Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
Ag Obair Còmhla Airson nan Eilean

Sgoil Àraich Thunga

Handbook

2026-2027









Respect – Honesty – Fairness – Resilience

Section 1: Failte – Welcome





Fàilte gu Sgoil Araich Thunga, far am bheil dà rùm ann. Tha aon rùm a foghlam tro meadhan na Gàidhlig aig na tràth ìrean agus a rùm eile a foghlam tro mheadhan Beurla le ion-chur Gàidhlig. Tha leabhar seo airson fiosrachadh a'thoir dhuibh mu dhiofar nithean co-cheangailte ris an Sgoil Àraich agus mu fhoghls, fo aois sgoile.

Welcome to Sgoil Àraich Thunga. There are two rooms within the setting, one which delivers the curriculum solely through the medium of Gaelic. The other room delivers the curriculum through the medium of English with some Gaelic input. This handbook aims to give you useful information about our nursery.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is dedicated to promoting and developing the Gaelic language which is a vital part of the culture and heritage of the Outer Hebrides. The Comhairle's provision of bilingual education is a key feature in te Comhairle's Gaelic Policy. The aims of formal education are to enable children who go through Gaelic Medium Education to become equally literate and fluent in the use of Gaelic and English and to make provision for all other children to have access to Gaelic in the curriculum.

The Comhairle also aims to enhance young people's awareness of the heritage and culture of their community through the formal and informal curriculum, aspiring to provide Gaelic Medium Education as the principal means of tuition in the first two years of primary school whilst maintaining a capacity for English Medium Education on an area basis. This is along with children entering early learning and childcare centres in the Western Isles having access to Gaelic Medium Education by actively promoting and supporting the availability of GME in every school catchment area, developing it in response to demand.

The aim is to increase the numbers of children entering GME by encouraging more parents to choose Gaelic education for their children, raising the importance of the home for acquiring Gaelic, ensuring practical support, resources and advice is available and that links are strengthened for passing Gaelic on to children in the home and in Gaelic early years' provision.



Our Staff



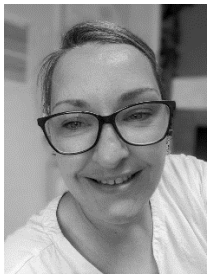
Mrs Maclean
Head Teacher

Gaelic Playroom



Donalda
Playleader

English Playroom



Dawn
Playleader



Lyndsey
Key Worker

Anna
Key Worker

Vacant
Modern Apprentice



Gemma
Key Worker

Clodagh
Key Worker

Olivia
Key Worker

The nursery is managed by the school Head Teacher, with the day-to-day running of the nursery delegated to Play Leaders.

All nursery staff are registered with the Scottish Services Council. This regulatory body ensures staff members have appropriate qualifications for their role and continue to update their knowledge and skills. All staff members are required to go through an enhanced Disclosure Scotland check or more recently through the 'Protecting Vulnerable Groups Scheme'(PVG)

Contact details:
tongschool@gnes.net
01851 822 873

Our Vision, Values, Aims and Curriculum Rationale



Our Vision:

Dèan do Dhìcheall - Be All You Can Be

Our Values:

Urram	Ceartas	Onorach	Seasmhachd
Respect	Fairness	Honesty	Resilience.

In Tong Primary School and Sgoil Àraich we develop happy and confident learners through our creative, challenging and flexible curriculum. A rich, meaningful, positive and bilingual environment will be nurtured through partnerships with parents and the wider community. Learners will be enriched by their local culture and heritage in preparation for life and work in an ever-changing society.

All children in Tong School and Sgoil Àraich should…

- Be cared for, with respect, no matter who you are.
- Have learning that is exciting and meaningful and builds our skills so we are ready for the challenges life may bring us.
- Celebrate our cultural identity, Gaelic language and how different we all are.
- Learn Gaelic so we can use it every day.
- Have learning that is developmentally appropriate and makes the best use of ICT to make it relevant and enjoyable.
- Help our community and have our community help us.
- Care for and use our local environment
- Be creative and curious in learning and learn how to be independent, confident and adaptable so we have the skills for life and work.
- Work in teams and be able to lead different parts of school life and learning.






SECTION 2

Admission

The nursery aims to ensure that the admission of children is fair and equitable and responsive to the needs of children, their parents and carers. Intakes of children are done throughout the year when space becomes available.

The nursery is open to children aged 2 - 5 years and is registered with the Care Inspectorate to provide a care service to a maximum of 24 children. Children aged 2 years can be enrolled at the group if they meet the requirement for statutory provision or if there is sufficient space. If demand for places outweighs supply priority will be given to children eligible for an early learning and childcare funded place. Children aged 2 years who are not eligible for a statutory place will only be able to attend as long as a space is available.

SESSION HOURS

We are open 8.30-5.30pm.
All 4 year olds and eligible 2 and 3 year olds are entitled to 1140 hours per year. High quality is at the heart of our ELC provision, as is providing the flexibility parents need to work, train or study.

You can choose to use your allocated hours as follows:

IN TERM-TIME ONLY (Sgoil Araich Thunga) (max of 30 hours per week for 38 weeks per year)	THROUGHOUT THE FULL YEAR (Term Time Sgoil Araich Thunga & Holiday Time Sgoil Araich Lacasdail) (max of 22.5 hours per week for 50 weeks per year, plus 15 hours to use ad-hoc)

Application Form, Parent Pack and Care Plan

An ELC application form will be issued on enquiry for a placement. A Parent Pack will be issued to parents on confirmation of a place at the nursery. Parents will also be issued with a Care Plan which will be completed along with a member of staff from the nursery. It is essential that all forms are completed by parent/guardian prior to the child attending the setting.

Enrolment and Eligibility for Early Learning and Childcare

Early Learning and Childcare enrolment usually takes place throughout the year, however there is an official enrolment in January/February on a date notified to parents by local press advertisement. Parents should be encouraged to enrol at this time for a place in the nursery during the coming year. Children who enrol in the nursery will be invited to spend an induction session in the nursery to experience a little of the nursery atmosphere and to meet the nursery staff. This usually takes place around the time of enrolment.

Criteria		Eligible From:
Where a child's 3rd birthday falls on or between these dates:	1st March – 31st August	August (Autumn Term) of that year
	1st September – 31st December	January (Spring Term) following their birthday
	1st January – last day February	April (Summer Term) following their birthday
OR where a 2 year old child's parent(s)/carer(s) are receiving out of work benefits or certain tax credits		The term following the child's 2nd birthday (for those already on benefits/tax credits) or the term following the date parent(s) become eligible for out of work benefits/tax credits
Or where a 2 year old child is Looked After in a Kinship Care placement, or lives with an appointed guardian (or has been since their 2nd birthday) Or a Parent was themselves Care Experiences eg Looked After		When arrangement are agreed and recorded as part of the Child's Plan. Please contact Early Years Office for more information on 01851 822 655

An advanced booking system operates to enable staff to make well planned provision for all children using the service.

Childcare Fees

Parents who use any wrap-a-round care will be invoiced monthly in arrears.
The preferred method of payment is by Direct Debit, or for CNES employees by payroll - relevant forms are available from the Education and Children's Services Department, Early Years Office. If you have any queries regarding methods of payment you are asked to contact the Early Years Office (01851822655). Failure to pay can result in the service no longer being available to your child.

Child Tax Credit/Universal Credit

You may be able to claim help with chilcare costs through Childcare Tax Credits – 0845300 3900

Tax-free childcare
• You can get up to £500 every 3 months (£2,000 a year) for each of your children to help with the costs of childcare.
• If you get Tax-Free Childcare, the government will pay £2 for every £8 you pay your childcare provider. This is paid via an online childcare account that you set up for your child.
• You can get Tax-Free Childcare at the same time as 30 hours free childcare if you're eligible for both.

What can you use Tax-Free Childcare for

You can use it to pay for approved childcare, for example:

- Childminders, nurseries and nannies
- Afterschool clubs and play schemes
- Home care agencies

We are signed up to Tax-Free Childcare.

Bookings and Cancellations

Priority will be given to children who are eligible for early learning and childcare funding. On enrolment parents will be asked to sign a parent contract and to indicate what days and hours are required. It is important that you read this contract carefully prior to signing as it outlines the conditions attached to your early learning and childcare place.

As detailed above, parents will be expected to pay for the days their child is booked in to the nursery whether they attend or not. This includes absence through sickness and holidays. The nursery does however have the discretion to reduce fees in the event of a child's long term sickness. The nursery manager will liaise with parents with regard to this.

Please note: Parents must give a 4 weeks' notice in writing when leaving the nursery or changing their contract. You may continue to be billed for your child's place if you fail to do so.

Holidays

For children on Term-time contracts their holidays will follow CNES school holidays calendar. No fee will be charged on these days.

For children on all-year contracts, holiday entitlement runs from 1st August - 31st July. For full-time and part-time places, parents are entitled to two weeks holiday leave which can be taken as and when required during the year, provided one month's notice is given, childcare fees will not be charged.

All year settings are closed for the Christmas/New Year holiday and for all Comhairle public holidays. No fee will be charged for these days.

Open day – Induction

We hold an open afternoon session when parents/carers or other family members can come in and visit the nursery and talk to staff. We advertise this on our social media and at local parent/toddler groups. You can complete application forms for enrolment or if your space is confirmed you can complete your parent pack.

SECTION 3: General Information

Key worker System
When your child starts in nursery they will be allocated a key worker and you will be notified who this is. This person is the main contact for any questions or updates about your child.

Attendance
ELC attendance is not compulsory, however for your child to get the best out their time with us, regular attendance is important. In the interests of child protection, if your child is ill and will not be attending please could you phone the school office and let us know. ***01851 822 873***

Signing in system
Parents/carers are asked to sign their child in on arrival at nursery and sign out on departure. Occasionally parents will forget to inform us of changes to their collection arrangements. In this circumstance we will telephone the parent to confirm the new arrangement before allowing the child to leave. You ensure your child does not arrive before their allocated time.

Illness
Our nursery staff require that you telephone them if your child is not able to attend nursery on a particular day. If your child becomes unwell we will contact you or your emergency contact and ask you to collect him/her as soon as possible. We follow the NHS guidance in regards to exclusions which can be found at https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Guidance_on_infection_control_in%20schools_poster.pdf

It should be noted that diarrhoea or vomiting illness requires children to be excluded for 48 hours from last episode of sickness and/ or diarrhoea.

Medical Information
You are asked to give details of any medical information relevant to your child on the form completed on enrolment. Any medical or dietary requirements are noted and all playroom workers are made aware of them. Please contact your child's keyworker if your child's medical details change at all.

Medication
If your child requires medication to be administered, you should discuss his/her requirements with your child's keyworker. Prescribed drugs, inhalers etc., require a permission form, which authorises staff to administer the medication to your child. Forms are available from a member of staff, or from the school office.
Please let us know if you have administered any form of medicine to your child prior to bringing them.

Minor Accidents and Upsets
Although we do our best to ensure that these are few and far between, realistically there will be occasions when they do occur. All our staff are highly trained and extremely sympathetic. They will comfort your child and deal with each incident as they see it. All staff are our trained first aiders. You will be informed of any minor accident and asked to sign the Accident Form which details any treatment given.

Prams and Buggies
We always like to welcome little brothers and sisters who visit, but our cloakroom is quite small and there is little room for prams and buggies. Please leave your pram outside on the ramp and carry your little one in.

Emergency closure
In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to close the nursery at short notice and send the children home - for example in particularly bad weather or if the electricity or heating system fails. Parents must make arrangements to have someone available to collect/care for their children should such an emergency occur. The nursery asks each parent to provide instructions, including the address and telephone number of a person who can be contacted in emergency circumstances. Please make sure that the nursery is informed of any change to a child's emergency contact information.

We have a Groupcall system which allows us to send automated messages to families for any reason, including notification of emergency closure. It is important that families ensure that the school always has up to date contact information for the sending of these messages.

Parents should also feel free to contact the nursery if they are concerned about the safety of their children because of deteriorating weather conditions and are free to collect their children at any time.

If there is to be a planned closure before the start of a normal nursery session

- A notice will be posted on the school Facebook page, Twitter page, school website and on the Local Authority website;
- Announcements will be made on local radio;
- The Groupcall message system will be used

Parking

Parking outside can be difficult, particularly around 9.00 a.m. and at 3.15 p.m. When dropping or picking up your child please park considerately, and be aware of children moving about the carpark if using the car park. Our car park operates a one-way system at peak hour which we kindly ask you adhere to. You may also use Morrison Terrace for drop off/pick up.

Toys

Sometimes children like to bring something special or a new toy to nursery for their friends to see, however parents should ensure that valuable items are not left at nursery, particularly as the authority has no insurance to cover the loss of such personal items.

While we support children bringing in 'transitional' objects from home to help them feel safe and secure we must make you aware that we cannot be held responsible if any items go missing. We encourage children to keep them in their own bags to keep them safe.

Clothing

Please ensure that your child attends nursery in clothes and shoes suitable for playing indoors and outdoors. We ask you supply a pair of wellies to keep in the nursery. We operate a free-flow environment where children have access to the outdoors throughout the session. While every effort is made to protect clothes, we cannot guarantee that children's clothes will remain clean. Please label all clothing/footwear.

Nappies

If your child is still in nappies please ensure you provide enough nappies and wipes for the duration of their stay at nursery. Also if your child is toilet training you must provide changes of clothing (underwear, socks and trousers) as accidents are still likely to happen. Soiled/dirty clothing will be bagged and placed in our collection box.

Snack and Lunch

We wish to encourage and educate children to adopt healthy eating habits and we do this through our choice of snacks. There is no charge for snack. If the children are funded they are entitled to a free school meal. Parents of unfunded children can opt to pay for a school lunch if they wish, they would just need to liaise with the school office. Children staying in the nursery over lunchtime can bring a packed lunch. Fridges have been installed to store the lunch boxes. Parents must clearly label their child's lunch box, containers and bottles/cups. We cannot reheat food or milk. No nuts, sweets or juice should be included. Children will be offered milk or water.

Sun Awareness

We ask you apply sun cream before their session, when needed. Parents should supply children with sun cream to top up through the day. Label their bottle with their name.

Notice Board

We maintain an information notice board for parents. Please check the notice board regularly and read the nursery policies which are also on display for your interest and information.

Photographs

Photographic and/or video recordings are made for educational purposes. Photos may also be taken for the local press. Permissions will be sought when completing your child's Care Plan
Parents will be informed when a school photographer will visit the nursery.

Outings

We frequently visit places of interest and attend events. Consent will be sought when your child begins nursery to cover all trips/outings.

Parent Council

The role of the Parent Council is to:

- Support the school/nursery in its work with parents
- Represent the views of all parents
- Encourage links between the school, parents, pupils, preschool groups and the wider community
- Report back to the Parent Forum (all parents are members of the Parent Forum).

Parents/Carers are encouraged to volunteer or put themselves forward to be chosen as representatives of the Parent Council. The Parent Council meets at least once a school term. All meetings are open and parents are welcome to attend. Meeting dates will be published following the AGM in June.

Communication

Throughout the session, information, events, activities, meetings or appointments are notified by Groupcall email, SeeSaw, school Facebook/X page, email and telephone contact.

Staff and pupils will share the learning of the children and notify you of class events via SeeSaw. We strongly encourage all parents to sign up to SeeSaw in order to keep in touch with what your child is learning on a day to day basis.

The School Office may from time to time contact parents through Groupcall SMS text message. This will be for urgent communications.

All parents/carers have the opportunity of face-to-face communication at Parents' meetings in November and May. Report cards will be distributed in March/April time. Where a child has an Individualised Education plan or Co-ordinated Support Plan, additional meetings may be arranged.

The Head Teacher has an 'open-door' policy between the times of 8.30am until 9am and 3.20pm until 4pm where parents can discuss any issues or concerns they may have. Alternative meetings can be arranged outside these times.

Additional Support Needs

Some children can have short- or longer-term additional needs and support in the early years could make life easier for the child going to school. We work alongside the Support for Learning Teacher to provide the appropriate support for children, based on children's need. You will be notified if your child has been referred to Support for Learning.

Transitions

We have a well-established Transition programme for pre-school children. A copy of our transitions policy is available in our policy section and in the nursery. Pre-school children begin their transition programme in Term 1 of their pre-school year as their class teacher visits the nursery.

COMPLAINTS, COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS PROCEDURE

We are keen that you should be completely satisfied about your child's education and we encourage feedback from parents and pupils. We are, therefore, interested in feedback of all kinds, whether it be compliments, suggestions or complaints. If you have a complaint about the nursery, please let us know. It is better that these things are shared openly and resolved fairly rather than being allowed to damage the relationship between the family and the nursery. There will be no negative consequences arising from making a complaint and we will deal with the issue as confidentially as possible. If we have made a mistake we will apologise quickly and clearly and try to put things right.

There are some things which you should take note of in relation to making a complaint:

- For day-to-day queries or questions contact your child's key worker or the Playleader.
- Please make any further or more formal complaints to the Head Teacher. This makes sure that the nursery knows what is going on and has an opportunity to respond and resolve the issue.
- If you are unhappy with the service or with our response, then you will have the right to take the matter further. You can put your complaint in writing or fill in a complaint form. Completed forms should be sent to: Director of Education, Skills and Children's Services, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Sandwick Road, Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, HS1 2BW.
- If you are still unhappy after further investigation and reply you can take the matter up with the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The reply will include the contact details.



Contact details:

Carol Ann Maclean
Head Teacher

Camacleod1u@gnes.net

01851 822 873

Section 4: Curriculum

The Nursery recognises the importance of delivering quality Early Learning and Childcare for young children, the importance of children's early experiences and how they are related to the quality of care that they receive. We are committed to providing a stimulating and challenging environment which will develop and broaden the learning experiences of babies and children in our care.

Recognising that children learn in a variety of different ways we believe that the following make powerful contributions to a child's learning: the opportunity to have first-hand experiences of a range of different activities and learning situations: the opportunities to play, the opportunities to talk, interact and socialise with other people.

The purpose of the curriculum at this early stage is to support children in all aspects of their emotional, social, cognitive and physical development. It should enable them to become increasingly independent, responsible and eager to progress in their learning.

Our Curriculum

Through our curriculum we aim to:

- Provide children with a variety of high-quality experiences according to their individual needs.
- Provide a good balance between activities initiated by children and those initiated by adults.
- Be responsive to children's need and interests and ensure progression in their learning and development.
- Use available space and resources imaginatively to enable children to work independently or collaboratively.
- Reflect the individual nature of our local community.

In planning our curriculum, we build on the holistic approach to curriculum design established in the Curriculum for Excellence and How Good Is Our Early Learning & Childcare: Self Evaluation in the Early Years.

We provide a flexible and stimulating environment to engage children in their learning through well planned interactive and challenging play. We believe that children learn best when they have scope for active involvement in a wide range of learning experiences. Curriculum for Excellence provides structure, support and direction to children's learning, enabling all children to become:

Successful Learners

Confident Individuals

Responsible citizens

Effective contributor

The experiences and outcomes at the early level will be used in suitable combinations to plan engaging, motivating and challenging activities. Taken together, as appropriate to the stage of development of each child, these activities should provide breadth of learning across the curriculum areas.

Further information is available from:

https://education.gov.scot/education-scotland/scottish-education-system/policy-for-scottish-education/policy-drivers/cfe-building-from-the-statement-appendix-incl-btc1-5/experiences-and-outcomes/

Realising the Ambition

Realising the ambition: Being Me (National practice guidance for early years in Scotland) was published in February 2020. This document has refreshed Building the Ambition to help support the further expansion to 1140 hours and improve the quality of our Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland.

This new guidance, Realising the Ambition: Being Me, reflects the original principles and philosophy of Building the Ambition and complements the current policy direction of ELC and early primary education. It aspires to support practitioners in delivering what babies and young children need most and how we can most effectively deliver this in Scotland to give children the best start in life.

The practice guidance aims to support anyone who works with and for babies and young children across all areas of Scotland. It has been designed to:

- build confidence and capability of those who work with children and families from pre-birth to starting school and beyond,
- make links between practice, theory and policy guidance to reinforce aspects of high-quality provision and the critical role practitioners play,
- clarify some aspects of current practice and provide a reference which practitioners can easily use,
- support improvement and quality by encouraging discussion, self- reflection and questioning about relevant practice in each setting, and,
- provide advice on achieving the highest quality of ELC and early primary provision that will enable young children to experience and to play their own part in Scotland being the best place in the world to grow up.

Planning the Curriculum

Planning, observation, record keeping, and assessment are used to ensure children's best interests are being served. Planning helps staff provide breadth and balance across the curriculum as well as setting out clear goals for children's learning and development. We also follow a child led approach in which it is flexible enough to respond to starting points indicated by the children themselves, or their parents or carers.

Through observing, talking to and listening to children, we will monitor and record individual children's progress and their next steps. The information gained is used to ensure that children's needs are being met and that they are being offered activities and experiences which are relevant, meaningful and suitably challenging.

An individual profile/Seesaw will be kept for each child that contains evidence about the child's experiences and learning. Parents/carers of the child should be encouraged to contribute to their content along with the child and staff. The information contained in the profiles should be shared with parents or carers informally during day-to-day activities, and formally at individual parent/carer meetings with a member of staff. These profiles are the property of the child and will be given to the child when he or she leaves the Nursery. Whilst the profile may be copied and sent to the child's receiving school information will not be disclosed to any other person without the consent of parents or carers.