



8<sup>th</sup> September 2023

Dear Parents/Carers,

I would like to extend a warm and enthusiastic welcome to everyone. This week has been particularly special as I had the pleasure of meeting many of you, whether on the playground or during our induction sessions for our new Nursery and Reception children. It was also incredibly special to see familiar faces among our returning families and reuniting with families we haven't seen in a few years!

Our shared journey begins anew, guided by our Merry Hill Vision that encapsulates our aspirations: **"A Happy Face, A Learning Place, A Growing Space."** Our vision reminds us that not only are we committed to fostering an environment of happiness, but also to cultivating a space where learning flourishes and our Merry Hill pupils continue to grow. With this guiding principle in mind, let us embrace the opportunities and many successes that await, working together to realise our collective potential. Welcome back!

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce our team this year.

Office and Support Team	Nursery Team	Reception Team	Year 1	Year 2	Assistant Head teachers
Mrs Stephenson (Office Manager),  Mrs Krangel (Administration Support, <i>works mornings</i> ),  Mrs Tooley (Finance Officer, <i>works afternoons</i> ),  Mr I Reid (Site Manager)	Mrs Jones, Mrs Gavriel,  Mrs Hill, Mrs Currie	Elephants – Miss Bates  Zebras – Mrs Summers/ Miss O'Donnell  Miss Will, Mrs Ogilvie-Jones, Mrs Barnes, Mrs Rogerson  Mrs Mitzman	Lions – Miss Finch  Mrs Kemp  Panthers – Miss Honnor  Mrs Bradbury Mrs Shahzad & Miss Reuben	Giraffes – Miss Stringer and Mrs Din  Bears – Mrs Nicoll Mrs Goodwin and Mrs Earle,	Mr B Reid  Mrs Ineson  Mrs Hall (working remotely)

## 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 categorized according to our curriculum drivers. It enables you to share in our school vision and values and learn more about our school priorities. This will be sent out every Friday.

*A Happy Face, A Learning Place, A Growing Space*

**Dates and Reminders** – Along with Merry Hill Matters, on a Friday, you will receive upcoming dates and key reminders

**Emails (Tuesday and Friday)** – These messages serve as a means to convey relevant and time-sensitive updates.

**Blogs** – These weekly blogs share the children's learning from the week to give you an insight into what's happening in the classroom and provide further guidance on how you can support learning at home. These will also be ready for you on a Friday.

**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.

### Curriculum Drivers

At Merry Hill, we have developed a broad curriculum driven by the learning elements our children require to be successful life-long learners.

Our curriculum's distinctiveness lies in the foundation of our four key drivers: **Healthy Learners, Curious Learners, Ambitious Learners and Collaborative Learners.**

The newsletter is structured around these four drivers, serving as a means to emphasise these fundamental components of our curriculum. Our drivers are what make our Merry Hill curriculum unique.

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

Our youngest learners have embarked on their Merry Hill learning journey and are settling in beautifully. I can assure you that we are all committed to providing exceptional care for your child/ren during their time here at Merry Hill. Together, we will foster a deep and lasting passion for lifelong learning.

At the beginning of each school year, and in the previous academic year we allocate time to help the children and staff build connections and to enable our pupils to learn and understand their new environment and routines. This ensures the children feel comfortable and ready to learn; our healthy learners!

#### 'Curious Learners' – *what we learn*

Each week the class teachers post blogs, which enable you to find out more about our education offer and reinforce learning at home. Please click on the link below to see the wonderful learning that has taken place over the week.

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

### Phonics

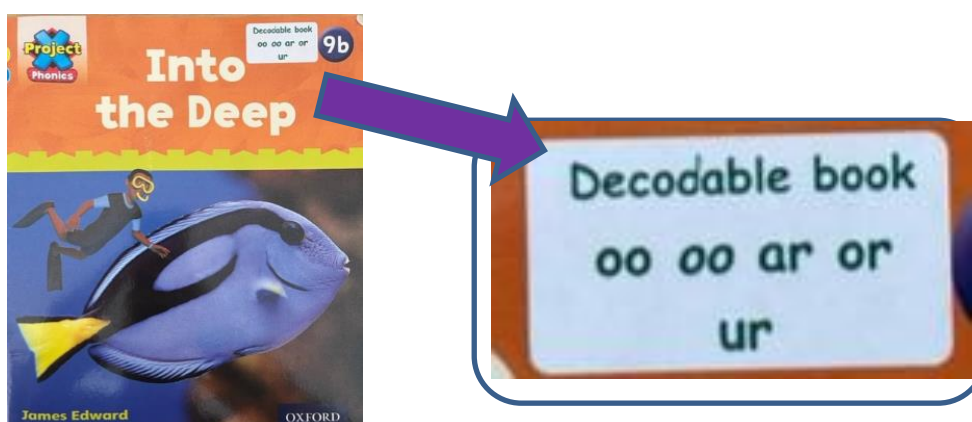
*A Happy Face, A Learning Place, A Growing Space*

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

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 phonics book, which is a fully decodable text, which the children should be able to read 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.



Please spend some time this week practising reading with your child. There will be more information coming out to you regarding reading books. These texts will be changed every Friday in school. We encourage you to read each decodable text 4 times focussing on a different reading skill each time. Please watch this video to guide you through each of the 4 skills:

<https://youtu.be/RHDaHaSAjPI?si=QnDcfPhN4Q45sUh>

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.

## Vocabulary

One of our school priorities is 'To build lifelong effective word learners' and we are now in our second year of implementing 'Word Aware' which is a whole school approach to teaching vocabulary. Please see the school website for further information:

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

### 'Ambitious Learners' – how we act when we learn

Throughout this week, our pupils have worked hard to enhance their learning behaviours and already their progress is truly commendable! We have held assemblies and classroom discussions to help shape our successful school days and enjoyable playtimes. We have also taken the opportunity to address conflict resolution strategies which we can use if we have a disagreement with a friend, and we have reintroduced the Zones of Regulation. You can find further information about the zones of regulation here:

*A Happy Face, A Learning Place, A Growing Space*

<https://merryhill.org.uk/our-learning-community/home-learning-blogs-and-extra-activities/emotional-wellbeing/>

Our team celebrates and acknowledges children whenever they demonstrate exemplary behaviour, and this consistent positive reinforcement contributes to the nurturing atmosphere that Merry Hill holds dear. It is important to ensure the children feel safe and comfortable at school, which is why we dedicate time establishing positive behaviours at the beginning of term, and reinforce throughout the year.

### **'Collaborative Learners' – our place in the world**

At Merry Hill, we are dedicated to nurturing our pupils to develop a holistic set of values, helping them to understand their place within the world, and empowering them to make positive contributions to society.

Currently we are actively pursuing both the 'Anti-Racism Award' and 'The Inclusion Award', and we will keep you updated on our progress towards achieving these important recognitions.

We are incredibly fortunate to have parents and carers who actively support and engage in our school's life and their children's educational journey. Our governing body, staff and I are dedicated to upholding this exceptional reputation and working collaboratively as a cohesive learning community to help our young learners reach their fullest potential.

Our ultimate goal is to ensure that every member of our community feels safe and happy and that we create a sense of belonging here at Merry Hill. To achieve this, we place great importance on our partnership with parents. Throughout the year, we will host various events such as parent sessions, workshops, coffee mornings, celebrating success sessions and more. We value your participation in these events as we work together to create a happy, thriving and inclusive environment.

### **Attendance**

And this leads me to the topic of 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.

According to the law, EVERY CHILD of compulsory school age is entitled to receive a suitable, full-time education that aligns with their age, capabilities and any special educational requirements they may have. It is the legal duty of every parent to ensure their child receives this education either by attending a school or through alternative educational arrangements.

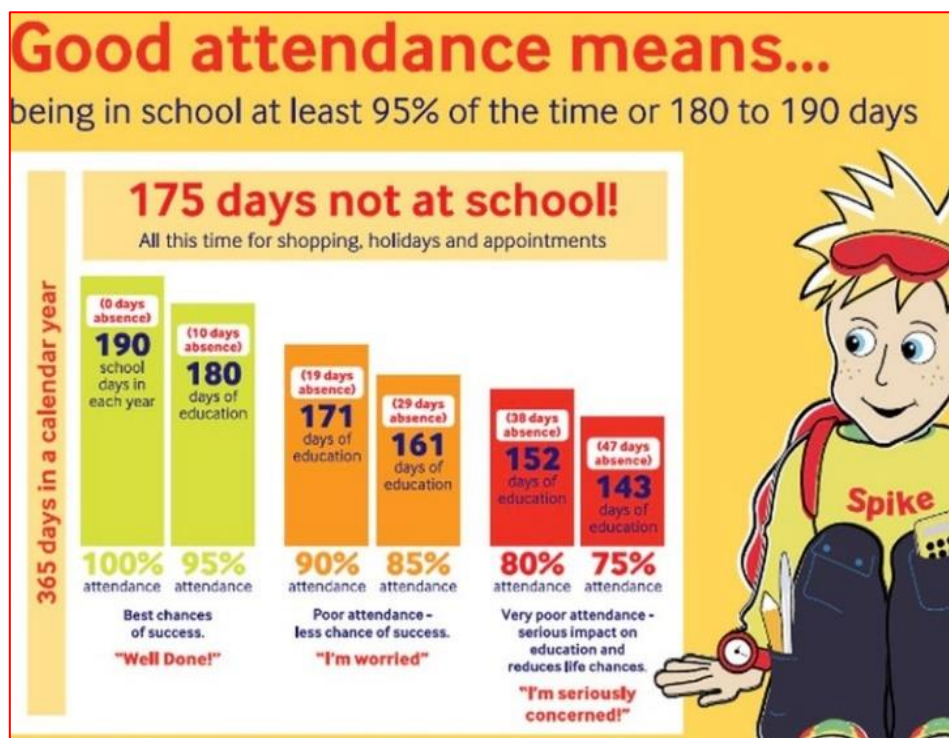
This week Professor Chris Whitty, the Chief Medical Officer, alongside other health professionals, wrote to schools to provide a public health perspective on illness and school attendance. The letter says that it is usually appropriate for pupils to attend school with mild respiratory illnesses, including general cold symptoms. Please see the NHS guidance if you are unsure whether to send your child to school due to illness. [Is my child too ill for school? - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/when-to-keep-child-at-home/)

Improving attendance is a collective responsibility. We want to work with you to ensure your child's attendance is the best it can be. We will ensure Merry Hill is a calm, orderly, safe, and supportive environment where your children want to be and are keen and ready to learn.

**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 why your child is not in school. We analyse data**

*A Happy Face, A Learning Place, A Growing Space*

to ensure any dips in attendance are acted upon immediately so that we can work together to keep attendance high. If you need support to improve your child's attendance, please be assured that we will happily work alongside you to remove any barriers and support you and your child.



### Cost of Living

Each week we include a free/ minimal cost activity that you might like to try after school, over the weekend or during the holidays. 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.

#### London Theatre Week

If you are interested in watching a West End show at a discounted rate, please see the link below:  
<https://www.londontheatre.co.uk/whats-on/london-theatre-week>

*A Happy Face, A Learning Place, A Growing Space*





Our kitchen team have been very creative this week which has put a smile on the children's faces! The classroom environments have been carefully created to ensure they are welcoming and support the children's learning and well-being. Thank you to all of the staff at Merry Hill for their hard work and dedication; they always go the extra mile to ensure our children are happy here at Merry Hill and I feel honoured to lead this amazing team!

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

*A Happy Face, A Learning Place, A Growing Space*