

WHALSAY SCHOOL PARENT COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting

Tuesday 10th February 2026 at 5.30pm in Whalsay Primary School

Present: Alison Shearer – Chair
Debbie Murray
Tanya Arthur
Zoe Williamson
Louise Laurenson
Valerie Anderson
Eilidh Eunson
Caroline Manson
Leona Sandison
Margaret Leask
Andrea Huntley

In Attendance: Anita Sparrow – Secretary
Neil Beattie – Executive Manager – Learning Estate (via video link)

Staff: Niall Healy

Apologies: Caroline Watt
Julie Reid

Welcome

Alison welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked Neil Beattie for attending.

Minutes of last meeting

The minute of the meeting held on 11 November 2025 was approved.

School Dinners

Neil Beattie is the Executive Manger Learning Estate, within Shetland Islands Council. He joined the meeting by video link to speak with us and hear our feedback on school meals, as well as sharing information with us.

Neil went through various points raised by parents:

- Too much pastry in the menu - He advised that they have tried to move away from having too much pastry. There are now only 3 items on the menu that include pastry. In a 3 week period there will be 2 pastry items in week 1, 2 in week 2 and only 1 in week three.
- Ultra Processed food - He advised that sausages are the only ultra processed item in the menu. Most things are made from scratch. Sausages and sausage rolls are the main exception to this.

- Standardised Menu – This was introduced in 2019. The menu goes out to the head cook as a first draft. The head cook chooses what goes on the final menu, so they can have some input. It is ok to change the menu as long as it fits with the nutritional guidelines. There are strict guidelines relating to energy, saturated fat etc. Neil would be happy to share the analysis. Reps questioned why there needs to be a standard Shetland wide menu. Could Whalsay not have its own menu, planned fully by the Head Cook? It had previously been acknowledged that Beth planned menus that met the guidelines and was an example to other schools. Neil will speak to Beth about this.
- Secondary pupils - Alison mentioned that some pupils go to the shop following their lunch as they are not fully satisfied. This defeats the good that is supposedly being done with the healthy lunch. Neil felt that 'Grab and Go' might help with this. This is being piloted in the Anderson High School and may possibly be rolled out at other secondary schools.
- Suppliers - It was noted that supplies for school dinners have to be bought from certain suppliers.
- Salad Bar – Some pupils thought that wasn't enough in the salad bar. Neil will speak to Beth about that.
- Meal Costs - Neil advised that the Council gets £3.33 per meal from the Scottish Government. That amount not only covers the cost of food but everything else that's needed to make a meal, including crockery and cutlery. What we actually spend is £6.60 per meal. Margaret asked if we have to prove the nutritional value of meals in order to get the SG funding.
- Portion Sizes – Some felt that portion sizes are not big enough and some pupils are still hungry after their lunch. Does guidance exist of the size portions should be? Neil advised that the cooks encourage pupils to take vegetables. As far as he was aware they would offer as much as the pupils wanted. However, if it is a real problem he would get someone to come to the canteen to look at this and he will speak to Beth about portion sizes. Parent Council members could have lunch at school. Someone had asked if waste could be monitored. Neil said he would get advice from the cooks on that. *Pupils are always asked if they want more when being served and are encouraged to use the salad bar.*
- Sauces - Another point raised was to ask if chicken could be plain with no sauce. Neil will speak to the cooks about that. Sometimes chicken is with katsu sauce etc so could be plain on those days, just don't include the sauce for those that don't want it. *The chicken is served separately from the sauce so pupils can choose if they want sauce or not.*
- Pasta & Toppings - Someone asked if pasta and toppings could be on offer each day. It was felt that it wouldn't be great to have it each day. Another school had suggested the same toppings could be used with baked tatties. *This is already done at Whalsay School.*
- Beans on Toast - It was felt by some parents that beans on toast was not value for money and not a 'proper' meal. It was noted that there is always another option available in addition to that. It is, however, very popular with pupils.

- Puddings - Someone asked if there could be more puddings. Neil stated that it's hard to keep within the guidelines when providing more than 2 puddings per week.
- Menu items - Some would like to see oily fish on the menu more. Others advised they would like to see soup and sandwiches and baked tatties more often. It was noted that red meat is only on the menu twice a week – this due to nutritional guidelines. Someone asked if instead of Moroccan Lamb, it could be roast lamb with tatties and gravy. It had previously been advised that Roast lamb wasn't a popular choice and Moroccan lamb is actually more popular with pupils.
- Vegetables - Someone made the point that there was a lack of vegetables in meals and that carrots had taken out of mince. This is not the case and there are hidden veg in many meals.
- Parent Pay - Ordering meals on parent pay was discussed. Some parents felt very frustrated with the system. Neil advised that even if a meal had not been booked, a pupil would still get their lunch. The system helps to gather information and reduce costs. On occasion meal bookings have been randomly cancelled. This will be looked in to.
- Cooks - It was noted how hard our cooks work and that they are bound by strict guidelines.
- Fish - A positive point was made about the fish the school gets. It is very popular.
- Survey - Niall advised that a survey has been done with pupils to get views.
- School Lunch - Zoe and Debbie will be the PC reps who go for school lunch. This will give a better insight from a parent point of view.

Matters arising

It was noted that anything relating to bullying should be directed to the school and not the parent council.

Treasurers Report

At the last meeting we had £3,863.12. Since then we've had a total income of £1870.22. This was made up of £750 from Whalsay Gala, merchandise sold before Christmas £77.87, raffle at Christmas concert took in £953 and the Cauliflower Christmas cards made £89.35. Total expenses was £597.02. This means we have £5,136.32.

Head Teacher's Report

Staffing

- P.E. - The recruitment for a new, permanent PE teacher is currently in process. There is a strong field of applicants and interviews will be taking place on the 27th February with communication in due course as to who the preferred candidate is.
- LSW and Nursery Practitioner - Joanne Stewart finished up with the school back in December. We wish Joanne well as she starts a new chapter in life in Orkney. Joanne's Nursery duties have been shared via internal cover within the current Nursery team. Similarly for LSW role, this is being covered by other LSW at the moment. Mischa Pearson will be joining the team two days a week to further assist after the long weekend.

S4 Prelims - S4 Prelims were again held at Livister Hall. This arrangement is a huge positive for the pupils as it allows them preparation for exam conditions in line with what is suggested by the SQA. Also related to S4, Miss Eyvor Irvine has sent all parents a written communication with a timeline of different events related to onwards transition including Careers Day at the AHS and a visit to the Halls of Residence.

School Events - Since our last meeting, we have had a number of different events which have showcased our pupils skills and abilities in different areas of the curriculum. These include Christmas concerts, Carols by Candlelight, Christmas Card delivery, mixed volleyball, Whalsay Careers event, Inter-House events, Business Enterprise sales

Play Sessions in the Primary - We have introduced our Play sessions on Friday as a means of our pupils developing their META skills. Last Friday, we had our Senior pupils down in the Primary to support Arts and Crafts, mini Science experiments, mock up buildings and musical activities. The staff team are continuing to develop these sessions to ensure they are engaging, purposeful and progressive in line with the pupils' interests.

Anti Bullying - Efforts to challenge all forms of bullying have been ongoing across Terms 2 and 3. The teaching of recognising the signs of bullying, understanding the impact and what actions to take have been covered across assemblies, Pupil Council meetings and extensively within the Personal and Social Education curriculum.

Wider Achievement - Our Term 3 offerings are now well established with a wide variety of different offerings including Darts, Knitting, Library, Music, Net Mending, Polytunnel, Enterprise, School Newsletter, Sports Leadership, Comics, Drawing, ICT and Photography. I am very grateful to our volunteers and teachers for their efforts in planning for and delivering these sessions which compliment our curriculum learning.

School Bus Code of Conduct - I have had a report of behaviour that is not in line with our agreed code of conduct that was shared with all parents during last Academic Year. Work is ongoing with individual pupils and their parents to provide clear reminders of the behaviour expectations for using the school bus service.

Staff Professional Learning - Teachers in Primary are joining the Learning Festival at Brae High School during the Inservice period. There are a number of different workshops and sessions organised covering a wide range of topics including supporting learners with additional and complex needs, building positive working relationships and differentiation within lessons.

Colleagues in Secondary will be undertaking Verbal Intervention Training which will be facilitated by colleagues in Psychology Services.

World Book Day - This will be celebrated on Thursday 5th March.

Class Rep Questions/Issues

Primary 1

Debbie advised that a pupil had been knocked over by the gate and asked if it could be kept open for the start of the day.

Primary 3

Eilidh passed on praise for the quality of the recent concert.

Secondary 1

Leona advised that pupils are happy with the screen free room.

Relating to school trips, she asked if there could be a 3 year plan. Last year the Aith school had gone on a trip to Edinburgh at half the cost of the Whalsay trip.

Secondary 4

Zoe expressed disappointment that pupils have not had the opportunity for work experience. There appears to have been little encouragement relating to this.

She advised that the heating at Livister had not been working properly during the prelims and hoped it could be fixed before the exams. It was noted that the heating has been fixed.

Niall left the meeting.

Alison said that following discussion with Niall the way feedback from parents to these meetings is made is going to change slightly. Niall would like comments, both negative and positive, to be passed to him a week before the meeting. Comments should therefore be sent to Alison 2 weeks before and she will collate and pass on to Niall.

Funding Requests

Office - A request from the primary office was approved for new darts equipment. £130.

Nursery - A request from Emily Robertson for Possum Play couch was approved. £400.

AOCB

Participatory Budgeting

Miss O'Dwyer is applying for funding from the Community Council participatory budgeting event. This is to purchase a marimba. She has also raised money from the Carols by Candlelight concert and is applying to the Zetland fund

Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 21 April 2026.