



4th September 2026

Dear Parents/Carers,

A very warm welcome to the new school year at Merry Hill! I am delighted to be back and really looking forward to all that the year ahead will bring. There is always a wonderful sense of excitement at the start of a new school year, and the children's big smiles as they returned said it all! It has been fantastic to see everyone back together, ready for a new year of learning and friendship.

Over the past weeks, our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to make sure every part of our school environment is ready to welcome our children back. From classrooms and corridors to our wider school spaces, so much care and thought has gone into creating a welcoming and inspiring environment for everyone.

This first edition of Merry Hill Matters is designed to provide you with some helpful information about daily life at Merry Hill, as well as keeping you up to date with some of the things happening across our school.

Communication at Merry Hill

Good communication between home and school is really important to us. To help everyone know what to expect, here is a quick guide to how we communicate with families:

Merry Hill Matters (Friday) This weekly newsletter will keep you up to date with school information, help you learn more about our school priorities and how you can support your child's learning at home.

Dates and Reminders (Friday) Along with Merry Hill Matters, you will receive upcoming dates and key reminders.

Emails (Tuesday and Friday) Emails are sent twice a week to convey relevant and time-sensitive updates, while trying to avoid email overload.

Blogs (Friday) The weekly blogs share the children's learning to give you an insight into what's happening in the classroom and provide further guidance on how you can support learning at home.

Seesaw – This online platform is used in KS1 and shares learning, homework and reading progress. It is a two-way communication of your child's learning journey.

Tapestry – This online platform is used to share the learning within school across the Early Years and enables our parents/carers to respond and also share home learning and events.

Keeping in Touch with School

Attendance: Strong attendance is crucial for our pupils to benefit from their school experience, which includes their academic achievements, overall well-being, and wider life chances. Further information will be provided in an attendance letter we will send out shortly. **As a school we ask**

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that you phone or email on the first day of your child's absence – preferably before the start of the day – to inform us of the reason why your child is not in school. Please use this email address to send your message - information@merryhill.herts.sch.uk

General information (bad night sleep, fall on the way to school – anything that may impact the day) please speak to one of our team on the gate who will ensure the message is recorded in our communication book and passed on to the relevant team members.

Speaking to the Class Teacher (at the end of the school day): If you would like to speak to your child's class teacher at the end of the day, please wait until all children have been safely dismissed. This allows the teacher to give you their full attention and ensures that all children remain properly supervised.

Appointments with the Class Teacher, Headteacher, or Assistant Headteacher (including SENCO): To arrange a formal meeting with the class teacher, Headteacher, or Assistant Headteacher, including the SENCO, please contact the school office. You may do this by visiting in person, calling, or sending an email to schedule an appointment with the relevant member of staff on information@merryhill.herts.sch.uk

Our Exceptional Team at Merry Hill



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Phonics at Merry Hill

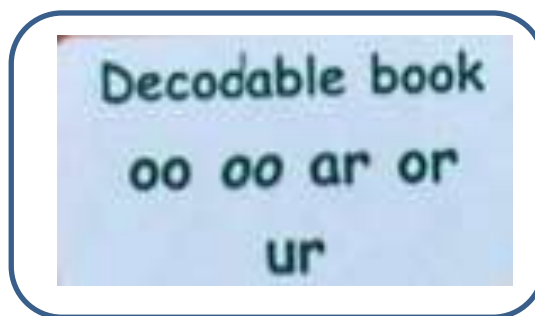
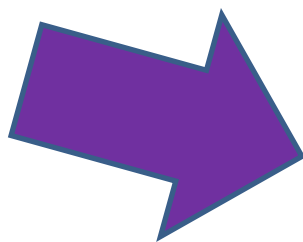
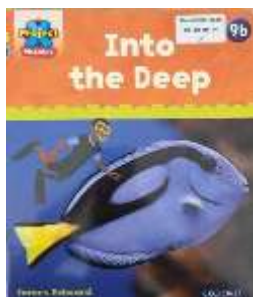
At Merry Hill, we use the ELS (Essentials Letters and Sounds) programme to teach phonics. There is written information as well as guidance videos about our whole school phonics programme available on our school website: <https://merryhill.org.uk/our-learning-community/our-curriculum/english/>

Reading Books

Reading

The children in KS1 will be bringing home their first reading books of the year. These include 2 books:

- 1 colour spot book for shared reading with an adult
- 1 fully decodable phonics book, which the children should be reading independently. The children will use their phonic skills to help them read unfamiliar words. The phonics decodable book has a label in the top right hand corner with the focus phonemes within the text.



These texts will be changed every Friday in school. We encourage you to read each decodable text multiple times to support the development of fluency. During each book read, please support your child to read each **sentence** three times to build fluency and automaticity.

Read 1 – Decode

Work out the words.

Read 2 – Fluency

Read smoothly and confidently.

Read 3 – Prosody

Read with expression and intonation.

Reception children will be bringing their reading books home very soon and we will have additional information and guidance for you to help support reading at home.

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Behaviour Curriculum - The Merry Hill Way

We are delighted to be entering our second year of The Merry Hill Way, our personalised behaviour curriculum designed to help every child flourish socially, emotionally and academically. At the heart of The Merry Hill Way are three simple rules: **READY • RESPECTFUL • SAFE**. These are brought to life through our core values of inclusion, responsibility, resilience and communication.

Through explicit teaching, mindfulness zones, and daily emotional literacy, children will learn how to manage their feelings, build positive relationships and make positive choices. We will dedicate specific time each half term to explicitly teach the children our behaviour curriculum to ensure they are happy, confident and ready to learn. We look forward to continuing this journey together and seeing our children continue to grow and truly embrace The Merry Hill Way.

Class Bears

Each class has a special bear that plays a central role in promoting oracy and strengthening the connection between home and school. Each week, a different child takes the bear home to enjoy exciting activities together then shares their experiences with their class. This provides children with a purposeful reason to speak, listen and develop their vocabulary as they describe their adventures. Parents/carers are encouraged to help their child to record the bear's adventures in the class book.

Vocabulary at Merry Hill

We are passionate about building lifelong effective word learners here at Merry Hill. We use an approach called 'Word Aware' to teach children vocabulary. Please see the school website for further information:

<https://merryhill.org.uk/fagconc/how-do-we-teach-vocabulary-at-merry-hill/>

Label everything – Lost property boxes

Please label all clothes to prevent lost or mixed up items. Having labelled clothing enables us to return items to the children and saves parents/carers time and money.

Reception and Nursery have a lost property box for unnamed clothes found in their environment.

KS1 lost property box - located outside the library in the KS1 building. This can be accessed at the end of the day should any item get misplaced.

Road Safety & Parking

Road safety around school is crucial to protect our children as they travel to and from school. Please avoid parking on the yellow lines at school so that the children can cross the road safely. School Lane becomes very congested so we advise walking to school where possible and, if driving, parking further from school and walking the remaining distance. The school car park is for staff members only.

Lunch Time and Halal Options

We offer a Halal meat option every Wednesday through our catering provider, HCL. If your child requires a Halal meal, please contact the school office at information@merryhill.herts.sch.uk so that we can ensure we have the correct dietary information recorded.

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Allergy Aware School

We are committed to being an allergy-aware school and ensuring that pupils with allergies are supported safely and inclusively throughout the school day. We ask parents and carers to keep us informed of any allergies and to provide up-to-date medical information and medication where required. In line with the latest Department for Education statutory guidance (July 2026), we are strengthening our arrangements for allergy awareness, staff training, risk management and emergency response. Our full **Allergy Safety Policy** will shortly be available on our school website, setting out how we work together with families to minimise risks and ensure that children with allergies can participate fully in school life.

Birthday Book Club and how we celebrate Birthdays

At Merry Hill, we love to celebrate children's birthdays during our class assemblies by giving them the chance to share a special book or magazine with their friends. In previous years, these donations have helped build up our school library. Now, we're focusing on enhancing classroom reading corners as well as the library. If your child wishes to donate a book or magazine for their birthday, they will present it during the assembly, and we'll add a special label with their name and birthday inside. This is a voluntary way for your child to share something special with their friends, and they'll be the first to read it! Some suggested magazines include Eco Kids Planet, First News, National Geographic Kids, Anorak, Amazing!, Horrible Histories, and more.

Have a restful weekend.

Sincerely,

Ms Melissa Adams
Headteacher

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