



REPORT BY HM INSPECTORS OF EDUCATION: THE NICOLSON INSTITUTE

Report by Chief Officer for Education and Children's Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to inform the Comhairle on the outcome of the inspection at the Nicolson Institute by His Majesty's Inspectors from Education Scotland, as published on 16 January 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Nicolson Institute was inspected by a team of HM Inspectors from Monday 2 October to Thursday 5 October 2023 using the Short Model. A short model inspection evaluates a reduced number of quality indicators and tends to last for a shorter period of time.
- 2.2 Education Scotland published a report of findings of the inspection on Tuesday 16 January 2024 in the form of a letter, which highlighted the strengths, agreed areas for improvement and a link to the summarised inspection findings (SIF) from the visit.
- 2.3 HM Inspectors gathered evidence to evaluate the work of the Nicolson Institute against the two quality indicators taken from *How Good is Our School? 4th Edition* (HGIOS4) and the letter of findings confirms that they were assessed as 'Satisfactory' on the six-point evaluation scale.
- 2.4 Working closely with department officers, the school has devised an action plan to address the agreed areas for improvement and a governance group has been constituted to oversee the delivery of the action plan and support the school.
- 2.5 Inspectors have indicated an intention to carry out a further inspection of the Enhanced Provision element of the school within six months of the publication of the report to assess progress towards delivery of improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note the findings of the inspection report, including key strengths, areas for development and actions to address improvement.**

Contact Officer:	Mary Clare Ferguson, Head of Education
Appendix:	Inspection letter – Nicolson Institute
Background Papers:	How Good is Our School? 4 th Edition (HGIOS4) Link

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	The delivery of the action plan for improvement will require the identification of some additional staffing resources that will have, as yet undetermined, financial implications.
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	Support Children, Families and Young People: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Raise ambition and attainment, in particular to address inequalities.- Ensure early intervention is in place to keep our most vulnerable children safe.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

BACKGROUND

5.1 His Majesty's Inspectors from Education Scotland evaluated the Nicolson Institute on two quality indicators against the six point scale as outlined in How Good is Our School (4th edition). It is always the same two indicators used in short model inspections. The levels and definitions of the six point scale are set out below:

6	Excellent	Outstanding – Sector leading
5	Very Good	The school has major strengths in this area
4	Good	The school has important strengths but there are some areas for improvement
3	Satisfactory	Strengths of the school just out-weigh weaknesses
2	Weak	The school has important weaknesses in this area
1	Unsatisfactory	There are major weaknesses in the work of the school which require immediate remedial action

5.2 Education Scotland's evaluations for the Nicolson Institute were:

Quality Indicator	Evaluation
2.3 - Learning, teaching and assessment	Satisfactory
3.2 - Raising attainment and achievement	Satisfactory

DETAIL

6.1 The inspection of the Nicolson Institute identified the following strengths of the school:

- Most staff foster positive, caring relationships with young people across the school. They use praise effectively to motivate learners.
- Staff are increasing their ambition for Gàidhlig and offer more learning and teaching through the medium of Gàidhlig. As a result, most young people in Gàidhlig Medium Education, by the time they leave school, are confident and successful speakers of Gàidhlig.
- Almost all young people are supported effectively to plan and achieve positive post-school destinations. They are supported to do so through effective partnership working.

6.2 The following areas of improvement were identified for the school:

- Staff should continue to raise the attainment of young people, specifically in numeracy and the quality of passes in National Qualifications.
- Senior leaders and teachers, with the wider school community, should develop a shared understanding of the features of high-quality learning, teaching and assessment. This should include planning appropriately for young people who require additional support with their learning.
- Senior leaders should plan strategically, and longer term, with the local authority to increase staffing, professional learning and the use of technology to continue to extend learning and immersion for Gàidhlig. This should include increasing the numbers undertaking qualifications and awards for Gaelic (Learners) and Gàidhlig.
- As a matter of urgency, senior leaders should work with staff, and the local authority to improve the quality of education for young people in the enhanced provision. Staff should focus on ensuring that all young people access relevant and well-planned educational experiences that engage them in their learning.

6.3 Following the sharing of findings of the inspection, the school management team and senior officers of the Comhairle have developed an Action Plan to address the matters raised and a Governance Group under the direction of the Chief Officer will monitor and ensure progress with the improvement actions and delivery of the Plan.

- 6.4 HM Inspectors have intimated an intention to conduct a further inspection of the Enhanced Provision within six months of the publication of their Letter of Findings.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Following the inspection, the school will continue to receive intensive support, particularly focusing on the matters raised in relation to Enhanced Provision. The Governance Group will meet frequently to review progress and ensure that the resources and support required to deliver the action plan are being provided.