



Shetland Islands Council

Whalsay School – A Connected Community of Learners

Head Teacher: Niall Healy

Website: <https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/sh/whalsayschoolweb/>

Whalsay School
Symbister
Whalsay
Shetland
ZE2 9AQ

Telephone: 01595 743800

Date: 8th January 2025

Dear Parents/Carers

Play in the Primary

As a Primary team we have been looking at how we can progress further with play through the Primary as we believe that play can enhance the pupils' learning experience and is a vital part of how children learn, grow and thrive. There is increasing research into the importance and value of play in children's daily lives and healthy development as outlined in the following resource: [Play Scotland, the national expert in Play](#)

After attending various training sessions led by local and national providers and hearing what other schools are doing, we have decided to introduce a set play session into our Primary curriculum to support all our pupils' development. These sessions are going to take place on Fridays between break time and lunch. Fridays have been selected as it is a day where no new learning is introduced and it is manageable for all teachers to adapt their timetables. During this time, each classroom will have play activities available as well as opportunities for quieter games and areas for more physical play to develop gross motor skills. The school will provide all resources so pupils are not to bring in anything from home.

During the play sessions, the teachers will observe the play, join in, interact and support the pupils. The teachers will enhance the play experiences by adding resources for pupils to take forward creatively, exploring their own ideas and developing their understanding. In the future, as the play sessions become established, we aim to link the pupils' learning to the curriculum, building in focused observations and assessments using a meta skills progression framework. Meta skills are vitally important learning skills for each young person's development through their journey in education and transferable to employment and life in the community. This will then support with our feedback to pupils and you as parents, outlining the life skills that are being developed.

As shared with the pupils, anything new will require reflection as to what is working well and how the experiences can be improved. The pupils' input and ideas will be regularly sought and I am confident they will come with excellent ideas as the weeks progress. This and collaboration with teaching staff will be important in the continued development and review of high quality learning experiences for all pupils.

Fire safety was discussed with the pupils and a fire drill will be held at the start of term 3 to risk assess our procedures.

We have set these sessions to be weekly for a trial period until the long weekend in February. We are looking forward to bringing the whole Primary together through play, helping build a strong sense of community – one of our core values in alignment with our school mission of being a connected community of learners. We hope that through such a programme, the children will feel part of something bigger which fosters pride in their school. We hope for the pupils to go home at the end of the week motivated, confident and enthusiastic about their learning, and for them and us to share these experiences with you through the Primary blog and school Facebook page.

We appreciate your support with this programme but if you have any questions, please get in touch and I will be happy to discuss further.

Yours sincerely

Lynsey Irvine
Depute Head Teacher