

COMANN NAM PÀRANT (NÀISEANTA)

Annual Report

2011/12

Chair's Introduction

I am pleased to present you with Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta)'s Annual Report for 2011/12.

This year, we have continued the expansion of the 'Parental Advisory Scheme' and parents have been involved in many promotional events, as well as stalls at locations such as shopping centres where there are likely to be parents with young children. We have been working with the Early Years team at Bòrd na Gàidhlig in order to strengthen the 0-3 sector which has to be a priority if we are to attract new parents to Gaelic medium education.

The number of pupils at primary level shows a small increase from last year's figure of 2312 with a total of 2418 pupils in 60 schools throughout Scotland. There has been one new Gaelic medium class open in Aberfeldy but the discontinuation of Gaelic medium in Bernera, Lewis means that the number of schools delivering GME remains static at 60. Although there has been no substantial increase in the number of entrants at P1 this year we expect to see an increase in the next year or two due to the efforts of the Parental Advisory Scheme and improved pre-school provision.

Unfortunately again this year there has been little progress with expansion in the number of dedicated Gaelic schools. Most progress has been made in Edinburgh where, following a successful campaign by parents, the consultation undertaken by the council supported establishing a school at Bonnington. Problems in the fabric of the building have unfortunately postponed developments but we understand that the school should be ready for opening in August 2013.

Last year parents throughout Highland were very concerned about Highland Council's proposal to remove all classroom assistant posts and along with parents in EME campaigned against the proposal. However the review undertaken of the posts has recommended that there should be posts of 'Pupil Support Assistants', graded at two salary levels which will combine the roles and responsibilities of Learning Support Assistants and Classroom Assistants and we welcome the retention of this classroom support which we feel is especially important for Gaelic education in providing linguistic support in the class.

In June, Comann nam Pàrant welcomed the publication of the HMIE Report 'Gaelic Education: Building on the successes, addressing the barriers', the first national report from the inspectorate on progress and issues in Gaelic education since the publication in 2005 'Improving Achievement in Gaelic'. The report describes best practice in Gaelic medium education especially in regard to language immersion and the importance of ensuring that the curriculum is delivered totally through the medium of Gaelic. The lack of written national guidance for Gaelic medium education which defines best practice is highlighted in the report as is the lack of progression at secondary level and the need for more effective transition from primary to secondary.

Highland Council celebrated 25 years of GME with a series of consultation events throughout the region with past and present parents participating as well as young people with experience of GME. The aim of these events was to seek views on past

and present provision and to discuss the future direction of 0-18 GME provision within Highland and these views to be fed into discussions on the Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan 2012-16. There were similar issues raised at each event, for example the lack of support for children with Additional Needs was raised at every event, an issue that has more recently been raised by parents at national level. The absence of a Gaelic Education Officer in Highland was also raised at the events and Comann nam Pàrant have written to the council on a number of occasions regarding failure to appoint to this post.

We have responded to a number of consultations on Gaelic Language Plans throughout the year and look forward to supporting the implementation of a number of these plans.

Comann nam Pàrant are grateful to Bòrd na Gàidhlig for continuing to fund the activities of the organisation and to Comunn na Gàidhlig for continuing administrative support.

I would also like to thank all the parents in the local Comann nam Pàrant groups that have campaigned for and supported Gaelic medium education this year. We realise that parents have many commitments and appreciate the time they give to CnP at both local and national level.

In this coming year Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta) look forward to working with Bòrd na Gàidhlig on implementing the National Gaelic Language Plan. Priorities in the coming year for Comann nam Pàrant are the same as they were last year; increase awareness of, and number of entrants to, Gaelic medium education mainly through a network of parental advocates, encourage and support parents to use more Gaelic in the home, support the demand for dedicated Gaelic schools and continue to seek improvements in provision in secondary schools.

Dawn Morgan, Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta) Chairperson
May 2012

Activities

Parental Advisory Scheme

Comann nam Pàrant has continued to expand this national Gaelic Medium Education (GME) promotion initiative which involves establishing a network of parental advisors who will raise awareness of GME opportunities across Scotland and ultimately increase the number of pupils accessing GME. We feel that the best advice for prospective parents to GME can come from other parents with personal experience of GME as parents or carers of children who are either currently in GME or have gone through GME.

There were 6 training sessions held throughout this year for the scheme attended by a total of 42 people. At these sessions parents are given information on GME in practice, support available outwith school for children and parents, common questions that prospective parents have and the advantages of bilingualism which is what attracts the majority of parents to GME. Last month, there was a session held in Glasgow, to which 5 prospective candidates, along with 2 of our Parental Advisors from Kilmarnock, attended. 4 of those candidates are now working as advocates for GME. 2 in Glasgow, and 2 in Meadowburn. There was to be a training day in Inverness in an attempt to source new parents for the Inverness-shire area and also across Skye, however this has to be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances. It is the intention that this training day will now be held June 2012.

Throughout the year parents on the scheme have been busy attending and organising events, liaising with schools and organising open days, distributing leaflets and posters, advertising in local press and visiting pre-school facilities to speak to parents. In some areas parents have been working with there-school team at Bòrd na Gàidhlig to start up new pre-school groups.

In September 2011, Comann nam Pàrant hired a second member of staff, on a Graduate placement for 1 year, whose main focus it is to provide support to parental advisors and help establish the Advisory Scheme. In addition to the extra support provided, a more solid administrative system has been implemented to try and record the various successes and failures of the Scheme, which in time, will allow us to fine-tune our efforts and resources. It will also provide an insight in the coming years as to any correlation between the work on the Advisory Scheme and enrolment figures for GME. Even though the recording of data is relatively new to the Scheme, at the time of writing this (14/05/2012) there have already been close to 1000 conversations noted between our parents and prospective parents across Scotland.

There are a number of written resources available for our parents to use when participating in events and open days. The main source of information continues to be the "*Fios is Freagair*" booklet on GME and also on Gaelic in the home. In addition to this, there is now a DVD to accompany the booklet. Copies of the DVD have been sent out to all our advisors and to numerous schools, playgroups, community centres around the country, and are available from our office. A digital copy of the DVD will also soon be available on the Comann nam Pàrant website, at www.parant.org.uk.

Gaelic week for schools in Edinburgh

We continue to support Gaelic education by organising Gaelic medium activities for children outwith the school both locally and nationally and this year we held the eighth Gaelic week in April for Gaelic medium pupils. Around 300 pupils from 14 schools came to Edinburgh where they took part in Gaelic medium activities at the National Galleries, Our Dynamic Earth, Royal Botanic Gardens and Edinburgh Castle. Pupils from as far afield as Lewis, Harris, Dunoon, Mallaig, Skye, Forfar, Tain and Inverness as well as schools from the Central Belt enjoyed the opportunity to use Gaelic outwith the classroom in a wide range of different situations.

Bilingualism Matters in the Western Isles

The many and varied benefits of bilingualism in the Western Isles were at the heart of the launch of a new initiative and resource, supported by Comann nam Pàrant, in Stornoway in October – the Western Isles branch of 'Bilingualism Matters'. The work of esteemed linguist Professor Antonella Sorace, on the advantages of bilingualism is at the core of this new, innovative project. As Professor of Developmental Linguistics at the University of Edinburgh, her groundbreaking research has truly dispelled the myth that exposure to 2 languages can confuse a child and hinder their mental development. On the contrary, her work shows how bilingual children gain so much more than monolingual children.

Along with participants from Lews Castle College and the Western Isles Health Board a number of parents who are also involved in the Comann nam Pàrant Parental Advisory Scheme attended a day's training with Professor Sorace and are now able to share the information on bilingualism with parents throughout the Western Isles.

School Diaries

Comann nam Pàrant produces a school diary for primary pupils in Gaelic medium education and offers financial assistance to secondary schools that wish to have a bilingual school diary.

Local Comann nam Pàrant Groups

Comann nam Pàrant groups continue to do important work at local level; supporting the work of the classroom, activities outwith school and campaigning on issues that are important to Gaelic medium provision. Parents in a number of places have re-established Comann nam Parant in their respective areas this year and now have committees with an action plan for their group.

Magaidh Wentworth, Parental Officer

Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta), the umbrella body for Comann nam Pàrant groups, is a registered charity in Scotland whose main aim is "to promote and support the establishment and maintenance of education through the medium of Gaelic". All areas with local CnP groups are able to be represented on the national committee, thus ensuring that all parents can have a voice at national level.

Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta) Committee 2011 / 2012

Dawn Morgan	Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey
Morag Deirdrie Soszka	Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross
Fiona Byrne	Wester Ross, Skye and Lochaber
Colin Meek	Wester Ross, Skye and Lochaber (resigned 11/11)
Kerry Butler	Central Scotland
Bob McGowan	East of Scotland
Margaret Ford	Wester Ross, Skye and Lochaber
Donna Young	Argyll & Bute
Marsaili Dow	Co-opted