

3-18 Literacy and English Review - Extract

4.4 Enhancing learning and achievement in literacy and English through Scots and Scottish texts

'The languages, dialects and literature of Scotland provide a rich resource for children and young people to learn about Scotland's culture, identity and language. Through engaging with a wide range of texts they will develop an appreciation of Scotland's vibrant literary and linguistic heritage and its indigenous languages and dialects. This principle suffuses the Experiences and Outcomes and it is expected that practitioners will build upon the diversity of language represented within the communities of Scotland, valuing the languages which children and young people bring to school.'

([Literacy and English: principles and practice paper](#), p4)

Across all sectors, staff are increasingly using Scots and Scottish texts to develop children's and young people's literacy skills. The next step for many schools is to plan opportunities for children and young people to use Scots language, and Scots and Scottish texts, beyond one-off events such as for St Andrew's Day or Burns celebrations. A knowledge and understanding of Scots language and Scottish texts allows children and young people to explore and appreciate Scottish culture. Learning Scots can often improve learners' engagement in learning and their development of wider literacy skills. Through Scots, learners can explore language in more depth, making connections and comparisons with the linguistic structures and vocabularies of other languages. Scots as a context for learning can also provide an engaging platform for children and young people to explore language, register and audience. It can encourage reluctant readers and writers to become involved as texts in Scots can capture the imagination and speak to them in a familiar voice.

Scots language can be used to particularly good effect in **early**

learning and childcare settings, encouraging the development of listening and talking skills as well as an awareness of rhythm and rhyme.



Fortrose Nursery School, Glasgow City Council

Case Study Focus: Raising children's awareness of Scots through stories and rhymes

Children are enthusiastic and active in exploring stories and songs in imaginative ways, using a variety of resources including puppets, figures and natural materials. They learn about the sounds and patterns of spoken language through the sharing of rhymes and songs. There is a strong focus on Scots and Gaelic at particular points of the year. Children are made fully aware of their Scottish identity with exposure to a variety of Scottish books and texts, which include 'The Gruffalo' in Scots, 'Jordan's New Jaiket', and the Katie-Morag series. As the headteacher is a native Gaelic speaker, children benefit and enjoy introduction to Gaelic sessions.

In the **primary** sector, Scots is a stimulating learning context. A few schools have taken effective steps to embed Scots in the curriculum throughout the year. This includes providing children with a range of texts in Scots and opportunities to read, write, listen and talk in Scots across a range of curricular areas.

Auchtertool Primary School, Fife

Case Study Focus: Well-planned progressive activities to develop knowledge and skills in Scots

Auchtertool Primary School places Scotland at the heart of its curriculum, and the children develop skills and knowledge through a range of rich and relevant contexts. Scots is embedded in the life of the school and valued by the whole school community. Across all stages, children have regular opportunities to talk, listen, read and write using Scots. This extends well beyond the traditional annual celebration of Robert Burns' birthday. An important feature of the school calendar is an annual whole school production, which is planned by children and staff as an integral feature of learning about Scotland. For example, a recent production of 'The Broons – A Wartime Christmas' was devised and written by older children and every child in the school participated. The production tells the story of a Scots family as they lived through World War 2, in the village of Auchtertool. Using *weel kent* characters, the drama presents aspects of local history at the time and illustrates children's learning through a creative and often amusing script. The drama, which includes music and dance covers a range of themes, including the Broons' feelings at the outbreak of war, and about gas masks and shelters, evacuees and rationing. The Broons provided a motivating context for literacy and English language skills, with children applying their skills and knowledge across a range of activities. The children explored the use of appropriate Scots and even provided a glossary in the show's programme for visitors. As well as producing a detailed script, the children used their skills to communicate with parents and the wider community to raise funds for the show and to borrow props and costumes. They did all their own publicity and sought support for lighting and sound. As well as producing a high quality show and having considerable opportunity to speak in their own local Scots dialect, children gained confidence in themselves as learners and were highly motivated in all aspects of their work in school. Children who find reading a challenge benefitted and gained confidence from opportunities to listen, talk and perform in character.



In the **secondary** sector, Scots and Scottish texts can continue to provide a productive connection between the classroom and the learner's home, community and cultural background. In the senior phase, Scottish texts are widely used at Higher in all the main areas of the critical essay paper. Since the reintroduction of the writing portfolio, there has been a small number of submissions of imaginative writing either partly or wholly in Scots, often of impressive quality. The Scottish text element of the new qualifications has ensured Scots and Scottish texts are being studied by all pupils in the senior phase. However, Scots is less prevalent from S1 to S3. In a few schools, young people are working in Scots and giving presentations to others, as well as engaging with classic and contemporary Scots and Scottish texts. Overall, there is a need for increased opportunities for children and young people at all stages to engage with and create Scots language and Scottish texts.

Stromness Academy, Orkney

Case Study Focus: Interdisciplinary learning/literacy across learning project using Scots song

Stromness Academy Choir was offered the opportunity to sing a set of Scots songs at the Scottish Learning Festival 2014. The music department worked with a Scots Language Coordinator from Education Scotland to select an appropriate group of six songs, each containing progressively more challenging Scots. Some of the

songs, such as the Orkney ballad 'Hamars O Syradale' and 'Loch Lomond', included occasional Scots words, while others such as 'Song of the Fishgutters' and 'Freedom Come-All-Ye' included more complex Scots vocabulary and grammar, providing challenge and depth of learning.

Active and collaborative learning techniques recommended by a modern languages specialist were used to teach vocabulary. Learners worked in pairs, with one partner studying words and definitions before sharing the learning with the other partner. Rehearsals focused on the accurate pronunciation of Scots. This was assisted by recordings of the songs, as well as practitioners speaking and singing the lyrics. Some of the young singers were Scots speakers and others were not, but all of the young people were comfortable singing in Scots.

The project also provided opportunities for breadth of learning through learning about Scotland, and learning about Scotland's place in the world. Learners researched the background to 'Freedom Come-All-Ye', and explored Hamish Henderson and the Corries' role in campaigning for the release of Nelson Mandela, and the end of Apartheid. They discovered that a cassette tape of the Corries' song 'Rivonia' was smuggled into Mandela's prison cell on Robben Island, and that Nelson Mandela visited Glasgow after his release. Some of them had heard the song being performed by a South African singer at the opening ceremony of the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014.

The school has now embarked on the new Scottish Qualifications Authority Award in Scots Language. A mixed age range class is studying for the award, including learners from S3 to S6, most of whom are members of the choir. The course is being delivered by a teacher from the modern languages department. The Scots song and Scots language studied prior to the choir performance has contributed substantially to learning for the Understanding and Communicating Unit of the Scots Language Award. Scots language acquired whilst learning the songs is being applied in assessment work for the communicating outcome.



Kirkwall Grammar School, Orkney

Case Study Focus: Studying poetry written in the local variety of Scots

A group of S3 learners in Kirkwall Grammar School study a twentieth century Scots/Orcadian poem called 'Speech', written by the Kirkwall Poet Christina Costie. Learners recite the poem together, and those in the class who are less familiar with Scots join in and hear the language as it should sound.

Prior knowledge or learning of Scots among the school community means that most learners are familiar with the commoner Scots/Orcadian words in the poem. Drawing on this prior learning, the class work together towards a full understanding of the text. This involves the acquisition of some new Scots vocabulary.

Depth of learning is provided as the main ideas of the text become clear. In the poem, a teacher punishes a boy for using Orcadian language in the classroom. Learners are encouraged to think about language, context and register, and learn that many Orkney words are of Scandinavian origin.

They learn that the familiar 'ku' and 'noo' forms (that the teacher in the poem would replace with 'cow' and 'now') are older European forms, similar to modern Norwegian, and are certainly not incorrect. The poem raises interesting socio-linguistic questions, and prompts classroom discussion about changing attitudes to Scots language over time.

Further challenge and depth is provided for some learners. The poem can be read in conjunction with materials from Orkney Heritage Society which introduce more challenging linguistic concepts such as vowels/diphthongs, the Great Vowel Shift, present participles as used in Orkney, and the influence of Scandinavian language on Scots/Orcadian.

As is often the case when studying Scotland, this poem in Scots motivates the learners because it is directly relevant to their own community and prior learning.

Appendix 4 outlines some practical next steps for developing practice in the use of Scots across sectors.

Appendix 4

Practical next steps for the development of Scots language and texts

Audit current practice and provision for Scots language and

texts. Ask yourself such questions as:

Do we only look at Scots language and texts within the context of one-off events such as St Andrew's day and Burns celebrations?

When was the last time we introduced new Scots language texts?

Have we thought about integrating Scots language and literature through interdisciplinary contexts?

Identify experiences and outcomes that could be delivered and achieved through the context of Scots language and texts.

This exercise will reassure both practitioners and parents as it will clearly illustrate the place of Scots language and literature within Curriculum for Excellence. Remember that as well as literacy, other areas of the curriculum have experiences and outcomes well suited to a Scots language context: for example, but not exclusively, expressive arts and health and wellbeing.

Investigate contemporary Scots language texts that could be used in your setting.

The Scottish Book Trust Scots language book lists are a good place to start. Create a coherent progression of skills plan for Scots language.

Practitioner confidence can be enhanced through this kind of exercise.

Develop a specific Scots language and literature policy, or include a Scots section in your existing literacy policy as appropriate.

This will be useful to demonstrate the equal status that Scots

enjoys alongside English and Gaelic.

Consider whether incorporating Scots into your 1 + 2 programme would be appropriate.

Some Local Authorities may wish their primary schools to explore the possibility of Scots language as L3.

Consider whether engaging with the SQA Scots Language Award would be appropriate for your setting.

Remember that these flexible units can be delivered by subjects such as English, languages, history, geography or music - individually or as an interdisciplinary approach.

Remember to keep spelling approaches consistent for written work in Scots.

If in doubt, remember you can always check with the Scots language dictionary - but bear in mind that there may be regional differences.

Consider partnering with a Scots Language Ambassador.

The scheme encourages a partnership between schools and confident Scots speakers. This could really help to enhance the status of Scots in your school or cluster. For details contact the Scots Language Co-ordinators.

Introduce a Scots word of the week.

This is an easy way to set the ball rolling and have learners and practitioners begin to discuss Scots and its use.

Contact your Scots Language Co-ordinator.

Your Literacy QIO should be able to put you in touch with the member of the team linked to your authority.