



**The Nicolson Institute
Parent Council**

Annual Report

2010/11

Introduction

The Nicolson Institute Parent Council was constituted on 11th June 2008.

This annual report provides an overview of the current Parent Council, its function, the activities undertaken during 2010/11 and a financial statement.

Why do we have a Parent Council?

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 gives parents the right to receive information about their children's education and to be represented and have their views expressed through a Parent Council.

The main functions of a Parent Council are to:

- Support the school in its work with pupils and parents;
- Represent the views of parents;
- Promote contact and communication between the school, parents, pupils, the community, and other providers.

The aim is to ensure that schools, parents, families and the community work together to give children and young people the best possible education. Schools serve the community in which they are located and a positive relationship with parents and the community is essential for the success of both the school and the community.

Whilst parents rely upon the skill, expertise and dedication of the officers of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and particularly the teachers within The Nicolson Institute, it should not be forgotten that parents also provide valuable skills, expertise and insight because they:

- Are experts in relation to their own children and have expert knowledge about their children's needs;
- Have unique and varied skills, interests, knowledge and experience;
- Are members of the local community with links to businesses, commerce and services that the school might not have;
- Are in touch with other parents and can represent a wide range of views.

It is for this reason that parent participation in the school's Parent Council is essential, to ensure that parents contribute to the success of The Nicolson Institute and the outcomes for all of the pupils who attend the school.

Community Vision

Parent Councils play an important role in delivering community vision. Local councillors are very supportive of Parent Councils and assist in the resolution of various issues and problems as well as attending events organised by the Parent Council.

The local councillors for Ward 06 Steornabagh a Deas are Angus Campbell, Charlie Nicolson, Angus Maccormack and Keith Dodson. Further details about your councilors and how to contact them can be found on the Comhairle nan Eilean Siar website <http://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/members/>.

Parent Council activities in 2010/11

The Parent Council met regularly during school term times and where necessary, short life sub-groups were formed which held *ad-hoc* meetings to progress specific events.

The Parent Council focused on four areas of activity.

- Administrative tasks
- New School
- Dealing with views and concerns
- Extra Curricular Activities

Administrative Tasks

A number of administrative tasks were undertaken:

- At the Annual General Meeting on the 28th September 2010 the following office bearers were re-elected and agreed to continue in their roles for another year:

Chair – Iain N Morrison
Vice Chair – D R Macdonald
Treasurer – Mairi Macsween
Clerk Carol Somerville.

Members;

Calum Morrison; Scott Connor; David Hanlon; Frank Rennie; Graeme Craig; Marina Macsween; Mairi Macsween; Scott Macneil; and Kevin Trewartha as Advisor to the Parent Council (later in the year to be replaced by the new Head Teacher/Rector Frances Murray).

Jane Gray was invited to be a Community Member of the Parent Council

- Appointments of Head Teacher/Rector and Depute Head Teachers.

The Parent Council was involved in the appointment of three Depute Head Teachers. Mr Angus MacIannan, Mr Anthony Tuffery and Mrs Erica Macdonald. Mrs Fiona Cunningham was already in post.

Mr Kevin Trewartha Head Teacher/Rector expressed his wish to retire at the end of the year. We arranged a Parent Council meeting for the 11th January to coincide with Mr Trewartha's last week and presented him with a small gift as a mark of appreciation as Rector/Head Teacher.

The interviews for the new Head Teacher/Rector took place the day before on Monday 10th January 2011 with Mrs Frances Murray being appointed.

It's been a number of years since we had a full complement of senior staff at the school and hopefully this is a period of stabilisation, consolidation as we move towards a new build school for the Nicolson Institute.

We wish them well as they settle into their new roles.

Visits by HMIe

The follow-up visit to last year's Assisted Self Evaluation took place in November with staff from the Education Department reviewing progress on the action points identified in the initial inspection of September 2009.

It was deemed that good progress had been made with regard to the action points.

A further visit in June of this year by HMIe reported their inspection of the school found the following key strengths.

- Polite and well-behaved young people who are keen to learn and contribute to the school and its community.
- The many opportunities for young people to extend and enhance their learning through a range of out-of-class activities.
- The positive impact of guidance and support for learning staff in supporting young people's learning and wellbeing.
- The positive impact of the Rector and senior managers in improving relationships, communication and consultation in the school.

We discussed with teachers and education authority staff how they might continue to improve the school. This is what we agreed with them.

- Continue to strengthen Gaelic medium education and Gaelic ethos and culture across the school.
 - Teachers should provide greater challenge for high-attaining young people and more support for those who need it in their lessons.
 - Continue to develop self-evaluation to ensure good practice is identified and shared, and action is taken to bring about improvement where necessary, including raising attainment.
- Broadbay Area Parent Council
Mrs. Murray reported on the first Broadbay area Parent Council meeting held on 07 February 2011. An invitation had been extended to all Parent Councils in the Broadbay area and eight out of the ten Parent Councils were represented at the meeting.
The agenda reflected items that would affect schools in the near future such as 'Exclusion' legislation in schools and Cyber Bullying.
 - Review of the Constitution
Discussed amendments in relation to the Constitution. The Clerk redrafted the Constitution and circulated for comments. The amended Constitution will be added on to the Parent Council Facebook/Nicolson Website (Parent Council page) and Mrs. Murray will ensure this is documented in the School Newsletter.
 - Report "Child Protection" SPTC Dundee Conference 06 November
Iain N Morrison reported that he had attended this Conference. He submitted documents and a brief summary paper in relation to the Conference and also gave a verbal report to the Parent Council. Written report available.

New School:

- Reference Group Meeting 5
Parent Council Members of the Reference Group were invited to a Stakeholder Consultation Meeting on the 26th May 2011. The main item for discussion was hard/soft landscaping and access routes. Minutes are available.
- Site visits for Parent Council members
Site visits for Parent Council members are to be arranged shortly via Mr Dan MacPhail (WISP Project Manager).

Dealing With Views & Concerns

A number of views and concerns, raised by parents and by the school, were considered by the Parent Council:

- School/Parent Council Website
Mr. Iain N. Morrison stated that although the Parent Council had their own Facebook page, the preferred communication route would be to have a page on the Nicolson Institute website. Mrs. Murray reported that she had recently set up Working Groups, one of which is the ICT Group, led by Mr. Tuffery, and this Group would be responsible for updating the Nicolson Institute website. The new website is now up and running and ready for new uploads.
- Litter Campaign/Enforcement Consultation
Chris Schofield, Environmental Health Officer, CNES, explained that this had come about as a result of complaints about litter in and around the town at lunch times, but it was accepted that it was not just school pupils. The cost of cleaning up at lunch times is currently costing £30,000 per annum. New bins have been provided along Smith Avenue, Sandwick Road and Leverhulme Drive.
- Media Reporting
There have been some excellent school achievements reported in the media. Here are only a few:
 - S2 debaters, took second place in the Big Green Challenge debate held in the Scottish Parliament on Monday 21st March.
 - The Nicolson's Under 14 Boys became North of Scotland Champions on May 16 when they beat Inverness Royal Academy 3-0 in Dingwall.
 - Stornoway Rugby's U15 Girl's Team recently enjoyed a fun packed weekend when they took first place at the IRB Festival of Rugby 7s held at Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh.

However we have to be vigilant when negative stories give opportunities to the press to sell papers.

Financial Statement.

All financial records are kept and maintained by our Treasurer, Ms. Mairi Macsween and thanks are due to her for her good work.

A statement of accounts is in the process of being prepared and a separate annual financial report will be provided.

Acknowledgements

The activities and achievements of the Parent Council can only be delivered through the hard work and dedication of the parent representatives and the teaching staff.

None of the work could have been achieved without the generosity of the parents, family, friends, pupils and teaching staff who volunteered their time. Thanks are also due to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar who provide staff and funds to assist with the Parent Council.

Suggestions and Comments:

If you would like to make any suggestions or have a comment you would like the Parent Council to consider, please contact us "The Nicolson Institute Parent Council" at The Nicolson Institute Office and mark for our attention. All suggestions and comments will be discussed at the next scheduled meeting.

Iain N Morrison

Chairman

September 2011