

**Cross Party Group on the Scots Language
Education Sub-committee
Glasgow meeting**

Tuesday 17th November, 2009

6.15pm - 8pm

Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Fyfe Lecture Theatre

Sederunt:

Mary Connolly (HT, Nethermains PS, Falkirk), Helen Darbyshire (Student, RSAMD), Christine Emmett, (ADHT, St Elizabeth's PS, South Lanarkshire), Matthew Fitt (Education & Outreach, Itchy Co), Margaret Foley (QIO, Dundee City Education Department), Fiona Gold (Class Teacher, Mosshead PS, East Dunbartonshire), Tom Hamilton (General Teaching Council for Scotland), Andrew Harvey (Uddingston Grammar School), John Hodgart, Hilary Jones (Lecturer, RSAMD), Jack Lowden (Student, RSAMD), Katrina Lucas (Comely Park PS, Falkirk), Ruth McClements (DHT, Bannockburn PS, Stirling), Joanna Nicholson (Sonsie Music), Morag Pieroni (PT English, Greenwood Academy, North Ayrshire), June Ranscombe (Highland Literacy Project), Mirka Ryjackova (Itchy Co), Jean Sangster (Lecturer in Voice, RSAMD), Jack Stuart (Scots Language Society), Glenn Telfer (Edinburgh Primary Schools), Elaine Webster (Outreach & Education Officer, Scottish Language Dictionaries), Melanie West (Audience Development Manager, North Ayrshire Council), Brenda Williams (DHT, Netherlee PS, East Renfrewshire)

Apologies:

Rob Gibson MSP, Karen Whitefield MSP, Maureen Watt MSP, Cathy Peattie MSP, Frank McAveetie MSP

Jo Allen (Portobello HS, Edinburgh), Stewart Anderson (HT, Wigtown PS, Dumfries & Galloway), Jill Bennet (Scots Poetry for Cool Kids, Fife), Glenn Bard (Shetland), Sheena Blackhall (Elphinstone Institute, Aberdeen University), Joy Cameron (Lochnell PS, Argyll & Bute), Elizabeth Cordiner (Scots Poetry for Cool Kids, Fife), Paula Cowan (University of the West of Scotland), Cecilia Craig, Rhona Craig (HT, Culross PS, Fife), James Forbes (Teacher, Midlothian), Susan Forde, John Gerard (PT English, Meldrum Academy, Aberdeenshire), Laureen Johnson (Shetland ForWirds), Morag Kell (Dumfries Academy, Dumfries & Galloway), Karon Llewellyn (Sunnyside PS, Glasgow), Sheila Love (HT, Ardler PS, Dundee), Peter MacKenzie (Education Convener, East Lothian Council), Derrick McClure (Aberdeen University), Irene McGugan (Assistant Director, Children's Services, Barnardo's Scotland), Ailsa McInnes (East Ayrshire Libraries), Susan McKay (Aberdeenshire Library and Information Service), Lucy McKinlay (Netherlee PS, East Renfrewshire), April McMahon (Edinburgh

University), 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), Wullie Oliphant (DHT, Moncreiffe PS, Perth & Kinross), Vicky Roberts (Portlethen Academy, Aberdeenshire), James Robertson (General Editor, Itchy Co), Gemma Rooney (South Ayrshire), Jane Sandell (Stirling Libraries), Caroline Stein (Probationer Support, Falkirk), Jenny Watson (Aberdeen Reading Bus Initiative), Les Wheeler (Elphinstone Institute, Aberdeen University), Christine Wilson (HT, Greenmill PS, East Ayrshire)

1. Welcome and introductions

Matthew Fitt (acting chair) welcomed all present. He thanked Jean Sangster and Hilary Jones of the Royal Scottish Academy for Music and Drama and Dance for their hospitality and support. MF introduced himself and Mirka Ryjackova taking minutes. All participants introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of previous meeting in Aberdeen on 7.9.09 were approved.

Apologies were read out by MF.

3. Sharing good practice

3.1 Jean Sangster introduced herself, Hilary Jones and two fourth year drama students, Helen Darbyshire and Jack Lowden, who gave a presentation on the work of RSAMD's School of Drama's Centre for Voice in Performance.

3.1.1 Helen Darbyshire delighted the group with a powerful performance as 'La corbie' from Liz Lochhead's *Mary Queen of Scots Got Her Head Chopped Off*. Jack Lowden treated those present to a gallus rendition from Scene 2 of *The Servant o the Twa Maisters* by Victor Carin.

3.1.2 HJ and JS spoke about the work done by the Centre for Voice in Performance to develop young actors' skills with language and accents. Each student is required to learn a range of Scottish and English accents, exploring language as a living entity. The Centre works with Scottish writers like Liz Lochhead. The worldwide success of *Black Watch* was cited as an example of the clear link between drama and Scots. The Centre also has an international student body through the Erasmus exchange programme. A Swedish RSAMD student who has now returned home is using his Scots in drama work at his Swedish university. Jack Lowden had won the 2009 Duncan McCrae Memorial

Award for which third year students at the RSAMD must perform two contrasting Scots monologues and a poem in a variety of accents and dialects of Scots. Both the Duncan McCrae Memorial Award (value £300) and the DM Competition Prize (£150) are made possible by a trust fund donation. English drama students have won in the previous years.

3.1.3 All students have to master Received Pronunciation initially. But regardless of their background, students at the end of their first year are given a taster introduction to Scots language, history, prose and poetry. The opportunity to do more intensive Scots work is available in second year, including drama writing and using texts from the past and present. HJ talked of the great new drama emerging from contemporary Scottish playwrights. She highlighted the Traverse Theatre's commitment to new writers and their youth programme which has worked with Edinburgh schools encouraging children to write scripts with the help of professional writers and actors. Many of the scripts the Edinburgh pupils produce are inevitably in Scots. HJ mentioned a similar programme at Polmont Young Offenders Institution.

3.1.4 JS noted the depth of Scots study at the RSAMD recalling how she had to research Scots in order to lead classes. HJ mentioned the collaboration between the RSAMD and Itchy Coe in 2003 on a project which brought six Scottish secondary schools together with six RSAMD students for performances from *Tam o' Shanter's Big Night Out* school play collection at the Alexander Gibson Opera Studio. The RSAMD has in the past made use of the Scottish Book Trust's Live Literature scheme to work with Scots writers like Christine de Luca.

3.2. Helen and Jack were asked about their experiences of Scots. HD said she is from Fife and her family don't speak Scots. JL, from the Borders, said he is a Scots speaker from a Scots speaking family.

3.2.1 When asked if they had changed their attitude towards Scots having been at the RSAMD, HD said that she felt a little bit more Scottish because she had learned more Scots words. JL said that although he was encouraged to speak Scots at home and primary school, he was actively discouraged from speaking Scots at high school and given no Scots texts to study. The RSAMD gives the language value. JS said that Scots is valued in drama and for graduating students is a relevant and marketable commodity.

3.2.2 Brenda Williams asked the students if they had picked up Scots vocabulary from other parts of Scotland. HD said she was picking up other words very quickly. JL referred to a Swedish classmate who is already speaking Scots. HJ commented that many of their student intake from Scotland initially do not recognise the word 'sleekit' in spite of its prominence in the Burns poem *To a Mouse*.

3.2.3 JS spoke of a through-line of Scots language development from graduation to professional acting. Commenting that a similar kind of Scots language through-line was required from primary to Advanced Higher, MF congratulated JS, HJ, HD and JL for their entertaining and informative presentation.

4. Making MSPs aware of current good practice

4.1 MF regretted the fact that no MSPs were able to come to the meeting and explained that was why he was standing in for the second time as the Chair. MF restated the Education sub-committee's aim of bringing the good practice in Dundee, South Lanarkshire, Falkirk, Highland and across other local authorities to the attention of MSPs.

4.1.1 Margaret Foley, Quality Improvement Officer for Dundee Education, spoke about the response to Dundee's new Scots language resource, *Whar's Wattie?* which was launched in October 2009. Designed to address the needs of speakers of Dundonian, *Whar's Wattie?* is supported by Dundee's Director of Education, Jim Collins, who wrote the Introduction to the teaching pack. The authority was involved in a big push to promote the resource with Margaret Foley talking to head teachers about the importance of the Scots language and a general wish to progress teaching of Scots from primary into secondary. Margaret said it was important to highlight the fun element of Scots, not connected to exams and assessment. Using Scots in class had the ability to relax pupils, especially boys. *Whar's Wattie?* was shared by Margaret with teachers from other local authorities at the Learning & Teaching Scotland National Literacy Network meeting in Dundee in November. For a small charge for printing and postage, Margaret offered CPG Education sub-committee participants a free copy of *Whar's Wattie?* Margaret Foley's contact e-mail address is: margaret.foley@dundeecity.gov.uk

4.1.2 Andrew Harvey, Uddingston Grammar, South Lanarkshire, told the sub-committee about the new Scots teaching resource for S3+ pupils, *Tak the Leid*. Launched in October 2009, AH explained the rationale behind *Tak the Leid* was to achieve a status for Scots in high schools. The resource was aimed at certificate classes and was based on Hamish MacDonald's Scots novella, *The Girnin Gates*. Produced as a result of a working group established by the authority's Language Adviser, Janey Mauchline, AH spoke of the need to create a unit which encouraged pupils to read and write in Scots but one that teachers would actually use. Despite the initial difficulties experienced by seeing Scots written down for the first time, pupils were enthusiastic and keen to learn more about the language.

4.1.3 MF reminded the sub-committee of the Scots teaching pack *When We Find the Gowd*, produced in 2008 by Fiona Norris at Inverclyde Education. With *When We Find the Gowd* covering Primary 1 to Secondary and *Tak the Leid* intended for S3+, MF noted that these two resources already formed a skeleton Curriculum for Scots language.

4.1.4 Mary Connolly, Head Teacher of Nethermains Primary in Denny, Falkirk, began telling the group about the good practice in Falkirk local authority. MC was due the next day to be talking to staff in a Clackmannanshire school about her school's experience of promoting and teaching Scots throughout the whole academic year. At Nethermains PS, a number of teachers have become Scots language coordinators. Katrina Lucas, teacher at Comely Park Primary, Falkirk, said that nursery teachers were now being encouraged to get involved and that there was a good response from this sector. MF mentioned the launch of the Falkirk Scots Coordinators' Report at the Scottish Learning Festival 2009 which can be read at www.scotseducation.co.uk/reports

MF also highlighted Katrina Lucas' recently published article on sharing practice through the Scots language in Chartered Teacher Studies newsletter, available to read at

http://www.strath.ac.uk/media/departments/pdu/docs/Issue_15_November_2009.pdf

MF pointed out that articles like KL's in academic education publications contribute greatly to the growing body of evidence that Scots is important in our schools. Referring to Falkirk's Scots Coordinators' Network, MC said that it came from the grassroots. The Network was a platform equally for sharing practice and for giving teachers and pupils confidence with Scots.

4.1.5 Jean Sangster asked about possible reasons for resistance to Scots in schools. MF said that the group may want to discuss this at Item 6 of the Agenda.

4.1.6 June Ranscombe, Principal Teacher at Auldearn Primary, Highland and representative of the Highland Literacy Project, spoke about how the Scots section of the Highlight Literacy project came about. JR said that Scots did not have a high profile in Highlands. Gaelic was the main language other than English with some pockets of Scots particularly in Caithness. HLP ran project with Learning & Teaching Scotland, looking at Continuing Professional Development training from early level to fourth level (nursery - secondary). JR reported an excellent response from all involved including Alness Academy and Inverness High School who performed *Tam o Shanter*.

4.1.7 Joanna Nicholson told the sub-committee about her project, Sonsie Music, which performs music and stories for nursery and primary level. Children learn to listen to music through storytelling. JN takes Sonsie Music around Scotland, aware that the various dialects of Scots require different approaches and often reveal different attitudes towards the language. The Sonsie Music website is: www.sonsiemusic.co.uk/about_sonsie_music.htm

4.1.8 Brenda Williams mentioned the response of boys during a joint drama project which made use of Scots language and Scottish myths and legends. BW stated that the inhibitions of many boys went away immediately and they became themselves.

4.2 MF asked the group how we can make our MSPs aware of this good practice.

4.2.1 BW said that schools should object to questionnaires from Government which ask: What are you doing for St Andrew's Day/Burns' Day? BW suggested that schools write back to ask Government, 'Why do you just ask about these two days?'

4.2.2 Andrew Harvey said that focusing on something like Scots just for a week can be counterproductive. The Homecoming has in this regard backfired. If use of Scots is increased in schools, the aims of A Curriculum of Excellence will be enhanced, particularly in terms of linguistic diversity. AH suggested that the Education sub-committee consider developing a practical 10-point manifesto to state why Scots is beneficial to Education. KL added that a 10-point manifesto could serve as an answer to the most frequently asked questions about Scots.

MF said that Government is concerned to promote Scottish identity and when children learn about Scots, this aim is met. JS said that engaging with Scots made many people feel special.

4.2.3 MF reminded the group that the June meeting of the CPG Education sub-committee discussed asking schools to invite MSPs to observe good practice. It was suggested that there may be a time limit on this as a General Election will be called in the first half of 2010.

MF recalled that Former Culture Minister, Frank McAveety's visit to a primary school in Edinburgh to observe a Scots lesson was very well received. Former Schools and Skills Minister Maureen Watt was glad to judge Scots Writing competitions.

4.2.4 It was suggested that a small group from the CPG Scots Education sub-committee could request meetings with the Schools and Skills Minister, Keith Brown, and Karen Whitefield MSP, Convener of the Parliamentary Education and Lifelong Learning Committee and other MSPs. Margaret Foley, Mary

Connolly, Brenda Williams and Jack Stuart said they would be willing to be a part of a delegation from the CPG Scots Education sub-committee. MF said that participants not present at the meeting may also want to be part of such delegations.

It was agreed not to approach the BBC at present, although it was noted that Brenda William's daughter works in BBC Radio Drama and may be able to help with possible future contact with the Corporation.

5. Questionnaire on Scots in schools

5.1 MF reminded the group that it was agreed at the June meeting to discuss preparing, distributing and collating a questionnaire for teachers on Scots.

5.2 MF said that he had been liaising with Cecilia Craig about her research project on attitudes to and use of Scots in Aberdeenshire schools. Maureen Watt at the September meeting had suggested that Duncan Macniven, the Registrar General, should be made aware of CC's research. MF with CC's agreement sent a letter to Duncan Macniven and received a reply which he read out. This letter can be read at **Appendix 1**. In addition, MF made Carole Campariol of the Scottish Government's School Directorate aware of CC's research. MF read out Carole Campariol's reply which is also available to read at **Appendix 2**. Carole Campariol's reply alluded to research being carried out by the Scottish Government into general attitudes towards Scots.

MF said that there was a real need for research into teachers' attitudes towards Scots and that such research may be useful to Government. He asked how we as a group can begin to plan research.

5.3 Research conducted by Katrina Lucas into pupils' and parents' attitudes in her school community was passed around the room.

5.4 MF proposed that a small group from the CPG Scots Education sub-committee could work on a relatively short questionnaire to assess teachers' attitudes towards the Scots language. MF asked who would be interested in collating and preparing such a questionnaire.

5.5 Mary Connolly said that a questionnaire would be eye-opening in terms of the range of attitudes.

5.6 Glenn Telfer said that attitudes are often self-evident but that it was good idea if presented in the right way.

5.7 Katrina Lucas said the questionnaire would need to explore what problems teachers face. Training would then need to be provided to address these.

5.8 June Ranscombe said that many teachers' problems with Scots are based on lack of confidence.

5.9 Jack Stuart said there was a need to get official backing of some sorts for the research.

5.10 Margaret Foley said yes to teachers survey but linked directly to parents, teachers always worry about parental attitudes. National and local Parents' Council have concerns which need to be answered. Parents and teachers need to be linked.

5.11 MF said that further research into parents' attitudes could be developed in the future but in logistical grounds for a voluntary group like the sub-committee, it might be possible to concentrate on teachers' attitudes for the time being.

5.12 Katrina Lucas, Mary Connolly, Melanie West, Fiona Gold, Ruth McClements and Glenn Telfer said that they would be willing to work on the Teachers' Questionnaire. MF mentioned that others not present may also want to contribute to the Questionnaire. He noted Celia Craig's experience in Scots Education research.

5.13 Fiona Gold added that there is a marked difference in attitude between East and West Dumbartonshire. East Dumbartonshire's staff on the whole were wary of the teaching of Scots.

6. Is Scots a priority within education in Scotland?

6.1 MF announced that the first meeting of the Ministerial Scots Language Working Group - chaired by Derrick McClure and commissioned by Culture Minister, Michael Russell - was due to take place on Tuesday 24th November 2009 at Bridge of Allan. MF, James Robertson, Laureen Johnson - who are participants in CPG Scots Education sub-committee - had been invited to be members of the Working Group. Many of the CPG Scots Education sub-committee were present at the Ministerial Scots Seminar in Stirling in February and it was encouraging that the promise of a Ministerial Working Group has been fulfilled.

6.2 MF reminded the group of Keith Brown's statement to Parliament on 23rd April 2009 when he said that *There is no extra funding for Scots and the Scottish Government has no plans to increase significantly investment in Scots in schools.*

MF asked if the group felt that Scots is a priority in Scottish education.

6.3 KL said that it depends where you are. Falkirk local authority is very committed.

6.4 JS said that the situation is much better than in the past.

6.5 BW made the point that in the 5-14 Curriculum, it was clear that Scots should be a priority but it was ignored. In Curriculum for Excellence, Scots has a higher priority but that it could be ignored once again.

6.6 John Hodgart said that he had always tried to teach Scots and been viewed as a daftie at worst, at best as an eccentric. He said that there is still fear and snobbery about Scots. That there is no requirement to study Scots at university or for teachers to even have a knowledge contributes to the problem. JH noted though that we have come a long way.

6.7 JS hoped that there would be a report for Scots similar to Meek Report which made specific recommendations for Gaelic.

6.8 JH said we could learn from the experience of Gaelic activists in Scotland and Ulster Scots activists in Northern Ireland.

6.9 MF explained that Ulster Scots has 30,000 speakers and has received substantial financial government support.

6.10 Jean Sangster cited the example of Wales where it is beneficial to job candidates to be a Welsh speaker. In Wales, language is not just a discussion but is being properly supported.

6.11 KL spoke about language needing to be valued.

6.12 Andy Harvey said that language is inevitably political and that there was a danger of the Scots language becoming a party political football.

6.13 Tom Hamilton advised that it would be beneficial to involve the universities and to have representatives from the Teacher Training Institutes on the CPG Scots Education sub-committee. TH also said HMle should be represented.

6.14 MF agreed and noted that Paula Cowan of the University of the West of Scotland and Pauline Sangster of Moray House were group participants. Mary Ritchie of HMle is also a participant.

6.15 Elaine Webster mentioned the Pupil Council and that it might be worth inviting some of them to a CPG Scots in Education meeting.

6.16 BW noted that children have no problem expressing themselves in Scots through drama. Margaret Foley added that animation has the same effect.

6.17 Glenn Telfer said that few authority figures speak Scots. BW said that some Scots had been introduced gently at assembly. Morag Pieroni said that she had had similar experiences with Scots to BW and Margaret Foley and that Scots works well with smaller groups of children.

6.18 MF noted that the CPG Scots Education sub-committee fully supports the teaching of English language. KL said that pupils required a proper introduction which set clear boundaries between Scots and English.

6.19 JS suggested seminars for Directors of Education. BW suggested enhanced Scots provision for secondary schools. Margaret Foley suggested that the Association of Directors of Education be contacted. Mary Connolly noted that Julia Swan, the Director of Education for Falkirk who happens to be English, is always supportive.

6.20 MC also mentioned the excellent practice in using ICT in a secondary school French lesson she had observed. Scots language ICT software would be a useful addition.

6.21 MF intimated that he was working for Learning & Teaching Scotland for six months. One of his projects for LTS is to produce a Scots language module to be published on the LTS Literacy website. He highlighted LTS' commitment to Scots demonstrated by the recent publication of the English and Scots anthology of school children's poetry and the fact that the anthology was called Hame.

7. Any other committee business

There was no other committee business.

8. Future meetings

MF said that he was liaising with Ailsa McInnes with a view to holding a fourth meeting in February/March in Kilmarnock.

It was hoped that there would be one final meeting of this academic year at the Scottish Parliament in early summer and that point MF intended to stand down as Administrator of the sub-committee.

Gratitude was expressed by all to the RSAMD for their hospitality and support.

9. Final thought: Czech proverb - 'Patience brings roses.'

The meeting was held on 17th November 2009, exactly twenty years to the day since the Velvet Revolution began in former Czechoslovakia. A bouquet of roses was presented by Jean Sangster of the RSAMD to Mirka Ryjackova, the sub-committee's minute secretary, on this auspicious anniversary for Czechs with the hope expressed that a velvet revolution can also happen for the Scots language in education.

Minutes:

Mirka Ryjackova (Itchy Coo)

Appendix 1

Letter received from Duncan Macniven on 16th October 2009

Many thanks for your letter of 30 September - which is indeed interesting as we think about how we ask people about the Scots language in the next census.

It would also be of interest, of course, to my colleagues in the Scottish Government dealing with education and I would imagine that you have sent it to them too.

Duncan Macniven
Registrar General
General Register Office for Scotland
Ladywell Hse
Ladywell Rd
EDINBURGH
EH12 7TF

Appendix 2

E-mail reply from Carole Campariol received 13th November 2009

Many thanks for sending the below [Cecilia Craig's research] and many apologies for not replying to you sooner, I have been in and out of the office a lot and while trying to keep on top of things.

I forwarded this piece of research to Janet Ruiz's team, who found it interesting and relevant. We will convey the findings of this other piece of research to Ministers when we submit the findings of the Scottish Government Scots survey research to them.

I hope this is helpful and thanks again for sight of this.

Carole Campariol
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