

Term 1 Newsletter - PHEW - a big read but all important!

Welcome back!

Welcome back to the new academic year. I trust you all had a restful and enjoyable holiday and managed to embrace some of that cracking weather Orkney was blessed with during the Island Games. Our new term started very smoothly and the first week went past in a right flash. Our new Nursery and P1 children had a very positive start but they were certainly looking more tired by Friday! We were chatting about our old P7s in the staff room, hoping they got on well at secondary school and early reports suggest it has been going grand.

We especially welcome Haldie, Raffy, Connie and Craigie into the nursery since our last welcome in the newsletter.

Staffing Update

We haven't had many staffing changes to what I reported to you in June. As a reminder, our staffing structure for 2025-2026 is as follows:

Head Teacher	Grant Thomson
Principal Teacher (PT) and P4-7 Class Teacher	John Dearnness
P1-3 Class Teacher (Monday to Wednesday)	Dawn Williams
P1-3 Class Teacher (Thursday & Friday)	Lynn Rendall
Support for Learning Teacher & PT release	Katherine Diaper
Support for Learning Assistant	Brian Darby
Early Years Lead Practitioner	Lorna MacIntosh
Early Years Practitioner	Kayla Muir
Early Years Practitioner	Jenna Tait
Janitor, Toothbrushing & Cleaning	Claire Smith
Admin Assistant & Auxiliary	Shona Garson
School Meals & Cleaning	Christine Anderson
Music (currently Monday AM)	Elaine Bain
Art (Fri PM)	Sheila Moodie
PE (Tues AM)	Holly Elson
Fiddle (Thurs AM)	Elizabeth Sullivan

HMIE Inspection

As you will have been aware we had two inspectors from His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) visiting the school on Tuesday. The inspectors observed the teaching and learning of Literacy & English across both classes and the Nursery. They also worked with two focus groups of children from P2 to P7 and analysed a range of the children's written work. The inspectors also took time to engage with staff regarding their views of Literacy

and English at our school and the high-level messages from their visit will be shared with you once ready.

Nursery News

Most of you will probably be aware of this already but I am over the moon to announce that Jenna Tait, our Early Years Practitioner, is expecting a baby in November. This means that Jenna starts her maternity leave at the end of this term. We will keep you posted on her maternity cover in due course.

Vision, Values & Aims and Curriculum Rationale

At the beginning of the new school year, it is always important to remind you 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 Community School, 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'. Our aims are 6 articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which were chosen by our pupils:

- 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. Do pop in and have a look. We have also shared our Curriculum Rationale as a reminder of what we do here, why we do it, and what we believe makes us a unique school.

Four Contexts of Learning

At the end of each term we will continue to issue you with our Four Contexts of Learning posters. These posters further bring to life our Curriculum Rationale and provide you with examples of the range of learning experiences provided to the children here. They are as follows:



- **Curriculum areas and subjects**

The curriculum areas and subjects are the organizers for the experiences and outcomes from Early, First and Second level from Nursery to P7.

- **Interdisciplinary learning**

This is the space in the curriculum for learning that goes beyond subject boundaries, allowing students to make connections between different areas of learning.

- **Ethos and life of the school as a community**

This is the positive climate of respect and trust based on shared values across the school community.

- **Opportunities for personal achievement**

These are the opportunities for students to achieve both in and beyond the classroom, which can help build confidence, motivation, and resilience.

Running Threads

Over the past years we have introduced a range of themes which help shape our little people into the best versions of themselves whilst ultimately ensuring they have the tools, skills and resilience required to deal with any challenges they may face. We will continue to embed these themes across assemblies this year. We will also use our weekly assembly times to celebrate the diversity and cultures of those around the world. Our running threads are:

- 5 Ways to Wellbeing & Wellbeing Indicators
- Character Strengths
- Zones of Regulation



- Meta Skills



- Rights Respecting Schools



End of Day Procedures

A gentle reminder (but I think you are aware already) that children in P1-3 are not permitted to walk home alone. If not travelling home by bus or taxi they must be collected by a known adult to us at the end of the school day. We also ask that all children who are not travelling home by bus or taxi are collected from inside the playground. We must never allow children to walk unaccompanied or unsupervised across the school car park at the end of the day as it simply gets too congested and busy. Do make sure you pass that on to all adults collecting your child(ren).

For children who are walking home and need to cross the road, we escort them across safely. For those children on the taxi or bus, if you have any last minute or regular changes to how your child(ren) are travelling home then please phone in advance and let the school office know. We often find ourselves conflicted when the little people report they are going home a different way than what is stated so your swift communication to Shona is appreciated.

Our Unique Qualities

- Our unique location overlooking Scapa Flow is a haven of biodiversity.
- We are a vibrant school with high levels of community engagement.
- Parental thoughts and concerns are valued and listened to.
- Nursery and two multi composite classes.
- Our school is a fun and friendly place to work and visit.
- Strong transition arrangements between classes and secondary school.
- We celebrate learning and achievement outwith school.

Our pupil voice groups ensure our learners have a say and are listened to.

The ethos and life of the school as a community

Opportunities for personal achievement

Our Vision, Our Values, Our Aims

We use these to maintain our very positive school ethos

Article 3

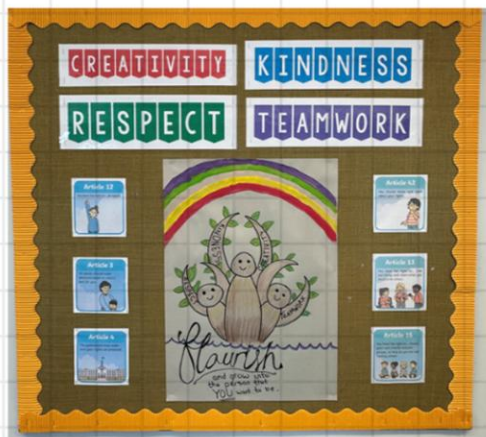
Article 4

Article 12

Article 13

Article 15

Article 42



Flourish... and grow into the person that you want to be.

Orphir Community School Curriculum Rationale

The Curriculum - 'the totality of all that is planned for children & young people throughout their education'

4 Contexts of Learning at Orphir

The purpose of the curriculum is to make sure that learners acquire the four capacities of Curriculum for Excellence to be:

Teamwork

Respect

Kindness

Creativity

Successful Learners

Confident Individuals

Effective Contributors

Responsible Citizens

- We learn through play, active learning, child led learning and adult directed instruction.
- We build nurturing and inclusive relationships with all pupils.
- We have high expectations of everyone.
- We learn both indoors and outdoors.
- Children's rights are at the heart of our planning.
- We develop the knowledge, skills and values to support our learners to thrive now and help them prepare for the future.

Learning at Orphir

IDLs - where learning from more than one area of the curriculum is brought together in our contexts for learning. We might work in our class, as a whole school or as part of the whole authority in IDLs. We learn from each other and our many partners doing IDL in our way.

Interdisciplinary Learning

Curriculum Areas & Subjects

- Literacy & English/Languages
- Numeracy & Mathematics
- Health & Wellbeing
- Expressive Arts
- Religious & Moral Education
- Sciences
- Social Studies
- Technologies

How?

We are a Silver Rights Respecting School and a Daily Mile School.

PE Kit

PE in Orphir is on a Tuesday this year. All children are required to wear suitable PE clothing (shorts, t-shirt etc) during this time as well as suitable trainers/plimsolls. For our younger children velcro fasteners are preferred until they can tie their own laces and of course long hair needs to be tied back and any rings or jewellery removed. If any of you would like help sourcing suitable PE kit then please approach myself, Shona or your child's teacher and we will be able to help you. Shona has issued our P1s with PE bags and we ask all pupils to keep these here in school - we like to send them home termly for a wash or of course sooner if we feel it is needed. We do suggest that each child has a complete change of clothes in school too and it can also be kept in the PE bag rather than taken back and fore each day.

Water bottles

We have purchased water bottles to hold in school for children to use if they forget their water bottle from home. Do not stress about putting in a water bottle if your child has forgotten in the morning to take one from home. We have loads here spare and the children are freely able to access them.

Snack

Please remember where you can to put a snack in with your child(ren) every day. If you do forget, we have rice cakes or oatcakes here that children are offered.

School Meals

Thank you for continuing to order school meals via ipayimpact. It is really important to have the majority of the orders in by the Thursday of the previous week to allow preparation and ordering time for the School Meals service. Children can change their mind and order if changed on the system by 9.00am of that morning but please don't do it every day! 😊 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 be aware, there isn't huge choice. Do remember to carefully check the options with your children as on days when pizza is the veggie option, it is normally more popular than the meat option that day.

Salvation Army Textiles Recycling

The children will each get a bag home if you are having a clear out we get a little back from the Salvation Army for this. Bags need to be dropped off to the bin at the bus shelter outside the school door or preferably on the 1st September inside the school front door.

<https://www.salvationarmy.org.uk/recycle/recycle-michael>

Security

Please can we ask that you close the gate as you leave the school grounds. This includes going from the Nursery too to ensure our peedie folk are kept safe.

Attendance

We will continue to monitor and report pupil attendance again this year in line with Orkney Islands Council guidance. At the end of each term we will take a closer look at those whose attendance has fallen between 90% and 95%. Often at this level there are clear authorised reasons for pupil absence - usually illness, but where at this level reasons are not known or unauthorised we hope to work in close partnership with the relevant families to ensure attendance does not dip further.

Where attendance begins to fall below 90% or even 80% we start to become more concerned. Please continue to report pupil absences to the office before 9:30 AM. After this time we will attempt to contact you to confirm your child's absence if we have not seen them. If we cannot reach you then we move to your emergency contacts (these should be up to date so please contact the office if you have any changes we need to be made aware of). We can, and do, apply a relative amount of discretion at these early stages of monitoring and are fully aware that each attendance case has its own story and this should not be forgotten.

Communication

As always we have an open door policy where we welcome your feedback, comments or questions or if you simply want to check in to see how things are going. Please feel free to contact your child's teacher directly for any class or curriculum themed queries, Shona for any admin, school meal, absences, medical appointments, Expressive Arts or general queries and of course myself for anything you would rather approach me directly with. We can be contacted as below:

Mr Thomson: grant.thomson@orkney.gov.uk
Mr Dearness: john.deariness@glow.orkneyschools.org.uk (or on Seesaw)
Mrs Williams: dawn.williams@glow.orkneyschools.org.uk (or on Seesaw)
Mrs Rendall: lynn.rendall@glow.orkneyschools.org.uk (or on Seesaw)
Shona: admin.orphir@glow.orkneyschools.org.uk

Do remember you are more than welcome to call me at either school regarding anything - you do not have to wait for me to be physically present in the Orphir School building.

Attachments

Forms are coming out for the following:

P1 - consent form for height and weight screening (Term 2)

P1-7 - flu vaccination consent form

Please make sure you return all the forms even if you don't consent and then we can pass them back to NHS Orkney.

The updated parent handbook is on the website and can be accessed via this link:

<https://www.orphircommunityschool.co.uk/school-documents>

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.

Family Events calendar: version 1

Term Dates for 2025-2026

Curriculum Rationale

Salvation Army - bags home with children this week - collection 2 September

Please complete all forms and return by Friday this week where possible.

Term 1 Diary Dates

- Parent Forum AGM and Meeting: Wednesday 3rd September 6 PM.
- Curriculum Information Evening: Thursday 18th September 6 PM.
- Joint Parent Forum meeting with Stenness: proposed Wednesday 24th September (time and location TBC).

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Curriculum Information Evening

Please join us on Thursday 18th September for our Curriculum Information Evening here in the school at 6 PM. Here there will be the opportunity to learn more about the learning taking place in your child's class this year and ways in which you can perhaps help. In response to some valued parental feedback we will also further explain our Curriculum for Excellence levelling process in a bid to help make this part of our reporting more user friendly and real. You will also be issued with a yearly curriculum overview for your child's class and your first termly class newsletter.

P6 Outdoor Education Days

23-25 September

Our Primary 6 pupils will be attending 3 days with outdoor education team taking parts in lots of different activities. Forms will come out shortly for parents to complete. Costs in the region of £100 per person will be paid for by fundraising done by the Parent Forum.

Timetable

Please see my timetable for this year:

Head Teacher Timetable 2025-2026		
Monday	Stenness	Orphir
Tuesday	Stenness	
Wednesday	Orphir	
Thursday	Orphir	
Friday	Stenness	

Family Yearly Planner

Please find attached the first version of our yearly planner which details all the main events we have planned this year. We will try not to change these but if we have to, we will do our very best to inform you as soon as we can. Shona will continue to put out reminders in her bulletins and of course information will also come in my termly updates.

Parent Forum

The AGM of the Orphir Community School Forum (formerly Parent Council) takes place here at the school on Wednesday 3rd September at 6 PM. This is followed by our first meeting of the year. Our Parent Forum is led by Liz Johnston and the meetings really are great. The Parent Forum are a positive and proactive group of parents who want nothing but the best for the children here at Orphir Community School and being part of the group helps keep parental voice strong. Please feel free to pop along on Wednesday 3rd September if you would like to be part of the Parent Forum or simply want to have a peedie look. Papers for this meeting will be emailed out separately.

Welcome from Liz Johnston Chair:

Hello,
Hope your children are settling in to the new term well.

We have a Forum meeting planned for parents for Weds 3rd Sept at 6pm at the school, an online option can be made available. Kids that don't need direct supervision are welcome to play in the playpark/outdoor space if needed.

This will be the AGM; after a couple of parents moving on this year, we are really keen to see some new faces at the meetings in order to make this sustainable for those of us already involved.

Thanks to those who already come or volunteer their time for netball/football and at events. This year we are aiming to have a fundraiser at the end of Term 1 (possibly a quiz night) and the Burns Supper in Term 3 (booked for Friday 23rd January 2026). The last few years we have been fundraising to put money towards the P6 and P7 outdoor activities and Hoy trip.

For those that are new to the school, I have attached a document which explains the role of the Parent Forum and our constitution.

There are 4 meetings a year, usually no more than 1.5 hours.
These meetings include:

- A head teacher's report, which gives useful updates on activities in the school and what is planned.
- Discussion on how parents can help with any planned events.
- An opportunity to discuss any school policies/projects
- Input on how additional funding is spent by the school.

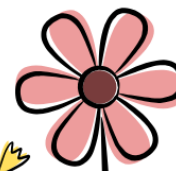
It really isn't a lot of work and I find it enjoyable but it is too much for only 3 people. Please consider coming along next week to find out more, we would love to see you.

Thank you,
Liz Johnston



Orphir Community School 2025-2026 Family Events Planner

Version 1



Term 1

OCSF Parent Forum AGM
Wednesday 3rd September

P1-P7 Curriculum Information Evening
Thursday 18th September: Evening

Term 2

N to P7 Halloween Disco
Thursday 30th October: Evening

Peedie Harvest Home
Thursday 6th November: PM

Reporting Progress Evenings
Wednesday 26th November
Thursday 27th November
After school

Children In Need
Friday 21st November

Christmas Service & P1-3 Nativity
Wednesday 10th December
Kirk: PM

Christmas Party
Wednesday 17th December: PM

Term 3

Burns' Supper
Friday 23rd January: Evening

Holidays
Thursday 12th, Friday 13th &
Monday 16th February

World Book Day
Thursday 5th March

Reporting Progress Evenings
Wednesday 11th March
Thursday 12th March
After school

Comic Relief
Friday 21st March

Class Assemblies
Monday 30th March: PM

Term 4

Holiday
Monday 4th May

In-service
Monday 1 June (closed to pupils)

Sports Day
Tuesday 2nd June: PM

Curriculum Showcase Event
Friday 26th June: PM

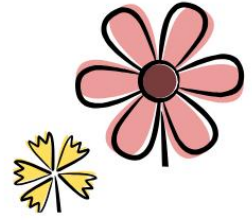
Leavers Assembly
Wednesday 1st July: PM

Leavers' Disco
Wednesday 1st July: Evening



Orphir Community School

2025-2026 Term Dates



Term 1

First day of Term
Tuesday 19 August 2025

Last Day of Term
Friday 10 October 2025

Term 3

First day of Term
Monday 5 January 2026

Holidays

Thursday 12, Friday 13 &
Monday 16 February 2026

Last Day of Term
Friday 3 April 2026

Term 2

First day of Term
Wednesday 29 October 2025

Last Day of Term
Friday 19 December 2025

Term 4

First day of Term
Monday 20 April 2026

Holiday
Monday 4 May

In-service
Monday 1 June
(closed to pupils)

Last Day of Term
Thursday 2 July 2026

