

Муниципальный этап всероссийской олимпиады школьников

по английскому языку

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9–11 классы

Скрипт аудиозаписи

Скрипт аудиозаписи **предназначен только для организаторов и членов жюри** и используется в случае возникновения технических проблем во время проведения конкурса понимания устной речи (Listening) и его проверки и оценивания.

Hello, my name's Jane Robertson, and I'm here to talk to you about a language you may not have heard much about before: Gaelic. I work at a Gaelic school in Scotland – I'm the headteacher, in fact. There aren't many of these schools at the moment, so I'm lucky to have such an interesting job.

Maybe I should start by explaining exactly what Gaelic is. It's a very old language that was spoken in most of Scotland, outside the cities, up to a couple of hundred years ago.

Today, unfortunately, very few people speak or even understand the language – only about 60,000 in the whole of Scotland. Now, you may think that sounds like rather a large number of people, but the total population of Scotland is over 5 million. So you can see that the number of Gaelic speakers form a relatively small proportion of the population as a whole.

And according to experts, a language is dead if fewer than 50,000 people speak it. You see, you have to have a large number of people using the language in everyday situations, not just linguists or people who learn it as a hobby. It needs to be a normal part of a lot of ordinary people's lives, or it simply doesn't qualify.

So our aim is to get as many people as possible interested in learning it. And young people – those under 25 – are particularly important. I would like to see a third of them speaking and writing the language – then we could begin to say it was in a healthy state.

At my school all the teaching is in Gaelic, whatever subject the children are learning. This is very important, because it has been discovered that very young children learn a language best if they are completely exposed to it – hearing and speaking the language all day. Of course, it's a bit of a shock for them at first, but we have some wonderful teachers, and they are trained to cope with that!

Quite a lot of parents send their children to our school because they want their children to know about the history of the country – cultural reasons like that. But of course, it's also well known that it's good for a child to grow up speaking two languages perfectly. And in fact, these children grow up to be bilingual. This gives them many advantages. It's been scientifically proven that bilingual children do better at tests, and there's reliable evidence that they are also more tolerant and imaginative. In this case, an added advantage is that children of Scottish origin are rediscovering Scotland's mother tongue.

Many people feel pessimistic about the future of Gaelic, and I can see why. When you look at the figures, it could appear that there's little hope. But I myself am extremely optimistic.

In fact, when it comes to situations like this, there's an example which is encouraging, and it's quite close to home. Not that long ago, the Welsh language was in real danger of dying out. Some children may have grandparents who speak it as a first language, but in many parts of Wales it's rare for kids to grow up speaking Welsh instead of English at home. However, with a lot of effort it's been possible to save the Welsh language. The important thing is to have government support and enough money available. In Wales, virtually 80% of children now learn Welsh as a second language at school. It's been a real success story, and I hope that we'll eventually be able to do the same in Scotland.