



# Evaluation of EPPI

Early Primary Partial Immersion in French  
at Walker Road Primary School, Aberdeen.

## Final Report

Richard Johnstone and Robert McKinstry

Launch meeting:  
Aberdeen, Friday 18th April, 2008



# Evaluation *of* EPPI

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

The present report contains all the key findings of the EPPI evaluation. As writers of the report, we have pleasure in making it available for, and presenting it, at the evaluation launch meeting on Friday, 18th April.

We wish to thank the staff, pupils and parents of Walker Road Primary School, the staff of Torry Academy and Victoria Road Primary School, Aberdeen, the staff of Aberdeen City Council and of the Scottish Government for the interest, goodwill and support which they have shown us at all times.

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Richard Johnstone and Robert McKinstry  
April 2008

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# Evaluation of EPPI

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## BACKGROUND

1. EPPI (Early Primary Partial Immersion) has been in existence at Walker Road Primary School for over seven years, and the original cohort have entered secondary education.

### Initial evaluation

2. An initial evaluation<sup>1</sup> covering the first two years was highly positive, showing that pupils were making excellent progress in French, especially in listening comprehension, were taking well to learning other subject-matter through French, and were showing clear signs of enjoyment and confidence. Their parents, the school staff and the staff of the local authority were also clearly positive.

### Immersion education

#### *Models of immersion education*

3. Immersion education has several different models, with the Walker Road model being based on 'early partial' immersion<sup>2</sup>. From Primary 1 onwards, pupils receive some of their education through French and some through English.
4. Common to all models of immersion are certain key factors: 'intensity' (children learning significant other subject-matter through their immersion language); 'time' (substantial amounts of time given to the immersion language, both overall and in any one week); and 'exposure' (sustained input and interaction with native speaker or at least highly fluent teachers). As such, immersion education is radically different from the dominant model of a modern language as a school subject.

#### *Outcomes of immersion education*

5. International research on immersion education<sup>3 4</sup> shows that immersion learners (compared with non-immersion learners) develop a much greater proficiency in the immersion language, with no clear demonstrated loss of first-language or subject-matter competence, and in many cases derive benefits to their general cognitive, linguistic, social and intercultural development.
6. The same research indicates however that nothing is guaranteed. Success in immersion depends on key factors such as high-quality teaching, sound planning, continuity from one year to the next, a supportive ethos and good links with parents.

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<sup>1</sup> Johnstone, R. M. (2002). *Early Partial Immersion in French at Walker Road Primary School, Aberdeen. The First Two years: 2000/1 and 2001/2*. The report can be downloaded from the Scottish Government web-site <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2003/01/16262/17504>

<sup>2</sup> The six main forms of immersion are 'early total', 'early partial', 'delayed total', 'delayed partial', 'late total' and 'late partial' with Walker Road belonging to the 'early partial' model.

<sup>3</sup> Johnstone, R. M. (2001) *Immersion in a Second or Additional Language at School: evidence from international research*. Report for the Scottish Executive Education Department. Available on Scottish CILT web-site at: <http://www.scilt.stir.ac.uk/pubs.htm#immersion>

<sup>4</sup> García, O. & Baker, C. (2006). *Bilingual Education: an Introductory Reader*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

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## The present evaluation

7. The present evaluation of EPPI began in late 2005 and was concluded early in 2008. Within the resource available to it, priority has been given to a focus on: a) processes of teaching, learning and management; b) pupils' attainments in English, environmental studies and mathematics (Primary 7 EPPI and non-EPPI pupils from the same school compared); c) Primary 7 EPPI pupils' progress in French; d) how EPPI is perceived by pupils, parents and teachers; and e) issues of sustainability and of transition to secondary school education.

## EPPI AT WALKER ROAD

8. Initially there were two classes at Primary 1, one of which became the EPPI class (which permitted a subsequent P7 EPPI v non-EPPI comparison). Later however, with falling roles, Primary 1 consisted of one class which received EPPI. Pupils moving into Walker Road from other primary schools, some with English as first language and others with other first languages, received special support in order to help them benefit from EPPI instruction.

## Distinctive features of EPPI at Walker Road

9. There are six characteristics which taken together make EPPI at Walker Road distinctive and to some extent different from other immersion programmes elsewhere: a) it is the first initiative in the UK in early partial immersion in a foreign language; b) the school is located in an area of acknowledged socio-economic disadvantage; c) the French native-speaker (NS) teachers are supernumerary, i.e. they complement the existing 'mainstream' staff, hence the model is based on over-staffing; d) in 2005 asbestos was discovered in the school building, necessitating the relocation of pupils and staff on two different sites; e) initially the time given to education in French is limited (in comparison with other models of early partial immersion) but as pupils progress through their primary education, the time for French builds up, as additional curricular areas are incorporated; and f) it has had special financial support from the local authority (Aberdeen City Council) and until 2007 from the (at the time) Scottish Executive Education Department (SEED)<sup>5</sup>.

## CLASSROOM PROCESSES

10. The NS teachers were observed to be successfully implementing a generally sound immersion strategy and to be further elaborating this in the light of their experiences.
11. Pupils showed particularly impressive proficiency and confidence in listening comprehension as they processed a rich variety of input coming at them at natural speed from their NS teachers.

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<sup>5</sup> The term Scottish Government is now used. This covers Education as well as other portfolios, and hence the term SEED is now no longer in use.

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12. As they proceeded through their primary school education, pupils gradually became able to explore an increasing range of curricular areas through combinations of listening, speaking, reading and writing in French, while also drawing on their first language in ways that seemed natural and consistent with a bilingual identity.
13. In the younger classes, pupils were able to listen with close attention, to act out, dramatise, move around, sing, chant, do simple calculations all in French, particularly in the Expressive Arts area. Older classes were able to use their French substantially in reading and writing, home economics, science and environmental studies (shared with English) in ways that demanded increasing sophistication.
14. Pupils were able to cope with subject-content that became cognitively more challenging as they proceeded from one year-group to the next. Although a range of performance gradually became evident, with some pupils having some difficulties in learning, pupils did not seem to be anxious or intimidated. In no classes were there visible signs of pupils having mentally or emotionally 'opted out' of learning through French.
15. By Primary 7 some pupils were observed to be producing extended utterances on a variety of topics in spoken French which they had obviously created spontaneously by themselves rather than simply reproduced as a result of rote-learning.
16. In addition, they were capable of handling computers and the internet by using French, and of working collaboratively in groups.
17. Some instances were observed of productive collaboration between NS teachers and classteachers, with the classteachers particularly helpful in supporting pupils' development of basic knowledge and skills.

## **PROCESSES OF MANAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **Initial visit**

18. A visit in mid-2006 reflected the difficult situation in which the school found itself, e.g. split-site and staff-health). Certain issues were presented to the management group (drawing on the school, the neighbouring secondary school and the local authority) for their consideration. These issues were: a) clarification of agreed overall management structure, both between the local authority and the school, and within the school; b) clarification of EPPI aims and policy; c) monitoring progress and responding to feedback; d) the dissemination and communication of key information; e) strategy for building up a stronger sense of shared ownership and involvement.
19. The evaluation team pointed out, however, that although they had identified these difficulties in the running of the programme, they had not seen any evidence of these difficulties having a negative effect on the actual processes of teaching and learning in classrooms which they judged generally to be highly effective.

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## Follow-up visit

20. A follow-up evaluation visit showed clearly that: a) the management structure had been thoroughly discussed and agreed; b) similarly the aims and policy for EPPI; c) monitoring and feedback were more regular, consistent and explicit; d) information about EPPI was being effectively disseminated and communicated, with for example regular monthly meetings and wider opportunities for communication to and with all staff; e) there was a clearer sense of shared ownership.
21. Overall then, the difficulties which had been identified in the first visit had been effectively addressed and the evaluation team is left with the impression of an effective and well-run programme. The ability to address these difficulties is impressive, given that literally there were no other EPPI schools in the UK with whom the staff could share their experiences, problems and possible solutions, and hence when inevitably at times the going got rather tough, there could be quite strong feelings of isolation. Particular praise should go to the Headteacher and to the Aberdeen City Council Support Teacher for Modern Languages who have played a leading role in bringing things together.

## ATTAINMENTS AT PRIMARY 7: EPPI AND NON-EPPI COMPARED

22. Since there were two classes at Primary 7 (one EPPI and one non-EPPI), a comparison was made of their attainments in English Language, Environmental Studies and Mathematics. Both classes attended the same school and came from the same area of Aberdeen, so they had much in common. There was no clear socio-economic advantage of one class over the other, though possibly a slight advantage for the EPPI class, but this was unlikely to be a significant factor.
23. The data were collected by a member of the evaluation team who was equally unknown to both classes, so there was no advantage to one or other class in having prior familiarity with the evaluator. This member of the evaluation team had been a member of HMIE for several years and so was able to draw on substantial experience of monitoring progress in Scottish primary schools.

## English

### *English: Reading*

24. Two groups per class were assessed, in each case one high-attaining and the other middle-attaining. Pupils in the EPPI class had a better appreciation of the writer's craft. They were more sensitive to vocabulary and ideas presented both in poetry and prose, and both the high and middle attaining groups were able to give insightful comments. With reference to national attainment targets, the EPPI pupils consistently attained higher than the non-EPPI pupils and would be well above national expectation in reading by the end of Primary 7.

### *English: Written work*

25. There was no evidence of any significant difference in the quantity or content of the written work from either class. Pupils from both classes wrote well, in a variety of forms. Punctuation and structure were appropriate. However, the EPPI pupils' work was more neatly presented and showed greater accuracy in spelling. Pupils from the EPPI class tended to show a more extensive and varied vocabulary, which they used comfortably.

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## *English: Listening and talking*

26. Both EPPI groups were very secure at level D. They spoke fluently and with confidence. The middle-attaining group displayed a maturity and confidence well above their chronological age and used extensive and varied vocabulary. They went far beyond the interviewer's questions and started questioning the interviewer. The non-EPPI pupils' conversation was more restricted, even in the high-attaining group. The middle-attaining group were not confident in their talk and their vocabulary was not extensive; they showed less developed social skills and less facility in language use.

## **Environmental Studies**

27. As for English, two groups per class were interviewed. The focus of discussion was on work recently done on World War 2 and on their enterprise scheme.
28. The abler groups from both classes had acquired a good knowledge of the main facts and important events of the Second World War and could give good reasons for almost all of the statements which they made. Both groups could talk at reasonable length about the Polish question in the 1930s and were aware to a good enough extent of the rise of the Nazi party. However, the group from the non-EPPI class had a more extensive knowledge and gave more detail in their answers.
29. The groups from the middle ability range showed enough grasp of the facts of the topic which they had studied. However, pupils from the EPPI class seemed to know more because they were able to express themselves better in English. In fact, their grasp of the facts and their understanding of events was about the same as those in the non-EPPI class, but they could talk more around the subject than the non-EPPI group could.
30. From discussion and study of written work, it was clear that overall the non-EPPI pupils had a fuller grasp of what they had been taught. The EPPI group had sufficient understanding and recall of the topic, but lacked the breadth of the non-EPPI group.
31. Overall, the EPPI pupils had not been disadvantaged by having had their environmental studies lessons delivered in French, in that they could recall and clearly knew and understood the major points of the topics. Given the interviewer's experience in assessing progress in this frequently taught topic, it can be said that the EPPI pupils had retained enough not to raise concerns.

## **Mathematics**

32. Two groups were interviewed, one comprising EPPI pupils and the other non-EPPI pupils. Both groups had been identified as high attainers in mathematics. In total 10 pupils were interviewed, six of them from the EPPI class. In the past year, the school had put the Primary 7 pupils into two sets, taking mathematics in English. The 10 pupils came from this top set.



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33. In shape, position and movement, both groups demonstrated confidence in their choice and use of strategies for solving the problems set to them. In both groups, knowledge of the attributes of geometrical shapes and angles was a little insecure, with the non-EPPI pupils demonstrating greater security in their knowledge of angles and their properties.
34. In information handling and display, the EPPI pupils were confident in their approach, but lacked accuracy. By contrast, the non-EPPI group was more accurate, and the pupils were more confident in what they were doing and in how they approached the tasks.
35. All pupils were accurate in their interpretation of graphs. They were quick and accurate in their judgements. They had no difficulty in interpreting information no matter how it was presented.
36. With regard to the two classes as a whole, as opposed to the ten high achievers selected for the above assessment, analysis of the teachers' data and information gained by the interviewer indicated that in the EPPI class as a whole, all pupils were on course to reach level D by the end of P7. A number would reach level E. EPPI pupils would meet and exceed national attainment targets. In the non-EPPI class as a whole, 50% seemed set to achieve level D or above, representing attainment below national levels.
37. It is reasonable to conclude that the attainment of pupils in the EPPI class as a whole in mathematics had not overall been adversely affected by their French language learning.

## **PROGRESS IN FRENCH AT PRIMARY 7**

38. Observation of several classes over the years had left the evaluation team in no doubt that the EPPI pupils had developed a highly impressive proficiency in French, particularly in their listening comprehension and their confidence in spoken interaction.
39. The evaluator with extensive HMIE (Languages) experience noted that the level of French used by the native speaker made no concessions to the fact that eleven-year-old English-speaking pupils were the target. The teacher's French was rapid and complex. In this evaluator's opinion, pupils studying French at Higher level in secondary school would have had difficulty in understanding and keeping up. During this observation period, it became evident that a clear benefit of EPPI has been that the pupils' understanding of spoken French is well in excess of what would be considered normal at the upper stages of the secondary school.
40. Given the above it was considered not necessary to seek to measure the EPPI pupils' listening comprehension or their general ability to interact in French. Instead, the focus was on two other aspects of their French: the ability to produce an extended spontaneous spoken utterance in a story-telling task; and abilities in reading and writing.

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## *Extended spoken utterances in story-telling task*

41. The story-telling task was on a new topic and was undertaken in small groups. The full range of pupils in the class were involved. Each pupil was asked to produce at least one extended utterance, making use of connecting devices if possible. The NS teacher checked their prior knowledge of connecting devices and the class quickly came up with: *Alors ... un jour ... soudain ... ensuite ... et ... à la fin ... aussi ... heureusement ... malheureusement ... il était une fois ... enfin ... par exemple ... puis.*
42. In order to check how 'extended' each spoken utterance was, a simple word count was used. No pupil produced less than seven words for their single utterance and the great majority produced double figures, with one pupil coming up with a spontaneous 24-word utterance. Thinking of each group as a whole, rather than of each pupil in the group individually, it can be reported that each group very quickly managed to produce an interesting little story in which the individual contributions hung together in convincing fashion.

## *Classroom tasks: Reading and Writing*

43. Two sorts of data were taken into account: a) examples of special task-sheets prepared by the NS teachers which indicated how reading was integrated with other skills; and b) their exercise books which showed the number and range of different writing tasks they had undertaken, plus what the pupils had made of these tasks in their own handwriting and illustrations.
44. One task-sheet was based on the film *Au Revoir les Enfants*. It asks pupils to integrate the skills of listening, looking, reading, speaking and writing. The structured questions prepared by the NS teacher make considerable demands on the pupils' cognitive, cultural and linguistic abilities. Another set of task-sheets refers to *La Deuxième Guerre Mondiale* and makes similar very high demands on the pupils. It is doubtful if non-EPPI pupils would be able to cope with this level of task before the end of Secondary 4. Both tasks require the sort of integration of diverse subject-matter, language, prior knowledge, negotiation and information-gathering that is central to Curriculum for Excellence<sup>6</sup>.
45. Analysis of the pupils' reading and writing notebooks revealed a range of tasks. Two examples may be given. First, there was reading and then writing summary versions of short stories, e.g. *La Cigale et la Fourmi*, preceded by a short vocabulary list of key words. Other short stories which featured were based on *Marie Grandes Dents* and *Grodinas* (a dinosaur). Second, there was writing brief notes in French on particular curricular areas, e.g. Queen Elizabeth & Mary Stuart; and notes on '*La Composition de la Terre*', including vocabulary such as: *la croûte; le manteau supérieur; une région de transition (source de magmas); une zone de subduction; une couche; le noyau extérieur; le noyau intérieur;* and a grid system which brought together information on '*La Finlande*' and included categories such as *langue; superficie; population; président; entrée dans l'UE; produits; capitale; monnaie; monuments célèbres.*

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<sup>6</sup> Curriculum for Excellence is the name given to the new curriculum which is being developed for schools in Scotland. For information see: <http://www.curriculumforexcellencescotland.gov.uk/>

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46. In relation to the above tasks, the least advanced pupils were able to produce connected written language in French, extending up to one page in their exercise book, with writing on alternate lines. The evaluator had no difficulty in understanding what they were attempting to communicate.
47. The more advanced pupils presented a larger number and a wider range of reading/writing activities in their exercise books; they incorporated a larger number of 'connectivity' devices; they were more prepared to be creative, even if this meant making mistakes, e.g. ... *parce que la neige* ... when the meaning was intended as 'because of the snow'; they were able to write longer passages, in many cases producing two sides or more of writing; they showed a richer vocabulary, including a wider range of tenses such as present, imperfect, perfect, future with *aller*, and in some cases the conditional and the pluperfect; there was more evidence of grammatical accuracy and correct spelling.
48. Overall, the evidence on pupils' reading and writing in French was impressive. The only need which suggested itself was a need to help pupils fine-tune their accuracy in spelling and grammar. The NS teachers were aware of this and were seeking ways of bringing it about.

## PERCEPTIONS

49. This section focuses on the perceptions of three parties who are central to EPPI: Primary 7 pupils, parents and NS teachers.

### Perceptions of P7 pupils

50. The perceptions of the Primary 7 EPPI pupils were collected by a questionnaire, supplemented by more open-ended views submitted subsequently in writing by the pupils. The questionnaire was designed to ascertain the following:
- gender (boy or girl);
  - level of enjoyment in being educated through French as well as English;
  - level of usefulness or otherwise of being educated through French as well as English;
  - level of confidence or anxiety when listening to teacher talking French;
  - level of confidence or anxiety when speaking French in class;
  - level of confidence or anxiety when reading French;
  - level of confidence or anxiety when writing French;
  - level of keenness or otherwise to continue with this form of education at secondary;
  - view as to whether or not it was a good idea for other schools to provide this form of education;
  - level of general confidence or anxiety when lessons are conducted in French;
  - feelings of ease or difficulty when lessons are conducted in French;
  - benefits gained from being educated through French as well as English;
  - disadvantages in being educated through French as well as English.

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51. Of the 20 pupils in the class, 18 were present (10 girls and 8 boys). The two items which were clearly most positive towards EPPI were the pupils':
- perceived level of enjoyment in being educated through French as well as English; and
  - view that it would be a good idea for other schools to provide this form of education (interestingly, the boys were even more positive than the girls on this particular item).
52. On none of the items was there a clear tendency towards a negative perception of EPPI.
53. On the item:
- level of usefulness' or otherwise of being educated through French as well as English, only two pupils (1 girl and 1 boy) registered a perception that could be taken as negative but not strongly so.
54. If the EPPI pupils were strongly in favour of EPPI being extended to other Scottish primary schools (51. above), they were less certain about immersion at secondary school. This is not surprising, since nobody had given the class any information on whether or not their EPPI would be continued at secondary, and if so what form it might take. At the time, the continuation of EPPI into secondary was surrounded by uncertainty and nobody at that stage knew what if anything would happen.
55. The items on confidence/anxiety showed slight tendency to anxiety when 'listening to the teacher talking in French' and 'writing French', an even balance when 'speaking French' and a slight tendency towards 'confidence' when 'reading French'.
56. These findings in (55. above) are interesting in that they do reveal some anxieties among the pupils, despite the fact that most observers of EPPI classes comment on the confidence which the pupils display. However, these findings are consistent with immersion research elsewhere<sup>7</sup> which shows that immersion students (compared with non-immersion students) showed greater 'willingness to communicate' and greater 'motivation' but also greater 'communication apprehension', a picture which seems to fit the EPPI students well. The reason given for the greater 'communication apprehension' is that immersion students are aware of the much higher challenge of coping with native-speaker language at natural speed.

## Perceptions of parents

57. Ten parents were interviewed, including four with children in Primary 7. They shared very much the same views as each other and considered that these views were representative of EPPI parents in general.
58. There was strong and unanimous endorsement of the benefits which EPPI was bringing to their children and to the family as a whole; they saw EPPI as a clearly superior form of education to what otherwise would be available to their children.

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<sup>7</sup> MacIntyre, P., Baker, S., Clement, R. & Donovan, L. (2003). Talking in order to learn: willingness to communicate and intensive language programs. *The Canadian Modern Language Review / Revue Canadienne des Langues Vivantes*, 59, 4, 589-607.

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59. There were no expressions of disenchantment with EPPI being reported by their children at home.
60. Benefits of EPPI included not only increased proficiency in French but also self-confidence, communication, a sense of European if not global citizenship and a considerable raising of aspiration. This was exemplified in more than one case by statements such as: *'We went to France and my son/daughter did all the talking for us. It was great.'*
61. They showed understanding of the difficulties which had been caused by the split-site arrangement, and admiration for the efforts of the staff to make the best of the situation.
62. They expressed a clear wish that in future years EPPI should be sustained in the primary school and continued in some form or other into their children's education at secondary school.
63. They registered deep concern at the lack of information which was available to them in relation to what would happen in the future. They felt that the school was on their side but that somehow the system was not providing them with information to which they felt entitled. They felt let down by the very system which had encouraged them in the first place to embark on EPPI. In the early stages of the project they and their children had been invited down to the SEED Headquarters at Victoria Quay in Edinburgh, where they had heard encouraging words from senior politicians. They felt this had given the politicians good publicity but now, as one of the parents put it, they felt they were being left 'hanging out to dry'.

## **Perceptions of the native-speaker teachers**

64. During the lifetime of EPPI there have been four main NS teachers. The three who were in post in 2007 were invited to set out their considered views about EPPI as they had experienced it. They were not given a set of questions to which to respond, but instead were encouraged to focus on those issues which they themselves considered to be salient.
65. It was clear to all three NS that their pupils' overall level of French was outstanding. One NS reported it was a moment of great pride when a certain pupil, when exposed to French-speaking outsiders was constantly confused for a French child, 'because of his incredible confidence and abilities in the language'.
66. Another NS reported that as a Modern Languages secondary trained and experienced teacher, she was still 'continuously amazed by the pupils' superior level of French'. She considered it superior not only to equivalent pupils doing MLPS, but also to secondary level pupils taught traditionally. To illustrate this, mention can be made of one of their ex-pupils who has moved to a different secondary school than the associated Academy; and although only in S1, he has been put in an S4 class for French.

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67. The NS teachers felt that their own understanding of how best to teach an immersion programme had developed in the light of their experiences. In particular, they had come to see the value of a more systematic approach to reading and writing. They had discovered that a French version of phonics had been used in Canadian immersion programmes and were now trying to see if it could be adapted for use in EPPI. Pupils in primary five were beginning to write simple stories and the trend was to start earlier if possible, if the pupils were ready. One NS reported that writing skills had enhanced some of the children's ability to express themselves orally.
68. Accuracy in pupils' writing was something the team was working on. An introduction of formal grammar at the end of primary years had proved difficult and unpleasant for the children and alternative options were being investigated to help with spelling and grammar.
69. The NS teachers were currently still working on a programme of study for each level which consists of establishing 'expected' levels for each year. It had been verified by the two staff from Aberdeen University up to Primary 5, but the two remaining years had still to be approved.
70. They were in regular communication with the mainstream classteachers to ensure good communication on the progress of pupils. They appreciated the advice and support which these teachers provided.
71. A Curriculum for Excellence was considered to fit exactly with what the NS teachers were doing. Skills are not compartmentalised, but on the contrary they are acquired and used in several different areas.
72. Walker Road has also been involved in welcoming a significant increase of newcomers both with English as a first language plus other children who are learning English at the same time as French. A special 'fast tracking' class has been set up to bring to these pupils a minimum background enabling them to participate in their respective classes. This has proved to be quite successful. Such pupils' needs to cope with whole-class activities are met during extra 30-minute lessons once a week in a small group.

## TRANSITION TO SECONDARY

73. The first EPPI class has now transferred to Torry Academy. The class has been separated among three register classes, because of the school's wish to mix children from different primary schools.
74. For well over a year before the pupils moved to secondary, there had been meetings of senior management staff of both Walker Road Primary and Torry Academy, with additional representation from Aberdeen City Council and the then SEED.
75. These meetings revealed a general consensus that it would be desirable for the EPPI pupils to receive some form of continuing immersion when they moved to secondary.

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76. However, a number of factors have thus far constituted something of a barrier to the desired continuation. These are:
- Uncertainty in the minds of several key figures as to what level of funding (if any), and from what sources, would be available to support continuation into secondary or indeed to sustain the programme at primary.
  - Difficulty in finding staff in the secondary school who would be able to teach one or other curricular area (in whole or in part) through French.
  - Difficulty in finding appropriate curricular material in French.
  - Difficulty in timetabling.
77. In the event, in the present year 2007/8 the programme is being sustained at primary though the continuation of the three native-speaker teachers by Aberdeen City Council.
78. At secondary a start was made on teaching Mathematics through French for three out of four periods per week, taught by a French-speaking teacher. Another possibility had been Science, but the timetable did not allow for this.
79. There were however doubts in the secondary school concerning the suitability of Mathematics for this purpose. Mathematics had not been taught through EPPI at the primary school. There was a concern that the school would appear to be failing if it did not meet its targets in Mathematics. The view was taken that Mathematics should be taught in English after the October break, and this has been put in place.
80. The EPPI pupils come together for their French lessons three times per week. There is no other exposure to French in any other area of the curriculum. At the beginning of S1, the EPPI pupils undertook in French the same topic ('the school') as the non-EPPI classes, but looked at different aspects of this and in greater depth. Since then, apart from one other topic ('a fashion show'), the EPPI class has not covered the same basic topics as the other classes but has undertaken topics more in keeping with their more advanced level.
81. In the opinion of the evaluation team senior staff in Torry Academy have genuinely tried to foster the EPPI experience, but with this first cohort of pupils, in view mainly of the difficulties indicated above, the continuation of EPPI into secondary has been very limited.

## CONCLUSIONS

82. The evaluation identified five main topics for investigation (see paragraph 7 of the present report). These can now be briefly addressed:

### **Processes of teaching, learning and management**

83. The evidence shows clearly that a wide range of processes of teaching and learning have been put in place which are appropriate for immersion education and which additionally go well with Curriculum for Excellence. Some difficulties in processes of management, administration and communication became apparent, but these were discussed with appropriate staff and have been very well addressed.

### **Attainments of EPPI pupils in English, Environmental Studies and Mathematics**

84. The evidence of EPPI at primary school shows clearly that pupils have not been disadvantaged in English, Environmental Studies or Mathematics by receiving some of their education through the medium of French. Indeed, in English EPPI pupils demonstrated markedly greater fluency, range and confidence than their non-EPPI counterparts from the same year-group.

### **Progress of EPPI pupils in French**

85. EPPI pupils have reached a level of proficiency in French which goes far beyond what can reasonably be expected of MLPS. This covers all four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. They have shown that they can use French in order to access with profit other areas of their curriculum. Their ability to cope with a fast flow of French input from their native-speaker teachers is particularly impressive.

### **Perceptions of EPPI by pupils, parents and native-speaker teachers**

86. EPPI pupils hold positive perceptions of EPPI. In particular they clearly view it as an enjoyable experience and they would like to see it extended to other Scottish primary schools. They are less certain about EPPI at secondary, but had received little or no information about this possibility. In class they show high levels of willingness to communicate, confidence and motivation, but under the surface there is in some cases some evidence of anxiety, particularly in respect of listening comprehension and writing. This however has been found in other immersion programmes elsewhere and seems to arise from pupils' understanding that they are facing up to a much higher challenge than is the case with non-immersion pupils.

87. EPPI parents hold strongly positive views, even after their children have gone through the entire EPPI experience for seven years at primary school. They consider that the benefits lie not only in their children's impressive proficiency in French but also in their positive outlook and confidence. They feel their children are better prepared for international citizenship. However, they have been dismayed by the lack of information concerning the future of EPPI, particularly in respect of continuation at secondary school. They are well-disposed towards the school but feel that somehow the 'system' has let them down on this matter.



# Evaluation of EPPI

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88. The native-speaker (French) teachers report themselves as highly impressed by what their pupils can do in French, and by their confidence in doing it, considering this to be much more than what they have found elsewhere in Scottish schools, whether in MLPS or in secondary schools. They feel their own approach has evolved with experience. Reading and Writing are introduced earlier and more systematically. They feel that more needs to be done in order to incorporate knowledge of grammar and to make this enjoyable to their pupils. They consider that collaboration with the everyday mainstream classteachers is beneficial.

## **Sustainability of EPPI at Walker Road Primary School and continuation into secondary education**

89. EPPI is being sustained at Walker Road Primary School mainly through Aberdeen City Council support for the continuing appointment of the three native speaker teachers and the continuing support of . Despite goodwill from the neighbouring secondary school to some form of continuation into secondary education, continuation has been very limited in the case of the first cohort which is now in Secondary 1. Difficulties have arisen because of lack of finance and appropriate materials, timetabling, and availability of teachers in appropriate curricular areas. The future of EPPI lies less in discussion with the government than with the local authority<sup>8</sup>.

## **Factors linked to the success of EPPI**

90. In the opinion of the evaluators, EPPI at Walker Road Primary School has been an outstanding success. It has brought something different and better into Scottish primary school education. In the era of Curriculum for Excellence it is preparing pupils very well for true international citizenship, not only through their outstanding proficiency in another major language but also in their confidence and international outlook.

91. What then seem to be the key factors associated with this success? These may be briefly listed (not in any order of priority) as:

- appropriate funding and other support from Aberdeen City Council and the national authority
- the commitment and enthusiasm of the school staff, particularly the Headteacher, well supported by the local authority Curriculum Support Teacher for Modern Languages (CSTML) and by two colleagues from the Faculty of Education (University of Aberdeen)
- the interest and enthusiasm shown by EPPI parents
- the provision of an appropriate number of supernumerary native-speaker (French) teachers, and the commitment, knowledge and skill which these have shown
- the provision of an early start (from Primary 1 onwards); a substantial amount of time (both time within each week and time over the years); a substantial increase in intensity of experience (not only learning an additional language but also learning vitally important other subject matter through this other language); and the creation of a friendly, supportive but also highly challenging environment

and possibly

- the provision of a research-based evaluation which at various points provided evidence and a perspective which staff might take into account.

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<sup>8</sup>A Concordat (2007) between the government and local authorities sets out a new arrangement between them, with less funding for national initiatives and more funding passed to local authorities for them to allocate within broad guidelines which the government provides. As a consequence, future governmental funding support for EPPI would be likely to be a matter for the local authority rather than the Scottish government to consider.

## MOVING INTO THE FUTURE

### Discussion

92. There is a strong case for the continuation of EPPI at Walker Road Primary School, for its continuation into secondary education at Torry Academy and for its more widespread adoption in Scotland. EPPI has been shown to deliver a far higher level of proficiency in French, with no clearly demonstrated loss to first language or other-subject knowledge.
93. Despite the highly impressive progress made by EPPI pupils, it would be misleading to consider their proficiency in French to be already fully 'stable' and to have reached 'pay-off' level. For them to gain the full benefits of their partial immersion, their education through French needs to be developed further at secondary school.
94. One of the world's leading researchers in bilingual education (Cummins, 2000)<sup>9</sup> distinguishes between 'Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills' (BICS) and 'Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency' (CALP). Both forms of proficiency are important.
95. Pupils on second-language immersion programmes tend not to develop high levels of young people's BICS, mainly because they do not have regular access to peers who are native-speakers of the immersion language. Their main input comes from only one person: the immersion teacher. In Canada, therefore, extensive efforts are now being made to help French-immersion pupils develop regular contacts with native-French-speaking children, e.g. through ICT, to help them develop a more rounded everyday young person's proficiency.
96. CALP involves the ability to write essays, give talks and command a range of different genres and types of discourse. Cummins rightly argues that CALP is essential if immersion learners are to gain the full academic benefits of an immersion education. Yet, CALP take many years to develop.
97. If EPPI pupils are to gain the real pay-off from their partial immersion education, then ways would have to be found of helping them to develop more regular interactions with French-speaking pupils of their own age, in order to extend their basic interpersonal communication skills, and at the same time to 'jack up' their command of important forms of cognitive-academic discourse, such as writing full essays, preparing lengthy reports, giving extended talks on substantive topics. These cannot be delivered, internalised and stabilised by the end of primary school education, so a well-planned, adequately resourced and challenging continuation at secondary school is essential.

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<sup>9</sup> Cummins, J. (2000). *Language, power and pedagogy: Bilingual Education in the Crossfire*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters

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## Recommendations

98. In the light of the evidence and analysis presented above, a number of recommendations seem appropriate:

99. It is recommended that:

- a) discussions should continue between key staff of Walker Road Primary School, Torry Academy and Aberdeen City Council in order to develop an agreed, coated and sustainable plan that will support EPPI at Walker Road and its continuation into secondary. It is recommended also that parents should be consulted and kept fully informed;
- b) appropriate staff of Aberdeen City Council (possibly facilitated by officials of the Scottish Government) should seek discussions with appropriate authorities representing France and possibly other French-speaking countries, in order to make them fully aware of EPPI and to explore possibilities for support and collaboration;
- c) at Walker Road, staff should continue to seek enjoyable ways of incorporating grammatical understanding into their pupils' experiences and to further develop the descriptions of levels of performance which experience suggests are appropriate for each year-group;
- d) at Torry Academy, the present first cohort who are now in Secondary 1 should within the years Secondary 2 to 4 receive some modules in which French is integrated with other areas of knowledge and experience. This does not have to imply teaching the whole of one particular subject through the medium of French;
- e) Cohort 2 pupils who are at present at Walker Road in Primary 7 should be in a position to benefit from an agreed and coated plan for continuation when they go to secondary;
- f) ICT and other links might be further developed with schools in the French-speaking world. This would apply to both Walker Road and Torry Academy, whether jointly or separately. It could offer highly exciting possibilities for joint international, intercultural and multilingual (English + French + maybe other-language) projects in which Aberdeen pupils and students would be in regular touch with their French-speaking counterparts and their teachers. This would be very much in the spirit of Curriculum for Excellence;
- g) national organisations such as Learning & Teaching Scotland, the Scottish Qualifications Authority and Scottish CILT, in collaboration with local authorities and TELs, should raise the profile of immersion education, whether of the 'early, 'delayed' or 'late' forms (see footnote 2, p1) as a possibility for primary and secondary schools in Scotland to consider, and should seek to elaborate a number of possible models which would be appropriate to the Scottish context and which would bear the stamp of national accreditation. The old 'one size fits all' approach to curriculum has gone, and there are several possible models of partial immersion which might be considered, not all of them based on the supernumerary provision of teachers.