



MERRYLANDS

PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

SPRING TERM – FRIDAY 6TH FEBRUARY 2026

MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL – MRS PRYER

Dear Parents/Carers,

This week we celebrated National Storytelling Week. The children have enjoyed listening to different stories as well as writing collaborative stories between different year groups. The children in KS1 and KS2 also participated in a National Literacy Trust live storytelling workshop which was led by authors/storytellers who also have a keen interest in music.

Across the school this week, children in Reception have been exploring a poem called 'Earthworms' while the children in Nursery completed a range of activities linked to Jack and the Beanstalk. Year 1 have been investigating different materials in science and Year 2 have been finding out who lived in a castle and what their roles were. Year 3 have been exploring magnets while Year 4 have been using map symbols. Year 5 found out about Anglo-Saxon art, culture, law and justice while Year 6 learnt about Emmeline Pankhurst and the Suffragettes. The children in the ASC have been learning about grouping and sharing in maths while the children in the Nest have completed a range of activities linked to the story 'Spot's Snowy Day'.

Thank you to all the parents/carers who attended parent consultation meetings this week. It is really important for us to share information with you regarding your child's progress throughout the year. As always, if you have any queries or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact the school or speak to your child's class teacher in the first instance.

Next week we are looking forward to Safer Internet Day, Children's Mental Health Week and Chinese New Year special dinner.

I hope you all have a great weekend!



School Attendance Target: 95.00 %



This week's attendance: 93.15%

The class with the best attendance in KS1 was Nursery with 96.25%

The class with the best attendance in KS2 was Mrs Almond's Class with 97.33%

If your child is absent, contact must be made to the School Office EVERY school day that your child is absent.

Please report your child's absence by phone 01268 417893, ParentMail or by email: admin@merrylands-pri.essex.sch.uk.

STAR OF THE WEEK CERTIFICATE

FOCUS : RESPECT

Nursery: Ethan M

Reception, Mrs Anthony: George H

Reception, Mrs Sullivan: Ollie F

Reception, Miss Bagridge: Dominic D

Year 1, Mrs King: Albina G

Year 1, Mrs Camoccio: Lexi A

Year 1, Mrs Andrade: Ocean S

Year 2, Mrs Didham: Kane S

Year 2, Miss Milne: Arabella G

Year 2, Mrs Christie/Mrs Cooper: Maisie B

Year 3, Mrs Almond: Jack W

Year 3, Miss Gilmore: Gagu D

Year 3, Miss Medina: Theo M

Year 4, Miss Lee: Elbiee T

Year 4, Miss Miller: Cody A

Year 4, Miss Atkin: Ellie L

Year 5, Miss Day: Luca V

Year 5, Mr Taylor: Vinnie L

Year 5, Miss Osborne: Zac A

Year 6, Miss White: Evan P

Year 6, Mrs Thour: Leo H

BADGES



Our Merrylands badges are given to the pupils who demonstrate the school values at all times.

They are good role models to other pupils and work hard to improve every single day. They try their best and persevere in all lessons, complete homework on time, have good school attendance and show kindness to their peers.

Reception	Harley Y
Year 1	Acasia P
Year 2	Jacob L
Year 3	Murtaza H
Year 4	Kevin G
Year 5	Annie-M G
Year 6	Lucas L

UPCOMING DIARY DATES

FEBRUARY

11.02.26 Safer Internet Day

13.02.26 Chinese New Year Special Lunch

16.02.26 February Half Term

23.02.26 Children return back to School



RESPECT

KINDNESS

PERSEVERANCE



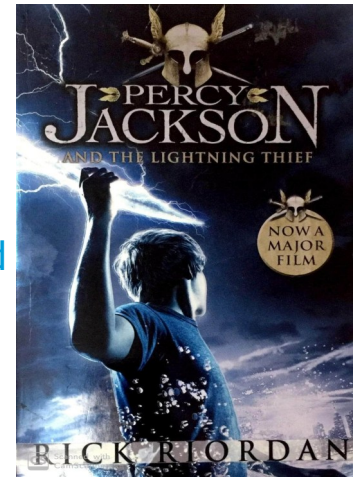
BOOK OF THE WEEK



Year 5, Mr Taylor's class are reading Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief by Rick Riordan. In their English lessons, the children wrote a narrative using a mythical creature as their starting point.

The children wanted to find out what happened next so we decided to read it as a class book at the end of the day and the children have been really enjoying the story.

Wiktorija said, "I like the book because it is fun and I like the mythical creatures involved." Emily said, "I really like Percy Jackson because there is lots of fighting and lots of adventure."



ACHIEVEMENTS



On Sunday 1st February, Emily L took part in a majorette competition. She performed three routines: Dazzle Solo, Dazzle Trio, and Ribbon Solo. She placed 3rd in her Ribbon Solo and 1st in Dazzle Trio. Well Done Emily!

At the weekend, Teddy in Year 5 won Player of the Match for Perry Street Blue after a very rainy match! Teddy played amazingly and showed real sportsmanship.

Perry Street Blue are currently 10 games unbeaten, 5 games drawn, 5 games won!



ECO CHAMPIONS

This week Nuwair and Emilia went to Downham Primary School to discuss our eco-action plan.

As a school our focused actions are looking at recycling and protecting marine life.

We also discussed phrases we would like to share with our eco committee.

Nuwair's message was: We carry the weight on our shoulders!

Emilia's message was : Help our place and leave no trace!



RESPECT

KINDNESS

PERSEVERANCE

On Monday 9th February 2026 children will return to school on Week 3.



Please ensure all school lunches are paid for in advance on ScoPay.



Please let the office staff know if there are any changes to your child's dietary needs.

L
U
N
C
H
T
I
M
E

Lighter Bites



OUR LIGHTER LUNCH OPTIONS OF JACKET POTATO & HAM OR CHEESE BAGUETTE ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL PUPILS EVERYDAY



MONDAY
TUESDAY
WEDNESDAY
THURSDAY
FRIDAY

WEEK 1

CHICKEN FAJITA WRAP
QUORN FAJITA WRAP
WITH POTATO CUBES & SALAD BAR
DESSERT - FRESH FRUIT & YOGURT

SAUSAGE ROLL
VEGAN ROLL

WITH SMILEY FACES & SPAGHETTI LOOPS
DESSERT - HOMEMADE ICED SPRINKLE CAKE
FRESH FRUIT & YOGURT

HOMEMADE CHICKEN PIE
QUORN & VEGETABLE PIE

WITH SAUTE POTATOES, CARROTS & GRAVY
DESSERT - FLAPJACK
FRESH FRUIT & YOGHURT

CHEESE & TOMATO PIZZA
WITH PASTA IN HOMEMADE TOMATO SAUCE & SALAD BAR
DESSERT - FRUIT JELLY
FRESH FRUIT

FISH FINGERS
CHEDDAR WHIRL

WITH CHIPS & BAKED BEANS
DESSERT - STRAWBERRY SWIRL MOUSSE
FRESH FRUIT & YOGURT

WEEK 2

BEEF MEATBALLS
VEGAN MEATBALLS

WITH PASTA IN HOMEMADE TOMATO SAUCE & PEAS
DESSERT - AMERICAN PANCAKES & GOLDEN SYRUP
FRESH FRUIT & YOGURT

BUTCHERS CHICKEN NUGGETS
VEGETABLE NUGGETS

WITH CHIPS & BAKED BEANS
DESSERT - HOMEMADE SPONGE CAKE & CUSTARD
FRESH FRUIT & YOGHURT

BUTCHERS PORK SAUSAGE
VEGAN SAUSAGES

WITH MASH POTATO, YORKSHIRE PUDDING, PEAS, CARROTS & GRAVY
DESSERT - FRUIT JELLY
FRESH FRUIT

CHICKEN CURRY
VEGETABLE CURRY

WITH STEAMED RICE & SWEETCORN
DESSERT - GOLDEN OAT FLAPJACK
FRESH FRUIT & YOGURT

BATTERED FISH
VEGETABLE FINGERS

WITH SMILEY FACES & PEAS
DESSERT - ICE CREAM
FRESH FRUIT & YOGURT

WEEK 3

BREADED CHICKEN BURGER
QUORN BURGER

WITH CHIPS & SALAD BAR
DESSERT - HOMEMADE CHOCOLATE SPRINKLE CAKE
FRESH FRUIT + YOGURT

BACON MACARONI CHEESE
MACARONI CHEESE

WITH PEAS
DESSERT - SEASONAL FRUIT & YOGHURT

BUTCHERS ROAST CHICKEN
QUORN FILLET

WITH ROAST POTATOES, YORKSHIRE PUDDING, GREEN BEANS, CARROTS & GRAVY
DESSERT - FRUIT JELLY

BEEF BOLOGNESE
VEGETABLE BOLOGNESE

WITH FUSILLI PASTA & MIXED VEGETABLES
DESSERT - HOMEMADE FLAPJACK
FRESH FRUIT + YOGURT

FISH FINGERS
CHEESE OMELETTE

WITH POTATO WEDGES & SPAGHETTI HOOPS
DESSERT - CHOCOLATE SWIRL MOUSSE
FRESH FRUIT & YOGURT

**National
Literacy
Trust**

Soundtrack Your Story

Playful storytelling at home
(KS1 or 2)

National Storytelling Week

Change your story

Creating stories together can be fun and relaxing. Making up stories using your imagination, things you see around you, and your memories helps develop language skills. Try creating your own sound-story with the activities below - there's no right or wrong way!

Collecting everyday sounds

When you are next outside, perhaps walking to school or in the park, try noticing (and maybe recording) some of the sounds you hear around you. You might hear dogs barking, a train in the distance or footsteps crunching. Try making the sounds with your own voices too.

When you get home, pick the sounds you like best and imagine what could be happening in a story with those sounds. Who or what is making the noise? Where is it happening?

How does the sound fit into your story world: is it a clue, a warning or part of an adventure? Tell or write your story.

In partnership with

**GO
ALL
IN.**

National
Year of
Reading
2026



Storytelling games to play at home

Try out these storytelling games at home with a family member or friend.

ABC story-making

Create a story together from thin air! You'll need two or more players. One person starts with a sentence beginning with "A," the next continues with a sentence starting with "B," and so on through the alphabet. Take turns adding sentences to see where your story goes.

Now, bring your story to life with sound. Can you add a rhythm, sound effect or background beat to match what is happening? Let the words become the soundtrack to your imagination!

Storytelling with real stories

Ask a friend or family member to tell you a story about their life. Prompt with questions, e.g., "What was the naughtiest thing you did when you were a child?" or "What is the funniest thing that's happened to you?" Then, tell the story to someone else, adding extra bits to make it more dramatic.

As you retell the story, think about the sounds that would go with it - laughter, footsteps, music from the time or even a dramatic drum roll. Think about the activity where you heard sounds on your walk and collected your own sound library. Use the sounds in your made-up tale to make the memory sing!

Story-making with objects

Collect 6–8 random small objects in a box or bag. You can use anything - a teddy, a coin or a fork. Take it in turns to pick an object without looking and use it to make up a story together. For example, if you take out a teddy, you could say, "Once upon a time, there was a tiny bear who..." Then, take out another object and decide what happens next: "Once upon a time, there was a tiny bear who found a shiny, gold coin. He picked it up and..." Build a story using all the objects.

As each object appears, think about what it sounds like in real-life, or what it might sound like in your imagination. Could the teddy hum a tune or could you say "mmm" as if you're enjoying food when you pick up your fork? Layer these sounds to create the perfect soundtrack to your story.

Forest School

What to Wear



Waterproof Jacket
with hood



Warm Hat:
Beanie or
Sun Hat



Long Sleeves:
T-shirt or
fleece

**Layers to Stay
Warm**
(Fleece, jumper)

prasers:



**Waterproof
Trousers**



Sturdy Boots:
Wellies or
Hiking Boots



Old Clothes



Woolly Socks



**Gloves for
Cold Days**



**Sun Cream &
Sun Hat** (in hot weather)

What Parents & Educators Need to Know about WHATSAPP

AGE RESTRICTION
13+

WHAT ARE THE RISKS?

WhatsApp is a free messaging service owned by Meta which allows users to send text and voice messages, make video calls, share multimedia – such as images, videos, documents and polls – and have group chats. WhatsApp messages are encrypted, meaning only the sender and the recipient can view what is sent. While this privacy may sound attractive on paper, this app comes with several associated risks that must be considered – especially for younger users.

GROUP CHATS

Group chats let friends talk together but can pose problems for young users. They might feel excluded – like discovering events they weren't invited to. Hurtful comments can also escalate quickly, as more people join in, amplifying the impact through a wider audience.

EVOLVING SCAMS

WhatsApp's popularity makes it attractive to scammers. Tactics include impersonating a child in an 'emergency' to request money, or triggering a login code, then pretending to be WhatsApp and asking for it – giving them access to private messages and personal data.

CHANNELS

'Channels' let users follow topics anonymously, interacting only through polls or emoji reactions. However, fake channels can mimic real ones, spreading misinformation, hate speech, or phishing for personal data. WhatsApp may also collect and share channel-following info with third parties, raising privacy issues.

DISAPPEARING MESSAGES

Disappearing messages help share sensitive info, but young people may wrongly assume they're fully private. Senders can opt for their message to vanish after 24 hours, 7 days, or 90 days – or for media, after one view. However, recipients can still save them by bookmarking or taking screenshots, reducing their privacy.

FAKE NEWS

WhatsApp's simplicity makes sharing news quick – accurate or not. To help curb misinformation, messages forwarded over five times now show a 'Forwarded many times' label with a double arrow. This alerts users that the message isn't original and may be unreliable.

CHAT LOCK

The new 'Chat lock' feature lets users store specific messages in a separate passcode- or biometrically-protected folder. While useful for privacy, it could be misused by younger users to hide conversations or content they know parents and educators might find inappropriate, including age-restricted material.

VISIBLE LOCATION

WhatsApp's 'live location' feature helps friends meet up or parents check a child's route home. However, anyone in a child's group chats can track their location, potentially revealing their home address or regular travel patterns to strangers.

AI INTEGRATION

Meta AI on WhatsApp poses risks to children, including exposure to misinformation, inappropriate content, and data privacy issues. AI responses may be inaccurate, and kids might share personal information unknowingly. It can also hinder critical thinking by offering ready-made answers.

Advice for Parents & Educators

EMPHASISE CAUTION

Encourage children to treat unexpected messages with caution. Get them to consider, for example, whether it sounds like something a friend or relative would really send them. Make sure they know never to share personal details over WhatsApp, and to be wary of clicking on any links in messages. Setting up two-step verification adds a further layer of protection to their WhatsApp account.

THINK BEFORE SHARING

Help children understand why it's important to stop and think before posting or forwarding something on WhatsApp. It's easy – and all too common – for content sent to one user to then be shared more widely, and even publicly on social media. Encourage them to consider how an ill-judged message might damage their reputation or upset a friend who sent something to them in confidence.

ADJUST THE SETTINGS

It's wise to change a child's WhatsApp settings to specify which of their contacts can add them to group chats without needing approval. To do this, go to 'Privacy', then 'Groups'. You can give permission to 'My Contacts' or 'My Contacts Except...'. Additionally, if the child needs to use 'live location', emphasise that they should enable this function for only as long as they need – and then turn it off.

CHAT ABOUT PRIVACY

Have a conversation with youngsters about how they're using WhatsApp, emphasising that it's for their own safety. If you spot a 'Locked Chats' folder, you might want to talk about the sort of messages that are in there, who they're with and why they have been hidden. Also, if a young user has sent any 'view once' content, discuss their reasons for using this feature.

Meet Our Expert

Dr Claire Sutherland is an online safety consultant, educator and researcher who has developed and implemented anti-bullying and cyber safety policies for schools. She has written various academic papers and carried out research for the Australian Government comparing internet use and sexting behaviour of young people in the UK, USA and Australia.



#WakeUpWednesday

The National College