

**HMIE**

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

24 March 2026

Dear Parent/Carer

In June 2025, HM Inspectors published a letter on Bun-sgoil agus Sgoil-Àraich Bhail' Ùr an t-Sleibh – Newtonmore Primary School and Nursery Class. The letter set out a number of areas for improvement which we agreed with the school and The Highland Council. Recently, as you may know, we visited the school again. During our visit, we talked to children and worked closely with the acting headteacher and staff. We heard from the headteacher 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 school has made and how well this is supporting children's learning and achievements. This letter sets out what we found.

The local authority needs to take urgent action to improve the leadership and staffing of the school and nursery, through the medium of Gàidhlig and English. All staff, supported by the local authority, need to develop thorough approaches to evaluate, improve, monitor and track the work of the school. Local authority officers need to support staff to lead and take forward areas for improvement.

Overall, there has been insufficient progress in this area for improvement.

Senior leaders created action plans to address the areas for improvement, including Gàidhlig-specific actions, with support from local authority officers. However, most staff were not fully involved in developing or reviewing these plans. The local authority must now help senior leaders and staff to work together to create clearer plans linked to key improvement areas. Senior leaders must ensure the plans outline the improvements to take place and how progress will be measured. Senior leaders must involve all staff to help them shape and be more involved in the improvement of the school. The headteacher needs to provide stronger direction, giving support and challenge to staff to increase the pace of change.

The local authority provided funding for additional teaching staff in August 2025. However, significant ongoing vacancies have meant this staffing has been used to provide cover. As a result, the additional staffing has not supported the improvement as planned. Staffing for older children in Gàidhlig Medium Education has improved. This has improved experiences for older children. However, permanent arrangements are not yet in place. Senior leaders should ensure this positive progress in children's learning experiences continues to improve and becomes embedded.



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Senior leaders observed learning and teaching across the mediums of Gàidhlig and English. They now need to identify clear actions for improvement with teachers. Staff do not yet have a shared understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. Senior leaders and staff must work together to develop their knowledge and understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. The local authority must monitor this work closely to ensure improvements happen quickly and result in positive outcomes for children.

All children in P1 – P7 are members of leadership groups, such as pupil government and community enterprise. Children enjoy these groups and say they feel involved in school improvement.

A few teachers lead improvement well, such as outdoor numeracy activities and in Gàidhlig Medium Education. Senior leaders must empower all staff to lead improvements linked to action plans to increase the pace of change across the school.

The local authority needs to take urgent action to re-instate the sgoil-àraich and progressive total immersion for children learning in the medium of Gàidhlig. Local authority officers need to support practitioners to help children in the sgoil-àraich to develop much stronger fluency in Gàidhlig.

There is positive progress in this area for improvement. Senior leaders now need to ensure that this progress is sustained and built upon.

The local authority has successfully reinstated the sgoil-àraich. Children in the sgoil-àraich experience full Gàidhlig immersion indoors and, on occasion, outdoors. Staff plan learning to ensure continuity and progression in children's learning. Children in the sgoil-àraich are making strong progress through immersion. They understand staff's consistent Gàidhlig use in play and routines. Children speak simple phrases, greetings, and personal details in Gàidhlig. Staff should continue strengthening immersion, indoors and outside, to build children's fluency in Gàidhlig.

Across the school and nursery, the local authority needs to support staff to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment in Gàidhlig and English medium. This includes developing thorough approaches to planning, assessing, tracking and monitoring children's learning to improve children's progress in literacy and numeracy.

Overall, there has been insufficient progress in this area for improvement.

Across the school and settings, in both Gàidhlig and English Medium, there are positive relationships between staff and children and between children. Most children are beginning to engage better in their learning. Children's behaviour in the school is improving, and children now learn in a calm environment.

Staff have started using floorbooks to record children's ideas. Staff now need to plan a better balance between adult-led and child-initiated learning. They should plan responsive experiences, which provide children with experiences which support them to explore, problem-solve, and be creative. Staff have improved the quality of their observations of children's learning. They now need to use information gathered in observations to plan learning that better meets children's needs and interests. They need to make better use of observations to assess children's progress. In Gàidhlig Medium, staff should use the Advice on Gaelic Education to support them to continue planning for fluency through total immersion.

Senior leaders must develop approaches to track and monitor children's progress thoroughly, especially in early literacy and numeracy. Staff must ensure they capture children's significant progress, and next steps.

School - Gàidhlig and English Medium

Teachers engaged in useful professional learning, provided by the local authority, to improve their understanding of high-quality learning and teaching. Teachers still provide mostly whole class lessons which do not meet the needs of all children. In most lessons the pace of learning is too slow. All teachers have progression pathways linked to Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes for all curriculum areas. However, staff do not use these consistently well across the school. Senior leaders must closely monitor teachers' planning to ensure they are planning a broad, balanced, progressive curriculum which meets the needs of all children. This should help all children engage well in meaningful and relevant learning which meets their needs well. Senior leaders need to use information gathered from class visits to better support teachers to improve learning and teaching further. Senior leaders should also ensure that teachers use high-quality planning which reflects the distinctive elements of Gàidhlig Medium Education.

Teachers use a few standardised assessments to identify gaps in children's learning. All staff need to develop a clear assessment strategy which includes using a range of approaches to assessment. Teachers need to improve the accuracy of their professional judgements of children's progress and attainment.

Supported by the local authority, the headteacher has introduced termly attainment meetings with teachers to discuss children's progress and attainment in literacy and numeracy. They identify targeted support for children, in and out of class, for children who require additional support. However, due to staffing challenges this support has not taken place as planned. The local authority should support the headteacher to address these challenges.

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With support from the local authority, staff must improve approaches to planning and supporting children who require additional support through the medium of Gàidhlig and English. This includes those children with reduced attendance in the school and nursery. They must ensure that children's needs are identified clearly and planned for effectively. In addition, children's progress should be monitored closely, tracked appropriately and evaluated regularly. Senior leaders must ensure that all approaches result in improved progress for children who require additional support.

There has been insufficient progress in taking forward this area of improvement in the sgoil-àraich and nursery. There has been some progress in the school across Gàidhlig and English Medium.

In the school, across Gàidhlig and English Medium, staff have developed a useful overview of children who require additional support with their learning. Senior leaders must review and update this regularly to ensure it contains up to date information about all children who require additional support. This should help staff to ensure all children receive the right support at the right time. Senior leaders now need to extend this overview for the sgoil-àraich and nursery.

In the school, all children who require a child's plan or individual education programme now have one. Senior leaders must ensure these are developed and evaluated in discussion with parents and children. In the sgoil-àraich and nursery, staff must now create high-quality individual plans for children who require additional support with their learning and development. Senior leaders must develop more detailed approaches across the sgoil-àraich and nursery to planning, monitoring and reviewing the progress for children who require additional support with their learning and development.

There are a few children who are on part-time timetables. The local authority must ensure senior leaders follow national guidance about the use of part-time timetables effectively.

The local authority needs to support staff in the school to improve approaches to ensuring equity for all children learning through the medium of Gàidhlig and English. They must plan carefully for and use additional funding appropriately to close gaps in children's learning and improve the progress of all children.

There has been insufficient progress in this area for improvement.

The headteacher created a plan to use Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to ensure equity and close learning gaps for all children. The plan included appointing additional staff to support children's learning and help raise attainment. However, senior leaders were unable to fill these vacancies. As a result, staff could not deliver planned outcomes. There is not yet clear evidence of work funded by PEF having a positive impact on raising attainment for children facing financial hardship. The local authority must support senior leaders to urgently review and update the plan to ensure effective use of PEF to raise attainment and increase children's progress.

In the school, the local authority must support all staff to use consistently high-quality approaches to help children to understand their emotions and wellbeing. Staff should continue to develop approaches to assessing children's wellbeing to help all children to make the best possible progress.

There has been some progress in this area for improvement.

Staff across Gàidhlig and English Medium Education have strengthened approaches to support children's emotional wellbeing. Most children now identify their feelings successfully and use strategies to regulate their emotions effectively. Staff make effective use of a newly created nurture room to provide targeted support for a few children. This is helping to improve children's engagement and wellbeing.

Senior leaders need to support teachers to assess children's wellbeing as planned. They need to support teachers to use information gathered to plan learning which supports children to develop their own wellbeing. Teachers need to provide planned progressive learning which helps children to develop their knowledge and understanding of wellbeing.

What happens next?

The school has made insufficient progress since the original inspection. The school needs more time and continued support from The Highland Council to improve. HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and work closely with The Highland Council to monitor and review ongoing improvement. We will carry out another inspection within six months. When we return to inspect the school, we will write to you as parents informing you of the progress the school has made.

Katharine Crombie

HM Inspector

On behalf of His Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education in Scotland