

# Summarised inspection findings

**Tiree Primary School Nursery Class**

Argyll and Bute Council

4 February 2020

## Key contextual information

The early learning and childcare (ELC) nursery class is a part of the all through school on the Island of Tiree. Significant changes to the senior leadership team for the whole school and nursery class have resulted in major changes to the location of the nursery class. This is providing better opportunities for practitioners to be involved in the life and work of the school. The nursery class is part of the local authority's pilot approach to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for each family. Three sessions are available each day, both in English language and Gaelic medium. These are mornings (English medium), lunchtime provision (Gaelic and English) and afternoons (Gaelic medium only). This session, the total roll is eight children over a combination of the above sessions. All children are three years of age and at the time of inspection, most have been in the setting for less than six weeks.

### 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

- The school has revised its vision, values and aims and the nursery class has sought parental views on how to make this more accessible and relevant for the nursery children. Moving forward, there is a need to continue to ensure these are relevant, meaningful and appropriate to the age and stage of children.
- The nursery class staffing structure changed in February 2019. The introduction of 1140 hours for both English language and Gaelic Medium Education (GME) included additional staff over lunchtime and increased support from senior leaders. The practitioner team have worked well together to embrace the changes in a positive manner. They discuss regularly with each other to identify what they feel is working well and what could be improved. They now have regular, weekly meetings with members of the senior leadership team and the input of an ELC teacher for half a day each week. The team benefits from continued support from the local authority early years team.
- Practitioners, following this period of significant change, are now able to access increased opportunities for career-long professional learning (CLPL). They demonstrate an enthusiastic and professional commitment to their role. Planned in-service training sessions around appropriate priorities, such as outdoor learning, are improving their observations of children. The team should continue to explore and agree consistent, shared expectations about high quality early learning. They need to carefully evaluate their practice using national guidance. In doing so, they should ensure that the impact of professional learning is making a difference to their practice and, in turn, outcomes for children.
- There is an improvement plan across the school and nursery. Moving forward it will be important for senior leaders to revise the needs of the nursery setting, ensuring that priorities

are relevant and appropriate. There is potential to increase opportunities for practitioners to develop their own skills in using self-evaluation materials more regularly.

## **GME**

- Tiree ELC has a set of aims. The school has recently refreshed their vision, values and aims. Senior leaders recognise the importance of articulating the work of the ELC to the school to make connections, whilst making these appropriate to the age of the children. It would be beneficial to ensure that they are reflective of Tiree ELC's local context, whilst meeting national expectations. These include expectations on high-quality expansion of ELC and GME.
- The ELC engages in a range of supportive activities to assist practitioners in their role. Senior leaders recognise that these need to be more evaluative and based on rigorous use of self-evaluation frameworks. It will also be important to develop a deeper understanding of the national self-evaluation framework, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?' (2015). 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 includes a priority for 2-18 provision. Senior leaders should detail how Tiree ELC is working towards the provision of 1140 hours of free, high-quality early learning and childcare. The current provision for GME is of a shorter time duration, and of not such a high quality as had been the case under previous entitlements. Senior leaders should ensure that sessions are of the highest quality and contributing to excellence and equity for all opting for GME by being delivered through total immersion. Working with parents, Gaelic groups and the community, they should develop a clear rationale for their ELC. This should adopt the use of terms, such as bilingual and immersion, that are in line with statutory Guidance for Gaelic Education.
- Staff of GME, and those contributing to different aspects of GME, should have time to meet discuss, reflect and drive change for this sector of education.

## 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

- All children attending are three years of age, and are new to the nursery. Relationships between children and practitioners are caring and positive and as a result, children settle quickly into their play. Children benefit from accessing independently a wide range of loose parts, particularly in the redesigned outdoor area. Loose parts play and the use of open-ended resources needs to be developed further indoors to initiate children's imaginative play. Children need more sensory experiences to develop a positive level of engagement in their play.
- The playroom indoors is spacious and well resourced. The structure of the session provides children with opportunities to take part in free play experiences. The staff team tend to choose the experiences for children, which are set at a similar level. Practitioners should provide experiences that are more interesting for children during free play, to encourage children to take part in small group or individual interactions. In turn, their observations should reflect this approach, by a focusing on whether any of the ideas or concepts designed by adults are further incorporated by children in their free play. This will ensure that children are challenged at a level that supports them to make the very best progress in their learning.
- Across the team, there are a few good examples of interactions, which support children's learning well. Children are asked what they would like to learn. For example, they asked for the provision of a shop, following a visit to the supermarket where children selected the resources they needed. To improve further, practitioners need to evaluate critically how they can improve their interactions and ensure all experiences support children's learning in interesting and dynamic ways. This should be more consistent for all children, all of the time.
- Episodes of learning with photographic and evidence from observations, capture and record children's progress and achievements. These are both online for parents and within a personal learning plan folder for children. This is at a very early stage of development this session and the approach does not yet evidence children's progress well enough. Practitioners' observations tend to be descriptive of the activity observed but not yet of the learning children are engaged in. Practitioners need to establish a shared understanding and an agreed system to ensure next steps in learning are appropriate and consistently addressed. More professional development opportunities in assessment should be available for practitioners, to increase their skill and confidence. Evidence that is more accurate will better support the tracking of progress.

### GME

- In GME, practitioners and children enjoy warm, caring and respectful relationships. Children are confident in their playroom. They freely explore the available resources and space.

- Practitioners use a few immersion approaches in the afternoon session for GME. These include commentary, songs and telling stories. Adults interact through Gaelic alongside the children as they engage in activities. They also engage in adult-to-adult conversations to enable children to hear the language. Children have some choice in what they play with next. Immersion sessions are short. Senior leaders should continue to review how children's learning can be available entirely through Gaelic, as a way of securing better progress.
- In the English medium session, children learn some Gaelic. This includes through songs and vocabulary. Staff should better track those who have indicated that they will be continuing with GME, and use more Gaelic language with them. In the English medium session, children themselves are independently using some Gaelic. This includes putting Gaelic words into a sentence. Planning for progression of Gaelic (Learners) needs to be clearer and provide continuity with a 1+2 Approach to Languages from P1.
- The afternoon session is designed to be total immersion through Gaelic. The timing of the afternoon session makes it more challenging for children to engage with their learning. Senior leaders should continue to consult with parents to ensure that the timings and delivery of the service are suitable. It would also be valuable to ensure that all parents are aware of the benefits of bilingualism and the importance of an early start to learning Gaelic as part of GME.
- For some of the time, a next step for practitioners is to plan specific play-based activities to support children's individual needs, based on robust tracking of progress. It would be useful to track the Gaelic being understood and used by the children to support planning for progress and reporting on achievements. For this, practitioners should use the experiences and outcomes of literacy and Gàidhlig, and Gaelic (Learners) as relevant to the aims of each ELC session. The development overviews used by practitioners are designed for development of English, rather than Gaelic through immersion. Across the broad general education in GME, it would be useful to have a programme for literacy and Gàidhlig and Gaelic (Learners) to support planning of learning.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- In the nursery class, the curriculum is based on play. Nursery routines offer a large proportion of time for free play where children can access both indoors and outside.
- Staff took time and thought to redesign well the outdoor learning spaces for children. Ideas were discussed with children and parents, which has resulted in an attractive outdoor space. Children now access a story hut, a mud kitchen, large sandpit and the beginnings of large loose parts resources. This area is used extensively each day. Commendably, the nursery are almost achieving the Scottish Government's recommended standards of access to outdoor play.
- Practitioners use literacy and numeracy trackers from Argyll and Bute (A&B) Council to plan experiences for children. The A&B Developmental Milestone Toolkit is used to record children's milestones and practitioners have implemented national guidance including Curriculum for Excellence. A next step is for practitioners to take cognisance of Building the Ambition refreshed narrative to ensure that experiences for children are set at the right stage of development. This will allow children to experience effective continuity in their learning.

### GME

- It is timely to review how GME is delivered in the ELC through total immersion and in the session where children access Gaelic (Learners). This should form part of devising a strategic direction for GME in a the whole school, where the numbers of children in GME is increasing.
- The ELC should build an awareness amongst parents of the benefits of GME and bilingualism. In doing so, the option for parents to enrol children in P1 GME should be kept open, especially given that the promotion of Gaelic is encouraging some parents to choose GME for their children.
- Planning for the promotion of Gaelic in the ELC should be based on the experiences and outcomes of Gaelic (Learners). Planning should support the purpose and intended outcomes of promotion of Gaelic (Learners).

## 2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Families feel very positive about the nursery class and appreciate practitioners' efforts to keep them informed of how their child is settling.
- Links with partners in the community are positive. For example, visits to the shop on the island encourage children to make their own shop in the nursery. This is helping children to understand, at their own level, positive skills for life and work. The nursery class benefits from the help and talents of the local community in designing their mud kitchen in the outside play area.
- To increase family engagement, the nursery class offers regular 'stay and play' sessions for parents, which are well attended. Story sacks are used weekly to encourage storytelling at home and parents are encouraged to review the story with their child. Moving on from approaches that encourage parental involvement, it will be important to ensure that practitioners support parents to become increasingly engaged in the life and work of the setting.
- Comann nam Pàrant (the national organisation which supports parents who opt for GME) support parents well.

## 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

satisfactory

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

- wellbeing
- fulfilment of statutory duties
- inclusion and equality

- Within the work of the nursery class, children's wellbeing is a high priority. Practitioners have created a welcoming, nurturing environment where very positive relationships are evident between staff and children. Children are welcomed individually on arrival each day and time is spent with parents to ensure that all necessary information is passed on. As a result, children are settled and readily engage in their play. The nursery team follow the A&B Developmental Milestone Toolkit to guide them towards appropriate expectations and interventions for children's age and stage of development. As a result, practitioners meet children's emotional and social needs well.
- Practitioners model successfully warm, positive interactions, which promotes wellbeing and encourages this in others. A focus on healthy eating through snack time and exercise is encouraging children to understand the benefits of keeping healthy. The wellbeing indicators of 'Getting it right for every child' are not yet used widely by the staff team. There is a link to the local authority's Developmental Milestones, but practitioners need to be clearer about how the wellbeing indicators help all children to feel safe, healthy, active, respected, achieving, nurtured, responsible and included.
- Practitioners are reflective about their practice and keen to continue to improve outcomes for children and families. They keep up to date with important developments in early learning and childcare to ensure they fulfil their statutory duties. They are particularly mindful of their responsibility towards children's wellbeing. Where children require additional support with their learning, practitioners are proactive in seeking support and making links with external agencies. The nursery team are aware of the policy to access support when required. Practitioners should consider how best to develop children's understanding of their own rights and wellbeing and help them to use the language to express their experiences and needs.
- Children and families are supported in a way that encourages participation and promotes inclusion. Practitioners are responsive to children's needs, feelings and moods. They encourage children to show kindness to each other. This is evident in how even the youngest children treat each other with respect, whilst enjoying fun and laughter. Practitioners are respectful in all their work with children. All children receive individual attention during the sessions. Practitioners have a very good understanding of the individual circumstances of children and use this knowledge to support them in their learning. The nursery roll is very low this session and there is merit in ensuring that the opportunities for attendance are more widely known with families across the island. This would enable the nursery team to better promote inclusion and equality through their work with children and families.

## **GME**

- Practitioners and children enjoy warm and caring relationships. Children are happy and confident in their playroom. They have had a focus on how to keep safe and are able to use some related vocabulary in Gaelic. Children play well together and are building respect towards each other. Practitioners are setting an appropriate environment for learning through immersion. Practitioners should make more use of the language of wellbeing to help develop their understanding.
- Children are beginning to develop independence at snack time. They are sociable and respectful in waiting their turn. They respond to prompts for personal care such as handwashing. There are opportunities to develop children's language skills around sitting down together for a snack.

### 3.2 Securing children's progress

satisfactory

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

- progress in communication, early language, mathematics, and health and wellbeing
  - children's progress over time
  - overall quality of children's achievement
  - ensuring equity for all children
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- Children are becoming more independent in a range of personal skills, such as changing shoes, washing hands and brushing their teeth. Free play is an everyday occurrence alongside small group activities, where children are learning to take turns and share. Practitioners set out the room on a daily basis within the range of equipment available. The recent development of using loose parts in discovery play is at an early stage and has the potential to increase children's curiosity in their learning.
  - There is a strong nurturing focus on children's health and wellbeing. The emphasis on relationships is helping children to settle and develop friendships. The majority can communicate their needs and feelings according to their stage of development and are kind and caring towards each other. They particularly enjoy being outdoors in the garden and the freedom to explore.
  - Early language development is being encouraged through children engaging in conversations, listening during small group times and taking part in songs and rhymes. Children have a growing confidence in communicating with others. They are being encouraged to identify their names using pictorial clues. Favourite stories and songs are a regular feature of practice. The introduction of the 'Gaelic words of the week' is extending children's vocabulary. There is a focus on extending and modelling vocabulary to help extend children's language development in English and Gaelic.
  - Children enjoy exploring a range of mark-making materials using paints, pencils and crayons. This is at a very early stage. The staff team should consider a wider range of experiences for children which would help the development of their fingers, which in time will help with the developmental stages of writing.
  - At the time of the inspection, the small cohort of children are very young, (three years of age), and had just started the nursery. Therefore, their progress over time cannot be evaluated. A personal learning plan folder is established quickly when children start the nursery class. The purpose of this is to record children's progress in literacy, numeracy and their developmental milestones. These plans are updated regularly by practitioners and sent home for parents. Practitioners need to ensure that all comments within children's plans are evaluative and based on what the individual child is learning. The nursery achievement wall shows children's achievements where parents are encouraged to share their child's successes from home.

## GME

- Children are at the early stages of learning Gaelic. They listen to songs and join in at the appropriate points through actions. Children listen well to stories. They use the readers' expressions and illustrations to help their understanding and make relevant comments. Children are beginning to learn some words in Gaelic connected to their topic. They also transfer some of these words into their spoken communication through English. In contexts such as when using playdough, they count to four. They know other numbers in Gaelic but are not yet able to use these in the right sequence. Children are able to identify a few colours. Children have exposure to other play contexts, which are building their skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. The absence of total immersion is constraining children's progress in developing their understanding of related language. As such, this is a weakness in delivering immersion approaches.
- Staff are able to talk about how they support the progress of children who have been in the ELC. The children in P1 are making good progress in learning Gaelic, for which the ELC staff have provided a strong start. Their future approaches to documenting children's progress should include the language that children understand. Practitioners would benefit from building their knowledge of the National Benchmarks and sharing standards through moderation activities.
- Practitioners' improved planning of the curriculum, assessment and profiling of achievements will assist them in putting interventions in place to promote equity.

## School Empowerment

### ■ Improvement

- Staff value the flexibility and autonomy afforded to them to meet the needs of children. The headteacher, supported ably by his senior leadership team, is creating conditions for effective empowerment of staff to improve learning, teaching and assessment. Staff feel much better placed to undertake roles which focus on leading improvements to practice and provision. They are benefiting from strategic direction in a number of important areas. High quality professional learning has been central to developing leadership at all levels.

## 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.