

## Submission from Falkirk Council

The inquiry will be held in three phases: Phase 1 will be Committee visits to primary schools; Phase 2 will be the taking of formal written and oral evidence; and Phase 3 will be a cumulative event in the Parliament's Chamber.

In advance of the start of Phase 2, the Committee would welcome views on the issues outlined above and in particular on the following points:

- Is there enough funding for the Scottish Government's proposal (including use of EU money)?

The level of funding proposed is insufficient for even the most modest approach to the implementation of the Scottish Government's proposal.

- Do existing teachers have the skills and teaching resources available for language tuition?
- Are existing teachers and teaching assistants equipped to teach languages?

No. Many teachers have no foreign language skills / qualifications at all. For example a recent audit indicated that around 24% of our teachers have Higher French; 9% have Higher German and 2% have Higher Spanish. The number of teachers with skills at this level in two or more languages is negligible.

- Should there be more training and support for new and existing teachers for language teaching?

Teachers will not require additional methodologies to deliver foreign languages in the primary school.

The active learning approaches associated with the delivery of Curriculum for Excellence and sound Assessment for Learning strategies will adequately support the delivery of foreign languages.

The training for teachers will require to focus on developing their own language skill level and their understanding of the culture of the countries whose language(s) they are teaching.

- What is the capacity within the curriculum to accommodate greater language study? Can language learning be embedded in existing teaching?

The most effective way to develop language is through immersion. In the absence of this, weaving the language into classroom routines, aspects of the curriculum and interdisciplinary learning programmes is the next most effective strategy. This, however, requires the teacher to have a facility in the language which allows him / her to respond to the unexpected.

- The choice of languages for teaching – which languages should children be learning and why?

The Scottish Government's proposal is confused and confusing in this respect. It is unclear if the reason for learning the language is to achieve linguistic competence, language awareness or cultural awareness. The underlying reason influences the decision on which language(s) to choose.

The choices made by Local Authorities will require to be pragmatic; particularly in the current economic climate. We can build on the skills' base of our existing teacher workforce – and consequently stick with European languages mainly French. Another option is to go for a more radical approach and embrace the language(s) of one of the emerging economies, perceived by the Scottish Government as potential economic partner. This would require an intensive training programme for all of our primary teachers and secondary language teachers– funding will not stretch to this.

Another pragmatic approach would be to focus on 'learning to learn a language' and devise a programme which allows young people to develop a degree of linguistic competence in one language; an understanding of how their learning strategies could be applied to other languages. Cultural awareness of all of the countries which have economic significance for Scotland could be incorporated into citizenship and international education programmes.

- The role of languages in economic development – what languages should children be learning to benefit their future careers, and to help Scotland flourish economically?

Local research has produced an unclear picture of the current landscape and did not present clear evidence of significant benefits to the local economy from knowledge of any particular language. It appears that the language(s) considered useful changes – it could be Russian for the period of a particular contract then move to Mandarin for another.

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