

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

25 JANUARY 2000

SCOTS LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

ABSTRACT

This report provides feedback on the consultation exercise recently undertaken on the draft policy on Scots Language and Culture; it also recommends adoption of a finalised version of that policy.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- a) notes the generally positive results of the survey recently undertaken (a copy of the questionnaire and detailed analysis of the results are available in the Members' Lounge);
- b) endorses the finalised policy statement (Appendix 1) and guidelines (Appendix 2);
- c) reaffirms its intention that the policy statement and guidelines should be interpreted by staff as supportive documents which offer a helpful and reasonably flexible framework aimed at nurturing Scots Language and Culture.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Reference is made to the meeting of the Education Committee on 8 June 1999 when a consultation exercise was authorised on a draft Angus Council policy on Scots Language and Culture in the Curriculum (agenda item 9).
- 2.2 Scots Language and Culture are very live issues much debated in the media. Many organisations, including - for example - the Saltire Society, The Scots Language Society, Scots Language Resources Centre and the Scots National Dictionary Association support the Language in their different ways. Most of our universities now have degree courses in Scots Language and/or literature and include Scottish studies across a range of other courses. Many have also devoted resources and staff to research in these fields, notably the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh, the department of English in Aberdeen, and the History department in the University of Dundee.
- 2.3 The Scottish Consultative Council on the Curriculum, which advises the government on curricular matters, has recently undertaken a massive survey of opinion on the "Scottishness of the curriculum" which established widespread support for greater attention to Scottish cultural content across the curriculum. SCCC has subsequently consulted on proposals, first to increase the proportion of Scottish History in the curriculum and secondly to raise the profile of Scottish content in all subject areas at all levels. The Scottish Executive is consulting on Scottish Culture in a more general sense, having very recently issued a consultation document which refers to the arts and media, to sport and language.
- 2.4 The draft Council policy on which consultation has been taking place represents the most recent local development in a process which began in the 90s with the independent and simultaneous appointments of two staff tutors in Scots Language, respectively in Dumfries and Galloway and Tayside, the latter part-funded by the Saltire Society.

- 2.5 A considerable number of initiatives (mostly in the field of language) were developed by Tayside Regional Council including:
- Commissioning and publishing *Fair upon Tay*, an anthology of literary texts from Tayside Territory for use in primary and secondary schools.
 - *Tae be Yersels*, a set of twelve radio programmes designed to showcase spoken Scots from all over Scotland was commissioned from Billy Kay and issued to all schools.
 - As part of the support for the national 5-14 guidelines on English Language, a local support group developed a resource pack entitled *Scots Language and Culture*.
 - Tayside Council staff made a major contribution to the development of The Kist/A' Chiste (SCCC) and substantial numbers were purchased for the Educational Resource Service for use in schools.
- 2.6 Other developments included the appointment of a writer in residence to the Soutar Hoose in Perth, the general distribution of national resources such as *Gleg and Flooers and Beasties* to schools, Angus District Council's publication of *Caa Dune the Mune*, and more recently Community Education's publication of writing in Scots by students and the appointment by Angus Council for the year 1999/2000 of a literature development officer with a strong interest in Scots writing.
- 2.7 The current guidelines draw heavily on many ideas from examples very kindly shared with officers of Angus Council by Moray Council and the former Grampian Regional Council.
- 2.8 The draft documents described in 2.1 above were duly sent to all schools along with a request for comment via questionnaire. A copy of the questionnaire, and a detailed analysis of the responses received, are available for perusal in the Members' Lounge.

3 COMMENTS ON DRAFT POLICY AND GUIDELINES

- 3.1 Respondents mostly either agreed or strongly agreed with every statement in the draft policy.
- 3.2 Respondents again agreed or strongly agreed with Section 1 of the draft guidelines (the introduction). The comments drew attention to some doubt over the status of Scots as a language in its own right. In re-drafting the guidelines reference has been made to *Why Scots Matters*, by J Derrick McLure who argues that Scots is a *language* as opposed to a *dialect of English*. Appendix 2A from the Scots Language Resource Centre summarises this position well. It seems as if this is the basis for a healthy debate and many teachers will wish to take further time in arriving at a definition of Scots which is satisfactory to them.
- 3.3 For the "Rationale" section, again support was either strong or very strong. Comments suggested that the document might be phrased with greater sensitivity to the multicultural context. These comments have been reflected in the finalised version of the guidelines.
- 3.4 Concerns relating to teachers who are not native speakers of Scots were raised as was the issue of how practising Scottish teachers were taught not to speak Scots in their own childhood. Several responses contained helpful suggestions which have been incorporated in the finalised version.
- 3.5 Teachers clearly perceive a need for further resources and would appreciate staff development.

4 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 Although the response to the survey was low (30%), the generally positive tone of the responses received suggests there is merit in adopting a supportive policy statement together with brief explanatory guidelines.
- 4.2 In the light of comments received, amendments have been made to the draft policy and guidelines. The finalised versions are attached (Appendices 1 and 2 respectively) and it is recommended that those now be approved by the Education Committee.

- 4.3 Given the enormous range of new initiatives which are currently being imposed on schools and teachers, it will be important not to present this policy as yet another initiative which schools have no choice but to implement. The whole thrust of the policy is about supporting and encouraging the Scots Language and Scottish Culture; the obvious corollary of this is that the policy itself should be implemented in ways and at a pace with which staff themselves feel comfortable. There are strong indications that current practice by many teachers is entirely in line with the principles now encapsulated within the proposed policy; in these circumstances it is hoped that the policy will be seen by these teachers as genuinely helpful in endorsing the approach they are taking, and that it will be used by other teachers as an encouragement. Staff development should be planned in order to provide the necessary support.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 Following on from the consultation exercise, the original short-life staff working group provided re-drafted versions of the draft policy and guidelines.
- 5.2 In addition, and in accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Director of Law & Administration.

JIM ANDERSON
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

JAA/RB

Angus Council Policy and Guidelines On The Scots Language and Scottish Culture

Policy

- Angus Council values the linguistic and cultural heritage of the people of Angus.
- The Council supports the status of Scots and its use as a language.
- The Council wishes to promote a greater understanding of the place of Scots and Scottish Culture in all areas of the curriculum.
- Scots, in its written and spoken forms, should be regarded as a valid medium for communication when it is appropriate.
- The teaching of Scots and Scottish culture should be delivered within a multicultural framework.
- Children should be given opportunities to study local customs, traditions and history within a wider cultural framework.
- Children should learn about the history and usage of Scots.
- Children should be given opportunities to experience the cultural heritage of Angus and of Scotland through literature, music, drama and art.

GUIDELINES

1 Introduction

- 1.1 Scottish culture, “the common experience, activities, history and artefacts of the people of Scotland”, is constantly changing yet remains recognisably unique to Scotland and its population.
- 1.2 To a greater or lesser extent, every area of the curriculum has elements which can be described as a distinctively Scottish. This is very obvious in the case of Social Subjects, for example, and perhaps less so in Science and Mathematics, but nonetheless present and important. Many of these areas have suffered comparative neglect over the years and the curriculum is the poorer for it.
- 1.3 An important element of Scottish culture is the Scots language¹, which derives from a form of Old English spoken in northern Northumbria in the sixth and seventh centuries AD. It became the national language of Scotland by the late fifteenth century, related to Tudor English in the way that Norwegian is related to other Scandinavian languages today. Political events such as the Union of the Crowns and the Union of Parliament, and the lack of a post-Reformation Scots translation of the Bible led to the gradual Anglicisation of the language (and attitudes to it). Standard English became the language of Church and State - and Scots came to be regarded as an inferior regional dialect.
- 1.4 Scots survives today in literature and in a number of spoken varieties. Most Scots use forms of speech, which include features of Scots language, to a greater or lesser degree depending on context and audience. Many Scots claim to speak some form of the language.

“It should be a central aim of Scottish schools to help their pupils understand that the common experiences, activities, history and artefacts of the people of Scotland constitute an identifiable and distinctive culture, worthy of transmission and of study.”
SOEID, *English Language 5-14*

“Schools have a duty to expose children to *questions* about society. Schools do not and should not “socialise” pupils into some national culture.”
Lindsay Paterson, Professor of Education Policy, Moray House Conference on Scottish Culture on Education, Edinburgh 1997

“Learning how to learn goes beyond study and information skills ... It includes personal qualities such as honesty and self esteem or what has

2 Rationale

- 2.1 The case for exploring and studying Scots language, literature and culture in schools is primarily based on the need to value the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of *all* children who live here, and to give them opportunities to become aware of the rich and diverse heritage which exists in Scotland.
- 2.2 Scots *is* a language, spoken by a substantial proportion of the population. To maintain the privileged position of Standard English and reject the home language of many

¹ That Scots is a *language* as opposed to a *dialect of English* is argued well in *Why Scots Matters*, by J Derrick McLure, Department of English, University of Aberdeen, The Saltire Society, Revised Edition, 1997. See also Appendix I

been referred to as “emotional intelligence”. In fact, learning to learn is very close to learning to be.”
SCCC, *Teaching for Effective Learning*

of our children implies rejection also of their homes and families, of the things which have given them love and security. It is a fundamental and damaging attack on the culture which has already shaped their lives. We should help children to be confident in listening, talking, reading and writing in the local and national variants of Scots.

2.3 This does not negate the importance of schools' obligation to give children a command of Standard English. Indeed it can be argued that greater awareness of linguistic diversity and secure confidence in the home language will enhance *all* communication skills including the ability to use Standard English.

“... it is logical that their children should be introduced to the literature and language of the country in which they have chosen to live. The same would be expected when entering the education system of any adopted nation.” Liz Niven, *The Tartan Chador*

2.4 The same principle of cultural and linguistic respect applies to the wide range of cultural and linguistic groups which exist within the population of Scotland. In studying such diversity, which may be one of the defining characteristics of our community, children can learn not only to value the indigenous cultural life of Scotland but also develop appreciation of cultures other than their own.

2.5 There is a need to ensure that all aspects of our culture in the widest sense (including History, institutions, media, health, science, and Arts) are appropriately included in our programmes of study. In developing these in schools it will be important to set them in their UK, European and global contexts.

3 The Language and Culture of Angus

“The speech of Scottish people is often distinctive. It may display features of pronunciation and intonation, which together constitute an accent. It may contain features of dialect such as vocabulary, syntax and economies of expression. These reflect the histories of communities and are part of the language children bring to school.” *SOEID English Language 5-14*

3.1 While the people of Angus are characterised by linguistic diversity Scots continues to be important in everyday speech in our communities. As defined by the *Concise Scots Dictionary*, Angus is part of that dialect area known as “Northern Scots”, which includes the Doric and shares certain features with speakers in Fife to the South and Perthshire to the West. A survey commissioned by the Scottish Office has established that as many as 67% of people in Scotland claim to speak Scots in some form or other.

3.2 A significant minority of the population of Angus comes from outwith Scotland and has limited experience of Scots language and Scottish culture. It can be shown too that a great many different “home” languages are spoken in the Angus area. Clearly the teaching of Scots language and Scottish culture must be carried out with sensitivity to these different cultures and linguistic groups. Communities within Angus have strong local cultural traditions and this is reflected in a wide range of local heritage groups and other bodies, which promote the indigenous culture of the area.

4 Pre-School

- 4.1 For many children, nursery is their first experience of formal education. *A Curriculum Framework for Children 3 to 5* (SCCC, 1999) highlights the pre-school year as “an ideal stage at which to enrich children’s language experiences by exposing them to different languages.” It is therefore appropriate to ensure that activities which encourage learning about Scots language and culture are offered at this stage.
- 4.2 Children bring their own experiences of understanding and using language at home and in the community to the pre-school setting. It is important that staff value this learning and use it to enrich their curriculum.
- 4.3 Young children take great delight in interesting words and sounds. Scots and non-Scots alike can enjoy the use of Scots materials in listening, talking, reading, writing and singing activities.
- 4.4 When children are talking, staff should be sensitive to their use of language, its vocabulary, syntax and pronunciation. Staff should not “correct” Scots forms of speech. Rather they should help the children to understand and value Scots where it is appropriate in the context of a range of language forms, including Standard English, all of which can be appropriate at other times.
- 4.5 Modelling of Scots by nursery staff will encourage children to use it. If staff can use Scots in an unselfconscious way they should do so.
- 4.6 The Authority strongly urges schools to recognise Scots as an important strand within a multicultural framework, by incorporating a statement on it in their communication and language policy for nursery classes.
- 4.7 During the pre-school year children should be introduced to other aspects of Scottish culture; for example customs surrounding St. Andrew’s Day or perhaps looking at Scottish food are just two possibilities.

“All we have to work with is the language and embedded experience that a child brings to school. We cannot reject this.”
SCCC SCOTTISH ENGLISH.
The Language Children Bring to School

“Taking account of the interests and skills emerging from the diversity that children and their families bring to the early years setting enriches learning experiences.”
A Curriculum Framework for 3 to 5.
SCCC 1999

5 Primary Schools

"General Aims of the Expressive Arts curriculum: To promote an awareness of cultural heritage, values and diversity"
SOEID, *Expressive Arts* 5-14

"The first tasks of schools are ... to enable pupils to be confident and creative in this language (this speech of the Scottish people) ... This will involve teachers in valuing pupil's spoken language, and introducing them to stories, poems and other texts which use dialect in a positive way."
SOEID, *English Language* 5-14

"Pupils should understand their environment... The local area and community provide excellent starting points through which understanding can grow to encompass other places and other times, thus pointing pupils to Scottish, British, European and global dimensions."
SOEID *Environmental Studies* 5-14

What is appropriate? When should inappropriate language be corrected? The central principles of acceptability should be that the pupil is making a genuine attempt at communication, is trying to achieve a real or agreed purpose, and especially for older pupils, is making an apposite choice in the speech form being adopted,
SOEID, *English Language* 5-14

- 5.1 Many opportunities are provided in the primary curriculum for integrated studies. In primary schools, therefore, Scots and Scottish culture should form an integral part of the whole curriculum.
- 5.2 The 5-14 National Guidelines on *Expressive Arts*, on *English Language* and on *Environmental Studies* indicate which elements of Scots and Scottish culture should be delivered within existing curricular structures. There are opportunities in Health Education, Science and Technology to discuss, for example, the serious health problems which can be associated with certain aspects of the Scottish lifestyle and to celebrate the many technological advances made by Scots.
- 5.3 Topic and thematic work in the primary classroom afford many opportunities for children to investigate local language and life. They can then be invited to make comparisons with other forms of language and culture thus developing a progressively wider appreciation of Scotland, the United Kingdom, Europe and the world. Within their developing world picture, schools should help them to contextualise various specifically Scottish strands of History, Music, Art and Science for example.
- 5.4 Scots should be seen as a valid medium for communication *wherever it is appropriate*. Definitions of what is appropriate vary and it would be wrong to attempt one here. However it is apparent that Scots is now acceptable where once it was not; for example in the media, including news and drama, in the theatre, in daily speech and in the Scottish Parliament. Teachers should *encourage* children to express themselves appropriately in Scots throughout the curriculum and not just in the area of language study.
- 5.5 Many schools already teach Scots and Scottish culture within the existing curriculum. Part of the regular curriculum audit should ensure the teaching of Scots language and Scottish culture is a well integrated part of the curriculum. This can lead to a suitable framework which gives recognition to current practice.

6 Secondary Schools

- 6.1 The importance of Scots and Scottish culture is highlighted in national 5-14 Guidelines, in Standard Grade Arrangements and in Higher Still Arrangements in English and Communication, History, Music and Drama. In Higher English students are *required* to study at least one Scottish text as defined by the Arrangements.

"...Increasingly... teachers are making welcome use of works written in the vernacular of such regions as the Northeast and the central belt to extend pupils' experience of the language and literature of their own country."
Effective Learning and Teaching in Scottish Secondary Schools - English,
 A Report by H M Inspectors of Schools (SOEID)

"Scottish texts should be actively sought and used in classrooms; poetry, drama and fiction, historical and contemporary; and media texts such as radio broadcast, films and television.
 Teachers should help pupils recognise themselves, and be able to look at themselves as Scots in a detached and self-aware manner."
English Language 5-14

- 6.2 Through implementing the national 5-14 Guidelines, secondary schools will continue to develop their provision of Scots and Scottish culture. This matter cannot be left to the enthusiasm of individual teachers. It will be very important that this process of development is managed on a whole school level and that learning in and about Scots and Scottish culture systematically and appropriately becomes part of every subject.
- 6.3 Accordingly, secondary schools should ensure that their regular curriculum audits address the need to ensure that all children have opportunities to learn about Scots and Scottish culture.
- 6.4 Learning and Teaching about Scottish culture should permeate the secondary curriculum. In addition to learning about language, literature, music and history, children and young people can critically question representations of Scottish identity through the media. Scottish culture should also be encountered in the sciences, in technology and business for example. Teachers can make children aware of the Scottish tradition in those areas personified by people such as Stevenson, Fleming, Elsie Inglis, Helena Kennedy, Anne Gloag and James Clark Maxwell. Above all the study of Scottish Culture must help young people to be confident in themselves and their own identity. There are, of course, resource implications in adopting such an approach. Schools should always seek to acquire the best possible resources for teaching Scots and Scottish culture. Services within the Council such as the Education Resource Service, the Educational Development Service, the public libraries network, Local Heritage Centres and local museums can offer valuable support.
- 6.5 Scots should be regarded as a valid medium for communication across the secondary curriculum. All teachers should welcome the diversity of languages brought to school by children and use it to develop linguistic competence. Study and use of Scots is an adjunct to the development of competence in Standard English and not a competitor for its place within the curriculum.

7 Community Education Service

- 7.1 The Community Education Service's adult education programmes should actively encourage the study and use of Scots and Scottish Culture. There are research and heritage groups in Kirriemuir and Carnoustie and small grants are available to help establish self-help groups. Scots is not only encouraged and supported but actively exploited in adult basic education groups.

APPENDIX 2A

The Scots Language

The publication in 1991 of SOEID's National Guidelines has prompted a reappraisal of attitudes to Scots in our schools.

"The speech of Scottish people is ...distinctive. The first tasks of schools are.... to enable pupils to be confident and creative in this language and to begin to develop the notion of language Diversity, within which pupils can appreciate the range of accent, dialects and languages they encounter."

".... Given such experiences, and conviction of the worth of their own accents and dialects, pupils will have greater empathy with those whose languages are different."

For the past century our educational policies have actively discouraged use of Scots language in schools. Scots has been confined to the playground as an inferior brand of English. Increased awareness of the history and development of the Scots language will assist teachers to recognise spoken Scots not as "bad" English but as a language with its ain vocabulary and grammatical structure.

The Scots language is descended from a northern form of Old English whose speakers had reached the area south of the Forth by the seventh century AD. Somewhat earlier, probably in the fifth century, Scots had come from Ireland with their Gaelic language, and they gradually began to extend their power; by the eleventh century the King of Scots ruled over most of what is now mainland Scotland, with Gaelic as the dominant language. However from the time of King Malcolm III (1057-93) and his Anglophile Queen, Margaret, strong southern influences came to bear. In the succeeding years many Anglo-Norman noble families and monasteries moved up from north-east England. Although their own language was Norman French, that of their retainers and followers was a form of northern English with strong Scandinavian influence (still noticeable in modern Scots in words such as *brae*, *gratin*, *lop* and *niece*).

This developing language, then known as *Inglis*, spread very rapidly, especially through trade in the newly founded burghs and soon reached most of the east and south-west of the country. Cultural contact leading to new words coming into the language, took place with Norse, as noted above, Gaelic, of which there is more than one might think, Dutch, through strong trading links with the Low Countries, Latin, more widely used than in England, and French. The last came not only from the Anglo-Norman aristocracy and from Parisian French arriving via English, but also from direct contact between Scotland and France in what became known as the Old Alliance. This was a series of treaties and diplomatic alliances between 1295 and 1560. Written records in Scots survive from the late fourteenth century onwards and one of the earliest literary works was Barbour's *Brus*, a narrative poem on King Robert the Bruce and his exploits in the wars against English invasions at the beginning of that century.

By the early sixteenth century, Scots, as it was now called, was well on the way to becoming an all-purpose national language, just as modern English was developing south of the border. (Gaelic was by now confined to western and northern areas and to the Western Isles). Events however soon led to a process of Anglicisation, which has continued to this day. From the Scottish Reformation in 1560, Scotland began to look to Protestant England rather than to Catholic France. In the absence of a Scots translation of the Bible, an English one, the Geneva Bible, was used in churches creating a severe handicap to the formal written use of Scots, in many important areas of society. The advent of the Union with England, and subsequent pressures for conformity to Standard English in formal literature and official documents, have reduced the range of registers easily available to Scots writers. However dialects of Scots still spoken differ greatly enough from English in their vocabulary and idiom to be barely comprehensible to a monoglot English speaker. Even those Scots people whose Scots can be more fairly characterised as "Scottish English", will still readily vary the admixture of Scots in their language according to the company in which they find themselves.

Educational policies have until very recently followed the Anglicising trend and in various ways sought to eradicate both Scots and Gaelic, even by beating children for the use of their own language in the playground. In spite of this official opposition, spoken Scots has survived in a vigorous form, so those forecasts of its imminent disappearance, recorded since the mid-eighteenth century, have so far proved unfounded. A strong literary tradition has ensured that it cannot be regarded as a mere dialect. Allan Ramsay and others from the early eighteenth century drew attention to the glories of early poetry in Scots, and its stature has been increased by poets such as Robert Fergusson, Robert Burns and Hugh MacDiarmid and by novelists such as Sir Walter Scott, John Galt and Lewis Grassie Gibbon. The strength of literary Scots has probably never been greater than it is today and at long last the spoken forms too are receiving their due in educational policies from primary schools to universities (Edinburgh University, for instance, has plans for the first full honours degree in *Scots Language*.) For the past twenty years or so the Scots Language Society has endeavoured to further the cause of Scots, and the

great success of W.L. Lorimer's *New Testament in Scots* in 1983 and of the *Concise Scots Dictionary* in 1985 are good indications of more civilised attitudes. The setting up of the Scots Language Resource Centre in Perth in 1993 is another sign that the Scots language is at last being treated with the respect it deserves

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