

Summarised inspection findings

Bun-sgoil Bhun Easain - Bunessan Primary School Pre-Five Unit

Argyll and Bute Council

23 September 2025

Key contextual information

Bunessan Primary School Pre-Five Unit – Sgoil-Àraich Bhun Easain is located on the island of Mull. It serves the village of Bunessan and its surrounding area.

The pre-five setting is registered for a maximum of 14 children at any one time. This is for children aged two years to those not yet attending primary school. No more than two children aged two to three years may be enrolled at any given time.

Children receive their entitlement to 1,140 hours of early learning and childcare through a term-time provision. This is through the medium of English. The pre-five unit consists of an indoor playroom and a secure outdoor area. It operates daily from 9.15 am to 3.15 pm.

At the time of inspection, 12 children were registered in the pre-five unit, with 10 present. A few children access a blended placement, attending both the pre-five unit at Bunessan and other settings elsewhere. The pre-five unit roll is increasing.

The headteacher is the pre-five unit manager. The setting is staffed by two childcare and education workers (CCEWs), and one part-time support assistant.

1.3 Leadership of change

good

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 headteacher and practitioners provide a nurturing early learning and childcare setting. This includes the teaching of Gaelic (Learners), where children hear the language in some of their play and learning. The pre-five unit shares the same appropriate vision, values, and aims as the school, co-created with parents, children, and staff. These values are confident, creative, and caring - misneachail, coibhneil agus cruthachail. Children reinforce these values by singing a song in both English and Gàidhlig - Gaelic. This supports children to understand very well the purpose and expectations of the pre-five unit in an age-appropriate way.
- The headteacher engages actively in professional learning to support improvements in the pre-five unit. He provides effective leadership and collaborates with local authority early years staff to guide practitioners. This partnership has led to enhancements in the playroom and outdoor environment. The headteacher's regular visits and discussions with practitioners, alongside monthly meetings, ensures a better focus on improvement. The headteacher has introduced a helpful quality assurance calendar that is starting to support more thorough monitoring and review of the pre-five unit. This will help establish clearer improvement priorities, with children and families evaluating impact.
- Practitioners collaborate effectively. They are valued as part of the whole-school community. They use their skills and professional learning to support each other and drive improvements. Practitioners are committed to striving for the best possible outcomes for children. One of their

recent successes is the increased uptake of children choosing Gàidhlig Medium Education at P1. As a result, the headteacher and practitioners should reflect on current provision and review documents to plan Gàidhlig language learning. This would support them to develop further a shared understanding of early years' pedagogy. Particularly, how Gàidhlig language learning would support further transitioning to P1. Practitioners do not yet have clearly defined leadership roles. The headteacher should assign leadership responsibilities linked to key improvement goals in order to strengthen practitioners' experience in leading change. Additionally, children should take on more leadership tasks, such as helping with snacks and assessing risks, to foster a sense of responsibility and independence.

- The school improvement plan (SIP) includes areas for enhancing the pre-five unit. Practitioners are involved fully in identifying relevant priorities within the SIP. They have successfully taken forward priorities to promote effective learning environments and family engagement that are having a positive impact on children. Practitioners are familiar with national self-evaluation frameworks. They are not yet using these self-evaluation frameworks thoroughly enough to evaluate their work. Going forward, practitioners should have a greater sense of ownership in prioritising areas for improvement relevant to the pre-five unit.

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

- Practitioners foster a warm and welcoming environment where children enjoy learning, both indoors and outdoors. Children feel happy, safe and secure as they engage with a variety of activities. They access an appropriate balance of adult-led and child-initiated learning experiences. Most children concentrate well for extended periods, especially with play that they themselves choose. They demonstrate imagination, independence and confidence as they explore and interact with their surroundings.
- Practitioners are beginning to speak and model Gàidhlig during daily routines within the pre-five unit. Children hear and learn Gàidhlig phrases regularly as they play, such as the phrase of the week. As a result, children make a good start to understanding a few Gàidhlig language phrases. This is increasing children's interest and uptake in Gàidhlig Medium Education. Practitioners should consider planning more consistent playroom activities to equip better children who are transitioning into P1. Practitioners' and children's interactions are caring and responsive. A few children should be challenged further in their learning through more regular and effective interactions.
- Practitioners have reinstated recently the use of a floorbook to enhance planning for children's learning. Practitioners are more responsive to children's interests, as a result. To maximise impact, practitioners' comments and observations within the floorbook should have a sharper focus on key learning outcomes and children's skills development. They should also continue involving children in planning and reflecting on the floorbook regularly. This will strengthen further children's understanding of their own learning.
- Practitioners use an online platform to share photographs of children's learning with parents. Each child has an individual learning profile folder that includes photographs, practitioners' observation notes and samples of work. Observations should highlight more clearly significant aspects of each child's learning to identify better relevant next steps. Practitioners should share these more regularly with parents, either through the online platform or during stay-and-play visits.
- Practitioners record effectively children's developmental milestones. They adopt a range of trackers to monitor children's progress in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing. Practitioners should refine processes to ensure that these are manageable and show clearly the progress children are making.

2.2 Curriculum: Learning and developmental pathways

- Practitioners provide a variety of play-based experiences, supporting children's imagination and creativity well through a range of activities. They continue to develop the outdoor area, offering engaging spaces for exploration. Children have choices, with almost all independently selecting their activities through free flow play indoors and outdoors.
- Practitioners consider developmental milestones, progression frameworks for literacy and mathematics, and early-level Curriculum for Excellence experiences and outcomes. They should continue reviewing the structure of the day to ensure children make the best possible progress in their learning. This includes through having a sufficient balance of adult-directed experiences.
- Children have motivating opportunities to explore the local environment and community by going on walks, for example to visit the community garden. They experienced recently a royal visit to the island. Children and practitioners attend a café fortnightly at a local church, at which they develop effective links with the community. This provides a valuable opportunity for intergenerational work and increases children's confidence and social skills.
- Children engage in weekly school assemblies throughout the year. This helps them to learn about rights and to become familiar with school routines before starting school. Children visit the school library and are developing an interest in reading. The older children at the school read to them, supporting further transition into school. Parents' and families' attendance at a block of weekly singing and storytelling sessions in Gàidhlig is extremely high.

2.7 Partnerships: Impact on children and families – parental engagement

- Practitioners have built strong, positive relationships with parents and families. They foster community engagement in learning Gaelic. Families participated in 'Seachdain na Gàidhlig - World Gaelic Week' celebrations last term. This reinforces very well their connection to the language.
- The school maintains a Gàidhlig phrase of the week, which is shared with parents and the wider community. This benefits those learning the language. To promote further Gàidhlig Medium Education, the staff team hosted an evening event. This resulted in full enrolment of P1 children for Gàidhlig Medium Education in 2025-2026.
- Practitioners keep parents well informed through an online platform, providing insights into children's learning. The headteacher and staff also communicate updates through regular letters and the pre-five unit noticeboard. There are additional helpful links included in the school handbook. Parents have expressed appreciation for the strong connections they have with the pre-five unit.
- Practitioners work effectively with community partners to enhance children's learning. Local visits, such as trips to the community garden, provide meaningful learning experiences. Parents and grandparents contribute actively by sharing their skills and interests through these events. Moving forward, practitioners should continue expanding parental engagement initiatives, ensuring regular 'stay and play' sessions. These sessions would strengthen shared understanding of play pedagogy and provide deeper insights into children's progress with their learning.

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.

3.1 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 place a strong emphasis on children's wellbeing, fostering a caring and inclusive environment. Relationships are central to learning and development. Practitioners are responsive to children's individual needs. As a result, children are settled and happy in the pre-five unit. If a child becomes distressed, practitioners provide reassurance and support. Children are encouraged to express their feelings. Practitioners are introducing gradually wellbeing indicators and children's rights. These should be made more meaningful for younger children.
- The pre-five unit has a welcoming and supportive atmosphere. Parents and families speak positively about the setting. Practitioners have strong relationships with children and treat them with respect. They model kind, caring behaviour and encourage children to be respectful. As a result, all children co-operate well, share resources and are kind and caring towards one another. All children show high levels of positive behaviour consistently throughout the week.
- Children develop independence through positive snack and lunchtime experiences. They collect their own food, set out cutlery and plates, and engage in unhurried mealtimes. This supports the development of their social skills.
- The headteacher and practitioners are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities for legislative requirements in keeping children safe, and meeting their care and learning needs. Practitioners attend appropriate training to ensure they understand procedures and policies. They regularly monitor and review children's individualised care plans to ensure appropriate progress. Practitioners should continue to ensure that care plans for all children are reviewed with, and signed by parents at least twice a year.
- Practitioners know each child and their personal circumstances well. This allows them to provide appropriate and sensitive support to children. Practitioners are aware of procedures to follow where a child may benefit from support with their learning or input from other agencies. Practitioners support families well through effective partnerships. They actively support children when they join the pre-five unit and follow children's progress as they move into P1.
- Practitioners have created an inclusive ethos, in which everyone is treated as an individual. They celebrate key events, festivals and customs throughout the year, including those for Gàidhlig. To strengthen children's global awareness, they should be introduced to a wider range of cultures. This will broaden children's understanding of diversity beyond their immediate experiences.

3.2 Securing children's progress

good

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

- Overall, children's progress in communication and early language development is good. Almost all children participate well during 'together time' at the start of each day, and while stories are read to them. A few children choose to listen to stories. Most children take part in conversations with each other and with practitioners. They express their views well. Most children show an interest in mark-making both in the playroom and in the outdoor area. A few children would benefit from increased mark-making activities within planned contexts. Children sing songs enthusiastically in Gàidhlig during a singing session led by a council officer. They would benefit from regular singing and hearing rhymes both in Gàidhlig and English. Most children understand common Gàidhlig phrases they hear during daily routines and recognise animal names within songs.
- Children make satisfactory progress in numeracy and mathematics. Almost all children count to 10 in English. They develop their awareness of numbers in Gàidhlig as they count within daily routines. Most children name colours and enjoy solving problems in the outside construction area. Children need to extend their use of mathematical language for measure and make connections with numeracy and mathematical skills across play contexts.
- Children's progress in health and wellbeing is good. They develop their physical skills and understanding of risk as they play outdoors and on trips to the community garden. Children learn about nature while helping to plant seeds and when looking after their chickens. They enjoy taking part in snack experiences, which develop their social skills. Their hygiene skills are applied while hand washing and toothbrushing. Children's independence and leadership skills should be developed further. For example, children could help to set up and tidy toys away. Children display kindness to one another and have made good friends. They use an emotions chart to record how they are feeling. As planned, children's understanding of the wellbeing indicators needs extending in a stage appropriate way.
- Practitioners evidence children's progress while in the pre-five unit in literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and with specified developmental milestones. Children make good progress, with the exception of numeracy where progress is satisfactory. Practitioners should increase their overview of children's progress across the curriculum, including Gaelic (Learners). The headteacher should include children's progress as part of whole-school meetings on progress and attainment. Practitioners should continue improving the accuracy of what they record in children's profiles, online learning logs and floorbooks to demonstrate children's progress over

time. Practitioners would benefit from streamlining monitoring and tracking processes to ensure that information gathered is easily accessible.

- Children are praised during their play, for example when they are kind to others. They attend assemblies where children's individual achievements are recognised. Most children's achievements from home are shared, with playroom displays showing successes and skills such as independence being developed. Practitioners should capture consistently all children's achievements within their profiles.
- Staff know children and families well. Children with additional needs make good progress because of the inclusive and supportive ethos in the pre-five unit. Practitioners are aware of where support may be required and put effective interventions in place, where needed. They should continue to collaborate closely with parents where support may be required.

1.1 Nurturing care and support

We observed children who were happy, confident and having fun. They experienced warm, nurturing and responsive care from a staff team that knew them very well, which supported the development of strong attachments and a sense of security in the setting. For example, staff spoke about children's likes, dislikes and interests. Staff could tell us how children were being supported, and information was recorded and reviewed in partnership with parents and external agencies. We discussed how staff should utilise their professional and personal knowledge of the children to create and document further strategies to support children in reaching their full potential.

We observed children being treated sensitively and with dignity and respect, while having their personal care needs met. For example, staff asked children if they would like to be changed, or discreetly asked children if they required the toilet. This practice supported children's independence and helped to build trusting relationships through respectful interactions.

Lunch and snack times were sociable experiences for the children, and staff encouraged children to be independent through self-serving and clearing away their dishes. We suggested that staff and management continue to develop lunch and snack routines with a focus on further developing the children's independence. For example, increasing opportunities to self-serve their own food, pour their own drinks and set up the lunch area. This will enhance the lunch and snack experience and support children in developing further life skills. Staff engaged the children in discussions on a variety of subjects during lunchtime, creating a relaxed and unhurried atmosphere. This supported the children's social and language skills.

We sampled the nursery's medication policy and consent forms and found these were in line with best practice guidance 'Management of Medication in Daycare and Childminding Services.'

Care Inspectorate evaluation: Very good

1.3 Play and learning

Children were happy, having fun and enjoying their time at nursery. They were confident within their environment and able to move freely around the playroom and outdoors. The nursery was well resourced, and there were some natural and open-ended materials available for children to be creative and to develop their curiosity and imagination.

The service had developed strong links with the community, supporting children to create strong connections to their own and wider areas. For example, intergenerational links with the local lunch club, Bookbug sessions and the community garden. The service also welcomed visitors into the setting, such as a local Gaelic singer, enhancing the children's sense of community and culture. Staff used children's individual 'Seesaw' accounts to record their experiences and achievements. The quality of play experiences was good across all play areas. However, the outdoor areas were particularly engaging, sparking children's curiosity and creativity and allowing them to take the lead in their play and learning. We saw staff building on children's interests by expanding play opportunities to support their learning.

Staff were undertaking a series of tracking activities to monitor children's progress. We discussed refining this process further to identify a clear progression pathway and individual next steps in

children's play and learning. There needs to be a more integrated approach to tracking and recording children's progress, with a planning format that is individualised and responsive, based on children's interests and identified next steps. Staff should continue to work together as a team to meet children's needs through high-quality interactions and thoughtful observations. This includes helping children think more deeply, build new skills and follow their own interests through play and learning.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: Good

2.2 Children experience high quality facilities

The playroom was warm, welcoming and well ventilated. Children could move freely between indoors and a large, secure outdoor area. We saw children confidently exploring all parts of the garden and playing together to develop their ideas. Staff provided a mix of structured and free play activities, including loose parts play, messy play, discovery tables and cosy indoor and outdoor areas for reading and relaxing. Resources were stored safely and appeared to be in good, clean condition, with staff checking these regularly and adhering to a resource cleaning schedule. As a result, children were having fun in a safe, clean environment, building independence and making their own choices in play and learning.

Children's information was stored securely within the playrooms. The service had a secure entry system, and risk assessments were in place to help keep the indoor and outdoor areas safe. Management should ensure any changes to the environment are being recorded. For example, potential trip hazards or new play equipment should be added to risk assessments, and staff regularly review these to keep children safe. We discussed that the implementation of a fob entry system could allow staff to stay focused on supervising and engaging with children without being interrupted to answer the door to other staff members.

Policies were up to date, well organised, reflected best practice guidance, and had been reviewed through an audit process.

Staff and children washed their hands before mealtimes and after using the toilet. We would encourage children and staff to wash their hands at other key points during the day, including when they come in from outdoors. This will help to prevent the spread of infection and ensure children and staff are kept safe and healthy.

Displays throughout the nursery were used to celebrate and recognise children's learning and achievements. Pictures of the children and their families were thoughtfully placed at children's eye level around the setting, helping to create a sense of ownership and belonging.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: Very good

3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well

As part of the setting's self-evaluation, management conducted a full review of the setting's vision, aims and objectives, involving staff, children, parents and the wider community. This collaborative approach helped build a positive ethos of kindness and confidence, giving children a keen sense of pride through encouraging their active participation. Management and staff showed a clear commitment to improving the service by working together on a vision that focused on achieving the best outcomes for children and their families.

Management collaborated with staff to create an improvement plan for the whole school, including the early learning and childcare provision. The plan identified key areas for development and placed importance on involving children and their families by regularly gathering their feedback. We discussed how using the Care Inspectorate's 'A Quality Framework for Daycare of Children, Childminding and School-Aged Childcare' could support robust evaluation and continuous improvement across all the quality indicators.

Quality assurance processes, such as recording practice supervision and individualised planning, need to be more firmly embedded within the setting's quality assurance calendar. This will support further reflective practice and help drive sustained improvement, leading to better outcomes for children.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: Good

4.3 Staff deployment

Staff were warm, welcoming and open throughout the inspection. The service was appropriately staffed to meet the needs of the children, with strong teamwork and communication supporting an inclusive and nurturing environment. Staff worked well together to ensure children were safely supervised in all areas of play, while also meeting individual care and learning needs. This created a secure space where children could confidently explore and enjoy play and learning opportunities.

Management and staff actively encouraged parental involvement through the nursery's online application 'Seesaw', its social media page and an active parent council. Parents were also invited to take part in community trips and regular 'stay and play' sessions. Communication was a key strength, with staff speaking with parents at drop-off and collection times. We discussed the potential benefits of having parents enter the setting during these times, and staff planned to discuss this further as a team. Parents told us they felt staff were supportive, approachable and always willing to talk through any concerns or updates. As a result, parents felt confident and reassured leaving their children in the care of the service.

All staff in the setting held a qualification in childhood practice and had completed key training, such as first aid and safeguarding. Staff had identified specific areas within the setting to evaluate and improve. We discussed the value of documenting and sharing these improvements with parents and highlighting the positive impact these had on children's outcomes and the quality of play and learning experiences provided. All staff in the setting were proficient in Gaelic and shared a passion for the language, which they passed on to the children through songs and everyday communication. This gave all the children an opportunity to experience the Gaelic language and culture, helping to foster a smooth transition for those children intending to progress into Gaelic Medium Education in school.

To support staff and improve children's experiences and outcomes, the manager had started to introduce a more formal process for one-to-one meetings and monitoring. This focused on staff practice and engagement, the use of resources, and the quality of play and learning. Staff should now be supported to continue reflecting on and reviewing their practice to help drive and sustain ongoing improvement.

Care Inspectorate evaluation: Very good

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.