

**The Nicolson Institute  
Stornoway  
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar  
21 June 2005**

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## 1. Background

The Nicolson Institute was inspected in March 2005 as part of a national sample of secondary education. The inspection covered key aspects of the school's work at all stages. It evaluated the structure of the curriculum, analysed pupils' performance in examinations (see Appendix 3) and assessed the quality of pupils' broader achievement. It also evaluated the quality of learning and teaching and pupil support, the environment for learning, the school's processes for self-evaluation, and its overall effectiveness and capacity for improvement. There was a particular focus on English, mathematics, computing and science.

HM Inspectors observed learning and teaching and examined pupils' work. They analysed responses to questionnaires issued to a sample of parents and pupils and to all staff. They interviewed groups of pupils and staff. Members of the inspection team also met representatives of the School Board and the Friends of The Nicolson Institute.

The Nicolson Institute is a non-denominational school serving the island of Lewis. At the time of the inspection, the roll was 1057. The percentage of pupils entitled to free school meals was above the national average. Pupils' attendance was in line with the national average. There was a unit within the school which catered for pupils with special educational needs.

An acting headteacher, seconded from the education authority, had been in post since April 2004. The new headteacher took up his post immediately after the inspection.

## 2. Key strengths

HM Inspectors identified the following key strengths.

- Positive, friendly relationships between pupils and staff.
- Well-organised and effective curricular and vocational guidance.
- Very good teaching in some departments.
- Pupils' achievements over a broad range of areas.

## 3. What are the views of parents and carers, pupils and staff?

Approximately one third of parents and carers returned the questionnaire. Overall, they had a positive view of the school and said that staff made them feel welcome when they visited. They thought that their children enjoyed being at school and that they were treated fairly. Pupils said that they got on well with other pupils and enjoyed being at school. They felt that teachers expected them to work to the best of their ability, helped them with difficulties and told them when they did something well. Teachers said that they liked working in the school. They felt that they showed concern for the care and welfare of the pupils and set high

standards for pupils' attainment. The majority of teachers thought that standards for pupils' behaviour were not consistently applied. A significant minority of teachers did not think that senior managers worked well as a team or that there was good communication within the school. Most parents and carers and the majority of teachers thought that the school was well led by the acting headteacher.

Further details about what most pleased parents and carers, staff and pupils and what they would most like to see improved can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

#### **4. How good are learning, teaching and achievement?**

##### **The curriculum, learning and teaching**

The overall quality of the curriculum was fair. The S1/S2 curriculum was broad with additional time allocated to the study of language. Consistent with the school's aim, all pupils in S1/S2 studied Gaelic for either fluent speakers or for learners. However, there was no provision, at any stage, for pupils who had learnt through the medium of Gaelic in primary school to continue to study additional subjects through this medium. At S3/S4, most pupils studied seven Standard Grade subjects to which were added various school or college short courses. A minority of pupils studied eight Standard Grades. The school offered and promoted a broad and balanced curriculum at this stage. Options included a wide range of vocational courses and effective arrangements were made to respond to pupil and parental choices. The S5/S6 curriculum provided good progression from S4. There was generally very good course provision and this was enhanced with college links. The provision for lower attaining pupils was limited. There were major weaknesses in timetable arrangements from S1-S6. These included inappropriate blocks of time, the uneven spread of classes across the week and the inflexible grouping of subjects in timetable columns. These factors impacted adversely on pupils' learning, their choice of courses and on the delivery of the curriculum. These arrangements also had a negative impact on meeting pupils' learning needs, on the continuity of their learning, and on their attainment.

Teachers provided pupils with clear explanations and instructions. In the best practice, they shared the purpose of lessons with pupils and used questioning well to develop pupils' thinking. There were examples of very skilful and effective interactive teaching. In art and design, home economics, technical subjects and religious and moral education, for example, teachers presented pupils with challenging tasks and set high expectations of what they should produce. In some subjects, teachers made effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to enliven teaching and enhance pupils' learning experiences. Overall, however, teachers' use of ICT was limited. A number of teachers provided too much direction and limited pupils' opportunities for independent learning. Most teachers set suitable homework. Pupils cooperated well with their teachers and remained on task. Some tasks did not provide pupils with sufficient challenge to enable them to make progress in their learning. Pupils collaborated productively on group tasks, when given the opportunity to do so. They responded well when a brisk pace of learning was set. However, in a significant minority of lessons, the pace was too slow and pupils were passive. Overall, there was too much variation in teachers' use of differentiated approaches to meet pupils' learning needs. In some lessons, teachers provided clear and regular feedback to individual pupils on their progress. Other lessons lacked such support.

## Achievement

The overall quality of attainment in S1/S2 was good. In English, the proportion of pupils attaining appropriate national standards in reading and writing by the end of S2 was above national averages. In mathematics, the proportion of pupils reaching appropriate national standards was also above the national average. Over the last three years, overall attainment in English and mathematics had fluctuated with no discernable trend.

The following comments are based on Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) data, using the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)<sup>1</sup> for the three year period (2002-2004).

The overall quality of attainment in S3/S4 was fair. By the end of S4, the proportion of pupils gaining five or more SCQF awards at level 3 was below the national average. Pupils' performance at this level had deteriorated significantly over the last three years. The proportion of pupils gaining five or more level 4 awards by the end of S4 had also decreased and was in line with the national average. The decline at levels 3 and 4 was a result of the deteriorating performance of boys. The proportion of pupils achieving five or more SCQF level 5 awards was above the national average with no discernable trend over the last three years.

At S5/S6 the overall quality of attainment was fair. The proportion of pupils gaining three or more SCQF awards at level 6, by the end of S5, was above the national average. The proportion gaining five or more SCQF awards at level 6 was in line with the national average. By the end of S6, the proportion of pupils gaining three or more level 6 awards was well above the national average. However, the proportion of S5 pupils who gained five or more level 6 awards had deteriorated significantly over the last three years. During this period approximately one fifth of all entries at Intermediate 2, Higher and Advanced Higher courses resulted in no award, mainly as a result of pupils not completing courses.

Information on the subjects inspected is given later in the report. Significant features of attainment in the subjects not inspected were as follows.

- At Standard Grade, pupils performed notably better in administration, craft and design, French, Gaelic and graphical communication and less well in chemistry and history in comparison with their other subjects.
- Pupils performed less well in biology and physical education than in their other subjects at Higher.

The school actively promoted pupils' wider achievements. Pupils had achieved notable success at local, regional and national levels in cross country running, basketball, badminton and athletics. The boys' and girls' football teams had reached national finals in the Scottish Schools Football Association championships. Many pupils participated in a wide range of

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C

6: Higher at A-C

5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2

4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4

3: Access 3 cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

musical activities. These included award-winning performances at the local and national Mòd, involvement in the school choir, the local wind band and orchestra, rock bands and the annual school show. Pupils' art work had been published in the local press and was displayed effectively in some areas of the school and the local community. The work of S6 pupils, in particular, was displayed in the local art gallery. As part of their enterprise activities, pupils with additional support needs had developed a range of technical skills. They had constructed and decorated clocks and model aeroplanes. A team from the school won a Gaelic debating competition at the Scottish Parliament. One pupil was runner-up in the Highland and Islands regional final of "Future Chef". Across the school, pupils had a very well-developed awareness of the needs of others. They had raised an impressive amount for local, national and international charities this session. Staff and pupils had worked together successfully on health-promoting activities. This had won a bronze award for the school. Pupils involved in the "Green Group" participated in a range of activities to improve the playgrounds and open areas around the school.

## **English language**

### **Learning and teaching**

Teachers set high expectations of the amount and quality of work pupils should produce. In most lessons, they provided pupils with varied and well-planned activities to develop their language skills. They did not always consolidate pupils' learning at the end of lessons. Pupils cooperated with their teachers and listened attentively in lessons. They collaborated well on paired and group tasks. While many pupils were actively involved in their learning, some were too reliant on their teachers and remained passive. Teachers provided pupils with helpful feedback during lessons, although the quality of written comments on how to improve varied.

### **Achievement**

By the end of S2, most pupils achieved appropriate national attainment levels in reading. Pupils' attainment in writing had improved and a majority were now attaining appropriate national levels. At S4, most pupils at Access 3 were successful. The proportion of pupils achieving a Credit award at Standard Grade was above the national average. At Intermediate 1, the proportion of pupils achieving A-C grades was in line with the national average. The proportion of pupils achieving A-C grades at Intermediate 2 and Higher was below the national average. Almost all pupils at Advanced Higher achieved A-C grades.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- At all stages, pupils were developing sound skills in evaluating the quality of their own and other pupils' work through their use of assessment checklists.
- At all stages, pupils wrote regularly, at appropriate length and in a variety of styles. This included imaginative poetry at S1 and well-produced magazines at S2.
- At S3 to S6, pupils wrote perceptive essays on the literary texts they had studied.

## **Mathematics**

### **Learning and teaching**

Teachers questioned pupils effectively and, in the best examples, developed pupils' understanding. They regularly set homework, but not all pupils completed it. Teachers were starting to make effective use of ICT to increase the pace of learning. However, overall, the pace of learning was too slow. Most pupils were well-behaved and worked well in class. The department had started to raise the level of challenge for higher attaining pupils at S2 and S3 to better meet their needs. There were important weaknesses in meeting pupils' needs. The allocation of time to mathematics from S1 to S4 was low.

### **Achievement**

By the end of S2, the majority of pupils were achieving appropriate national levels of attainment. By the end of S4, the proportion of pupils achieving a Credit award was in line with the national average. Pupils performed notably less well in mathematics at Standard Grade and at Higher than in their other subjects. At Higher, the proportion of pupils achieving A-C grades was below the national average. Pupils performed notably less well than would be expected from their attainment at S4. At Intermediate 2, the proportion achieving A-C grades was below the national average. At Intermediate 1, the proportion achieving A-C grades was above the national average. Less than half of those presented for Advanced Higher achieved A-C grades. At S5, a high proportion of pupils presented for mathematics did not achieve an award.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- Pupils at S1 to S3 had recently achieved success in national mathematical competitions.
- The presentation of many pupils' work was untidy.

## **Computing**

### **Learning and teaching**

Teachers explained new work clearly. In the majority of lessons, they shared the purposes of lessons with pupils. In one lesson, very effective use was made of a digital projector and an interactive whiteboard to explain and illustrate difficult concepts. Most lessons had a good mix of individual practical exercises and whole-class discussion. However, in classes where too much time was spent by pupils working individually, the pace of learning was slow. Generally, there were insufficient opportunities for pupils to work in pairs or in small groups. Teachers' approaches to setting and marking homework varied. In the best cases, homework was set regularly, commented on in detail and pupils' efforts were praised. The broad range of courses available in S5/S6 provided a very good basis for meeting pupils' needs. However, pupils' needs were not met as well in S1 where some tasks were not relevant to them and in S3/S4, where a greater variety of approaches was required.

## **Achievement**

S1 pupils were able to use the basic features of word processing and spreadsheet software. At Standard Grade, the proportion of pupils achieving Credit awards was above the national average. Pupils performed notably better in Higher computing than in their other subjects. In Higher information systems, the majority achieved A-C grades. Over the last three years, nearly one fifth of candidates entered for a Higher course did not achieve an award. The majority of pupils entered for Advanced Higher achieved A-C grades.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- Pupils at each stage were able to use the school's networked computers confidently to store and retrieve files.
- Pupils in S5 and S6 had developed useful skills in using industry standard office software packages.

## **Science**

### **Learning and teaching**

In most classes teachers shared lesson objectives with pupils and explained concepts and ideas clearly. However, they relied too heavily on textbooks and worksheets as the main focus of work. Only in some classes was teaching imaginative and challenging. Most teachers used questioning well to check pupils' understanding but not to extend their learning. Teachers did not set regular homework. They were at an early stage in using ICT effectively. Most pupils participated well in class but were not always given an appropriate level of responsibility. Sometimes the pace of learning was slow. Teachers did not always set tasks to match pupils' differing learning needs, especially in S1/S2, where insufficient account was taken of pupils' learning in the primary school. As a result, work was not sufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils.

## **Achievement**

Most pupils performed well in their classwork at S1/S2. S1 pupils showed a good understanding of electrical circuits. Pupils in S2 were less secure on their recent topic on forces. Pupils in S4 showed a good understanding of heat loss and ways to reduce it in houses. The majority presented for Standard Grade science gained grades 1-4 and a few gained a Credit award.

Other features of pupils' achievement included the following.

- Most pupils in S4 Standard Grade science displayed a good level of practical skill.
- Pupils in S1/S2 were developing a good understanding of the main features of a scientific investigation but needed to further develop their reporting skills.
- A significant minority of pupils at each stage did not present their written work in a clear and tidy manner.



## 5. How well are pupils supported?

Overall arrangements for the pastoral care and welfare of pupils were good. The school had sound procedures for child protection and appropriate anti bullying strategies. It successfully promoted a healthy lifestyle through the personal and social education (PSE) programme and health promotion events. The committed guidance staff knew their pupils well and pupils appreciated their support. Some register teachers were beginning to fulfil a first level guidance role. Pastoral links with the associated primary and S1/S2 schools were well-developed. The school was beginning to develop positive links with a range of external agencies, to support pupil welfare. The school needed to record more focused pupil information.

The PSE programme from S1 to S6 included key aspects of decision-making, careers education, preparation for the world of work, citizenship and health education, including sexual health and relationships. There was a good involvement of outside speakers. The school had recognised the need to review the programme in S5/S6, to fully meet senior pupils' needs. The classroom environment in most PSE classes was a positive one where young people could exchange views and form opinions. The department needed to review some of the resources for PSE and provide clearer advice to teachers on the delivery of lessons.

The school provided very good curricular and vocational guidance for pupils. At key transition stages, pupils and their parents received comprehensive information on course choices through helpful booklets and in-school events. The school also prepared S2 pupils very well for making careers choices by offering them opportunities to develop decision-making skills and explore career interests, making sound use of ICT. The school did not have such supportive arrangements for later transition points. There was a very good range of well-organised education for work opportunities, including an "Up for Enterprise" event in S1 and work experience in S4 and S6. Guidance teachers were becoming increasingly involved in monitoring and tracking senior pupils' progress. They were reviewing the current system, with a view to improving and extending it.

The overall quality of support for learning had major weaknesses. Teachers and classroom assistants in the department were caring and generally worked well with individuals who required support. However, the department did not liaise, or work purposefully, with other departments to support learning. It had identified a large number of pupils who required individualised educational programmes (IEPs). These included the pupils with special educational needs who attended the unit. However, planning for support and the setting of targets for these pupils were not clear, and there were no regular reviews of their progress. Targets and strategies were not shared with other teachers, pupils or parents. All of this made it difficult to track pupils' progress, establish next steps in learning and involve others in the support process. Records of Needs were not regularly reviewed. The school and department had not yet agreed a whole-school approach, to addressing the range of pupil needs, which would enable the department to support pupils more effectively. A clear part of such an approach would be to address the issue of insufficient staffing within the department.

The school made some appropriate provision for eight pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. They were taught as a group in the support for learning base and in a number of subject departments. Overall, teachers were using a suitable range of strategies to engage pupils in their learning, including good use of visits to the local community.

However, they were not using ICT enough. In planning for progression to S3 next session, the school had not developed courses through which pupils could gain appropriate national qualifications. Almost all pupils engaged enthusiastically in class activities, but teachers did not encourage them sufficiently to take responsibility for their learning. Pupils had made some progress in their learning in English language and mathematics. However, there were weaknesses in their overall progress since S1. Within the structured programme for personal and social development, pupils had insufficient opportunities to develop an appropriate awareness of personal relationships and drugs education. Pupils integrated well with their mainstream peers when given the opportunity. There were major weaknesses in the overall management of the special class.

There were two deputy headteachers with responsibility for pupil support. They needed to work more closely to establish clear strategic planning and support for the integrated management of services for children.

## 6. How good is the environment for learning?

Aspect	Comment
Quality of accommodation and facilities	<p>The accommodation and facilities had major weaknesses. The school had access to very good outdoor sports facilities and an outstanding sports hall, which was shared with the wider community. The well-used library provided pupils with access to a wide range of fiction and non-fiction books and to a suite of computers. However:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• showering and toilet facilities in the school for physical education were poor;</li> <li>• the school buildings were not secure and a public right of way passed through the large campus;</li> <li>• the signage outside and inside the buildings was inadequate;</li> <li>• there was limited social accommodation for pupils and the dining hall was too small;</li> <li>• the ICT facilities were poor and the library was only equipped with six computers; and</li> <li>• disabled access was limited in some of the buildings.</li> </ul> <p>Some parts of the school had small classrooms and some rooms overheated. The internal appearance of the school was mostly drab, but some staff had created bright and attractive learning environments. Parts of the school had been refurbished at various times in the past and the education authority was addressing the security issues and planning to rebuild the school.</p>

Aspect	Comment
<p>Climate and relationships, expectations and promoting achievement and equality</p>	<p>Staff-pupil relationships were relaxed and friendly. Teachers had very high expectations of pupils' behaviour. Many staff also had high expectations for pupils to achieve in sport, music and debating. But teachers' expectations of pupils' attainment were not consistently high. Almost all pupils behaved well in class and around the school. Pupils respected teachers and complied with their learning and teaching approaches. However, some pupils did not have sufficiently high expectations of themselves and some senior pupils, especially, were not committed to learning. Staff morale had improved in the last year and teachers felt valued through the participative approach introduced by the acting headteacher. The frequent assemblies addressed a good range of topics and provided sufficient opportunities for religious observance. The religious and moral education department was very effective in enabling pupils to explore global issues and in raising their awareness of other peoples and cultures. Although this work and other areas of the curriculum promoted cultural diversity, there was not a coherent approach to promoting equality and fairness across the school.</p>
<p>Partnership with parents and the community</p>	<p>The school's partnership with parents and the local community was strong. Staff made parents feel welcome in the school. Parents found parents' evenings beneficial and reports on their children were clear and helpful. The School Board and The Friends of the Nicolson Institute parents group provided effective support to the school. The school had a good reputation in the local community. It had good links with local businesses and was actively involved in a wide range of community, sporting and cultural events. This included links with the Gaelic Arts Project. A number of outside agencies had an input to the school curriculum. The school used a number of ways to communicate with its parents and partners but was not always effective in getting across its priorities for development and its policies, including its school uniform policy.</p>

## 7. Improving the school

The school provided good opportunities for pupils to achieve in a wide range of areas. A broad curriculum was available at each stage with good vocational options at the middle and senior stages. Teaching was generally good, and in some cases very good. There were weaknesses in learning, and especially in meeting the needs of all pupils. Pupils generally behaved well in the school and had good relationships with teachers but some senior pupils were not sufficiently committed to learning. The school provided good pastoral care. However, an overriding, major concern was the deterioration in pupils' performance in national qualifications over the last three years.

The acting headteacher had been in post since April 2004. When he took up his post the school had not benefited from a culture of quality assurance and improvement planning. Staff had not been accustomed to reviewing the quality of attainment or the quality of learning and teaching. The school timetable was unsatisfactory. Professional reviews of teachers and continuous professional development were weak. Since his appointment, the acting headteacher had improved the ethos of the school by developing communication between senior managers and staff, by consulting with and involving staff in taking the school forward, and by forging better links with pupils and parents.

The education authority assisted the school to carry out an audit of its work in March 2004, which it then followed up in December 2004. This helped the school to identify its strengths and weaknesses. Since the audit, the school had produced its first development plan in consultation with staff. Senior managers had begun to undertake a leadership role with staff working groups, which had been formed to take forward each project in the plan. Useful steps had also been taken in some departments by principal teachers and teachers, to monitor and evaluate attainment, learning and teaching. Senior managers had improved their department links and they were developing their corporate strategic role. However, they did not all have enough time allocated to them for their managerial role. Their approaches were inconsistent and not focused sufficiently upon improving learning and teaching. Principal teachers had an important role too in taking the school forward and already some had been particularly successful in creating a strong ethos of achievement in their departments. With the collaboration of staff and support from parents and carers, and the education authority the acting headteacher had created the climate for further improvement of the school.

### **Main points for action**

The school and education authority, in liaison with HM Inspectors, should improve the quality of attainment by taking action to improve:

- learning and teaching, drawing upon the best practice in departments with an emphasis upon improving pupils' learning experiences and meeting their needs;
- the provision and quality of support provided to pupils experiencing difficulties with their learning and for those pupils in the special unit;
- the timetable arrangements; and
- the effectiveness of self-evaluation, building upon the willingness of staff to improve provision.

In addition, the education authority should continue with its plans to improve school security and address the unsatisfactory accommodation.

### **What happens next?**

The school and the education authority have been asked to prepare an action plan indicating how they will address the main findings of the report, and to share that plan with parents and carers. HM Inspectors will continue to engage with the school and the education authority in monitoring progress, and will undertake a follow-through inspection. This will result in another report to parents and carers, within two years of the publication of this report, on the extent of improvement that has been achieved.

Terry Carr  
HM Inspector

21 June 2005

## **Appendix 1 Indicators of quality**

### **We judged the following to be very good**

- Curricular and vocational guidance
- Climate and relationships

### **We judged the following to be good**

- Overall quality of attainment: S1/S2
- The teaching process
- Personal and social development
- Pastoral care
- Expectations and promoting achievement
- Equality and fairness
- Partnership with parents, the School Board and the community

### **We judged the following to be fair**

- Overall quality of attainment: S3/S4
- Overall quality of attainment: S5/S6
- Structure of the curriculum
- Pupils' learning experiences
- Meeting pupils' needs
- Self-evaluation
- Leadership
- Effectiveness and deployment of staff with additional responsibilities

### **We judged the following to be unsatisfactory**

- Learning support
- Accommodation and facilities

## Appendix 2 Summary of questionnaire responses

What pleased parents and carers most	What parents and carers would like to see improved
<p>Almost all parents and carers said that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff made them feel welcome in the school;</li> <li>• their child enjoyed being at school; and</li> <li>• their child was treated fairly.</li> </ul> <p>Most parents and carers said that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school would act if parents raised concerns;</li> <li>• teachers set high standards; and</li> <li>• their child found school work stimulating and challenging.</li> </ul>	<p>A significant minority thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school could improve the way it let them know about its priorities for improvement.</li> </ul>
What pleased pupils most	What pupils would like to see improved
<p>Almost all pupils said that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they got on well with other pupils and they felt safe and secure in school; and</li> <li>• teachers expected them to work to the best of their ability.</li> </ul> <p>Most pupils said that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they enjoyed being at school;</li> <li>• at least one teacher knew them well and the school helped them to keep safe and healthy; and</li> <li>• teachers helped them when they were having difficulties and told them when they did something well.</li> </ul>	<p>A significant minority thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the behaviour of pupils was not good; and</li> <li>• that some pupils were not treated fairly in the school.</li> </ul>

What pleased staff most	What staff would like to see improved
<p>All staff said that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they liked working in the school;</li> <li>• teachers worked hard to promote and maintain good relations with the local community; and</li> <li>• teachers gave pupils constructive feedback about their work.</li> </ul> <p>Almost all staff said that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school dealt effectively with bullying and they were aware of the school's procedures relating to child protection.</li> </ul> <p>Most staff thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school communicated clearly to parents the standards of work expected from pupils; and</li> <li>• pupils' success was regularly celebrated.</li> </ul>	<p>The majority of teachers thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• standards set for pupils' behaviour were not consistently upheld; and</li> <li>• there was insufficient staff discussion about how to achieve school priorities.</li> </ul> <p>The majority of ancillary staff also thought that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• they did not have good opportunities to be involved in decision making; and</li> <li>• there was not effective communication between senior managers and staff.</li> </ul>



## Appendix 3 Attainment in Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications

### Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) levels:

7: Advanced Higher at A-C/CSYS at A-C  
 6: Higher at A-C  
 5: Intermediate 2 at A-C; Standard Grade at 1-2  
 4: Intermediate 1 at A-C; Standard Grade at 3-4  
 3: Access 3 Cluster; Standard Grade at 5-6

### Percentage of relevant S4 roll achieving by end of S4

		2002	2003	2004
<i>English and Mathematics</i> <i>@ Level 3</i>	The Nicolson Institute	94	90	91
	National	91	91	91
<i>5+ @ Level 3 or Better</i>	The Nicolson Institute	95	90	90
	National	91	91	91
<i>5+ @ Level 4 or Better</i>	The Nicolson Institute	88	83	78
	National	77	76	77
<i>5+ @ Level 5 or Better</i>	The Nicolson Institute	40	43	37
	National	34	34	35

### Percentage of relevant S4 roll achieving by end of S5

		2002	2003	2004
<i>5+ @ Level 4 or better</i>	The Nicolson Institute	89	91	84
	National	78	78	78
<i>5+ @ Level 5 or better</i>	The Nicolson Institute	66	68	59
	National	45	45	45
<i>1+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	The Nicolson Institute	65	61	56
	National	39	39	39
<i>3+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	The Nicolson Institute	33	29	29
	National	23	23	23
<i>5+ @ Level 6 or better</i>	The Nicolson Institute	10	8	6
	National	9	10	9

**Percentage of relevant S4 roll achieving by end of S6**

		<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>
<b>5+ @ Level 5 or better</b>	<b>The Nicolson Institute</b>	69	72	74
	<b>National</b>	46	47	47
<b>1+ @ Level 6 or better</b>	<b>The Nicolson Institute</b>	69	72	72
	<b>National</b>	44	44	44
<b>3+ @ Level 6 or better</b>	<b>The Nicolson Institute</b>	48	51	44
	<b>National</b>	31	31	31
<b>5+ @ Level 6 or better</b>	<b>The Nicolson Institute</b>	26	35	25
	<b>National</b>	20	20	20
<b>1+ @ Level 7 or better</b>	<b>The Nicolson Institute</b>	23	25	18
	<b>National</b>	12	12	12

## **How can you contact us?**

### **If you would like an additional copy of this report**

Copies of this report have been sent to the headteacher and school staff, the Director of Education, local councillors and appropriate Members of the Scottish Parliament. Subject to availability, further copies may be obtained free of charge from HM Inspectorate of Education, Argyll House, 3rd Floor, Marketgait, Dundee DD1 1QP or by telephoning 01382 349999. Copies are also available on our website at [www.hmie.gov.uk](http://www.hmie.gov.uk).

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HM Inspectorate of Education

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**Subject:**

RE: Bullying in the Nicolson Institute.

**From:** [redacted]

**Sent:** 03 October 2018 14:10

**To:** [redacted] Education Scotland enquiries <Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk>; [redacted]; [redacted]

**Cc:** PS/Education Scotland <ps/educationscotland@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Bullying in the Nicolson Institute.

[redacted]

Thank you for sharing this.

As this person has alerted us to alleged bullying and safeguarding issues in the school, we need to share this with the education authority. I will amend our standard safeguarding response to reflect how the concern was submitted and send this to you.

[redacted]

Can you confirm if you are available to contact the relevant person in the Western Isles?

Thanks

[redacted]

[redacted]

HM Inspector

Education Scotland/ Foghlam Alba

Optima Building

[redacted]

**From:** [redacted]

**Sent:** 03 October 2018 14:04

**To:** Education Scotland enquiries <Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk>; [redacted] [redacted]; [redacted]

**Cc:** PS/Education Scotland <ps/educationscotland@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk>

**Subject:** RE: Bullying in the Nicolson Institute.

**Importance:** High

Hi [redacted]

Lady below contacted enquiries but hasn't said she is making a complaint so I don't think our standard "complaints process is applicable". Copying to you and [redacted] to see if you are happy with a proposed response from the enquiries mailbox.

Suggested response:

Thank you for forwarding your information onto Education Scotland. I have forwarded your petition onto our Area Lead Officer for The Isle of Lewis and also to our safeguarding team for awareness. Education Scotland do not have the remit to investigate individual concerns. However, we would advise that the petition should be sent both to the Nicolson Institute and the Local Authority. The education authority has responsibility for ensuring that any concerns about schools in its area are dealt with appropriately.

Thank you for your correspondence.

Enquiries

**From:** PS/Education Scotland  
**Sent:** 03 October 2018 13:16  
**To:** [redacted]  
**Subject:** FW: Bullying in the Nicolson Institute.

Hi [redacted]

Can you advise [redacted] please, I'm not sure?

Many thanks / Mòran taing.

---

[redacted] | Education Scotland | Foghlam Alba

---

Tel: [redacted]

Address: Denholm House, Almondvale Way, Livingston EH54 6GA

Web: [www.education.gov.scot](http://www.education.gov.scot)

**From**[redacted] **On Behalf Of** Education Scotland enquiries  
**Sent:** 03 October 2018 13:13  
**To:** PS/Education Scotland <[ps/educationscotland@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ps/educationscotland@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk)>  
**Cc:** Education Scotland enquiries <[Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** FW: Bullying in the Nicolson Institute.

Hi,

Are you able to reply to this enquiry or would you like me sent out details of complaint process?

Thanks  
[redacted]

**From:** [redacted]  
**Sent:** 02 October 2018 19:56  
**To:** Education Scotland enquiries <[Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:Enquiries@educationscotland.gsi.gov.uk)>  
**Subject:** Bullying in the Nicolson Institute.

Hi there my name is [redacted] and I am a parent of a child in the Nicolson Institute. On the Isle of Lewis.

I started an online Petition and at first it was only to raise awareness and to get parents views on bullying. There is some very upsetting comments on the petition from children and from Parents. There is videos going around of students being assaulted in school from other students and not much seems to be getting done about it. When I started this petition I had no idea I was going to get so many signatures or read some disturbing cases. And now it has become the talk of our island and more and more parents coming forward

with stories of their own and how they have reported it and nothing is ever done. I have been advised to send you the petition so that is what I am doing.

[redacted]

Regards

[redacted]

Sent from my iPhone

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**CONFIDENTIAL: Record of inspection findings:  
The Nicolson Institute: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar: 6233139  
The Record of Inspection Findings (RIF)**

**Purpose and audience**

- This document (called the 'Record of Inspection Findings' or RIF) is provided to support the headteacher/centre manager in leading improvement. The findings and evidence in the RIF provide detail which will be helpful in guiding improvement planning and improvement activities.
- The RIF is provided for use by the education authority and headteacher/centre manager of the establishment to which it refers. It is a technical document designed for use by education professionals.
- A RIF is not intended to be copied and distributed in its entirety. Headteachers/centre managers should use their judgement in sharing particular sections of the RIF confidentially with others as appropriate to their areas of responsibility and interests.

**Contents**

- The RIF is the set of notes used by the inspection team for the discussion of findings meeting on the final day of the inspection visit. It may also contain information that was not required in the discussion.
- The information in this RIF has been checked and edited to ensure that individual members of staff below appropriate levels of seniority and individual young people, or small groups of young people, cannot be identified and that it conforms to Scottish Government guidelines on the disclosure of data.
- The RIF is not an exclusive record of all of the evidence which underpins the inspection evaluations as expressed in the published report, and should not be regarded as such.

**Sources of evidence for the RIF**

- In all inspections, inspectors visit learning activities in contexts appropriate to the establishment. They observe learning experiences and teaching, talk to staff, children and young people about learning and achievement, and other aspects as appropriate to the inspection. Inspectors evaluate children's and young people's achievements in different aspects of the curriculum, using direct observation, sampling of learners' work, and additional data as appropriate to the sector. Inspectors also have a range of professional discussions with staff who have responsibility for managing the educational provision, and other staff as appropriate. They take account of stakeholders' views, including those gathered through pre-inspection questionnaires and discussions with parents and other members of the community, as appropriate to the sector.

The RIF will contain references to the way that Curriculum for Excellence is being taken forward in the context of the establishment. This may include progress in planning, prioritising and reviewing the curriculum, through the use of self-evaluation and improvement planning, and in applying key ideas and principles from Curriculum for Excellence. It may also include how the school is working with partners and with its own staff to enable them to learn together to develop their understanding of Curriculum for Excellence ideas and put them into practice, supported by a plan for continuing professional development. There may be references to how experiences and outcomes are being used to improve learning and achievement and how individual teachers are contributing to literacy and/or numeracy and aspects of health and

**CONFIDENTIAL: Record of inspection findings:**

**The Nicolson Institute: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar: 6233139**

wellbeing. The RIF may also refer to how staff identify and measure improvements in learners' experiences and in standards of achievement; how they communicate with and involve parents, and how they collaborate to plan and support learners' progress.



<b>MI: [Redacted]</b>	<b>Sector: Secondary</b>
	<b>Date of inspection week: 6 June 2011</b>
<b>On-line Report publication date: 30 August 2011</b>	<b>RIF sharing date: 2 September 2011</b>

**Priorities and key activities, in response to scoping meeting**

**Focus of learning trails**

The inspection team followed aspects of the work of the school which arose from the self-evaluation discussion with the senior management team at the start of the inspection. These included:

- tracking systems and improving attainment;
- consistency of learning experiences;
- revised reporting arrangements with reference to Curriculum for Excellence;
- quality assurance procedures
- pupil support arrangements
- positive ethos supported by consultation and communication

**Learning episodes (Total 62)**

**P7:** science; business studies; English **S1:** "Learning 2 Learn" x3; PSE x2; home economics; art (S1/S3 lesson); history; PE; English; geography; French; mathematics; Latin **S2:** science x3; computing x2; Gaelic learners; Gaelic songwriting; technical; art; English; geography, history; PE; support for learning; **S3:** English x3; physics x2; PSE x2; French x2; technical x2; business education; Latin; media studies; mathematics; RME; Gàidhlig; music; 2 groups in pupil support base **S4:** n/a **S5/S6:** chemistry x2; biology; English; PE; home economics; mathematics; computing; music; Gàidhlig; Gaelic learners.

**Focus groups/meetings:**

**Members of senior management team:** initial self-evaluation discussion; depute headteacher re pupil support; headteacher re health promotion; headteacher re community links; headteacher re curriculum; joint observation of two lessons with headteacher; headteacher to reflect on Tues 7/6 findings; headteacher and 2 headteachers re attainment and tracking; headteacher re S2 elective programme and quality improvement systems; 2 headteachers re transition; headteacher re 2010-11 improvement plan and S1/S2 attainment; headteacher re Gaelic medium; headteacher re safeguarding and quality assurance;

**Teachers:** "professional dialogue" sessions: S1-S3 broad general education; senior phase; behaviour/inclusion; assessment & reporting; Gaelic; group of principal teachers; Wed 8/6 lunch-time drop-in session; group of unpromoted teachers; PTs mathematics and modern languages; science teachers; PT English re "wiki" and S1/2 attainment tracking; EAL teacher; support for learning teachers; attended house meeting (Gibson House); group of teachers supporting community involvement etc.

**Young people:** S2/S3 group re learning experiences; young people studying Gaelic/Gàidhlig; buddy training; two groups of young people re health promotion; two groups of young people re community involvement & achievement; observations of Pointers Boys group (5 S3 young people); Hi Fire groups (S4 young people); Duke of Edinburgh (S4 young people).

**Lay Member activities:** two groups of parents; group of young people; Chair of Parent Council.

**Other:** inclusion worker; group of auxiliaries; manager of Extended Learning Resource; community partners from NHS, Lews Castle College, community education, active sports and Skills Development Scotland; Quality Improvement Manager and Head of Schools re various issues relating to the inspection; visits to two register class sessions; senior member of catering staff.

**Sharing findings:** [redacted] with headteacher & depute headteacher re Gaelic; [redacted] with headteacher re health promotion; [redacted] with depute headteacher re partnerships; [redacted] with pupil support staff; [redacted] with senior management team and Quality Improvement Manager for final sharing of findings.

**2. HOW WELL DO YOUNG PEOPLE LEARN AND ACHIEVE?**

**QI 2.1 LEARNERS' EXPERIENCES:**

**VALUE: good**

- The atmosphere in most classes is positive and purposeful. Almost all young people are polite and well-behaved. In almost all lessons seen, young people listened attentively, co-operated with teachers and each other and worked diligently on tasks given.
- Young people are treated fairly and show respect for staff and each other. Of those young people who responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire, almost all (92%) feel safe and well looked-after and have confidence that teachers will give them help if it is needed (91%). Most (88%) enjoy learning at school and almost all (96%) feel they are getting on well with their school work.
- Young people enjoy opportunities to be actively engaged in their learning. In the best lessons (around a quarter of those observed), they are involved in group tasks, discussions, undertaking research and doing practical tasks (For example English, RME, S1 art). They collaborate well when given the opportunity to work together in groups (some science lessons, chemistry, Learn2 Learn). They respond positively to teachers' questions and instructions. They value the improvements to their learning brought about by the increasing use of information and communications technology (ICT), for example the use of classroom in a box for independent research, MP3 players for improving language skills and Nintendo DS devices to develop cognitive thinking. Some staff regularly share learning intentions and success criteria with young people and recap effectively at the end of lessons. (For example, French and English).
- The above good practice is not yet used widely enough across the school. At times, young people are not fully engaged in their learning when it is too teacher led or the pace is too slow (for example in S2 science, S3 physics, S1 history). Young people do not always have enough opportunity to think for themselves or work collaboratively. Tasks can be repetitive in class, for example young people in one S1 class were making posters in 3 of 5 lessons observed in one day. Young people could be given more responsibility for their own learning and lead learning more regularly
- While there are examples of effective practice in helping young people identify their strengths and how to improve (For example French, English, home economics), this is not yet a consistent feature of learning experiences across the school. Young people would benefit from having more consistent opportunities to set themselves targets for their learning.
- Subject departments are beginning to take more account of young people's views on key aspects of their learning (For example technical, home economics, PSE). Overall, there is still important work to do to ensure that all young people have a say in making learning experiences across the school better.
- Young people expressed mixed views about the effectiveness of the pupil council and school council. Some feel that their voice within the school is becoming stronger. For example, the introduction of a modified sweatshirt for older pupils. Although individually young people feel listened to by individual staff and the senior management team if they approach them on specific issues or concerns, "learners' voice" is not yet strong enough in the school. There is a need to encourage and develop young people's involvement in the improvement planning in the school.
- Young people have many opportunities across the school to extend and enhance their learning through a range of out-of-class activities. House competitions are organised termly to improve ethos and encourage participation in sports. A range of after-school sporting activities are provided and promote the involvement of young people in an active lifestyle. Involvement of young people in choirs, musical events and performances builds confidence and self-esteem. Young people experience a good range of excursions, some organised as part of their learning in specific subjects, and others to develop their social and personal skills, for example the S1 residential experience.
- Opportunities to travel and gain a global perspective are good. Young people value the wide range of international visitors and trips organised by the school (Canada, France, Germany,

Italy, Austria, and Barcelona). They think that they are developing informed views of other cultures through exchange visits to Germany and China.

- Young people can describe a variety of ways the school supports and encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. This includes healthy choices in the canteen, extra curricular clubs, speakers during assembly and house sports competitions.
- Young people contribute well to the school and its community, for example, by helping younger pupils in classes and other activities. Many young people raise money for community groups in the community.
- Within discussion groups senior pupils felt that they were prepared and supported well in their move from school to further learning or employment.
- Vulnerable learners are building their confidence through taking part in programmes organised in conjunction with the school's community partners. These programmes include the Pointers Boys Group, HiFires and the social and vocational programme.
- The school does not yet fully use the opportunities to develop young people's talents and interests in the media field through use of the school radio.

**QI 1.1 IMPROVEMENTS IN PERFORMANCE: VALUE: weak**

### **OVERALL QUALITY OF ACHIEVEMENT**

- The involvement of young people in a wide range of activities is developing them personally and socially. They are developing as responsible citizens and show respect and consideration for others. Young people across the school have a high awareness of the importance of charity work and work effectively together to raise substantial sums of money for a wide range of worthy causes (shoe boxes for Romania, Jeans for Genes, Children in Need, MacMillan Coffee mornings, Comic Relief and Save the Children).
- Many young people develop cultural awareness and become more outward thinking by participating in a range of local trips, excursions to the mainland and international residential experiences. Local trips include the S1 Gaidhlig residential experience in Gearranan. International trips include those to France, China, Germany, Canada and the USA. Young people develop skills as global citizens through a Fairtrade week in home economics. However, young people's awareness of sustainability issues is not high enough across the school.
- Young people in S1 have designed and made a sundial which will be displayed in Percival Square in the town centre. This project was initiated by the Stornoway Amenity Trust and promotes positive partnerships with the community.
- A few young people (mainly in the upper school) enthusiastically take on leadership roles and exercise responsibility well. Such roles include house captains, prefects, pupil council representatives, buddies to support younger pupils and coaches at after-school clubs. The school should seek to encourage greater participation of young people in all year groups to develop leadership skills.
- Young people develop their skills and confidence through a range of activities including the performing arts, sports, membership of groups linked to subject departments or through assuming roles in relation to school performances such as Glee. Those participating in the popular debating club are developing informed attitudes on a range of topical issues and learning how to consider the views of others. Those participating in the drama club have learned how to improvise, mime, and have learned how to project their voices better and developed confidence and self-esteem as a result.
- Young people from across all stages have achieved much success in a range of school, local and national competitions. Inter-house activities such as athletics and tug o' war are keenly contested and develop team-working skills. Young people involved in debating have achieved notable success in the BT National Debate (Gaelic), Donald Dewar Memorial debating competition, Rural Schools Scotland Debate and the Big Green Challenge Schools debate. The U14 football team won the boys North of Scotland cup, the U15 girls rugby team won the girls' competition at the Festival of Rugby at Murrayfield. The school has achieved

much success in the Mod. One pupil has become a national chess champion and competes across the country.

- Ten young people participating in the Caledonian Award are achieving success. A significant number of young people (approximately 90) are developing their skills for life and work through participation in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award. CLD is involved in active delivery of Duke of Edinburgh award and the majority of young people progress successfully to higher levels of the award. The school is increasing its involvement in this work.
- Most young people who attend college achieve success in their courses. A number of young people who require additional support with their learning are achieving success at Access 2 level in subjects such as personal finance. Young people with Individualised Educational Programmes and support plans are making good progress in relation to targets set within these plans.
- Young people's successes are routinely displayed on house notice boards, local press, the school magazine 'The Sun', through receiving praise postcards and at assemblies and award ceremonies to celebrate achievement. The school has recognised the need to track young people's wider achievements and is considering how best to do this. This work is at the early stages of development.
- Current use of accreditation for young people's achievements is limited. For example, the school could extend its use of Youth Achievement Awards, and consider recognising young people's contribution as buddies and paired readers through an award system e.g. community involvement, Millennium Award. The school should work with community partners to meet its objective of recording young people's wider achievements and increasing opportunities for accredited awards.
- The presentation of work in jotters and organisation of notes needs to be improved to assist children in their learning.

### **OVERALL QUALITY OF ATTAINMENT AND PROGRESS**

Overall, at all stages, young people could attain more highly. The school recognises the need for improvement and now needs to take steps to address the issue. A whole-school monitoring and tracking system is being developed to improve monitoring and tracking young people's progress in learning across all areas of the curriculum. The school performs less well and notably less well than schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds in seven of the ten key performance measures.

#### **Standards of attainment over time**

##### **Strengths:**

- Attendance is in line with the national average. Exclusions are below the national average.
- Almost all young people leave school for university, college, training or employment. The proportion of young people entering higher education is above the education authority and national average. The proportion of young people entering further education has improved over the last 3 years. At S4, there has been consistently strong performances in administration; Intermediate 2 art & design; craft and design; geography. At S5/S6, young people consistently perform well in computing.
- By the end of S6, the proportion of young people achieving an advanced higher award is above the national average. At this level, the school performs better than those schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds.

##### **Aspects for development:**

- Currently, there is not a sufficiently robust or rigorous system in place to gain an accurate view on how well young people build on their prior learning by the end of S2. The school does not have reliable attainment data on young people's progress in reading, writing and mathematics by the end of S2.
- A few subject areas present young people for NQ awards at Access and Intermediate 1 level at S3 with varied success. In 2010, none of the 16 young people presented for Access 3

geography completed the award; of the five young people presented at Intermediate 1 media studies level none achieved an award.

- By the end of S4, the school performs notably less well than schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds with regard to “5 or more awards at General or equivalent”; and less well with regard to the measures “5 or more awards at Credit level or equivalent”.
- By the end of S5, across all key measures, the school performs notably less well than schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds. Strong performance within a few subjects at S4 does not necessarily translate in to success at S5/S6 e.g. administration, business management and art & design. At S5/S6, the school performs less well than schools which serve young people with similar needs and backgrounds at 3+ and 5+ awards at Higher level.
- The number of NQ no award and incomplete awards is too high.

### **Progress within a broad general education (to include areas of responsibility for all)**

#### **Strengths:**

- Within the English department, ‘speech’ focus weeks enable young people to demonstrate their listening and talking skills through real and relevant contexts. For example, at S3, young people were debating whether or not the UK should be involved in foreign conflicts.
- At S3, young people demonstrated a good understanding of equality in society through their work in RME.
- Young people are developing their skills in talking and listening for a variety of purposes in lessons across the school. They use ICT well to complete tasks and engage in research.
- Young people in the support base are developing their knowledge of numeracy and handling money in real-life contexts.

#### **Aspects for development:**

- The school is not yet in a position to provide information on young people’s progress in literacy, numeracy or health and wellbeing.
- Overall, the quality of young people’s written work is not of a high enough standard.

### **IMPACT OF THE IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

In the last year, the school has successfully implemented some improvements to systems and processes, for example improved systems for sharing good practice in learning and teaching; and a review of approaches to quality assurance. The school is now well placed to ensure that these improvements have a positive impact on young people’s learning experiences and achievement.

The 2010/2011 improvement plan contained 6 main improvement priorities

1. To improve the quality of learning and teaching
2. To enhance quality of learning and teaching throughout the use of ICT
3. To enable pupils to reach full potential in all areas
4. To develop enterprising approaches to education
5. To develop the curriculum in line with national and local guidelines
6. Provision of an appropriate curriculum and timetable structure to deliver it.

#### **Strengths:**

1. Increasingly, teachers share practice within departments and across the school. A revised approach to quality assurance is improving understanding of the role of self-evaluation in improving learning and teaching. Inter-disciplinary learning projects have supported a shared understanding of approaches to learning and teaching across the school.
2. Enhanced investment in ICT resources (e.g. classroom in a box) is increasing the use of technology within learning and teaching. Teachers have been offered twilight CPD opportunities to improve the use of ICT within lessons. There has been an increase in the use of digital examination papers. Young people have access to computers to support their learning and for research purposes. The school website is being reviewed and improved by a staff group.

3. A revised home study policy has been completed.
4. Rich tasks, Learning 2 Learn programmes and elective courses have been implemented in S1/S2 to promote enterprising learning.
5. The revised S1 curriculum takes account of the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. A learning wall maps out coverage of the Experiences and Outcomes across all eight curriculum areas. This has been shared with primary schools. Teachers have produced S2 programmes building on S1 plans. The school is actively working towards increasing the number of subjects delivered through Gaelic medium education. New subjects have been introduced to enhance the curriculum and better meet needs of learners e.g. skills for work courses.
6. The school's curriculum plan featured on the national Curriculum for Excellence website. This plan has been reviewed and modified by staff. Staff have reviewed aspects such as approaches to inter-disciplinary learning, rich tasks and electives. As a result, they have a clearer picture of how learning should be organised within Curriculum for Excellence and have restructured the curriculum at S1/S2.

#### **Aspects for development:**

- Staff do not have sufficient ownership of the improvement plan to understand their role in taking forward improvement plan priorities.
- There needs to be further work with partners to provide them with more opportunity to influence the improvement plan in the school. Partners have limited understanding regarding the progress of improvement planning in the school.
- Overall, improvement plan priorities have not had a sufficient impact on improving outcomes for learners.

#### **ADDITIONAL EVIDENCE SUBMITTED AFTER INSPECTION**

##### **1. ANALYSIS OF ATTAINMENT DATA**

The paper does not provide convincing evidence that improvements in performance are any stronger than evidenced during the inspection week. It includes some crude methods of analysing data, for example, averaging of NCDs and counting the number of subjects which have pass rates above national average at S5 and S6 without taking on board expected progression rates or the number of pupils presented for the course examination. It may be useful for the member of the inspection team in the lead on analysing examination data to have further discussion/engagement with school and/or education authority staff on data analysis.

##### **2. PAPER ON TRACKING & MONITORING**

This paper describes the processes in place in the school for tracking young people's progress and achievements. These processes were already known to the inspection team by the end of the inspection week. The paper provides no new evidence on the impact of tracking processes. It states that findings from monitoring and tracking are discussed by departments and SMT links. During the inspection, SMT members were not able to produce evidence of the impact of these discussions, and the paper does not provide any further evidence in this aspect.

##### **3. ADDITIONAL PAPER FROM HEADTEACHER**

An additional information paper provided by the headteacher states that: "In response to identification of areas of underperformance, targeted support, including observation of good practice in own and other departments, has been offered to specific staff, and a focused programme of observations has been implemented." This paper provides no evidence of the impact of these measures, or any indication that they have led to improvements.

The above three papers do not provide sufficient convincing additional evidence which would lead to any change in the evaluation of Q1 1.1 as shared on the final day of the inspection.

##### **4. TELEPHONE DISCUSSION: MANAGING INSPECTOR AND HEADTEACHER 23-6-11**

In discussion with the Managing Inspector, the headteacher clarified the school's view of the specific impact of the measures described in paper 3 above. In September 2010, analysis of examination data identified the mathematics and science departments as under-performing. The targeted support described in paper 3 above has led to improvements in attainment in

mathematics and science in S5 and S4, as evidenced by the prelim results shown in paper 1 above.

All evidence for QI 1.1 has been reviewed by the Assistant Chief Inspector with overview responsibility for the inspection as follows:

Evidence shows important weaknesses in relation to themes one and three. Overall, the significant issues are decreasing trends in key measures and the fact that the school's performance in these key measures does not compare well to other similar schools. There are also important weaknesses in approaches to tracking and monitoring progress. In looking at the other contributory factors, the school needs to improve in: providing young people with suitably challenging activities; and in developing young people's skills in thinking critically and being aware of themselves as learners. Taking all of the above into account, along with the limited impact of the improvement plan, the evaluation is confirmed as weak.

### **3. HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL HELP YOUNG PEOPLE TO LEARN?**

**QI 5.3 MEETING LEARNING NEEDS:**

**VALUE: satisfactory**

#### **Strengths:**

- The majority of teachers take account of individual needs in planning tasks activities and resources used in classes. In the best lessons (around a quarter of those observed), the pace of learning was brisk and young people were supported and challenged very well (for example, tasks in English, RME and Gaelic at S3 were open-ended and allowed young people to respond at an appropriate level of challenge.
- The school takes positive and proactive steps to ensure that barriers to learning are identified promptly and addressed.
- The Pupil Support and House Team structures provide good opportunities for staff to work proactively with partners to identify, review and evaluate the support in place for young people with identified needs. Robust communication ensures that pastoral and support for learning staff are alerted early if any young person is in need of support.
- Young people are encouraged to be proactive in developing ideas about their future and are acquiring the skills and knowledge to plan careers effectively and gain experience of the world of work e.g. through PSE, work experience, UCAS links with SDS and the 16+ programme with local business partners.
- The pupil support department (guidance and learning support) works successfully with a range of partners to put in place interventions to meet individual needs. Young people with attendance issues or who are looked after are being supported to return to school through careful tracking.
- Learning support staff have in place systems to ensure that all teachers are aware of the support needs of individuals. They provide high quality support to young people in classes and in the base and offer valuable support to staff. They communicate regularly with parents and involve them in planning. Support for learning assistants provide good quality support to young people in classes.
- The school links well with partners to support young people and families who require additional support. Partners include the Inclusion Worker and Extended Learning Resource, Social Work CAMHs team and a number of local voluntary agencies. This would now be good time to build on this to work more strategically with partners in relation to planning their involvement in early intervention within school to support young
- People e.g. those with mental health issues or who are at risk of exclusion and to plan and deliver the curriculum for individuals and groups. A weekly lifestyle drop-in is supported by CAMHS, public health nurse and health promotion staff as an opportunity for young people to access health information and speak confidentially with health professionals. This could be reviewed to make the session more interactive and engage more young people.
- The school is developing programmes with partners to source and provide different learning opportunities that effectively support a range of needs. For example, the Pointers boys and girls group helps socially isolated young people to gain new friends and learn new skills.

### **Aspects for development:**

- Approaches to matching learning activities to the needs of individual learners and groups in classes are currently very inconsistent. There is a need for more personalisation and differentiation in classes to meet the needs of all learners. Around half of the lessons observed are too teacher-led. The pace of learning is too slow in a significant number of classes. Tasks, activities and resources are not always well matched to young people's needs.
- Courses and programmes are not always challenging enough. The school could do more overall to provide challenge for higher-achieving young people. Some tasks provided lacked challenge.
- Support for learning staff need to continue to focus on working with class teachers to agree on strategies and facilitate greater involvement of subject departments in supporting young people.
- There is scope to involve young people, parents and teachers more fully in setting and monitoring targets within individualised educational programmes.
- Consider more flexible deployment of auxiliaries to maximise the use of support e.g. curriculum development when not required in classes.

### **COMMENTS ON TEACHING FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING**

- Teachers establish and maintain positive relationships with their pupils. They use praise well across the school to motivate and encourage young people to do their best. Most teachers' explanations and instructions are clear.
- Teachers are improving the use of ICT as a means of motivating and engaging learners. Overall, more use could be made of ICT to engage young people in their learning. Not all staff make effective use of interactive whiteboard technology to enhance learning and teaching.
- Staff are taking forward *Assessment is for Learning* strategies to improve approaches to learning and teaching. Whilst teachers share the purpose of lessons, the learning intentions are not always reviewed or revisited within the lesson. Most staff are using an increasing range of teaching approaches to engage young people in their learning.
- Although there are some good examples of questioning to develop young people's thinking, this is not an area which is well developed across the school. Where staff use questioning effectively, young people are encouraged to explain and justify their responses.
- Teachers need further development in understanding national standards and developing a range of assessment approaches to inform learning.

### **QI 5.1 THE CURRICULUM:**

**VALUE: good**

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON HOW WELL THE CURRICULUM SUPPORTS LEARNING**

#### **RATIONALE & DESIGN**

The school aims to enable each individual learner to reach his/her full potential intellectually, spiritually, aesthetically, emotionally, physically and socially. It aims to create an atmosphere of discipline and friendliness throughout the school and to provide a high quality education in a stimulating environment. All teachers are aware of their responsibilities with regard to literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing and the principles of Curriculum for Excellence. The school recognises that there is further work to be done to develop a shared vision for these aspects, in particular health and wellbeing.

#### **DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM**

As part of the implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, all teachers have been involved in developing new courses in their curricular areas, and developing their understanding of literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across the curriculum through the "learning wall". Working groups for the curriculum S1-S3; the senior phase; and reporting, recording and assessment are taking forward key developments. The S1-S3 curriculum group have reviewed the S1 curriculum in the light of experience in 2010-11 and have produced a clear curriculum rationale for S1-S3. Planning for the senior phase is at an early stage of development. With separate working groups



for S1-S3 and the senior phase, the school needs to ensure coherent development of the curriculum S1-S6 to meet the needs of young people.

Innovations in the curriculum have included increased opportunities for vocational education and Gaelic music and media introduced through the School of Ambition project; “rich tasks” and “Learning 2 Learn” in S1 (see below); and courses in literacy and numeracy for life for lower-attaining young people in S5.

## **PROGRAMMES AND COURSES**

### **S1/S2**

- Young people study a wide range of subjects: English; mathematics; science; Gaelic; French or Latin ; ICT; business studies; geography; history; music; art; technical; HE; PE(2); PSE; RE. In S1 this year, they have had two period of “rich tasks” and two “Learning 2 Learn”. In S2, they have had two periods of “electives”.
- For session 2011-12, the structure of the S1 curriculum has been revised. Teachers have decided that having four periods given over to “rich tasks” and “Learning 2 Learn” in 2010-11 has not been in line with key principles of Curriculum for Excellence. For example, developing skills for learning is the responsibility of all teachers across all curricular areas, not just those involved in delivering “Learning 2 Learn” two periods a week.
- The programme of rich tasks has provided some good opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, for example “Local, Global”, an international education project linked to Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes in languages; social subjects; and health and wellbeing. However, this has allowed some teachers to conclude that they need not plan for interdisciplinary learning.
- In 2011-12, English and maths will have 4 periods a week each instead of 3, with the expectation that interdisciplinary learning, including literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing will take place within these programmes, involving staff from across the school. The school should keep these developments under on-going review.
- The programme of “elective” courses (2 periods a week) in S2 in 2010-11 has included writing; drama; shinty; media; pre-school; Spanish; sport; auto-engineering; Eurozone; dance; and Gaelic creativity & digital media. In the course of the session, young people have followed four of these courses, broadly in line with their choices, but with some pupils being allocated to courses not of their choice. This programme is being revised for 2011-12. It will begin with all young people following a 6-week programme of visits to local businesses. Detailed planning of the programme, showing coverage of Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes, has yet to be completed. Thereafter, a streamlined programme of electives will run.
- Staff have used Experiences and Outcomes to plan and assess young people’s learning. They recognise there is further work to be done to develop their confidence in using the Experiences and Outcomes, in particular for assessment.
- More work is needed to ensure young people have suitable opportunities to apply and develop their skills in literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing across their learning.

### **S3/S4**

- Young people study English (4); mathematics (4); science (3); social subject/RME (3); RE (1); PE (2) and PSE (1). Most study a language other than English. On the advice of guidance staff, some young people (20/220) study SVS or media studies and travel and tourism instead of a language. In addition, most choose three further examination courses. Some young people (43 in S3 2010-11) study one other school-based course and go to college to study Skills for Work courses in construction, engineering and maritime skills.
- Innovative courses at this stage have included Gaelic music and Gaelic film and media, introduced through the School of Ambition project, but these will not run in session 2010-11.
- Courses on offer to meet the need of young people with additional support needs include Access 2 courses in environmental studies, personal and social development, financial education and independent travel. The school is beginning to develop a range of support and

learning programmes in conjunction with partners to work with and engage with vulnerable learners.

- It should continue to develop in this area, including strengthening links with partners in curriculum planning and continuing to focus on developing skills for life and skills for work.

### **S5/S6**

- Young people benefit from a very wide range of courses at all levels from Intermediate 1 to Advanced Higher. The school has been building up the range of options at these stages for lower-attaining young people, for example, literacy for life; engineering craft skills; college course in care; and skills for life course in energy. There are good opportunities for progression from S4.
- Young people in S5 must choose five subjects. They have one period of RE, one of PE and one of PSE per week. In session 2011-12, they will have 2 periods of PE.
- Young people in S6 must choose 4 subjects. They have 3 supervised private study periods. They have one period of PSE. There is no RE. PE is optional and around 30% of S6 opted in to PE in session 2010-11. A series of S6 options such as radio and young enterprise are slotted in once teachers' availability is known.
- After-school clubs include archery, athletics, badminton, basketball, football, hockey, rugby, shinty, knitting, chess, cheerleading, jazz and kick boxing.
- The focused PSE programme draws on the expertise of partners and members of the local community well to ensure young people receive up-to-date information in relation to their physical wellbeing and planning for choices and changes.

### **TRANSITIONS**

The school has positive liaison with its many associated primary schools. Through a cluster initiative this session, staff from the school met colleagues from associated primary schools to discuss numeracy and mathematics. Work with colleagues in associated primary schools to discuss a shared understanding of standards and expectations with regard to Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes is at an early stage of development.

Continuity of children's learning is encouraged through a shared transition project among schools (Native American this session) and a planned programmes of visits. A helpful induction programme of 3 days duration is well organised including using buddies from the senior school to give new pupils more confidence.

Helpful information on children's learning and progression related to the first and second level and any identified needs is recorded and shared from primary schools. This information is circulated among all relevant staff but the use of this information could be improved to ensure young people can build on their prior learning.

The school provides an extended programme for vulnerable learners and those with additional support needs. One child with ASN has had weekly visits to get more familiar with the new setting and different adults.

At S2, a number of pupils transfer from junior secondary schools across the island. Visits by the DHT and PT Guidance are organised with each school to assess pupil's current levels and give help in making curricular options. They access a well planned induction programme over 2 days. Productive links with Lews Castle College and local employers prepare young people for positive destinations after school. Through the 16+ Learning Choices project, 20 local employers support young people at risk of missing out in finding positive destinations.

### **GAELIC MEDIUM**

- The school has developed a plan for taking forward learning through the medium of Gaelic. Staff are clear about the plan and are keen to implement it. Teachers are delivering aspects of geography, history and science through the medium of Gaelic at S1.
- In S1, Gaelic songwriting and production innovative use is made of ICT to rearrange Gaelic songs to be more contemporary
- Out- of-class activities such as the trip to Harris help young people who are learning Gaelic improve their fluency.

- In S1, Gàidhlig courses are now related more directly to the Curriculum for Excellence Experiences and Outcomes and most young people are responding well.
- The school needs to increase the pace of implementing the curriculum through the medium of Gaelic at all stages. In so doing, coherent and co-ordinated programmes need to be developed which focus on progression of all language skills, grammar and specialist vocabulary from stage to stage. These programmes need to give young people experiences that are rich in Gaelic across all the contexts of the curriculum both within and outwith the classroom. Staff recognise that they need to increase the use of Gaelic in existing courses to impact on young people's fluency in all language skills.
- An audit has been completed which matches the availability of teachers who are fluent in Gaelic to the delivery of subjects through the medium of Gaelic. This needs to be used to include giving wider opportunities for young people through the medium of Gaelic.
- The curriculum for S1 and S2 Gaelic (Learners) needs to be improved. It needs to take more account of young people's prior knowledge from use of Gaelic in the home and primary. Only a third of the current S2 are continuing with Gaelic in S3. Staff need to be proactive in encouraging young people to continue with their study of Gaelic.

#### **4. HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF ITS WORK?**

**QI 5.9 IMPROVEMENT THROUGH SELF-EVALUATION: VALUE: satisfactory**

Revised, more coherent procedures for quality improvement across the school have been put in place in the last session.

They include the following: autumn departmental analyses of STACS data; departments carrying out self-evaluation using quality indicators from *How good is our school?*, supported by a local authority "tool"; departmental S&Q reports and improvement plans; professional review and development and related CPD.

The headteacher has led staff in evaluating the quality of the school's work using the 10 dimensions of excellence and the 6 entitlements of Curriculum for Excellence. This has been a helpful exercise which has provided opportunities for staff to recognise the positive aspects of the school's work, contributing to its improving ethos. This has been followed up in departments. Parents and young people have been consulted on priorities for the 2011-12 school improvement plan.

Partner agencies are keen to engage with the school and see recent senior staff changes as significantly improving partnership work with the school. There is further work to do to develop joint planning and evaluation with partners.

Staff are contributing to improvements in the school through participation in working groups, in the area of Curriculum for Excellence, and also ICT, behaviour and inclusion. Non-teaching staff are involved in some groups.

Members of the senior management team have carried out a series of lesson observations in their linked departments and have provided helpful feedback for staff. There is scope for this process to identify good practice and aspects for improvement more clearly. This could then feed in to a report on learning and teaching across the school to inform teachers' own self-evaluation and reflection, professional discussion in departments, and to provide a focus for further lesson observations.

There has been a high turnover of staff within the senior management team and this has contributed to the lack of consistency in approaches to putting agreed quality assurance approaches into practice. Principal teachers spoke about differing approaches and levels of engagement across different SMT members. There is good practice which can be shared. More systematic monitoring of progress with departmental improvement plans is required to ensure action points are being addressed.

Senior managers are not making full use of STACS data, including whole-school measures, to evaluate attainment across the school leading to action for improvement. There has been no formal analysis of prelim results which might lead to focused action to improve young people's experiences and achievements.

The school has identified the need to improve its approaches to tracking young people's progress in learning in order to improve attainment. Senior managers are also aware that it is important to ensure consistently high quality learning in teaching across the school in order to improve attainment. Overall, a more focused and determined approach is needed to improve attainment.

### **LEADERSHIP ACROSS THE SCHOOL TO SUPPORT IMPROVEMENT (Including leadership of CPD)**

The recently-appointed headteacher has made a very strong start to improving ethos, communication and consultation in the school.

Following a long period of staff turnover and acting assignments, the school now has a full, permanent senior management team in place. All four DHTs are making a positive contribution to creating a positive ethos and leading learning across the school.

SMT appointments and the prospect of a new building are leading to high levels of optimism amongst staff about the school's future.

The challenge now is to ensure that improved ethos and improved approaches to quality improvement lead to improvements in young people's learning and achievements across the school.

### **CPD**

Teachers have reflected on their own practice through "learning journals" and "triad" approaches. These approaches have been successful, but not sustained, and the school recognises the need to revise and relaunch them to support reflection and professional discussion and development across the school.

### **Other important evidence**

### **PASTORAL CARE & SAFEGUARDING**

All staff know young people very well and pay very good attention to their mental, social and emotional needs. They regularly make referrals to pupil support staff who respond promptly and take appropriate action to address concerns. There is a positive climate in which young people feel safe and secure. The health and wellbeing of individuals is enhanced by pastoral and support for learning staff who give high quality pastoral care. The school has not yet extended the role of all staff in providing personal support. Young people feel they can approach adults in school if they have a concern.

The approach to anti-bullying has been reviewed for S1 this session. They worked in different groups to research and produce a drama production which was performed to the whole school during assembly. Other groups interviewed members of staff and the community, and a group were involved in re-writing the school anti-bullying policy. Young people enjoyed this active approach to learning.

All staff receive training on child protection on an annual basis. The HT and DHT are trained as child protection coordinators within the school and the DHT has provided twilight enhanced training for pupil support staff. There is a need to ensure that staff who arrive after August or supply staff receive appropriate information and training in child protection.

The building is not secure. Several access doors do not have appropriate security locks.

### **HEALTH PROMOTION**

- Young people can describe a variety of ways the school supports and encourages them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. This includes healthy choices in the canteen, extra curricular clubs, speakers during assembly and house sports competitions. They feel safe in school and know where to get help when they need it. They know their guidance teacher well.
- The school is meeting the duties to provide access to drinking water, promote uptake of school lunches, and ensure children entitled to a free school lunch aren't openly identified. School lunches are of good quality and increasing numbers of young people are eating these since the introduction of the Cabin (additional temporary dining hall in porta-cabin).
- A planning nutritional analysis was provided. However, many items available for young people to purchase at lunch time (e.g. all panini and drinks) are not included and this will need to be checked with the authority.

**CONFIDENTIAL: Record of inspection findings: The Nicolson Institute: Western Isles Council : 6233139**

- Several food and drink standards are not being met. Several drinks exceed the permitted volume of sugar content, and crisps are no longer permitted at lunchtime.
- There is a very low uptake of FSM entitlement (less than 40%). This should be investigated with the aim of addressing any issues and improving uptake.

**EQUALITIES**

- There is good coverage of equality issues within the PSE and RME programmes including anti, bullying, anti-racism, sexual stereotyping and awareness of other cultures. Good practice was observed in the RE department.

I was passed a telephone call today (24<sup>th</sup> February 2005) at 10.20 a.m. from [REDACTED]

She alleged that her [REDACTED] the Nicolson Institute, has been subjected to repeated bullying while at school, since the age of [REDACTED] stated that she had been to the school and had discussed the matter with [REDACTED] and that no change had been effected.

I asked [REDACTED] if she had contacted the education authority and she stated that she had not done so. I then suggested that she do so as the education authority was the appropriate body to inform and to take forward her concerns.

I also asked if [REDACTED] had been supplied with a questionnaire in respect of the forthcoming inspection of the Nicolson Institute and she said that she had not, but would like one. I undertook to send her one and, with her permission, to inform the managing inspector of her concerns. She agreed to this.

I stated that I would record our conversation within this email and keep a paper copy of this message as a record of it.

[REDACTED]  
24<sup>th</sup> February 2005

Dated as shown  
[REDACTED]