

Summarised inspection findings

Bun-sgoil Ullapuil – Ullapool Primary School

The Highland Council

25 August 2026

Key contextual information

Bun-sgoil Ullapuil – Ullapool Primary School serves the rural village of Ullapool. The bun-sgoil – primary school offers learning through English and Gàidhlig – Gaelic. It is a designated bun-sgoil for Gàidhlig Medium Education, overlaying most of the catchment area for Ullapool High School. The bun-sgoil has a different catchment area for English Medium Education, covering the village of Ullapool and the surrounding rural area of Lochbroom.

The headteacher is newly appointed to the bun-sgoil in January 2026. Prior to this, there have been a number of short-term appointments from June 2022. The headteacher is the only promoted post holder. She is registered as the Nursery Manager with the Care Inspectorate and has responsibility for the sgoil-àraich – nursery in Gàidhlig and a nursery in English. From August 2026, the headteacher will have a 0.5 full-time teaching commitment in English Medium Education.

At the time of the inspection, the bun-sgoil roll was 112 children. There are seven classes in total across both mediums of learning. In September 2024, the headteacher reported that approximately 27% of the roll, required additional support with their learning and development.

Across the bun-sgoil, the majority of children reside in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation decile 7.

In September 2024, no P6-7 pupils were registered for free school meals.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	satisfactory
This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are: - learning and engagement - quality of teaching - effective use of assessment - planning, tracking and monitoring	

- Across the bun-sgoil, children learn in positive, respectful and nurturing environments. The bun-sgoil values are becoming embedded across Gàidhlig and English medium classes. Children are friendly and polite. They are proud of their bun-sgoil. All staff demonstrate a good knowledge of the children, their families and the local context. They use this knowledge well to create supportive learning environments for children.
- In Gàidhlig and English Medium classes, children’s behaviour across the bun-sgoil is very positive. Children and staff demonstrate effectively the bun-sgoil value of ‘coir – caring’. When required, staff use strategies effectively to support children to regulate their behaviour and re-engage in learning. In Gàidhlig and English Medium classes, there are some low-level disruptions when the pace of learning is too slow. The headteacher and staff should review their use of teaching time across the week to maximise all possible learning opportunities. Staff should have higher expectations of how they maintain all children’s engagement in learning.

- All staff value the importance of Gàidhlig language and culture. Gàidhlig is increasingly visible in the bun-sgoil through bilingual displays. Most children recognise the purpose of bilingual displays. Almost all classes have a charter, which is beginning to assist children understand the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children are not yet familiar with the rights related to their community and Gàidhlig as an Indigenous Language. In taking this work forward, teachers should plan for children to have more influence on making decisions connected to improving their learning experiences.
- Staff have high-quality skills in Gàidhlig, with a high proportion fluent in the language. Staff use total immersion pedagogy well for the majority of time. They use Gàidhlig in a range of contexts across the curriculum. Too often, children are not yet confident to respond in Gàidhlig to adults and peers in the classroom setting. Children use English to respond. They are encouraged by staff to increase their use of Gàidhlig in the class. The headteacher and staff should develop a policy on immersion in Gàidhlig and track children's skills in listening and talking to develop further their fluency and confidence in Gàidhlig. Staff need to return to having high quality immersion in all classes, in which children talk Gàidhlig consistently.
- Across English and Gàidhlig Medium Education, in the majority of lessons, teachers share effectively the purpose of learning. Teachers provide clear and helpful explanations and instructions. They are developing their approaches to supporting high-quality discussions with children on how they recognise their successes. In the English Medium classes, a few teachers share with children how they will be successful. This helps children to focus on their learning and understand what they need to do to be successful.
- Across English and Gàidhlig Medium Education in the majority of lessons, teachers plan children's learning experiences well. Children who require additional support with their learning have effective personalised arrangements for most of the time. Specialist staff and pupil support assistants provide supportive one-to-one and small group support to ensure all children are included in learning. This support is available in fluent Gàidhlig. However, tasks and activities through Gàidhlig and English do not always take sufficient account of children's differing needs. As a result, a few learners are not supported or challenged appropriately. This limits children's engagement and reduces the effectiveness of learning time. Most children are capable of making better progress during lessons.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers revisit prior learning and use questioning well to check children's understanding. This supports children to engage well in learning and complete planned tasks successfully. In a few lessons in English medium classes, teachers use higher-order questioning well to extend children's thinking and deepen learning. Senior leaders should continue to support all teachers to develop a wider range of effective questioning strategies to promote deeper understanding. As a result, children would be better supported to think more deeply and take more responsibility for their learning.
- Across Gàidhlig and English Medium Education, most teachers make effective use of digital technologies to enrich learning and teaching. Digital tools are used appropriately to engage learners, support motivation and enhance access to learning. Teachers use assistive technologies well to support children with literacy challenges. This helps children feel included in learning. Online platforms are increasingly embedded across stages and are used to share learning, support communication and encourage learner engagement. A digital lead is

providing valuable professional learning to support staff confidence and improve consistency in the use of digital technology across the bun-sgoil.

- Across English and Gàidhlig Medium Education, teachers at the early level are developing their approaches to play-based learning. Teachers have reviewed the learning environment to be welcoming and engaging for children. They now need to consider the balance and progression of play across the day to maximise learning through play. Senior leaders should support staff to engage deeply with national guidance to strengthen their shared understanding of play pedagogy and consistency of approaches. The headteacher and staff should develop a clear whole-school play-based learning policy to guide sustaining improvements moving forward. This policy needs to be specific to Gàidhlig Medium to ensure regular interactions and intentional language learning.
- Teachers use the outdoor environment well to support learning. Most children are provided with opportunities to learn beyond the classroom. A minority of children benefit from planned learning in the forest. This supports their engagement and enjoyment of learning. Teachers should develop a clear and progressive outdoor learning pathway to ensure that all children have regular access to well-planned and meaningful outdoor learning experiences.
- Teachers provide children with a range of verbal and written feedback about the quality of their work. In structured assessments, teachers provide more detailed feedback. Children do not consistently receive quality feedback with next steps in learning. Teachers should continue to enhance the quality of feedback that children receive about their learning. This should support more effective planning to meet learners' needs and help them understand better their strengths and next steps in learning.
- Teachers use a range of appropriate summative and standardised assessment to gather evidence of children's progress. This information is used well to identify gaps in learning and inform planning literacy and numeracy through Gàidhlig and English. Teachers are developing their use of formative assessment strategies. Senior leaders are at an early stage of strengthening approaches to gathering a broader range of evidence and data. They should use this to support more accurate tracking of progress and help all children achieve their expected targets.
- The headteacher has reviewed children's work with teachers from out with the bun-sgoil to gain an overview of standards. Currently, teachers do not participate in moderation activities within the bun-sgoil or beyond. This results in a limited shared understanding of standards in learning and assessment across stages. Teachers' confidence in making professional judgements is not yet secure, and assessment information is not consistently reliable. Teachers should now prioritise developing thorough moderation practices to strengthen consistency, build professional confidence and improve assessment.
- Teachers plan learning across the medium and long-term, for which they use local authority learning pathways. The headteacher has recently introduced planners that assist teachers make connections across subjects. These planners are beginning to provide a clear structure for children's learning. Children are beginning to contribute their suggestions for what they would like to learn. Parents have welcomed receiving termly plans for their children's learning. Teachers are beginning to review more confidently their curriculum planning and evaluations.

The headteacher should ensure that teachers plan learning to meet the needs of all children, particularly children who require support or greater challenge in their learning.

- The headteacher meets termly with teachers to review children's progress in literacy through Gàidhlig and English, numeracy and health and wellbeing. These meetings identify children making appropriate progress or require additional support. They are not yet effectively raising attainment. Staff are at the early stages of consistently checking children's progress in literacy and numeracy on a termly basis. The headteacher is introducing a new online tracking and monitoring toolkit. She should ensure this strengthens teachers' understanding of children's progress over time against national standards.

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.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

weak

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

Attainment in literacy and numeracy

- Overall, in English and Gàidhlig Medium Education, levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy are weak. In Gàidhlig and English Medium Education, a majority of children could make better progress in learning. Teachers' professional judgements of children's progress and attainment are not consistently thorough. Children are not making sufficient progress from their prior levels of attainment.
- Senior leaders cannot evidence clearly the progress made by children with additional support needs.

Attainment in Literacy and Gàidhlig in Gàidhlig Medium Education, and as appropriate Literacy and English

- Overall, the majority of children's attainment in literacy and Gàidhlig is weak. In literacy and English, as appropriate to immersion in Gàidhlig Medium, the majority of children are making satisfactory progress by P7.

Listening and talking

- Across all classes, the majority of children listen well to follow instructions and direction from staff. Older children engage well with adults. They share their ideas and opinions confidently. At the early and middle stages, children are not yet confident in their use of the Gàidhlig language. Children are not talking consistently in Gàidhlig when responding to adults and peers. At the older stages, most children develop their skills in Gàidhlig fluency and apply their understanding of grammar when using irregular verbs and tenses during listening and talking games. Younger children would benefit from more opportunities to practise their spoken Gàidhlig in the classroom and beyond.

Reading

- Younger children understand basic sounds and phonics. They identify objects related to sounds. At the middle and older stages, children use their knowledge of language to read fluently in Gàidhlig and English. Older children apply a range of reading strategies to read and understand texts, including skimming and scanning. Children at the middle stages make predictions, discuss characters and identify features of punctuation. Older children distinguish well between fiction and non-fiction. Across all stages, children would benefit from more challenging texts and reading activities to support them in reaching their expected milestones.

Writing

- At early level, most children are beginning to form lowercase letters. They write their names and use drawings to convey their ideas. Older children use a variety of sentence openers. They write in different genres across curricular areas. The majority of children need higher expectations of their handwriting and how they present their work. At the middle stages, most children use the correct punctuation, including capital letters and full stops with increasing accuracy. The majority of children are spelling basic common words and using strategies to support their spelling. All children should write regularly, to develop their skills in the craft of writing.

Attainment in Gaelic (Learners) in English Medium Education

- Children in English Medium Education exchange personal information in Gàidhlig. They use Gàidhlig in daily routines in the classroom. As yet, children's progress is not checked to encourage more accelerated progress in learning Gàidhlig. Children through connections with organisations, such as Fèis Ròis are building their understanding well of related Gàidhlig culture and music.

Attainment in literacy and English in English Medium Education

- At early level, a minority of children make satisfactory progress. At first level, the majority of children make satisfactory progress. At second level, most children make satisfactory progress.

Listening and talking

- Across English medium classes, almost all children communicate confidently and articulately. They interact positively with staff and their peers. At early level, most children enjoy listening to and discussing stories. They answer questions appropriately. A few children lack confidence identifying words that rhyme. At first level, the majority of children answer confidently different types of questions about texts. A few children need to develop their skills in listening and responding to the views of others. At second level, most children ask and answer questions with confidence. They build on each other's ideas by asking questions or offer suggestions during small group discussions. Across the bun-sgoil, all children should plan and deliver presentations to a range of audiences to build their confidence in talking further.

Reading

- Across the bun-sgoil, most children enjoy reading. At early level, the majority of children enjoy retelling stories. They talk enthusiastically about their favourite books. Children answer simple questions well about books they read. For most children, the pace of developing reading skills is too slow. Staff should now review their approaches to developing early reading skills. At first level, the majority of children explain well the types of books and authors they like to read. They describe confidently the characters and main ideas in these stories. Children are less confident at discussing the features of a non-fiction text. At second level, most children read clearly and use expression well to engage the listener. Most children answer inferential and evaluative questions very well and explain reasons for their views. Children should be encouraged to select and read more challenging texts.

Writing

- At early level, the majority of children write their own names independently. A minority are beginning to write simple sentences independently. At first level, the majority of children use

capital letters and full stops correctly. Most children require support to use more complex punctuation in their writing and develop a wider range of sentence structure. At second level, most children create sentences that include imaginative language features, such as similes and onomatopoeia within their writing. Most children write for relevant and meaningful purposes, including participating in local and national competitions. Across the bun-sgoil, teachers should raise expectations of children's presentation of written work. Children should write more frequently, sustain lengthier and more in depth writing across the curriculum.

Numeracy and mathematics in Gàidhlig Medium Education

- Overall, the majority of children make weak progress in numeracy and mathematics through the medium of Gàidhlig. A majority of children are capable of making much better progress. Children are not using mathematical terminology in Gàidhlig routinely in class.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, the majority of children count forwards and backwards to 20. They are not confident in identifying numbers in between. They add accurately within 10 but are not confident in subtracting. At first level, the majority of children round numbers to the nearest 10 and 100. They add three-digit numbers accurately but need further work on subtracting three-digit numbers. At second level, the majority of children order decimals correctly and convert fractions to decimals and percentages. Most children require further practise in solving word problems.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, the majority of children continue a simple pattern. Children do not yet name two-dimensional (2D) shapes or three-dimensional (3D) objects using correct terminology. At first level, the majority of children name 2D shapes. They require further work on naming 3D objects correctly. At second level, the majority of children name a range of angles. They are not yet confident in identifying missing angles, such as supplementary and complementary angles.

Information handling

- At early level, the majority of children sort objects by colour and size. Children are yet to interpret simple graphs. At first level, the majority of children interpret data from graphs and Venn diagrams. At second level, the majority of children use the language of probability to describe the likelihood of events happening. At first and second level, children should use digital technology to develop further their data handling skills.

Attainment in numeracy and mathematics in English Medium Education

- Overall, at early and second level the majority of children make satisfactory progress across numeracy and mathematics. At first level, progress is weak. Across the bun-sgoil, there are gaps in children's knowledge of numeracy concepts and skills. A majority of children could be making better progress.

Number, money and measure

- At early level, the majority of children count forwards and backwards within 10. They are less confident in counting backwards within 20. Children confidently double numbers within 20. They do not recognise coins up to 10p. At first level, a minority of children add and subtract

three-digit numbers. They select money correctly to pay from items. Children are not yet confident in giving change from £10. At second level, the majority of children round numbers to two decimal places accurately and order numbers less than zero correctly. Children are less confident in using money within a context, for example, working out profit and loss.

Shape, position and movement

- At early level, the majority of children identify a line of symmetry in a shape. Children name 2D shapes but do not name 3D objects. At first level, a minority of children identify correctly a right angle and lines of symmetry within shapes. They are not yet confident in describing the properties of a 3D object. At second level, the majority of children name a range of 3D objects and describe their properties, using correct mathematical terminology.

Information handling

- At early level, children sort objects by colour and size. Children are not familiar with interpreting simple graphs. At first level, the minority of children describe surveys and graphs. At second level, the majority of children interpret a range of graphs and data. They are less confident in identifying the likelihood of events happening.

Attainment over time in English and Gàidhlig Medium Education

- Staff check children's attainment in literacy and numeracy at P1, P4 and P7. However, current data does not yet provide a reliable picture of progress over time. The bun-sgoil is introducing more robust procedures to improve the accuracy of attainment information, including more thorough attainment meetings and the use of a detailed tracking system. As an important priority, senior leaders must ensure that data gathered is accurate and used effectively. This is to inform a clear strategy for raising attainment in literacy and numeracy for all children.
- Attendance has been in line with the national average over the past three years. A few children's attendance is below 90%. Reasons for absence include term-time holidays and illness. The headteacher works closely with families where attendance levels are a concern. She should review approaches to supporting improvements in individual children's attendance with partners more regularly. This should ensure interventions are effective.
- A few children attend bun-sgoil on a part-time basis. Senior leaders should continue to work towards ensuring that all children receive their full entitlement to education.

Overall quality of learners' achievements in Gàidhlig and English Medium Education

- Children develop a range of skills through the events and activities they experience, both in and out of bun-sgoil. They build team and communication skills. These activities include regular sporting and cultural events in which children take part, for example, local Mòds, shinty and cross country. Staff now need to check children's achievements to ensure no child is missing out and to plan opportunities where this may be the case. They should use this data to support further all children to experience success.
- Children's confidence is increased when their achievements, in and out of bun-sgoil, are celebrated at assemblies and through newsletters. Class achievements are recognised with 'Star of the Week' awards. A minority of children have opportunities for leadership through committees, such as the pupil council and eco group. These groups actively seek the views of the wider school community. Staff should increase leadership opportunities for all children.

Equity for all learners in English and Gàidhlig Medium Education

- The headteacher and staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic context of the school community. They provide a free breakfast club for children, which is well attended. Additionally, staff actively seek funding to reduce costs for families, including securing grants to subsidise the use of the local minibus for school trips.
- Senior leaders planned for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) to be used to provide additional staffing. Due to difficulties in appointing staff, this has not been possible. The headteacher now needs to work with staff, children and parents to develop a clear plan for the use of PEF to improve outcomes for children and close the poverty-related attainment gap.

Other relevant evidence

Other relevant Information

- Children in English Medium Education learn Gaelic (Learners) at P1, and at P5 they begin to learn French as a second additional language. For Gaelic (Learners), children access a local authority digital platform. All children in Gàidhlig Medium Education are immersed in Gàidhlig at P1, access the experiences and outcomes of literacy and English at P4, and learn French from P5. Across the bun-sgoil, children enjoy and take part in Gàidhlig language and cultural events. These include the Fèis Rois, Youth Music Initiative, the national five-a-side football competition, Cuach na Cloinne and the Inverness Mòd. The numbers in Gàidhlig Medium Education are increasing overtime as a result of the strong commitment to Gàidhlig by all staff, supported by the wider community. This helps staff show positive progress towards implementing the ‘Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017.’ Staff now need to focus on increasing total immersion to accelerate children’s progress. Staff should consider how children in English and Gàidhlig Medium Education can champion the language and culture as part of leadership roles.
- Staff meet national minimum expectations in physical education, religious and moral education and religious observance.
- Staff are making strong progress with increasing the numbers learning Gàidhlig, which meets positive outcomes in meeting duties for the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017. The bun-sgoil handbook should be clearer on how parents enrol children into Gàidhlig Medium Education. Senior leaders, staff and children should ensure that the handbook details the benefits of Gàidhlig Medium Education, bilingualism, immersion and the curriculum offer. Senior leaders should refer to the ‘Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education, 2017’ in taking Gàidhlig forward.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard 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.