

Cross-Party Group on Germany

Tuesday 25 October at 6:30pm

Microsoft Teams

Minute

Present

MSPs

Colin Beattie MSP
Fiona Hyslop MSP

Invited guests

Marie Donald - Quality Improvement Officer – Primary, East Dunbartonshire Council
Ian Donaghy – Head Teacher, Bishopbriggs Academy
Carole Robertson – Principal Teacher of Modern Languages, Bishopbriggs Academy

Non-MSP Group Members

Laura Cunningham
Dr Andreas Zimmer
Sigrid Riewerts
Peter Müller-McDougall
Hans-Georg Thönges
Oliver St-John – British German Association

Apologies

Peter Friedrich
Eleoma Bodammer
Alexandra Stein

Welcome & Approval of Previous Minutes

CB welcomes the CPG.

SR makes amendment to previous minutes.

New Deputy Convenor

CPG requires a new Deputy Convenor. CB and LC to coordinate.

Political, Cultural and Economic Update

AZ discussed the cost-of-living crisis in Germany and the measures being taken to support people through the crisis.

CB and FH discussed a previous visit to Germany in July 2022. Discussion focused on energy security, energy market regulation and hydrogen.

Speaker: East Dunbartonshire Council / Bishopbriggs Academy

CR and ID gave an overview of German at Bishopbriggs Academy.

CR gave background on the work the German department at Bishopbriggs Academy undertake to help pupils learn the language. Bishopbriggs is in partnership with the Goethe-Institut in Glasgow since 2008 and have renewed their contract for another 3 years. This partnership helps provide funding for both pupils and teachers to help learn the German language and provides a chance for pupils to visit Germany. Bishopbriggs also have a student through the GET-SET-GO programme to bring German into the classroom.

ID added that Bishopbriggs Academy is in a unique position where of the four associated primary schools, two have French as their main language, 2 have German but they also have a Gaelic-Medium and Gaelic for learners being taught at primary level. Thus, Bishopbriggs offers a vast range of languages and have the provision to offer these languages at Higher and Advanced Higher.

CPG members collectively discussed the issues with language learning in Scotland and sourcing German speaking teachers. This has been an issue for Bishopbriggs since Strathclyde University stopped German. Issues were also raised that language learning in high school is often determined by the languages taught at primary level. It is difficult to cater for all languages.

ID noted the importance of career long learning for teachers. An example used was a French/Spanish teacher at Bishopbriggs is learning German through the Goethe-Institut to expand their teaching skills.

ID and CR mentioned the cultural experience is important to pupils. This involves learning about events such as Oktoberfest and partaking in German exchange programmes. Bishopbriggs Academy have had this programme delayed due to Covid-19 pandemic but hope for its return soon. Bishopbriggs and Goethe-Institut linked the school to a university / industry to hear first-hand the importance of a language in future careers.

SR questioned how many pupils take German at Bishopbriggs Academy currently and how many are predicted to study German when leaving school. CR responded at least 2 pupils have gone on to study German in previous years but the numbers in classes are dependent on those who learn German at primary school level. Bishopbriggs has also provided a HUB for pupils across East Dunbartonshire to study Higher German.

CPG discussed the importance of exchange programmes in learning languages and the benefits to young people who participate in these programmes. It was emphasised that Brexit has made this much more difficult coupled with universities across Scotland removing German language courses.

MD provided an overview for East Dunbartonshire Council overall in respect of German and language learning overall. MD remit is 1+2 languages and the funding that accompanies the programme. Funding is used for the Get-Set-Go student teacher and CLPL courses for teachers enrolled in Open University courses to learn a language mainly French. East Dunbartonshire Council also use teachers who are fluent in a language to train other teachers in the language.

SR mentioned help on offer for councils such as Goethe-Institut courses for teachers which are free. Get-Set-Go Programme introduced 'L Plus' this awards 30 credit points to any participant that completes the programme. This is currently under a trial run.

CB thanked CR, ID and MD for attending CPG.

Future CPG Discussion

CB asks SR and AZ to coordinate on a paper focusing on 1+2 policy and Brexit. SR will report on the academic Brexit.

AOB

HGT is leaving Goethe-Institut on 21 December. CPG wished HGT well.

Future date will be circulated early 2023.

Meeting concluded at 8:15pm.

