

# Summarised inspection findings

**Sgoil-Àraich Bun-sgoil Lacasdail - Laxdale Primary School Sgoil-Àraich**

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

28 November 2023

## Key contextual information

Bun-sgoil Lacasdail - Laxdale Primary School offers learning through Gàidhlig and English for children aged three to 12. The school's early learning and childcare provision, in Gàidhlig and English, is known as sgoil-àraich. The sgoil-àraich has a playroom and garden area for three to five-year-olds in Gàidhlig Medium and one for English Medium Education. The sgoil-àraich operates all year through the medium of Gàidhlig and English. A nursery manager is in post to lead the additional free 1140 hours of early learning and childcare, in both English and Gàidhlig Medium Education. Practitioners work all year or during term time.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has a Gaelic First Policy, with the presumption that children will attend Gàidhlig Medium Education. Parents choose which medium of learning they wish for their children. There are 39 children registered for the sgoil-àraich. There are 18 children in Gàidhlig Medium Education and 21 in English Medium Education. Each sgoil-àraich playroom is registered for 20 children at any one time.

There were a few periods of higher staff absence during the pandemic. Senior leaders are aware of the impact of the pandemic and how they need to support children.

### 1.3 Leadership of change

good

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 staff and children at Sgoil-Àraich Bun-sgoil Lacasdail – Laxdale Primary School create an inclusive ethos based on their values. The head of school has successfully created a supportive culture between all staff and children. Staff feel valued by the head of school. The sgoil-àraich has renewed their vision and values. All staff and children should continue to work together to ensure that they understand the purpose of values and know what these mean in practice. Practitioners should now make stronger references to total immersion principles.
- The head of school and nursery manager have used self-evaluation well over time to identify priorities for improvement. This has impacted positively on improving children's relationships and behaviour, and in implementing the additional 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for English and Gàidhlig Medium Education. Staff have maintained a good standard of education over challenging times. The head of school and nursery manager should continue making more detailed use of published quality assurance frameworks, along with the Advice on Gaelic Education (2022) and Realising the Ambition (2020). This would assist in securing even more meaningful links between self-evaluation and improvement planning to maintain well-paced change.
- The head of school works well with an executive headteacher to have effective quality assurance arrangements in place. These arrangements are resulting in positive changes. The head of school and nursery manager observe practice in the sgoil-àraich. Practitioners receive

useful feedback from this. Practitioners also engage in peer observations, from which they discuss strengths and next steps for improvement. The head of school and practitioners should now capture their practice in a policy and quality assurance schedule. This would assist in empowering further staff in their role for self-evaluation and guiding the strategic direction of the sgoil-àraich.

- The head of school and the nursery manager have a range of useful strategies and protocols in place to guide practitioners. These are reviewed regularly. There are a few areas for which a more strategic approach to policy and guidance would support the setting's further improvement. It would be important to capture expectations on total immersion in a policy. Staff would find this useful in evaluating the quality of practice. This policy should include how children and staff's use of Gàidhlig in the English medium sgoil-àraich playroom and shared spaces support an immersion environment.
- Practitioners across the sgoil-àraich are reflective, evaluative and are confident in changing direction to gain more impact for children. They have visited other early learning and childcare provisions to extend their practice. The head of school and nursery manager support practitioners with professional review and development. From this, practitioners know their strengths and next steps in professional development. Practitioners should continue to access professional learning related to leading sgoil-àraich improvements, including on Gàidhlig and immersion. They would benefit from having lead responsibilities for individual curriculum areas, in addition to contexts of play such as the outdoors.
- It is embedded practice for primary class teachers to lead play in both playrooms on a weekly basis. This supports children's learning and development as they move from sgoil-àraich to primary. Teachers model practice, which supports practitioners' professional learning.
- Practitioners across the sgoil-àraich work very well collegiately with parents and partners to support children and to improve their learning experiences. Parents are aware of family learning opportunities and how to support their own language skills in Gàidhlig. The head of school should continue with plans to increase further parents' role in improvement planning.
- Children give their views on the sgoil-àraich, to which practitioners listen and act as appropriate. Children make decisions in their play and learning. Some choices around Gàidhlig, such as whether children in the playroom for English have singing sessions for Gàidhlig, should be considered as part of all children's learning. This would help children in English Medium Education understand their local context, language and identity.
- Practitioners are helping all children respect the different ways that they learn. To help create a sense of belonging, children greet each other in Gàidhlig at whole-school events, such as at assembly. Children in the sgoil-àraich for English learn some Gàidhlig. Senior leaders and staff should continue leading the curriculum to value diversity and foster positive attitudes to all children's identity.

## 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

good

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 the sgoil-àraich, practitioners' interactions with children are nurturing, warm and caring. Children demonstrate positive relationships with practitioners and their peers. They feel valued, safe and secure. Children make independent choices about where they will play, moving confidently between the playroom and outdoors. Practitioners should continue to review and develop the indoor and outdoor environment to support children's development and learning, especially in literacy and numeracy.
- Practitioners in the sgoil-àraich Gàidhlig have created a warm and welcoming total immersion environment for children and families. Practitioners' and children's interactions are kind, caring and responsive. Children are learning how to get on well as a group. Children are confident in their environment. They are happy, safe and are developing friendships. These are important features to be underpinning children's total immersion in Gàidhlig.
- Practitioners across the sgoil-àraich have developed a good balance between intentional and responsive planning. This extends children's learning. Practitioners use floor books to capture children's and parents' voice and record children's learning.
- Children in sgoil-àraich Gàidhlig are curious about learning that takes place in the playroom, the garden and in the community. Children engage well for most of the time in adult-led activities, such as 'claradh' (registration). They are independent in checking others' attendance at sgoil-àraich and responding to say they are in attendance. At times, adult-led activities are too long, with children needing a faster pace of learning. Children choose confidently contexts in which to play, both indoors and outdoors. They develop well their imagination in role-play. Practitioners' regular interactions in Gàidhlig during role-play develops children's Gàidhlig language. Practitioners use a range of total immersion opportunities well to support children's language development.
- Children in both mediums of learning make good use of the community. They enjoy walks and finding interesting places in which to read stories, explore nature and learn about sustainability. Children should be encouraged to access more books and other texts for enjoyment and to source information.
- Practitioners across the sgoil-àraich are developing their understanding of early childhood development. They know children and families well. Practitioners use this knowledge to support children's learning through planned experiences, and to be responsive to interests and needs. Practitioners interact with children to nurture and support learning. They should now develop further their use of questioning to enhance and extend children's learning across the curriculum.

- Across the sgoil-àraich, practitioners share children's learning with parents using an online platform. Children are developing skills in using the interactive whiteboard and tablet computers. They research areas of interest and practise their skills in literacy and numeracy. Children are developing an understanding of number and direction through programmable toys. Practitioners should continue to explore how digital learning and technology could be used further to extend and challenge children's learning across the curriculum. More of children's understanding of Gàidhlig through immersion should be celebrated and recorded. Practitioners should develop moderation as part of reliable and valid assessment.
- As all children learn, practitioners observe them carefully and record observations in learning journey folders and through an online platform. Practitioners are developing their skills in observing children's significant learning. They should continue to develop these observations with a focus on the specific skills children are developing and applying. This will help practitioners identify clear and meaningful next steps across the curriculum for individual children.
- Practitioners track all children's progress towards developmental milestones and progress in literacy and numeracy. This is based on Curriculum for Excellence National Benchmarks. Practitioners use their records well to support planning for all children. A few children are already fluent in Gàidhlig, which they use independently in play. Children who are fluent need more challenge in their language across contexts of play. Their progress should be tracked. Practitioners now plan to collate information on all children's progress through an overview tracker. This will support them to identify more clearly the areas where children need further experience, or need to make better progress. Practitioners need to develop clearer targets to measure the progress being made by children with barriers to learning. It will be important that all available information is used to maximise learning opportunities for all children and support their transition into P1.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum in the sgoil-àraich - Gàidhlig provides play through total immersion in Gàidhlig. In both sgoil-àraich playrooms, learning is based on Curriculum for Excellence and responds to children's interests. Practitioners make good use of curriculum frameworks to plan an interesting range of learning experiences. They continue to develop the curriculum using national practice guidance, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me* (2020) and the *Advice on Gaelic Education* (2022) to support improvements to their experiences, interactions and spaces. This is helping to ensure a broad and balanced curriculum.
- Practitioners in both sgoil-àraich playrooms track the use of experiences and outcomes for literacy and Gàidhlig/English as appropriate, and numeracy and mathematics. Practitioners are also extending children's knowledge of Gaelic culture. They should also track health and wellbeing and progress in Gaelic (Learners), as appropriate.
- Practitioners in both sgoil-àraich playrooms provide personalisation and choice. This is while ensuring an appropriate balance between adult-led and child-initiated activities.
- All children's individual needs are the focus for planning transitions into the sgoil-àraich and on to school. Practitioners manage transitions to sgoil-àraich from home with care and sensitivity. They work closely with families, and support children to develop confidence and settle quickly into the setting.
- All practitioners and teachers across the early level work collaboratively to support successful transitions. They provide very good support to children as they move from sgoil-àraich into C1/P1. Across the sgoil-àraich, children take part in helpful transition activities every week. Children get to know the teaching staff who will continue their learning in the early level when they move to the primary stages. Children's transition activities often are adult-led activities as part of children's planned learning. Children in Gaelic Medium Education take part in whole-school assemblies and weekly joint learning activities with the C1/2 class for Gàidhlig Medium Education. This is supporting increased enrolments into C1.
- All practitioners should continue working with teachers at the early level to plan progressive experiences across the four contexts of the curriculum.
- All practitioners have a very good understanding of the benefits of learning outdoors. Children benefit from high-quality learning experiences in the sgoil-àraich, school grounds and in the wider community.

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

- Practitioners across the sgoil-àraich have very positive relationships with parents and families. They provide information about children's sgoil-àraich experiences through daily verbal feedback, WOW moment cards, regular parents' meetings, report cards and a summary of experiences using an online platform. Parents share achievements from home, which practitioners and children celebrate and add to the online platform. Practitioners value comments from parents about children's learning.
- Parents enjoy and benefit from events such as stay and play sessions. This helps them experience first-hand what their children learn at sgoil-àraich. Staff gather parents' views to help identify improvements and strengthen partnership working. Practitioners should continue to develop opportunities for family learning to enhance and support learning for children.
- Parents in Gàidhlig Medium Education are aware of the available local activities for Gàidhlig out with the sgoil-àraich. Practitioners should increase the information available at the reception area on the benefits of Gàidhlig.

## 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 wellbeing of all children is a key strength across the sgoil-àraich. Practitioners develop strong, nurturing relationships with all children and families. The sgoil-àraich offers a calm and welcoming environment. Practitioners know children well and are responsive to their needs. They show a high level of care for individual children. As a result, children feel safe, secure and confident within the sgoil-àraich.
- Children in both sgoil-àraich playrooms are becoming more independent at snack, in their personal care, and developing good friendships. They are developing life skills in hygiene and food handling. Children in English Medium enjoy preparing healthy snacks. All children are developing independence as they serve themselves. They socialise well with practitioners and each other. Children in Gàidhlig Medium Education enjoy lunch in the school canteen. Older children are able to select food independently and carry their lunch trays to the table. They can be more independent in preparing and serving snack.
- Most children play very well together across the sgoil-àraich. They show consideration for each other. A few children's relationships with each other and staff have improved. Children are now better at exhibiting more positive behaviour in keeping with the sgoil-àraich's values.
- Practitioners across the sgoil-àraich recognise the importance of their role in supporting children's health and wellbeing. Getting it right for every child is evident in practice. Children in the playroom through English Medium understand the wellbeing indicators well. They do so through having individual characters representing the wellbeing indicators. This helps children to associate the wellbeing indicators with their daily lives. Children can discuss how to keep themselves healthy, active and safe. They are inclusive and respectful of each other.
- Children learning through Gàidhlig are at an early stage of understanding what the wellbeing indicators mean to them. They learn about nature and taking risks through energetic play outdoors and in the wider community. Children should take more individual responsibility, with support from adults, for checking safe crossing of roads.
- Practitioners across the sgoil-àraich know the children well as individuals. They work closely with school staff and external agencies. Practitioners need continued guidance in supporting children in Gàidhlig Medium Education who require additional support. Speech and language therapy support for children needs to be through Gàidhlig. Practitioners should ensure that children's individual plans are reviewed regularly with parents.
- As a result of the inclusive environment across the sgoil-àraich, children are learning to value and respect differences in how others communicate and play. Practitioners model respect and fairness effectively in their interactions. Children know they are unique and valued.

Practitioners should now develop further intentional and responsive experiences to support children to develop an understanding of diversity and equality. Children should be supported to become more aware of their rights, as part of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. They should develop a deep understanding to their rights as learners of a language of Scotland.

- Practitioners are making good progress with the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education (2017). They are providing total immersion activities. Practitioners consult parents to encourage their continued engagement with Gàidhlig Medium Education. The head of school is working well with the local authority to ensure staffing through the modern apprenticeship programme.

## 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

### Gàidhlig Medium Education

- Almost all children are making good progress in communication and early acquisition of Gàidhlig language. A few children are fluent in Gàidhlig from transmission at home. These children engage very well with all of the conversation in the sgoil-àraich in Gàidhlig. Almost all children play well together. They take part actively in routines such as snack, in which they hear and use Gàidhlig for transactions. Their regular use of Gàidhlig in routines is applied independently to their imaginative play. Children are confident and happy in acting familiar contexts, such as their snack routine. Their skills in socialising are improving as they build friendships together. Most children sing words of songs, some of which they accompany with actions to show understanding. Children use and understand instructions connected to the routines of their playroom. Children lead some group routines using the correct tense and verbs. Children enjoy listening to stories and commenting on their detail. They could be more curious about stories, including by accessing oral and written texts independently. They should be encouraged to use texts to research for information. Older children write their names, with a few children copying their favourite words. There are opportunities for children to use their literacy skills across all play contexts in a more purposeful way.
- The majority of children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. They understand some age-appropriate mathematical terms. Children develop an awareness of shape and length as they build models. They develop an understanding of measurement as they make play dough. Children count to numbers ranging from five to 20. A few children identify these numbers out with sequence. There are opportunities for children to use their numeracy and Gàidhlig skills across all play contexts in a more purposeful way.
- Almost all children are happy and relaxed in the sgoil-àraich. Children's care and kindness to each other is encouraged and celebrated. When children have different points of view, they are encouraged to respect others' views and reach an agreement. Children help each other during their play. All children are developing their oral health skills well as they engage in toothbrushing daily. Children demonstrate well developed physical skills in outdoor play, for example during walks in the community.

### English Medium Education

- The majority of children are making good progress in developing their early communication, language and literacy skills in English. A few children are making very good progress. Children can express confidently their thoughts and feelings. They communicate well with each other and practitioners as they play. A few children need gentle reminders to listen to the ideas of

others. They recall familiar nursery rhymes with actions. Children enjoy sharing a book with adults. They listen very well when responding to stories. They use age-appropriate recipe books to make play dough and experiment in the mud kitchen. Children recognise their name, with a few doing so with support. The majority of children can write their name independently. Children demonstrate their literacy skills in different contexts, for example when creating alternative endings to traditional stories.

- The majority of children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. A few children make very good progress. Children count forwards in their daily routines. They recognise and count numbers to 10. A few children count upwards to 20. Children would benefit from practising to count backwards from 10 and 20. Children are beginning to understand simple fractions. They can describe how to split a whole object into two halves. Children can identify, describe and create two-dimensional shapes and simple three-dimensional objects. A few children can use these to create patterns. They know the days of the week. A few children can describe different seasons. Learners can compare length, including comparing their heights using the language taller and smaller. They explore measure through practical tasks, for example, making play dough. Children are developing an understanding of data handling by collecting data on rainfall and eye colour. They use this information to produce simple bar charts.
- Practitioners promote children's health and wellbeing through a range of opportunities. As a result, children are making good progress against developmental milestones. Practitioners encourage and celebrate children being kind. With support, when necessary, children are learning to manage their emotions. Children help each other during their play. Children know how to keep themselves safe in sgoil-àraich. They are encouraged to make and serve their own snack. They discuss healthy food choices. They are developing an understanding of hygiene and how to prevent the spread of germs. All children are developing well their oral health skills as they engage in daily toothbrushing. Children demonstrate well developed physical skills in outdoor play, for example during risky play with loose parts. They run, jump, balance and climb with confidence.

### **Children's progress over time in Gàidhlig and English Medium Education**

- Most children in both sgoil-àraich playrooms are making good progress since starting sgoil-àraich. Practitioners use a variety of assessment information, observations, learning journals and practitioners' professional judgement to evidence children's progress over time.
- Practitioners in the sgoil-àraich playroom for English Medium education should track children's progress in Gaelic (Learners) as an important feature of the local and national context of the curriculum.

### **Overall quality of children's achievement**

- Practitioners in both sgoil-àraich playrooms praise and encourage children regularly during their play. They recognise, value, and celebrate children's wider achievement in a range of ways. This includes recognising achievements through the WOW wall displays and the online platform. Most parents share achievements from home. Practitioners should continue to monitor that all children's achievements are celebrated to ensure that no child is missing out.

### **Ensuring equity for all children**

- Practitioners across the sgoil-àraich promote equity well. They know families very well and have a sound knowledge of factors that help build a picture of the whole child. Practitioners identify quickly potential barriers to learning and put effective support in place for all children. They work closely with families and other professionals to implement effective strategies and

interventions. Practitioners recognise the challenges families may face as a result of the current cost of living crisis.

## Practice worth sharing more widely

- Practitioners and teachers across the early level work collaboratively to support successful transitions. They provide very good support to children as they move from sgoil-àraich into C1/P1. Across the sgoil-àraich, children take part in helpful transition activities every week. Children's skills in literacy and numeracy are improving. This also models total immersion approaches to practitioners. Children get to know very well the teaching staff who will continue their learning when they move to the primary stages. Children take part in whole-school assemblies. Children in Gaelic Medium Education have weekly joint learning activities with the C1 and C2 class for Gàidhlig Medium Education, for example in physical education. This is supporting increased enrolments into P1 Gàidhlig Medium Education.

## 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.