

Summarised inspection findings

Sgoil Àraich Loch a Tuath

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

17 September 2019

Key contextual information

Sgoil Àraich Loch a Tuath is situated within Sgoil a' Bhac, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The provision is for children aged two to those not yet attending school. The sgoil àraich (nursery) operates mornings only. There are two playrooms, to which children are assigned depending on whether they are in their ante or pre-school year.

The sgoil àraich is registered for 40 children at any given time. At the time of inspection, there were 30 children on the roll.

At the time of the inspection, the sgoil àraich was providing Gaelic Medium Education (GME), with children immersed in the Gaelic language.

1.3 Leadership of change

weak

This indicator focuses on working together at all levels to develop a shared vision for change and improvement which reflects the context of the setting within its community. Planning for continuous improvement should be evidence-based and clearly linked to strong self-evaluation. Senior leaders should ensure that the pace of change is well judged and appropriate to have a positive impact on outcomes for children. The themes are:

- developing a shared vision, values and aims relevant to the setting and its community
- strategic planning for continuous improvement
- implementing improvement and change

- The headteacher (HT) needs to strategically support and lead improvements in the sgoil àraich. This should be based on robust processes for monitoring and reviewing all aspects of practice. It should work in tandem with the feedback that practitioners receive from local HTs as they support each other with quality assurance.
- There is a shared vision, values and aims across the school and sgoil àraich. These were reviewed and refreshed to take account of the views of children, parents and practitioners. Children's understanding of the values is supported by them being displayed in Gaelic in an age-appropriate way. Moving forward, it will be important to ensure the vision, values and aims remain current and relevant to high-quality immersion in early learning and childcare.
- The recently-appointed play-leader and well-established practitioner team demonstrate a sense of commitment to their roles. The sgoil àraich has experienced staffing changes. Practitioners demonstrate resilience and enthusiasm. They strive to make a difference to children. The play-leader has identified areas for improvement and is beginning to implement change. For example, she has introduced learning journals. She is working with the practitioner team to lead and take forward improvements in practice. By working together in this way, there is considerable potential to develop the work of the nursery class. The team has weekly meetings with the P1 teacher of GME to focus on planning and transition.
- The HT carries out annual appraisals. Practitioners engage with professional learning to support their practice. There is a need for practitioners, working with the HT and P1 teacher, to develop a shared understanding of early learning pedagogy. This should be used to deliver high-quality total immersion early learning and childcare (ELC) in line with current thinking and best practice. Practitioners should be given opportunities to lead improvements to enable them to develop their skills, knowledge and confidence in a chosen area of expertise.

- The school improvement plan (SIP) is common to the school and sgoil àraich. Identified priorities do not currently fully reflect what should be the sgoil àraich's areas for improvement. All practitioners should be involved in identifying relevant priorities. This should help to develop a sense of ownership and allow practitioners to take forward a leadership role linked to the SIP.
- Self-evaluation is at the very early stages of being fully developed across the sgoil àraich. Practitioners share informal, daily and weekly dialogue to inform improvements and changes in practice. They are at the early stages of using national self-evaluation frameworks to evaluate the quality of provision. Practitioners would benefit from further engagement with the self-evaluation framework, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?', along with the 'Advice on Gaelic Education'. This would assist them to reflect and identify areas for improvement, which are pertinent to their context. The HT should lead improvement, ensuring a manageable pace of change that results in impact.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

This indicator focuses on ensuring high quality learning experience for young children. It highlights the importance of a very good understanding of child development and early learning pedagogy. Effective use is made of observation to inform future learning and identify the progress made. Children are involved in planning for their own learning. Together these ensure children's successes and achievements are maximised. The themes are:

- learning and engagement
- quality of interactions
- effective use of assessment
- planning, tracking and monitoring

- Children in the sgoil àraich enjoy a welcoming, relaxing and caring environment as a basis for their learning through total immersion. Practitioners understand the need to use Gaelic as the core language of learning and play. Children when engaging in their play demonstrate the sgoil àraich values of friendship, kindness and respect to each other. They could be encouraged to show more respect and responsibility for tidying-up the playroom. Most children engage well with play that they themselves choose. On such occasions, they find play motivating and meaningful, and concentrate deeply to be curious and solve problems. Children's learning takes place in a range of play contexts, both indoors and outdoors. They are evidently more motivated in their learning when outside. Children confidently explore the large area in which they play outdoors.
- Practitioners have improved their use of Gaelic for immersion. With the HT's ongoing support, they acknowledge their responsibility in ensuring that they fully fulfil the principles of immersion as an important feature of Sgoil Àraich Loch a Tuath. Practitioners, in interacting with children, make some good commentaries. In the playroom for the younger children, there is a welcome use of songs. Most children join in by singing along and by participating through actions. Children enjoy such experiences. Across both playrooms, there are some regular, familiar contexts, which enable children to use some of the language that they are acquiring.
- A few children do not always sustain concentration for all of group activities. Practitioners should make more use of the 'Advice on Gaelic Education', and other documentation, to strengthen their understanding of pedagogy for immersion and learning at the early level. They should be clearer of the intended learning from contexts, and the range of approaches to immersion that will be used to achieve success in learning. In so doing, they should plan more challenging play, ensuring a brisker pace of learning and improved engagement from children.
- Overall, there is scope for more extensive use of digital technology to support learning.
- Children's learning is recorded in learning journey books through photographs, comments and practitioners' observations. The quality of observations need to have a much sharper focus on the significant learning of individuals and groups of children. These, in turn, should support the identification of what children need to learn next and inform the completion of developmental overviews, alongside practitioner professional judgement. There is scope for more of children's understanding of Gaelic through immersion to be documented. The use of developmental overviews to track progress is not fully based on GME and, as such, is not fully effective. As observations embed, practitioners should develop moderation as part of reliable and valid assessment. Children's experiences are documented in big books and wall displays. These should now be used as a stimuli for reflecting with children, and their parents, on their learning and progress. In so doing, there should be articulation in the use of the language of learning

used at the primary stages of GME. Conversations on learning should establish what children already know and what they would like to learn more about.

- Practitioners plan learning in line with whole-school approaches for interdisciplinary topics, literacy and Gàidhlig, and numeracy and mathematics. Planning should also be more responsive to children's interests and promote curiosity, investigation and creativity. Practitioners need to develop their skills in evaluation, for which they should build their knowledge of total immersion in ELC.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide play-based experiences through immersion for children. There is an element of choice within free-play both indoors and outdoors, through which children fully engage and cooperate. Practitioners should continue to review the structure of the day and balance of adult-directed experiences to ensure children have increased opportunities to lead their own learning.
- Sgoil a' Bhac and Sgoil Àraich Loch a Tuath have a rationale for their curriculum. This should be refreshed to better reflect high-quality total immersion ELC, as well as important features of the local context. Practitioners should develop a greater understanding of developmental stages, including how young children learn through schematic play. Their professional learning should focus on 'Pre-Birth to Three' and 'Building the Ambition' adapted to total immersion. This would be good preparation for extending provision as part of the extended free hours.
- Practitioners have had a focus on the national programme, Developing the Young Workforce. Children have benefitted from visitors to the sgoil àraich representing the coastguard, nursing and dentistry. Children have opportunities to explore the local environment and community by going on a nature walk and having an outing to the beach.
- Transition activities take place over the year through children's engagement with assemblies, shows and sport events. Formal visits take place in the final term. The teacher of P1 GME meets practitioners in the sgoil àraich on a weekly visit. Children who may require additional support with their learning would benefit from planned enhanced transitions.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Overall, partnerships with parents are positive. They are happy with their children's experiences at sgoil àraich. In a recent consultation, parents highlighted key strengths, including relationships with practitioners and the information shared with home. A minority of parents requested better outdoor play and resources. As planned, the sgoil àraich should continue to develop outdoor learning in line with best practice guidance. Practitioners should continue to develop the outdoor space, for example, introducing more challenge through approaches such as loose parts.
- Parents are kept informed with regular newsletters, daily dialogue and opportunities for stay and play sessions. Information for parents, including their children's learning experiences are displayed on a designated notice board. Parents also have access to their children's individual learning journeys. They may contribute to the learning journeys through comments on their child's progress and learning. There are opportunities for parents to request a more formal appointment to discuss their child's progress.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

satisfactory

This indicator reflects on the setting's approach to children's wellbeing which underpins their ability to achieve success. It highlights the need for policies and practices to be well grounded in current legislation and a shared understanding of the value of each individual. A clear focus on wellbeing entitlements and protected characteristics supports all children to be the best they can be and celebrates their successes and achievements. The themes are:

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- A warm and welcoming ethos supports children to feel safe and secure in their environment. Relationships across the sgoil àraich are positive, which result in a relaxed and happy atmosphere. Children are developing friendships. They are kind and considerate to their peers. Settling in procedures for children include the opportunity to visit and share information prior to starting. When children start sgoil àraich, they are supported to settle and encouraged to bring a comforter from home to support transition.
- Children are happy and confident. They engage in a range of outdoor experiences, for example, using tyres to create an obstacle course. Daily opportunities to be outdoors supports children to develop their confidence and resilience. It impacts positively on their sense of wellbeing. They use the local environment to explore nature, including planting and growing in the poly-tunnel.
- Snack time is a social experience. All children sit down as a group to enjoy a healthy snack. At the start of term, children are consulted on the foods they would like for their snacks. This is in addition to the fresh fruit being served daily. Children act as "snack helpers". They are supported to cut fruit, fill jugs of water and put dishes on the table. Children are developing their skills in hygiene. Children's leadership skills should be developed further to enable a sense of responsibility and increased independence skills.
- In their practice, practitioners and children exhibit the outcomes of the wellbeing indicators. They are at an early stage of developing a shared understanding of Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC). Practitioners should work together with children and parents to promote the language of wellbeing indicators: safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, responsible, respected and included. This should be introduced in a developmental way to ensure that the wellbeing indicators become embedded as children move through the sgoil àraich and into school.
- The more formal use of the statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, February 2017 should be taken forward to assist in improving playroom practice. This is particularly important as the Comhairle implements the extended free hours. Overall, other statutory Guidance on inclusion is met. However, policies and procedures need to be more robust to ensure positive outcomes for all children. Practitioners should revisit their codes of practice and statutory Guidance in ELC.
- Inclusion and equality is promoted throughout the work of the setting, with all children and families treated with respect. Practitioners treat children fairly and take account of their individual likes and dislikes. Children who may face barriers to their learning have support plans in place. However, these need to have a clearer focus on targets and next steps. This would support practitioners in measuring the progress children are making over time. The HT

should consider the allocation of support assistants across the 2-12 provision to better impact on progress.

3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

This indicator relates to the development and learning of babies, toddlers and young children. It requires clear understanding of early learning and development and pedagogy. It reflects the integrated way young children learn and the importance of experiences and development happening on an individual basis within a supportive, nurturing and stimulating environment. High quality early learning and childcare contributes significantly to enhancing children's progress and achievement as they grow and learn. It can benefit all children by closing the attainment gap and ensuring equity for all. It is about the holistic nature of development and learning ensuring these foundations are secure in order to achieve future attainment success. The themes are:

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
 - children's progress over time
 - overall quality of children's achievement
 - ensuring equity for all children
-
- Practitioners give children an important start to acquiring fluency in the Gaelic language. As children progress through the early level, the school reports that most and almost all children are achieving the early level by the end of P1. This is assisting the school in reducing the gap in attainment.
 - Children are making satisfactory progress in communication and early Gaelic language. Children use greetings and courtesy formulae. They understand instructions and phrases used in familiar contexts, such as during snack time. They are able to name items of food and drink. The older children are able to apply this vocabulary in less familiar contexts. For most of the time, children show respect to their peers by listening carefully to what they have to say. They understand an increasing range of communication. Children should be encouraged to access texts across the contexts in which they play. The younger children are interested in stories that are being read aloud to them. They ask questions about illustrations associated with these stories. Children would benefit from having more stories read aloud to them. There is scope to increase role-play, singing, rhymes, reading aloud and independent access to books as children play on a daily basis. The location of the role-play area between the two rooms is not always encouraging children's free flow use of this potential language-rich context.
 - Children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. They count the number of children attending the sgoil àraich. Children also recognise some numbers out of sequence. They explore common shapes in play. When used, role-play areas afford a few children opportunities to use coins and money in a real-life context. Children are encouraged to measure and make some simple estimations. The daily clàradh (registration) is helping children to think of the concept of time. Children organise and sort objects to explore weight and capacity. There is scope to increase the use of simple graphs, charts and signs to display information.
 - Children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. In planned experiences in the gym, children enjoy exploring how different sea creatures move. Most children are able to catch a large ball. The majority of children are developing confidence and the skills required to pedal a two-wheel bike. This builds on opportunities for achievements with which children engage beyond the sgoil àraich. To develop these skills further, children need to negotiate manoeuvres that are more challenging. Overall, physical play needs to be more challenging, and include risky play. This should support the development and application of a wider range of skills. Children are learning about healthy food choices through contributing to planning snack

menus. Visits to the canteen for snack support transition with children becoming comfortable in the school environment.

- Documentation of learning evidences that children are making some progress over time and that value is added by being in the sgoil àraich. This includes children becoming more confident, resilient and beginning to develop the skills required to be motivated, lifelong learners. Children are also making progress in their understanding of Gaelic, and some use in it familiar contexts and through song. As practitioners increase their knowledge of child development, this will assist them in analysing, evidencing and using children's progress to more effect. Practitioners plan to adopt emergent literacy approaches that are used at the primary stages. In so doing, they should ensure that approaches are articulated to GME.
- Practitioners recognise, capture and celebrate wider achievements, for example, the success of the local 'bike club'. The skills developed through achievements should be used to promote progress across all areas of learning. By monitoring wider achievements robustly, practitioners could use this information to ensure no child is at risk of missing out. Children contribute to the life of the school and the wider community, for example through fundraising, visits to a local care home and recycling materials.
- To promote equity, more use could be made of available data to inform planned interventions. There is scope for the introduction of targeted interventions to secure greater progress for more children, for example using information from developmental overviews. Measuring impact will ensure that the correct interventions are in place to promote and ensure equity for all children.

Choice of QI: 2.4 Personalised support

- Universal support
- Identification of learning needs and targeted support
- Removal of barriers to learning

- Practitioners work well with parents to ensure all children receive universal support in the sgoil àraich. Emergent literacy assessments at the start of sgoil àraich and P1 inform strategies to ensure progress in literacy across the early level. Children are immersed in Gaelic on commencing sgoil àraich. They are observed to be learning the language in an age-appropriate manner for most of the time.
- Practitioners work with parents, health visitors, and speech and language therapists to secure positive outcomes for all children. They should continue to observe and identify children's needs early to allow appropriate supports and interventions to be put in place.
- A key worker system allows practitioners to support children's individual needs and promote their wellbeing. Practitioners share information both informally each day and more formally at weekly team meetings. They now need to make more use of their knowledge of individual children to effectively plan developmentally appropriate experiences.
- Practitioners have supportive and caring relationships with children. They encourage all children to achieve success.

Quality of care and support

Under this quality theme, we looked at how the staff met and planned for the individual needs of children. As well as their understanding and confidence in safeguarding and protecting children.

Children were very happy and settled in the sgoil àraich. Staff knew children and their families well. They were kind, respectful, nurturing and welcoming to all children, families and visitors.

Initial information gathered about children gave staff basic information about children's individual needs and preferences. We noted that some of the information gathered was very relevant and supported staff to care for children.

We discussed how more robust and meaningful personal plans would enable staff to support children more effectively. Although information had been gathered from parents and other professionals, we found that this information could be used more effectively to plan for and measure the progress children were making in their overall development.

The service should, in line with legislation, develop more robust personal plans for children that highlight children's individual needs, their stages of development and how staff plan to support children. Staff should continue to ensure that they review personal plans every six months, or as children's needs change. We have recommended that the service develop further, and implement meaningful and robust personal plans.

We saw some examples of when children's independence was promoted and encouraged. For example, when children were leading and directing their own learning in the 'shop' and during snack time. Staff should continue to support and develop children's independence, while taking account of immersion. They should continue to explore ways to encourage and enable children to learn through the use of loose parts and open-ended resources. Staff would benefit from training, and personal research in these areas, and how these may be used as part of immersion.

Children's health and wellbeing needs were being met by the staff team. However, we identified areas where improvements have to be made. We noted that the service did not have robust systems in place to support the safe administration and recording of medication. We have recommended that the service address this. We signposted the service to the Care Inspectorate document, 'Management of medication in daycare and childminding services'.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

Quality of staffing

Staff at Sgoil Àraich Loch a Tuath worked well together. They showed commitment and resilience during a period of transition to staff changes, and roles and responsibilities. The newly-appointed play-leader was keen to lead improvements in the service, and support staff to improve outcomes for children and families. The HT and local authority should strategically support the training needs and development of the play-leader and play-assistants.

Staff genuinely cared for and nurtured children. They were seen to praise and encourage children to celebrate success. It was clear that children and families trusted and respected staff.

Staff held appropriate childcare qualifications. They attended core training sessions provided by the local authority. Staff could describe the positive impact of some training, such as Play on Pedals and autism training. Weekly staff meetings provided a platform for staff to meet and discuss the future plans and development of the service. Staff welcomed the protected time they had to meet and share ideas.

Staff were registered with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). They were not fully aware of their responsibilities in terms of understanding and being knowledgeable about the codes of practice, and in participating in and recording the impact of training. The HT and local authority should provide guidance to support staff in this area.

Staff were not familiar with the health and social care standards which were implemented in April 2018. Staff should familiarise themselves with this document and use these standards in their planning, assessment and provision of care. Staff would benefit from training in the self-evaluation tool, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?', 'Advice on Gaelic Education', and other key guidance, documentation and regulatory frameworks. The HT and local authority should support staff in this area.

Care Inspectorate grade: adequate

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements or recommendations. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and two recommendations.

Recommendations

- Personal plans for children should be developed further to ensure that children's personal preferences, likes and dislikes are recorded. Current information on children's routines should be maintained. Staff should ensure that purposeful individual observations, and clearly identified next steps, are recorded for each child. They should ensure that spontaneous observations are carried out, where appropriate. This will give clear information on children's individual learning and support each child's keyworker to identify individual next steps in learning for each child in their group. Children's personal plans should be reviewed every six months, or as children's needs change.

Health and Social Care Standards:

1.14 – 'My future care and support needs are anticipated as part of my assessment.'

1.15 – 'My personal plan (sometimes referred to as a care plan) is right for me because it sets out how my needs will be met, as well as my wishes and choices.'

The service should review, update and implement the service's medication procedures, ensuring these reflect best practice guidance. This should include:

- Recording clear information about children's medical conditions and how medication has to be administered. This should include triggers, signs, symptoms and actions to be taken by staff.
- Demonstrating how information is shared with parents/carers when medication has been administered.
- Ensuring staff record information about any medication they administer promptly.
- Ensuring staff clarify the dose of medication with parents/carers, where this differs from the instructions.

Health and Social Care Standards:

4.14 – ‘My care and support is provided in a planned and safe way, including if there is an emergency or unexpected event.’

1.24 – ‘Any treatment or intervention that I experience is safe and effective.’

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.