

# Sgoil Araich Thunga Day Care of Children

Tong  
Isle of Lewis  
HS2 OHJ

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**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
26 January 2023

**Service provided by:**  
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002104

**Service no:**  
CS2005113838

## About the service

The day care of children service, Sgoil Araich Thunga has been registered since 1 April 2011 to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children in English Medium, and 24 children in Gaelic Medium, from the age of two years to primary school age.

The service provides Gaelic and English Medium Education in two rooms in the nursery area of Sgoil Thunga, on the island of Lewis.

The nursery provides pre-school education in partnership with Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar. Children are funded for pre-school education from the age of three years.

Nursery children had access to the outdoor area, and children had access to the school library, gym, and the secret garden.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 23 and 24 January 2023. The inspection was carried out by two inspectors from the Care Inspectorate. To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service, and intelligence gathered since the last inspection.

In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with eight children in the service
- spoke with six members of their families
- spoke with seven staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Staff were kind, caring and nurturing. They knew children very well and were committed to their care.
- The head teacher created an ethos of continuous improvement within the service where quality assurance and improvement was part of the improvement plan, and we discussed how these could improve outcomes for children in their playrooms.
- Children were meaningfully involved and made choices about their play and learning.
- The management team and staff should continue to consolidate quality assurance processes underpinned by best practice guidance, especially during lunchtime.

## From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

### 1.1: Nurturing Care and Support

We found several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and they clearly outweighed areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this key question as good.

Children were confident, familiar with nursery routines, and had fun playing with friends. The Head Teacher of the school demonstrated a strong commitment and empathy to the families and staff that attended the nursery and there was a strong ethos of care and nurture throughout the service. One parent told us, "I would like to commend the setting for their fun, nurturing approach to learning." Staff knew the nursery children well and had formed positive relationships with them and their families. One parent told us, "My child did struggle to settle but staff were great in comforting and encouraging him, whilst using his interests to help him settle." Children attending the service were happy, settled, and secure in the service and confident in their interactions with staff. They were made to feel included by staff who were calm, respectful, and skilled in building relationships. Staff used nurturing approaches to help children feel safe and their emotional wellbeing needs were met.

We selected five personal plans and they all contained information that informed nursery staff about the people who matter to the child outside nursery, along with their likes and dislikes through the 'All About Me' book. Staff's knowledge of the children should be used consistently to ensure plans reflect children's needs, wishes, and choices and reviewed with in timescales. We evidenced that staff worked well with other agencies to support children's needs, but this was not always clear in the personal plans, and what would support the child's needs. (See area of improvement 1).

Mealtimes were generally a positive experience for children. We discussed that staff should sit with children to encourage social interaction, improve supervision, and use this time more effectively to build relationships with children. Children were encouraged to prepare their own snack sitting down together and were offered fresh water to drink. Children had some opportunities to learn life skills, however, these could be further enhanced by them being able to pour their own drinks, see the lunch options for that day, and be more involved in setting tables. The service agreed meal times needed to improve and they would review the mealtimes. More information can be found in practice notes 'Keeping children safe: supporting positive mealtime experiences in early learning and childcare (ELC)' on the Care Inspectorate Hub. (See area of improvement 2).

### 1.3: Play and Learning

We found several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and they clearly outweighed areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this key question as good.

Children's early language, literacy, and numeracy skills were being supported through planned experiences. Staff understood child development and they provided learning experiences which added depth and breadth to their learning. Staff had observed that children had been interested in planets. We seen the mindmap of what children wanted to learn and staff showed us the floor books of the varied experiences that children had been involved in throughout this time. More recently, children had extended their interests from planets to making rockets to visit the moon, and the rockets that they had made were displayed throughout the playroom.

Children's interests and prior learning were beginning to inform experiences, spaces, and interactions. Those in Gaelic Medium Education had a good balance of total immersion activities led by adults. Children's confidence was increasing in speaking and singing Gaelic in social situations and routines. Staff engaged well with children during immersion play. They provide rich commentary in Gaelic, whilst promoting children's curiosity. One parent told us, "We come from a non Gaelic speaking household and we have never regretted putting our child into the Gaelic room. The staff have been nothing but helpful and supporting of him and us during his time there and his learning has flourished and he has overtake us as parents in our learning." In both playrooms children benefited from a range of visitors to nursery to extend childrens play, one visitor being a Yoga teacher. One parent told us, "My child enjoys yoga at nursery and recognises when she needs to take deep breaths in order to calm herself down."

Children's voices could be reflected more within the planning process, this would create a better balance of child and adult initiated experiences being offered. For example, when planning, staff should start with what matters to the child and this should be shown in the child's individual Learning Plan, and this would link to the experiences offered throughout the playroom. Any additional help required for that child should be noted in their Personal Plan.

We evidenced that one of the project priorities for the nursery through the Improvement Plan was to develop the use of the outdoor play. One parent told us, "My son enjoys the nursery outdoor playing areas and the STEM activities that they do. I am very happy with the nursery and my sons learning and playing opportunities there." Children's opportunities to play and learn were enhanced through strong connections to the community. The service made good use of local space, using the local parks as part of their community walks, and their forest school approach as explained by a staff member who was extending this type of play.

Procedures for protecting children who require medication were robust. There was clear evidence of children's dietary and medical needs along with children's likes and dislikes displayed sensitively for supply staff to gain a good and understanding children's needs.

### Areas for improvement

1. To support children's learning and development, you, the provider, should review personal planning. This should include, but is not limited to, including views of parents and children that link to the planning cycle of the curriculum offered.

This is to ensure that care, play and learning is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: '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' (HSCS 1.15).

2. To support children's wellbeing, you, the provider, should review mealtime routines. This should include, but is not limited to, ensuring children have a nurturing experience with time for quality interactions from adults and opportunities to develop independence. Careful consideration should be taken from current nutritional guidance on portion sizes along with choices offered being well balanced.

This is to ensure that care, play and learning is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which state: 'I can enjoy unhurried snack and meal times in as relaxed an atmosphere as possible' (HSCS 1.35).

## How good is our setting?

4 - Good

### 2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

We found several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and they clearly outweighed areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this key question as good.

The nursery was in a self contained designated wing within Tong Primary School. The setting was spacious, with two classrooms with designated kitchen, toilets, and changing facilities. There was a designated outdoor space where children could play, along with a secret garden within the school grounds, and children had access to additional outdoor space in the school playground. The setting was warm, welcoming, and well maintained. The play areas were designed to promote different areas of learning, such as early language, literacy, and numeracy skills. We seen consultations with the children with lists of toys that they would like to have in the nursery. Staff told us that they intended to engage in meaningful observations to establish if the children are using the environment effectively. This will ensure that childrens needs and wishes are met and extended.

There were doors leading out onto the nursery play areas, but this was not a freeflow experience for children yet. Staff were looking at how this experience could be offered, but explained to us that many resources that were left outdoors, blow away due to the weather in this area. We agreed with staff that they should develop boxes of resources that could be placed outdoor easily to enhance childrens investigation skills, such as magnifying glasses, binoculars, etc. The team should continue with their plans to extend outdoor play in a meaningful way, as identified through the Improvement Plan.

Parents shared with us some concerns that they had about the building, these included:

"The facilities at Tong can be challenging due to the age of the building and some facilities need to be improved but this should be recognised as an urgent need and staff work well within these limited facilities."

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

### 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

We found several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and they clearly outweighed areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this key question as good.

The head teacher promoted a clear vision that helped staff understand the aspirations of children and their families. The service had a clear vision, aims and objectives, and a range of quality assurance processes in place, involving children and beginning to involve families' views. Staff were beginning to learn how to use peer observations to improve staff practice in the playroom. We spoke with the playleader how using a quality calendar, specifically for the nursery, would ensure that all staff receive this support as well as overviewing how the children are using the playroom environment. Training resources to Improve Quality Assurance practices can be found on the Care Inspectorate Hub:

<https://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/4212/qa-calendar.pdf> Quality Calendar Guidance.

The service was very well led by a strong, approachable, head teacher who delegated responsibility appropriately to staff and involved them in the development of the service. Good direction was provided to the team who were committed to providing children and families with positive experiences. High staff morale impacted strongly on children's experiences. We seen lots of examples of children being asked their views on the service and we would like to see this extended to more parents being consulted.

Staff spoke confidently and passionately to us about their leadership roles in the service, but these were not reviewed yet to measure the impact to children of these roles. They were further developing their skills in self-reflection and evaluation to improve outcomes for children. Staff focused on increased attainment for children. They encouraged children to articulate their views and provided opportunities for children to lead their learning. We agreed with the head teacher that quality improvement visits by the playleader in each room would ensure that effective experiences for children would be supported. This role would also enable staff to spend some time exploring best practice examples to enrich children's play and learning, as discussed during this inspection.

## How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

### 4.3: Staff Deployment

We found several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and they clearly outweighed areas for improvement, therefore, we evaluated this key question as good.

The staff team provided a wide range of skills and experience to the service. One parent told us, "The staff are always great at passing on any information from the day and have a very child friendly, easy to understand way of dealing with any problems the children may have." They worked well as a team. They told us they were happy in their roles and worked together to ensure they met the needs of the children and families. However, staff absences had some impact on service delivery. They spoke very highly of the head teacher and staff feel valued and listened to by her. They recognise that she is trying hard to recruit an additional playleader to support staff in the Gaelic playroom. Once this person is in post there will be a clear remit for both playleaders, and staff were looking forward to this opportunity to extend their professional dialogue and reflection.

Staff met regularly to reflect on what works well and discuss where positive changes could be made. Examples of this were seen in the service improvement plan and staff meetings. Staff were committed to providing the right care and support for the children everyday. One parent told us, "Staff are always very welcoming and friendly and they seem to do lots of fun activities."

Staff attended various further development events and courses. These included STEM opportunities, literacy and numeracy, along with First Aid. They shared new thinking, pedagogy approaches, and together made improvements to the nursery environment. Staff should continue to be supported to make positive changes and continue to develop the quality of experiences in the playrooms. One parent said, "I would like to commend the staff for their fun, nurturing approach to learning. My child clearly loves attending nursery and playing with the other children and nursery staff."

The service had ample staff to meet the recommended adult to child ratio during the inspection, and were well deployed to ensure that their differing experience enriched the playroom environment. The ratio had been adapted to meet the needs of the children, for example, children with higher dependency levels. Effective staff deployment also ensured good supervision of children, for example, staff communicated when a task took them away from their responsibilities, ensuring children were safe.

Staff were positioned well throughout the service and were able to appropriately respond to children's needs and provide high quality care and support. We acknowledged that due to staff shortages, staff may be moved between both playrooms, but this was done in a manner to minimise disruption to the children. The staff communicated well to ensure daily tasks were undertaken without interrupting the children's play.

## What the service has done to meet any requirements we made at or since the last inspection

### Requirements

#### Requirement 1

The provider must make proper provision for the health, welfare, and safety of service users. In order to achieve this, you, the provider, must:

a) ensure the safety and security of the children playing outdoors in the school grounds.

This is to comply with: Regulation 10. Fitness of Premises:(1) A provider must not use premises for the provision of a care service unless they are fit to be used. In making this requirement, the following Health and Care Standards, My Support, my life were considered: 'My environment is safe and secure.' HSCS 5.17.

**This requirement was made on 11 December 2019.**

#### Action taken on previous requirement

This area was safe and children could not get out onto the main playground in school, that could easily lead to going out into the community. Robust risk assessments were also in place to ensure that this area was kept secure along with the erection of a fence around the nursery area.

**Met - within timescales**

## What the service has done to meet any areas for improvement we made at or since the last inspection

### Areas for improvement

#### Previous area for improvement 1

Personal plans should show progression and be linked to the planning cycle, where appropriate. This is in order to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: '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.' (HSCS 1.15).

**This area for improvement was made on 11 December 2019.**

#### Action taken since then

There had been some improvements made to Personal Plans, but these were not consistent in all plans. There was very little evidence of the personal plans linking to the planning cycle. This area of improvement has been repeated under Quality Indicator 1.1: Nurturing Care and Support and we signposted the service to best practice documentation to meet this area of improvement.



## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com)

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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