

Cathraiche

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Cllr Jenny Dawe
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The City of Edinburgh Council
City Chambers
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A Chomhairliche Dawe chòir

Gaelic Education in Edinburgh

It was a pleasure to meet with you on Wednesday and thank you for taking the time to discuss Gaelic matters informally with Douglas Ansdell and me.

As we discussed, your officials are currently analysing the responses to the Council's draft Gaelic Language Plan while education officials are looking at options that will be brought forward to the Council for consideration based on the outcomes of the recent feasibility study on Gaelic education.

Bòrd na Gàidhlig would welcome proposals for the development of Gaelic education, in particular a commitment to a standalone Gaelic school, within the final version of the Council's Gaelic Plan when it comes forward for approval. We believe that such a holistic approach to Gaelic development in the city would be preferable, and would significantly strengthen your Plan.

While in Edinburgh yesterday, I visited James Gillespie's High School and met S2 pupils all of whom are electing to continue studying Gaelic from S3 onwards. I also met a pupil in S6 about to sit his Advanced Higher Gàidhlig - the first pupil in Edinburgh to do so. Apart from the good work being done in the Gaelic classes by Ann Macdonald, the presence of a Gaelic speaking PE teacher within the school as a probationer means that PE is offered in Gaelic, and a Gaelic Sports Club has been established. I would hope that the Council would seek to retain Gaelic speaking teaching staff where at all possible to ensure the continued expansion of Gaelic medium subjects offered. The Scheme of Specific Grants for Gaelic Education, from which the City of Edinburgh Council currently receives around £250k annually, was designed to assist with just this kind of situation, to help defray the costs of developing Gaelic education. Gaelic teachers can, of course, also teach in English so offer good value for money!

There have been very encouraging developments in relation to Gaelic medium education in Edinburgh, and the unit at Tollcross has been an outstanding success. We recognise the tight financial constraints within which the Council is currently operating but, as we discussed, beyond the capital costs that will need to be incurred to establish a Gaelic school, the ongoing revenue costs should be no higher than for an English language school. This is especially so when numbers of pupils are as healthy as is currently the case at Tollcross Primary School. Experience elsewhere

would lead us to expect that the establishment of a Gaelic school will result in further growth in numbers of pupils. This would help Bòrd na Gàidhlig in its new focus - a Scottish Government priority - on increasing the numbers of Gaelic speakers across Scotland.

I congratulate the Council on its achievements to date and want to reiterate that we would like to be helpful and assist the City of Edinburgh Council in any way we can to help achieve what parents of Gaelic pupils in Edinburgh would like to see. Their desire for a standalone Gaelic school is clearly in line with Bòrd na Gàidhlig's policy and the National Plan for Gaelic. I would ask you to urge your officials to involve parents of Gaelic pupils in discussions on options for Gaelic education and to keep in touch with Douglas Ansdell and myself on these matters if we can help at all. Douglas is on 0131 244 0336 or douglas.ansdell@scotland.gsi.gov.uk and my contact details are at the top of the page.

I also outlined the Iomairt Gàidhlig (Gaelic Initiative) that has been set up in the city, and I was encouraged to hear that your officials are looking at properties that might be suitable as a focal point for Gaelic activities. The Gaelic community in Edinburgh will be happy to hear of some progress on this.

Thank you very much again for taking the time to meet, and I look forward to hearing from you further as matters develop.

Leis gach deagh dhùrachd



Arthur Cormack
Cathraiche

cc Douglas Ansdell, Head of Gaelic & Scots, Scottish Government