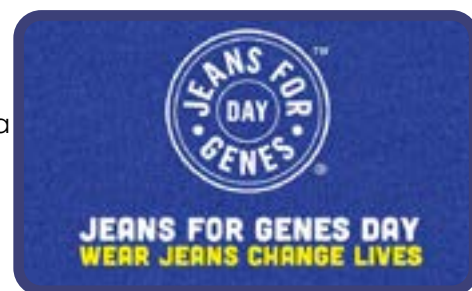
Please do not hesitate to get in touch via email or the main office if you feel this support would be helpful for you or your child.

I also host a coffee morning each half term and would be pleased to see as many of you as possible. The next coffee mornings will be on Thursday 22nd October and Friday 27th November, further information will be shared.

rfs.safeguarding@bilft.org
01234745200

Fundraising

Thank you to all pupils, families and staff who donated to Jeans for Genes a UK charity who support children and families with genetic conditions. You raised an amazing £51.50.



Headteacher's Message

What a wonderful start to the new school year at Rivertree. It has been a real pleasure to welcome our pupils and families back and to see our school community come together again.

I am incredibly proud of the way our pupils have settled, embraced new experiences and approached their learning with such enthusiasm. Thank you to our families for your continued support and to our dedicated staff team for making every day meaningful for our pupils.

We have so much to look forward to this year as we continue to help every child **Dream, Discover and Develop.**

Diary Dates

Last Day of Term - Friday 23rd October 2026

Half Term - Monday 26th October to Friday 30th October 2026

Pupils Return to School - Monday 2nd November 2026