

Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) is the foremost authority on independent schools in Scotland. It represents mainstream, special and specialist schools located in twenty-two of the thirty-two Scottish local authority areas. SCIS is equivalent to the eighth largest education authority in Scotland, in terms of pupil numbers, and the fourth largest employer of teachers in Scotland. SCIS promotes choice, diversity and excellence in Scottish education. Its strategic objectives are to provide a professional service to member schools that is supportive, relevant and of high quality; to represent and promote the interests of the independent school sector; and to enable the sector to make a worthwhile contribution to the development of education in Scotland.

Education, Regulation, Promotion, Collaboration

In a recently published document called *Activities and Achievements 2009, Vision and Values 2010*, SCIS sets out its stall under the headings of *Education, Regulation, Promotion and Collaboration* and shares its future plans. Extracts are included, below, and the full report can be downloaded from <http://www.scis.org.uk/publications>

Education

SCIS is represented on the Curriculum for Excellence Management Board, the SQA Advisory Council, the General Teaching Council for Scotland and many national committees and working groups. This gives the independent sector access to the key participants in Scottish education, a voice at the negotiating table and a direct channel through which concerns can be communicated.

Through SCIS's work with Ministers and Scottish Government Departments, the sector has become more widely recognised and has strengthened its position as a respected partner in the development of education in Scotland. SCIS has created a permanent position in Scottish education for the 32,000 children and 7,000 staff in the independent sector. The wide-ranging SCIS CPD programme is recognised for its high quality and helps to bring together knowledge, talent and expertise, to facilitate professional dialogue and to showcase good practice from different schools.

Regulation

SCIS has developed positive working relationships with the regulatory bodies – HMIE, Care Commission, Scottish Social Services Council, OSCR – to ensure not only that the sector is compliant but also to be able to work in partnership to raise standards, exemplify good practice and effect improvements. *In all cases the regulatory bodies have responded positively by listening to SCIS, by working with SCIS as colleagues and jointly managing the complexities of the regulatory burden on schools.* SCIS has been instrumental in influencing discussions with Scottish Government, lobbying MSPs on key issues and representing the views of the sector.

Promotion

Through its marketing, communications and research strategies, SCIS has raised the profile of the independent sector, consolidated its reputation, enhanced the material on the website and made the advice to parents more user-friendly. *SCIS has helped to widen access to independent schools by encouraging interested parents to make the initial approach, by reaching out to wider catchment areas and by offering guidance on applying for financial assistance.* Linking and promoting SCIS's activities through common themes has created a more corporate approach and strengthened the position of the sector.

Collaboration

Working together as a sector and with colleagues from different sectors has proved that there is strength in pooling resources, in sharing ideas, in stimulating debate, and in learning from each other. *Working collaboratively with the Government, with partners in education, with the Regulator, the press and the media similarly produces positive results. It opens doorways, facilitates discussion and develops partnerships of mutual benefit.* Working with parents and the wider public opens our minds to new ideas, to perceptions and misconceptions that the sector will seriously consider.

Future Plans

SCIS is a responsive organisation, focused on meeting the needs of its member schools, and a proactive, representative body, ensuring that the voice of the sector is heard. Given the economic climate, the pressures on parents, the charity reviews, the complexities of regulation and the importance of providing a sound education to 32,000 children, SCIS's Governing Board has identified priorities for 2010 including:

- consolidating and strengthening the sector
- supporting parents and schools during the recession
- guiding schools on meeting the charity test
- enhancing the reputation of and respect for the sector
- encouraging the sharing of good practice
- making information transparent and accessible
- promoting the excellence of education provided to a diverse range of young people across Scotland



32,000 of Scotland's children are educated at independent schools

www.scis.org.uk



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