

Scots' Richtfu Hame — the Clessruim!

(Scots Belongs in the Classroom!)

A Survey of the Approach to the Scots Language by Local Education Authorities.

*“Gonnae no ’poloqeese fur oor leid
's if it wur the Sassenach's puir relation,
a maiden lady saft in the heid
steid o a pretty lass strang an sure
wi hir creel o wirts claiiked wi meanin.”*

From “Gonnae No” by Rowena M. Love
(www.rowenamlove.co.uk, www.makarpress.co.uk)
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Quotes

“Of great benefit to encourage writing and language development.”

Aberdeenshire teacher’s response to Matthew Fitt workshop.

“The children really enjoyed themselves and can’t wait for the next one!”

Aberdeenshire teacher’s response to Buchan Heritage Society workshops.

Above reported by Bruce Robertson OBE, Director of Education, Learning and Leisure, Aberdeenshire Council.

“Teachers and pupils value the opportunity to engage with Scots in their classrooms and improvements in self-esteem and literacy are also apparent, in line with your comments.”

Anne Wilson, Director of Education, Dundee City Council.

“In Falkirk Council we recognise that teaching and promoting Scots language can remove barriers to learning, particularly for the less able and less confident child.”

Julia Swan, Director of Education, Falkirk.

“...highlighted how talking and writing in Scots can be a means of increasing pupils’ motivation to write and to write more extensively.”

Mike Rosendale, Head of Schools and Community Services, City of Edinburgh.

“Over recent years our cultural coordinators published a series of poems in Scots written by our own children. This was a highly effective programme which did much to break down misunderstandings of the use of Scots.”

Gordon McKinlay, Education Manager (Learning and Teaching) Renfrewshire.

“We encourage our probationer teachers to include dialect in their sessions, particularly if they are non dialect speakers themselves. The Shetland dialect is a good way into Shetland culture.”

Helen Budge, Head of Schools Service, Shetland Islands.

“... allows pupils to be confident and creative in their use of language, and allows them to further develop notions of language diversity.”

David Cameron, Director of Children’s Services, Stirling.

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Important Note: Acknowledgements and Disclaimer

The authors wish to express their thanks to all those who contributed the responses on which this report is based and to Rowena M. Love for granting permission for the use of an extract of “Gonnae No”. They also gratefully acknowledge the advice of Michael Hance of the Scots Language Centre, Dr Christine Robinson of Scottish Language Dictionaries and Prof James McGonigal of the University of Glasgow. Any errors or shortcomings, however, are the authors’ responsibility alone.

Time and resources did not permit this report to be shaped in the form of an academic paper or to incorporate an extensive review of the relevant literature. Those interested in a more academic perspective on the issues raised may wish to contact the advisors mentioned above.

The authors hope that this report will be of some use to the Scots Language Audit but it is intended primarily as an inspirational document. The authors trust that it will draw attention to the significant benefits associated with the introduction of the Scots language to Scottish classrooms (and, more broadly, into the educational experiences of young people in Scotland) and hope that it will assist the exchange of ideas with regard to how this might best be implemented.

Executive Summary

Concerns that UK school-leavers have poor language skills have been widely expressed. This may have implications for the country's economic success. Research overseas has demonstrated the multiple benefits of early exposure to a second language. After English, Scots is Scotland's second most widely spoken language, but it is often denigrated and Scots language institutions struggle to find funds. West Lothian's "Language at Letham" project demonstrated the existence of unwitting prejudice against Scots speakers amongst teachers, but when they were alerted to this, and Scots was introduced into the classroom, teachers, pupils and parents alike all responded enthusiastically and improvements in pupils' self-esteem, engagement and literacy were apparent.

Dr Bill Wilson, a member of the Scottish Parliament's Cross-Party Group on the Scots Language, wrote to all of Scotland's Local Education Authorities (LEAs) to alert them to the "Language at Letham" findings and to ask what they were doing to promote the Scots language in their schools.

The findings were encouraging. The "Language at Letham" experience has been confirmed in several LEAs and many were enthusiastic about Scots language in the classroom.

There are several joint projects involving LEAs, and LEAs and cultural bodies, and considerable expertise exists, the work of Matthew Fitt and Itchy Coo deserving special commendation. Sharing of best practice should be encouraged and, to facilitate this, ideas for improving Scots language provision and the LEAs where these are implemented are listed in the report.

The existence of distinctive regional dialects is an advantage with regard to the promotion of the Scots language in that it appears to enhance local identity, pride and self-esteem.

The Scots language undoubtedly *belongs in the classroom*. Improving Scots-language education would be a practical and effective way of improving the language skills (not least in English), academic attainment and wellbeing of Scottish pupils. It fits well into the "Curriculum for Excellence", readily being incorporated into cross-curricular projects.

Improving the status of, and funding for, the Scots language should be a priority for the Scottish Government.

Introduction

It has been demonstrated that the early learning of a second language has multiple academic benefits (Alberta Education website, undated; Areny and Van der Schaaf, 2000) but in recent years newspaper headlines have often reported the UK's poor record in language skills and business leaders bemoan the impact that this has on the competitiveness of UK businesses. It seemed sensible to investigate what approach schools are taking to Scotland's most widely spoken native language (other than English), and what implications the findings of such an investigation might have for the educational attainment of Scotland's young people, not least with regard to language skills in general.

Scots has all too often been denigrated and downgraded, and those who speak it made to feel inferior (Douglas, 1994). Bill Wilson highlighted the extreme nature of some of the bigoted views still found today in a speech he gave in the Scottish Parliament (Wilson, 2007). The Scottish Arts Council's recent decision to cut the funding for Scottish Language Dictionaries and the Scots Language Centre suggests that, to this day, the Scots language may be undervalued. However, West Lothian's "Cuddy Brae: Language at Letham" project revealed the benefits of introducing Scots into the primary school curriculum (Itchy Coo *et al.*, 2007). It found that teachers had unconsciously held negative attitudes towards the language but when they were alerted to this they took immediate steps to remedy the situation. The introduction of Scots into the curriculum brought improvements in pupils' self-esteem and literacy skills and the project received a universally positive response, from teachers, parents and pupils (as would be expected from similar work overseas).

Dr Bill Wilson (who, as a child, was given the tawse for speaking Scots in the classroom¹) wrote to the directors of education of Scotland's local education authorities to bring the "Language at Letham" project to their attention and to ask them whether the subject of discrimination against Scots speakers and/or the benefits of introducing a Scots language element into the classroom are broached in the course of their teachers' in-service days and, if not, whether they would consider doing so. (A sample letter may be found in the Annex A.)

¹ As was the case for many children who spoke Scots or Gaelic.

Responses

Summary of LEA responses

The vast majority of responses were good, and most of the few LEAs that did not provide details of Scots language programmes nonetheless appeared to be receptive to the idea of improving their Scots language provision. A few responses are singled out for comment below.

Aberdeenshire's comprehensive and enthusiastic response was unique in that Bruce Robertson reported that he had spoken Doric at public events. Also encouraging was the integration with/awareness of the work of other organisations in the region, and the development of a CPD programme in conjunction with **Aberdeen City** and **Moray**.

The **City of Edinburgh**'s response, like Aberdeenshire's, showed how exposure to the Scots language could be imaginatively integrated with other learning experiences. The key description here would be "innovative cross-curricular practice".

Dumfries and Galloway's response also had unique aspects, such as the proud reporting of a fifteen-year history of promoting the Scots language in its schools and the publication of a book featuring pupils' work in English, Scots and Gaelic.

Dundee City reported how the Scots language was being widely promoted at both the primary and secondary levels, and integrated with storytelling, drama and music. Also impressive was the provision of Scots master classes. The benefits seen, in terms of pupils' self-esteem and literacy, perhaps explain Dundee's enthusiasm.

East Lothian's response, like that of Aberdeenshire, revealed a recognition of the importance of authority figures modelling the use of the language, and, as did the City of Edinburgh, expressed the view that the Scots language should not be restricted to a single-subject ghetto.

Falkirk, like Dundee, explicitly recognises the spin-off benefits of promoting the Scots language in the classroom, and has a unique strategy to provide all its teachers with awareness and skills in this area.

Inverclyde and **Renfrewshire** deserve mention for holding a joint literacy forum of which a major focus was the use and encouragement of Scots in classroom.

Shetland had investigated the adequacy of its provision for education in the Shetland dialect and in response had developed a range of teaching resources. Like several other councils it is integrating the promotion of the language with other activities. It appears to be uniquely aware (perhaps with the exception of West Lothian Council) of the attitude of its teachers to Scots (Shetland dialect), having surveyed this. Perhaps also unique is the fact that 62 % of its teachers speak Scots (Shetland dialect) and the fact that it specifically encourages probation teachers, especially those who do not speak Shetland dialect, to organise activities in the dialect. The emphasis on a “contemporary take” on the dialect also deserves praise.

Apart from having a good Scots programme in its primary schools, **South Lanarkshire** emphasises the importance of a positive attitude to the language in its probationer teachers.

West Lothian’s “Language at Letham” project was the inspiration for this survey. Clearly this council is outstanding in its awareness of the benefits of promoting the Scots language as well as of the damaging nature of prejudice against it, albeit that such prejudice may often be subconscious.

Some Ideas for Improving Scots Language Provision Reported by LEAs

Idea	Local Education Authorities where implemented (not exhaustive!)
Apply for a graduate placement to research and improve the availability of resources	Shetland
Obtain baseline data: survey teachers and pupils' attitudes to Scots	West Lothian (and, to some extent, Shetland)
Study the impact of a Scots language programme on pupils (...teachers, parents)	West Lothian
Explicitly offer to share experience with other LEAs	West Lothian
Alert teachers to the importance of a positive attitude to Scots	South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire, West Lothian
Collaborate with musicians	Aberdeenshire, Dundee City, Shetland
Collaborate with local historical/cultural societies	Aberdeenshire
Collaborate with local theatres/drama groups	Dundee City
Collaborate with other LEAs	Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray; Inverclyde and Renfrewshire
Invite writers to schools	City of Edinburgh Dumfries and Galloway (and Poet's Chair for Pupils idea)
Publish pupils' work in Scots	Dumfries and Galloway (book of new writing from schools included Scots contributions), Renfrewshire (published pupils' poetry)
Translate literary works from English (or other languages) into Scots	Dundee City (translated fairytales)
Provide/develop drama/story-telling resources	Dundee City, Inverclyde, Shetland
Engage in miscellaneous cross-curricular work	City of Edinburgh (film project)
Adults model the use of Scots in various contexts	Aberdeenshire, East Lothian, Shetland
Train teachers to act as authority leaders in every "cluster" of schools	Falkirk
Use Scots in multiple subject areas	Dundee City, East Lothian, Fife, Shetland
Run master classes for senior pupils	Dundee City

Discussion

General considerations

The picture is encouraging, with most Local Education Authorities (LEAs) giving good (or excellent) responses. A caveat when interpreting the less comprehensive responses is that in some cases these might reflect the time pressures on the respondent and the knowledge of the subject possessed by that individual. It cannot be assumed that many good things are not happening in schools in those LEAs that sent shorter replies. Clearly, however, the better responses, detailing many Scots language activities LEAs are engaged in, may be assumed to be accurate. In summary, the situation may, if anything, be even better than represented by the responses received.

Parity with Gaelic?

It is right and proper that Gaelic education be properly resourced, but if Gaelic education receives considerable support in its heartlands and significant support even in areas where Scots is a more widely spoken minority language (there are Gaelic-medium schools in many regions of Scotland, and Gaelic is available as a language option in many English-medium schools), it is surely right that Scots should also be widely supported. Parity would appear to be a long way off but, in view of the benefits of promoting the Scots language reported elsewhere in this document, and without seeking to take anything away from the support Gaelic enjoys, it would be good to see the gap reduced.

No discrimination?

Some respondents blandly asserted that there was “no discrimination against Scots speakers” but provided no convincing evidence to support this. As the “Language at Letham” report demonstrated, discrimination may be unconscious and go undetected, and therefore unchallenged, unless it is specifically looked for.

Spin-off benefits confirm “Language at Letham” findings

The survey has confirmed the spin-off benefits of learning Scots identified by West Lothian’s “Language at Letham” project. The quotations listed at the beginning of this report reflect the enthusiasm with which both teachers and pupils respond to the introduction of Scots into the classroom.

The importance of enhancing children’s “self-esteem” has been pooh-poohed in certain circles, but the relationship between enhanced self-esteem

and classroom participation and academic performance was underlined by the responses from several LEAs, and improvements in literacy noted. These findings are in line with the work in other countries referred to in the Introduction (Alberta Education website, undated; Areny and Van der Schaaf, 2000).

In the course of discussing an early draft of this report an advisor expressed the view that it is crucial for children's future employability and education that they develop a solid grasp of English and that this is facilitated by an intellectual understanding of language variety within social contexts and a confidence of identity. Even were this narrow outcome the only one of interest, many of the LEAs' responses suggest that recognising the Scots linguistic experience of children would be advantageous.

Regional dialects a plus

Three of the better responses came from areas with distinctive regional dialects: Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Shetland. In fact, in the case of Aberdeenshire the response suggested that there might be some doubt as to the identity of Doric as a dialect of Scots, and in Shetland the local language tends to be referred to as "Shetland dialect" rather than as "the Shetland dialect of Scots", reflecting, undoubtedly, the strong regional identity of the inhabitants of Shetland.

The association of distinctive dialects with enthusiastic reports of the benefits of Scots suggests that the existence of various dialects could well be a positive factor rather than the obstacle it is often misrepresented to be. While the absence of standardised Scots might wrongly be used as an argument against the validity of the existence of Scots as a language, or to protest the impracticality of teaching it (arguments that would equally apply to English²) the diversity of the language could well be a major asset, assisting its enthusiastic uptake by teachers and pupils in each of the regions. (Comparative word-collecting exercises, under the aegis of Scots Language Dictionaries, for example, could prove to be exciting inter-school projects.) It seems likely that pride in regional identity, contributed to by the recognition and promotion of local dialects, makes a significant contribution to the self-esteem spin-off benefits of introducing Scots to the classroom.

The modelling of the use of Scots and its use in all subject areas

The responses of several LEAs (or, at least, of several of the people replying to Dr Wilson's letter on their behalf) state or imply that they believe that for the introduction of Scots into schools to be fully effective (and, therefore,

² A language with many regional and national dialects and spelling variations.

for the associated benefits to be maximised) the use of the language should be modelled by teachers/authority figures, and that its use should extend beyond those classes specifically allocated to language. What would be wrong with a teacher in a maths class saying “twa an twa mak fower”, for example? The “Curriculum for Excellence” is, in any case, in favour of cross-curricular projects. The responses of Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Shetland are good examples of this point of view, and East Lothian’s response explicitly makes these points.

Matthew Fitt and Itchy Coo

Most of the responses mentioned the sterling work of Matthew Fitt and Itchy Coo publications. While Mr Fitt is undoubtedly to be praised, several related questions suggest themselves. Is it healthy that so much should apparently rest on one man’s shoulders? Can he adequately promote the Scots language in all of Scotland’s LEAs? Is Itchy Coo adequately resourced, especially if Scots language provision is to be enhanced in Scottish schools?

Conclusions and Recommendations

- The Scots language undoubtedly *belongs in the classroom* where its introduction brings multiple benefits. It fits very well into the “Curriculum for Excellence”, readily being incorporated into cross-curricular projects.
- Most of Scotland’s LEAs are engaged in promoting the Scots language to some extent, but there is room for improvement. Annex B lists some of the ideas gleaned from the responses received.
- There are already several joint projects involving LEAs, and LEAs and cultural bodies, and considerable expertise exists (in LEAs and their schools, in other organisations, such as the Buchan Heritage Society, Dundee Rep Theatre, Itchy Coo and Shetland ForWirds, and in individuals, such as musicians Maria Millar and Sheena Wellington). Such projects could be rolled out more widely, and those LEAs identified as “outstanding” in this report could surely share their experience with others. (Indeed, Val Brodie of Letham Primary School in West Lothian has explicitly offered to do so.) Annex B may be of some assistance to LEAs seeking to improve their Scots language provision by learning from others.
- The work of Matthew Fitt and Itchy Coo deserves special mention, having great impact and being highly valued, but it is hard to imagine

that they can be anything but stretched very thin. Do they require more resources?

- The existence of distinctive regional dialects is an advantage with regard to the promotion of the Scots language, in that it appears to enhance local identity, pride and self-esteem.
- In summary, it would appear that improving Scots-language education, with the demonstrated spin-off linguistic (and other) benefits that this would have, would be a practical and effective way of raising the linguistic (and other) capabilities of Scottish youngsters. Mechanisms for the sharing of best practice should receive attention. Arguably, Scotland is doing a reasonable job at promoting another of its minority languages (Gaelic). Improving the status of, and funding for, the Scots language too should be a priority for the Scottish Government.

References

Alberta Education website, undated. Available from WWW:
<http://education.alberta.ca/teachers/resources/learnlang/benefits.aspx>
[cited 1 October 2008]

Extract from above website:

Benefits of Second Language Learning

The *Impact of Second Language Education* study shows the benefits of learning a second language are much broader than simply the ability to speak in another language. It reports on research that affirms the importance of second language education on intellectual potential, scholastic achievement, first language skills, citizenship and the economy.

The research conclusions in each area are as follows:

Intellectual Potential

- Students fluent in two language score higher in both verbal and non-verbal intelligence.
- Students studying a second language are superior in divergent thinking tasks and in memory ability and attention span.

Scholastic Achievement

- Second language students have higher test scores in reading, language and mathematics.
- Each additional year of second language training created a greater positive differential compared to students not receiving a second language.

Effect on First Language

- Second language education significantly strengthens first language skills in areas of reading, English vocabulary, grammar and communication skills.
- The earlier the start, the greater the positive effect on the first language.

Citizenship

- Students studying a second language have superior cross-cultural skills and adapt better to varying cultural contexts.
- Students studying a second language display greater cultural sensitivity.

Economic Potential

- There is an urgent requirement for qualified speakers of languages other than English in areas of science, technology, medicine and global commerce. [**N.B.** *This comment should not be read in isolation and taken to be irrelevant in view of the fact that Scots is not widely spoken outwith the UK. As the reference below shows, pupils exposed at an early age to more than one language are better at acquiring others. In other words, early exposure to both English and Scots will improve the acquisition of other languages, not hamper it.*]

Areny, M. and Van der Schaaf, A., 2000, 'Catalan. The Catalan language in education in Catalonia, Spain.'

Mercator-Education. Available from WWW:

http://www1.f.a.knaw.nl/mercator/regionale_dossiers/PDFs/catalan_in_spain.pdf [cited 1 October 2008].

Extract from above website:

Since the beginning of the 1990s, experiments have been conducted with immersion courses and a foreign language. So far, these experiments show promising results, as children hold to the same level of the first language and the second language or surpass students in equivalent courses. This means that trilingual education affects the learning or acquisition of other languages positively. An important precondition is quality and a threshold level of teacher proficiency in the target language (Artigal, 1995:178).

Douglas, S., 1994, 'The Scots Language and its European

Roots' (extract from an edited version of a paper which Dr Sheila Douglas gave at the Robert Gordon University's Heritage Conference).

Available from WWW:

<http://www.scotslanguage.com/books/view/2/540/The%20Scots%20Language%20and%20its%20European%20Roots> [cited 15 July 2007].

Extract from above website:

There is also the equally mistaken theory that Scots is a "corrupted" form of English. This word carries with it a suggestion of inferiority that cannot be reconciled with the fact that our so-called "corrupted" language has from very early times produced a literature of the very highest quality, from the Medieval Makars to Hugh MacDairmid and beyond. The people who hold this viewpoint can never explain how the language came to be "corrupted" or even what exactly they mean by the word and why that makes it inferior. In linguistic terms of course, it is meaningless, but of course linguistic terms are not what these critics have in mind. What they are expressing are social and political prejudices that come from their blinkered view of their country in its European context. It is noteworthy that those who claim Scots is just a form of English are often the same people who say they cannot understand anyone who speaks Scots, even if it is only Scots-accented English. If it isn't all that different, why is it so hard to understand? If they can't understand it, perhaps it's because it has for example, so many Scandinavian words in it. I shall return to this point in due course.

First, I want to denounce the poisonous racism inherent in the system by which generations of Scots have been taught to reject their own language. "Speak properly" has long meant for Scottish school-children "Speak English". This is a monstrous piece of cultural oppression and something I am glad to report our Universities and schools are beginning to banish from their curricula. To speak of the three I know about - there may be others - Professor Graham Caie of Glasgow University who significantly has experience of living and working in Denmark, devotes a considerable amount of time to teaching Scots, as does Professor Charles Jones of Edinburgh University, and Derrick McClure and Caroline Macafee at Aberdeen University. All this means we are likely to get more language teachers in our schools who know something about Scots. The Scots which students in these three Universities bring with them is accepted and studied instead of being regarded as something to be eliminated. But as I know from experience, those teachers who at present try to teach Scots language and literature in our schools are still up against barriers of prejudice and ignorance among teachers and parents. Often work with pupils is made more difficult by the influence of the home, as well as the ethos of the school, which may both be resolutely opposed to Scots. During my teaching career I had to disabuse quite a lot of my pupils of the idea that Scots is some kind of slang and I experienced more than once the use of Scots intended as a form of insolence. These were quite easy things to deal with. One can easily explain the difference between slang and dialect, show the long history of the usage of Scots in literature and defuse attempts at making speaking Scots a way of giving cheek by switching the conversation into Scots.

But to get people to understand that Scots is a living language to be proud of, one has to try to help them to grasp the nature of language itself, which is not so easy to do. Present day Scots is often described as "eroded" or "diluted", as if there were something unnatural about this. But it is part of a natural process, akin to that which affects the landscape. To say Scots is different from what it was one or two hundred years ago is of course true: a living language does not stay the same; it changes constantly, and you can't put the clock back or stop it. All languages evolve, losing words that are no longer needed and acquiring words for new ideas, inventions or purposes.

Itchy Coo, Glasgow University and Literature in Learning, 2007, 'CUDDY BRAE: LANGUAGE AT LETHAM, The Scots Language in a Scottish Primary School'. Available from WWW: <http://www.scottishbooktrust.com/node/15938> [cited 15 July 2007].

Wilson, W.L., 2007, 'MSP "Invents" Ban on Indigenous African Languages to Illustrate Discrimination Against Scots.' Available from WWW: http://www.billwilsonmsp.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=61&Itemid=2 [cited 2 October 2008].

Annexes

Annex A. Example of Letter Sent

Dear Mr _

In-service days and the Scots language.

Scots has all too often been denigrated and downgraded, and those who speak it made to feel inferior. You may be aware of the “Cuddy Brae: Language at Letham” project which revealed the benefits of introducing Scots into the primary school curriculum. It found that teachers had unconsciously held negative attitudes towards the language. The teachers took immediate steps to change things and the project received a universally positive response from teachers, parents and pupils alike, and brought improvements in self-esteem and literacy skills. One of the children said, ‘I dinnae like daeing that much writing, but in Scots I like doing words and all that.’ (If you are not convinced by the “Language at Letham” project, the benefits of multilingualism have been demonstrated elsewhere, for example with respect to Catalan and Castilian in Catalonia.)

With the above in mind, I would like to know whether the subject of discrimination against Scots speakers and/or the benefits of introducing a Scots language element into the classroom are ever broached during your teachers’ in-service days? If not, would you consider it?

Should you require further information on Scots feel free to visit my website and search “Scots language” using the “exact phrase” option. If you would like to talk to me about this feel free to give me a call. In the meantime, I look forward to receiving your response to this letter.

Aefauldlie

Dr Bill Wilson MSP

Annex B. Summaries of Local Education Authorities' Responses

Summaries of individual responses are given below. For the sake of brevity many of these are given in note form rather than full grammatical sentences. As Gaelic (*Gaidhlig*) rather than Scots is the minority language of most importance in Highland and the Western Isles the responses from these regions have been indicated by a superscript 'G'.

Aberdeen City

No response received but see mention by Aberdeenshire Council.

Aberdeenshire

Response from Bruce Robertson, OBE, Director of Education, Learning and Leisure:

Several CPD [Continuing Professional Development] sessions ran in 2007 with involvement of Matthew Fitt with very positive outcomes and an enthusiastic response from participating teachers (supporting quotes provided).

Working with colleagues from **Moray and Aberdeen City** to present a more ambitious CPD programme in 2008 (details provided).

Informal CPD provided by the Buchan Heritage Society (details and supporting quotes provided).

Arts Education Team supports considerable range of Doric/Scots work through music (details provided).

Notes: Seems to be some confusion regarding Doric/Scots, not realising former is dialect of latter. Mr Robertson has addressed the Education Committee and a whole school in Doric.

Angus

Response from David S. Sawers, Chief Executive:

I am happy to reassure you that the Scots language is given appropriate priority in our schools. The detailed planning of In-Service days is left to our Head Teachers.

I hope this brief response is helpful.

Argyll and Bute

Response from Ronald M. Gould, Head of Service, Secondary Education and Pupil Support.

All of our schools include activities on aspects of the Scots language. This is done through studies of the poetry and songs of Robert Burns and a variety of other authors.

The topic of discrimination against the Scots language has not been broached as a topic during in-service days.

Our schools welcome and celebrate diversity, and it is authority policy that culture and language do not become barriers to participation and achievement.

We are committed to engaging our teachers with the language and literacy outcomes and experiences of Curriculum for Excellence. Within this framework there are clear opportunities for our schools to further enrich and diversify their languages curriculum with the study of Scots.

City of Edinburgh

Reply received from Mike Rosendale, Head of Schools and Community Services. Long, detailed and positive response. Thanks Bill Wilson for reminder of importance of combating discrimination and prejudice.

Use many Scots texts in schools. New set of Scots texts for younger pupils, incl. nursery age, recently purchased.

“Writers in schools” scheme, writing workshops, innovative cross-curricular practice (e.g. senior media studies students at Portobello High given brief to tell story of someone who lived/lives in Edinburgh in Scots — resulted in film on Burke and Hare), at Carrick Knowe Primary Scots language is key priority next session with working party developing whole-school approach, Clovenstone Primary studies Burns’ life and poetry as part of award-winning Enterprise in Education work which was focus of BBC Scotland programme...

Various initiatives involving Matthew Fitt. Note especially project with boys at Sighthill Primary: “...highlighted how talking and writing in Scots can be a means of increasing pupils’ motivation to write and to write more extensively.”

Clackmannanshire

Response from Raymond Young, CPD Coordinator:

...fully support the teaching and use of the Scots language in schools.

There is no discrimination....

CPD... includes access for teachers to Scots language and culture programmes.

One of our headteachers, Ms Alice Dunphy, St Mungo's RC PS, is recognised nationally for her commitment to the Scots language and is regularly called on to help judge submissions for Scottish Saltire awards.

If you require any further more detailed information do not hesitate to contact me.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles)^G

Bill Wilson had a conversation with a representative on 28 August who confirmed that the main minority language in the region is Gaelic and that the LEA was giving its full support to this language.

Dumfries and Galloway

Response from Keith Best, Operations Manager (Quality Improvement and Support).

Reassuring and comprehensive response, which included details of the CPD programme (Matthew Fitt), their Poet's Chair for pupils idea, a book showcasing new writing from schools in Dumfries and Galloway (including writing in Scots) and this statement:

In Dumfries and Galloway schools the Scots language has been given a much higher prominence and has been valued over the last 15 years and will continue to [be] so within the context of a curriculum for excellence for the foreseeable future.

Dundee City

Response from Anne Wilson, Director of Education.

Excellent response with details of partnership projects and interactive training sessions (Matthew Fitt, James Robertson) and master classes in Scots language for senior pupils.

Other points from the letter:

Scots is now an integral part of the Higher syllabus.

...translation of traditional fairytales into Dundonian Scots.

opportunities in all of our primary schools for our young people to tell tales in their “mither tongue”

Launching storyboxes from nursery to P7 which promote the use of Scots language and culture...

Literacy Reduced Contact Teachers all received training in Scots as a medium for self-esteem and self-expression.

HMIe report: “There was now a very good focus on Scots Language in the school”.

Drama: Playhouse Project — drama in Scots in partnership with Dundee Rep

Music: Sheena Wellington working in one school to create a contemporary repertoire of Scots music/song.

Teachers and pupils value the opportunity to engage with Scots in their classrooms and improvements in self-esteem and literacy are also apparent, in line with your comments.

East Ayrshire

Response from Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service: Schools.

At present no explicit programme [...] worth considering and I will raise it with Head Teachers during the next Head Teachers’ meeting

East Dunbartonshire

Response from John Simmons, Head of Education:

No plans to introduce a compulsory Scots element into all schools... May be reviewed when draft outcomes for Literacy and English have been reviewed at national level.

Begun to look at possible in-service providers for the coming session. Matthew Fitt has worked with one secondary school.

Equality and discrimination in all forms are addressed through the local East Dunbartonshire Council on Equality and Fairness.

East Lothian

Email response from Don Ledingham, Acting Director of Education and Children's Services (followed from telephone discussion):

Dear Bill

It was good to speak to you on the phone. I've attached a link to my Learning Log where I explored the idea of a cultural rucksack - coincidentally my previous post on my Log included some Scots.

The teaching of Scots takes place in all of our schools and is encouraged in both the written and spoken forms.

We hope that through our emerging Scottish Cultural Strategy we can ensure that all teachers see that they have role to play in encouraging our language - *regardless of the subject they are teaching. I think another key point is that leaders at every level model the behaviour by using Scots in their communication with staff and parents.* [Our emphasis.]

Regards

Don Ledingham

<http://edubuzz.org/blogs/donsblog/>

East Renfrewshire

No response received, despite reminders.

Falkirk

Response from Julia Swan, Director of Education:

Matthew Fitt's work in a Falkirk school contributed to government's recognition of the place of the Scots language in the curriculum.

In Falkirk Council we recognise that teaching and promoting Scots language, which many children use confidently and comfortably, can remove barriers to learning, particularly for the less able and less confident child.

To ensure *all* schools in Falkirk Council area provide this experience:

One primary teacher in each cluster and two secondary English teachers to be trained by Matthew Fitt and form community of learning, acting as authority leaders in this area. No other authority in Scotland has this approach to skill their staff in teaching Scots.

Fife

Response from Nora Conlin, Education Officer.

No discrimination against the use of Scots within Fife schools.

Scots language and culture taught within English language curriculum and in other areas (*e.g.* social subjects, enterprise education).

As our children and young people grow and develop, an increased appreciation of Scotland's vibrant literary heritage and indigenous languages will also be an important part of their experiences.

Fife schools have been strong in promoting Scots language and drama. All use a range of Scottish texts.

Gives various examples of ways in which Fife children are exposed to and practise Scots (*incl.* Matthew Fitt).

“I will discuss the contents of your letter with the Learning and teaching Officer (Literacy). if you wish to explore the subject further so not hesitate to contact me.”

Glasgow City

Brief response from Margaret Doran, Exec. Director of Education and Social Work Services.

Glasgow has not offered in-service training on the specific subject. [...]. We would consider doing this within our staff development programme.

We have recently appointed two Quality Improvement Officers to lead developments in literacy. I will pass them a copy of your letter highlighting your website.

Highland^G

Response from Hugh Fraser, Director of Education, Culture and Sport.

Notes that council has significant commitment to Gaelic but feel it is also important that pupils have opportunities to appreciate the wider range of Scottish language, heritage and culture.

Celebrated Highland Year of Culture which “explored the diversity of a range of languages and heritage not only in Highland but in Scotland as a whole” etc.

Inverclyde

Response from Ian Fraser, Corporate Director, Education and Social Care.

Delighted to update you about a new initiative which is currently underway in Inverclyde and one which will be showcased at next week’s Scottish Learning Festival at the SECC.

In response to a curriculum for excellence [...] and building upon good practice established during Matthew Fitt’s series of mini-residencies in Inverclyde schools, we have been developing a Scots language resource entitled *When We Find the Gowd* [...] a photocopiable resource which aims to provide a framework for developing knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of Scots language [...]. It contains a series of lessons covering first, second and third levels (approx P2 – S2) supported by topic appropriate glossaries and some pupil materials.

We are excited about this new programme [...] and are looking forward to seeing the children and young people in our schools enjoying and benefiting from the learning opportunities provided by *When We Find the Gowd*.

Midlothian

Response from Donald S. MacKay, Director, Education and Communities.

Subject has not been discussed but happy to consider doing so. In-service courses for primary staff have been arranged on

“Rhymes, Sangs and Poems, An Introduction to the Scots Language”, presented by Matthew Fitt.

Moray

Response from George M Sinclair, Head of Educational Development Services.

Have had small amount of in-service provision on the Scots language. Have policy on the teaching of Scots language and Scottish culture although it is dated and will be updated under a wider literacy policy in 2009. Nevertheless, schools do link aspects of their work to Scots.

North Ayrshire

Response from Carol Kirk, Corporate Director (Educational Services).

Good and concise response, noting more than ten past, present and future initiatives. (Note Matthew Fitt’s extensive involvement!)

We take a very inclusive approach...

North Lanarkshire

Brief response from David Craig, Education Officer (Learning & Leisure Services)

Development of Scots language is one that is highly valued in Lanarkshire

Lanarkshire Council’s QIO Peter McGhee has worked directly with Matthew Fitt.

“In speaking to Peter, I know he plans to raise your letter with his Principal Teachers at his next Business Meeting and encourage the positive use of your website.”

Orkney

Brief telephone discussion on 28/8/08 with Clerical Assistant with Melanie Slater as no response to initial letter received.

Sent a link to the “Integrated Children’s Services Festival CPD”, in which there is no specific mention of Scots although several language and literacy-related workshops are listed. A reply may

still come from the Director of the Education and Recreation Department, Leslie Manson, to whom she said she would speak.

Perth and Kinross

Response from John Fyffe, Executive Director (Education and Children's Services):

Much good and very good work already exists in our schools with regards to the learning and teaching of Scots.

[...]

Our Literary Development Group is currently working to further develop the newly published draft national outcomes and experiences for English Language and Literacy for use in all Perth and Kinross schools, part of which is Scots and Scots text.

I have passed on the information about the project you describe to our Literacy Development Officer for discussion within the Reference Group at a later date.

Renfrewshire

Reply from Gordon McKinlay, Education Manager (Learning and Teaching).

Currently considering implications of draft literacy outcomes for curriculum for excellence. Using this as impetus for review of own literacy strategy. Become apparent that all aspects of literacy need to be addressed including use of Scots in classroom.

Held literacy forum with Inverclyde Council. Major focus was on use and encouragement of Scots in classroom.

Over recent years cultural coordinators published poems in Scots written by our children. Was highly effective, did much to break down misunderstandings of the use of Scots.

Although at early stages, keen to support and enhance provision of Scots language within curriculum and provide professional development opportunities for our teachers.

Scottish Borders

Reply from Helen Ross, Acting Primary Schools Manager (on behalf of Director away on leave).

For a number of years we have advocated the involvement of our pupils in Scots language.... Some teachers have been involved in training courses. Most schools have advice on teaching Scots language in their policies and guidance.

Although a number of resources were introduced a few years ago, for example the excellent CCC publication 'The Kist', [...] not aware of anything new [...].

Not previously aware of Letham but will research this further and pass on information to my Headteacher colleagues. Also intend to visit your website.

Shetland Islands

Reply from Helen Budge, Head of Schools Service, Education and Social Care Department.

“Research [by Shetland ForWirds] uncovered a lack of easily accessible resources available for teachers to use in Shetland dialect. [We] applied for a Graduate Placement to carry out further research and following this research create[d] new dialect resources aimed primarily at pre-school and Early Years.

New resources include:

‘Ditty Box’ – Pre-school resource packed full of dialect stories, poems and songs with corresponding activity sheets and additional materials including a CD.

‘Gaer Box’ – Early years resource similar to above including original art work by local artists.

‘Play Box’ – Everything needed to put on a dialect play including costumes, scenery, sound and stage directions. [The two plays, for different age groups] are written in dialect by Marsali Taylor who is available to go out to schools [...].

‘Dialect Singing’ for primary school children funded by Youth Music Initiative provided by local musician Maria Millar.

[Pre-school research in 2006 suggested 42% of children speak Shetland dialect and 62 % of staff.] The main aim however is to make children feel comfortable using whatever dialect and accent

they are familiar with, and to enable them to communicate effectively with adults and other children to the best of their ability.

An area that was highlighted in the pre-school research covered children's reaction to spoken dialect. Comments included:

“Some English children will try to use Shetland words” (or vice versa)

“Those who have non-Shetland speaking parents often do not understand broad Shetland”

“They don't comment on others speaking dialect and accept it as normal”

“They probably would not understand every dialect word, but they do not understand everything in English either.”

Teachers were asked the question: “Do you encourage the children to use dialect?”

Responses included:

“We don't discourage it” (common answer)

“Bairns are encouraged to use language and communication generally”

“They are not corrected if they speak dialect”

“Children are not actively encourage but they can use it if they choose”

“Through using dialect ourselves we are encouraging it”

In our experience we are not aware of any discrimination against the Shetland dialect as such but perhaps staff are unsure to what extent dialect should be used. There are also varying opinions as to the importance of the dialect in the curriculum. This may be a generational thing too as there was most definitely a time in the past when speaking dialect at school was discouraged.

Anecdotally we have heard of children very recently in certain schools being discouraged from speaking dialect.

The use of dialect in Shetland schools seems to be up to the individual teacher but [it is understood] that children must be taught ‘proper’ English too. We are merely trying to encourage teachers to use the new resources, should they so wish. We are trying to ensure that the resources available to teachers are modern and vibrant showing as much as possible a contemporary take on the Shetland dialect and not to place it in the past.

Shetland dialect sessions are a feature of teachers' in-service [days] as are CPD sessions throughout the year. We also encourage our Probationer teachers to include dialect in their sessions or at least give it a go, particularly if they are non dialect speakers themselves. The Shetland dialect is a good way into Shetland culture.

We are not able to answer your query into whether there is discrimination against Shetland dialect speakers as this has not been an area we have researched in any depth but hopefully the above will give you an idea of what we are doing to promote the Shetland dialect.

South Ayrshire

Response from Margo Williamson, Head of Educational Achievement and Quality Development.

Enthusiastic [...], have provided in-service training courses. Presently putting together CPD calendar for 08/09 and have Scots language event for both primary and secondary teachers [Matthew Fitt, Itchy Co].

Will be engaging all our head teachers around Curriculum for Excellence work. Scots language and culture will feature.

South Lanarkshire

Response from John Mulligan, Head of Education (Achievement and Attainment).

Actively promoted Scots language in the primary curriculum. Sought to expand resources in Scots available to the primary teacher. Staff development in relation to Scots language is ongoing inclusion in our in-service programme. Worked with Matthew Fitt in providing in-service training for primary school staff. included working with groups of primary-age pupils. Itchy Co publications widely used

Include in Probationer development programme sessions which highlight importance of teacher recognising the language children bring to classroom and positive attitude to Scots central to this. Ensures staff at outset of career alert to impact of their own responses to children's language.

Overall approach ‘inclusive’, have many young people whose first language is not English. In area as diverse as SL awareness of this is seen as important aspect of teacher development....

Stirling

Response from David Cameron, Director of Children’s Services.

I concur with your perspective [...]. It allows pupils to be confident and creative in their use of language, and allows them to further develop notions of language diversity.

Has provided in-service for teachers in the Scots language. Offered workshops by an external provider and these were positively evaluated.

Some of our schools have incorporated texts in the Scots language into the curriculum, adding enjoyment and choice to children’s learning experiences. Has been matter for devolved management within schools.

Given major work we are undertaking on *A Curriculum for Excellence*, would be apposite to revisit these opportunities in the use of the Scots language. Our officers with responsibility for Arts and Culture and Literacy respectively, have expressed an interest in revisiting this in the near future.

West Dunbartonshire Council

Reply from Graham Jefferies (Manager of Professional Development) c.c. Terry Lanagan (Ex Director of Educational Services).

In-service days have never involved the subject of discrimination against Scots speakers. However, staff have discussed the benefits of introducing a Scots Language element into the classroom.

Schools are keen to have a curriculum which includes elements of our culture and traditions.

Scots will feature in Scots afternoons, topics on both local and national issues, Burns competitions, Scots prose and poetry, production of Scots dictionaries and glossaries, wall displays etc.

Last term staff were consulted about the new Curriculum for Excellence proposals: “The draft outcomes produced by writing

teams of Scottish teachers refer to the richness and diversity of languages in Scotland and highlights the benefits of using languages which children and young people bring to the classroom.

We will include in our centrally based training an awareness raising element to ensure teachers don't unconsciously have negative attitudes towards the language. The development of resources are always helpful in this respect.

Western Isles: see Comhairle nan Eilean Siar^G

West Lothian

Response from Gordon Ford, director of Education and Cultural Services, thanking Bill Wilson for his kind words re Language at Letham and expressing support for his proposal to audit Scots provision across councils.

I'm sure the Head Teacher, Mrs Val Brodie, will be happy to share her work with other colleagues across the country.