BEMIS Scotland are the national Ethnic and Cultural Minorities led umbrella body supporting the development of the Ethnic Minorities Voluntary Sector in Scotland and the communities that this sector represents.

Our vision is of a Scotland that is equal, inclusive and responsive: A society where:

- people from the diverse communities are valued, treated with dignity and respect,
- have equal citizenship, opportunities and equality of life,
- and who actively participate in civic society.

Introduction:

Curriculum for Excellence has the potential to reflect the ingenuity and diverse skill set resplendent in Scotland’s mosaic of communities. Communities can be particularly influential and key partners in enhancing the educational experience of both ethnic minority pupils and the broader school community.

From our experience this is particularly apparent within the EM voluntary sector and increasingly prevalent within a cultural context including but not reserved to important characteristics such as language, music, sport, song and dance.

The preceding Education and Culture Committee review focussed on the ‘Development of Scotland’s Young Work Force’. In order to appropriately meet this challenge and utilise all of the opportunities at our disposal BEMIS support the committees review of the place of the voluntary and private sector and the key skills they can encourage and enhance in this context.

It is important to note that both sectors have particular skill sets and roles in the overarching process of raising attainment and fulfilling the potential of Scotland’s youth. Curriculum for excellence has the ability to adapt and make use of the opportunities available across sectors and in the spirit of this collaborative philosophy this submission will convey the experiences of diverse communities and potential for further collaboration between sectors.
Minority languages in Scotland:

Language is a key cultural characteristic and an important variable in both a cultural and educational setting for celebrating cultural diversity and promoting active citizenship. Language provision as a conduit for raising attainment and fostering a sense of belonging and engagement in Scotland has been identified by members and via work programmes as a crucial dynamic in progressing the educational attainment agenda.

For bilingual speakers and EAL learners a solid foundation in their heritage language, as research all over the world shows, is vital to effective acquisition of the language of the host country.

It supports cognitive development, development of literacy skills, attainment and affects positively the speakers’ self-esteem and emotional development.

Community languages should be supported within the education system with the specific purpose of developing them in all four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) as heritage languages and shouldn't be treated just as an interesting addition to the suite of languages offered as L3 within the “1+2 strategy” (cf. also the 486/EEC Directive of 1977*).

✓ Recommendation: The availability of national qualifications, at least for the most numerous community languages in Scotland, would be desirable. The qualifications are available for Urdu but not for Polish or any other of the main community languages.

✓ According to the 2011 Census, 7% of people over 3 years old living in Scotland use language other than English at home. In some local authority areas the numbers are considerably higher – 13% for both City of Edinburgh and Glasgow City, 15% for Aberdeen City, 20% for Shetland Islands and 47% for Eilean Siar.

✓ Scots and Polish (each 1%) and Gaelic (0.5 %) were, on the whole the most common languages other than English reported as being used at home. British Sign Language was used at home by 13,000 people aged 3 and over (0.2 % of the total population aged 3 and over).

✓ The Pupil Census Supplementary Data for 2014 published by the Scottish Government in February 2015 revealed that the children in Scottish publically funded schools speak between them 139 languages, the top five being Polish (11,582), Urdu (5,400), Gaelic (4,610), Punjabi (4,105) and Arabic (2,374).

✓ Scotland is a truly multilingual and multicultural country. This variety is often considered to be a challenge but it is also a fantastic resource and part of Scotland’s common heritage. When trying to lay down the route to the integration for the people of Scotland we should consider both perspectives.
Lack of consistency Education Scotland’s Parent zone encourages families to ‘speak English at home” while the evidence-based advice that EAL teachers are providing parents with is to speak the parent’s own language at home.

1) The scale of the third and private sectors’ involvement in schools, in terms of improving attainment and achievement, and the appropriate dividing line between their role and the role of education authorities;

1.1 Curriculum for Excellence affords us the opportunity to create, develop and implement unique and equitable responses to the needs of diverse school communities drawing on the expertise of community organisations in the provision of language needs and other cultural characteristics. Taking into consideration that;

✓ Local community organisations are in a position to enable the school to engage more successfully with families who are more likely to suffer from social isolation for cultural, social or economic reasons, such as new migrant, asylum seeker or refugee communities.

1.2 The relationship between the public sector and voluntary sector in the early engagement process should be one of mutual collaboration. On occasions the 3rd sector is better positioned to engage more directly with individuals or communities.

Example:

Wyndford Nursery, Glasgow approached Maryhill Integration Network for support to engage with parents who had English as an Additional language and needed support to learn key phrases. MIN were able to support the group to become a conduit for each other with parents being able to advise and guide each other. From this group the parents have a greater sense of belonging and are able to engage with their children’s school and learning- which in turn has helped their children to be more settled, engage with additional activities and shows them that their parents recognise the value of education.

2) Whether the full potential of the third and private sectors in helping to improve children’s attainment and achievement is being realised;

2.1 Some third sector organisations, including language schools and community groups, have experienced difficulties engaging with schools. It was highlighted that organisations needed the support of “higher” organisations such as the local authority or Education Scotland to be able to get into schools.

✓ Recommendation: Schools should be encouraged by local authorities and national education bodies to build sustainable relationships with local community organisations. The need for this can be evidenced via school roll
or ethnicity of demographics. Intermediary bodies such as BEMIS, Housing Associations, Local Area Committees or Community Planning Partnerships can be engaged to identify harder to reach communities or organisations.

2.2 **Where third sector organisations were able to work with the school the partnerships were often very positive**, bringing in additional skills and experience to the school and new opportunities for the children - for example in Scotland’s most ethnically diverse area, Govanhill, community projects such as Govanhill Youth Action, The Irish Heritage Foundation, Friends of Romano Lav and Sistema Scotland provide extra dimensions of educational provision in a variety of culturally sensitive formats for the benefit of the broader school communities.

2.3 Work between Schools and community organisations such as the provision of language, music or broader cultural educational experiences should be encouraged within a context of collaboration looking to sustain programmes legacy and outcomes. There should be a distinction made between organisations providing ‘services’ and ‘long term collaborations’ between schools and communities. In the former teachers and staff can also benefit from gaining a broader understanding of communities as opposed to 3rd sector interventions being interpreted as ‘separate’ from the core curriculum. In this scenario the Curriculum for Excellence can reflect the diversity of the school community and draw on this key asset, communities themselves in any relevant context.

- **Recommendation:** Further collaboration with community schools in terms of language provision would be an appropriate response, in some part, to the national ‘1+2 language’ strategy. Providing opportunity for all pupils to have access to an additional language opportunity.

- **Fully utilising then 1+2 approach:** the policy has the potential of becoming a powerful integration tool if the involvement of young people (including refugees and asylum seekers), parents and communities is encouraged and the diverse community/home languages of Scotland are fully recognised and valued. Curriculum for Excellence has the ability to adapt in relevant formats to reflect this progressive policy and fulfil its broader potential.

2.4 At a time of significant budget restrictions as evidenced by Glasgow City Councils decision to cut 7.5 EAL (English as an Additional Language) the need to make full use of community school language teachers is significantly enhanced. In addition to the need for this engagement **ambiguity surrounds the steps taken to ensure the statutory obligations of the local authority** in the decision to cut EAL teachers in Scotland’s most ethnically diverse city.

- **Recommendation:** At a time of significant budget restrictions all local authorities should be clear on their strategy for managing the diverse needs of language and educational provision for diverse citizens and their statutory obligations in this context. **EQIA’S are not tick box exercises for pre**

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1. See Annex 2 – Scotland’s Language Forum Review
**determined decisions.** The provision of an equitable educational experience is a fundamental human right for all of Scotland’s diverse citizens and budget decisions should be implemented within this context ensuring the longer term cultural and economic benefits in our social capital.

2.5 The Gathered Together Project has observed that in certain circumstances there has been a lack of natural engagement in the provision of English language classes which take place within the same physical location. For example, ‘Family English Classes’ administered by ‘Community Learning Dept.’ in certain cases have no formal relationship within the schools in which the classes are administered potentially undermining the full potential of the services i.e. lack of communication on vocabulary and lesson content covered in school and covered in evening class.

- **Recommendation:** BEMIS would encourage initially the development of standard guidance for local authorities administering dual services in educational to ensure a joined up approach across this area. In addition this should be developed to encourage broader recognition and engagement with 3rd sector in relevant circumstances. I.e. community schools and cultural organisations with an emphasis on language provision.

3) How successful schools have been in reporting on pupils’ wider achievements (i.e. not just examination results) such as those the third sector helps to deliver. Whether such achievements are valued by parents, employers and learning providers, as much as formal qualifications;

3.1 The cultural diversity of Scotland’s communities are reflected in vibrant settings across cultural characteristics such as but not reserved to language, music, song, dance, religious and expressions of intangible cultural heritage. Curriculum for excellence provides the opportunity to broaden recognition of pupil’s achievements both within and outwith schools.

- **Recommendation:** There is no uniformed example of extracurricular achievement. For diverse communities there will be diverse examples of success. However, with greater collaboration between cultural (including religious), sporting and community organisations and schools the identification and celebration of such achievements can be enhanced. Curriculum for excellence should champion and encourage the engagement of the broader cultural community in highlighting the achievements of individuals and communities. Some of this good practice already exists in schools, particularly those with a higher ethnic and cultural diversity however a national ‘Multicultural celebratory day’ within the schools calendar could provide an opportunity to develop relationships and celebrate the wider school communities achievements and the frameworks – in some circumstances international - in which these successes are recognised.

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4 See Annex 1
**Recommendation:** The intersectionality between local authorities and broader achievement via independently administered frameworks of recognition should **not be downgraded by local authorities as they do not fund them.** There have been varied experiences in the past in which local authorities refuse to carry success stories of individual and community achievements via official and relevant publications as they are not under their financial remit. The broader achievements of pupils identified in the developing relationship between schools and broader community should be championed via relevant mediums.

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**Annex 1**

**GATHERED TOGETHER** is a pilot project working to support ethnic and cultural minority parents to become more involved in their child’s education and the school community.

**Cruinn Cómhla**

We are a joint venture between BEMIS and SPTC, funded by the Scottish Government through its Third Sector Early Intervention Fund, managed by the Big Fund. We have been working closely with parents, schools and local authorities to identify and build good practice in inclusion and equality. We are working in six local authorities- Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Falkirk, Fife, Glasgow and Stirling & Clackmannanshire.

We are working directly with parents and carers from all ethnic and cultural backgrounds, finding out about their experiences of involvement with their children’s school and education, barriers that they experience to getting more involved and giving them information about their rights as parents and the role of the Parent Council in being a voice for parents.

We also offer training that gives parent councils the chance to think about why parents aren’t getting involved in the school community and provide the opportunity to develop practical solutions to help to overcome any barriers. SPTC are working with us to deliver this training. We want to share your good practice and offer practical advice when it comes to involving parents.