



THE NICOLSON INSTITUTE FURTHER INSPECTION

Report by Chief Officer, Education and Children's Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to inform the Comhairle on the outcome of the further inspection visit at the Nicolson Institute by His Majesty's Inspectors from Education Scotland, as published on 8 October 2024.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Nicolson Institute was inspected by a team of HM Inspectors in January 2024 using the Short Model. A Short Model inspection evaluates a reduced number of quality indicators and tends to last for a shorter period of time.
- 2.2 Education Scotland published a report of findings of the inspection on Tuesday 16 January 2024 in the form of a letter, which highlighted the strengths, agreed areas for improvement and a link to the summarised inspection findings (SIF) from the visit.
- 2.3 Working closely with department officers, the school devised an Action Plan to address the agreed areas for improvement and a governance group has been constituted to oversee the delivery of the Action Plan and support the school.
- 2.4 A small team of inspectors returned to the school in June 2024 to carry out a further inspection of ASN and enhanced provision element of the school to assess progress towards delivery of improvements. The findings of the visit were published in October 2024.
- 2.5 The Report recognises that important improvements have been made to the service, but that further work is also required inspectors will return to the school to review ASN provision again within one year of the publication of the report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle note the Report.**

Contact Officer:	David Downham, Quality Improvement Officer Secondary
Appendix:	Further Inspection letter – Nicolson Institute 8 October 2024
Background Papers:	Inspection Letter – Nicolson Institute 16 January 2024

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	Applicable UNCRC Articles: 28 – A Right to Education 29 – Goals of Education Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education (2017)
Corporate Strategy	Support Children, Families and Young People: Raise ambition and attainment, in particular to address inequalities. Ensure early intervention is in place to keep our most vulnerable children safe.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 In January 2024 HM Inspectors gathered evidence to evaluate the work of the Nicolson Institute against the two quality indicators taken from *How Good is Our School? 4th Edition* (HGIOS4) and the letter of findings confirms that they were assessed as ‘Satisfactory’ on the six-point evaluation scale.
- 5.2 Following the sharing of findings of the inspection, the school management team and senior officers of the Comhairle have developed an Action Plan to address the matters raised and a Governance Group under the direction of the Chief Officer will monitor and ensure progress with the improvement actions and delivery of the Plan.
- 5.3 At the time HM Inspectors intimated an intention to conduct a further inspection of the Enhanced Provision within six months of the publication of their Letter of Findings.
- 5.4 A return visit by HM Inspectors to conduct a further inspection of the ASN and enhanced provision was carried out in June 2024 and published in October 2024.

DETAIL

- 6.1 A principal teacher with responsibility for the enhanced provision was appointed in June 2024. Together with senior leaders, she is beginning to establish her role within the school. Staff are positive that this appointment will provide leadership and support ongoing improvement. Across the enhanced provision, there remains a number of areas that require further improvement such as deployment of staff, staff training, staff relationships and communication. Ongoing issues with staff absences are impacting on continuity of learning and support for young people. The three classes within the enhanced provision now each have a designated class teacher. This improved approach provides young people with a key contact who has an overview of their learning and progress. Staff and senior leaders should continue to develop the role of designated class teachers to ensure they have an increased role in planning, assessing, and monitoring the progress young people are making.

- 6.2 Almost all young people engage appropriately in lessons and respond well to learning within the enhanced provision and mainstream classes. Staff use a range of communication approaches effectively to support young people to make choices and access their learning. Almost all staff have positive relationships with young people and understand their learning, medical and care needs. Staff have developed individual timetables for young people that reflect their specific learning and support needs. Timetables include learning in the enhanced provision and in mainstream classes with peers.
- 6.3 For a few young people at the senior stages, there is an improved focus on ensuring they attain national qualifications and develop skills for life beyond school. These young people have opportunities to participate in activities such as volunteering, cooking, and work skills. Staff need to ensure that all young people at the senior stages have appropriate opportunities to gain skills and qualifications. Staff understand the importance of celebrating young people's achievements and ensuring they are included in the life and work of the school. Young people now participate in awards ceremonies with mainstream peers and in whole school events such as the school show. As planned, senior leaders and staff should continue to ensure that young people in the enhanced provision are included and involved as much as possible in the wider life of the school.
- 6.4 The HMI Inspectors will return to conduct a further inspection of the school within one year of the publication of the letter on 8 October 2024. After this, parents will be written to informing them of the progress that the school has made.

CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The school has made progress since the original inspection. The school will continue to receive support, particularly focusing on the matters raised in relation to Enhanced Provision to ensure further improvements. The Governance Group will meet routinely to review progress and ensure that the resources and support required to deliver the Action Plan are being provided.