This briefing for practitioners is intended to explore the aims and purposes of including the Scots language as part of Curriculum for Excellence. It can also be used to inform partners, learners and their parents and carers about the Scots language.

**CfE Briefing**

**Curriculum for Excellence: Scots Language**

With its various dialects, Scots forms an integral part of Scotland’s heritage and cultural life, playing a vital role in children’s and young people’s learning about Scotland. It can also make a strong contribution to the development of children’s and young people’s literacy skills. Including Scots as part of Curriculum for Excellence can help motivate some learners and their families by showing them that the language they use at home is valued. This briefing provides background information about the nature of the Scots language, the learning opportunities and benefits offered by the inclusion of Scots in the curriculum. It explores how Scots is developing across educational establishments as part of Curriculum for Excellence, within literacy and languages and across the wider curriculum.

1. **What is Scots Language?**

Scots is one of the three indigenous languages of Scotland. It is commonly used in everyday speech, in literature and in song. Often used in the workplace and at home, Scots is also occasionally heard in broadcasting. In the 2011 census, 1.5 million people reported that they use the Scots language. In September 2015, the Scottish Government launched its Scots Language Policy, in both English and Scots, to recognise the important role that school education has in promoting the use of Scots. One aim of the policy is to “promote the acquisition, use and development of Scots in education, media, publishing and the arts”. The policy contains an appendix that details Education Scotland’s Action Plan for further developing Scots language in education.

November 2015
In September 2015, the Scottish Government launched its Scots Language Policy, in both English and Scots.

“Learners’ understanding of structures and features of English language is supported and reinforced when reading and writing in Scots.”

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

- If in doubt, check with the Dictionary of the Scots Language – But bear in mind that there may be regional differences.

3. Is Scots really sufficiently different in terms of vocabulary and grammar to be considered a ‘language’, and taught as such?

A brief comparison with two other European languages may help here. Norwegian and Danish are different languages, but speaking one can understand speakers of the other. Similarly, much of Scots is readily intelligible, with some practice, to an English speaker. Scots and English are sister languages, in the same way that the languages of Norway and Denmark are. It is important for learners to know the differences between the languages and the times when they might want to use one rather than the other. Recognising and celebrating the differences between English and Scots can help support literacy skills, as well as skills for learning other languages. Learners use skills such as listening and talking, reading and writing when they engage with Scots, all of which are key to successful language learning. There are, however, unique features of Scots grammar, and there is a rich range of vocabulary, as shown in the publication of numerous region-specific dictionaries of Scots dialects, such as The Shetland Dictionary and The Orkney Dictionary, as well as much of the content found in the aforementioned Dictionary of the Scots Language. The key text on the grammar of Scots language is Dr Christine Robinson’s Modern Scots Grammar which deals with the grammar of Scots language using modern terminology, giving readers an understanding of the way language works. It provides readers with the vocabulary to think about and discuss Scots, English and other modern languages and provides the grounding for readers to undertake further exploration and discover language for themselves.

4. Linking Scots to the 1+2 approach to language learning

Language Learning in Scotland – A1+2 Approach (2012) sets out the Scottish Government’s ambition for all children and young people in Scotland to learn two languages in addition to their own. The first additional language is known as L3, and is introduced from P1 onwards. The second is referred to as L3, and is studied from P5 onwards. Schools may choose Scots as an L3. As well as language study, cultural and historical aspects of Scots will provide learners with excellent opportunities for learning about their local area and Scotland as a whole. There is also huge potential for the integration of Scots into interdisciplinary learning.

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 an L3.

5. Are all the dialects spoken across the country ‘Scots’?

In Scotland, it is widely accepted that there are eight different ‘regional varieties’ or dialects of Scots: Insular (Orkney and Shetland), Northern, North Eastern (Doric), Highlands and Islands, West Central, East Central, South Western and Southern. All have equal status. Despite some differences due to the different social, linguistic, cultural and historical influences unique to each area, these varieties are mutually intelligible. Throughout Scottish literary history, generations of writers and artists have adapted Scots spelling and grammar rules previously employed by others to produce new and unique texts. Often the result is a codified Scots that reflects a region of Scotland, or, on occasion, that reflects one individual’s own unique voice.

When including Scots in the curriculum, it is important to use a variety of Scots that is known and recognised by learners. Learners should be encouraged to do the same and express themselves, both in their speech and in the texts they produce, by acknowledging voices and sounds from the community around them. In some cases, that language community stretches across all of Scotland, remaining consistent from Baltasound to Eyemouth, in other ways it changes surprisingly between Banff and Ellon. Not only does writing in such a way show learners’ knowledge and appreciation of literature and culture, it is also a
demonstration of critical and creative thinking. In creative writing lessons in Scotland today, the Scots produced within one classroom will contain contrasts and varieties, just as it will when comparing the Scots language in a Northern Isles classroom with one in the Borders or a Scottish city. This mirrors what is found in literature published from one area of Scotland to another. For learners to participate in such an exercise, they require competence in the significant aspects of learning: listening and talking, reading and writing. This helps support and embed literacy skills and offers them the opportunity to demonstrate their abilities in Scots, English and other languages.

Education Scotland has prepared lists of online texts that contain examples of the different dialects. Visit the Education Scotland website and find the *Guide to Regional Varieties of Scots*.

---

6. Scots language as an asset

In the Scottish Government’s *Audit of Current Scots Provision in Scotland* (2009) language is referred to as ‘an asset’:

*Language functions as an asset in supporting identities, in providing commonality and community and in the case of regional or minority languages, of providing opportunities for the cultural expression of language identity […] In addition, the development of the language assets of a regional or minority language can instil a new and/or renewed sense of pride in both local and national identity. It also helps build confidence, particularly in young people who receive the opportunity to both learn it and learn in it.*

Many learners bring Scots language to the classroom. When Scots is presented as a valid medium for communication in educational settings, practitioners may discover that their learners already have a wealth of knowledge about the language. Many pupils can already speak Scots. There is evidence from across the country that developing the place of Scots in learning settings can motivate those who are less engaged, and that many learners can become effective contributors. Scots can assist in producing new and interesting work in creative writing lessons; can provide learners with confidence in debating and presenting; can inspire learners to share unique and personal opinions when describing themselves, their family and where they are from, drawing on Scots vocabulary and experiences of speaking and hearing the language. Education Scotland’s initiative ‘Keen tae Ken yir Kin’ is an example of this in practice, where two classes from different areas of Scotland are paired to share writing/ audio and video clips in Scots language, exploring the dialect, accent and vocabulary unique to their area.

**Contact Education Scotland to find out more and be involved in a future ‘Keen tae Ken yir Kin’ partnership.**

**Identify Experiences and Outcomes that could be delivered and achieved through the context of Scots language and texts.**

- Scots language ties in to all of the Significant Aspects of Learning for literacy, and should be considered in terms of reading, writing, talking and listening. Most commonly taught in Literacy and English, Scots also can be included within expressive arts and social studies, with the inclusion of Scots enhancing projects which focus on studying Scotland. Find examples of ‘bundles’ of Experiences and Outcomes from across the curriculum that can be delivered and achieved on the Education Scotland website in the *Scots language section*. 

---

When Scots is presented as a valid medium for communication in educational settings, practitioners may discover that their learners already have a wealth of knowledge about the language.