

## **What is SCIS? A guide for schools considering membership**

### **History and purpose**

Established in 1978 to represent and support independent schools in Scotland, the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) became a charitable company limited by guarantee in 1990. SCIS represents 75 member schools which educate more than 32,000 children of mixed abilities from diverse backgrounds. SCIS promotes choice, diversity and excellence in Scottish education. SCIS represents:

- 75 member schools – mainstream, special and specialist
- 32,000 pupils of mixed abilities from diverse backgrounds
- 3,500 teachers and around 3,000 support staff

The key aims of the SCIS are to:

- communicate and negotiate with the Scottish Parliament, the Government, public and private bodies on behalf of the independent sector
- advise member schools and their governing bodies about educational developments and legislation affecting independent schools (e.g. education, taxation, welfare, health and safety)
- advance education via curriculum development and the training of teachers
- provide information, advice and guidance to parents, the general public and the media

### **Independent schools in Scotland**

#### ***Inspection and regulation of independent schools***

Independent schools in membership of SCIS are registered with the Scottish Government Schools Directorate and are subject to inspections by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) and the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care.

#### ***Freedom to innovate***

Being responsible for their own management allows independent schools to adapt to changing circumstances and to develop expertise and resources to suit their needs. Each school has its own governing board, appoints its own staff and maintains strong links with its parents. Although independent, schools can share their resources and benefit from their collective expertise. Through their membership of SCIS, they work together for the benefit of the sector and its pupils.

## ***Strong tradition of academic attainment***

Teachers in the independent sector are well qualified and most are registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland. Most SCIS schools follow the Scottish examination system and some also present pupils for GCSE, A and AS levels or the International Baccalaureate (IB).

## **Advice, support and representation for member schools**

SCIS acts as a consultative body for the independent schools sector and represents the views and interests of its member schools to the Scottish Government and educational bodies throughout Scotland and beyond. SCIS supports schools in a number of ways:

developing the curriculum

- responding to new developments in education through consultative groups
- making presentations on key issues concerning nursery, primary and secondary education
- representing the independent schools sector at national conferences and other events

publishing information and guidelines

- researching and producing policy guidelines for member schools on key issues such as child protection, dealing effectively with complaints, accessibility
- arranging training to ensure schools keep abreast of current legislation covered in the guidelines
- commissioning projects, undertaking research and disseminating information both within and about the independent sector

supporting the teaching profession

- providing a comprehensive programme of Continuing Professional Development to teachers at all levels across all subjects
- offering training to probationary teachers during their induction year
- promoting professional development and sharing of good practice
- representing the sector on the General Teaching Council for Scotland
- supporting recruitment into the teaching profession through the SCIS website and attendance at national recruitment events

## ***Continuing Professional Development for teaching and non-teaching staff in member schools***

Around 100 workshops, seminars and conferences, designed for teaching and non-teaching staff, take place annually at venues around Scotland. Participants can develop their knowledge, improve their skills and competences, and enhance their career prospects by taking part in the programme. Topics cover a broad range of educational management, teaching, care and welfare, and administrative areas. Examples are curriculum development; teacher induction training; behaviour management; the child at the centre; primary/secondary transition; team leadership; child protection and many more.

Annual conferences are held for diverse groups from Heads and Governors to Learning Support Teachers to School Secretaries, enabling colleagues from schools across Scotland to share best practice.

## **Information, advice and guidance for Parents**

As the foremost authority on Independent Schools in Scotland, SCIS offers information, advice and guidance to parents seeking an independent education for their children. A comprehensive directory of independent schools is produced every October and distributed worldwide. Information can be provided about:

- the choice, diversity, characteristics and strengths of independent schools in Scotland
- the Scottish education and examination system
- special needs education
- pupils numbers, schools fees and other statistical data
- meeting the cost of school fees and applying for financial assistance

Parents are also guided through open days and school visits, questions to ask when visiting schools, entrance procedures and the admissions process.

## **SCIS Staff and Governing Board**

The day-to-day work of SCIS is carried out by Director, Judith Sischy; two Deputy Directors, David Clark (Continuing Professional Development) and Sarah Randell (Communications and Marketing) and a team of three administrative staff, Liz Blamire, Fiona MacAulay and Linda Gillies. SCIS's Governing Board comprises a Chairman, Professor Sir David Edward, and Governors, Heads and Bursars elected by the member schools.

**for more information visit the SCIS website at [www.scis.org.uk](http://www.scis.org.uk)**

**21 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7PE  
Tel: 0131 220 2106 Email: [info@scis.org.uk](mailto:info@scis.org.uk)**