

AN COMUNN GAIDHEALACH



THE SCHOOL, GAEILIC AND THE COMMUNITY

Paper to Local Authority Councillors

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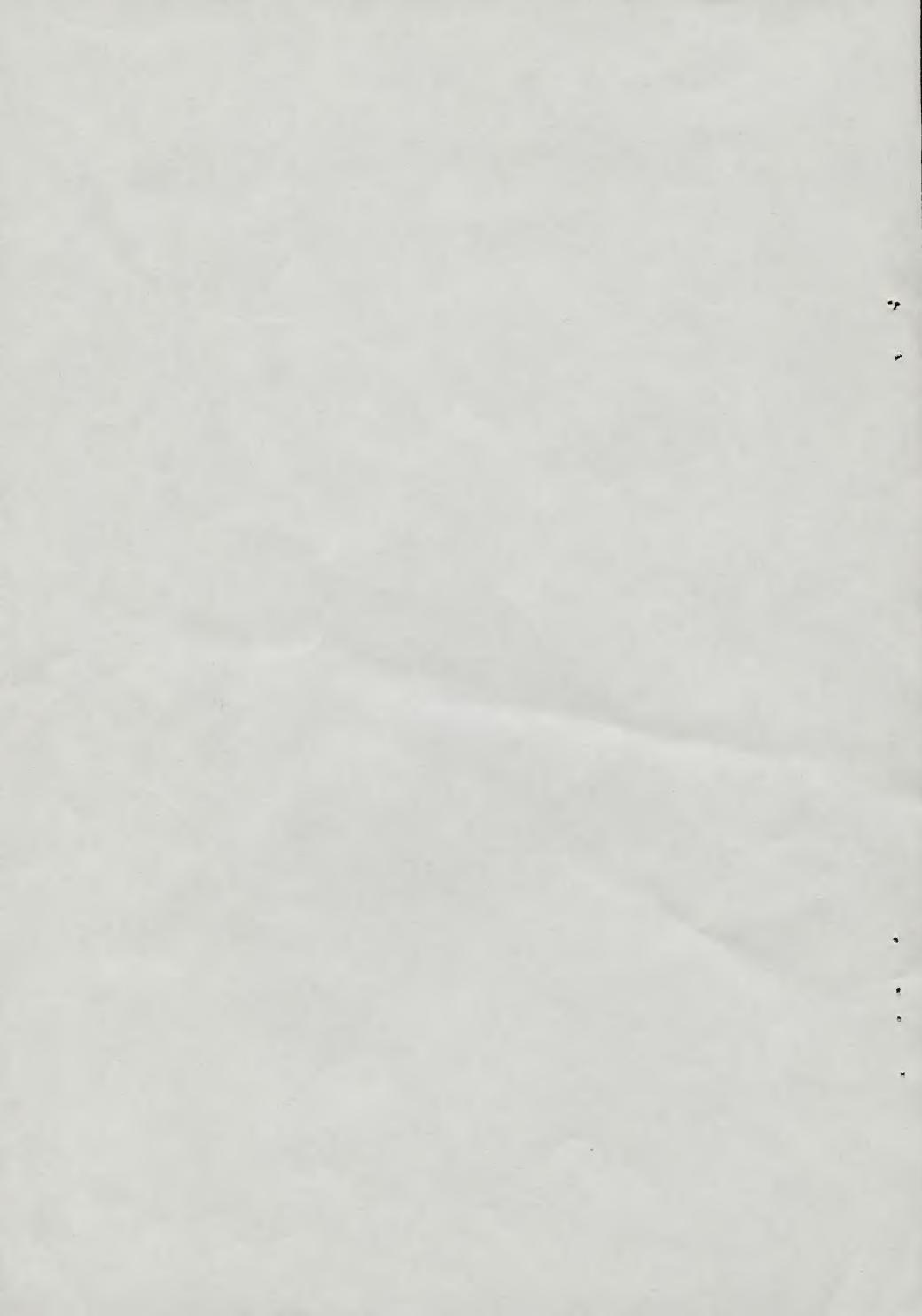


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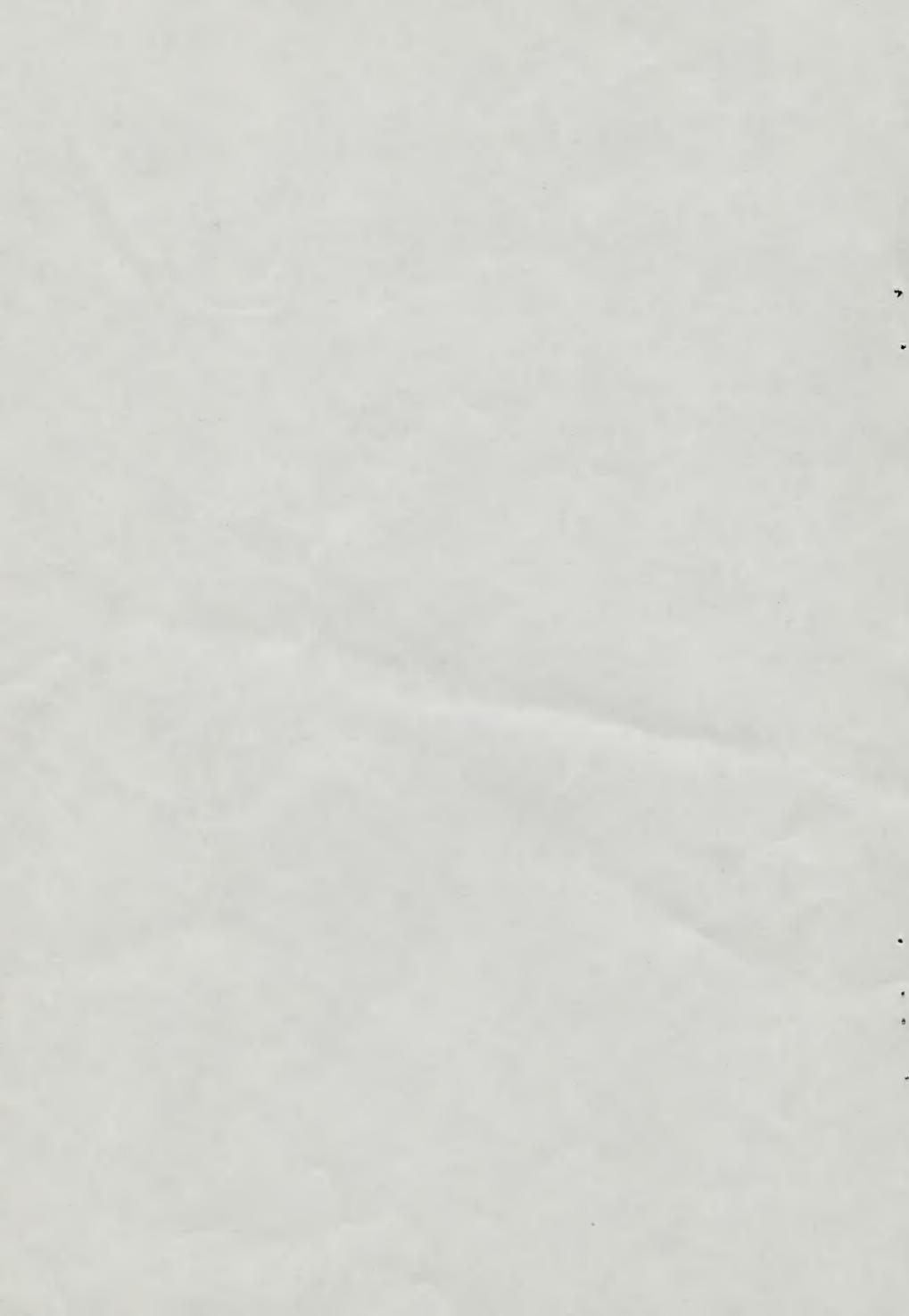


## Foreword

It is not the intention of An Comunn Gàidhealach at any stage to interfere with policy or with policy decisions formulated or arrived at by elected representatives who constitute the membership of local authorities, or by officials appointed by those local authorities. The purpose is to set out observations and proposals in accordance with the stated aims of the Association as embodied in our constitution, and we recognise that a number of these observations and proposals will be considered by local authorities as a matter of course in arriving at decisions.

The closure of primary schools is an emotive issue, and we would not wish to enter into educational or economic arguments for or against the closure or retention of primary or community schools. We leave that to those who have the expertise and the first hand knowledge. What we seek to do is to set out, as we in An Comunn Gàidhealach see it, the effects of action on the Gaelic language and culture within a community, in the hope that our observations will be taken into consideration during the process of decision-making.

An Comunn Gàidhealach intend to circulate this paper to all local authorities who have a responsibility for education in Gaelic throughout Scotland. We hope that it will be of assistance to those who have to make the final decisions.

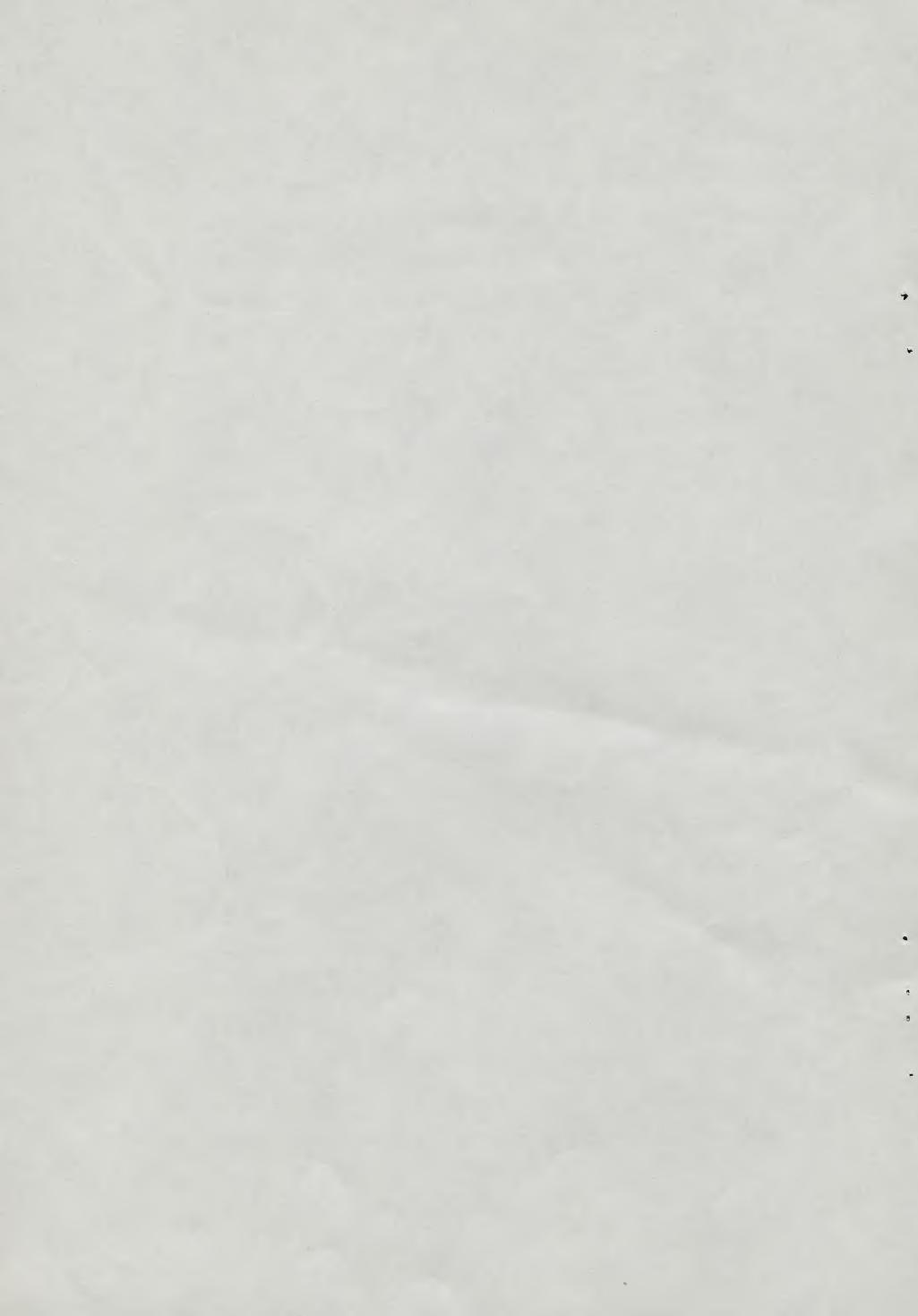


1. The primary school is a focal point for the people of a community.

Without a school there will be no community, neither will there be a school without a community. In the absence of a school, youngsters will lose their identity with the community, with their history and with their heritage, and the link between them and the community will disappear. In the remote townships of the Highlands the community will not survive for long without its youth. When children are young, it is important that the teacher knows both them and their parents. Also, parents with young children will not settle in a community unless there is a school there, and the danger is that eventually the community will become deserted.

2. It is at primary school stage that the foundations of education are laid, and Gaels are too familiar with education being thrust upon them from outside. This last link between community and education must be maintained if there is to be any hope for Gaelic. The primary school reinforces awareness of heritage, culture and language. It is worth remembering that many a Gael and Islander contributed to the well-being of the country and of its people, following his primary education in small community schools.

3. Parents have a special affinity with the school which their children attend. The influence of the school affects the home, and if little children are in a strange community for a part of their lives, and particularly in a community in which Gaelic is not strong, it is doubtful if Gaelic will be strong in the home either. The primary school influences both the community and the home.



4. It is acknowledged that differences exist between schools concerning Gaelic, and this depends on a number of factors, such as the community itself and the ability of teachers to teach the children Gaelic. The closure of primary schools will hasten the day when children accept English only as the norm, while they are still very young. When those children grow up, there is a danger that there will be a generation which has no interest in Gaelic. If Gaelic is not a part of the lives of the young, it will surely die.
5. It is much easier to encourage the use of Gaelic in community schools than in large establishments containing more non-Gaelic speakers. The strength of Gaelic depends on how the young children learn it. The language must be meaningful within the school and within the community if there is to be any hope for it. If Gaelic is strong in the community, and if children are moved to a community where Gaelic is not used, the status of Gaelic is diminished within the community. The children, at a very early age, would come under the influence of a culture and way of life which was essentially English.
6. Following the closure of primary schools in communities in which Gaelic is strong, it will be much more difficult for the people to accept efforts to advance the cause of Gaelic. Also, it would be more difficult to benefit from the work which currently takes place in playgroups and nursery schools. Children will use the language of the playground, and it seems that that language will be English in a larger and more non-Gaelic school. Many factors work against Gaelic at the present time. It is important that they be not encouraged if possible.



7. It is acknowledged that there are many reasons for closing primary schools, and that there are also reasons for keeping them open. Surely, if Gaelic is in danger on account of closure, that is something worthy of consideration, because, connected with Gaelic are culture, literature and a way of life.
8. Sometimes the number of pupils in a school diminishes to such an extent that that school has to be closed. When that happens, the community has already undergone change. But there are many schools, which do not have a very large roll of pupils, which enhance the heritage and identity of the community. It is worth remembering that Gaelic is a valuable heritage in which language, music, culture and way of life are entwined.
9. The strength of Gaelic is very important for learners of the language, and for those who have an interest in the language. Gaelic is strongest in community schools, which are frequently situated in remote areas. We are not only interested in maintaining the number of speakers who already exist, but in increasing the number so that more people will be able to speak our language. There is no doubt that the closure of primary schools will have an effect on Gaelic.
10. Eventually decisions will have to be arrived at. It is hoped that, in arriving at those decisions, the case for Gaelic will receive consideration. It has been said that a land without its own language is a land without a soul. Surely this holds good for the community too. In schools where Gaelic receives little or no attention at the moment,



perhaps the time is now right for looking at ways in which the language can be introduced. Perhaps the time is right for looking at enrichment rather than accepting decay as being inevitable.

*Summary:*

An Comunn Gàidhealach are of the opinion that Gaelic must be a very important factor in the debate about the closure of the primary or community school. We hope that this paper sets out at least some of the arguments on behalf of the language, and that these will be considered fully in the process of decision making.

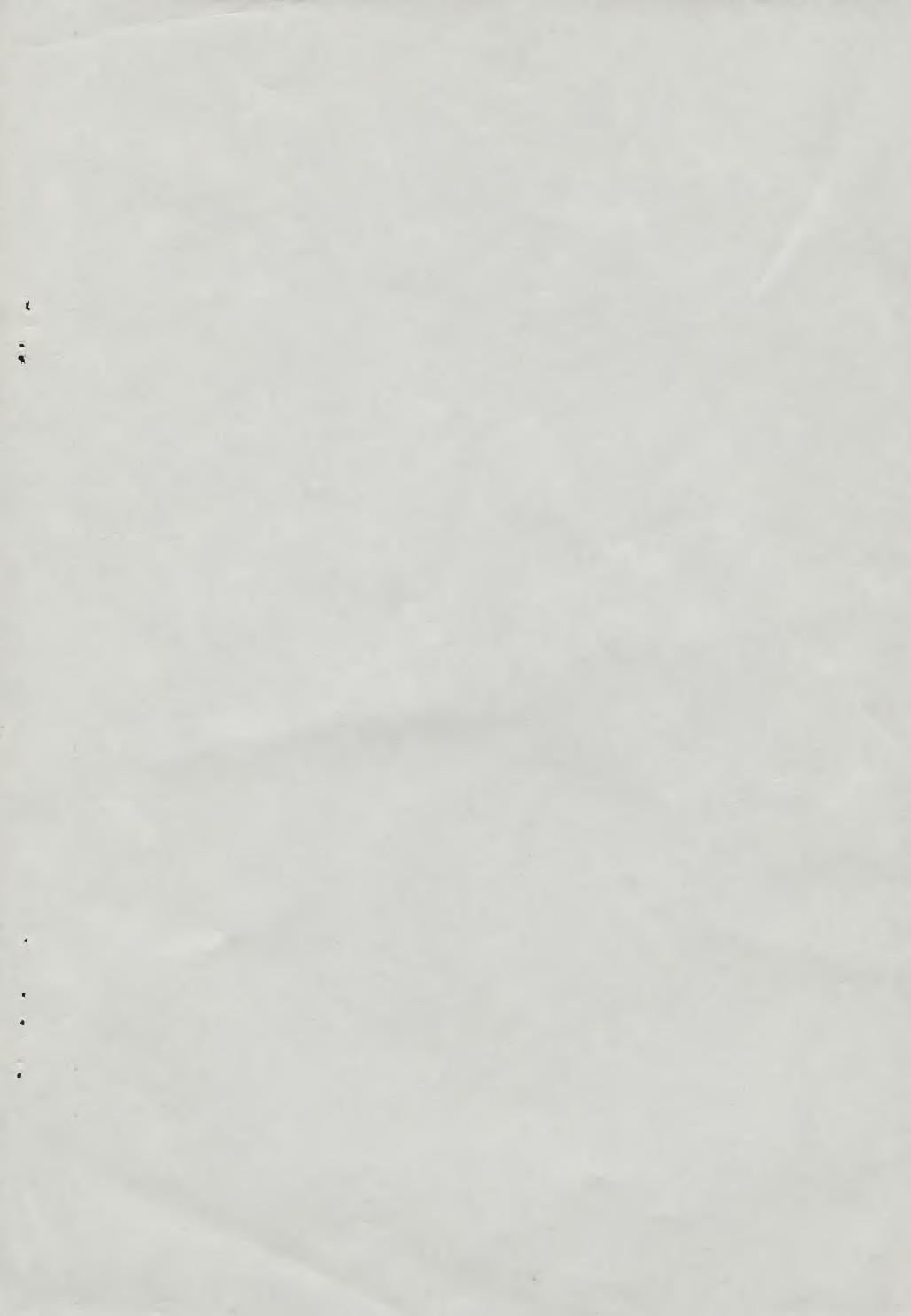


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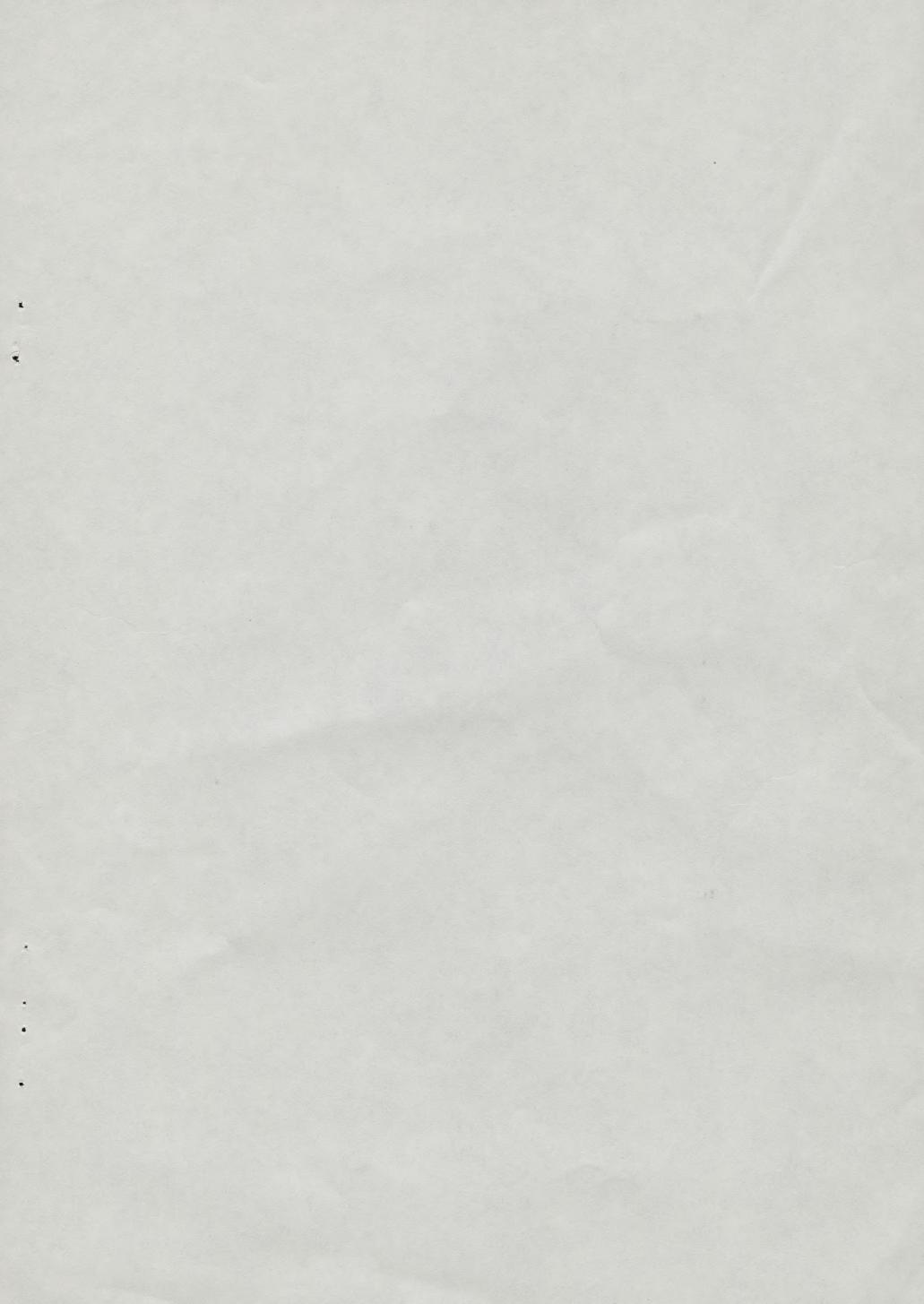
AN SGOIL, A' GHAIÐHLIG 'S A' CHOIMHEARSNACHD

Pàipear gu Comhairlichean nan Ughdarras Ionadail





DUNADH SGOILTEAN



Rainmh-radh :

Chan e rùn a' Chomuinn Ghàidhealaich aig ire sam bith gnothach a  
ghabhail ri poileasaidh no ri co-dhunaidhean poileasaidh a chaidh a  
dheilbh no a ruighinn le riochdairean taghte a tha a' déanamh suas  
ballrachd ughdarrasan ionadail no le oifigich a chaidh a shuidheachadh le  
na h-ùghdarrasan ionadail sin. 'S e adhbar a' phàipeir seo gun cuirear  
sios beachdan agus molaidean an co-chòrdadh ri rùinteann ainmichte a'  
Chomuinn mar tha iad air an cur sios nar bonn-stèidh, agus tha sinn a'  
tuigsinn gum bithear a' beachdachadh air cuid de na beachdan 's de na  
molaidean sin co-dhiù ann a bhith a' tighinn gu co-dhunaidhean.

'S e rud tòcail a th' ann an dùnadh bhun-sgoiltean, agus cha  
mhiannaicheadh sinne tighinn a-steach air argumaidean foghlamach no  
eacanamaiceach, an dara cuid air taobh no an aghaidh bun-sgoiltean no  
sgoiltean coimhearsnachd a dhùnadh no a chumail fosgailte. Fàgaidh sinn  
sin acasan aig a bheil an teòmachd agus an t-eòlas pearsanta. Tha sinne a'  
feuchainn ('s tha sinn a' faicinn seo mar chuibreann de ar dleasdanais mar  
Chomunn) ri toirt fainear, mar a tha sinne anns a' Chomunn Ghàidhealach  
gam faicinn, buaidhean gniomhachais air cànan 's air cultar na Gàidhlig ann  
an coimhearsnachd, 's tha sinn an dòchas, ann a bhith a' déanamh sin, gun  
toirear suil air ar beachdan ann a bhith a' tighinn gu co-dhunaidhean.

Tha An Comunn Gàidhealach an dùil am páipear seo a sgaoileadh gu gach  
ùghdarras ionadail a tha a' gabhail cùram foghlam na Gàidhlig air feadh  
Alba. Tha sinn an dòchas gum bi e na chuideachadh, 's nach ann na bhacadh,  
ann a bhith a' ruighinn cho-dhunaidhean.



1. Tha a' bhun-sgoil na h-ionad meadhain airson muinntir an àite. Cha bhi coimhearsnachd ann gun sgoil, no sgoil gun choimhearsnachd. As aonais na sgoile, caillidh clann òga co-ionnanachd ri an coimhearsnachd, ri an eachdraidh 's ri an dualchas, agus falbhaidh an ceangal a tha eadar iad fhèin 's a' choimhearsnachd. Air bailtean iomallach na Gàidhealtachd cha bhi coimhearsnachd fada beò às aonais òigridh. Nuair tha clann òg, tha e cudthromach gum bi an tidear eòlach orra agus air am párantan. Cuideachd, cha tig párantan le clann òga a-steach a choimhearsnachd no a bhaile mur a bi sgoil gu math faisg, agus tha cunnartan ann air a' cheann thall gun tèid coimhearsnachdan bàn.
2. 'S ann aig ire bun-sgoile a tha stèidh foghlaim air a shuidheachadh, agus tha na Gàidheil ro eòlach air a bhith a' faighinn foghlaim bhon taobh a-muigh. Feumar an ceangal mu dheireadh seo a chumail eadar coimhearsnachd is foghlam ma tha dòchas sam bith ann don Ghàidhlig. Tha a' bhun-sgoil a' daigneachadh eòlas is mothachadh air dualchas, air cultar 's air cànan. 'S fhiach a chuimhneachadh gur iomadh Gàidheal agus Eileanach a chuir ri soirbheas na dùthcha 's ri soirbheas an t-sluaigh, an dèidh a' chiad oideachadh fhaotainn ann an sgoiltean beaga na coimhearsnachd.
3. Tha ceangal sònraichte aig párantan ris an sgoil 's a bheil an cuid chloinne. Tha buaidh na sgoile a' bualadh air an dachaigh, agus ma tha a' chiann bheaga ann an coimhearsnachd choimheach fad cuibhreann dem beatha, agus gu sònraichte ann an coimhearsnachd anns nach eil a' Ghàidhlig làidir, 's iongantach gum bi a' Ghàidhlig làidir anns an



dachaigh nas mò. Tha a' bhun-sgoil a' buadhachadh an dà chuid air a' choimhearsnachd 's air an dachaigh.

4. Tha fhios gu bheil eadar-dhealachadh ann eadar sgoiltean a thaobh na Gàidhlig, agus tha sin an crochadh air àireamh nithean, mar a' choimhearsnachd fhèin agus comas an luchd-teagaisg air Gàidhlig a thoirt don chloinn. Dlùthaichidh dùnadh nam bun-sgoil an là sam bi a' chlann a' gabhair ris a' Bheurla a-mhàin, 's gun iad ach fior òg. Nuair dh'fhàsas a' chlann sin suas, tha e cunnartach gum bi ginealach ann aig nach bi ùidh sam bith 's a' Ghàidhlig. Mur a bi a' Ghàidhlig fa chomhair na h-òigridh, thèid i bàs gu cinnteach.
5. Tha e mòran nas phasa a' Ghàidhlig a bhrosnachadh anns na sgoiltean beaga seach ann an ionadan mòra anns am bi barrachd de Ghoill. Tha neart na Gàidhlig an crochadh air mar a dh'ionnsaicheas an fheadhainn òga i. Feumaidh brigh a bhith aig a' chànan san sgoil 's anns a' choimhearsnachd ma tha dòchas gu bhith ann dhi. Ma tha a' Ghàidhlig làdir ann an coimhearsnachd, agus ma thèid clann a ghlumasad gu sgìre far nach eil a' Ghàidhlig air a cleachdad, tha inbhe na Gàidhlig a' siocladh anns a' choimhearsnachd. Bhitheadh a' chlann, aig aois glè òg, a' tighinn fo bhuaidh cultair, cleachdaidhean agus dòighean na Beurla.
6. Le bhith a' dùnadh bhun-sgoiltean ann an coimhearsnachdan 's a bheil a' Ghàidhlig làdir, bhitheadh e mòran na bu doirbhe don t-sluagh gabhair ri ɔidhirpean air a' Ghàidhlig adhartachadh. Cuideachd, bhitheadh e na bu doirbhe gréim a chumail air buaidh na h-obrach a tha a' dol air ɔdhart anns na cròileagain 's anns na sgoiltean àraich.



Cleachdaidh a' chlann cànan an achaidh-chluiche, agus tha e coltach gur i a' Bheurla as mothà a bhitheas an sin mar as mothà 's as Gallda an sgoil. Tha mèran nithean ann a tha ag obair an aghaidh na Gàidhlig san là a th' ann. Tha e cudthromach nach cuirear ris an àireamh sin ma ghabhas e sheachnadh.

7. Tha fhios gu bheil iomadh adhbhar ann airson bun-sgoil a dhùnad, agus gu bheil adhbharan cuideachd ann airson a cumail fosgailte. Is cinnteach ma tha a' Ghàidhlig ann an cunnart air sgàth dùnaidh, gur e sin rud bu chòir a mheas, oir, an ceangal ri Gàidhlig, tha cultar, litreachas, dòigh-beatha is eile.
8. Uaireannan, thèid àireamh sgoilearan ann an sgoil cho iosal 's gu feumair an sgoil sin a dhùnad. Nuair thachras sin, tha a' choimhearsnachd air atharrachadh mu thràth. Ach tha iomadh sgoil, anns nach eil àireamh uabhasach mòr de chloinn, ag adhartachadh dualchas agus dearbh-aithne na coimhearsnachd. Is fhiach cuimhneachadh gu bheil a' Ghàidhlig na dileab luachmhoir anns a bheil cànan, ceòl, cultar is dòigh-beatha co-fhillte.
9. Tha fallaineachd na Gàidhlig air leth cudthromach do luchd-ionnsachaidh agus dhaibhsan aig a bheil ùidh 's a' chànan. 'S anns na sgoiltean beaga, a tha tric ann an àitean iomallach, a tha a' Ghàidhlig làidir. Chan e a-mhàin na tha againn de luchd-labhait a ghleidheadh a tha fainear dhuinn, ach an àireamh a mheudachadh gus am bi tuilleadh dhaoine a' bruidhinn ar cànan. Chan eil teagamh nach bi buaidh aig dùnad bhun-sgoiltean air cor na Gàidhlig.



10. Air a' cheann thall, feumar tighinn gu co-dhunaidhean. Thatar an dòchas, ann a bhith a' ruighinn nan co-dhunaidhean sin, gum beachdaichear air suidheachadh na Gàidhlig. Tha e air a radh gur tir gun chànan tir gun anam. 'S cinnteach gu bheil seo fior mun choimhearsnachd cuideachd. Ann an sgoiltean anns nach eil mòran aire ga thoirt don Ghàidhlig an-dràsda, 's dòcha gu bheil an t-am ann coimhead ri dòighean air a' Ghàidhlig a thoirt a-steach. 'S dòcha gu bheil an t-am ann a bhith a' sìreadh leasachaidh an àite a bhith a' gabhail ri crionadh mar nì a tha do-sheachainte.

*Geàrrchunntas:*

Tha An Comunn Gàidhealach den bheachd gu bheil a' Ghàidhlig na cuspair air leth cudthromach san deasbad mu bhun-sgoiltean no sgoiltean coimhearsnachd a dhùnad. Tha sinn an dòchas gu bheil am pàipear seo a' cur an cèill co-dhiù cuid de na h-argamaidean às leth a' chànan, agus gum beachdaichear orra sin gu domhainn ann a bhith a' tighinn gu na co-dhunaidhean.

