

Official opening at Bun-sgoil Taobh na Páirce – Edinburgh's first dedicated Gaelic Medium Education school



OFFICIAL OPENING OF NEW GAELIC SCHOOL FOR EDINBURGH

Dr Alasdair Allan MSP officially opened Edinburgh's first dedicated Gaelic school, Bun-sgoil Taobh na Páirce, today.

Dr Allan, Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland's Languages, was the guest of honour at the school which has been developed on the site of the former Bonnington Primary School in Leith.

Bun-sgoil Taobh na Páirce has a roll of 211 – 58 of them in Primary One – and a further 79 children in the nursery. There are 30 Gaelic speaking staff and the curriculum will be taught entirely in Gaelic.

It has been funded by The Scottish Government and The City of Edinburgh Council.

This morning's ceremony also marks the launch of the Council's Gaelic Language Plan. Since 2008 the Council has been working with the public and Bòrd na Gàidhlig to agree the scope and contents of the plan which sets a five year action plan to support the development of Gaelic within the capital.

Head teacher, Anne MacPhail, said: "I'm very proud to be leading the school into a historic new era for Gaelic in the city. The local Leith community have been very welcoming since we moved in and I'm really looking forward to building on the

successes of our first few weeks.”



Convener of
Education – Paul
Godzik

Councillor Paul Godzik, Education, Children and Families Convener said: “Today’s official opening demonstrates the Council’s long-standing support for the development of the Gaelic language and investing in young people and our communities.”

Councillor Deidre Brock, Gaelic spokesperson for the Capital Coalition, said: “Having a dedicated school for Gaelic in the capital is a significant milestone for the Gaelic community and the city. The language is already an important part of daily life for many in Edinburgh, and our Gaelic Language Plan will build on this foundation.

“It is right that Scotland’s capital city helps to promote and develop Gaelic through our schools and institutions, so this unique language and culture can be carried on through the voices of generations to come.”

Dr Allan, Minister for Learning and Scotland’s Languages, said: “Minister for Learning, Science and Scotland’s Languages, Dr Alasdair Allan, said:

“It’s a privilege to be here today to officially open Bunscoil Taobh na Páirce, Edinburgh’s first dedicated Gaelic school.

“This school, and others like it, will help ensure that Gaelic continues to be a vibrant part of our culture, immersing pupils and staff in the language and allowing them to carry it with them throughout their lives.

“Our efforts to encourage a new generation of Gaelic speakers

and teachers is already showing encouraging results – as we've seen by the 12 per cent rise in pupils entering P1 this year – and the launch of City of Edinburgh Council's Gaelic Language Plan will mean that its work to promote the language will reach even more people."

The school is open to anyone who wants their child to have a Gaelic medium education.

Bun-sgoil Taobh na Páirce replaces the Gaelic Medium Education (GME) Unit which was based within Tollcross Primary School and established in 1989. The unit had steadily seen its roll rise over the years as demand for GME has grown.

The name for the new school (Parkside in English) was chosen by staff, pupils and parents to reflect its new location, next to Pilrig Park.

The Scottish Government has also announced an additional £4 million over the next two years will increase the number of places available in Gaelic Medium Education (GME) across Scotland to meet continually rising demand.

Minister for Languages Alasdair Allan announced the extra funding in the week that Edinburgh's first dedicated GME school Bun-sgoil Taobh na Páirce will have its official opening.

Dr Allan said:-"Attracting children to Gaelic is imperative to maintaining the language as a vital part of our culture. We have made it our goal to increase speaker numbers and preserve Gaelic as a vibrant part of our culture.

"We are already seeing good results with a rise of 12 per cent in pupils entering P1 this year, showing our strategy to encourage a new generation of Gaelic speakers and teachers is working well.

"This week the data on Gaelic speakers collected as part of

the 2011 Census will be published. We know that the overall number of speakers has been in decline for some time, reflecting the fact that traditional Gaelic speakers have tended to be in older age groups. That is why encouraging a new generation of Gaelic speakers is so important to the future of the language.

“Recent research by Edinburgh University showed that the vast majority of English speaking Scots believe Gaelic is important to our sense of identity, our heritage and our contemporary culture and support Gaelic education. This is an important time for Gaelic and we must translate this enthusiasm and support for Gaelic into learning opportunities for young and old to create new generations of speakers.”

The additional £2 million per year for the Gaelic Schools Capital Fund will be available to councils to expand GME in their region and was announced by the Finance Secretary John Swinney in his draft budget on September 11, 2013. The additional investment is subject to Parliamentary approval