

Children in Scotland submission to the European and External Relations Committee

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

Children in Scotland is pleased to see that the value of learning foreign languages in primary schools has been recognised by the Scottish Government. Children in Scotland has been involved in researching and promoting the value of multilingualism in society for many years. The benefits of foreign language learning in childhood can also be enjoyed in adulthood through enhanced cognitive abilities and a deeper understanding of languages. *Children in Europe*; published in the UK and Ireland by Children in Scotland, is a multilingual publication which, over the past decade has contributed to a better understanding of languages in education and the promotion of multilingual societies. *Children in Europe* published a special issue dedicated to the study of services available for children in multilingual societies with Children in Scotland publishing an article by Dr Antonella Sorace¹ following her research on the importance of bilingualism in children.

In order to assess the funding required for the successful implementation of the 1 + 2 Approach more information must be available on exactly how this is to be achieved. The work that is already being carried out by Gaelic Medium Education (GME) schools throughout Scotland is to be commended and may act as a model to aspire to with foreign language learning. The levels of funding that they require are higher than that of their English speaking counterparts as they often rely on language assistants to immerse the children in their second language. However speaking at a Holyrood conference, *Gaelic Medium Education: Striving for Sustainability*, Professor Lindsay Patterson elucidates that as the number of children enrolled in GME rises, the cost per head actually falls, so that it is no more expensive to educate pupils through Gaelic as it is to educate in English.²

¹ Antonella Sorace "Two are better than one" as printed in *Children in Scotland* (January 2009) P.14

² Professor Lindsay Patterson, speaking at the Holyrood conference "Gaelic Medium Education: Striving for Sustainability" as quoted in *Holyrood Magazine* (November 2010) <http://www.holyrood.com/2010/11/opportunity-knocks-2/>

This shows that with the correct initial investment foreign language learning in schools can be embedded into education models in a self sustaining way.

The British Academy has for the past two years recognised the hard work and innovation of teachers and institutions in delivering languages in schools. Most recently they commended the work done by Dallam School in Cumbria who currently teach other subjects entirely in another language.³ The success of this type of work is credited to the diligence of the teaching staff and is already being carried out by existing state funding. However in order to ensure that each child benefits from the same level of foreign language education significant investment must be based on accurate assessments of teaching staff and their resources throughout local councils.

Furthermore, key to the successful implementation of this proposal will be a long-term strategy. There should be careful consideration of the longer-term goals and structural funds necessary to ensure that programmes are maintained through successive governments. With the correct funding in this early stage of implementation it should ensure that languages remain a key part of early education. Children in Scotland is very supportive of investment in this area to produce both social and economic benefits to Scotland.

b. Do existing teachers have the skills and teaching resources available for language tuition? Are existing teachers and teaching assistants equipped to teach languages? Should there be more training and support for new and existing teachers for language teaching?

As highlighted above, prior to the implementation of this proposal there should be clear guidance on what is expected of teachers in relation to teaching methods, the time allocated to foreign language learning in the curriculum as well as the resources that they will be provided with. Children in Scotland welcome the Working Group's recommendation that there be more effective co-ordination between primary and secondary sectors, and the support their recommendations for revised teacher training. Ensuring the success of a long-term strategy and of children's language learning will require a greater partnership with secondary schools in order to provide the greatest support to both teachers and learners.

Children in Scotland would also welcome greater inclusion of languages in pre-school education based on the successful implementation in primary school in order to give the greatest support to children's language learning.

³ Professor Nigel Vincent "No comprende: are the benefits of language getting lost in translation?" as published in the Guardian online edition (20 February 2013) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/feb/20/learning-languages-schools-importance>

As primary school teachers embrace the changes resulting from Curriculum for Excellence there should be careful consideration made to the resources and training required to teach languages from a younger age. There must also be clarity about how these changes are to be implemented at each level. Support must be offered to all staff, particularly those lacking in confidence or experience of teaching foreign languages. Teaching methods should also be discussed to ensure that children are given as many opportunities as possible within the classroom and beyond, to hear and practice foreign languages.

In 2008 Children in Scotland identified the need to provide parents and pupils with additional support to ensure that multilingual children, whose first language was not English, were able to thrive in education. In partnership with Learning and Teaching Scotland we successfully developed training for schools, communities and families to create language friendly environments. This has helped to increase the support available to children and families whose first language is not English and helps to demonstrate how wider support may be used to aid children who are learning additional languages.

Children in Scotland is currently undertaking work to understand children and young people's views of language learning and teaching. We will also aim to work with teachers and parents to evaluate their levels of engagement with language learning. We will develop a bank of good practice examples that demonstrate how the process of language learning can be made meaningful, interesting and exciting. This will focus on approaches, the transition between primary and secondary school, engaging parents and employers as well as learning from what children and young people have told us.

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

Children in Scotland believe that there should be greater use of other languages inside the classroom to encourage children and young people to positively engage with language as a vital part of learning. Parents should also be encouraged and supported in engaging with their children's learning.

Children in Scotland has already provided training for supporting teachers to teach in multilingual classrooms. Support must be made available to teachers, particularly those lacking in confidence or foreign language skills. Teaching methods must also be evaluated to ensure that the children are benefiting fully from the introduction of languages at an early age.

Our member local authorities have examples of schooling, which embed language learning in existing teaching in early years, primary and secondary levels.

Children in Scotland welcomes the Committee's visit to Dalmarnock Primary School which is within one of our member local authorities, Glasgow City Council. In a previous submission Dr Judith McClure⁴ commended the work carried out by their dedicated teaching staff with limited resources. Moving beyond these examples to a more systematic approach in every school should be possible with the right combination of leadership and support for teachers.

Parents too must be encouraged to support a child's first language if it is not English. Data released from the English census revealed that one in six schoolchildren in England speak a foreign language as a mother tongue.⁵ This indicates the wealth of language resources already available outside of the classroom that have significant benefits to learning.

It is also critical that the parent body supports their school's efforts to accommodate greater language learning. Demonstrating the benefits, including enhancing the employment opportunities for their child, is important.

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

There is considerable debate on this issue and the choice of languages available will rely on forward planning both economically and politically. In June 2012, CBI and Pearson Education conducted a skills survey⁶ that found businesses rated the top five languages as German, French, Spanish, Mandarin and Polish. Whilst German, French and Spanish have been widely taught in schools in recent years, the recognition of the emerging value of both Mandarin and Polish is worth noting.

There is broad support from Children in Scotland on ensuring language choice for the benefit of the child as well as wider society. As previously mentioned the role of parents whose mother tongue is not English, to enhance foreign language's within a child's development should also be supported.

⁴ European and External Relations Committee, "Foreign Language Learning in Primary Schools (Thursday 24 January 2013)" http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/S4_EuropeanandExternalRelationsCommittee/Submissions_for_meeting_of_24_Jan_2013.pdf

⁵ Figures quoted by Professor Nigel Vincent "No comprende: are the benefits of language getting lost in translation?" as published in the Guardian online edition (20 February 2013) <http://www.guardian.co.uk/teacher-network/teacher-blog/2013/feb/20/learning-languages-schools-importance>

⁶ "Learning to Grow: what employers need from education and skills" Education and skills survey 2012 by CBI and Pearson Education (June 2012)

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

The value of learning languages, particularly in the early years is substantial. In 2009 Children in Scotland highlighted research done by Antonella Sorace, Professor of Development and Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh on the benefits of bilingualism in children.⁷ This research identified the cognitive abilities that result from bilingualism, however it stresses the importance of creating a learning environment that supports these other languages. Children in Scotland believe that any investment in the development of skills and knowledge in children will produce wider benefits to society.

Children in Europe alongside its partners in 13 European countries have investigated the use of languages in early years education. This has enabled Children in Scotland to identify the benefits that may be enjoyed from foreign language learning as well as the prevalence of multiculturalism. As people become increasingly mobile the importance of learning foreign languages in early childhood will expand the opportunities available to individuals in later life.

Enabling primary school children to actively engage with their learning will be vital to the programme's success. Therefore the opinions of children and young people are imperative in assessing the future societal and economical benefits. Children in Scotland are currently asking children and young people which languages they regard as the most widely spoken and whether they make connections to languages and future employment.

We do not have any other comments at this point but would be pleased to submit further information either in writing or orally. For more information contact jcassidy@childreninscotland.org.uk

⁷ Antonella Sorace "Two are better than one" as printed in *Children in Scotland* (January 2009)

Children in Scotland is the national umbrella agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies and services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society. Children in Scotland represents more than 400 members, including most of Scottish local authorities, all major voluntary, statutory and private children's agencies, professional organisations, as well as many other smaller community groups and children's services. It is linked with similar agencies in other parts of the UK and Europe.

The work of Children in Scotland encompasses extensive information, policy, research and practice development programmes. The agency works closely with MSPs, the Scottish Government, local authorities and practitioners. It also services groups such as the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People (with YouthLink Scotland). In addition, Children in Scotland hosts Enquire - the national advice service for additional support for learning, and Resolve: ASL, Scotland's largest independent education mediation service.