

ESOL Network Meeting 1st October 2008

Update on English as an additional language (EAL) provision in schools

Background

1. The Scottish Government welcomes the children of migrant workers into Scotland. It shows that Scotland is perceived as a vibrant, successful and thriving country where people want to live and work. These children bring a richness and diversity to our schools, which is valued.
2. A number of migrant workers are arriving in Scotland, especially from Eastern Europe, and many of them are bringing their families with them. Schools have noticed a large rise in the number of pupils for whom English is an additional language and are working hard to ensure they receive the education to which they are entitled.
3. In the September 2007 School Census, 15,411 pupils were identified as having English as an additional language. This marked an increase of 5,925 from the previous year's census, though some of this increase is believed to be due to improved reporting. Of the 15,411 total, 3,595 pupils were classified as "New to English"; 3,198 as "Early Acquisition"; 4,622 as "Developing Competence"; and 3,996 as "Competent".
4. The teacher census identified 209 full time equivalent English as an additional language teachers.
5. At September 2007, there were 138 different languages reported as the main home language of pupils in Scotland. The most common after English were Punjabi and Urdu, with Polish moving into third place, followed by Cantonese, Arabic and then French moving above Gaelic. Polish was the most common main home language after English in 16 authorities and Punjabi in 9 authorities.
6. Class sizes in Scotland are falling, and this will enable our teachers to spend more time with individual pupils, including those such as children with English as an additional language, who require extra support. For example, 12% of our P1-P3 children are now in class sizes of 18 or less, an improvement from last year. Average primary class size has also fallen since last year.

Education policy

7. In Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence is the name given to the extensive plans for modernising and improving the education that we offer our young people. This framework puts the learner at the centre of the curriculum. At the end of their school experience we want pupils with English as an additional language, as with all pupils, to be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
8. Curriculum for Excellence aims to increase attainment and achievement levels for all children and young people through a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum that is fully joined up from 3-18 and by providing them with opportunities to gain skills

for life and work, as well as knowledge and skills for learning. There will also be a greater focus on personal support to enable all pupils to fully access the curriculum.

9. Planning should ensure that pupils with English as an additional language have access to the same range of learning opportunities as other pupils, but also that they have their specific needs met through a curriculum tailored to address and meet these needs.
10. Legislation is in place to support these policies and developments. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (ASL Act) requires education authorities to identify, meet and keep under review the additional support needs of all pupils for whose education they are responsible. The ASL Act introduces a new framework within which all types of additional support needs may be met, with collaboration between different agencies and with the emphasis on the individual needs of the child. Against this background, education authorities must review their policies and provision for the whole spectrum of additional support needs, including English as an additional language.

Role of Education Authorities

11. Duties to provide education, health and social care for all children in their areas lie with local authorities and NHS Boards.
12. The Scottish Government is investing record levels of funding in local government - £34.9 billion over the period 2008-11. Education authorities have the flexibility to allocate the resources available to them to meet their local needs and priorities. This includes providing for pupils for whom English is an additional language.
13. Within the terms of our agreement with local authorities, it is for them to recruit, train and deploy their EAL teachers. We aim, however, to encourage local authorities to develop the capacity of all their schools to meet the demands of pupils for whom English is an additional language. While there will be occasions where EAL teachers will work 1:1 with pupils, such a model is unlikely to be sustainable as the number of pupils increase. We would like to see EAL teachers working with schools and developing the skills of all teachers to enable them to teach EAL pupils.

Scottish Government activity in support of EAL

14. Officials meet regularly with the Scottish English as an Additional Language Co-ordinating Council (SEALCC). This provides a valuable opportunity to hear from practitioners about the issues they are facing. SEALCC recently produced a document *Evidence of Good Practice in Supporting Bilingual Learners*, which was distributed to all schools.
15. The Scottish Government commissioned the Scottish English as an Additional Language Co-ordinating Council and the Centre for Education of Racial Equality in Scotland to produce a document on good practice for teaching pupils who have English as an additional language – *Learning in 2+ Languages*. Published in 2005, this document aims to help all staff in educational establishments better to understand the strengths and development needs of bilingual learners and to address them more effectively within the mainstream classroom.
16. The Government has also published an Education Guide for Asylum Seekers, with relevance for migrant workers and their families.

17. In addition, we continue to encourage schools and colleges to work in partnership to meet the needs of learners. As the ESOL Network will be aware, as part of the adult ESOL strategy for Scotland, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Funding Council have recently allocated £2.7m of additional funding to community learning and development partnerships and colleges, along with advice encouraging them to “develop ESOL for families and actively link with schools” as a key priority.
18. In February 2008, HMle commenced a review of EAL provision in schools and further education colleges. Their report will provide examples of excellent practice and recommendations which will help mainstream teachers. Once we receive the final report, we will be in a better position to consider any further support authorities may require.
19. More broadly, the Scottish Government is committed to helping refugees to integrate into Scottish communities. Good progress has been made in implementing the Scottish Refugee Integration Forum Action Plan over the last three years. Work includes an education guide for asylum seekers and refugees, which informs parents and pupils who are new to Scotland of how the education system works, what to expect on arrival at school, how to prepare and where to access support and assistance. The booklet is available in a range of community languages.

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