

**HMIE**

Luchd-sgrùdadh an Rìgh airson Foghlam ann an Alba
His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education in Scotland

Summarised inspection findings

Sgoil-àraich Shiaboist – Sgoil Shiaboist

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

18 August 2026

HM Inspectors gathered evidence to enable us to evaluate the ELC's work using three quality indicators from the Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors. This document provides our summarised findings.

Key contextual information

Sgoil-àraich Shiaboist is located within Sgoil Shiaboist in the village of Shawbost on the Isle of Lewis, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. The sgoil-àraich provides total Gàidhlig immersion for all children who attend. This is based on Comhairle nan Eilean Siar's Gàidhlig First policy, which assumes all children will learn through the medium of Gàidhlig. The sgoil-àraich is registered to provide funded early learning and childcare to a maximum of 24 children aged from two years to those not yet attending school. The current roll is eight and most children attend from 9 am – 3 pm, five days per week. The sgoil-àraich has one large playroom, access to the school gym hall and an extensive outdoor space. The headteacher has overall responsibility for the sgoil-àraich and there is one acting playworker and two nursery key workers.

Curriculum	good
This quality indicator highlights the importance of placing the needs, interests, rights and progress of children at the centre of curriculum design and implementation. <u>Curriculum</u> is defined as the totality of all that is planned for children from ELC, through school and beyond. It emphasises that children are entitled to a curriculum underpinned by the <u>principles of curriculum design</u> and enriched through meaningful learning experiences indoors, outdoors and within the community. It recognises the need for all children to experience opportunities to develop the interests, knowledge, skills, and attributes they will need to adapt, thrive and achieve in today's world. This quality indicator also recognises the importance of the curriculum supporting progress in children's learning as they enter the setting and at key points of transition. The themes are: • curriculum rationale and design • continuity and progression in the curriculum • partnerships • skills for life and learning	

- The headteacher, staff and partners have created a clear curriculum rationale based on Curriculum for Excellence through the medium of Gàidhlig. The rationale reflects well the four contexts of learning and developing curriculum capacities. All curricular areas are reflected in the rationale. In 2025-26, senior leaders revised the written rationale with a strengthened focus on local culture and Gàidhlig language. This is helping children develop a deeper understanding of their own community and environment. Children's Gàidhlig language is developing very well, along with active promotion of play, wellbeing and total immersion. Staff are not currently using the full detail of the written rationale to support strategic planning of learning and should make regular use of the principles of curriculum design. The headteacher and staff should ensure that the rationale includes children's learning of Gàidhlig through total immersion, with a detailed aim on how Gàidhlig language is developed.
- Staff are beginning to use local authority curriculum pathways to improve the focus on providing planned and progressive learning in literacy, numeracy, and health and wellbeing. All children receive their entitlements to all curricular areas but staff are at an early stage of using these curricular frameworks. Staff use a Frèam Cànan – a Gàidhlig language framework – to

structure children's learning of Gàidhlig language. Staff should continue using the Frèam Cànan, alongside the curricular frameworks, in all aspects of planning play through total immersion. This should be supported by approaches that encourage children to rehearse, repeat, sing and talk more Gàidhlig. Staff should now create more detailed planning for assessment and use this more thoroughly across all curricular areas.

- Staff have effective arrangements to support children as they start at sgoil-àraich and then move to primary one. Staff plan a few purposeful transition activities between children at the sgoil-àraich and a Gàidhlig play group. As staffing enables, children benefit greatly from a year-long programme where they enjoy valuable activities to support their transition to sgoil. The children experience a range of curricular activities as part of this programme. It also encourages them to continue with Gàidhlig Medium Education in the sgoil. In 2025-26, all children have enrolled for Gàidhlig Medium Education in primary one. This is a significant success in sustaining Gàidhlig and improving continuity with Gàidhlig Medium Education. The headteacher and staff should continue to build improved numbers at P1 into a strong sustained pattern.
- Staff provide very worthwhile opportunities for children to interact with fluent speakers of Gàidhlig and to develop skills across the curriculum. Children shop at Bùth Chàrlabhaigh for provisions for the sgoil-àraich. The older children in the sgoil visit their friends at sgoil-àraich to read stories and to build relationships. Children follow their personal interests, for example, by attending a dinosaur exhibition in Stornoway. A representative of Comann nam Pàrant supports children's use of Gàidhlig in songs and through texts. These opportunities enrich children's experiences of being totally immersed in Gàidhlig, while building skills in numeracy, literacy and other areas. Staff have very positive and attentive relationships with parents. Staff should continue offering parents resources to support children's learning of Gàidhlig at home. Children should be encouraged further to develop sustained links within the Gàidhlig community.
- Children develop important skills for life and communication in Gàidhlig. They understand confidently language associated with personal situations and play contexts, as well as routines. Children are starting to say a few phrases of Gàidhlig. They should be encouraged to talk more Gàidhlig in everyday situations, such as during their time together for snack. Children are developing their knowledge of skills for work through reading a story and discussing their future career aspirations. Children develop important practical life skills in growing, preparing and purchasing food. Children use digital technology for a range of purposes, including in using online maps. Staff should continue recording how well children are developing their skills, particularly in understanding Gàidhlig.

Learning, teaching and assessment	good
This quality indicator focuses on how children benefit from access to high quality spaces and well-established routines that help them feel secure and ready to engage. It explores how children are supported to build positive relationships, regulate their emotions, and purposefully participate in a wide range of motivating learning experiences. It demonstrates the importance of staff having a high level of skill supported by strong pedagogical leadership. This includes a clear understanding of pedagogy, the concept of play, how children learn, children's rights and children's behaviour. It places value on high quality relationships, consistent expectations, and skilled interactions that enable children to sustain engagement, follow routines, and build independence in their learning. This indicator highlights the importance of observing and interacting sensitively with children to plan and assess their learning. It recognises the value of involving children fully in planning their learning indoors, outdoors and within the local community. This quality indicator emphasises the importance of robust tracking and monitoring of children's progress to ensure practitioners know all children very well as learners. The themes are: • children's learning and engagement • interactions to support learning • planning and assessment • tracking and monitoring	

- Children learn in a caring, supportive and immersive environment. They have an effective start to a learning pathway in Gàidhlig by attending the sgoil-àraich. Children are very happy, settled and confident. They concentrate well for extended times in a range of motivating play, both indoors and outdoors. Children explore and experiment while acquiring Gàidhlig language. They develop their skills in role-play and imagination very well. Children have an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning experiences. They show high levels of engagement in whole-group learning opportunities for most of the time.
- Staff model fluently the use of high-quality Gàidhlig in regular language routines. They interact regularly with children as they play. On a few occasions, staff should continue increasing their use of commentaries, questioning, songs and storytelling in Gàidhlig. This would help children use the Gàidhlig language at a faster pace. Staff should consider working with smaller groups of children to reduce waiting time to take their turns in group activities.
- Staff value children's interests when planning play-based learning experiences. They incorporate children's ideas into a variety of indoor and outdoor activities designed to build Gàidhlig language skills, knowledge and understanding. These opportunities encourage early language development and active engagement. Moving forward, staff should broaden the range of play situations that deliberately support the use of Gàidhlig, helping children recognise its linguistic, social and economic benefits. Spaces for play should consider how they can develop Gàidhlig talking skills such as a play space for a ceilidh, podcasting or a Gàidhlig school.
- Staff capture children's progress and engagement in experiences well through floorbooks, wall displays and digital learning journeys. Staff should identify more clearly the significant learning

they will assess. This will support them in identifying accurately children's next steps in their learning. Children have a strong understanding of the Gàidhlig language. Staff should now capture improvements in language acquisition as this would provide clear evidence of how they are raising attainment in this area.

- The headteacher has started to meet staff to talk about children's progress. She provides very useful feedback to staff on visits to the playroom on the quality of learning and teaching. The headteacher should now focus on total immersion approaches. This will support children to use Gàidhlig confidently and ensure they make clear and sustained progress in their Gàidhlig development. Staff are at the early stages of using their observations of children's learning, developmental milestones and professional dialogue, to demonstrate children's progress over time. Staff are starting to use a new tracking system linked to progression pathways, national Benchmarks and Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. This is beginning to provide staff with a broader overview of what children have achieved in literacy and numeracy. Senior leaders should continue to support staff in using their observations to track children's development and significant learning more effectively and thoroughly. An important next step for senior leaders and staff is to gather and maintain a more accurate and detailed picture of each child's learning and progress across the curriculum.

Wellbeing, inclusion and equality	good
This quality indicator highlights the importance of positive relationships and children’s wellbeing. It recognises the importance of providing high quality, inclusive, and appropriate rights-based support. These approaches result in improved outcomes for children’s learning, wellbeing and participation. It takes full account of children who may require additional support to access and benefit fully from their entitlement to high quality ELC. This includes identifying and assessing their learning and wellbeing needs in a timely manner and providing personalised and targeted support. This quality indicator recognises that strong, collaborative partnership working between those supporting children is essential. It highlights the importance of meaningful engagement with children and families to inform decisions about how children’s needs should be met. This quality indicator emphasises the important role senior leaders play in ensuring all staff have relevant and worthwhile professional learning to meet the diverse and sometimes complex needs of children. The themes are: • positive relationships and wellbeing • universal support • Identifying and assessing learning needs and targeted support • inclusion and equality	

- Staff develop positive relationships, meaningful engagement and an inclusive environment in which children can play and learn. This supports all children to settle quickly in the sgoil-àraich. Relationships between staff and children and among children are a strength. Children are kind to each other as they play and learn in their welcoming environment. Staff talk to children about their feelings and should continue to build on this effective practice. Staff respect each other’s strengths and work well together as a team.
- Staff strive to provide the best possible support and improve outcomes for all children and families. They have clear processes in place to monitor children’s attendance and follow up absence promptly when needed. Staff should encourage all parents to ensure children attend the sgoil-àraich to maximise their learning of Gàidhlig. Staff use the wellbeing indicators appropriately in everyday interactions, routines and through real-life contexts. For example, staff use the language of ‘safe’ as they risk assess their outing to the local parent and toddler group. Staff should continue to embed the language of the wellbeing indicators in a developmentally appropriate way. This will support children to understand and use this language in their everyday experiences.
- Staff value and respect children as individuals, with their own personality, views, needs and rights. They support and encourage children to participate in a developmentally appropriate way within the playroom. For example, staff support children well to share their library book with their peers, to ask questions and prompt answers. Staff invite children to prepare snack, with children participating well in this experience. Children enjoy a calm and unhurried lunch experience in the school dining hall. Staff support children effectively to engage in the lunch

routine and develop their independence skills well. This supports a positive lunch experience for all children.

- Staff support and encourage all children to engage fully in Gàidhlig immersion effectively. Staff promote inclusive practice and ensure all children are supported in ways that work best for them. All children engage well in exploration and play indoors and outdoors. For example, children play outdoors using their imagination very well, as they ‘put out fires’. Children ride trikes and bikes confidently, taking managed risks as they move quickly down the hill. Staff should now look to enhance further their outdoor environment. In doing so, staff should continue to involve children in how they develop the outdoor environment and listen to their ideas.
- Senior leaders and staff adhere fully to legislative requirements and refresh regularly their knowledge and skills. They have systems and procedures in place to ensure children are safe and well. For example, staff regularly review and update children’s informative care plans with parents. Staff know individual children well and gather a range of information from parents as children start sgoil-àraich. They use the national wellbeing indicators effectively to provide a holistic assessment of children’s strengths and support needs. Staff have begun to identify next steps in learning for all children. Moving forward, staff should continue to work alongside children and parents to create individual learning and development targets. These targets should build on children’s prior learning and be reviewed regularly.
- Staff value and treat all children and families with kindness, respect and fairness. They encourage all children to be involved fully in the sgoil-àraich, promote inclusion and continue to develop children’s rights in a meaningful way. Staff have rightly identified parental engagement and involvement as an area for development. They continue to offer opportunities for parents to take part in the life of the sgoil-àraich, for example, taking part in stay and play sessions. Staff value diversity and understand the socio-economic, cultural and linguistic context in which children and families live. Staff use a range of resources to support children’s understanding of the world in which they live and grow.
- Staff make very strong progress in promoting equality using the Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017. They provide total immersion in Gàidhlig for the full 1140 hours. The headteacher and staff should develop clearer information on how children in Gàidhlig Medium Education benefit from bilingualism. The headteacher and staff should continue working with the local community trust to extend the after-school care available to children and their families.

Safeguarding

- The setting 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 setting and the education authority.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard [Education Scotland](#)[HMIE](#) 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.

On behalf of His Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland.