

Summarised inspection findings

Sgoil Àraich Ùige Sgoil Ùige

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

3 October 2023

Key contextual information

Sgoil Àraich Ùige is a nursery providing Gaelic Medium Education for children aged three to five, and eligible two-year-olds. The school serves the village of Timsgarry and surrounding rural communities in a remote area on the western coast of Lewis.

Sgoil Àraich Ùige offers 1140 hours a year of early learning and childcare (ELC) during term-time. The sgoil-àraich also provides places for two-year-olds whose parents wish to pay for childcare. This increases childcare facilities available to parents in a rural area.

There are fewer than ten children in Sgoil Àraich Ùige. Throughout the summarised inspection findings, we will refer to children as a group rather than individual cohorts. This is to ensure anonymity of children.

The headteacher has been in post at Sgoil Ùige for six years. An executive headteacher has strategic overview of all of the schools in the cluster. They support the school and do some quality assurance activities.

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

Sgoil Àraich Ùige has interrupted access to wi-fi services, sometimes for up to five weeks.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

satisfactory

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

- Children make an important start to fluency in Gaelic by attending Sgoil Àraich Ùige. They benefit from positive, caring and warm relationships with practitioners. Children engage well with the range of total immersion play experiences indoors, outdoors and in the community. Practitioners have created a welcoming and friendly ethos and community for children to be immersed in Gaelic.
- Practitioners, together as a team, use high-quality Gaelic to create total immersion experiences. Children are confident in joining their friends at the primary stages for some of their immersion. As a whole-school group, children sing in Gaelic with a visiting specialist tutor. They sing a range of songs connected to their island, heritage and culture. This supports their language development effectively. Practitioners should increase their use of songs to provide continuity with children's singing with the visiting tutor.
- Practitioners interact with children in purposeful conversations, commentaries and questioning. They should maintain regular and effective interactions in Gaelic. Practitioners should continue using the 'Advice on Gaelic Education' (2022) to extend the total immersion approaches that

they use. Children have an interest in science and are developing related specialist vocabulary. They concentrate very well in such learning contexts. Children are using digital technology to create short sound files with the names of minibeasts. This encourages children to speak Gaelic. Children should be encouraged to engage with more activities that encourage them to speak Gaelic.

- Practitioners provide an appropriate variety of natural objects and open-ended resources in the outdoors. Children are developing their understanding of sustainability and how recycling objects supports their play. They grow plants from seed and develop responsibilities for watering plants. Children would benefit from having a secure area in which to play outdoors that is adjacent to the sgoil-àraich.
- Practitioners should increase the learning they lead and initiate, based on progression in immersion. They should use the experiences and outcomes of the early level in doing this, while retaining a balance with child-led activities. Practitioners should ensure children's learning has breadth, depth and challenge in an increasing range of contexts. Practitioners should develop play contexts around Gaelic-specific elements of language, culture, vocation and contemporary aspects of Gaelic. This will help children build their understanding of the importance of Gaelic in their lives. Practitioners should also have a planned focus on very young children's learning.
- Each child has an individual learning profile that includes photographs, practitioners' observations, targets and next steps, and a few samples of children's work. Practitioners are beginning to use this information to help them make judgements about children's progress in their learning. They should increase curriculum coverage in profiles. Practitioners produce an overview of the experiences and outcomes that children cover.
- Practitioners are reflective and keen to be continuously improving their practice. They should continue to develop their expertise in recording observations with a clear focus on what children can do, say and understand in Gaelic language, skills and knowledge. Practitioners should continue to identify relevant next steps in learning for individual children. They should increase their dialogue on profiles with children. This would enable children to talk better about their learning, successes and achievement.
- Practitioners plan with a focus on literacy, Gaelic language, numeracy, mathematics, and health and wellbeing. This includes identifying key Gaelic words and phrases for practitioners to introduce to children through play. Children contribute to planning by sharing their ideas, experiences and interests. Children would benefit from greater depth and levels of challenge in their learning.
- Practitioners track children's developmental milestones. They are beginning to check children's levels of understanding and their use of the Gaelic language in a more robust way. The headteacher should track children's progress as part of a whole-school strategy to raise attainment.

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 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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- Overall, children are making good progress in understanding Gaelic language and communication. They use a few Gaelic words in routines and independently in their play. Children are able to name items of food and drink, and single words on topics such as animals. They build their imagination and creativity through role-play. Children are developing their skills in listening. They are able to retell aspects of stories. Children recognise their name on labels, with some writing their names. They enjoy a range of mark-making experiences. Children should be encouraged to speak more Gaelic in everyday routines in which they are comfortable.
 - Children are making satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. They develop their Gaelic as they count in routines. Children recognise numbers and count objects in outdoor contexts. They are developing the language of mathematics through discussion on days of the week and when experimenting with volume at the water tray. Children can apply their numeracy skills in Gaelic to real-life contexts, such as in role play in cafes. Children are beginning to repeat the names of basic shapes in Gaelic. There are missed opportunities, through total immersion play, to extend further children's numeracy skills.
 - Children are making satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. They are developing their awareness of feelings. Children follow instructions to be safe when changing from one learning environment to another. They are building friendships and share their toys well for most of the time. As a next step, practitioners should introduce wellbeing indicators in an age-appropriate way. Children show high levels of independence during their play. They should be encouraged to tidy up their playroom more regularly during the session. Children enjoy taking part in a family snack, for which they could be more involved in planning, preparing and washing up. They develop their social skills and transactional language during this time. Children join their friends at the primary stages for lunch, play at interval, and "time together". This is helping children to feel safe in bigger spaces.
 - Information gathered on children's learning demonstrates that children make satisfactory progress in their learning from year to year since joining Sgoil Àraich Ùige. Practitioners have identified the need to have more robust evidence on children's progress in Gaelic over time. Children's progress is starting to be evidenced in music and science.

- Practitioners recognise and display children’s achievements in Sgoil Àraich Ùige. Children contribute well to the life of the wider community. Parents provide information from home on children’s achievements. These are celebrated in the sgoil-àraich and built upon in planning.
- All practitioners know individual children well and take effective account of the differing circumstances of children and families. They provide sensitive interventions to meet the needs of individuals. Practitioners understand their role in promoting equity. Practitioners should raise parents’ awareness of how they continue to build on children’s fluency during long breaks from Sgoil Àraich Ùige, such as holidays. This would assist in reducing gaps in children’s progress, particularly in acquiring Gaelic.

Other relevant areas

- The school improvement plan and standards and quality report need a much greater focus on the sgoil-àraich.
- There is not a current school handbook available on line. The school handbook does not detail Gaelic Medium Education and learning through immersion. The promotion of Gaelic is required by the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education (2017). For other requirements of the Guidance, such as delivering total immersion, the sgoil-àraich is making positive progress.

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.