

Summarised inspection findings

Sgoil Ùige

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

3 October 2023

Key contextual information

Sgoil Ùige provides education for children aged three to twelve through the mediums of both Gàidhlig and English. The school serves the village of Timsgarry and surrounding rural communities in a remote area on the western coast of Lewis.

The headteacher has been in post at Sgoil Ùige for six years. There are currently 25 children on the school roll. Of late, the school roll has risen, with an increase in the number of children learning in Gàidhlig Medium Education. Almost all children are in Gàidhlig Medium Education. The school enables children who move to the area, after C1, to do Gàidhlig Medium Education through individual pathways. (The school refers to their classes for Gàidhlig Medium Education in Gaelic using *clas*, which abbreviates to C.) The number of children in English Medium Education is very small. At some stages, in both mediums of learning, there are no children. All of the children in the Sgoil Àraich Ùige (nursery) are in Gàidhlig Medium Education. Throughout the summarised inspection findings, we will refer to children as a group rather than individual cohorts. This is to ensure anonymity of children.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, children coped well with periods of remote independent learning. On return to school, children focused quickly on learning, showing high levels of engagement and motivation.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

weak

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 school, children are polite, respectful and contribute positively to the community. Children are proud of their school and that they may learn through the medium of Gàidhlig. Children share confidently how much they enjoy attending a small, rural, island school. They learn in a range of contexts.
- Children are aware of some of their rights within The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) articles. Children are asked about their learning, with their views considered. Recently, children identified that they would like to increase their speaking of Gàidhlig within school. This is being taken forward in this year's improvement plan. Children need a much stronger and more independent role in making decisions and leading improvements in learning. Children do not have a recognised way of making their views known, such as through a pupil council.
- In the majority of lessons across the school, children are enthusiastic about their learning. This is most evident in lessons that interest and motivate children, such as outdoor learning. Children respond well to the opportunities they have to work in pairs and groups. Teachers use ongoing questioning and interactions well to support children to demonstrate their understanding of tasks and recall prior learning. When children are interested in their

learning in class, they show higher levels of engagement. However, in a number of lessons children are passive in their learning. Teachers should increase the pace of learning to ensure sustained engagement and focus for all learners. Teachers need to plan for greater challenge and differentiation in learning. This is to ensure they motivate and meet the needs of a wide range of learners more effectively.

- Across the school, children learn in the community, with partners and by using technology. Visiting tutors in chanter, guitar and singing enrich children's learning. Children sing in Gàidhlig with much energy and enthusiasm. Their chosen songs are connected to their island, heritage and culture. This supports children's language development effectively. Children experience active learning in the outdoors, during which they are keen and engaged. Some of this learning is through The John Muir Award, for which teachers should consistently use the resources and assessments in Gàidhlig. Teachers organise a focus on skills, for which some Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is used. Partners plan and deliver experiences ranging from fishing, drone photography and tennis. For the children in Gàidhlig Medium Education, the headteacher and staff should now ensure that this aspect of the curriculum is consistently delivered in Gàidhlig. Children are not always confident with the specialist vocabulary connected to these contexts.
- Gàidhlig is visible and heard in classrooms, and shared areas of the school, such as the dining hall. Children observe religious observance through Gàidhlig daily. The headteacher and teachers need to ensure that all immersion and language learning approaches are based on national advice for immersion. Staff should increase their knowledge and use of the "Advice on Gaelic Education" (2022). At pace, the headteacher should articulate the school's policies to immersion to guide staff in ensuring high standards in Gàidhlig Medium Education.
- The school can have long periods when they cannot get access to the internet. This interrupts children's and teachers' use of technology.
- The headteacher and teachers need to monitor robustly how well teaching and learning approaches are raising children's attainment. They need to develop a whole-school approach to teaching children's skills in reading and writing in Gàidhlig and English. They need clear approaches to teaching phonics, firstly in Gàidhlig and later in English for children in Gàidhlig Medium Education. This needs to result in more breadth and coverage of expected standards at an accelerated pace. Children's progress in reading and writing is currently constrained. While the school's improvement plan has a project focusing on writing, including the teaching of phonics, this needs to have much more impact. There needs to be more ongoing monitoring and moderation of how well learning and teaching approaches are improving children's progress and attainment. For the majority of time, children's play-based approaches are connected to learning aims. Staff should ensure that all play activities are providing appropriate pace and challenge. Children provide immersion for each other with their use of Gàidhlig for play.
- Children in English Medium are independently learning Gàidhlig as an additional language. For this, children use technology, such as apps. They also join singing sessions in Gàidhlig. The headteacher should now integrate Gaelic (Learners) into the curriculum, with ambitious targets set for what children can achieve.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers share the purpose of learning and ways in which children can be successful. Staff should support children to identify their own specific learning targets in literacy and numeracy. This will help children to have a good understanding of their own strengths and next steps in learning. Teachers provide some oral and written feedback to learners. They need to ensure that children receive consistently high-quality feedback.

Children need to have an accurate understanding of their progress in learning and what they need to do to improve.

- Teachers use different approaches to gather information about children's progress. They collate samples of children's work throughout the year to help inform decisions about children's progress. There is not yet a whole-school approach for assessment. This should detail the agreed ways assessment will be taken forward across the year. In doing so, the headteacher and teachers should ensure there is a stronger focus on assessment being planned early as an integral part of learning and teaching.
- Teachers should continue to engage in moderation activities with colleagues from local schools, including for talking. This will help to establish a clear understanding of children's progress to inform professional judgements.
- Teachers use progression pathways to plan learning for most areas of the curriculum. They do not yet make full use of a progressive pathway in place for health and wellbeing contextualised to their school. The headteacher should work with staff to develop further their approaches to planning children's learning. This should increase the emphasis on how the plans are delivered in Gàidhlig and through immersion. The headteacher and teachers need to ensure that all children receive their entitlement to a broad progressive curriculum.
- Teachers and the headteacher discuss children's attainment and progress throughout the year. They now need to do this in a more formal way. Processes for assessment, tracking and monitoring are at an early stage of being developed. Teachers should have clear targets set to assist in raising attainment and reducing gaps, which are actioned and monitored. The headteacher and teachers need to link clearly how tracking and monitoring informs planning for learning and teaching, and longer-term improvement planning. On an ongoing basis, teachers' analysis of data needs to be more reliable and focused on improving children's progress and skills. It should inform planned interventions and diagnostic assessment, with impact tracked. Interventions are not always in place for children where required.

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 that need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

satisfactory

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

Attainment in literacy and numeracy in Gàidhlig and English Medium

- Overall, attainment in literacy and Gàidhlig, literacy and English and numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. This is through the medium of Gàidhlig and English. Across both mediums of learning, the majority of children are achieving, or are on track to achieve expected levels. There are a number of children who are capable of achieving more highly, particularly in writing. Staff should have higher expectations of children writing in detail, with technical accuracy, and good presentation. Staff should support children to make better use of strategies to improve their spelling.
- Children who require support with their learning are making steady progress. A few children require additional support plans to enable them to make better progress in their learning.

Attainment in literacy and English in English Medium

Overall, children's attainment in literacy and English is satisfactory. Children are achieving, or are on track to achieve, expected Curriculum for Excellence levels.

Listening and talking

- Overall, children in English Medium Education are making satisfactory progress in listening and talking. Children are articulate and converse confidently with adults and visitors. They listen well during lessons, which enables them to complete follow up tasks appropriately. Children enjoy detailing how they grow strawberries in the community polytunnel using subject-specific vocabulary. They listen respectfully to each other and build well on the contributions of others. Children would benefit from having a clearer understanding of the listening and talking skills they are developing as part of their learning.

Reading

- Overall, children are making satisfactory progress in reading English. Children make effective use of digital texts for research. They enjoy choosing books from their school library and can identify the books they like to read. There are much fewer written resources for children to access about Gàidhlig language and culture. By second level, children in English Medium read with expression and understanding. With prompting, children confidently discuss characters, setting and summarise the main ideas from a known text. Children need more opportunities to analyse and discuss familiar and unfamiliar texts.

Writing

- Overall, children in English Medium are making satisfactory progress in writing. They are increasingly writing for different purposes. By second level in English Medium, most children use paragraphs to organise and structure writing. At times, a few children working at second level, do not always use capital letters or full stops correctly. A few children do not consistently apply their knowledge of spelling strategies or rules within extended pieces of writing. Children report that they enjoy writing. There are different examples of children writing across the curriculum.

Attainment in literacy, Gàidhlig and English for children in Gàidhlig Medium Education

- Children are making satisfactory progress in listening and talking in Gàidhlig, and in English as appropriate to stage. Their attainment is satisfactory. A few children's fluency in talk is strong in Gàidhlig. Children's rate of progress is not maintained as children move from the sgoil-àraich through the primary stages. Children are also not using their progress in talking to build strong skills in reading and writing, particularly at the total immersion stage.

Children have a good understanding of Gàidhlig. They respond in Gàidhlig and initiate conversations themselves. Some use idiom and specialist vocabulary well. By C6, they are using too many English words in their communication. They are not able to consistently talk about strategies for learning new vocabulary. For some areas, such as science and technology, children lapse into English when in conversation. Children's learning needs to have more focus on teaching grammar and have higher expectations of grammatical accuracy.

- Children's progress and attainment in reading is satisfactory, and in writing Gàidhlig is weak. In literacy and English by C6, children's progress and attainment in reading and writing is satisfactory. The school does not have consistently reliable data on the achievement of Curriculum for Excellence levels. Staff should make more use of the data that they have from standardised and ongoing formative assessments. The school's approach to raising attainment requires to be much more strategic. It needs to be based on a well-planned curriculum and clear programmes of work that assist children to develop their skills.

- By C6, children are keen readers and have favourite authors. They read at home as well as in school. They are able to talk about a few features of a good book. They read fluently in English, with increasing expression. They read with less expression in Gàidhlig and are more hesitant in reading. Overall, the pace of progress in reading is too slow. The school has had a focus on revisiting phonics in Gàidhlig and English. This has not yet had enough impact. Children have access to a very limited range of books in Gàidhlig in the school library. The books for Gàidhlig need to have a much higher visibility in the library. The books should also promote Gàidhlig culture.

- By C6, children use a range of verbs to write their sentences. They use a few features of punctuation correctly most of the time, but this needs to be more consistent. Children write too often in short pieces, which does not enable children to develop their creativity, plot and figurative language. Younger children are reliant on scaffolding to support their writing for too long, particularly through scribing. This is impacting negatively on their independence in writing. Children could be making more use of voice text to convey their ideas and views. Children are not independent in writing a sentence by the end of the early level. At the first level, children write longer pieces, with a range of verbs and correct use of capital letters. However, children's writing is not consistently clear on first reading. Children write more legibly and in detail when writing in purposeful contexts, such as for the drama on the ship, Metagama. By C6, children are still to develop note-making skills.

- Children in English Medium Education need a structured way of having their progress in Gaelic (Learners) recognised. Children should also have their progress monitored and tracked as part of being on a pathway to fluency.

Numeracy and mathematics

Numeracy and mathematics in Gàidhlig and English Medium Education

- Overall, attainment in numeracy and mathematics is satisfactory. The majority of children are on track to achieve appropriate Curriculum for Excellence levels. Children in Gàidhlig Medium Education are confident in their use of most mathematical terminology in Gàidhlig.

Number, money and measure

- At the early level, the majority of children are using the numbers zero to ten in counting, representing quantities and as part of addition and subtraction. They are developing an understanding of money through play. At first level, the majority of children count confidently in fives and tens. They can identify different digits in numbers showing a good understanding of place value. At first and second levels, the majority of children demonstrate mental agility appropriate for their stage. They use their knowledge of times tables to complete calculations. There is a need for staff to revisit the times tables regularly as part of learning. Most children explain the strategies they use for simple addition and subtraction calculations. At first level, most children confidently round to the nearest ten and 100. They calculate simple fractions of whole numbers. At the second level, only a few children demonstrate a sound understanding of decimals and percentages. Children are developing their understanding of money. A few children confidently identify coins/notes to £20.00. They calculate accurately change for a given amount. A few children working at first, and at the start of second levels, calculate accurately the area and perimeter of simple shapes. Older children are less confident and familiar with this area of mathematics.

Shape, position and movement

- The majority of children working at the early level can recognise and use common two-dimensional shapes. At the first level, the majority of children identify a range of two-dimensional shapes. They are less confident in identifying three-dimensional objects. The majority of children are beginning to understand lines of symmetry. The majority of children at second level name a range of angles.

Information handling

- Across the school, children identify different ways to represent information including bar graphs and pie charts. Children should continue to apply their information-handling skills across different contexts for learning to ensure depth, challenge and application.

Attainment over time

- The headteacher and staff track individual children's progress in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing, through Gàidhlig and English. They are also capturing some aspects of progress across other curriculum areas. Data provided by the school demonstrates that staff have maintained steady standards of attainment for most children over the last six years. There are a number of children who are capable of making better progress in learning.

Overall quality of learners' achievements

- Across the school, children benefit from a wide range of experiences that promote achievements well. These include contexts within and out with the school. For children in Gàidhlig Medium Education, opportunities for achievements should be in Gàidhlig. Partners' contributions should be in Gàidhlig.
- Children are proud to perform in front of others as part of the local Mòd and community Christmas concert. These experiences also allow them to showcase proudly their use of Gàidhlig language. They worked closely with the local historical society as part of the Comhairle's (Council) Dìleab project commemorating 100 years since the Metagama took island emigrants to Canada. This was a community-attended event that incorporated drama, music and art, and celebrated the area's Gàidhlig heritage and culture.
- Children develop their enterprise skills well across a range of school events, enabling them to work together for the benefit of others.
- For the last few years, staff have collaborated with partners to deliver regular planned days focusing on skills. These are to promote the development of children's skills across a range of contexts, including sports, art and music. Children and parents report that these events support some children well to learn new skills in an enjoyable and rewarding way. Children also participate in local clubs such as chanter, football, dancing and guitar. They are becoming more confident in describing the skills they are developing as part of their school and out of school experiences. Children would benefit from opportunities to lead learners' clubs and groups. This would provide ways for them to develop and use a wide range of skills in meaningful contexts.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher and staff have a good understanding of the socio-economic and rural backgrounds of children and families. They have taken positive steps to minimise the cost of the school day and make clubs available locally. The Parent Council supports them very well to achieve this.
- In collaboration with the local authority, the school makes use of PEF to employ additional staff to accelerate children's attainment and wellbeing. In the last few years, the additional staff has helped to organise and deliver the activity for skills. This session, the school has not been able to access the additional staffing due to recruitment difficulties. Skill days are delivered largely in English, which increases gaps in children's attainment in Gàidhlig. It will be important that the headteacher continues to carefully monitor the impact of all interventions to ensure that they secure the best possible outcomes for children.

Other relevant evidence

- Children receive two-hours of physical education a week. They also engage in walking daily a mile in the community. The headteacher is considering the timing of the daily mile to increase teaching time.
- The headteacher and staff should continue to use the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education (2017) to achieve year-on-year change. They could be making better progress in implementing this Guidance, including for immersion and in Gaelic (Learners).

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.