

Summarised inspection findings

Sgoil Bhàgh a' Chaisteil / Castlebay Community School

Sgoil Àraich / Nursery Class

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

27 August 2019

Key contextual information

The nursery provision is part of Sgoil Bhàgh a' Chaisteil, which is a Gaelic status school. The nursery classes use rented accommodation within Barra Children's Centre. This is a separate building situated across from the school. The setting is registered for 36 children. At the time of the inspection, there were 31 children on the roll (18 in Gaelic Medium Education – GME - and 13 learning through English - EM). Children may attend from aged two and a half years to those not yet attending school. The provision for GME was not able to meet all parental requests this session, 2018-19. Both the GME and EM class are taught in the morning in different rooms to meet the requirement for total immersion. Children have access to large, enclosed garden areas and the wider school campus including the public library, swimming pool and gym hall.

1.3 Leadership of change

satisfactory

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 change 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

- Practitioners in both the nursery class for GME and EM are able to talk about change and improvement. They are hardworking and committed to striving for the best possible outcomes for children. One of their commendable successes is the increase in uptake for GME at nursery, with continuity into the primary stages.
- In GME and EM, the nursery vision, values and aims are the same as that for the school. Senior leaders have plans to work with all stakeholders to review these. In so doing, they should ensure that they are reflective of Sgoil Bhàgh a' Chaisteil's unique context, while meeting national expectations. A useful start has been made in drafting a policy that begins to articulate what it means to be a Gaelic status school. Practitioners should now explore in depth how social, economic, language and cultural aspects inform their strategic direction for GME and EM. This, along with an up-to-date knowledge of policy and practice, should be the basis of co-creating a meaningful and relevant vision, values and aims.
- Senior leaders are now meeting with practitioners as part of ongoing dialogue to influence continuous improvement. They also undertake monitoring visits and provide some helpful feedback to both classes. These evaluative activities need to be more focused on children's progress and the distinctive approaches to GME. It will also be important to develop a deeper understanding of the national self-evaluation framework, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?'. Key documents, such as Advice on Gaelic Education and Building the Ambition, should underpin self-evaluation to inform and support change which is bespoke to GME and EM.
- The school's improvement plan identifies priorities which are important for the nursery classes, for example, the development of health and wellbeing. However, more specific targets for GME and EM, based on more rigorous and systematic self-evaluation, would be beneficial in achieving a brisker pace of change. Senior leaders recognise the value of increasing

ownership and responsibility for continuous strategic planning for the nursery, which is fully integrated within that of Sgoil Bhàgh a' Chaisteil.

- Practitioners refer to nurseries policies, which have been made available by local authority staff. These do not routinely reflect GME, bilingualism, immersion and the school's status for Gaelic. The admission, enrolment and settling in policy should reference GME. It should reflect the Comhairle's (local authority's) commitment to always give children a place in a GME nursery. Policies should also detail how GME is promoted with parents, including as a continuum of 3-18 and lifelong learning. Other policies such as early learning, curriculum, play and partnerships should be inclusive of GME. As the school develops its status for Gaelic, it would also be important to reflect Gaelic Learner Education.
- Practitioners in GME and EM are responsible for the day-to-day leadership of the nursery classes. They find professional learning and collaboration activities useful in supporting improvement. Practitioners would benefit from professional learning which focuses on what effective practice constitutes in a GME and EME nursery, including as part of a Gaelic status school. This may be achieved by visiting other nursery classes, using the national improvement hub and the opportunities afforded by the Comhairle's own digital platform, e-Sgoil.

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

- Across GME and EM, practitioners and children enjoy very positive and caring relationships. Children are treated and respected as individuals. They are responded to through appropriate praise and encouragement. The welcoming and relaxed atmosphere helps children settle, and be ready and keen to learn. Children's learning takes place in a range of contexts, both indoors and outdoors.
- In GME, practitioners recognise the important roles they have for achieving a sustainable future for the language in Barra and beyond. Practitioners are very fluent in the language. They use of a range of good immersion approaches, such as commentary, songs, rhymes and stories. As children play outdoors, there is some adult interaction through Gaelic to help develop children's fluency. This includes the development of specialised vocabulary, such as that associated with imaginary play around a boat and fishing. However, outdoor play is not consistently a total immersion experience. Also, practitioners' interactions need to be more frequent. Intergenerational work with the local community benefits children. It assists with immersion, application of learning and in preservation of local dialect.
- In GME, almost all children engage very well during free play. They are able to sustain concentration appropriate to their age and stage of development. During free-flow sessions, practitioners make good use of commentary through Gaelic. At other times, making necessary preparation for such as that required for snack can get in the way of outcomes. The deployment of an additional member of staff should be considered.
- In EM, most children engage well in the learning experiences on offer. Levels of engagement are highest when children choose where and with what they play. For example, children engage well in the outdoor area.
- In GME, children enjoy time in groups, which are led by the practitioner. These tend to be groups based on the keyworker system. It would be well-judged to consider the balance between adult-led and free-flow play, while maintaining the use of Gaelic for immersion. At planned times, it would be good to target groups to certain children. For example, those who are older, those who benefit from exposure to Gaelic at home, or those who need more support with their learning. This would help meet the needs of individuals, while increasing the pace of learning and challenge.
- In GME and EM, it would be useful to explore the balance between adult and child-led learning across each session, and week as a whole, to ensure a more appropriate blend. We discussed how children could be even more involved in talking about, planning and leading their own learning. Shifting the emphasis of 'welcome times' to have a sharper focus on talking about learning would support this further. Practitioners engage appropriately in conversation with children during play and use questioning to support children's thinking. The use of questioning

now needs to build more consistently on what children already know in order to add increased depth and challenge to learning. This will help ensure that all children make the progress that they are capable of from their nursery experiences.

- In both GME and EM, children are developing early skills in digital technology. Overall, there is scope for more extensive use of technology to support learning and provide real-life experiences. This would foster an early interest to support the Comhairle's digital strategy, e-Sgoil. Children are curious around the interactive board and in GME enjoy exploring Gaelic-related websites and programmes.
- In both GME and EM, practitioners know children well as individuals. They make observations of children as they play. Building on positive aspects, such as providing helpful explanations of learning to parents, now need to have sharper focus on the significant learning of individuals. This should help identify what children need to learn next and inform future planning. Good practice which identifies next steps in learning for individual children should be shared across the classes.
- In August 2018, practitioners in GME and EM introduced electronic learning journals to record observations and children's experiences in nursery. Practitioners report that they find this approach more manageable. Parents welcome the recent access to their child's journal online. We discussed with practitioners how increasing children's involvement with the journals could support reflection on their learning and help develop a language of learning. Together, practitioners, children and families need to work in partnership to create individual journals that provide a holistic profile of learning over time.
- Floor books are used to support planning for children's learning in GME and EM. This is helping practitioners be more responsive to children's interests through identifying possible lines of development. Moving forward, it would be useful to establish what children already know and what they would like to learn about to add depth and challenge to learning. Progress in learning is tracked through observations and the use of developmental overviews. These help identify areas where children may need support or further learning. The overviews now need to be articulated to GME, for example, their focus on plurals is for EM. Moderation of the overviews, both within and beyond the setting, would ensure a shared understanding of children's progress and ensure that professional judgement is suitably robust.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Planning for all children's learning takes account of Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. Pedagogical approaches continue to be developed and practitioners engaged fully in discussions to support this as part of the inspection process. A clear curriculum rationale and a shared pedagogy that take account of the unique local context should now be developed. Working with colleagues across the early level to develop these will support progression and continuity in learning. Practitioners should continue to make use of the National Benchmarks to support their knowledge of progression across the early level.
- The outdoor area continues to be developed and practitioners strive to overcome limitations of free-flow access. As planned, the development of loose parts play outdoors will increase opportunities for children to be imaginative, creative and solve problems. There is scope for creativity and curiosity to be encouraged more through a range of open-ended and natural resources, both indoors and out.
- Practitioners are putting into effect professional learning on embedding literacy and numeracy. They plan interventions to support children's development. Practitioners build on most opportunities to promote literacy and numeracy. At times, there are missed opportunities to apply learning in context, for example, through routines. Care should be taken to ensure the promotion of literacy and numeracy is consistently delivered through play.
- The GME class are ready for additional playroom space to afford even better outcomes for immersion. This would also ensure that all parents requesting GME have their requests met.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents and the community value GME and demonstrate their commitment with increased enrolments. Commendably, some parents, grandparents and other adults use Gaelic with children outside of nursery. This is a very strong enhancement to children's fluency. Parents have been given useful phrases to use at home with their children. As more progressive planning is developed, it would be good to be sharing more language with parents to support family learning.
- Across GME and EM, there are very positive relationships between families and the setting. A range of opportunities allows parents and carers to be part of their child's learning and nursery experiences. Partnerships with parents also enrich the curriculum, for example, supporting the facilitation of regular visits to the swimming pool and creation of new resources such as raised flowerbeds.
- Partnerships with the local community are significant. Examples include the role played by practitioners in a parenting project held in the community in the evening and ongoing intergenerational work with a local care home for the elderly.
- Parents of GME and EM are well informed about nursery events and activities through home-link diaries, daily feedback, open evenings and the use of a closed social media group. We discussed with practitioners how streamlining this contact could reduce bureaucracy, while maintaining effective communication. Parents have recently had online access to children's electronic learning journals. This will provide valuable insight into the progress children make in their learning and strengthen the learning partnership with families. This includes providing opportunities to share achievements and learning from out with the nursery.

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.

3.1 Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion

good

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

- The promotion of wellbeing has a key role in the nursery class for GME and EM. Relationships between practitioners and children are consistently warm and encouraging. Almost all children feel safe, relaxed and confident. They are developing the skills they need to play together such as sharing and taking turns. Children show respect for their learning environment during routines such as tidying up. Simple rules and sensitive intervention, when required, by practitioners promote positive behaviour. 'Star of the week' awards reinforce good behaviour and efforts in learning. The national wellbeing indicators are evident in practice. It will be helpful for practitioners to use the language of wellbeing more explicitly with children to support their developing understanding. It would be useful for children and practitioners in GME to have access to the wellbeing indicators through the medium of Gaelic.
- Children demonstrate an awareness of different feelings and confidently identify facial expressions matched to emotions. Involvement with a local care home for the elderly is supporting children to develop empathy and an appreciation of the different and changing needs of others.
- Most children in GME and EM can describe the requirements of a healthy lifestyle including a balanced diet, exercise and the need for personal care such as handwashing and tooth brushing. They enjoy exploring a range of foods and developing independence at snack time.
- Children in GME and EM adopt responsibilities such as setting up for snack. There is scope to develop further children's leadership skills. This could include responsibilities such as leading the ordering of and preparing snack, and risk assessing aspects of their play. This would support a strengthening of the child's voice and involvement in decisions that affect them.
- Practitioners in GME and EM recognise the key role they play in keeping children safe. They are confident that their actions can protect children. Personal care plans collate a range of information to support practitioners in meeting the care and learning needs of children. As identified with practitioners, they should continue to develop individual plans to include a chronology of significant events. Using plans regularly and including more holistic information, will contribute more fully to securing positive outcomes for children. Senior leaders have worked together to develop their understanding of statutory duties which relate to early learning and childcare.
- Practitioners in GME and EM correctly identify children who may experience barriers to their learning. Clear guidance for supporting children with additional support needs, and input from specialised staff support this further. Interventions that are made should be consistently recorded, with successes measured more robustly over time. Practitioners recognise where they need to develop their own understanding in order to support children and seek relevant professional learning to enhance their skills.

- Senior leaders and practitioners have an understanding of the importance of delivering high-quality early learning and childcare through the medium of Gaelic. While many aspects of the statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education are evident in playroom practice, its more formal use would be useful. This is particularly so as the Comhairle commences consultation on the implementation of the extended free hours. To support this, the work done on the Advice on Gaelic Education by principal teachers should be shared with nursery staff in GME and EM.
- All children and their families in GME and EM are treated equally and inclusively. Diversity and challenging any potential discrimination could be developed further. In doing so, the team should ensure the curriculum reflects a wider range of cultures and backgrounds than may not be represented in the immediate community.

3.2 Securing children's progress

good

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

Communication and early language in GME

- Children are making good progress in listening and understanding, with some of the older children making very good progress. Some of the older children are able to hold a conversation in which they relay experiences, invent and share their own stories, and make predictions. All children are understanding well the Gaelic that is used with them in routines. In contexts such as arts and crafts, the older children understand continuous conversation. They answer a range of questions using the correct tense. They are able to accurately use some sophisticated grammar. The majority of the younger children will speak some familiar Gaelic words and phrases. Children could be using more social, purposeful and transactional language at snack time. Practitioners are busy organising snack, which is reducing their capacity to be interacting with children. Children enjoy singing and retelling rhymes, for which they have a selection memorised.
- Children are making good progress in reading and writing. Children enjoy listening to stories. They give their views on text and predict what may happen next. A few access books independently. More children should be encouraged to access texts for a wider range of purposes, including to find information. The older children are interested in mark making. They write in their different contexts for play.

Numeracy and mathematics in GME

- Children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. The older children can count up to 20. With some prompts from an adult, they can also count backwards within that number range. All children are familiarising themselves with money and use it appropriately in some contexts for play. Children use a computer programme to show their understanding of some shapes. Children do not have much exposure to gathering data and its representation. Most children are able to identify colours. There is an opportunity to develop early skills in measurement.

Communication and early language in EM

- Almost all children are making good progress in communication and language. Simple rules to support listening help children focus during group activities. A few children are not yet ready to listen for expected periods, for which expectations need to be differentiated. Targeted and sensitive support is offered to children who require additional help with communication as they develop their spoken language. The use of signing also supports the development of expressive language. A few children enthusiastically and confidently share their experiences.

Traditional stories provide an enjoyable basis for exploring learning across the curriculum. Most children show interest in stories and are able to retell familiar texts. Regular use of the public library is encouraging a love of books. A few children confidently distinguish between lower and upper case letters and identify rhyming words. Most children show interest in mark making at their individual developmental stage, for example making attempts to write their name to 'register' for nursery. Care should be taken to ensure that natural interest in letter names and sounds is taken forward through play rather than formal, structured activities. Children are developing an appreciation of the Gaelic language through singing and the use of simple phrases.

Numeracy and mathematics in EM

- Most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Opportunities to count in routines and planned opportunities for number recognition are supporting children to develop their awareness of number. Most children count within ten, with a few demonstrating an awareness of numbers beyond twenty. Children use a range of mathematical language to compare and describe size and quantity. Real-life situations such as shopping for snack and baking are helping children to develop an early awareness of money and measure. Practitioners should continue to develop and broaden children's awareness of all aspects of numeracy and mathematics to include time, shape and data handling.

Health and wellbeing in GME and EM

- Almost all children are making good progress in health and wellbeing. A valuable focus on water safety is helping children develop confidence and early skills in swimming. Physical activities in the gym hall are helping children to develop a range of gross motor skills. They are beginning to recognise the effect exercise has on their bodies. The introduction of more challenging and risky physical play would allow children opportunities to test themselves. Fine motor control is developing through a range of activities including food preparation, art activities and the use of construction materials. Through exploring their family trees, children are developing their sense of self and their place within their family unit. Extending this could support the exploration of different family structures to widen children's understanding of diversity.

Children's progress over time in GME and EM

- Through discussions with children, inspection observations, review of learning journals and floor books, it is evident that most children are making good progress over time. As approaches to documenting children's progress embed, it will be important to ensure that these record a robust and coherent record of children's progress over time.

Overall quality of children's achievement in GME and EM

- Practitioners use praise well to recognise children's achievements and celebrate success. For example, in the local produce show. With parents now having access, learning journals provide a useful way of capturing wider achievements from out with the nursery. The careful tracking of achievements will help ensure that no child is at risk of missing out.

Ensuring equity for all children in GME and EM

- The supportive and inclusive ethos supports all children to play an active and equal role in the nursery community. Practitioners are proactive in identifying and reducing barriers to effective learning for all children. They work in partnership with colleagues from other professions to ensure children make good progress. Reconsideration of the how additional staffing is deployed could promote more planned and targeted interventions. This will help secure the best possible outcomes for children particularly where needs are identified through deeper exploration of available information and data.

Choice of QI: 2.6 Transitions

- Quality of support for children and their families
- Collaborative planning and delivery
- Continuity and progression in learning

- The setting is at the heart of the local community. As a result, children are already familiar with the whole school campus, school staff and children in the school prior to and during transitions. There is a recognition of the importance of developing positive relationships with children and families to aid transition processes. This begins at the earliest stage with informal enrolment afternoons for both nursery and school. Key information is gathered and used to help ensure that individual needs are met as children begin transition.
- Local authority guidelines and procedures provides clear guidance for practitioners to support children who require additional support at points of transition. This includes deferral policy where children may benefit from an additional year in nursery and an early entry to school policy.
- Helpful transition programmes are well established to support children to develop confidence as they begin nursery and as they move onto school. How well children settle in nursery is monitored through timely settling in reports. As children begin nursery and P1 a programme of visits support children to gain confidence over an extended period. 'Buddies', children from P6, are matched with nursery children to provide support in the school setting from the beginning of P1.
- Identified practitioners deliver a planned programme to pre-school children across the year to support school readiness. Working in a less structured, but targeted way, this additional staffing could support children in a more personalised way. As identified, there is a need to develop a shared pedagogy, based on play, across the early level. This should have a stronger focus on the continuity of learning and experience between nursery and school across the continuum of the early level.
- Helpful information about children's learning and progress in nursery is shared with school staff in overviews and transition reports. As the use of learning journals embed, these could support increased sharing of information. This will promote continuity, progress and challenge as children progress across the early level.

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.