



15th September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

To ensure Merry Hill's continued success, it is imperative that the entire community share enthusiastically in our ethos and underlying values. This week we met with staff and children to discuss the vision of our school. In an assembly with the children we talked about what they like about our school and how we could make it even better. With staff, we discussed the changing needs and context of our school to ensure our vision is current and that our school priorities will drive improvement. It is important that our vision is shaped by our entire learning community so we would love to hear from you. Attached is a link to our current vision, please can you read through and email the office with any ideas or adjustments that you feel should be made. <https://merryhill.org.uk/our-school/our-school-vision/>

KS1 Transitions

On behalf of the Key Stage One (Year One and Two) team, we would like to express our sincere appreciation for your patience as we have been navigating the transition to our new routines, particularly for our year one children who have moved to the other side of the building.

Thank you to those parents and carers who have faced delays in picking up their children at Ashfield in recent days, we genuinely appreciate your understanding during this period. Thank you to the Ashfield children, who have been affected, for their patience also. During these initial stages, our dedicated teachers are working tirelessly to ensure a smooth transition for our pupils. Your understanding and support are greatly valued as we continue to make these adjustments.

Inclusion Award

One of the main benefits of inclusive education is the recognition and nurture of diversity in communities. Inclusion brings different children together in a classroom, and through carefully planned and adapted provision, allows everyone the opportunity to grow and learn. We have dedicated time to training our staff and developing our practice here at Merry Hill, and we believe that inclusion is a strength of the school. We are currently working towards the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Inclusion Award (SENDIA) in order to validate our excellent inclusive practice. Undertaking this award will ensure that outstanding SEND inclusion sits at the heart of our school now and in the future. Thank you to all who have answered questionnaires, attended meetings or joined our working party. This collaborative approach has ensured we are providing the best possible education for all children here at Merry Hill. We will continue to keep you updated with our progress towards this award.

Anti-Racism Award

We continue with our journey towards achieving the Anti-Racist Award provided by Leeds Beckett University. We have been busy reviewing our curriculum offer to ensure that all the cultures within our school community are well celebrated. We also want our children to have

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opportunities to see the positive impact and contributions that their culture has had on our world. Our children aspire to do great things and we are passionate about children recognising themselves as future inspirations in time to come. As a staff team, we have begun a food club where members of staff bring in foods based on their backgrounds and culture. Mrs Shaz started off an amazing week with delicious Lamb biryani, lamb tagine and naan! We are also working on developing racial literacy amongst our staff and have developed a book study group. Our current read is, "Why Am I No Longer Talking to White People about Race?" by Reni Eddo-Lodge.

Road Safety

Following on from my correspondence regarding road safety and the well-being of our pupils sent on 6th September, I would like to update you on actions taken to address the issues raised. I have had meetings with neighbours to listen to their concerns and gathered feedback from our parents and carers, thank you to those who have provided this feedback. I have scheduled a meeting with other local Headteachers and Councillor Maxie Allen to share this feedback and to collectively think about strategies and solutions to improve the parking and congestion outside of our schools and ensure local residents are content. In the meantime, please continue to be considerate of our neighbours and ensure you are leaving driveways clear and parking in a way that keeps our children safe.

'Healthy Learners' – how we ensure we are ready to learn

It is normal for pupils to feel a little anxious about going back to school after the summer, but some children will find it particularly hard. If you are worried about how your child is managing the return to school, you can find advice and information on *Hertfordshire's Local Offer* website. [If your child is too anxious to go to school](#)

The *Health for Under 5s* website has lots of useful information and advice from trusted NHS professionals and is all about keeping your young child happy and healthy.

For parents whose children have just started school for the first time, you'll find a [helpful animation which has advice about how you can prepare your child \(and yourself\) for starting primary school](#).

You can also find information on topics such as fussy eating, difficult behaviour or [toilet training for children with sensory needs](#).

[Visit the Health for Under 5s website.](#)

'Ambitious Learners' – how we act when we learn

The children have continued working on their learning behaviours this week which includes learning how to listen effectively, how to take turns within a classroom setting and how to work collaboratively. These behaviours are continually developed over the course of the year and we will share with you the learning taking place.

'Curious Learners' – what we learn

Please click on the link below to have a peak at some of the wonderful learning that has taken place in your child's classroom this week:

<https://merryhill.org.uk/our-learning-community/year-group-blogs/>

Vocabulary (School Development Priority 2 – To build lifelong effective word learners)

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For those who are new to Merry Hill, I wanted to include some information about why vocabulary is so important and how we ensure our children become lifelong effective word learners.

Language impact on the curriculum : *Children who are behind in language development at age five are 6 times less likely to reach the expected standard in English at age eleven, and 11 times less likely to achieve the expected level in maths.* (Department for Education, December 2017)

At Merry Hill we address word gaps through our whole school vocabulary teaching approach thus enabling our children to access the curriculum, whilst simultaneously developing independent word learning skills so they become lifelong effective word learners. Last year we developed a culture of word learners through an introductory assembly, a vocabulary parade, word games and the introduction of word of the week. Our children are excited about words, they talk about language and are busy collecting words. We had 'Word Aware' training to ensure we were using an effective, research based whole school approach to teach vocabulary and this has been successfully rolled out from Reception to Year 2. This year we will extend the programme into Nursery to ensure we begin addressing any possible word gaps at the earliest stage. We will begin implementing short, in class vocabulary interventions to ensure all children are able to access the curriculum. We will also develop our independent word learners, further information regarding this will be shared throughout the year.

For more information on our whole school approach to teaching vocabulary and how you can help at home, please see our school website: <https://merryhill.org.uk/faqconc/how-do-we-teach-vocabulary-at-merry-hill/>

'Collaborative Learners' – our place in the world

Cost of Living

Each week we include a free (or inexpensive) activity that you might like to try with your family. If anyone has any tips or ideas of free or inexpensive activities you would like to share with our community, please let the office know. I hope you find these useful.

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South Oxhey Rocks/Sculpture Trail

Where?

Oxhey Woods Car Park

Watford, Northwood HA5 3YA

What?

Hunt for colourful painted stones/rocks in your local area, find them then re-hide them for someone else to find again! Paint your own stones with any designs and creations to hide. The more stones hidden, the more fun there will be! It is a free, fun activity that will get the whole family outside exercising without a phone or gadget in sight!

There is also a sculpture trail located here which is fun to explore with the family. It is a 1km circular walk so can be done with young children too!

<https://www.creativehertfordshire.com/oxhey-woods-sculpture-trail/>

NB Please be careful not to add gems or glitter as birds to any rocks you paint as birds and other wildlife may try to eat them. You can join the South Oxhey Rocks group on facebook for further information. The group holds themed events like the Halloween Spooky Stone Trail so it is worth joining the group to keep updated.



Have a lovely weekend!

Sincerely,

Ms Melissa Adams

Headteacher

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