

Term 1 Newsletter

B U M P E R E D I T I O N !

Welcome

I would like to start this newsletter by wishing all of our families a warm welcome back. I hope each and every one of you had a wonderful summer - from what the children have shared with me so far you have all been very busy. We had a hugely successful, calm and positive start to the year last week and I for one am delighted to be back. As always, we have an action-packed year ahead of us and it promises to be full of fun.

Special welcome must go to the children joining us in our Nursery, welcome to Callum, Ruari, Roman, Tadhg, Dylan and Alexander. Welcome to P1 for Emily, Oskar, Aria, Elara, Balfour and Freya and of course welcome to our pupil who is new to us, Issy in Primary 7.

P4-7 Absence Cover

You may be aware that Mr Dearness was absent from school last week. Where it is not common practice to comment on staff absence I want to assure you that the transition to P4 for our old P3 pupils was smooth and they have all settled well into the 'big class'. The children in P4-7 are currently being taught by Leila Dearness in John's absence as well as by Katherine Diaper as normal on a Monday. This is providing great consistency to the children and we will continue to make sure that the teaching and learning continues with as little disruption as possible.

Attachments to this Newsletter

You will find in this envelope for your family, the usual consent forms for completion - medical, excursions, annual update; one for each child. General consent form one; per family. There are extra health forms for P1 children and also flu vaccine forms for registered children at the school. Not all children will have these depending on previous preferences indicated to NHS Orkney.

Primary Ones

They have settled in really well and following the school routines like professionals! Reminders though - P1-2 get a piece of fruit from the Scottish Government aka Christine on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. There is no need to have extra snack on those days if you wish.

Any long hair on a Tuesday needs to be tied back for PE so if children came in already with their hair up, that would be great - but we always (nearly) have a stock of baubles for any that isn't.

School Meals

Shona continues to produce Microsoft Forms for the ordering of school meals and will send out the links as required. Please ensure you complete these unless you have informed the school your child(ren) will only be having packed lunches. If these are not done in time, meals will be ordered for your child(ren) and sometimes we are ordering meals when the children are having packed lunches. Try and help us reduce food waste where you can by ordering via this method and keeping us informed. In the event that home packed lunch is chosen but forgotten, we endeavour to provide the children with a meal that day or a sandwich but there isn't huge choice.

2024-2025 Staffing Structure

Kayla Muir and Jenna Tait started with us in the Nursery last week as our new Early Years Practitioners. Both Kayla and Jenna have already made a positive impact in the Nursery and we are delighted to have them both with us and look forward to their future at Orphir nursery.

Please find our staffing structure for 2024-2025 below.

Classroom Staff

Head Teacher

Principal Teacher & P4-7 Class Teacher

P1-3 Class Teacher (Monday to Wednesday)

P1-3 Class Teacher (Thursday & Friday)

Support for Learning Teacher/ Principal Teacher Cover

Support for Learning Assistant

Grant Thomson

John Dearness

Dawn Williams

Lynn Rendall

Katherine Diaper

Brian Darby

Expressive Arts

Music

PE

Art & Design

Fiddle

Kate Fletcher

Holly Elson

Marie Montgomery

Elizabeth Sullivan

Nursery Staff

Early Years Lead Practitioner

Early Years Practitioner

Early Years Practitioner

Lorna Mcintosh

Kayla Muir

Jenna Tait

Support Staff

Educational Psychologist

Clerical & Auxiliary

Janitor, Cleaner & Toothbrushing Supervisor

School Meals & Cleaner

Imogen Kerr

Shona Garson

Claire Smith

Christine Anderson

School and Nursery Refurbishment

During the summer holiday period our school and nursery went through some refurbishment. The current P1-3 and P4-7 class bases had their carpet replaced with linoleum and the toilets in the Nursery have been relocated and fully enclosed. The changes in the Nursery toilets are now more in line with Care Inspectorate guidelines and legislation and of course ensure the continued dignity of our littlest people. The Nursery garden has also been extended and the low fence heightened with the aim of making our space more secure.

Vision, Values & Aims

At the beginning of the new school year it is always important to remind you all of our school and nursery vision, values and aims. These are the foundations of what we believe in here at our school and nursery and sets out a clear expectation in terms of what our ethos and relationships are based around.

At Orphir we truly value creativity, kindness, respect and teamwork whilst working under the vision of 'flourish and grow into the person that you want to be'. We have a set of 6 new aims which have been generated by last year's Rights Respecting Schools steering group and these are direct articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The group identified 6 clear articles and these are perfect aims that the staff here will try their best to uphold at all times. They are as follows:

- Staff will act in the best interests of the child (Article 3).
- We will strive to make rights real (Article 4).
- We will have respect for children's views (Article 12).
- We will allow children to share their thoughts freely (Article 13).
- We will allow our children to set up or join groups (Article 15).
- We will make sure everyone knows children's rights (Article 42).

Our vision, values and aims are clearly displayed in the reception area of our school and we are very proud of these and the collaboration that has gone into getting them right. At the in-service day all staff engaged with these values and identified how we as staff expect each other to display these in the day-to-day life of the school. We also signed an aims pledge that states we will do our best to uphold these articles from the UNCRC.



2024-2025 School Improvement Priorities

This year at Orphir we have one main school improvement priority and that is based on the theme of pupil led learning. This priority evolved from our staff self-evaluation sessions and consultation with learners towards the end of last academic year and was highlighted as an area for development. Part of this priority will involve all learners across the school leading parts of their own learning using a skills framework and the setting up of pupil voice groups to drive forward pupil led change across the school. If anyone would like to know more about this priority or be involved in any way then please don't hesitate to get in touch. There are of course other bits and bobs that we will continue to tweak and adapt as the year goes on in response to feedback we perhaps receive.

Orkney Islands Council Attendance Policy

Orkney Islands Council have a policy in place which outlines the responsibility of schools to monitor and track the attendance of children and young people and to intervene if attendance becomes a concern. Good attendance at school is vital as it promotes positive continuity in learning and helps promote wellbeing and routine.

With this in mind, please continue to contact the school office as soon as you can if you know your child is going to be absent through illness, for medical reasons or for any other reason. If we have had no communication from you by 10 AM at the latest, we will make contact with you if your child is absent. The policy Orkney Islands Council uses outlines a range of reasons where absences may be recorded as authorised and similarly those which may not be authorised. If you know your child is going to be absent for a period of time for a specific reason, please get in touch and we will be able to tell you if the absence will be recorded as authorised or unauthorised. (Whole school calendar dates attached)

As part of my termly monitoring, if your child's attendance (P1-P7) drops between 90-95% or below 90% you will receive communication from us that this has happened. This is part of the policy and we will continue to work with families in a supportive manner to help address any issues and concerns whilst treating each absence case on an individual basis.

Rotary Club Shoe Box Appeal

We will be collecting items for the Rotary Club of Orkney Shoebox appeal this term (2 shoeboxes). The attached poster lists what is suitable. The Nursery and P1-3 class, could we ask that you collect items for the child box and the P4-7 class collect items for the young people up to age 18. The boxes will be held in school and items can be handed in to the school office. If you would like to donate a boy or girls toy to be distributed to children in Eastern European countries then please hand these to the school office before the end of term 1. All donations will be warmly welcomed no matter how big or how small.

School Gates - A small health and safety plea.

Could I kindly ask you all for your continued vigilance when entering the school grounds via all our gates. Please ensure these are fully closed and secured once you have passed through them. Your help with this matter will be very much appreciated.

Class Newsletter

In week 5 of this term both classes and the Nursery will be sending home a bespoke class newsletter which details important information that will be useful for you to know about the year ahead in your child's class. The idea being that this newsletter can act as a reference point for important information and keep you up to date with key learning opportunities and themes planned for the year ahead. You may well be asked if you have any skills or interests that you may be able to offer to the class and we would fully embrace any offers of help as we LOVE having our parents and caregivers working with us in school.

End of Day Procedures

A gentle reminder that children in P1-3 who are not on school transport need to be collected at the end of the day, in person, by a responsible and nominated adult. Children from P4 upwards may walk home alone once we have made sure they are safely across the road. Please contact the school and let us know if your child is in P4 upwards and you consent for them to walk home alone. For those collecting children, please continue to wait inside the school grounds - this shift has helped us massively in reducing the people congestion and chaos at the car park. We, as staff, have a clearer idea of who has or has not been picked up and we can keep them safe until ready to be collected or can help deliver them more safely to their nominated adult. Please all continue to be mindful of the busy car park at pick up and drop off times and keep making the safety of our children a priority.

Family Yearly Plan & Diary Dates

Please find attached to this newsletter our family plan for the year ahead which contains our important dates for key events. Whilst we don't anticipate any of these to change, we will make sure any changes are communicated in as timely a manner as it can be. Our events this year have also been planned with feedback provided from last year. We have combined the class assemblies so that both classes will perform on the same day to reduce the need for some families to come twice and we have made sure (at this stage!) we do not have two events on in the same week.

Communication & Feedback

This year we will continue to seek your feedback on a range of school related topics and themes. You are of course welcome to provide feedback to us at any time should something crop up you feel we need to know. We will always welcome polite, constructive and respectful communication and always consider all of your points to see if there are things we can do differently. In session 2023-2024 we received lots of bits of feedback and this this is a snapshot of what we did as a result.

You said...	We did...
The amount of communication from school can at times be too much and lots of things are missed.	Reduced and streamlined our communication to one big termly 'bumper edition' of a newsletter with peedie fortnightly reminders from Shona.
There were too many school events scheduled for the same week and it is hard to get time off work for them all.	We looked closely at when we planned our events to make sure there were no weeks where there were two parental events in the same week.
It would be good to have netball posts outside to enable the kids of all ages to practice.	Claire regularly took out the netball posts and set them at different heights so that all children could have a go.
Start connecting with some of our elderly visitors as they are often lonely and might love the interaction.	We held our first ever intergenerational event which was open to members of our school community who may not have direct links to the school.

P6 Outdoor Education Days

This year our P6 Outdoor Education on-site activity days are planned for Thursday 26th September, Friday 27th September and Monday 30th September 2024. This year, Orphir will be paired with Firth and Evie and the days will take place at Firth Primary School. More information will follow to our P6 pupils nearer the time.

Science Festival Workshops

We are grateful to have secured a range of Orkney Science Festival workshops which will form part of our Science curriculum for the year. Dates are still being finalised. We are blessed here at Orphir to have a range of visiting workshops and specialist visitors who help deliver elements of our curriculum and to all those visitors thank you for making sure the experiences for the children here are as good as they can be.

Education, Leisure and Housing

School term dates - 2024 / 2025 (all dates are inclusive)

Term 1 2024	Tuesday 20 August – Friday 11 October. (39 days)
October holidays	Monday 14 October – Tuesday 29 October.
Term 2	Wednesday 30 October – Friday 20 December. (38 days)
Christmas holidays	Monday 23 December – Friday 3 January.
Term 3 2025	Monday 6 January – Friday 4 April. (61 days)
Schools closed	Thursday 13 February – Tuesday 18 February.
Spring holidays	Monday 7 April – Monday 21 April (Easter Monday 21 April)
Term 4	Tuesday 22 April – Friday 4 July. (52 days)
Schools closed	Monday 5 May (May Day holiday).
Schools closed	Monday 2 June.
Staff Only, In-service days are:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monday 19 August.• Monday 28 and Tuesday 29 October.• Tuesday 18 February.• Monday 2 June.

Thank you all for your support this first couple of weeks while we all get back into routines! I am looking forward to a great year with you all and the staff at Orphir and as ever, if you have any queries, or questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at the school. We are happy to meet with parents as required to work together for the best of the peedie folk we all love and care about.

Kind regards as always

Grant Thomson

Grant Thomson
Head Teacher
Orphir and Stenness Community Schools