Carnivals and Festivals
Zen Den Medium term planning for Autumn 1b 2026

Pathway:	**Pre-formal Engagement**

Cognition, Learning and Engagement

- Twice-weekly Attention Autism: bucket, attention builders and optional turn-taking
- Sensory stories about celebrations, lights, music and The Jolly Postman Christmas book
- Explore festival and carnival objects using cause-and-effect toys and sensory trays
- Match or anticipate familiar sounds, lights and actions

Communication and Interaction

- Respond to familiar celebration songs, sounds and rhythms
- Use gaze, gesture, objects of reference or symbols to request more/stop
- Practise shared attention and responding to own name
- Explore turn-taking through passing, shaking or activating instruments

Personal and Social Development

- Experience celebrations with peers in a predictable, low-arousal setting
- Show preferences for sounds, textures and lights
- Join short shared music and movement activities
- Practise waiting and sharing with adult support

My World Around Me

- Explore Diwali lights, Hanukkah candles and Christmas objects through sensory experiences
- Notice changes in light, colour, sound and movement
- Explore carnival objects and photographs from different cultures



My Physical World
PE/Gross and Fine Motor

- Daily sensory circuits and movement opportunities
- Dance and move to festival music; stop/start activities
- Reach, grasp, shake and release instruments
- Fine-motor exploration: ribbons, large shapes, stamping and posting
- Weekly PE session with specialist PE teacher

My Independence
Self-help/Life Skills

- Make choices using objects, visuals or core boards
- Participate in tidying and putting away equipment
- Practise simple routines: coat, handwashing and transitions
- Indicate help, more and finished

My Creativity
Music/Art/Drama

- Explore drums, shakers, bells and festive music
- Sensory painting, printing and light-based mark making
- Art work for whole school Christmas display (hoops and tree decorations)
- Join repeated actions in songs and sensory stories
- Where appropriate, join in class sing along performance which will be shared with families and carers

Enhanced Curriculum
Trips/Visits/Experiences

- Weekly library visits and festival-themed sensory stories
- Sensory celebration experience
- Explore school decorations and displays where appropriate
- Family trip to the park
- Christmas celebration

Pathway	Semi-formal Explorer

Cognition and Learning Early Development	Communication and Interaction	Personal and Social Development
• Read and sequence stories linked to celebrations, including The Jolly Postman Christmas • Use Colourful Semantics to write sentences about festival pictures • Learn and apply topic vocabulary: festival, celebrate, light, music, tradition • Use word banks, visuals and sentence stems for descriptions • Continue individual phonics, reading and writing interventions linked to targets	• Recognise, represent, order and compare numbers to 19 • Count forwards and backwards within 20 • Use concrete resources, pictorial models and number lines to add within 20 • Use concrete resources, pictorial models and number lines to subtract within 20 • Solve simple addition and subtraction problems using festival objects • Use ongoing assessment to identify gaps and adapt support	• Take turns and cooperate during games and practical activities • Respect that people celebrate different festivals and traditions • Recognise and communicate feelings during group celebrations • Develop independence, confidence and responsibility
My World Around Me		**My Physical World PE/Gross and Fine Motor**
• RE: Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Hanukkah and Christmas; compare traditions • Computing in ICT suite: mouse skills, Paint, digital cards and simple sequencing/programming where accessible • Explore the cultural significance of celebrations using stories and photographs		• Daily sensory circuit and movement breaks • Cut, paste, tear and join materials for festival products • Manipulate split pins, paper strips and simple fastenings with support • Dance, clap and move to festival rhythms • Weekly PE session with specialist PE teacher
My Independence Self-help/Life Skills	**My Creativity Music/Art/Drama**	**Enhanced Curriculum Trips/Visits/Experiences**
• Use checklists and visual prompts to organise resources • Follow safe routines for tools, ICT suite and classroom equipment • Practise independent tidying and caring for belongings • Make choices, ask for help and reflect on completed tasks	• Explore and play different carnival instruments • Create festive patterns, cards and decorations • Act out The Gingerbread Man with moving puppets • Where appropriate, join in class sing along performance which will be shared with families and carers	• Weekly library visits and festival-themed sensory stories • Sensory celebration experience • Explore school decorations and displays where appropriate • Family trip to the park • Christmas celebration • Pantomime • Orchestra performance

Pathway	Formal/Semi-formal Challenger

English	Maths	Personal and Social Development
• Read and sequence stories linked to celebrations, including The Jolly Postman Christmas • Use Colourful Semantics to write sentences about festival pictures • Learn and apply topic vocabulary: festival, celebrate, light, music, tradition • Use word banks, visuals and sentence stems for descriptions • Continue individual phonics, reading and writing interventions linked to targets	• Recognise, represent, order and compare numbers to 19 • Count forwards and backwards within 20 • Use concrete resources, pictorial models and number lines to add within 20 • Use concrete resources, pictorial models and number lines to subtract within 20 • Solve simple addition and subtraction problems using festival objects • Use ongoing assessment to identify gaps and adapt support	• Take turns and cooperate during games and practical activities • Respect that people celebrate different festivals and traditions • Recognise and communicate feelings during group celebrations Develop independence, confidence and responsibility

My World Around Me Science and Humanities		My Physical World PE/Gross and Fine Motor
• RE: Diwali, Eid al-Fitr, Hanukkah and Christmas; compare traditions • Computing in ICT suite: mouse skills, Paint, digital cards and simple sequencing/programming where accessible • Explore the cultural significance of celebrations using stories and photographs		• Daily sensory circuit and movement breaks • Cut, paste, tear and join materials for festival products • Manipulate split pins, paper strips and simple fastenings with support • Dance, clap and move to festival rhythms • Weekly PE session with specialist PE teacher

My Independence Life Skills	My Creativity Music/Art/Drama	Enhanced Curriculum Trips/Visits/Experiences
• Use checklists and visual prompts to organise resources • Follow safe routines for tools, ICT suite and classroom equipment • Practise independent tidying and caring for belongings • Make choices, ask for help and reflect on completed tasks	• Explore and play different carnival instruments • Create festive patterns, cards and decorations • Act out The Gingerbread Man with moving puppets • Where appropriate, join in class sing along performance which will be shared with families and carers • D&T: construct and evaluate carnival maracas and jointed gingerbread puppets • Investigate sound, materials, joining methods and moving mechanisms	• Weekly library visits and festival-themed sensory stories • Sensory celebration experience • Explore school decorations and displays where appropriate • Family trip to the park • Christmas celebration • Pantomime • Orchestra performance