



MERRYLANDS

PRIMARY SCHOOL AND NURSERY

SPRING TERM – FRIDAY 13TH FEBRUARY 2026

MESSAGE FROM HEAD OF SCHOOL – MRS PRYER

Dear Parents/Carers,

We have come to the end of a busy half term and what a week we have had! On Tuesday the children joined live online lessons based on using AI and the reliability of information found on the internet as part of Safer Internet day. The NSPCC has a lot of information about online safety including advice on setting up parental controls, speaking to children about AI and using social media. For further information see the website: <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/keeping-children-safe/online-safety/>

Also this week, Year 2 went on a trip to Hedingham Castle, Nursery and Reception participated in a Chinese New Year workshop and Year 1 had a workshop about famous explorers. Children from Year 2 and Year 6 attended the Trust Spelling Bee competition while children across the school completed activities linked to Children's Mental Health Week. We also had a special dinner for Chinese New Year.

The end of the week finished with much singing and dancing at the discos. The children had a fantastic time. Thank you to Friends of Merrylands for organising the discos and to everyone who volunteered to help. Supporting fundraising events like this really helps us to provide more great opportunities for the children so thank you to everyone who bought a ticket.

Thank you also to everyone who voted in the parent governor election. I am pleased to share that Craig Brookes will be joining the school's governing body next term.

I hope that you and your family have a great half term break and I look forward to seeing everyone on Monday 23rd February.



School Attendance Target: 95.00 %



This week's attendance: 94.87%

The class with the best attendance in KS1 was Mrs Camoccio's Class with 99.56%

The class with the best attendance in KS2 was Mr Taylor's Class with 97.78%

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 : KINDNESS

Nursery: Amayah A

Nest: Jonathan F-V

Reception, Mrs Anthony: Reed S

Reception, Mrs Sullivan: John W

Reception, Miss Bagridge: Iroh D

Year 1, Mrs King: Juvan A

Year 1, Mrs Camoccio: Rosie R

Year 1, Mrs Andrade: Felicia P

Year 2, Mrs Didham: Roxanne O

Year 2, Miss Milne: Mya M

Year 2, Mrs Christie/Mrs Cooper: Frankie B

Year 3, Mrs Almond: Victoria A

Year 3, Miss Gilmore: Harley W

Year 3, Miss Medina: Piper M

Year 4, Miss Lee: Chelsea T-H

Year 4, Miss Miller: Benas B

Year 4, Miss Atkin: Elayna H

Year 5, Miss Day: Rayyan M

Year 5, Mr Taylor: Samantha E

Year 5, Miss Osborne: Zac A

Year 6, Miss White: Lily-Mae P

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	Ayan C
Year 1	Karlo B
Year 2	Freddy E
Year 3	Darcie H
Year 4	Olivia-Rose W
Year 5	Nathan J
Year 6	Logan K

UPCOMING DIARY DATES

FEBRUARY

16.02.26 February Half Term

23.02.26 Children return to School



RESPECT

KINDNESS

PERSEVERANCE



BOOK OF THE WEEK

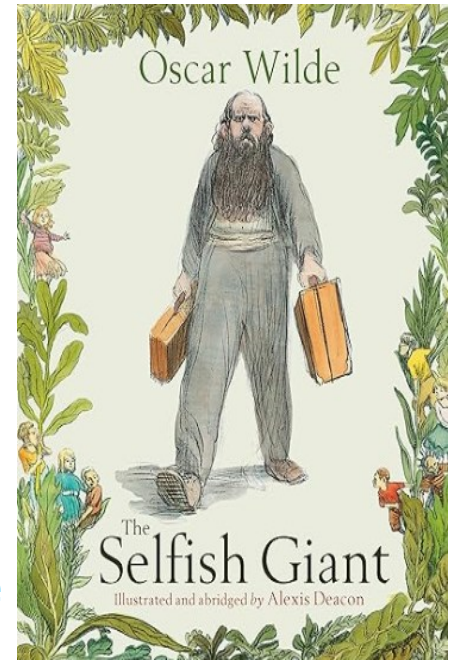


Year 4—Miss Miller's Class

In our English lessons, we have been reading 'The Selfish Giant' by Oscar Wilde. As a class, we have explored the exciting writing techniques Wilde uses, including personification and the careful use of prepositions to create vivid descriptions.

Throughout our work on the story, we have written letters, created persuasive adverts, and composed thoughtful diary entries inspired by the characters and events. We especially enjoyed discussing how Wilde used the changing seasons to reflect feelings of happiness and sadness in the story.

Ellis said, "I liked the part when the giant stopped being selfish and allowed the children back into the garden!"



YEAR 2 HEDINGHAM CASTLE

On Monday morning Year 2 set off from school to visit Hedingham Castle as part of their history topic on Castles.

They spent the day with three historians who told them all about the history of the castle. They had a brilliant day and learnt lots of new things about everyday life in the castle. The children had the chance to visit the dungeon, the storeroom, the banqueting room and the castle toilet!



SPELLING BEE

On Wednesday, children from Year 2 and 6 attended a Spelling Bee competition at Fairhouse Primary School, along with 10 other schools. The children had to take part in a variety of different activities linked to spelling, including a spelling test, word wheel and team spelling.

Year 6 came in 4th place in the KS2 competition while Year 2 received bronze medals in the KS1 competition. Congratulations to all of the children involved. You worked incredibly hard!



RESPECT

KINDNESS

PERSEVERANCE

On Monday 23rd February 2026 children will return to school on Week 1.

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



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

Starting Reception Roadshows



Is Your Little One Starting Reception in September 2026?

Come along to our Starting Reception Roadshow!

Get ready for a fun, friendly, and totally **FREE** event designed to help you to support your child feel excited and confident about starting reception.

Essex Early Years has teamed up with local schools plus education, health and care partners to bring you a lively, helpful session packed with top tips and advice.

Want to join in?

Ask your child's childminder, preschool, or nursery for details about your nearest event, or visit the Essex Talk, Listen and Cuddle website to find out more about dates and times across Essex.

Starting Reception Roadshow near you:

Where: Janet Duke Primary School - 105 Markhams Chase,
Basildon SS15 5LS

When: Wednesday 18th March - 6pm - 7.30pm



You can find out information about the event by scanning the QR code or visiting www.tlc-essex.info and searching 'Starting reception'



Follow us on social media to join our
Starting Reception Campaign



Instagram



Facebook





SPACE

Supporting Parents and Carers in Essex (SPACE) is a free, parent to parent service, offering a variety of routes to access SEND guidance, signposting, and support:

In Person- meet us at Local Offer Roadshows, coffee mornings, and community events.

By phone – talk one-to-one with a peer educator

Online – join webinars on key topics, led by peer educators

On the SPACE Website – find helpful information and guidance anytime.

Below you will find some links that we hope you find useful:

SPACE Website – here you will find SEND Guidance and details of upcoming online/in-person events.

Request a 121 with a Peer Educator: <https://forms.office.com/e/7SPDHFHNpu>

Date	Time	Event title
Monday 9 February	10am to 11.30am	Sleep
Wednesday 11 February	12pm to 1.30pm	Toileting
Monday 23 February	7.30pm to 8.30pm	Drop-in (Evening)
Tuesday 24 February	10am to 11.30am	Sensory Needs
Thursday 26 February	7.30pm to 9pm	Introduction to Autism (Evening)



**Next
Draw**



*And the
Winner
is...*

January 

**HOLLIE
WRIGHT**

£28.50

£304.50



raised for Friends of Merrylands in 2025

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.

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.

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.

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

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)