

Cathraiche

Art MacCarraig | Arthur Cormack

F: 07702 674143

P: art@gaidhlig.org.uk



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Mr Alex Wallace
Ceannard
James Gillespie's High School
57 Lauderdale Street
Edinburgh
EH9 1DD

A Mhgr Wallace chòir

Gaelic at James Gillespie's School

Since I wrote to you on 23 March, I have read the recent HMIE report on James Gillespie's High School. Congratulations on such a good report, which can only add to the already encouraging developments in relation to Gaelic medium education in Edinburgh.

I am delighted that your Gaelic provision has been praised and that there is a recommendation that you should "build on these strengths to provide greater continuity for children entering from Tollcross Primary School who learn through Gaelic-medium education". This is a key issue and was at the heart of my previous letter to you.

The *Gaelic Education Needs Feasibility Study* prepared by Premier Business Development and discussed by the City of Edinburgh Council's Children and Families Committee on 7 December 2009, makes interesting reading in relation to the continuum from primary to secondary in Gaelic. If the numbers referred to on pages 8 and 9 of the report were to result, a dedicated Gaelic secondary school in Edinburgh would be viable. However, as you will also see, the report says that a suite of Gaelic subjects, similar to provision elsewhere, is suggested as a short-term and more sustainable solution to Gaelic secondary education in Edinburgh. They add that this 'could be incorporated in James Gillespie's new build' (Study, page 9).

That being the case, I would ask again if the future needs of Gaelic are being taken into account in designing the new school, given that the further expansion at primary level will lead to greater demand at secondary level within a very short number of years? I would also reiterate my hope that you would seek to retain Gaelic speaking teaching staff where at all possible to ensure that expansion in the range of Gaelic medium subjects offered could be assured.

You may also be interested to know that, last week, Bòrd na Gàidhlig published an Action Plan - *Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig* - which seeks to put measures in place to increase the numbers of Gaelic speakers in Scotland, and we see major expansion in Gaelic medium education at all levels as being key to achieving this. You can download a copy of the plan from www.gaidhlig.org.uk. There was a debate on *Ginealach Ùr na Gàidhlig* in the Scottish Parliament last Thursday and Ministers gave their full support to the plan and reiterated their significant commitment to Gaelic.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig | Darach | Fèith nan Clach | Inbhir Nis | IV2 7PA

Bòrd na Gàidhlig | Darach House | Stoneyfield Business Park | Inverness | IV2 7PA

Fòn/Phone: 01463 225454 | Facs/Fax: 01463 716217 | Pòst-d/E-mail: oifis@gaidhlig.org.uk

www.gaidhlig.org.uk

MSPs of all parties supported the plans although some worried that they were overly ambitious and somewhat challenging. In relation to Gaelic development we have to be ambitious, and I love a challenge! It is through working with places where good things are already happening that we can make the quickest progress, and I think there is a significant opportunity for James Gillespie's High School to further improve the confidence of its pupils, and to further enrich their lives, by developing a niche for itself in Gaelic secondary education provision.

Congratulations again on the good work, and if Bòrd na Gàidhlig can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd



Arthur Cormack
Cathraiche

cc Oifis a' Bhùird