

MSP Responses to Letter from Cross Party Group on the Scots Language Sub-Committee 20th January 2010

MSP
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

20 January 2010

Dear,

The Scots Language Current Good Practice in Scotland's schools

I am writing to you on behalf of the Cross Party Group on the Scots Language Education Sub-committee.

Following last week's negative reports in the media about the role of Scots in Education, the sub-committee would like to make you aware of the fact that hundreds of teachers and education professionals are seeing clear benefits from increased engagement with Scots in the classroom.

These benefits relate to: improved **literacy** skills, greater **social Inclusion**, enhanced **attainment** in reading and writing, increased understanding of **local culture and heritage** and better spoken **English**.

We would urge you to learn more about current good practice in this important area of Scottish Education by visiting the Sub-committee website www.scotsinschools.com

And if you would like more information about the positive impact of Scots in schools, members of the Sub-committee would be delighted to meet with you to discuss the language and its place in education.

In addition, we would be only too happy to liaise with your office to arrange a visit to a school in your constituency in order to demonstrate first-hand how staff and pupils respond to Scots language in the classroom and across the curriculum.

The Scottish Government, the United Kingdom Government and the European Union all recognise Scots as a language under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Read about the Charter on our website.

Scots has been taught in Scottish schools since 1991 through the *5-14 Curriculum*. As schools prepare to implement *Curriculum for Excellence*, a large and growing number of staff in all local authorities now include Scots as an essential part of their teaching practice.

With testimony coming from front-line teachers that Scots can improve the learning experiences and outcomes for many of our youngsters, there is a clear democratic imperative to give our Scots-speaking children the right to learn more about their mother tongue and to grant schools the resources to support this.

A great many people were angered by the misleading and poorly-informed comments made about the educational value of Scots following the publication of the report *Public Attitudes Towards the Scots Language*. With over a hundred participants including teachers, Head Teachers, Principal Teachers, Quality Improvement Officers, lecturers in schools and institutes of teacher education, writers and academics, the Cross Party Group on the Scots Language Education Sub-committee exists to keep MSPs informed about Scots in schools.

We would be glad to hear your views and experiences of the Scots Language in education.

Yours sincerely,

Matthew Fitt
Secretary

Cross Party Group on the Scots Language Education Sub-Committee
www.scotsinschools.com

Responses from 18 MSPs (in alphabetical order)

1. Alasdair Allan MSP Western Isles

SNP

e-mail received 30.1.2010

For yer letter anent the press cuiverage on scots- ye'll no be surprised tae hear A gree wi ye!

2. Rhona Brankin MSP Midlothian

Labour

e-mail received 3.2.2010

Dear Matthew

Thanks for your letter of 20 January on the Scots language. I share your views about the benefit of increased engagement with Scots in the classroom.

As a former teacher I always got a huge response from youngsters when we read Scots in class. They loved it.

Best wishes

Rhona Brankin

3. Keith Brown MSP Ochil

SNP

Scots CPG e-mail to Ellen Forson, Keith Brown's constituency office 5.2.10

Dear Ellen,

Many thanks for the phone message you left earlier this week regarding a possible visit by Keith Brown to a constituency primary school. I've just phoned your office but you were unavailable.

I have been liaising with Bannockburn Primary School which is engaged in very effective Scots language teaching and the Head Teacher, Mrs Camilla Dickson, has said that she would be delighted to welcome Mr Brown to her school.

The school is currently focussing on Scots contexts. P4 have been working on aspects of Scots language and P7 will be holding a Scots Celebration concert on Thursday 25th of February.

In order to set up the most suitable date for the visit, you will find the school's full contact details from their website:

<http://www.bannockburnprimary.uk.org/home.ikml>

And if you need any more information from myself about the work of the Cross Party Group on the Scots Language Education Sub-committee, please don't hesitate to ask.

Braw wishes

Matthew Fitt

www.scotsinschools.com

NB: Bannockburn PS outside Ochil constituency. EF will ask if St John's PS in Alloa will be able to host Keith Brown to see their Scots language work. MF to write to Bruce Crawford MSP to ask he would like to visit Bannockburn PS.

**4. Robert Brown
MSP for Glasgow Region**

Lib-Dem

Letter 8.2.2010

Dear Matthew,

Many thanks for your letter of 20th January 2010 which gives a helpful background on the issues you want to raise with regard to the use of Scots language in schools.

I am grateful to you for bringing these matters to my attention and I may take you up on the opportunity to visit a school with good practice in this area. I may come back to you on that one in the future but my forward diary is a little crowded at present, certainly until after the General Election.

Best wishes,

Robert E Brown

Liberal Democrat MSP for Glasgow Region

**5. Aileen Campbell MSP
South of Scotland**

SNP

e-mail received 12.2.2010

Matthew, just wanted to thank you for the letter regarding the CPG's education sub committee. If there's anything I can do to help then let me know. I have tried a number of times for the Education Committee to look at the Scots language in the classroom but have been unsuccessful.

The other thing I was going to suggest was that there may be opportunities for collaboration between your sub group and the CPG on Children and Young people. It's just a thought, if it's something you'd want me to pursue I'd be happy to.

CPG Reply 16.2.10

Dear Aileen,

Many thanks for your e-mail and support. I hope the Education Committee will consider Scots in Education at some point in the future. And if there is a way for the Scots CPG Education Sub-Committee to work with the CPG on Children and Young People, I think our group would want to explore that.

Best wishes,
Matthew

www.scotsinschools.com

**6. George Foulkes MSP
Lothians**

Labour

Letter 2.2.2010

Dear Mr Fitt

The Scots Language

Thank you for your letter of 25 January. I am afraid I do not accept that Scots is a separate language. There are various dialects in Scotland but they are all based on the English language and not a separate language like Gaelic.

Best wishes.

Yours sincerely
George Foulkes MSP

**7. Kenneth Gibson MSP
Cunninghame North**

SNP

Letter 2.2.2010

Dear Matthew,

The Scots Language - Current Good Practice in Scotland's Schools

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding the above.

I have very little personal experience with the Scots Language in Education, having been educated at a time when even speaking with a Scots accent was frowned upon and certainly any hint of dialect was virulently suppressed!

I am of course very keen to see Scots used in schools as appropriate and indeed in nursery schools I have seen it used very positively. At one nursery school, for example, the song 'heads, shoulders, knees and toes' in Scots was highly amusing as well as very enjoyable for the children.

Since my own childhood I have noticed a significant decline in the use of many Scots words such as burn, bogle, beastie etc which have almost all fallen out of use I am sad to say. Ensuring that Scots remains a living language is I believe something which can only enrich Scotland and the educational experience of our children.

With all best wishes,
Yours sincerely,
Kenneth J Gibson MSP

**8. Karen Gillon MSP
Clydesdale**

Labour

Letter 28.1.2010

Dear Matthew,

Thank you for your recent letter. As you know I am well aware of the valuable role that Scots language plays in education. Indeed I had the pleasure of visiting Robert Owen Primary School with you [in 2008]. I enjoyed the session and it was clear the children did too.

I wish your group every success in the future.

Kind regards,
Karen Gillon MSP

**9. Annabel Goldie MSP
West of Scotland**

Conservative

Letter 27.1.2010

Acknowledgement of receipt of letter from CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee

**10. Jamie Hepburn MSP
Central Scotland**

SNP

Scots CPG reply to phone message left by Fraser Hudghton 27.1.10

Dear Fraser,

Many thanks for your phone message. I called back this afternoon but couldn't reach you.

It would be a pleasure to arrange a visit for Jamie to a school in his constituency to see good practice Scots Language teaching.

His constituency covers Falkirk and North Lanarkshire and there are a number of members of the Cross Party Scots Education Sub-committee who would be delighted to welcome Jamie to their school.

I'll liaise with the group to see which school and class would be the most useful for him to see and I'll get back to you as soon as I can. We can then discuss dates and other details.

Jamie may find the report on the Falkirk Scots Coordinators Group to be of some interest. That's available at <http://www.scotseducation.co.uk/reports.html>

Braw wishes
Matthew Fitt
Secretary
Cross Party Group on the Scots Language Education Sub-committee
www.scotsinschools.com

Reply from Fraser Hudghton 27.1.10

Many thanks Matthew, and apologies for missing you earlier. The Falkirk East or Cumbernauld & Kilsyth area would be ideal, and I look forward to hearing which school/class would be suitable. I will flag up to Jamie that link you have highlighted.

Braw wishes in return,

Fraser

**11. Fiona Hylsop MSP
Lothians**

SNP

Letter 26.2.2010

Dear Mr Fitt

Thank you for your letter of 20 January 2010 to Fiona Hyslop, Minister for Culture and External Affairs, inviting her to discuss Scots and its place in education. Ms Hyslop would be delighted to accept your invitation. Please contact her Diary Secretary...to make the necessary arrangements.

Mags Nicholson for Darren Dickson

**12. Ken Macintosh MSP
East Renfrewshire**

Labour

Letter 4.2.2010

Dear Matthew

Thank you very much for your letter drawing my attention to current good practice in the use of the Scots Language in our schools and the unfortunate recent press coverage of the issue.

My own children have just come back from school this month having learnt "The Sair Finger", "Address to the Haggis" and more. I can certainly testify that there is great work going on in our schools using Scots.

Thanks again for raising this important issue.

Yours sincerely,

Ken Macintosh MSP

**13. Jack McConnell MSP
Motherwell & Wishaw**

Labour

Acknowledgement of receipt of letter from CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee

**14. Gil Paterson MSP
West of Scotland**

SNP

Letter dated 28.1.10

Dear Matthew

The Scots Language

Many thanks for your very informative letter.

I do believe that Scots speakers have had to carry a burden that undermines their confidence when using their natural tongue and all that can be done to redress the negative attitudes and of course, the active discrimination that has been practiced over generations, will take considerable effort but in the end must be done.

Therefore I am pleased with your work and would welcome the opportunity to visit a school in order to highlight and encourage all those involved at every level to bring Scots out of the shadows and into normality which is that like many other people around the world our language is taken for granted and a matter of fact rather than inferior pressures.

Yours sincerely,
Gil Paterson MSP

**15. Michael Russell MSP
West of Scotland**

SNP

Letter 12.2.2010

Dear Mr Fitt,

Thank you for your letter of 20 January 2010 to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning, Mike Russell MSP, inviting him to discuss Scots and its place in education. I note that you have also written to First Minister, the Cabinet Secretary for Health and Wellbeing and the Minister for Culture and External Affairs. Please consider this letter as a joint response.

Mr Russell would be delighted to accept your invitation. Please contact Mr Russell's Diary Secretary...to make the necessary arrangements.

Claire Inverarity for Brian Taylor

**16. Elizabeth Smith MSP
Mid Scotland and Fife**

Conservative

e-mail received 26.1.10

Dear Mr Fitt

Thank you for your letter regarding the Scots Language and the good practice which relates to schools in Scotland.

I am very much aware of recent developments and I am also aware of several successful programmes which have inspired pupils.

I am also aware of the website and I'm sure I will continue to make use of it.

Elizabeth Smith

**17. Stewart Stevenson MSP
Banff & Buchan**

SNP

Letter 27.1.2010

Dear Mr Fitt

Thank you for your letter of 20th January.

I am happy to confirm my support for the Scots language. I should be delighted to take you up on your offer of arranging a visit to a school in my constituency and look forward to hearing from you in this regard.

With best wishes meantime,

Yours sincerely,

Stewart Stevenson MSP

**18. Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Glasgow Govan**

SNP

Letter 26.1.2010

Dear Mr Fitt

I am writing to acknowledge your recent letter to Nicola Sturgeon regarding your invitation to visit a school to demonstrate how pupils respond to the Scots language. ministers' diaries are always busy but your kind invitation will receive careful consideration.

Yours sincerely,
David McGeown
Correspondence Unit