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**Meeting the Charity Test
A clean bill of health for 6 schools – 4 given more time**

This is how the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) pronounced on the 10 independent schools assessed under the first full phase of the charities review.

Judith Sischy, Director of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS), said *"We are delighted that 7 of our schools, including the High School of Dundee which was reviewed last year, have passed the charity test and although we are disappointed at the view taken by OSCR, we are confident that the remaining 4 schools will be able to retain their charitable status."*

Under the new legislation, all charities have to pass a charity test. OSCR took the view that in the case of 4 schools there needs to be a plan to increase facilitated access. *"The schools are keenly aware of their responsibilities as charity trustees and will be giving careful consideration to OSCR's recommendations"*, said Judith Sischy. *"They have been encouraged to look at ways of increasing public benefit by widening access and offering more bursaries. We are sensitive to the needs of parents, especially in the current economic climate, and we have always tried to support families who are keen to give their children the opportunity to benefit from the education in one of our schools. Fortunately the sector is buoyant and doing well."*

**For further information please contact Judith Sischy or Sarah Randell on
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Notes to Editors:

- Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) has released figures, collected in its September 2008 census of member schools, which indicate the level of financial assistance currently being given to parents. The total of funds awarded is over £17.5 million which is used to provide financial assistance to around 13% of pupils across the sector.
- The independent sector educates almost 32,000 pupils, which saves the public purse an estimated £165 million a year. Add to this the funds distributed in financial assistance such as mean-tested bursaries and the independent sector saves the country nearly 40 times as much as it receives in financial benefits. In terms of pupil numbers, the independent sector in Scotland is equivalent in size to the 7th largest of 32 education authorities.
- By providing financial assistance to parents, through means-tested bursaries and assistance with fees, independent schools in Scotland have remained true to their origins. Built on charitable foundations, in some cases hundreds of years ago, today they work hard to be accessible to families on all income levels.
- No school, or individual in a school, makes a personal gain or profit. Any small surplus that is made from fee income is reinvested into the school for the benefit of pupils or used to fund bursary places.
- The law permits charities to charge fees, provided that the level of fee can be justified. Where a fee has the effect of restricting access, the charitable activities must outweigh that restriction.

The 7 schools that have passed the test with a clean bill of health are:

High School of Dundee

George Heriot's School, Edinburgh

Gordonstoun School, Moray

St Mary's Music School, Edinburgh

Glasgow Steiner School

Donaldsons College, Linlithgow

Regius Christian School, Edinburgh

The 4 that have been given more time are:

Hutchesons Grammar School, Glasgow

Merchiston Castle School, Edinburgh

St Leonards School, St Andrews

Lomond School, Helensburgh

Ends