

Summarised inspection findings

Sgoil an t-Òib

Leverhulme Memorial Primary School Nursery Class

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

19 August 2025

Key contextual information

Sgoil an t-Òib – Leverhulme Memorial School offers Gàidhlig - Gaelic Learner and Medium Education. It is a Gàidhlig status school. The sgoil-àraich - nursery operates a Gàidhlig First Policy, with all children immersed in Gàidhlig.

The acting Head of School – Ceannard Sgoile has been in post for just over two years. She is also the sgoil-àraich manager.

Over time, recruiting and retaining practitioners in the sgoil-àraich has been very challenging. In April 2025, the sgoil-àraich offered 1140 hours of total immersion in Gàidhlig for the first time in three years.

The sgoil-àraich is registered for 15 children aged 2-5 years. When children aged two are in attendance, the ratio is one adult for five children.

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 acting Head of School has prioritised developing positive relationships with all practitioners, children and families. She has a clear vision for what constitutes an effective total immersion sgoil-àraich. Her achievements will be strengthened further with the recent appointment of permanent practitioners to the sgoil-àraich.
- The sgoil-àraich shares the sgoil's vision, values and aims. The acting Head of School has reviewed the vision, value and aims to be more succinct. She should continue ensuring their relevance to the sgoil-àraich. This is while maintaining a strong focus on total immersion in line with national advice. Additionally, the sgoil-àraich's emphasis on community should be clarified further so that children and parents understand the importance of using Gàidhlig beyond the sgoil-àraich.
- The sgoil-àraich team are settling well into their new roles. They create a welcoming culture for children and their families. Practitioners understand the significance of their use of Gàidhlig in sustaining the language on the island. They benefit from networking with other specialists in immersion. Practitioners are beginning to take forward lead roles in the sgoil-àraich to support children's play pedagogy through immersion. They meet weekly for professional dialogue and to reflect on children's experiences. Practitioners discuss children's progress and possible next steps. The acting Head of School should continue supporting practitioners lead change to improve further the sgoil-àraich.
- The acting Head of School has used self-evaluation well to identify the sgoil-àraich strengths and next steps. The school improvement plan has priorities for both the sgoil and the sgoil-àraich within the same themes. As a result, practitioners have made progress in encouraging children's early writing skills and increasing children's knowledge of science, technology,

engineering and mathematics. The ongoing changes in staffing has made it challenging to make and sustain improvements and change. The current practitioners are beginning to evaluate their planning of learning. They are beginning to ascertain how they use relevant questionnaire comments from parents. The acting Head of School and practitioners should now develop a specific improvement project for the sgoil-àraich. This should build high standards in the sgoil-àraich, with relevant professional learning for the practitioner team. Practitioners should build their expertise in the regular use of the national quality improvement frameworks, such as the 'Advice on Gaelic Education'. The sgoil-àraich team would benefit from consistent strategic leadership and advice to support and guide their work.

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

- Children are happy, safe and secure in their total immersion play. They form very caring relationships with new practitioners. Children thrive in a nurturing atmosphere, in which practitioners plan a range of learning experiences. These experiences help children learn Gàidhlig, as well as develop knowledge, skills and understanding across the curriculum. Children confidently choose from a range of play activities. They access additional learning resources independently, both in the sgoil-àraich and in other spaces at Sgoil an t-Òib.
- Children concentrate very well for extended periods on activities that interest them. These activities include painting, creating models and exploring the garden. Children respond well to practitioners' consistent use of very fluent Gàidhlig to be totally immersed in Gàidhlig. Children listen carefully to respond and acknowledge practitioners' regular conversations and commentaries. Children use some Gàidhlig in their play when prompted. They respond accurately in Gàidhlig to familiar questions.
- Practitioners provide motivating and appropriate individual and small group activities. Children are creative in developing imaginary play. This extends the depth of immersion conversations that practitioners have with children. Practitioners should read more stories with children, play games and engage further in role play.
- Children have a range of contexts in which they can play, both in and beyond the playroom. These should continue to be extended to promote learning and fluency across all areas of the curriculum. Practitioners make effective use of routines, such as snack for children to socialise and develop fluency in Gàidhlig. They should continue to develop routines that promote language learning and encourage children to speak in everyday situations.
- Children enjoy learning in their garden, where they are curious about minibeasts, growing vegetables and tending flowers. Practitioners should continue to plan meaningful learning using the garden as a context, as well as wider in the outdoors.
- Practitioners use digital technology to deepen a few of children's interests. Children use magnifiers to explore minibeasts. Practitioners should plan for a wider range of digital technology to support their pedagogy and children's independent use for a variety of purposes.
- Practitioners are building their knowledge of individual children. They use developmental milestones to check children's progress in a few areas of wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. Practitioners observe children as they play to capture a picture of their progress. Practitioners should plan the focus of observations around significant learning, and children's understanding and use of Gàidhlig. This should ensure children are challenged in play and assist with planning children's next steps in learning. Practitioners should be clear of children's

understanding of Gàidhlig through immersion and use of Gàidhlig. Both these features of learning Gàidhlig need to be celebrated further.

- Parents enjoy seeing photographs and text on a digital platform of what children have been learning. Children are proud of their individual learning journeys. Practitioners should now embed the use of national Benchmarks in their practice to clarify further how they are taking forward the early level of Curriculum for Excellence. They should also ensure that they have a strategic overview of each individual child's progress across all areas of learning. This would assist in planning learning and engaging children in conversations about their learning, strengths and next steps to be more successful. The acting Head of School should include the sgoil-àraich in all strategies on analysing and discussing children's progress at Sgoil an t-Òib.
- Practitioners have recently adopted more purposeful planning of curriculum areas. This planning needs to be extended further to include approaches to pedagogy and assessment to meet children's individual needs. Practitioners are planning the important vocabulary with which the children should be familiar. They should plan as well for immersion being based on articulate and continuous communication. The acting Head of School should embed the sgoil-àraich's outcomes within existing arrangements for monitoring and tracking all children's progress.
- Practitioners should actively engage in moderation activities within the sgoil-àraich. They are at the early stages of moderating standards with practitioners in a nearby sgoil-àraich.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners deliver a motivating curriculum based on total immersion and play the Gàidhlig Medium way. Children learn the Gàidhlig language, and gain knowledge of their island and further afield. Children's interests are planned, with clear connections to the world of work and nature. Practitioners use guidance to develop children's fluency so they can access all of the curriculum through Gàidhlig in the early level.
- Practitioners are beginning to plan more thoroughly for progression. They do so for literacy in particular. Practitioners should continue to use the comhairle's newly developed progression pathways. They should engage in professional learning to assist their successful use of these progression pathways as an integral part of planning.
- Practitioners provide highly personalised support to help children settle into the sgoil-àraich and transition to the bun-sgoil. Parents appreciate the support their children receive. They are advised well on Gàidhlig Medium Education and its benefits. A clear pattern of uptake is emerging, where all parents opt for Gàidhlig Medium Education in the bun-sgoil.
- Parents are exceptionally interested in their children receiving singing tuition as part of their learning, and to prepare them for national and local mòd. The local authority should continue to work with parents in filling the vacancy for a singing tutor.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Parents appreciate the established positive relationships across Sgoil an t-Òib. The staff team author a bilingual newsletter and use social media to keep parents well advised of children's successes. Practitioners use a digital platform to record children's experiences.
- Parents appreciate practitioners' commitment to Gàidhlig and education. The sgoil-àraich is based in an area of significance for Gàidhlig. Parents feel uncertain about the education authority's support for the sgoil-àraich. They have experienced three years of interruption to the service from challenges in recruiting practitioners. The acting Head of School should ensure that the sgoil-àraich receives support from national and Gàidhlig organisations, including Comann nam Pàrant.
- Practitioners make daily connections with parents in Gàidhlig to build on opportunities to learn at home. They speak Gàidhlig to parents as children transition to and from sgoil-àraich. The acting Head of School is planning to promote further adult learning of Gàidhlig. Parents accept invites to be part of the sgoil-àraich's total immersion, play and learning. Children create for their parents spontaneous 'sharing of learning' sessions as they are collected for going home.
- Parents have access to a range of resources on the benefits of Gàidhlig Medium Education. These are displayed at the reception area of the setting, as well as digitally. The staff team have collated these resources on line.
- Children are very visible in the community. They actively demonstrate that using Gàidhlig happens beyond the sgoil-àraich in the community. The staff team have an effective strategy to encourage partners' use of Gàidhlig to support total immersion.

2.1 Safeguarding

- The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant practitioners 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

- Practitioners value having children's wellbeing central to learning through play. They know children as individuals with their own personalities, interests and needs. Children enjoy their time at the sgoil-àraich. The small numbers in the sgoil-àraich help children to all be friends together that care for each other. Practitioners develop an atmosphere in the sgoil-àraich where children feel safe, and are kind and respectful to each other. For almost all of the time, children share well and understand why they need to wait their turn to play with a particular toy.
- Practitioners are very caring to children. They show empathy and respect to children. Practitioners look out for children and offer extra care and attention. Children are comfortable and confident to make their needs known to practitioners. They are supported by practitioners to solve quickly minor differences. Children are beginning to understand how to make compromises. Children talk confidently about how to be safe and keep others safe.
- Practitioners have established snack and mealtimes to be a calm and relaxed social time. Children have their snack in the playroom and their lunch in the dining room. They get to know their older friends by being in the bun-sgoil. Children are very independent at snack and meal times. They demonstrate good manners for formal situations, such as having a meal.
- The acting Head of School and practitioners are knowledgeable in statutory requirements and codes of practice in relation to sgoil-àraich. Practitioners create children's personal plans regularly to meet children's health, care and welfare needs. They do this in partnership with parents.
- The acting Head of School and practitioners are successfully implementing a Gaelic First policy. This is creating conditions to support well the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017. There is an emerging pattern of children continuing with Gàidhlig Medium Education as children move from sgoil-àraich to the bun-sgoil. The acting Head of School and practitioners are determined to sustain the Gàidhlig language. Of late, the sgoil-àraich has had difficulties in retaining practitioners. The local authority should continue to support the sgoil with Gàidhlig-qualified practitioners.
- Practitioners value diversity and encourage children to explore the wider world beyond their island. They recognise the importance of careful planning to ensure that children requiring additional support experience no barriers to learning.

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

- Children make good progress in communication and early Gàidhlig language skills. As a result of being in sgoil-àraich over time, children understand almost all the Gàidhlig language that is used in total immersion. They show their understanding by responding in Gàidhlig, or through actions. All children answer questions to give personal details, such as how they feel. Children use social language in routines such as snack. They also speak Gàidhlig as they ask for and share food and drink at snack. Children name a range of specialised vocabulary connected to their interests, such as animals. Children listen to songs well. They are now ready to learn more songs connected to their total immersion contexts. Children understand that they use texts to find out more information on their interests. Children should be encouraged to use texts in all contexts in which they play. Children develop well their early writing skills. A few can write their name.
- Children make satisfactory progress in early numeracy and mathematics. They count in sequence and identify numbers up to 15. Children develop a purpose for their use of Gàidhlig in the community by walking to the local bùth - shop to buy items for their snack. They develop skills in planning and budgeting by using the bùth. Children name colours, shapes and objects and group them. Children think of measuring and estimating when creating models. Practitioners should increase children's learning in numeracy and mathematics in a full range of play contexts.
- Overall, children make satisfactory progress in health and wellbeing. Children are content and settle quickly in the sgoil-àraich. Children wait patiently for their turn in total immersion play. They enjoy good relationships and friendships with each other. Children are developing well their physical skills. There are a few situations in which children develop their understanding of taking risks. Children understand their role in hygiene through routines in washing their hands. Children assist practitioners in preparing a snack and are independent in serving themselves. Practitioners should continue to support children to understand their own wellbeing using the rights of children and national indicators, in an age-appropriate way. Children are assisted very well in settling into the sgoil-àraich, and then to P1, by early and regular transitions. This includes visits to the P1 class.
- The interruptions to staffing have resulted in a slow pace of change, including the setting having effective evidence in place to show progress over time. Children develop their fluency, but children's full potential can be realised further. Children are ready to be challenged more to

increase their knowledge, skills and understanding across all curricular areas. This will support all children to make the progress of which they are capable.

- Practitioners capture children's achievements within a digital platform. As a next step, children should be more independent in recording and talking about their achievements. To facilitate this, it would be useful to ensure that children have free access to summaries of their achievements.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

Children were happy, settled and enjoyed their time in the nursery. Natural friendships had formed between children. We observed children being caring and inclusive in their play with each other. Positive attachments had been formed between staff and the children which contributed to them developing a sense of belonging. Children knew the routines and approached staff with confidence to seek support. Staff communicated with children down at their level in a gentle and sensitive manner. We observed staff being nurturing, providing comfort, reassurance, cuddles and warmth to children when required.

Children's personal plans contained relevant core information about their individual health, welfare and safety needs. We could see how staff consulted with parents in order to review and update care plans. This meant that information was current, and staff could use the information to support children and ensure their needs are met. Children's personal plans linked very well to Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), a Scottish Government programme that aims to improve outcomes for children and young people by ensuring they receive the right support at the right time and United Nations Convention on The Rights of The Child (UNCRC), an international treaty that outlines the rights of all children.

Children experienced a positive snack and lunchtime. Children told us that they had been to the shop to buy fruit for their snacks during the week. Most children enjoyed school meals; some brought their own packed lunches. We asked staff to review how they stored and served packed lunches. They were currently stored in a fridge in the dining room. We suggested that rather than the whole packed lunch being placed in a fridge that perishables are removed and stored in the fridge. This will reduce the risk of cross contamination and infection. Additionally, we asked that staff provide children who brought packed lunches with a plate and cutlery. This will support children to feel more included in the lunchtime experience.

Staff were aware of children with medical conditions, this included children who had food intolerances or allergies. Where children required medication, this was stored safely. Appropriate paperwork including consent and administration records were maintained. These procedures helped to support staff to meet children's individual needs and keep them safe and healthy. Staff were aware of their responsibilities to safeguard and protect children. Annual child protection training kept them up to date with national and local guidance. Staff were aware of who they should report any concerns to and the records they should keep.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

1.3 Play and learning

Staff were positive role models. They were committed to making every effort to create and promote opportunities for children to hear, speak and understand Gàidhlig. Staff were actively encouraged and supported by the acting Head of School and local authority to provide Gàidhlig and promote the Gaelic First Policy. We observed children listening, responding and speaking Gàidhlig at various times during our visit.

Children were having fun and enjoyed playing and learning at sgoil-àraich. Play spaces were well-resourced, and children could self-select toys and materials to support their play. Some children were particularly interested in tadpoles that had been brought into the setting. They told us that they were excited to see them develop into frogs. Reference books about wildlife and

insects were available to children. We observed some children showing great interest in these. Resources available supported children to develop their skills in language, literacy and numeracy and sparked their curiosity and imagination in topics which interested them.

Individual learning journals were used to capture children's experiences and some of their achievements. Parents and staff celebrated children's achievements at home and at nursery. We noted that although children's learning journals were attractive and contained photographs of the types of experiences children had engaged in, it was difficult to identify a clear progression pathway and next steps in children's play and learning. Staff training around observations, assessment and tracking would support improvement in this area.

The service had recently introduced a new system for planning to meet children's needs and development. Staff met weekly to discuss learning intentions and plan activities for children. A more robust and outcome focused approach to planning for children's learning and tracking children's progress was needed. Staff were in the early stages of developing their approach to assessing and tracking children's progress. Staff would benefit from training around child development, theory and best practice to support high quality play and learning. (See area for Improvement)

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

Children experienced a clean, bright and welcoming nursery with plenty of natural light and good ventilation. Good use of soft furnishings, and natural resources created a calm and homely space. The layout of the playrooms allowed children to move around freely.

Children accessed the outdoors via the main school entrance. Most children were confident in their routine of preparing to go outdoors by putting on their own jackets. We asked the setting to continuously review and update their risk assessments to ensure that they reflected the current risks and/or hazards. We asked that they pay particular attention to perimeter fences, gates and spaces where it would be easier for children to get to unnoticed.

Staff were committed to the health and safety of children who used the service. We noted how staff had responded to and recorded minor accidents and incidents that had occurred. Staff ensured that information was shared with parents about the accidents and the actions taken. Both staff members were confident in their role of administering first aid and both held first aid certificates.

The service had appropriate infection control procedures in place to support a safe environment and the health and wellbeing of the children and staff. During food preparation and serving, staff followed best practice guidance and carried out effective cleaning of tables before and after children ate. Children were supported when hand washing at appropriate times throughout the day. This contributed to minimising the potential spread of infection for both the staff and children.

We have asked the setting to review and consider the safety of the fire door in the Sgoil Àraich. During our visit, the fire door was locked and could be unlocked in the event of an emergency by a magnetic fob. Although all permanent staff had a fob we raised concerns about the potential impact as a result of human error. We asked the acting Head of School to seek advice about this from the fire service.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The acting Head of School and staff team were committed to making improvements however staffing challenges had impacted on the overall pace of change. They demonstrated their commitment to the service and were motivated to make improvements to ensure positive outcomes for children.

Staff told us that they felt supported and motivated by the acting Head of School. Additional support was provided by the local authority early years officer. Staff would benefit from more opportunities to meet together formally with the early years support officer to reflect on and identify their future development needs and celebrate their achievements in the planned improvement journey.

The vision values and aims of the service are reflected in the daily life of the sgoil-àraich. They were displayed in hallways and in the playground in a visual way. This helped young children to understand and begin to engage with them.

The manager and staff team valued parents' input and had strengthened their approach to involving families. This included, stay and play sessions, questionnaires, the opportunity to be part of the whole school parent council and parents' meetings. This supported families to feel connected to the service.

A more robust approach to monitoring and auditing of all aspects of service delivery needs to take place. Staff should be involved in self-evaluation and improvement tasks. Supporting staff to reflect and plan changes will improve outcomes for children. (See area for Improvement)

Care Inspectorate evaluation: adequate

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff were motivated and committed to providing a positive experience for the children in their care. They were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach and demonstrated positive team working. This promoted a happy and secure environment for children. They modelled positive social interactions, and were respectful and supportive of each other. This helped children to develop an understanding of relationships.

The acting Head of School recognised the importance of ensuring that the service was appropriately staffed throughout the day to support the safety and wellbeing of children. The service had experienced challenges over recent times to employ Gàidhlig speaking qualified staff in the service. To ensure continuity of care the acting Head of School tried where possible, to provide cover by school staff who children knew and were familiar with. There were times when the service had to reduce service delivery. This had caused upset and uncertainty for children and families.

Since February 2025, the provider had successfully appointed two full time Gàidhlig speaking staff. The recently appointed staff team worked well, and communicated well with each other. They were still in the process of building relationships with each other, children and families. Children and families benefitted from the security and consistency of the staff team. We were reassured that the new staff team had the skills and motivation to provide a positive experience for children and families.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: good

Requirements made by the Care Inspectorate for the early learning and childcare setting.

During the previous Care Inspectorate inspection, the setting had no requirements and no areas for improvement. As a result of this inspection, there are no requirements and two areas for improvement.

Area for improvement

To ensure that children experience high quality play and learning, the nursery manager and provider should ensure that staff access training and apply it in practice.

This is to ensure that care and support is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS) which states that: 'I am supported to achieve my potential in education and employment if this is right for me' (HSCS 1.27) and 'I experience high quality care and support based on relevant evidence, guidance and best practice' (HSCS 4.11). This is to ensure staff skills and knowledge are aligned with national practice guidance for early years in Scotland 'Realising the ambition: being me.'

To support the service to identify their strengths and areas for further improvements, the provider should further develop their quality assurance processes. This should include but is not limited to:

- (a) Developing robust processes for auditing and auditing children's personal plans and learning journals.
- (b) Undertake monitoring of service procedures and staff practice.

This is to ensure management and leadership is consistent with the Health and Social Care Standards which state: "I benefit from a culture of continuous improvement, with the organisation having robust and transparent quality assurance processes." (HSCS 4.19)

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.