



5th September 2025




Dear Parents/Carers,

A warm welcome to the new school year at Merry Hill! We are thrilled to have your children with us and look forward to a year filled with learning, growth and excitement! This first Merry Hill Matters of the year is designed to provide you with some helpful information about daily life at Merry Hill.



Our Exceptional Team at Merry Hill

With the start of the school year, our children had the exciting opportunity to vote on their class names and they chose birds as their theme! We made this change to give children a stronger voice in shaping their school community and to foster a sense of belonging and identity. Birds symbolise freedom, growth and curiosity, qualities we hope to nurture in every pupil here at Merry Hill. It would be wonderful for the children to find out some interesting facts about their class bird ready to share with their friends.

Our Classes and Staff

	Ducklings am/pm Mrs Jones	Mrs Ogilvie-Jones Mrs Parker
	Teals & Kingfishers Mrs Gavriel Miss O'Donnell Miss Reuben	Mrs Barnes Mrs Hill Miss Ananda Mrs Bradbury Mrs Shahzad
	Moorhens Miss Honnor	Miss Senghani

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	<p>Hérons</p> <p>Miss Malin</p>	<p>Mrs Kemp</p>
	<p>Swans</p> <p>Miss Finch</p>	<p>Mrs Shahzad</p> <p>Mrs Rogerson</p>

Communication at Merry Hill

Collaborating with our learning community is fundamental to the achievement of our learners. The intention behind each mode of communication is outlined as follows:

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 avoiding 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.

How do you communicate with us?

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 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

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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 wish to speak with the class teacher at the end of the school day, we kindly ask that you wait until all the children have been dismissed. This is to ensure full compliance with health and safety regulations, maintain appropriate supervision of the class, and allow the teacher to give their undivided attention to the conversation once the children have safely departed.

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

Phonics at Merry Hill

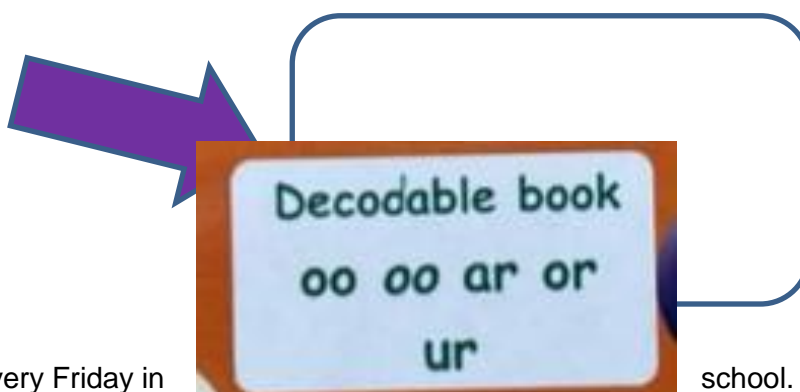
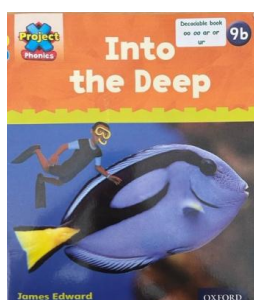
At Merry Hill, we use the ELS (Essentials Letters and Sounds) programme to teach phonics. There is written information as well as guidance videos about our whole school phonics programme available on our school website: <https://merryhill.org.uk/our-learning-community/our-curriculum/english/>

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.

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1. The first read to focus on **decoding**.
2. The second to focus on developing **fluency**.
3. The third read to focus on **prosody** (using appropriate 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.

Behaviour Curriculum - The Merry Hill Way

As mentioned on Tuesday, we began our brand new behaviour curriculum - The Merry Hill Way - this week is designed to help every child flourish socially, emotionally and academically. At its heart are our three simple rules: **Ready, Respectful** and **Safe**, supported by 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. Please see the attached letter for more information so that together we can support our children to be kind, confident and ready to learn.

Timetables

Your child/ren will be coming home with a paper copy of their class timetable.

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/faqconc/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

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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

Merry Hill is pleased to share that we offer a Halal meat option every Wednesday, through our catering company HCL. We are committed to meeting the diverse dietary needs of our pupils and acknowledge that some families require Halal meat for religious or cultural reasons. However, due to the higher costs of Halal meat and our limited budget, we kindly ask families whose children exclusively consume Halal meat for religious, dietary, or personal reasons to inform the school office at information@merryhill.herts.sch.uk. Your cooperation helps us ensure that we can provide this option while managing budget constraints.

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.

Good Bye and Thank you Mr Reid

Today we said a fond farewell and thank you to Mr Reid, who is retiring and moving up north to be closer to his son and granddaughter. Although he is beginning this exciting new chapter, Mr Reid has promised to pop back in to see us after his holiday next week so if you haven't yet had the chance to say goodbye, there will still be an opportunity.

We are so grateful for the time Mr Reid has spent with us at Merry Hill. As our caretaker, he looked after the school with dedication and pride, always going the extra mile to ensure everything was just right. His hard work, warmth, and good humour brought smiles to staff and children alike.

We wish him every happiness in his retirement and look forward to welcoming him back for visits in the future. On behalf of our entire team, we look forward to the new academic year and extend our appreciation for your invaluable support in ensuring a smooth return to school.

Have a restful weekend.

Sincerely,

Ms Melissa Adams
Headteacher

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