**Communication and Reporting to Parents, Pupils and other Teachers**

**Hamnavoe Primary School Policy October 2003**

### Introduction

Communication with parents has been a Hamnavoe Primary School priority since the HMIE Inspection of the school in February 2001 and since then much work has been done in this area.

The Head Teacher has been involved with an E.U. Project that involves Shetland Islands Council Education Service and universities in Italy, Spain and Germany. The project, based on improving home-school communication, has given the staff at the school the results of research currently being undertaken in this area at university level. These results have had an impact on the way the school now communicates with parents.

Hamnavoe Primary School was involved in the Assessment is for Learning Project 1, Formative Assessment, funded by the Scottish Executive. Our project was based on interviewing pupils at regular intervals in primaries 4 to 7 with regard to their progress in mathematics. As a result of this project the staff of the school now believe that there should be more emphasis placed on talking to pupils about their progress in school and in planning for future learning. As a result the staff feel that pupils should be more involved in the reporting of pupil progress to parents and other teachers.

During session 2002/2003 parents were given the questionnaire, Communication and Reporting to Parents, to gain their views on how successful communication was with the school and to identify ways to make it better. Around 50% of families returned the questionnaire. An Action Plan was written based on the information given in the questionnaire and is included as appendix (A).

It is the view of the staff at Hamnavoe Primary School that the way the school communicates to parents is of vital importance. The staff believe that Communication should feature in the title rather than the narrower ‘Reporting to Parents’. The staff also feel that pupils need to be included as key stakeholders at this point.

### Communication and Reporting - Aims of the School

1. To work in partnership with parents and pupils to maximise the benefit of future learning and teaching.
2. To establish a true dialogue between parents and pupils so that information passes freely between all partners.
3. To communicate to parents, pupils and other teachers in a clear and interesting manner.

Written Communication

The staff of the school are striving to make all written communication more easily understood and more interesting to look at. With this in mind the following will feature in future written communications from the school.

- A summary of School Policy Documents, School Development Plans etc. will be given with little jargon present.
- A contact name will also be present.
- Colour and graphics will be used to make written communication more attractive and interesting.
- Regular discussions with parents will be held about what type of written communication they need and how is should be presented.
- Communication kept simple so that the message can be found at a glance.

Written Communication to Parents

Parents have become more involved in the process with regard to written communication, through the questionnaire ‘Communication and Reporting to Parents.’ Parents have also become involved in writing information leaflets to parents i.e. Information for New Parents, School Trip Information and Attainment Levels and National Tests – more are planned. Parents are involved at the draft stage of all written papers produced by the school.

Written Communication to Pupils

At the start of session 2003/04 the pupils in primaries 3 to 7 produced a Personal Learning Plan in Reading, Writing, Mathematics, Listening and Talking. It is proposed that pupils will produce 5 Personal Learning Plans during a school year covering a six-week period with the help of their teacher. The purpose of these plans is to build on the success of the Formative Assessment Project we did in Maths the session before when pupils were asked to point out any area of difficulty they had and were given help to overcome the problem.

The Personal learning Plans that the pupils in primaries 3 to 7 will produce will indicate areas that they hope to improve on and areas that they need some extra help to overcome any problems they have. Each of the 5 Personal Learning Plans produced during the school year will be sent home to parents. Each will be reviewed at the end of the period covered. After each Personal Learning Plan has been completed pupils will be able to score their progress in a scale of 1 to 10. Teachers will be able to make comments on any area covered in the plan too.
**Written Communication to other Teachers**

All written reports that are given to parents and pupils will also be available to other teachers when children move classes at the end of a session or move to secondary school. The school has very close links with Scalloway Junior High School and maintains good lines of communication that continue well into a pupil’s first years at secondary school.

**Pupil Progress Report**

Pupil Progress reports are written and given to parents and pupils at the beginning of June. The reports are given to parents prior to a parents’ day/evening in June and form the basis for discussion at this meeting. Parents are timetabled to meet their child’s teacher for a 15-minute session. If a parent wishes a longer meeting, a double session of 30 minutes can be arranged. If parents cannot manage on the days or evenings allocated for these meetings then another time will be arranged to suit the parents.

Pupils will discuss the content of the Pupil Progress Report with their teacher around the same time as it is given to parents.

The 5 – 14 Reporting document states the following:

*A good school report should:*

*convey, through the teacher’s comments, a clear impression of personal knowledge of the pupil, within the constraints of the time available in which teacher and pupil work together;*

*provide a description of progress and attainment;*

*comment on personal and social development and attendance;*

*comment on strengths and development needs and identify Next Steps for learning and teaching;*

*encourage motivation through a constructive approach;*

*be a focal point for dialogue between home and school.*

The current Pupil Progress report format was revised in September 2003, when the types of report were examined, and agreed to by parents, pupils and teachers.
**Spoken Communication**

**Parents’ Meeting**

During a school session there are 5 parents’ evenings/days for primary 1 parents and 4 for the rest of the school. Parents of primary one pupils have an extra meeting at the end of September to discuss their child’s initial progress in school. Two other meetings to discuss pupil progress for all parents are held in November and June. These individual meetings can be arranged for any time during the day or in the evening. Two parents’ evenings, in September and February are held to discuss new developments in the school or on a range of educational topics.

A room for children not involved in parents’ meetings will be provided in the school. This room will be supervised and have a range of activities for children.

Parents can arrange to meet with their child’s teacher at any time during the session by contacting the school. Meetings frequently happen outside the 9 am -3 pm teaching day. The Head Teacher is always available for meetings.

The staff of the school try hard to make visitors to the school feel welcome. However, some parents find meeting with teachers stressful. Advocacy Shetland, (phone 696462) can give advice about such meetings. If you wish to bring a relative or friend to a meeting with a teacher you are quite entitled to do so.

**Pupil Meetings**

As is stated in the Policy, meetings regularly take place with children in primary 3 to 7, to produce a Personal Learning Plan. When the Pupil Progress Report is produced in June there will be an opportunity for each pupil to discuss the content with their teacher.

**Where Meetings Take Place**

When teachers and parents meet care will be taken to find a place to talk that means the meeting is confidential i.e. not in a public place where others can listen.

**Record of Meetings**

When teacher/parent meetings take place out with the usual round of meetings it is usual that a minute of these meetings is kept. This minute is later agreed by both teacher and parent as a true record of their meeting.
E-mail Communication

Schools in Shetland have adapted the Schoolmaster system to allow pupils access to E-mail communication. Since September 2003 all pupils in the school, from primary 4 to 7, have been allocated their own personal E-mail address. Pupils in primary 1 to 3 have a single class address.

The Schoolmaster system is internet based. It is a managed, secure system that filters out any unsuitable materials. As well as providing an E-mail address for pupils it allows safe chat rooms to talk with other children. Information about this system was given to parents at a parents’ evening in September 2003.

The school has arranged for any parent in the school to be allocated a Schoolmaster E-mail address. It is planned during session 2003/04 to begin using E-mail to send information to parents who wish to use this method of communication. Parents who do not wish to be E-mailed by the school will receive their information by letter as usual. There will be no difference in the information sent by E-mail or by letter.

School Website

A new school website is planned for October 2003. At present it is only in the early planning stages. The site will supply up-to-date information about the school and will contain a page with School Board Information.

The main difference between the new website and the old one will be the fact that it contains regularly updated information. When the site is ‘up and running’ this section of the policy will be rewritten and the information there in given to parents.

Scottish Executive

The Scottish Executive have a website for parents called Parentzone. This website has an ever-increasing range of information which is aimed at parents with school age children. Parentzone provides information in an accessible way that will help parents to get involved in their children’s learning.

The address of this site is: parentzone@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Open Door Policy

The school truly has an ‘Open Door Policy’ with regard to meeting with parents. This means that the door is always open. The Head Teacher is always available to talk about your child’s needs and meetings with teachers can readily be arranged.
Don’t be afraid to come through this open door!! And remember you can bring a friend.