

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2008

EAST AYRSHIRE CONFUCIUS CLASSROOM

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to seek approval for further developments in the teaching of Chinese in East Ayrshire schools.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** East Ayrshire's Department of Educational & Social Services has shown commitment to raising the profile of Chinese language and culture in its schools. This report links to the wider pattern of links with China described in another report on this agenda.
- 2.2** Grange Academy is now in its second year of hosting a visiting Chinese teacher, who offers Chinese classes to students from Grange and several other secondary schools, to students from secondary schools in North Ayrshire and to employees of the Council. A teacher of Chinese from the local community is currently in training in the school. Grange Academy has twice sent pupils and teachers to No 1 Middle School in Kunming and a teacher from that school was the first of their Chinese teachers. Some Grange students will be presented for national qualifications in Chinese for the first time in May 2008.
- 2.3** Loudoun Academy has offered workshops in Chinese language and crafts, while Stewarton Academy has established a firm link with the Hwa-Chong Institute in Singapore, where the home language of the students is Chinese. Park Special School includes a study of Chinese language, music, calligraphy and mask-making in the curriculum for its older pupils.
- 2.4** East Ayrshire students have taken part in Chinese New Year celebrations with the Chinese community in Kilmarnock and by video-conferencing with Chinese students in Singapore.

3. NEW DEVELOPMENTS

- 3.1** The Scottish Government wishes to establish six Confucius Classrooms in local authorities. Each Confucius Classroom will act as a "hub" for the dissemination of Chinese language and culture throughout the local area. East Ayrshire's Department of Educational & Social Services has been invited to host such a facility. East Ayrshire is well-placed to take advantage of this opportunity, with willing schools and learners and with good working relationships with other local authorities.

- 3.2** This new development will operate on the following principles: it will seek to further raise awareness of China and of the Chinese language and culture; it will promote Chinese as a 'learnable' language; and it will widen opportunities for young people and adult learners to gain national qualifications in Chinese.
- 3.3** The Confucius Classroom will be based in the new Grange Academy in Kilmarnock. The aim of the facility will be to offer lessons in Chinese language to students from as many East Ayrshire secondary schools as possible, to secondary students from North and South Ayrshire, to adult learners and on an outreach basis to other schools, including primary and special schools.
- 3.4** The facility will be staffed by a Probationer Teacher and by a Chinese Language Assistant visiting on an annual basis from China. The priorities of the staff will be to work extensively in the base school to develop Chinese courses at an increasing number of levels (beginner, Access 3 and Intermediate 2); and to provide, with the support of the Languages Project Officer, professional development opportunities to teachers who wish to introduce their pupils to Chinese language and culture. As a first step, the department's Early Years pack, for use with children aged 3 to 8, currently providing support for French, Spanish and Gaelic, will be extended to offer materials for Chinese. Schools will be encouraged to involve the local and wider Chinese-speaking community in their work and to extend the initiative to include Chinese arts and crafts as well as language and culture.
- 3.5** ICT provision will support the initiative: students will have access to computers so that podcasting and online learning can be further developed; MP3 players will be provided for language practice. Video-conferencing and learning links provided by Learning & Teaching Scotland will also widen access. School to school links between Scotland and China will also be encouraged, using email and video-conferencing.
- 3.6** Support for Chinese staff will be provided by the department's Quality Improvement Team, who will be responsible for developing and implementing a Chinese Action Plan. It is planned to offer high-quality professional development opportunities, including study visits to China.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** Learning and Teaching Scotland (LTS) will provide infrastructure support in the form of web based materials, hubs for cross authority communication and joint development, curriculum and staff development and co-ordination in Scotland. Government funding will be identified to support the initiative. East Ayrshire support will be in the form of staffing allocated in the 'classroom'.

5 POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** Nil

6. COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

6.1 These activities contribute to the themes of “Improving Opportunities” and “Promoting Community Learning.”

7. RISK IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Members approve the further development of Chinese language and culture in East Ayrshire schools and the future development of the Confucius Classroom.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

JN/MR
11.02.08

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Jean Nisbet, Quality Improvement Officer, Tel: (01563) 555650 or Kenneth McKinlay, Acting Head of Service: Schools, Tel (01563) 676126.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: Kenneth McKinlay, Acting Head of Service: Schools