



Shetland Islands Council

Acting Head Teacher: Mrs Lynsey Irvine

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

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Dear Parent/Carer

I hope you all had an enjoyable Summer break despite the weather not being the best at home. As you are aware, I am currently acting up as Head Teacher, with Leanne Moss supporting on Thursdays and Fridays. This is a new challenge for me but I am in the fortunate position of knowing the school and the community very well and I have a clear vision of the areas we need to develop, whilst building on the many strengths of the school. I look forward to working with everyone over the next term to make our school the best it can be.

Staffing

I am delighted to welcome the following staff to our school team this session:

Maths - Mrs Alison Risk (Tues-Wed), job-sharing with Mrs Constable

P.E – Miss Karis Leask (Mon – Tues, Thurs – Friday)

French – Mrs Joanna Phelan (Friday)

Nursery, Modern Apprentice –Miss Angela Williamson (Mon – Fri)

Recruitment:

Head Teacher Post – After an unsuccessful round of recruitment, the post is due to be readvertised

Nursery Teacher – This post is currently being advertised

Senior Practitioner, Nursery – Remains vacant and we are working on solutions to ensure this remit is covered

Learning Support Assistant/Supervisory Hours – Recruitment underway with interviews to be held next week

We are always looking to increase our bank of supply staff for Learning Support Assistant and Learning Support Worker. If you are interested in being added to the supply list or know someone who may be, please complete the following form or get in touch with myself or Pauline for an informal discussion:

Priorities for School Development 2026 - 27

Following our consultation processes at the end of last academic year, our school development priorities have been set out and are as follows:

- 1) **Finalise and embed our learning and teaching policy, including planning systems**
- 2) **Streamline our vision, values and aims** – Ensure pupil needs are met through clear classroom management strategies, developing pupil leadership groups and celebrating achievements
- 3) **Focus on Metaskills development across the school linking to play experiences in the Primary** – links to learning and teaching
- 4) **ELC** – Streamline Curriculum Rationale and embed planning systems to meet pupil needs

Communication with the School:

Our school blog contains a range of up-to-date information and as the year progresses we will keep you informed of any new dates for your calendars and key information. Our School Handbook is available to read on the blog and our School Improvement Plan/Standards and Quality Report will be shared with parents in due course.

News of upcoming events and links to Blog posts are also shared on Whalsay School Facebook page. This page is open to all parents and staff of the school – if you would like to be included, please put in a request to be added to the group.

Could you please ensure the school's email address whalsay@shetland.gov.uk is added to your address books to prevent emails going undelivered or into your spam folders.

Should you need to contact the school about your child's progress, please contact us by phone or in writing, rather than through social media. In Nursery and Primary, in the first instance, queries should be directed to your child's teacher/nursery staff. If the issue is particularly significant or serious, please get in touch with myself, Mrs Leanne Moss or Pauline Irvine (DHT). In Secondary please contact Pupil Support: Miss Eyvor Irvine or myself.

Complaints Procedure:

If you have a complaint to make in relation to your child's progress or the school in general, please contact me directly, at the school. The matter will be treated confidentially, and the School Leadership Team will talk through how best to resolve the situation and let you know how the matter has progressed.

After speaking to us, if you feel that the matter cannot be resolved at school level, you may contact our QIO at SIC Children's Services. An information leaflet is available from the school and in the Parents' section of the website under Policies.

Annual Data Check

These forms will be sent out shortly, along with the Photos, Videos and Data Protection form. Please check, sign, and update details where necessary and return them to school with your child as soon as possible. The Term Dates card will be sent home along with the forms. Please keep the card so as you can refer to the holiday dates throughout the school year.

Break Times

Weather permitting, all Primary pupils will be expected to play outside at morning and lunchtime intervals. Please ensure your child has appropriate warm clothes i.e. jacket, scarf, gloves with them each day. If you do not wish your child to go outside any day i.e. due to illness, please ensure you write a note in your child's homework diary or phone the school office.

Following the Secondary assembly on the first day back, Secondary pupils are also being encouraged to get outside at break time to support both their learning and wellbeing. It has been lovely to see the positive impact of this already, with pupils benefiting from fresh air, physical activity and time to recharge before returning to lessons.

Fetching Primary Pupils at end of School Day

From Primary 2 onwards, pupils may leave school at the end of the day without adult supervision. When Primary 1 pupils are in full days, they should be picked up from the outside door of the classroom rather than the corridor inside.

Traffic Management and Cycling to School

For the safety of everyone around the school, please use the designated parking areas at the Primary school, Harbison Park or Leisure Centre when dropping off and picking up your children.

Please avoid parking on the roundabout or blocking the car parks at all times as this impacts the flow of traffic and our drop off system.

In order to ensure the safety of pupils around Secondary at picking up time, we have agreed with parents an unofficial one-way system at picking up times (Mon-Thurs 3.40 and Friday 2.00). This involves asking parents/carers picking up pupils to take a clockwise route past the school. This will mean that traffic is all moving in the same direction as the school bus. The route is marked on the map below and we would like to continue with this system this session.

As a school we want to promote cycling to school, and pupils regularly benefit from Bikeability sessions in upper Primary. However, it is for you as parent/carer to decide when you feel your child is able to cycle to school unsupervised. In making this decision you may want to keep in mind that Bikeability Level 2 courses are not offered to children under 10 as their perception of traffic speed is generally not well enough developed. We would recommend that pupils cycling to school wear a helmet and that their bicycles are regularly checked.

Bus code of conduct

Everyone who travels to and from school by bus will receive the Bus Code of Conduct. This is in place to ensure the safety, respect and wellbeing of all pupils while travelling to and from school. We would appreciate your time in reading over this with your child before signing and returning the slip to school.

Music Tuition

If your child has weekly music instruction, please note that it is their responsibility to check the timetable and turn up on time for their lesson with their music folder. They may not receive their lesson if they forget their music folder which limits continuity and hinders their progression. Regular practice at home is also important.

If your child is interested in taking up any of these instruments, please apply online to add them to the waiting list - [Instrumental Instruction – Shetland Islands Council](#)

Attendance

The Education (Scotland) Act places a responsibility on parents to ensure that their children attend school regularly, and regular attendance is clearly in children's best interests. If your child is absent, please phone the school before 9.30am on the day your child is off to inform the school of the reason for absence. If you do not phone, a member of the School Office will

be in touch to enquire about the absence. Please note, legally, we are obliged to ask why your child is absent from school.

If your child becomes unwell during the school day, you will be contacted, and appropriate arrangements will be agreed.

Should your child be arriving in late, or need to leave school early, please put a note into the school office as well as informing register teachers so that we can keep accurate records of pupil absence and attendance.

We know that regular attendance supports learning and, for Secondary pupils, directly affects a pupil's chances of achieving National Qualifications. For this reason, attendance in S4 is crucial as absences inevitably reduce the time that teachers have to support pupils with course work and revision. Please let us know if your child is worried about something or if you notice sudden changes in behaviour. These could be tied to something going on in school.

In cases of unsatisfactory attendance, the Head Teacher, Depute Head Teacher and/or Pupil Support Teacher will discuss the problem with parents and strategies will be developed, seeking to improve the situation. The leaflet below from SIC's Childrens Services has more information and advice on this issue:

[037-Attach-Attendance-Leaflet.pdf \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](#)

Family Holidays & Requests for Leave of Absence

Circular No 5/03 from the Scottish Executive Education Department, dated 26th June 2003, states that family holidays are to be classified as "unauthorised absence" from school unless under exceptional circumstances.

Every effort should be made to avoid taking holidays during term time as this disrupts the child's formal education and reduces learning time.

Please refer to the Application for Leave of Absence of Pupil forms. These are available to download from the School website and paper copies can be collected from either School Offices. These forms should be completed at least one week prior to the proposed absence. Staff will only be expected to organise work for pupils during their absence if the absence has been authorised by the school.

[Application-for-Leave-of-Absence-of-Pupil.pdf \(glowscotland.org.uk\)](#)

Dress / Property

There is no special uniform, but we expect pupils to be smart and tidy. We ask parents to cooperate with us in not sending children to school in clothes which could be described as offensive to others, e.g. slogans on T-shirts.

We cannot accept responsibility for lost property and valuables and large sums of money should not be carried to school.

Period Equality

Shetland Islands Council are providing access to Free Period Products. These products are available for anyone who menstruates and is attending a school in Shetland.

You can complete the order form at the following link, to request a one-off 3 month supply of products or to sign up to a 3 monthly subscription that will be sent directly to your door. (Delivery may take up to 28 days.)

https://my.shetland.gov.uk/en/AchieveForms/?mode=fill&consentMessage=y&form_uri=sandbox-publish%3A//AF-Process-64c04772-ec94-476a-bdbc-158d69eaf5a5/AF-Stage-7500f301-

A selection of products is also available in school, for pupils to use when necessary.

Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme

All under 22s resident in Scotland will have access to free bus travel from 31 January 2022. Those eligible will receive access to the **Young Persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme** using their National Entitlement Card, allowing them to travel for free on buses across Scotland. However, children under the age of 16 **MUST** have approval from their parent or guardian before free travel is added to their card

Secondary pupils who attend a Skills for Work Course will be expected to use their free travel pass in the future, so we would urge you to apply, if you have not already done so.

Application forms can be found at the following links:

Form for **NEW Junior NEC applications (5-10years)** – [Junior National Entitlement Card Application – Introduction – Self \(shetland.gov.uk\)](#)

Form for 11-15 year olds. This form is for **NEW** applications, including photo updates. Do not use this form to get a replacement Young Scot card. [Young Scot National Entitlement Card Application – Introduction – Self \(shetland.gov.uk\)](#)

This form is for **EXISTING Young Scot NEC holders aged 11-21 years only.** [Young Scot National Entitlement \(EXISTING\) Card – Approval, Opt-In Under 22 Free Bus Travel – Introduction – Self \(shetland.gov.uk\)](#)

If you are unable to complete the form online, please get in touch and we can help you with the application.

Administration of Medicines:

Generally, the school cannot administer any drugs or medicines to pupils. However, there are two sets of circumstances in which requests can be made to the Head Teacher or Depute Head Teacher to deal with the administering of medicines to pupils at school:

- (A) Cases of chronic illness or long-term complaints such as asthma, diabetes or epilepsy and
- (B) Cases when children recovering from short-term illness are well enough to return to school but are receiving a course of antibiotics, etc

The School Management Team will only accept responsibility if the medicine is brought to the school by the Parent, not the child, and must be delivered personally to the Head Teacher or Depute Head Teacher along with written guidelines for administration, signed by the parent/carer and doctor.

Homework Diaries

Each pupil in the school from P1-S4 have a homework diary and we are promoting the use of the diaries across the school. We would appreciate if parents/carers can check and sign the homework diary each week.

Parent Council

Whalsay School Parent Council exists to encourage the community to be involved in the life of the school, the education of the pupils and to provide a means for the expression of parents' interests and views.

The names of all of the School's Parent Council members are on the School Blog.

<https://blogs.glowscotland.org.uk/sh/whalsayschoolweb/for-parents/parent-council/>

Dinner Money

The cost of Primary dinners this term has changed to £2.60 per day and Secondary dinners £3.15 per day. All meals must now be pre-booked on the Parent Pay system. School milk has increased to £1.30 per week for pupils who choose to take milk, amounts due for the term will show up on your ParentPay account shortly.

Scottish Childhood and School Flu Immunisation Programme 2026/27

Flu vaccines are due to take place on Thursday 1st October. Prior to this, further information and permission slips will be sent home. More information about the programme can be found on the following link: <https://www.nhsinform.scot/childflu>

I am aware that this is a lengthy letter containing a considerable amount of information. I aim to be in touch again soon with further, more detailed information on specific aspects of the school, beginning with behaviour management. In the meantime, I would appreciate your input through the homework task that the oldest child in each family from P3–S4 has taken home this week.

If you have any questions, or would like to discuss anything further, please do not hesitate to contact me at the School.

Yours sincerely

Mrs Lynsey Irvine
Acting Head Teacher

