

Sgoil Araich an Iochdair Day Care of Children

Iochdair School
Bualadubh
Isle of South Uist
HS8 5RQ

Telephone: 01870 604 894

Type of inspection:
Unannounced

Completed on:
20 May 2025

Service provided by:
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Service provider number:
SP2003002104

Service no:
CS2011280740

About the service

The service is provided by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and is registered to provide early learning and childcare education to a maximum of 16 children from the age of two years to primary school age.

The Sgoil Àraich provides Gaelic immersion education. The Sgoil Àraich is based within a playroom in Sgoil an Iochdair on South Uist in the Western Isles.

At the time of our inspection visit the service had eight children registered. On the first day of our inspection four children were in attendance, and seven on our second day.

About the inspection

This was an unannounced inspection which took place on 19 and 20 May 2025. 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:

- received electronic feedback from four families who used the service
- spoke with staff and management
- observed practice and daily life
- reviewed documents

As part of this inspection we undertook a focus area. We have gathered specific information to help us understand more about how services support children's safety, wellbeing and engagement in their play and learning. This included reviewing the following aspects:

- staff deployment
- safety of the physical environment, indoors and outdoors
- the quality of personal plans and how well children's needs are being met
- children's engagement with the experiences provided in their setting.

Key messages

- Children were happy, confident and settled in the service.
- The setting was well furnished and spacious for children.
- Staff knew the children well and were attentive to their needs.
- The service worked well with other professionals to meet children's needs.
- Children benefitted from a manager and staff team who were committed to the future development and continuous improvement of the service
- Staff worked well together as a team to offer positive outcomes for children.

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?	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good

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

How good is our care, play and learning?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 1.1: Nurturing care and support

Staff demonstrated very warm, nurturing interactions with children. They knew children and families well. Children were secure and responded positively to staff's warmth. We observed children receiving lots of positive praise and physical touch. These warm interactions helped to make children feel safe and secure in the setting.

Staff knew children very well. They could tell us about their individual needs, interests and stages of development. Personal plans contained information about children, their needs and interests. Staff used these plans well to support children and record progress. The majority of families who provided feedback told us that they felt involved in their child's care, including developing and reviewing their personal plan. One of them commented "Parents evenings are used to review our child's plan and nursery contact via email/drop off handover or seesaw if there is anything to report in between."

Staff recognised where children required additional support. They had good links with other professionals to ensure that information about children was shared and that strategies to support children were being used. Regular team around the child meetings highlighted how professionals came together to ensure that children received the care they needed when they needed it. As a result, children were being well supported and making progress.

Effective systems were in place for the safe storage, recording and administration of medicines. Although no child required medication at the time of our inspection staff were confident in their knowledge of procedures to administer and record medication.

Children had some involvement in the planning of snacks; they sometimes went to the shop to choose and purchase their snack. We found that they had little involvement in the preparation of snack. We discussed with the team leader how this could be improved. For example, by providing children the opportunity to spread their own crackers, chop their own fruit and set table. Enabling children to be more independent at snack time would support their development and increase their confidence.

We observed children over lunchtime. Children were asked in the morning what they wanted from a selection of two options. Children enjoyed their meals it was a relaxed and unhurried experience where staff engaged positively and supported them. Where children had packed lunches, these could be transferred onto plates to provide a more homely nurturing meal experience rather than eating from box. To minimise the potential risk of cross contamination and infection we suggested to staff that they remove perishables from lunchbox and store in fridge rather than the whole box. This will support children's health and wellbeing.

Children currently attending Sgoil Àraich at the time of our inspection did not require a sleep. We discussed with the playleader what resources would be required should younger children join the service in the new term. The management team and local authority representative provided assurances that appropriate resources would be available in the new term to support safe sleeping.

Quality indicator 1.3: Play and learning

Staff were positive role models. They were committed to making every effort to create and promote opportunities for children to hear, speak and understand Gàidhlig. Staff were actively encouraged and supported by the head of school and local authority to provide Gàidhlig and promote the Gaelic First Policy. We observed children listening, responding and speaking Gàidhlig at different times during our visit. Children particularly enjoyed participating in a group Gàidhlig singing session with some of the primary school children.

Children had many opportunities to learn about their community and the environment that they lived in. They benefitted from visits to local shops, playparks, the harbour and beaches. Learning within the local community helped children to develop a sense of identity and belonging. Opportunities to plant, grow and observe wildlife were frequent. Children enjoyed taking us to their planting areas where they had planted potatoes, rhubarb and onions. Within the outdoor areas children also had opportunities to develop their physical skills as they climbed trees, swang from rope swings and balanced on homemade balancing beams. Children also told us about the birds that had nested within a large drum in the playground. Staff had explained to them that the mummy bird had left the baby birds in the drum, and she was coming back to feed them and make sure they were safe. Children enjoyed "looking after" the birds. This supported children's understanding of nurture, attachment and responsibility.

We looked at floor books where children's learning and experiences they had been involved in were recorded. Children's reflections and thoughts about the experiences were included within the floor books. Staff used children's thoughts and ideas to extend and plan future learning experiences. This highlighted how staff valued and respected children. The learning recorded within the floor books linked to Education Scotland's curriculum for excellence experiences and outcomes. This supported and guided staff to gather children's achievements and show their progress. We reviewed evidence that children were progressing well because of the child centred planning approach being used by staff.

Staff planned and recorded children's learning on an online App which families had secure access to. We could see how parents had accessed the App and, on some occasions, made comment. The effective use of the App helped to involve parents and carers in their child's play, learning and development. We sampled children's progress and learning on the App. We found that staff posted photographs and descriptions of what activities children had been involved in. There were some inconsistencies around the quality of recording individual learning and progress. Linking the learning recorded in floor books to children's individual learning journals would provide further evidence of progression.

How good is our setting?

4 - Good

We evaluated this key question as good where several strengths impacted positively on outcomes for children and clearly outweighed areas for improvement.

Quality indicator 2.2: Children experience high quality facilities

Access to the Sgoil Àraich was through the secure buzzer entry of the school. Visitors to the service were met by a member of school or clerical staff prior to gaining access. They were required to sign in and out of the building. These procedures contributed to the safety of children in the Sgoil and the Sgoil Àraich.

Children were cared for in an environment that was warm, bright, and well maintained. The Sgoil Àraich had their own dedicated space within Sgoil an Lochdair. The Sgoil Àraich benefitted from shared space within the Sgoil. Areas such as the dining hall and outdoor play spaces were used well and respected by both Sgoil Àraich and Sgoil children. Access to these areas within the Sgoil helped children to become more familiar with the Sgoil. This supported smooth transitions and helped build children's confidence. One parent who provided feedback agreed with our observations stating "My child enjoys getting to have school lunches and to be able to access school dining hall. This will benefit her when making the transition to school in a couple of years."

Staff had worked hard to try to create a softer more nurturing environment in the playroom. The purchase of a sofa, cushions and rugs had created a softer more homely environment. One parent who provided feedback commented "Lovely, homely nursery room with a variety of resources and activities refreshed frequently." Other resources and play materials were of a high quality and well set out within the playroom to allow children the opportunity to move around the room confidently and chose resources which sparked their interest and curiosity. As a result children were engaged and curious within their learning environment.

We looked at how staff minimised and control the spread of infection within the setting. Infection, Prevention, and Control (IPC) policies and procedures were in place. For example, we observed staff and children practice effective hand washing at key points such as after personal care, being outdoors and before and after eating. This protected children and staff from the potential spread of infection.

Children accessed the outdoors via the main school entrance. Children enjoyed playing outdoors. We noticed that within the extensive areas available for play there were potential blind spots and more secluded areas where children could get to unnoticed. We could see that staff were vigilant in their supervision of children and risk assessments had been carried out. We asked the setting to continue to review and update their risk assessments to ensure that they reflected the changing risks and/or hazards. We asked that they pay particular attention to perimeter fences, gates and spaces where it would be easier for children to get to unnoticed. This is to ensure that children are safe and accounted for. We also discussed with the manager and local authority representative at feedback the playpark within the school grounds. They told us that the playpark had been deemed unsafe for use several years ago. The local authority should continue with the plans to reinstate and make safe the playpark. This would further enhance experiences for children outdoors.

How good is our leadership?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 3.1: Quality assurance and improvement are led well

Sgoil Àraich staff were very well supported by the head of school, who is the registered manager of the service. Staff also received support from a Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Early Years Support Officer. The manager was visible within the Sgoil Àraich and was committed to ensuring that children received the best experiences and outcomes at the service.

The compassionate approach to leading and supporting staff meant that staff felt valued and included in planning for improvements. Staff involvement in self-evaluation and reflection had led to the development of a highly reflective and responsive staff team. Their honest and transparent reflections enabled them to recognise where they were and what they needed to do to improve care, learning and experiences for children. As a result of this children received a high standard of care, learning and support.

Self-evaluation had taken place against key national documents and guidance such as, the national standard self-evaluation document, "How good is our early learning and childcare?" and the "Quality Improvement Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare sectors". Information from self-evaluation was used to identify strengths and areas for improvement. These linked with priorities in the service improvement plan. This meant a meaningful improvement plan was in place with relevant priorities for continuous improvement.

The management and staff team had come together with other services to share good practice, develop transition programmes, and further develop community links for children across the area. Peer monitoring across settings had led to effective moderation of services within the network. This had potential to develop high quality outcomes and experiences for children.

The management and staff team valued and respected the opinions of children and families to support improvement. Families were provided with a copy of the service's improvement plan on the school website. There were opportunities throughout the academic year for families to comment on improvement plan progress. Regular opportunities to provide feedback and make suggestions were available through questionnaires and meetings.

How good is our staff team?

5 - Very Good

We found significant strengths in aspects of the care provided and how these supported positive outcomes for children/people, therefore we evaluated this key question as very good.

Quality indicator 4.3: Staff deployment

Children benefitted from a small and established staff team who genuinely cared and loved the children. Staff were committed to ensuring that children received the best possible care and attention. They were kind, caring and nurturing in their approach and demonstrated positive team working. They modelled positive social interactions and were respectful and supportive of each other. This helped children to develop an understanding of relationships and promoted a happy and secure environment for children.

The setting was appropriately staffed each day to ensure the wellbeing of children in the service. The management team recognised the importance of ensuring adult child ratios were maintained. Effective arrangements were in place to ensure that occasional staff absences and vacancies caused minimal disruption to children's care. Effective staff deployment also ensured good supervision of children. For example, staff communicated when a task took them away from their responsibilities, ensuring children were safe.

Children benefitted from all staff being fluent Gàidhlig speakers. Throughout our visit we observed staff and children communicating in Gàidhlig. The staff team's commitment to immersion supported children's understanding and use of Gàidhlig.

Almost all staff were appropriately qualified; one member of staff was working towards gaining a childcare qualification. Staff had a good knowledge of child development. Staff were committed to their professional development ensuring they delivered a high-quality service and improved outcomes for children. Staff had engaged in some learning which included formal training, professional discussions, and self-directed reading. This supported staff to develop their knowledge and skills. As a result, children's care, play, and learning was informed by best practice and current research.

Parents who provided feedback were very positive about the staff team. They all strongly agreed that staff are nurturing and responsive to their child's needs. Some of their comments included:

"Consistent staff team means my child is very comfortable and at ease with adults looking after her." and
"Very much an open door policy where I feel I can contact staff easily with any concerns/updates."

Complaints

There have been no complaints upheld since the last inspection. Details of any older upheld complaints are published at www.careinspectorate.com.

Detailed evaluations

How good is our care, play and learning?	5 - Very Good
1.1 Nurturing care and support	5 - Very Good
1.3 Play and learning	5 - Very Good
How good is our setting?	4 - Good
2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	4 - Good
How good is our leadership?	5 - Very Good
3.1 Quality assurance and improvement are led well	5 - Very Good
How good is our staff team?	5 - Very Good
4.3 Staff deployment	5 - Very Good

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