

Summarised inspection findings

Sgoil Lionail - Lionel School

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

23 April 2024

Key contextual information

Sgoil Lìonail – Lionel School is in Nis (Ness), a rural area on the Isle of Lewis. The area is recognised as a stronghold for Gàidhlig (Gaelic). Many people who reside in this area have Gàidhlig as their mother tongue.

The sgoil (school) provides learning through the medium of Gàidhlig and English. Sgoil-Àraich Sgoil Lìonail (Lionel Early Learning and Childcare) is situated in Sgoil Lìonail. It provides early learning and childcare provision through the medium of Gàidhlig as part of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's 'Gaelic First' policy.

The headteacher post has been vacant since June 2023. The executive headteacher for rural Lewis is currently acting headteacher for Sgoil Lìonail. This arrangement is in place from August 2023 to June 2024. The executive headteacher has strategic responsibility for Sgoil Lìonail, as well as other schools in Lewis. A principal teacher is part of the sgoil's leadership team. Members of the leadership team are fluent speakers of Gàidhlig. Staff, both teaching and non-teaching, lead the programme for Gàidhlig and enable the language to be used out with the classrooms.

There are 71 children at P1-7, almost equally divided between Gàidhlig and English Medium Education. Children learn in five classes in the morning and four classes in the afternoon.

No child lives in 20% most deprived data zones in Scotland. However, the school recognises that this data measurement may not be reliable for their rural area.

Last term, the sgoil had significant staffing absences. There was specialist primary supply cover available.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

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

- Across the sgoil, senior leaders and staff ensure that there is a friendly and nurturing atmosphere. Staff and children's relationships are positive and supportive. Classrooms are well-organised and purposeful. As a result, most children participate well and are engaged in lessons. Senior leaders, teachers and all staff have a clear focus on making learning interesting and relevant. Classroom displays and open areas across the school show and celebrate children's work well.
- The acting headteacher has introduced strategies to promote further children's engagement, participation and leadership of their own learning and in the life of the school. Children respond very positively to these increased expectations. All children are members of various committees. A few children are on the pupil council. The acting headteacher and staff should

continue developing these committees as total immersion opportunities. Children appreciate that their ideas and suggestions count and are proud of their role in improving their school. They demonstrate resilience and cope very well with transitions and changes to their routines. This includes having different teachers, and returning to school after closures due to severe weather.

- In Gàidhlig and English Medium, staff ensure that younger children benefit from high-quality learning that is based firmly on play pedagogy. They take positive account of the principles of play within national guidance. In Gàidhlig Medium Education, learning through total immersion play is underpinned by the 'Advice on Gaelic Education' (2022). This is providing a good transition for children following the 'Gaelic First' experience in the sgoil-àraich. Across Gàidhlig and English Medium, play pedagogy helps ensure that planned learning is motivating and meaningful. It provides younger children with daily opportunities to lead their own learning. Staff provide activities that provoke and encourage children's curiosity and creativity very well. In the case of Gàidhlig Medium, approaches to play ensure that children are developing further their fluency in Gàidhlig. Children should be encouraged to talk independently in Gàidhlig to each other during play all of the time.
- In lessons through Gàidhlig and English, teachers provide clear instructions overall. Almost all children know the purpose of their learning. Teachers use questioning effectively to engage children and to check for understanding. Across the school, teachers should be clearer on the skills children develop. This will help children develop a greater awareness and better understanding of the relevance of their learning of skills for learning, life and work. For example, children would benefit from teachers highlighting the skills they are developing in lessons and activities. In Gàidhlig Medium Education, teachers should identify the specific grammar that children are learning.
- In Gàidhlig Medium Education, staff are fluent speakers. They use total immersion pedagogy and strategies very well. Gàidhlig is visible and can be heard throughout the school. The older children use Gàidhlig well in peer interactions when they are working independently of the teacher. The acting headteacher is implementing a very useful Gàidhlig language framework. This is giving staff clear direction and advice on exciting pedagogy for teaching grammar. When children require corrections in language, teachers do so sensitively. Younger children experience choice as they lead their own learning. Older children need more choice in their learning. This can be supported by children having choices in how to demonstrate their learning through effective planning for assessment.
- Across the school, teachers plan tasks and activities well for the multi-stage groups of children. Overall, teachers differentiate lessons well to meet the varying needs and abilities of children. This helps almost all children to remain engaged and focused on their learning. Children who need additional help with their learning are supported well in class. Pupil support assistants provide sensitive and targeted interventions. Across the school, senior leaders and staff have identified that higher-achieving children would benefit from more challenge and depth in their learning.
- Teachers' effective use of 'Advice on Gaelic Education' (2022) has impacted positively on the planning of Gàidhlig literacy outcomes. As a result, children across all stages are confident in their fluency and use of Gàidhlig. All staff are implementing new approaches to teaching writing in both Gàidhlig and English. There are positive signs that this is leading to improvements in the quality of children's written work.
- Children choose from a variety of books, written in English, in the school and class libraries. Younger children have responsibility for organising their class library. They apply their prior

learning very well to arrange books in alphabetical order, make signs and keep the library tidy. Parents volunteer to help older children to refresh and re-organise the school library. The library would benefit from more contemporary texts in Gàidhlig, as well as that related to the culture of Gàidhlig.

- Teachers provide written and verbal feedback to children about their learning. Children self-assess their own work and give feedback to their peers, for example on the quality of their writing. As planned, teachers should share practice to consider the most effective way to set short-term personalised targets for each child. This should be linked to the feedback children receive on their work.
- The acting headteacher has led the whole-school community in a successful process to refresh the curriculum rationale. She has a clear vision to ensure that all children learn about and benefit from the unique heritage and strong culture for Gàidhlig in the local area of Nis. Teachers plan learning across most curriculum areas to meet children's needs. Within interdisciplinary learning topics, children collaborate well with their teachers to plan and shape their learning, using 'what I know', 'what I want to know' and 'how will we learn' frameworks. Teachers plan for learning over the long- and short-term, ensuring that children experience a broad and balanced curriculum. Staff continue to review planning processes. Teachers should seek further opportunities to include children more fully in the planning of their own learning. The headteacher has plans in place, going forward, to enhance further outdoor learning as a key driver of the school's curriculum. Teachers need to accelerate their progress in teaching Gaelic (Learners). This would assist in increasing the amount of Gàidhlig that would be heard and spoken in shared learning and social spaces.
- Across the school, teachers use a variety of assessments for literacy and numeracy to provide baseline data and to demonstrate children's progress. The acting headteacher has introduced an assessment calendar. This outlines clearly when key assessments and tests will take place across the school year. As a result, teachers ensure that assessment is an integral, ongoing part of planned learning that informs their teaching. Teachers are engaging with a few moderation activities with colleagues in other schools. As planned, teachers would benefit from more opportunities to work alongside colleagues in other schools. Teachers should share practice in planning for assessment and, more explicitly, link children's progress to national Benchmarks. This will help to support further teachers' confidence and accuracy in making judgements about children's achievement of Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) levels.
- The acting headteacher has introduced a comprehensive digital system to check and monitor how well all children are learning in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Since her appointment, the acting headteacher has introduced focused meetings with staff to check regularly on all children's attainment. These approaches are impacting positively on teachers' confidence in assessing children's progress towards achieving national standards, particularly in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders and teachers should continue with their plans to use materials to assess and track children's progress in all curriculum areas. They should track children's progress in Gaelic (Learners), given the work done on the 'Nis' identity.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

- 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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

good

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

- Children's attainment and progress is expressed in 'overall' statements, rather than for specific year groups or CfE levels. This is because of the very small numbers of children at each stage.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy in Gàidhlig Medium Education

Attainment in literacy and Gàidhlig

- Overall, children make good progress in literacy and Gàidhlig. Children have good fluency in Gàidhlig. Children with additional support needs make good progress towards their individual targets in learning.

Listening and talking

- Younger children develop listening and talking skills well in total immersion and social contexts. They develop skills in collaborating with fluent speakers in the community in deep and challenging ways. Older children support the younger ones in these situations by planning questions to ask fluent speakers. By second level, children talk Gaelic fluently across a range of contexts for their learning. Children use Gàidhlig confidently in adult-led situations, and more independently in pairs and groups. They take turns as appropriate. Most children across all stages express their ideas and opinions persuasively. Children's accuracy in grammar is improving.

Reading

- Across the school, most children can read aloud fluently in Gàidhlig. Children are beginning to use expression with increasing confidence as they progress to second level. By the end of first level, children have a good understanding of phonics and decoding unfamiliar text. They connect phonics with spelling. During first level, children are engaging well with English phonics. They are able to build on prior skills. Children share ideas about the writer's use of punctuation in a story. They make and justify simple predictions about characters and plot.
- By second level, children identify features of what constitutes a fiction text. Children are working with literacy in Gàidhlig and English. Most children explain good use of punctuation and the techniques authors use in composing text. By second level, children read confidently a challenging fiction text in Gàidhlig as their core reading. They re-tell the story in their own words. Children identify features of text in speech and describe how this helps develop their understanding of characters' feelings. By second level, children explain how they select texts for range of purposes through the medium of Gàidhlig and English. Children share personal responses to their preferences for texts from reading for enjoyment.

Writing

- Across stages, almost all children make good progress in writing Gàidhlig. Children's high expectations of themselves impacts positively on their progress. Their presentation of work is

consistently of a high standard. Children at the early level develop positive early writing skills through well-planned play pedagogy. For example, 'Cafaidh Lionail' provides provocations and real-life contexts for children to learn through play. This is helping children build confidence with letter formation and a purpose for writing.

- Across stages, children write imaginatively. They understand the different features of texts, such as character descriptions. By first level, children use different verbs to begin sentences. This is helping children create more engaging pieces of writing. Children enrich their writing experiences through articles for the local newspaper, 'Fios'. By second level, almost all children write independently in both languages. They write for different purposes and in a range of genres. Children's progress in writing, in both Gàidhlig and English, is visibly supported by an extensive list of expectations. By the second level, children are writing weekly blogs using digital technology. Children organise information in appropriate ways to suit purpose and audience.
- Children's progress in Gaelic (Learners) is at an early stage. They exchange basic information. Children in English Medium need to build on the progress they make in Gàidhlig from the sgoil-àraich in a progressive way.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, most children are making good progress across numeracy and mathematics through the medium of Gàidhlig. Most children are on track to achieve their expected level of CfE by the end of the session. They are making good progress from prior levels of learning in numeracy and mathematics. They use mathematical terminology fluently.

Number, money and measure

- Younger children solve first level addition and subtraction using three-digit numbers. They identify whole numbers before and after. A few children bridge three-digit numbers using mental strategies. Children understand place value well and demonstrate how to divide objects into fractions, such as half and quarter. A few children identify coins. They know how much to spend money in shopping situations and calculate change. A few children confidently use simple money calculations. Across stages, children quickly recall timetables. They apply this knowledge in a range of contexts. In money and time questions, the majority of children solve real-life problems.
- Almost all of the older children recognise and identify negative numbers and place value. Children use percentages well to solve money problems. They find the value of fractions of numbers up to 100. Some children identify equivalent and simplify fractions. Most children are rounding numbers up to 100,000. The majority of children apply number skills to word-based problems. Most children confidently apply place value when using decimals.

Shape, position and movement

- Most younger children identify correctly two-dimensional shapes and identify three-dimensional objects. Older children identify and name lines of symmetry within two-dimensional shapes. Children are able to explain perimeter. Almost all children identify the language of position and direction. By first level, children identify right angles. Children need to explore and develop further sizes of angles in relation to a right angle. By second level, children need to investigate and classify further angles using the appropriate mathematical vocabulary. This will help with their knowledge of movement.

Information handling

- Across all stages, children explain and use tally marks to gather information. By the first level, children use bar graphs to display information. By second level, children confidently display information in graphs. Children read information accurately from digital graphs to get an

understanding of quantity. Older children need to improve their pace of retrieving information from graphs in a greater range of contexts.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy in English Medium

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy is good. Across the school, most children are on track to achieve national expected levels of attainment. A few children are predicted to exceed national expectations. Children with additional support needs are making good progress towards their individual targets in learning.

Attainment in literacy and English

- Overall, children's progress and attainment in literacy and English is good.

Listening and talking

- Overall, most children are making good progress in listening and talking. Younger children enjoy listening to stories. They re-tell traditional tales enthusiastically using puppets and by performing their own plays. Most children listen well for instructions, for example in following the class routines. They listen and chat to each other with interest as they play together. Children's next step is to develop further their skills in groups. They need more support to listen with respect to others' contributions, take turns to speak and avoid interrupting each other. Most older children are articulate and express their ideas and opinions confidently. They take turns appropriately and listen well during class discussions. By P7, most children describe the features of a well-presented prepared talk for the assemblies they lead. Most children identify what makes a respectful audience. Older children enjoy taking part in class debates, in which they ably make arguments for and against topical issues.

Reading

- Across the school, most children have a good understanding of core reading skills. Almost all children apply these successfully in new contexts. Younger children develop their knowledge of initial sounds well. The majority of younger children read common words and their reading texts confidently. As they progress through the early stages, most children apply their knowledge of words well to decode new and unfamiliar words. At the upper stages, most children read aloud fluently, a few do so with great expression. Older children discuss well the features of novels together in their 'literacy circles'. They take on roles confidently, such as 'passage finder', 'summariser' and 'discussion director' to engage and explore shared texts in small groups. As a result, most older children can identify techniques that writers use to engage readers, for example, simile, metaphor and alliteration.

Writing

- Children's progress in writing is good, overall. Most younger children are learning to form letters correctly. They have very good opportunities to write independently as they engage in imaginative play. For example, they create their own menus, lists and notices for their 'Castle Café'. Most younger children write simple sentences. They illustrate their own stories. They have a very good understanding of the plot and sequence of stories, through their exploration of traditional tales. A few younger children benefit from targeted support to use correct punctuation more consistently in their independent writing. As children move through the stages of the upper school, they write for different purposes. This is often linked to their topic work. Most children identify features of imaginative, functional and personal writing. They would benefit from more opportunities to make their writing increasingly interesting by using features of writing, such as similes and metaphors. The majority of older children enjoy writing stories. High-achieving children would benefit from more opportunities to write extended pieces, and from learning to practice the skills of editing and redrafting their own work.

Numeracy and mathematics

- Overall, children's progress and attainment in numeracy and mathematics is good. A few children exceed national expectations for their age and stage of development.

Number, money and measure

- Most younger children order and correctly identify sequences in numbers. As they move through the stages of the school, most children develop their knowledge of place value well in relation to their age and stage. Teachers plan motivating games and activities to improve children's speed and agility in mental calculations, particularly recall of multiplication and division facts. Older children enjoy the competitive approach to beating their own timed scores in these games. As a result, most children can answer numeracy calculations quickly and accurately.
- Across the school, most children demonstrate an appropriate understanding of time and money for their age and stage. A next step is for older children to extend their learning about money in real-life contexts, such as credit and debit cards, loans, and working within a budget. Most older children have a sound knowledge of fractions, decimals and percentages and use this knowledge well to solve problems. Most children are confident in estimating the lengths of familiar objects. Younger children would benefit from more practice in using arbitrary and standard units to estimate and measure objects within their environment.

Shape, position and movement

- Across the school, almost all children have a sound understanding of symmetry, two-dimensional shapes and three-dimensional objects, appropriate to their age and stage. Most older children apply their knowledge about compass points very well when discussing the weather and wind direction.

Information handling

- Across the school, almost all children sort and display data in a few different ways. By P7, children collect information using tally marks and display their data in a range of graphs and charts. A next step for children across the school is to apply further their knowledge in real life, for example by carrying out their own surveys as part of their committees and pupil council work.

Attainment over time

- Overall, children's attainment in literacy and numeracy, through Gàidhlig and English, over the past few years has remained steady. This is despite the impact of the pandemic, along with the changes in leadership and staffing. The school's evidence shows that most children are achieving expected national levels in literacy and numeracy over time. The acting headteacher and staff have identified the need to continue to raise attainment in listening, talking and writing. They are taking the right steps to achieve this. The acting headteacher has identified areas for further improvement in attainment, particularly to challenge high-achieving children. She has appropriate plans in place to achieve this. As part of this, teachers will share practice and continue to increase children's own expectations of what they can achieve. Teachers are yet to gather evidence of children's attainment across all the curriculum areas and contexts.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Across the school, children develop skills and achievements that promote a strong sense of identity and pride from the island's heritage and Gàidhlig language, music and culture. Curriculum partners support this work very well. Younger children, in both Gàidhlig and English Medium, are beginning to plan intergenerational projects with Comann Eachdraidh Nis and senior members of the community. Through this, children are beginning to develop social skills, while adding to their knowledge of Nis. Taigh Dhonnchaidh assists with singing and

musical skills for the Mòd, cèilidhs, the folk group choir and solo singing. Children develop skills in acting, entertaining an audience and contributing to a community through performances such as the Metagama. Partners' support should be consistently delivered through Gàidhlig. This should develop children's skills in the Gàidhlig language and model the community's use of Gàidhlig. In addition, this will offer children more challenge in learning and help to sustain local dialect.

- Older children are beginning to develop skills in organising events, such as The MacMillan Coffee afternoon, St. Andrew's Day cèilidh and Oidhche Shamhna (Halloween) parade. Children improve their communication, negotiation, collaborative and decision-making skills when planning these events. This also increases children's ownership of their learning. Children's involvement in committees, including the pupil council, is starting to increase children's say in improving the school. The acting headteacher should organise these committees without compromising children's skills in Gàidhlig.
- The acting headteacher tracks children's involvement in achievements. She is also beginning to track how children's achievement connect to CfE capacities. A few children achieve accreditation for their achievements. For example, they work towards Bikeability awards at levels one and two, and John Muir Award, which is led by Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn. Going forward, the acting headteacher, staff and pupils should develop a clear overview of each child's development in skills for learning, life and work and CfE capacities.

Equity for all learners

- The acting headteacher and staff have a very good understanding of the challenges faced by children and families. She has introduced helpful approaches to track and monitor the attainment and achievement of all children. This includes those who have barriers to learning or experience disadvantage. For Gàidhlig Medium Education, the headteacher planned effective supportive interventions that has built children's confidence in their learning of Gàidhlig and closed gaps. These actions met children's needs through the medium of Gàidhlig. It ensured that children had continued access to an inclusive and equitable education experience within Gàidhlig.
- The acting headteacher has prioritised the use of Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to address any gaps in children's learning. This includes gaps that may arise through disadvantage or poor attendance, while recognising that overall attendance is in line with national data. Children can attend a few clubs after sgòil at the adjacent Spòrs Nis (a sports centre in Ness). This supports parents with employment. Targeted interventions are beginning to have a positive impact on closing these gaps. All staff work hard to ensure that no-one misses out and that all children experience equity in their school experiences. The acting headteacher should have appropriate plans in place to ensure that parents and children are consulted on future spending of PEF.

Other relevant evidence

- The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and children. In addition, the HNI examined the effectiveness of whole-school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of children through food in school. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider.
- Teachers are making good progress with the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education (2017). They provide children with total immersion in most aspects of the curriculum. The Comhairle has established a modern apprenticeship pathway to increase staffing to support raising attainment through the medium of Gàidhlig. Teachers should continue accessing professional learning in total immersion. In English Medium, teachers need to accelerate progress with teaching Gaelic (Learners).
- Stakeholders raised concerns about the state of the building and that it was not watertight.
- Parents/carers would appreciate a discussion with the executive headteacher on the time that the school starts in the morning.

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.