

22 January 2019

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2016, HM Inspectors published a letter on Tollbrae Primary School, and Sgoil Àraich and Nursery. At that time, we were trying out some new approaches to school inspection and using new quality indicators for early learning settings. We focused our original inspection work on aspects of leadership and management across the school; the quality of learning, teaching and assessment; and the school's support for all children to make progress and achieve as highly as possible. HM Inspectors were happy with the quality of provision at the primary stages. However, we agreed with the school, and North Lanarkshire Council, that all aspects of the Sgoil Àraich and Nursery needed improving. We subsequently returned to the Sgoil Àraich and Nursery to look at how it had continued to improve its work, and published another letter in August 2017. Recently, as you may know, we visited the Sgoil Àraich and Nursery again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the headteacher (HT) and staff. We heard from the HT and other staff about the steps the school has taken to improve. We looked at particular areas that had been identified in the original inspection. As a result, we were able to find out about the progress the Sgoil Àraich and Nursery have made, and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

### **Improve all aspects of provision in the nursery.**

HM Inspectors continue to note improvements in children's provision through the medium of Gaelic and English (The Sgoil Àraich and Nursery).

The HT continues to give clear direction to early years. She is now better enabled to meet national expectations for Gaelic Medium Education (GME). The HT is strongly committed to achieving the best possible outcomes for all children. A recently appointed teacher is knowledgeable in both GME and English Medium Education (EME). Along with the HT and practitioners, she is already leading effective change in the Sgoil Àraich and Nursery. Practitioners are working well to provide an improved provision for children.

Across GME and EME, HM Inspectors observed children to be content, confident and capable. Children get on well together and exemplify respect towards each other. The teacher and practitioners are caring, supportive and kind towards children. This is helping to build children's self-esteem and confidence. Children are developing skills in making decisions about their play and snack. The teacher and practitioners are clearer with children on what they will be learning in some contexts of play and development. They should continue to clarify learning in all contexts of play and the curriculum. While children have individual targets set with them, more planning is required to meet the needs of individuals and those who are more able. Children are engaging well with digital technology to support their learning in numeracy. While developing their imagination in a role-play, they show an understanding of how technology can support their organisational skills.

In GME, children benefit from adults interacting with them regularly through the medium of Gaelic. This is embedding Gaelic immersion as a key driver in children's learning experiences. For almost all of the time, the teacher of GME uses a good range of immersion

approaches. These include songs and commentary. It would be good to have more emphasis on storytelling and rhymes. As the roll increases, it is important that those deployed to support learning through immersion are speakers of Gaelic.

The recently appointed teacher is now leading on planning the curriculum, along with practitioners. The curriculum offered is resulting in most children making appropriate progress. Children's learning remains based on play, with a strong focus on developing literacy, numeracy and wellbeing. Commendably, immersion, as relevant to the Sgoil Àraich, is a much-improved feature of the curriculum. The increased use of wellbeing indicators is raising all children's understanding of keeping themselves healthy. The 'stay and play' and 'opening-up learning' sessions are encouraging parents to be involved in their children's learning. It would now be well judged to have a stronger focus on what progression looks like across the early level. The teacher and practitioners have increased the use of partners to enhance children's experiences. For the children in GME, this entails visiting the local library for Gaelic Bookbug sessions. Going forward as part of the extended free hours, further use should be made of the Advice on Gaelic Education to ensure a high-quality GME curriculum. As the Sgoil Àraich and Nursery move to a new build in May 2019, staff recognise that children need richer outdoor learning experiences.

The teacher and practitioners are putting to good effect their professional learning. This includes their links with teachers at the primary stages for EME, and for GME at Condorrat Primary School. They have had a successful focus on helping children feel confident about moving from Sgoil Àraich and Nursery to P1. These links should be continued to promote further excellence and equity at the early level into the primary stages. A few teachers have been trained in delivering Gaelic (Learners) as part of a 1+2 Approach to Languages. Working with Fèisean nan Gàidheal, this has resulted in all children in P5-P7 learning some Gaelic. This has raised children and staff's awareness of Scotland's languages and GME, both nationally and as part of the context of their school. Children in P5 have shared their learning of Gaelic songs with those in the Sgoil Àraich. Children learning through the medium of English in the nursery should also have this opportunity.

### What happens next

The school has made good progress since the original inspection. We are confident that the Sgoil Àraich and Nursery have the capacity to continue to improve. We will make no more visits in connection with this inspection. We feel that the numbers accessing GME in the Sgoil Àraich could be higher. As a result, we are asking North Lanarkshire Council to increase the impact of their promotion of GME and bilingualism. North Lanarkshire Council will inform parents about the setting's progress as part of its arrangements for reporting on the quality of its schools.

Joan C. Esson  
HM Inspector