

**Cross Party Group on the Scots Language
Education Sub-Committee
Kilmarnock meeting**

Wednesday 10th March, 2010

6pm - 8pm

Burns Monument Centre, Kay Park, Kilmarnock

Sederunt:

Carrie Boax (Greenwood Academy, North Ayrshire), Mary Connolly (HT, Nethermain PS, Falkirk), Matthew Fitt (Education & Outreach, Itchy Co), Andrew Harvey (Uddingston Grammar School), Peter McGhee (Quality Improvement Officer, North Lanarkshire Council), Ross McGregor (Writer/Librarian, James Hamilton Academy, East Ayrshire), Ailsa McInnes (East Ayrshire Libraries), Morag Pieroni (PT English, Greenwood Academy, North Ayrshire), Gemma Rooney (HT, St Cuthbert's PS, Maybole, South Ayrshire), Mirka Ryjackova (Itchy Co), Jean Sangster (Lecturer in Voice, School of Drama, RSAMD), Caroline Stein (Probationer Support, Falkirk Council), Jack Stuart (Scots Language Society), Melanie West (North Ayrshire Library Information Service), Graham Williamson (Scottish Qualifications Authority/University of Dundee)

Apologies:

Rob Gibson MSP, Elizabeth Smith MSP, Kenneth Gibson MSP, Maureen Watt MSP, Stewart Stevenson MSP, Gil Paterson MSP

Jo Allen (Portobello HS, Edinburgh), Muriel Angus (Letham PS, West Lothian), Jill Bennet (Scots Poetry for Cool Kids, Fife), Glenn Bard (Shetland), Sheena Blackhall (Elphinstone Institute, Aberdeen University), Dr David Borthwick (University of Glasgow, Dumfries), Laura Brandon (ADHT Carrick Knowe PS, Edinburgh), Elizabeth Cordiner (Scots Poetry for Cool Kids, Fife), Paula Cowan (University of the West of Scotland), Cecilia Craig, Rhona Craig (HT, Culross PS, Fife), Professor John Corbett, University of Glasgow), Maggie Cruikshank (Mither Tongue, Keith), Christine Emmett, (ADHT, St Elizabeth's PS, South Lanarkshire), Lynne Ferguson (Literacy Coordinator, Falkirk), James Forbes (Lasswade HS, Midlothian), Susan Forde (Fons Scotiae), John Gerard (PT English, Meldrum Academy, Aberdeenshire), John Hodgart (former PT English, Garnock Academy, North Ayrshire), Maureen Jobson (Acting Director of Education, East Lothian), Laureen Johnson (Shetland ForWirlds), Elaine Kent (Bridge of Weir PS, Renfrewshire, Sheila Love (HT, Ardler PS, Dundee), Marion Low (PT English, Inveralmond HS, West Lothian), Katrina Lucas, (Comely Park PS, Falkirk), Peter MacKenzie (Education Convener, East Lothian Council), Angela Mackie, (Letham PS, West Lothian), Fiona Maher (Creative Links Officer,

Midlothian), Ruth McClements (DHT, Bannockburn PS, Stirling), Kirsteen McCue (University of Glasgow), Professor James McGonigal (writer), Irene McGugan (Assistant Director, Children's Services, Barnardo's Scotland), Moira McIver (Kittybrewster PS, Aberdeen) Susan McKay (Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service), Lucy McKinlay (Netherlee PS, East Renfrewshire), Joanna McPake (Scottish CILT), Fiona Maher (Creative Links Officer, Midlothian), Janey Mauchline (Adviser in Languages, South Lanarkshire), Yvonne Manning (Principal Librarian, Library Services, Falkirk), Vanessa Morris (CREATE, Dumfries & Galloway), Rosa Murray (General Teaching Council for Scotland), Joanna Nicholson (Sonsie Music), Liz Niven (writer), Wullie Oliphant (DHT, Moncreiffe PS, Perth & Kinross), Joan Parr (Head of Education, Scottish Arts Council), Janet Paisley (writer), June Ranscombe (Highland Literacy Project), Mary Ritchie (HMIE), Councillor Jim Roberts (Spokesperson for Lifelong Learning, East Ayrshire), Vicky Roberts (Portlethen Academy, Aberdeenshire), James Robertson (General Editor, Itchy Co), Chris Robinson (Scottish Language Dictionaries), Jane Sandell (Stirling Libraries), Eunice Stephen (HT Inverallochy PS, Aberdeenshire), Michael Stephenson (Inveralmond HS, West Lothian), Ailsa Stratton (PT English, Boroughmuir HS, Edinburgh), Jenny Watson (Aberdeen Reading Bus Initiative), Rosalind Webster (HT Glenburn PS, South Ayrshire), Les Wheeler (Elphinstone Institute, Aberdeen University), Brenda Williams (DHT, Netherlee PS, East Renfrewshire), Christine Wilson (HT, Greenmill PS, East Ayrshire), Jean Wilson (PT English, Buckie HS, Moray), Elaine Wylie (HT St Ninian's PS, Stirling)

1. Welcome and introductions

Matthew Fitt (acting chair) welcomed all present. He thanked Ailsa McInnes of East Ayrshire Libraries and Gerard Cairns, Information Services Manager, for their hospitality and use the excellent facilities at the Burns Monument Centre. Group members expressed thanks for the tour of the Centre and Monument. MF introduced himself and Mirka Ryjackova taking minutes. All participants introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting in Glasgow on 17.11.09

MF read out the apologies sent for this meeting.

3. Sharing good practice

3.1 Morag Pieroni distributed copies of the Greenwood Homecoming Anthology. She and Carrie Boax explained the rationale behind the anthology. It had been noted that pupils involved in Burns Clubs at primary level tend to lose interest

in secondary school. During the Year of Homecoming, the school tapped into funding available from North Ayrshire Council, the local Burns Club and the Scottish Arts Council. They also sought further funding from the local business community. In a large school of 1600, it was hoped that creating a Homecoming Anthology as a cross-curricular project would bring pupils and teachers closer together. Through a series of events including an inter-house competition funded by local Burns Club, pupils enjoyed and were enthusiastic about speaking in the Scots language and participating in Scottish cultural activities. As part of the Homecoming project, £500 was also raised for a local hospital. In addition, a fourth year class entered a national Scots writing competition run through the Scottish Book Trust and the Royal Mail Children's Book Award and won the 1st and 2nd prizes.

3.1.1 Jack Stuart asked about the context in which Scots is taught at Greenwood Academy.

3.1.2 Morag Pieroni answered that Matthew Fitt had worked with her staff to raise profile of Scots but added that teachers can be reluctant to teach Scots, often concerned about spelling. MP said that it is all about confidence and sharing good practice without preaching to people.

3.1.3 Jack Stuart asked about responses from parents.

3.1.4 Morag Pieroni spoke about the 'Granny Project' where older generation worked with school pupils to relate their experiences of working in factories during the war and the fishing industry. Parents became involved, commenting at school parents' nights that their children were asking about Scots words.

3.1.5 Carrie Boax added that teaching in the Scots language was very honest, that there was nothing fabricated about it and that pupils responded to Scots in a natural way.

3.2 Matthew Fitt mentioned that Christine Wilson, Head Teacher of Greenmill Primary School in Cumnock, had sent her apologies. He spoke about the good practice at Greenmill PS which two years running has held a Scots medium week where staff and pupils speak only in Scots. Radio Westsound did a feature on Greenmill's Scots Week and it was a very positive experience for all concerned with many children engaging in more enthusiastically with learning than they might usually do.

3.2.1 Peter McGhee said that there were benefits from the charisma of a presenter like MF who is confident in using Scots but that there was a lack of confidence among teachers. PM agreed that Scots empowers pupils who do not normally participate in creative activities to express themselves. Scots feeds into creativity but is often viewed as a tool for creativity rather than for wider

use. Teachers respond positively to Scots but are not prepared to make it a priority. As part of a North Lanarkshire Burns Club competition, 900 pupils from age 5 to 12 performed in a town hall, learning and reciting Scots poetry which is a great support to the achievement agenda. But although young people were willing to stand up and recite Scots, they can experience difficulty with being creative in Scots themselves. Schools need an incentive to develop creative writing in Scots.

3.2.2 MP mentioned the Banter Booth at Greenwood Academy where pupils were able to record what they felt Scotland meant to them. Pupils enjoyed this but some teachers were uncomfortable with pupils expressing themselves in this way, saying children should not be speaking like that.

3.2.3 PM made the group aware of an initiative with the Scottish Government and Mike Bailey for a conversation with young people which would be an excellent opportunity to take Scots language forward. Mirka Ryjackova will try to find out more about this.

3.2.4 MP reminded the group of the inspirational performances by drama students Jack Lowden and Helen Darbyshire at the last CPG meeting at the Royal Scottish Academy for Music and Drama and that performances like these could be used in the conversation with young people initiative.

3.2.5 Jean Sangster said that the RSAMD in 2009 had provided the entertainment at Scotland House in Brussels with a nearly all Scots programme. The RSAMD returned to Scotland House in January 2010 with performances in Scots and with Scottish musicians. The audience of about 100 non-native English speakers appreciated the energy of the language and for the most part understood it.

3.3 MF noted the good practice in North Ayrshire facilitated by Melanie West and the Greenwood Teachers' Centre.

3.3.1 Gemma Rooney said that South Ayrshire needs to be more strategic with regard to Scots. After a Scots CPD session, it is difficult to sustain enthusiasm. GR suggested there could be more involvement at teacher training level.

3.3.2 Graham Williamson spoke about the annual Scottish culture event at Dundee University for the one-year postgraduate student teachers. He said that there would be more room to build provision in the four-year programmes. GW highlighted the problem of sustainability and that there was a real difficulty fighting attitudes like 'that is not Scots'. More resources were required as was more encouragement from others. GW cited the good practice at Greenwood Academy as great evidence of achievement. If Scots was seen more in terms of attainment, it would broaden the evidence that Scots is useful in education.

3.3.3 Caroline Stein spoke about sustainability in Falkirk local authority. There was a fear factor and a need for approval but she had been working with newly qualified teachers who were very excited about Scots and some were willing to take it on after seeing Scots language lessons in practice. Some teachers were already using Scots in all areas of the curriculum. CS mentioned the work of the Falkirk Scots Coordinators who are meeting again soon.

3.4 Andrew Harvey updated the group on the response so far to the South Lanarkshire Scots teaching pack 'Tak the Leid'. AH described it as a traditional teaching unit except that it is in Scots which aims to encourage pupils to study a Scots novella and to write at certificate level. It had proved successful with third-year classes, providing an example of how to adapt Scots texts. AH spoke of the historic challenge faced by the CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee as language is a loaded political issue. AH mentioned that where there are good resources in a school, other teachers come to borrow them, finding them inspirational. Funding for Scots language texts is essential. Delivering Scots through Curriculum for Excellence at secondary level is difficult because of its structure and exam-driven components. It all has to be taught well and Scots has to be taken seriously. A long term strategy is necessary but without confidence it will be difficult.

3.5 Matthew Fitt showed a preview of the new Scots Module from the Learning & Teaching Scotland Literacy website, due to go live on Thursday 18th March 2010. Fiona Norris, Literacy Team Leader for LTS, commissioned Scots Education Resources, to write the Module which is part of Knowledge of Language. The Module is fifty pages long and arranged in seven sections including What is Scots?, Scots and Literacy and Writing in Scots. The Module makes clear statements about what Scots is, gives a history of the language and how it fits into Curriculum for Excellence. MF expressed the hope that this will have a positive impact on teachers' confidence. And with the validation of Scots in Curriculum for Excellence and now by Learning & Teaching Scotland, some levels of sustainability may be achieved.

3.6 GW suggested the possibility of creating a nationwide resource using GLOW. If there were more resources, there would be a greater chance that more colleagues will follow.

3.6.1 PM highlighted problem with quality and monitoring assurance.

3.6.2 MF mentioned Michael Stephenson (a CPG member) who is the first online secondary teacher through a Scottish Book Trust programme.

3.6.3 MP mentioned that the use of GLOW with a parent group and submitting homework through it but there were some technical glitches.

3.6.4 PM spoke of the 80,000+ pupils who had watched the Michael Rosen on-line event run by the Scottish Book Trust. And mentioned the Masterclass with Liz Lochhead run by Media Matters which proved very popular generating enthusiasm for writing and poetry writing. A Masterclass in Scots would be a good topic to discuss.

3.6.5 Ross McGregor noted the potential of GLOW to be used on a local level.

3.6.7 Carrie Boax said GLOW had been used for a dress rehearsal of a concert.

3.6.8 MW said a GLOW event like the Michael Rosen one would benefit by coordination by a national body like Scottish Book Trust.

4. Scots Language Questionnaire

4.1 MF reminded the group of the decision taken at the 17th November meeting to develop a questionnaire to ask teachers about their attitudes towards Scots. Several group members volunteered to serve on a Research Sub-Group and since then, the Sub-Group has been liaising closely through e-mail. A Research Sub-Group meeting organised by Katrina Lucas was held at Comely Park Primary School on Tuesday 2nd March. The Research Group submitted the latest draft of the questionnaire to the CPG Sub-Committee to seek their comments and suggestions. MF pointed out that Research Group would not be obliged to act on any suggestions or comments made by the CPG Sub-Committee but that all will be passed on to them for their consideration. MF said he had e-mailed the questionnaire to Sub-Committee members attending the Kilmarnock meeting the day before and also distributed paper copies at the meeting. MF invited points, comments and suggestions from the group.

4.2 PM referred to Q8. It is currently an open question. He suggested that the questionnaire offers types of support to receive a clearer answer. Q9 could benefit from the same approach.

4.2.1 PM suggested lettering each of the boxes in each question to give more precise statistics.

4.2.2 AH suggested the What stops or prevents you from teaching a language spoken by 1.6 million people in Scotland?

4.2.3 Jack Stuart said that the introduction was not clear.

4.2.4 MP asked about distribution.

4.2.5 MF said there would be a small trial run of the questionnaire. The Research Group is exploring the possibility of distributing it through Glow.

Individual CPG Sub-Committee members will be invited to help with distribution.

4.2.6 AH suggested enhancing the presentation to encourage more teachers to answer the questionnaire. He said that adding some Scots words, quotes or even icons/pictures in the margins and borders would attract more teachers to the questionnaire.

4.2.7 MW highlighted accessibility legislation and the need to produce the questionnaire in the appropriate font. Otherwise some local authorities may not be able to distribute it.

4.2.8 JS suggested to add to Q7 a number of possibilities in answer to how confident are you?

4.2.9 AH suggested that information about the average length of time taken to complete the questionnaire should be included in the introduction.

4.2.10 PM noted that it would be important to clear the questionnaire with each education authority. A good covering letter would be essential. If it was given out as a circular as a priority, it would get to every school.

It could be presented at headteachers' meetings. JS asked if it would be distributed in fee-paying schools.

4.2.11 JS suggested removing the word 'attitudes.'

4.2.12 There was a consensus from the Sub-Committee that the questionnaire title be changed from *Teacher Attitudes to the Scots Language in Scottish Education: Questionnaire to Scots Language and the Curriculum of Excellence*.

4.2.13 It was also suggested that a category 'Other' be added to 'Nursery, Primary, Secondary, Special' list to allow a wider spectrum of people working in education to respond.

4.3 MF said that these were all excellent suggestions and thanked the Sub-Committee for them. He also thanked the Research Sub-Group on behalf of the Sub-Committee for all their hard work so far.

5. Liaison with MSPs and the Scottish Government: update on progress

5.1 MF raised the letter he sent on 20th January 2010 to all 129 MSPs on behalf of the Cross Party Group Scots Language Education Sub-Committee. This was a response to the negative press coverage of the Scottish Government's publication *Public Attitudes Towards the Scots Language*, available at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/01/06105123/0>

5.2 MF announced that both the Education Minister Michael Russell and the Culture Minister Fiona Hyslop have agreed to meet a delegation from the CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee. A date has been set to meet Mr Russell at the Scottish Parliament on 29th April and a date is still to be confirmed to meet Mrs Hyslop. A number of Sub-Committee members have volunteered to be part of delegations to meet MSPs and MF will contact each individually to ask about their availability.

5.3 MF said that the following 18 MSPs had responded to the letter of 20th January and passed the MSPs letters round the group. The MSPs responses are compiled in separate files Appendix - Letters.

List of MSPs who responded to CPG letter

Alasdair Allan MSP
Rhona Brankin MSP
Keith Brown MSP
Robert Brown MSP
Aileen Campbell MSP
George Foulkes MSP
Kenneth Gibson MSP
Karen Gillon MSP
Annabel Goldie MSP
Jamie Hepburn MSP
Fiona Hyslop MSP
Ken Macintosh MSP
Jack McConnell MSP
Gil Paterson MSP
Michael Russell MSP
Elizabeth Smith MSP
Stewart Stevenson MSP
Nicola Sturgeon MSP

5.4 MF announced that several MSPs had requested to visit schools to see first hand good practice with the Scots language. These are listed below. As Secretary, he had been liaising with schools and MSPs' offices. He thanked the schools and the MSPs' assistants for their support.

Keith Brown MSP
Jamie Hepburn MSP
Fiona Hyslop MSP
Gil Paterson MSP
Stewart Stevenson MSP

5.2 PM suggested that the CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee would benefit from inviting staff from TESS and the BBC to be members.

5.2.1 JS questioned the appropriateness of inviting members of press and media to be part of the group at the moment

5.2.2 MF stated that there was a clear lack of a body to campaign positively for Scots when there is negative reporting by the press

5.4 MF reported that Aileen Campbell MSP had suggested that it might be useful for the CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee to liaise with the Cross Party Group on Children and Young People. The group agreed this was a good idea.

5.4.1 MF noted that the Sub-Committee received letters from Ken McIntosh MSP, Elizabeth MSP, Kenneth Gibson MSP and Aileen Campbell MSP and that they are all members of the Scottish Parliament Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee. Karen Whitefield MSP who has been asked to be kept informed of the work of the CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee is Convener of the Parliamentary Education Committee. MF asked the CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee if we should approach the Education Committee offering to supply information on the good practice with Scots language across the country. The group agreed.

5.4.2 MP said that Nicola Sturgeon, a former pupil of Greenwood Academy, may be a good person to contact.

5.5 PM said that elected members often respond better to meeting front line teachers and librarians than with advisors.

6. What is required to support provision for Scots in South of Scotland and West of Scotland schools?

6.1 With the meeting with Michael Russell in mind, MF called for suggestions from the Sub-Committee what the delegation should ask the Education Minister on the 29th April.

6.2 PM said that there is a present need for a resource bank for Scots language teaching materials. This would allow better sharing of resources where possible in electronic format so it can be adapted by school and teachers.

6.3 GR said that Scots should be incorporated into a unit at teacher training colleges.

6.3.1 JS offered Continuing Professional Development at a fee from the RSAMD

to give teachers in local authorities confidence with the sounds of and speaking in Scots.

6.4 AH mentioned existing handbooks for teachers on varying subjects. A similar handbook could be produced for all teachers about the Scots language.

6.5 JS said that the Government should appoint a coordinator in Scots in every local authority. He said that each authority should have a policy on Scots and that there should be more CPD provision.

6.6 RM said that GLOW has the potential to broadcast Scots language sessions made by external agencies.

6.7 JS said that the Scottish Qualifications Authority should include more Scots in exams.

6.7.1 MP would like to see more Scots at Higher level.

6.8 Mary Connolly said there was a need for accreditation from schools who deliver Scots language. MC said that this could be on the same level as for Enterprise. MC noted that HMIE had recently observed the good practice at Nethermains Primary School. Across the board, MC continued, pupils enjoy learning in Scots.

6.8.1 JS said HMIE should be required to report on the provision of Scots in schools.

6.9 AH said that schools and local authorities should have a policy on Scots and then suggested that the CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee could write a draft of a model policy on Scots.

6.9.1 Mirka Ryjackova said that an anti-discrimination policy for Scots which would protect the rights of Scots speaking children is required in each local authority and that guidance on such a policy would have to come from Government.

7. Any other committee business

7.1 MF asked for the minutes to reflect that some CPG Scots Education Sub-Committee members had expressed concern that their e-mail addresses had been used by one group member to send unsolicited material. It was agreed that in future all items of correspondence should be sent by e-mail to the Secretary in the first instance who will then send it to the other group members if relevant to the work of the group.

7.2 MF highlighted the need to protect the reputation of the group by not consenting to information about the work of the group being included on websites whose content may be inappropriate for children, young people and the education profession in general.

7.3 MF intimated that Itchy Coo's Education and Outreach programme would cease in March 2011.

8. Future meetings

The next meeting will be held at the Scottish Parliament in the week beginning 24th May 2010. Date and time to be confirmed.

Gratitude was expressed again by all to Ailsa McInnes and Gerard Cairns for their kind hospitality at East Ayrshire's Burns Monument Centre.