

# Sgoil Araich an Taobh Siar Day Care of Children

Sgoil an Taobh Siar  
Barvas  
Isle of Lewis  
HS2 0QN

Telephone: 01851 701 602

**Type of inspection:**  
Unannounced

**Completed on:**  
28 November 2024

**Service provided by:**  
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar

**Service provider number:**  
SP2003002104

**Service no:**  
CS2008182518

## About the service

Sgoil Araich an Taobh Siar is a day care of children service which is situated in the village of Barvas, Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles. The service is provided by Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar and operates from premises within Sgoil an Taobh Siar. The service provides Gaelic medium early learning and childcare.

The service can accommodate a maximum of 24 children from the age of two years to primary school age. At the time of our inspection there were a total of 14 children present.

The accommodation consists of one spacious playroom. Children have direct access to an outdoor play area for physical play and outdoor learning. Children also have access to the multipurpose sports grounds in the primary school and the school gym hall. There is a reception area, changing and toilet facilities for children and catering and staff facilities.

## About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 27 and 28 November 2024. The inspection was carried out by one inspector from the Care Inspectorate.

To prepare for the inspection we reviewed information about this service. This included previous inspection findings, registration information, information submitted by the service and intelligence gathered since the last inspection. In making our evaluations of the service we:

- spoke with children using the service
- spoke with one parent whose child attends the service
- reviewed feedback from 12 parents and carers whose children attend the service
- reviewed feedback from five staff members employed in the service
- spoke with the manager and staff
- observed practice and staff interactions with children
- reviewed documents.

## Key messages

- Children experienced care within a service where they were fully immersed in Gaelic medium.
- Staff used kind and nurturing approaches which contributed to children feeling welcome, safe, and secure and contributed to positive relationships.
- The manager and staff should review the mealtime experience to ensure it promotes a sociable, relaxed, and unhurried experience for all children.
- Children were happy, settled and confident in the service.
- The manager and staff should review the routine of outdoor play and the experiences available for children's play and learning.
- Children and staff regularly visited areas within the local community to extend their play and learning.
- Quality assurance processes could be further developed to support continuous improvement of the service.
- The manager was visible, friendly and approachable to children, families and staff.

## From this inspection we evaluated this service as:

In evaluating quality, we use a six point scale where 1 is unsatisfactory and 6 is excellent

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good

Further details on the particular areas inspected are provided at the end of this report.

## How good is our care, play and learning?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, when taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Children's care and learning routines were delivered with kindness and compassion from staff who were warm, nurturing and caring towards children. The interactions were responsive and engaging and we saw staff comforting children. This supported children to feel safe, secure, and contributed to the positive relationships they had with staff. Parents agreed and one commented, "Staff are incredibly caring with the children and are always very warm and welcoming at drop off and pick up and are happy to discuss any issues or concerns." Another parent said, "They are all kind and friendly and we feel confident leaving my child in their care."

Children were happy, settled, and confident and had developed friendships which enhanced their wellbeing. Families agreed and one parent commented that their "child is always happy". One child told us they liked "Playing with my friends and drawing."

Children mostly experienced sociable mealtimes as they ate together in the school dining hall. They were able to sit with friends and staff and chat together. The environment became louder and busier when school children joined nursery children for lunch. This impacted on the previously relaxed and calm experience, making it more difficult for children to hear and engage sociably. When children had finished their meal, they waited for other children to finish before leaving the table. Whilst this was a positive step in teaching children sociable skills for life, some children waited for extended periods causing them to be restless. This had the potential to impact on their wellbeing by limiting choices and opportunities for children's play. When we discussed with the manager the benefits of reviewing children's mealtimes, we were satisfied that action would be taken to enhance children's experiences.

Personal plans were in place for children. Plans were created in partnership with parents and carers and reviewed regularly. These included comments on children's progress in relation to individual SHANARRI wellbeing indicators (safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible, and included). These contained the information staff needed to support children and meet their individual needs. Parents commented, "I get to see my child's care plan and the staff, and I discuss and agree on the plan. They inform me what my child has improved on and discuss areas for further development" and "The staff very regularly update care plans and needs to make sure my daughter is receiving the highest standard of care while with them."

Staff knew the children well which meant they were able to respond to their individual needs and preferences. Management and staff were utilising support within the school environment in agreement with parents to provide support and challenge to meet children's individual needs.

Children's medicine was clearly labelled, administered, and stored safely. We asked the manager to include steps that staff would take in an emergency, if for example a child did not respond to their life-saving medication. This contributes to supporting children's health and wellbeing. We were satisfied that action was taken to address this before the end of the inspection.

All staff had attended child protection training. They were aware of their responsibility to safeguard children in their care and had the ability to recognise when children and families needed support. Although child protection information was being recorded, we discussed with management the benefit of recording this within individual chronologies for children. This would enable staff to identify and respond to patterns of support needed whilst maintaining confidential records.

### Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Indoors, children were having fun and engaged in a variety of experiences. They had good opportunities to lead their own play and learning, which impacted positively on their development and wellbeing. We saw children engaged in play experiences for prolonged periods of time. There were opportunities for children to develop their skills in language, literacy, and numeracy. Children particularly enjoyed using magnets to make models. They told us about their imaginative creations, saying, "we're making an animal house for lion, polar bears and seals" and "they'll have water." Children also liked drawing and painting pictures and talking about these with their friends. One child said, "I have the funniest story ever."

Children were using a range of resources that supported their creativity, and imagination, which impacted positively on their development. We saw children transporting items to other areas of the playroom and staff supported this, showing their understanding of child development and schematic play. Schematic play is repeated actions or behaviours that children display as they explore the world around them.

Staff joined in with play and were responsive to children's interests. They were skilful in knowing when to step back from play and join in again to spark children's interest and curiosity. Staff recognised where further challenge would be beneficial and equally, where support was required. This meant staff could respond meaningfully to children's needs and wishes and supported children's overall wellbeing and sense of belonging.

Children had opportunities for play outdoors to support their health and wellbeing. In response to icy surfaces within their usual outdoor space, staff took children to the school outdoor play environment. However, this took place during the school break time which meant the area was busy with school aged children. This restricted nursery children's space and freedom to play. In response to this, staff offered structured activities to nursery children such as completing a daily mile and following an obstacle course. At times children were standing waiting for their turn as only a small number of of them at a time could join in. This meant that children were not able to explore and develop their own play ideas at that time. We discussed with the manager the benefit of reviewing this outdoor play routine with staff. This could enable children to have greater choice should they need to use the schools grounds again because of adverse weather conditions.

We could see children were consulted in planning. Plans were responsive to their interests, and their ideas and thoughts were being taken forward by staff to support children's play and learning. Learning goals were set for children and staff were planning for children's next steps in development. These were created to support children's individual learning and progression. Floor books were being well used and captured children's experiences. Staff recorded children's voices within the big books, supporting children to recall and build on previous learning. This contributed to valuing and respecting children and provided a message to children that they mattered.

Online learning journals shared information with families about children's individual play experiences and learning. Some journals evidenced children's progress well, supporting families to work with staff to enhance children's overall development. However, the approach to this was inconsistent with some observations of children containing less detail about their skills and progress. Staff and management had been reflecting on the quality of children's learning journals and as such had identified them as an improvement priority. We were therefore satisfied that a plan was in place to develop a consistent approach to supporting children's progress within play and learning.

## How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, when taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Children were cared for in an environment that was bright, welcoming, and clean. It was furnished with natural resources which helped create calm and relaxing environments that promoted children's wellbeing. Indoor and outdoor environments were safe and secure for children and the service was well maintained to protect children from harm. Parents agreed and one commented, "I know when I leave my child at nursery that they are safe, I trust the staff. At the end of the day that is what is most important (to me anyway!). They are safe and happy."

Children's health and wellbeing was supported through regular access to outdoors for fresh air and exercise. In the nursery garden, there were opportunities for children to participate in risky and challenging play. The climbing and slide apparatus provided opportunities for children to build their confidence and resilience. An outdoor playhouse provided shelter for children from most weathers ensuring they were comfortable and experiencing fresh air. It was a cosy space that contained soft seating to provide space to rest between playing. This supported children's emotional wellbeing. Additionally, children had opportunities to use the school gym hall for physical development and movement.

A good range of toys and games including natural materials were available for children. Storage of resources were accessible and supported children's choices to support their needs and interests. There were cosy spaces for children to rest and relax contributing to children's health and wellbeing.

Children had opportunities to be part of and become familiar with the local community. Children's play and learning was extended through visits within the local community. This included, going to the shop and visiting a house that was being constructed. Some services came to the nursery too. They had visits from the story bus and the emergency services. These experiences help children to gain confidence and to develop a sense of belonging within their local community. Parents positively expressed the way that children accessed the local community and shared several comments about what was on offer to children. One said, "They seem to play lots of interesting and educational games. Reading, singing. They have emergency service vehicles at the school at various times which was enjoyed. The "story bus", also outings to Stornoway for pantos and other activities on an lannir throughout the year."

Children and staff were washing their hands before and after mealtimes to prevent the potential spread of infection. This was less frequent when children and staff were returning indoors from playing outside. We shared with the manager the importance of washing hands at this time to in order to enhance children's health and wellbeing. We were satisfied that this would be taken forward. Drinking water was available for children to access during the day to keep them refreshed and hydrated.

Children and staff had grown their own vegetables. This provided children with a deeper understanding of where food items come from and helped to develop a positive attitude towards healthy eating. The food items were brought back into the service and used for mealtimes, play and learning.

## How good is our leadership?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, when taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

The manager was passionate, visible, friendly, and approachable to children, families, and staff. Staff knew the manager well and told us they felt supported by them. Staff commented, "I am always included in any discussions and asked my opinions. I am regularly asked if I am doing well" and "I am confident enough to speak to anyone if I have any concerns." This helped to develop a motivated staff team who were committed to the children and families who attended the service.

The manager was committed to initiate change by involving and recognising the contributions of families and staff. Parents were consulted on various aspects of the service and suggestions were taken forward to support with improving outcomes for children.

Children were being consulted and their thoughts and feelings were considered in relation to their play experiences. This was particularly evident within curricular plans where children helped plan play experiences that met their interests. We discussed with management the opportunity to extend this further by including children's voice within other areas of the service. For example, when making changes to playroom environments. All parents who provided feedback told us they and their children were involved in a meaningful way to help develop the service. Parents commented, "My child's views and ideas are always listened to. We have the opportunity to be on the parent council too" and "Staff have asked ways in which they can improve the service."

Staff confirmed that they had been supported and were engaged in self-evaluation exercises and their thoughts and opinions were listened to and valued. Self-evaluation was used to identify strengths and where improvements could be made. Management and staff were using good practice publications to support their reflections, enabling them to benchmark against best practice. We could see identified areas for improvement were being taken forward to improve outcomes for children and their families.

The service was using a quality assurance calendar to monitor and audit aspects of the service. Management carried out monitoring of staff practice and staff were involved in peer observations. This had led to strengths and areas for improvement being identified, contributing to improved outcomes for children. We discussed with the manager the opportunity to extend monitoring further, for example by including observing and collaborating with staff to develop children's mealtime experiences.

The manager should review the procedures for the auditing of medication, personal plans and accidents and incidents. We identified conflicting information within records for one child's medication. Auditing of the medication has the potential to recognise this and support with making changes. We suggested the procedures for auditing could include the sharing of information of the improvements identified to be taken forward and in response the action taken. This has the potential to lead to continuous improvement of the service.

Staff were supported to engage in the settings improvement journey. Although at the early stages of their improvement plan, they were making progress in their priorities of online journals and mathematics. Staff were confident in telling us the progress being made and how this was supporting the outcomes for children and their families.

The service had re-visited and distributed their champion roles. This supported staff to be responsible and accountable based on their skills and interests to make improvements within the service.

## How good is our staff team?

4 - Good

We made an evaluation of good for this key question, as several important strengths, when taken together, clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

### Quality Indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

There was a small core staff team who were present to care for the children. Relief staff were providing cover whilst recruiting for an additional part-time member of staff. The service was ensuring the same relief staff were covering to support with consistency and continuity of care for children's care, play and learning. We could see staff knew children well and had positive connections with them.

Most parents told us there were always enough staff in the service to meet their child's needs. Parents commented, "There always seem to be enough staff" and "There is often staff working one on one with a small group on an activity to develop their learning when I pick up." In contrast a parent told us "I think there is a staff shortage at times." A staff member told us, "There are days when there are only two members of staff with 16 children which is within ratio however staff are stretched when there are children that require extra support included in the group of 16 children." Overall we found there were enough staff to meet children's needs and provide children with care.

Staff deployment worked well in most areas to support the needs of the children in their care, play and learning. However, we observed one occasion where some children were left unsupervised for a short period of time when eating their lunch. This took place when children were being supported by a staff member for personal care. Two staff members were present in the dining hall and one table wasn't always well supervised. We discussed with management the importance of staff communicating with each other when a task takes them away from their work with children. This is particularly important to ensure children's safety when eating.

The staff team provided a range of skills and experience to the service. All staff were supported to develop their skills and knowledge through attending professional development. This contributed to consistently good care, play and learning for children. Staff shared with us how their training had supported them to reflect, and as a result they had made changes to their practice. One staff member told us, "The sensory processing training I took part in was very interesting and informative. It was helpful to set achievable targets when planning for the children."

Key working arrangements ensured there was consistency in individual children's care across the day. Parents agreed and one parent commented, "The Sgoil Araich team are very happy and considerate. They make myself and my daughter feel very welcome, and my daughter is comfortable with the staff which makes it so much easier to trust them with her through the day."



Staff breaks were planned to minimise the impact on children whilst enabling staff to rest and refresh. Staff told us and we observed that they had opportunities for protected time off the playroom floor for planning and observations. This enabled staff to plan to meet children's needs.

## Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at [www.careinspectorate.com](http://www.careinspectorate.com).

## Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	4 - Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	4 - Good
1.3 Play and learning	4 - Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	4 - Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	4 - Good
How good is our staff team?	4 - Good
4.3 Staff deployment	4 - Good

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