

PRESS RELEASE: JANUARY 2005

Independent schools welcome Charities Bill

The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) has welcomed the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Bill, which seeks to regulate the charity sector in Scotland and to modernise charity law. SCIS has responded formally to the Parliament's Communities Committee as part of the consultation process.

The Director of SCIS, Judith Sischy, says: "The focus of the Charities Bill debate as it affects the independent schools sector has centred on the issue of public benefit. As bodies that exist primarily for the advancement of education, independent schools have always enjoyed charitable status. Now they will be required to demonstrate that they meet the 'charity test' as described in the Bill. This is not likely to pose difficulties as the schools have an in-built tradition of providing public benefit, which accords closely with their ethos and founding principles. Independent schools are committed to the advancement of education and are not run for profit or for personal gain."

Judith Sischy, continues, "The contribution made by the independent sector extends far beyond the financial and is difficult to quantify in absolute terms. The schools make a significant contribution to the Scottish education system and are recognised worldwide as centres of excellence. They offer an education that is rich, diverse and wide-ranging; they are outward looking and have a long tradition of public benefit. The pupils are encouraged to become actively involved in the local community and to develop a spirit of citizenship, as is evidenced by the contribution they make to society in their adult lives."

Independent schools have a tradition of supporting families from diverse backgrounds and actively raise funds for scholarships and bursaries to widen access.

Notes:

1. The existence of the independent sector provides a net benefit to society. The funds distributed by independent schools in scholarships and bursaries to families who cannot afford the fees amount to around £7.5 million per year. This is about three times more than the schools receive through local tax relief as a result of their charitable status. Added to the direct savings of educating 31,000 plus pupils in the public sector, estimated at £155 million a year, the independent sector actually saves money on Scotland's education budget.
2. Overall, the independent sector comprises 4% of the pupil population in Scotland with a particularly significant presence in Edinburgh (24%), Glasgow (12%), Aberdeen (14%), Perth & Kinross (14%) and Dundee (8%) at secondary level.
3. The full SCIS Response, as well as all other responses to the Draft Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Bill can be found on the web at www.scotland.gov.uk/library5/social/ctisb-00.asp. Examples of Public Benefit Contribution are contained in the Annex to the SCIS response.
4. Gross local authority revenue expenditure per pupil on secondary education in session 2003/3 (the latest year for which such figures are available) was on average £4,657, excluding capital funding, funding for special projects (e.g. IT initiatives) and centrally funded services. The average secondary day fee in independent schools for session 2002/3 was £6,294.

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