

# Summarised inspection findings

**Gairloch Primary School and Nursery Class**

The Highland Council

18 June 2019

## Key contextual information

Gairloch Primary School offers early learning and childcare provision in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) during morning sessions, and English Medium Education (EME) in the afternoons. Children from both groups come together and share the same playroom one day a week. The GME provision has had significant challenges in securing staffing. A permanent practitioner took up post in January 2018. Before this appointment, all children met as one group. This did not meet national expectations on total immersion.

EME and GME share the same playroom across the day. There is a designated space that allows free-flow access to outdoor play. Children also access the extensive, wider school grounds. Registration is for 22 children to attend at any one time. At the time of the inspection, four children were accessing GME and eight children accessing EME. Of the 12 children, ten are in their ante pre-school year and two in their pre-school year.

### 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 aims of the nursery classes have been in place for a number of years. School staff, pupils and parents are currently refreshing the vision, values and aims for the school. Children and practitioners within the nursery classes have yet to be involved in this process. The vision, values and aims should reflect and celebrate Gaelic language and culture and be accessible to children and families. They should also reflect current thinking and research in early learning and childcare through Gaelic and English. Going forward, practitioners should explore meaningful ways to share the values with children.
- The acting headteacher has responsibility for managing the nursery. She has a realistic view of its strengths and areas to be developed. She recognises that pace of change has been constrained. There has been positive progress made in establishing GME provision within the last year, with a commitment to its continuous improvement. Practitioners in both GME and EME are well placed to increase the pace of change and improvement.
- The acting headteacher undertakes monitoring visits to both classes. She provides helpful feedback to support improvement of specific aspects. This includes the ongoing development of planning and profiling of children's learning. This is impacting on how children are involved in their own learning. Processes to support improvement over time, such as monitoring of practice, are helping identify what is working well and what still needs to improve. A nursery teacher provides management support on a fortnightly basis. Working together with the headteacher, a detailed programme of self-evaluation is now established. This includes monitoring learning and progress, and supporting planning of children's learning. As a result, there are early positive signs of improvement. Practitioners in both classes also benefit from support from an Early Years Support Officer. She visits termly to observe, monitor practice and offer advice. She has progressed the use of floor books. Practitioners value this support as

assisting the ongoing improvement journey. A next step is for a similar support to be adopted for the bespoke elements of GME.

- Practitioners should develop a shared, deeper understanding and use of the national self-evaluation framework, 'How good is our early learning and childcare?'. Key documents, such as 'Advice on Gaelic Education', some of which now forms statutory Guidance, would be helpful to support meaningful monitoring and self-evaluation in the GME nursery class. Practitioners have worked collaboratively on projects in the school improvement plan, such as developing early literacy. They should ensure that specific targets in relation to Gaelic language acquisition are included within their priorities. More collegiate working to support GME would be beneficial, including further engagement with other GME early learning settings.
- In EME and GME, practitioners work very well together. They are responsible for the day-to-day leadership of the nursery. They are committed to providing high-quality early learning and childcare. Professional learning is supporting improvement. For example, a recent input on observing children's learning has had a positive impact on the quality of observations made by practitioners. Professional review processes help identify areas of interest that practitioners would be keen to develop in the setting, for example science. Practitioners' interests and expertise could be utilised further in strategic leadership roles and with the school improvement plan.
- Practitioners need to ensure that the nursery handbook details GME, transitions and the benefits of bilingualism.
- Practitioners value and act on the views and opinions of children. There is, however considerable scope to extend children's early leadership skills. This will support and encourage children to contribute to improvements as fully as possible, allowing them to realise their potential through appropriate challenge.

## 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

- In both classes, most children are enthusiastic and engage well with learning experiences. There is a strong feeling of community. Children work well together and confidently follow their interests during free play. They demonstrate a good level of motivation and concentrate for extended periods while leading their own play. Practitioners' and children's interactions are consistently respectful and engaging. Within this positive ethos, children are observed to be confident. They are developing a keen sense of responsibility. They contribute to the setting by caring for each other and their environment.
- Children are stimulated to learn in a wide range of interesting contexts. This includes both planned and spontaneous play, with an appropriate focus on real-life experiences. Practitioners are responsive to children's interests. They use strategies such as 'talking tubs' to stimulate discussion, determining what children already know and what they want to learn. We discussed with practitioners in EME the importance of monitoring the balance between child and adult-led activities during a session, and across the week. They should promote further children's independence in learning. Children should direct and lead their play, and make more decisions during sessions.
- Children are confidently hearing and absorbing Gaelic as part of their total immersion in the separate GME nursery sessions. The practitioner carefully intervenes and interacts during play to extend children's Gaelic language. This is supporting progression in learning. Arrangements for the weekly joint session need to be reviewed to ensure that total immersion approaches are available in Gaelic for children every day.
- Practitioners in both classes have a good understanding of how children develop and learn. They have established very warm and nurturing relationships with children. They have high expectations of learning and behaviour. Practitioners' commentary and questioning supports and extends learning, often stimulating further curiosity and investigation. Practitioners differentiate questioning and, in GME, target Gaelic vocabulary based on the knowledge they have of children's development. This helps to offer appropriate support and challenge where required.
- Children work with practitioners to plan future learning using floor books. These support discussion and record their experiences. Practitioners involve children in responsive planning, providing them with challenging experiences and developing their curiosity.
- Children make good use of a range of digital technologies to support and extend learning. They research on the internet, send an email and discuss contents of digital photographs. As planned, a review of the use of technologies should be undertaken to establish what is working well and what might be improved. This should result in more use of websites for Gaelic to

support language acquisition. The focus on everyday technologies, such as a bread maker and kitchen tools, is helping children to explore and investigate real-life situations.

- Practitioners have had recent professional learning on making quality observations of children's learning. This is beginning to have a positive impact, with a clearer focus on the skills children are developing. There is potential for observations to have an even sharper focus on learning to better support the identification of what children need to learn next.
- All children have a learning profile, which records a range of information on children's experiences. There is scope for children and parents to be having more conversations on profiles and floor books. Children should be supported with the language to use in these conversations to focus on learning and progress.
- Practitioners recognise that approaches to identifying and recording next steps in learning are not yet consistent. Children and parents' regular engagement with setting targets would create a fuller picture of the totality of children's progress in learning.
- Practitioners have begun to track children's progress using local authority guidance. They are tracking how well children are developing their understanding of Gaelic. A next step would be to use information from tracking for moderation with colleagues at the primary stages, as well as for moderating beyond the setting.

## 2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- The curriculum in both nursery classes takes account of children's interests, their local community and Curriculum for Excellence. The outcome of this includes enriching learning, with a range of skills and children's curiosity being extended.
- The curriculum in the GME nursery is delivered through total immersion four mornings per week. When total immersion is available, children's language skills in Gaelic are being developed effectively through rich and exciting experiences, both indoors and outdoors. Practitioners need to ensure continuity in total immersion when both nursery classes are together in the playroom for part of the week. This is also important in planning for the extended free hours.
- In EME and GME, developing communication and early language, numeracy and mathematics, and health and wellbeing are priorities in the curriculum. Everyone takes responsibility for this within a climate of achievement. As part of the whole-school curriculum framework, it will be important to develop a clear pedagogy shared across the early level through Gaelic and English. This should support the continuum of play-based learning into P1. The development of transition arrangements will enhance this further.
- The curriculum in GME and EME is planned to be highly responsive. Practitioners track coverage of experiences and outcomes to ensure breadth and depth of learning across all curricular areas. The curriculum could now be usefully evaluated using all of the design principles. This should ensure that learning, teaching and assessment is well-matched to the development of all children. Practitioners should use National Benchmarks to develop an understanding of progression across the early level and to support transitions.
- The nursery has its own enclosed outdoor learning area. Practitioners have a sound understanding of what quality outdoor learning involves and what improvements are needed. Practitioners recognise that this area has considerable potential to promote curiosity, inquiry, creativity, and problem-solving skills. HM Inspectors also discussed with practitioners the potential for more risk-taking play that the natural environment around the school affords.

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

- Practitioners have established very positive relationships with children, parents and families. There is a welcoming and relaxed atmosphere at drop-off and pick-up times. This adds to the sense of community within the setting. Daily discussions, noticeboards, review of floor books and learning profiles inform parents about children's progress. A blog, regular newsletters and the use of social media are well-received.
- In GME, website addresses are shared with families to encourage their involvement in learning. This could usefully be extended to include sharing Gaelic vocabulary for use by parents in the home.
- Parents share children's achievements from home through 'star moments'. This helps develop linking between home and nursery on learning. Recent events, such as the 'Bake Off' encourage parents and families to share in learning activities. It also encourages them to be active partners in the ongoing development of the setting. Access to the council's website, 'Bumps to Bairns' provides extensive advice and support for parents and practitioners to involve them in learning. This also supports the involvement of parents in their child's developmental overview.
- The benefits of bilingualism are displayed in the school. There is capacity for more promotion of GME.
- Practitioners make some use of the local community. This increases children's motivation to learn in a range of contexts. HM Inspectors discussed with practitioners how they may maximise further the rich local context. This could entail extending the newly established inter-generational links, as well as the natural environment.
- Practitioners should continue to invite Gaelic partners and organisations to work collaboratively with them. Their remit would include promoting GME, supporting the learning of Gaelic and building an inclusive ethos.

## 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 that need to be addressed as a matter for urgency.

### 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

- In both classes, the promotion of wellbeing is a key feature. Practitioners provide very positive role models and have high expectations of children. Children settle quickly into the welcoming and relaxed ethos and environment of the nursery. Routines are taken forward in a sensitive and nurturing way. Almost all children are happy and confident in the setting. They play well together, share and take turns well. Children are treated with respect and valued. They have their opinions and thoughts listened to and taken forward. There is a sense of fun evident in the nursery, which complements the promotion of wellbeing.
- Children are supported in understanding wellbeing through a range of interesting learning experiences. There is a particular focus on being safe and healthy. Children are developing an understanding of the importance of handwashing. A daily 'check in' provides children with an opportunity to talk about their emotions and feelings. This could now be extended to include an emotional 'check out' and increased discussion during play. Almost all children are managing risk while playing in the outdoor area, for example, when using loose parts equipment. Children could be more involved in risk assessing aspects of their play. In EME, children confidently categorise foods into groups using a food pyramid. They describe whether foods are healthy or unhealthy. Children have 'tasting passports' to encourage them to try new and unfamiliar foods. They are given opportunities to express their views and make decisions about matters affecting them, such as contributing to the weekly snack menu. Children would now benefit from learning about their rights through their continued use of the wellbeing indicators. This will help to ensure a holistic understanding and develop children's use of the language of wellbeing.
- Overall, the acting headteacher and practitioners have an understanding of the statutory duties required to deliver early learning and childcare. Practitioners understand the importance of keeping children safe and their role in ensuring that this happens. They are developing their understanding of the requirements of care planning and working with families to gather a range of information to help them support children. This information needs to be more comprehensive and reviewed regularly with parents to fully comply with legislation. More account needs to be taken of the statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, particularly as the extended free hours are implemented. Risk assessments for GME need to be reviewed to ensure they reflect the number of adults in the nursery, and how risks will be managed. Additionally, some of the EME nursery's risk assessments need to be refreshed to fully reflect practice and safeguarding.
- Children and families are fully included in the life of the setting, with everyone warmly welcomed. Practitioners support individual children to access all learning experiences. Children are observed to be treated fairly and with respect. Inclusion and equality are evident within the areas of play. HM Inspectors have asked practitioners to monitor resources and children's participation in learning activities to ensure a balance in gender. This will ensure there are no potential, artificial barriers to learning. There is scope for wider celebration and

exploration of diversity in meaningful ways. This will support children to become aware of cultures and customs and ways of life in the wider world.

- Practitioners are knowledgeable about children's individual learning and development needs. They are familiar with the procedures to follow, should any child require additional support. There are timely interventions in place to support children who experience barriers in their learning. Practitioners follow advice and guidance from agencies, such as speech and language therapy, to bring about improvements for individuals. They should now further develop their recording processes, review care plans and evaluate the impact of any interventions used to support individuals.

### 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

- Children in the GME class are making good progress in literacy and Gàidhlig. They understand Gaelic phrases used during snack time. When prompted, they can say some words associated with their snack menu. All children recognise their name through self-registration. Some chose to overwrite their own names on cards, and form letters in flour, or on paper. They follow instructions and listen well to floor book activities about people who help us. Role-play supports children to acquire contextual language. There is scope to increase singing, and the use of rhymes and books, within the playroom on a daily basis.
- In the EME class, most children are making good progress in communication and early language. Children enjoy exploring mark making in a range of inviting contexts. A few children are able to write their name confidently, with the majority making positive attempts. Children are developing an interesting range of vocabulary by exploring new and less familiar words. These are often related to learning contexts. A few children enjoy copying new words. Most children are familiar with a range of texts including traditional tales. They confidently talk about characters and what they enjoyed most in a story. Children recognise the difference between fiction and non-fiction texts. Recently, children enjoyed accessing recipe books to find information and follow instructions. Children are developing a range of skills and understanding from syllables and phonological awareness introduced through play and routines. A few children confidently identify rhyme and are beginning to identify alliteration. A few children benefit from visual supports in the nursery, for example to sequence routines. Children learn simple phrases and vocabulary in French through routines. Given the context of the setting, Gaelic should have a higher profile in supporting a shared understanding across the nursery community.
- Children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics in the GME class. They can count a few objects and recognise numbers during their play. They explore common shapes in the school playground and match the photos they took showing similar shapes. Children use a food chart to discuss the day's food menu.
- In the EME class, most children are making good progress in numeracy and mathematics. Most children use number confidently in their play and in nursery routines. Real-life, meaningful contexts are used well to allow children opportunities to apply their developing skills and understanding. Children have explored simple data handling. There is scope to continue this in more contexts. Children are being helped to explore money and recognise the different values

of coins. The children could be involved in more real-life experiences, such as ordering snack foods.

- In both classes, children demonstrate a good awareness of how they can take responsibility for their own health and wellbeing. As a group, they show kindness towards others. Children enjoy opportunities for fresh air and exercise. There is a focus on the importance of good manners, which positively reinforces children's respect for each other. A focus on emotional intelligence is supporting children to describe their feelings and strategies they may employ to manage them independently. Children demonstrate a good level of independence in routines such as preparing for outdoor play and snack. They could now be more involved in the preparation of snack foods to adopt even more responsibilities within the nursery community. Children's fine motor control is developing well through a range of experiences, including a focus on different fastenings on clothes. Children demonstrate good physical skills as they negotiate loose parts, and use a range of bikes according to their actual ability level. There is scope for more challenging experiences to develop gross motor skills.
- As a few children have recently started nursery, their progress cannot yet be clearly evidenced. These children are developing the skills they require to be motivated, independent and confident learners. Practitioners are increasingly recognising the significant learning of individuals. This is allowing previous experiences and learning to be extended to help children make the best possible progress. There is scope to build on the progress children make in the nursery as they move in to P1.
- Children's achievements are recognised and celebrated well through praise and encouragement. The 'star of the week' award provides an incentive for children to behave well and try hard in their learning. Moving forward, children could engage more in peer assessment. There is potential for children to contribute more to the wider community and as global citizens of 21<sup>st</sup> century Scotland.
- A supportive and inclusive ethos with a climate of mutual trust and respect permeates the nursery. Practitioners demonstrate a good awareness of the differing backgrounds of children. They recognise where potential barriers to learning may exist. Practitioners work in an inclusive way, seeking advice where appropriate, to support them in their efforts in achieving the best outcomes for children. Practitioners' deeper use of available information and data would assist with strategies and targeted interventions having maximum impact. This should inform decisions about any future interventions.

## Choice Q1 : 2.4 Personalised support

- Universal support
- Role of practitioners
- Identification of learning needs and targeted support]
- Removal of barriers to learning

- Across the setting for EME and GME, practitioners are committed to providing a nurturing and caring environment for children. This, with the well-established relationships between children, families and practitioners, provides a strong foundation for providing personalised support. The needs, interests and wellbeing of individual children are at the centre of planning processes.
- The partnership between home and nursery helps provide a strong picture of each child's experiences and interests. We discussed how the recording of this information could create a more detailed individual plan for each child and develop a shared approach to learning. Plans must be reviewed regularly with parents to meet legislative requirements.
- A well-established key worker system supports the forming of appropriate attachments that support children to feel safe, secure and ready to learn. Children have regular interactions with their key worker and other adults who know them well. This promotes their wellbeing and encourages their progress in learning. As identified, there is potential for children to be even more involved in reflecting on and talking about their next steps in learning. This will help children to understand themselves better as learners and the progress they are making.
- Overall, tasks, activities and resources are at the right level to help children in GME and EME make sustained progress over time. Practitioners recognise that there is scope for increased engagement with natural, open-ended materials, including outdoors. This will support further challenge for children through maximising learning experiences that engage, sustain and extend interests consistently.
- Practitioners in EME and GME correctly identify where children need support or challenge in their learning. They are keen to provide the right interventions. Links with partner agencies and professionals ensure that any factors, which may present as barriers to children's learning, are identified and addressed quickly. It would be beneficial to keep chronologies as a record of conversations with parents and other professionals, and list interventions, which have been trialled. This would assist in measuring impact over time.
- Practitioners in GME and EME make increasingly effective use of observations to support the assessment of the needs of individual children. Their knowledge of family circumstances supports this further. Where appropriate, practitioners work in a targeted way with children who face potential barriers to their learning. The evaluation and analysis of information gathered on children's progress now needs to be in more depth. It would be beneficial to review children's attendance patterns to ensure that children do not miss out on key aspects of their learning. This will help ensure that the correct interventions, if required, are in place to achieve the best outcomes.

## 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.