

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

Wednesday 17th November, 2010

6.15pm - 8pm

Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Room V2

Present:

Katrina Lucas (Comely Park PS, Falkirk), Melanie West (Children's and Families' Officer, North Ayrshire Council), Ruth McClements (Bannockburn PS, Stirling), Elaine Webster (Scottish Language Dictionaries), Jill Bennett (Scots Poetry 4 Cool Kids, Fife), Elizabeth Cordiner (Scots Poetry 4 Cool Kids, Fife), Christine Emmett (St Elizabeth's PS, South Lanarkshire), Jack Stuart (Scots Language Society), Glenn Telfer (writer and teacher, Edinburgh), John Hodgart (retired PT English/ASLS Education Committee), Matthew Fitt (Education Director, Itchy Co), Jean Sangster (Lecturer in Voice, RSAMD), Andy Harvey (Uddingston Grammar, South Lanarkshire), Anne White (Letham PS, West Lothian), Muriel Angus (Letham PS, West Lothian), Professor Alan Riach (Department of Scottish Literature and Language, Glasgow University), Alexander Hutchison (RSAMD Writing Fellow), Lynn Ferguson (RSAMD)

Apologies:

Aileen Campbell MSP, Rob Gibson MSP, Caroline Stein (Nethermain PS, Falkirk), Velma Bevan (PT English, Auchinleck Academy, East Ayrshire), Susan McKay (Young People and Schools Librarian, Aberdeenshire), Lynne Ferguson (Falkirk HS), Cecilia Craig (retired PT English, Aberdeenshire), Peter MacKenzie (Convener, East Lothian Education), Councillor Jim Roberts (Ballochmyle, Ayrshire), Janey Mauchline (Quality Improvement Officer, South Lanarkshire), Gemma Rooney (HT St Cuthbert's PS, South Ayrshire), James Forbes (Lasswade Academy, Midlothian), Sheena Blackhall, poet, Peter McGhee (Quality Improvement Officer, North Lanarkshire), Fiona Gold (East Dunbartonshire), Rosa Murray (General Teaching Council for Scotland), June Ranscombe (Auldearn PS, Highland), Tom Hamilton (General Teaching Council for Scotland), Jenny Watson (Aberdeen Reading Bus Initiative), Ailsa McInnes (South Ayrshire Libraries), Sheila Love (HT Ardler PS, Dundee), Kirsteen McCue (Glasgow University), Joanna Nicholson (Sonsie Music), Ross McGregor (James Hamilton Academy, East Ayrshire), Mirka Ryjackova (Itchy Co), Gillian Bell (Dundonald PS, South Ayrshire), James Robertson (Itchy Co), Hilary Jones (RSAMD), Ronnie Renton (ASLS)

1. Welcome and introductions

Matthew Fitt, chairing the meeting in the absence of an MSP, welcomed members to the meeting, thanked Jean Sangster and Maggie Kinloch for kindly hosting the CPG Education Sub-Committee for a second time. Members introduced themselves.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting in Kilmarnock on 10.3.10

3. Performance by Drama Student Lynn Ferguson

3.1.1 Lynn Ferguson, 4th year RSAMD drama student and winner of the Duncan Macrae Prize performed a piece for the meeting in Scots written by Tom McGrath

3.2.1 Lynn said that she had not thought of Scots as a language until coming to study at the RSAMD. The group thanked her for her performance.

4. Update on Research Group's National Survey of Teacher Attitudes to Scots

4.1.1 Katrina Lucas gave an update on the Research Group's National Survey of Teachers' Attitudes towards Scots. The Report is due to be published on the Scots CPG Education website on November 30th 2010.

4.1.2 KL noted that the research has revealed a great many fascinating responses. Primary teachers seem to have more of a have-a-go attitude. Secondary teachers may have more knowledge about the subject but lack confidence. Primary teachers have seen the response/outcomes of Scots language work. They see it as important and are more positive. Primary teachers seem to be past the stage of asking if Scots is a language or not. Primary teachers are keen for a bank of resources to be developed and are fed up of having to hunt for/create materials.

4.1.3 KL hoped that the CPG research will lead to a push for a bigger survey on Teacher Attitudes/Scots in schools being commissioned.

4.2.1 MF asked the group if the final Report should contain a section for recommendations to the Scottish Government.

4.2.2 Jack Stuart said that a summary would be useful to highlight needs. JS said that some clarity was needed.

4.2.3 Andrew Harvey advised that we should say what we think is required.

4.2.4 Jean Sangster said that research that benefits the wider community usually has a higher level of support.

4.2.5 Elaine Webster suggested that the teachers who responded will be expecting something to happen.

4.3.1 AH said that Secondary teachers are more suspicious of Scots. There is enthusiasm at S1/2 level but there are problems moving into Standard Grade years. There are issues with exams, propriety and parental concerns.

4.3.2 KL said that the quality of CPD in Falkirk is having a positive effect on attitudes in general.

4.3.3 JS said that there is not much in Scots for S3 upwards and this needs to be built on. The benefit of Scots is that pupils become enthused about language and with words in general.

4.4.1 KL noted that most people chose to respond in English in the survey. There was only one response in Scots. MF said that the questions were in English. KL said this made it less threatening and elicited more responses. EW said that everyone should have a chance to build a certain level of confidence. Alexander Hutchison suggested that attempts to promote Scots in school and in general would have more credibility if discussions were conducted in Scots.

4.5.1 John Hodgart said that there have been positive statements in official documents for more than 20 years and yet we're no further forward at Secondary level. He said there is a need to embarrass the present administration into doing something. JL said there was a clear need to make recommendations.

4.5.2 EW said that Secondary teachers are asking for training and information.

4.5.3 JH said that a mandatory element is necessary.

4.5.4 KL said that teachers want a point of contact and someone to manage training and resources - a co-ordinator. This role could be based at LTS or GLOW or own authority

4.5.5 Alan Riach said that official recognition was needed first and that Scots should not just be seen as a dialect or series of dialect.

4.5.6 KL said that there is a need to make the point that Scots impacts on English and brings about improved engagement in all literacy.

4.5.7 MF asked if the Report should make a key recommendation that a co-ordinator be employed in every authority. This was the initial suggestion that had been raised at the Ministerial Working Group meetings. There was general agreement about recommending a co-ordinator be put in place in every relevant local authority.

5. General Teaching Council for Scotland's new award for Professional Recognition for Scots language teaching.

5.1.1 MF announced that the General Teaching Council for Scotland is promoting a new award for Professional Recognition for Scots language teaching. KL and Caroline Stein have already been accepted for this award and several members of the Sub-Committee are applying. An event will be held in the Scottish Parliament in February to honour successful applicants.

MF added there is more information on the GTCS website www.gtcs.org.uk and that the GTCS are to be applauded for showing this commitment and belief in the value of Scots teaching practice.

5.1.2 Some colleagues said they had found the Application form difficult. KL encouraged them to persevere.

5.2.1 Muriel Angus and Anne White said they were disappointed that previous good work in West Lothian now seemed to have petered out. AR spoke of the importance of validating the way that people speak and Scots in writing. KL mentioned the need to win over parents and to demonstrate the benefits of Scots in wider engagement.

6. Update on the Delegation Group's meetings with the Cabinet Secretary for Education and the Minister for Culture

6.1.1 MF informed the Sub-Committee that he, KL and Peter McGhee had met Michael Russell, Cabinet Secretary for Education on the 6th of October.

6.1.2 This followed a meeting with Fiona Hyslop, the Minister for Culture, on 29th of May which was attended by 14 Sub-Committee members. Michael Russell who was due to attend the May 29th meeting was unable to come at the last minute. He submitted his apologies.

6.2.1 MF said that at the meeting on 6th of October Michael Russell had intimated that he supports Scots in education in principle but that there is no money for it. It was put to Mr Russell that there was a consensus that a coordinator or team of coordinators should be established within Learning & Teaching Scotland. Again Mr Russell said that there was no money to fund this. He did offer to chair a meeting between the CPG Education Sub-Committee and Learning and Teaching Scotland. MF said that a meeting date had been set for this on the 19th of January at the Scottish Parliament.

6.2.2 MF noted that Mr Russell had invited KL to join the Scottish Government's Excellence Group for English. He also pointed out that the Engage for Education blog on Scots language had more comments than any other guest blog on the site.

7. Response to Scottish Government Literacy Action Plan

7.1.1 MF had written to Carole Campariol at the Learning Directorate asking how the Government saw the role of Scots in its recent Literacy Action Plan. CC had answered 'The plan also highlights that targeted literacy plans should be in place at the local level. There are obviously opportunities here to ensure that Scots, where appropriate, features.'

7.1.2 There was consensus from the group and some frustration at the phrase 'where appropriate'. The question was asked when would it be inappropriate to learn about Scots in a Scottish school. There was also concern that the word 'feature' keeps Scots in a special place for one-off

events or lessons. It was suggested that 'feature' be replaced with 'should be integrated.'

7.1.3 MF agreed to write to CC to suggest that a Sub-Committee delegation meets with the framers of the Literacy Action Plan to discuss the 'opportunities' mentioned at 7.1.1.

8. Burns' Day 2011 statement calling for increased provision of Scots language and Scottish literature within the new education body, SEQIA

8.1.1 MF asked the group if there was a need for a Burns' Day 2011 statement calling for increased provision of Scots language and Scottish literature within the new education body, SEQIA.

8.2.1 There was a consensus that a statement was needed to raise awareness (again!). It was agreed that the Party of Scotland should be doing much more to support the teaching of Scots language and Scottish literature in schools.

8.2.2 JS said that legitimisation was needed.

8.2.3 JH insisted that exams must be developed to include Scots and that the Scottish Government had obligations under the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages to support languages like Scots.

8.3.1 MF asked which organisations should be approached to seek an endorsement for the statement. The GTCS, STUC, universities, church of Scotland, Literature Forum, Bishop Conti, prominent writers, Judith Gillespie and the EIS were suggested by members of the group.

8.4.1 MF and JH agreed to work on a joint statement between the CPG and ASLS and to circulate a draft in due course for approval by both organisations.

9. Any other committee business

9.1.1 The Sub-Committee thanked Katrina Lucas for all her hard work on the Survey and Report on Teacher Attitudes to Scots and Melanie West and Jean Sangster presented her with a bouquet of flowers.

10. Date of next meeting to be confirmed