**Promoting Peace Education in Scotland’s Schools**

At a time when militarism is on the rise, countries are rapidly increasing their military spending after years of decline, and conversations about military strategy have become far more commonplace, the peace testimony of Friends remains as counter cultural and necessary as ever.

One of the many ways in which Friends can contribute to the long-term conditions for peace is through the promotion of peace education within schools; the radical act of equipping young people with the knowledge and skills needed for the cultivation of a culture of peace. After all, as the recent report from Britain Yearly Meeting “Peace at the Heart” notes “*The years that young people spend in education shape their whole lives. Their sense of self, relationships, and life chances, as well as the attitudes they take to their community and society into adulthood, begin to mature in this period”*. In this context a pedagogy that fosters healthy relationships with oneself, with one’s peers, with one’s communities and with the wider world is not only vital, but has clear benefits for all.

Here in Scotland we do not come at this from a standing start. For one thing, the Scottish Government are signed up to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that include SDG 4.7:

*“by 2030 ensure all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality,* ***promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence****, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development”*

At present much, if not all, of the delivery of SDG 4.7 falls within the Scottish Government’s Global Citizenship education known as “Learning for Sustainability”. According to the 2019 Learning for Sustainability Action Plan *“Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is a cross-curricular approach which enables learners, educators, schools and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society.”* The strategy also states that *“Every school should have a whole-school approach to Learning for Sustainability that is robust, demonstrable, evaluated and supported by leadership at all levels”.*

While this is a positive starting point, and the requirement for every school to have a whole school approach to LfS provides a useful gateway to explore how young people are equipped to promote a culture of peace, there is a risk that the interpersonal element, that is so vital to effective peace education, is lost within the many other themes contained within Learning for Sustainability. In many ways we would like to see peace not just as one item among many in an already crowded part of the curriculum, but rather as a foundational part of the fabric within schools, with schools becoming places where the principles of peace and equitable ways of relating are practised and explored daily at all levels of school life. Such models are already being explored within the Peace Schools scheme in Wales, and would make a brilliant contribution to establishing a culture of peace within Scotland. Colleagues from QPSW and I recently made this point to an independent review group advising the Scottish Government on plans for a Scottish Peace Institute. If Scotland wants a role in peace building globally, it needs to start by fostering a culture of peace domestically. A more in depth integration of peace principles into the education system would be a good place to start.

But to achieve this our conversations here need to go beyond the Scottish Government. Teachers and schools, who deliver and design the curriculum, need training in peace education, resources for delivering it and research which demonstrates its benefits. Similarly, Local Authorities, who are responsible for spending and the delivery of nationally agreed targets and statutory requirements, need convincing that this is not only part of their statutory requirements but also a good use of resources within schools. We feel that this can be done and we are working to formulate a coalition involving teaching unions, faith groups, peace education organisations and representatives on Local Authorities who are able to make this case to these groups.

By the time this article is published the 2022 Local Authority elections will be completed. Trying to meet councillors at this early point in their term of office is a good opportunity to raise the issue of peace education: share the “Peace at the Heart” report with them, ask about the authority’s approach to learning for sustainability and encourage them to explore the Peace Schools scheme. In doing so, we might just get one step closer to placing peace at the heart of Scottish education.