

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 29 MAY 2001

EVALUATION OF GAELIC MEDIUM EDUCATION AT ONTHANK PRIMARY SCHOOL

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise Elected Members of the conclusions and recommendations of an independent evaluation of Gaelic medium teaching in East Ayrshire Gaelic classes at Onthank Primary School.

2.1 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 East Ayrshire's Gaelic medium unit opened in August 1997. In the school Session 1999-2000, an evaluation was undertaken by Craigie Campus of Paisley University. The evaluation was completed early in 2001 and a full report has now been delivered to the Head Teacher and School Board.
- 2.2 A full copy of the report is available in the Members' Library. Members will recall that reports on Gaelic provision have been made to Committee on a number of points.

3. CONCLUSIONS OF THE EVALUATION

- 3.1 Since its establishment, the Gaelic Unit at Onthank Primary School has become integral to the educational life of East Ayrshire. Strong links have been formed with the early-years Gaelic provision as well as the primary school itself. Parents have been able to stimulate and develop their own interest in Gaelic. Most importantly, however, the quality of learning and teaching is of a high standard, owing much to the commitment of the staff concerned. Children are confident in the Gaelic language and standards are high. Visitors to the unit are impressed by its bright and lively atmosphere together with the quality of the children's work.
- 3.2 The report points out, also, that enrolments for the unit higher than predicted and children playing a full part in cultural events in East Ayrshire and beyond.
- 3.3 Parents express satisfaction with the standard of education offered. The resources and accommodation were thought to be good. The staff of the unit, whose efforts to offer children a safe, nurturing and positive learning experience, are much appreciated.

- 3.4 The report further indicates that a full curriculum is available in both Gaelic and English, that pupils' fluency and literacy in Gaelic is "on target" and that the attainment of the children in the Gaelic classes, as shown in national 5-14 tests, is well above the average both in Gaelic and in English.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS IN THE REPORT

- 4.1 School managers and the authority should continue to monitor the language development of the children currently in bilingual education, particularly when the oldest children are introduced to French in P6.
- 4.2 In particular, the authority should continue to press at national level for more explicit guidelines on language development.
- 4.3 The authority should continue to allow staff of the Gaelic unit to take advantage of staff development opportunities, wherever available, and to participate in national working parties producing resources for use in Gaelic classes.
- 4.4 At the same time, the authority should press at national level of urgent action to relieve centrally the burden of resource development which currently falls on teachers.
- 4.5 The school and authority should continue to seek ways to help parents of children in the Gaelic classes who need support in Gaelic.
- 4.6 The authority should investigate possible models for the secondary education of those children in the Gaelic unit who will make the transition from primary to secondary school in August 2002.
- 4.7 The authority should use the experience of the Gaelic unit to plan future support for other community languages.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil.

6. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Nil.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that Elected Members:

- (i) ask the Director of Educational and Social Services to implement, where appropriate, the recommendations of the report on Gaelic Medium Education at Onthank Primary School; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

JN/NG
19 April 2001

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. "An Evaluation of Gaelic-Medium Education in East Ayrshire" - March 2001.

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Schools, Tel: (01563) 576118.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: GRAHAM SHORT, HEAD OF SCHOOLS