


# Transitions for Armed Forces families





Moving around is a way of life for many Armed Forces families. It can often be exciting, but sometimes it can be difficult to find your feet in a new location.

It can be unsettling for children and young people who are in education as they leave behind old classmates, make new friends and face a different curriculum or exam system.

This leaflet aims to help make the transition as easy as possible for families who are moving to Scotland, or who are already here but relocating to another part of the country.

#### IN THIS BOOKLET

- How to find a school place for your child?
- Understanding the curriculum that is followed in Scottish schools.
- What is available to help children and young people to continue their education with as little disruption as possible?



## PREPARING TO MOVE INTO A SCOTTISH SCHOOL

### 1 Collecting Information - finding and registering in a school

#### When does the school year begin and end?

The school year runs from mid-August to the end of June with breaks for Christmas and Easter. Term dates and other holidays vary according to the local authority (also referred to as council).

#### How do I decide which school to send my child to?

Registering your child at the local primary or secondary school in the area of your home is usually an easy, straight forward process that you do right at the school.

Most children and young people in Scotland go to state schools funded by the local authority/council.

Each local authority is split into catchment areas and your catchment school, linked to your home address, is normally the one your child will go to.

Armed Forces parents can use the Forces Children's Education website to find the catchment schools in their Service Family Area (SFA). [www.forceschildrenseducation.scot](http://www.forceschildrenseducation.scot)

#### Can I choose the school to send my child to?

Ordinarily children attend their catchment area school. However, parents can make a placing request to a school of their choice. For more information on how to do this, see [www.gov.scot/publications/choosing-school-guide-parents-nov-16](http://www.gov.scot/publications/choosing-school-guide-parents-nov-16)

**NOTE:** placing requests do require time and effort, paper-work and a waiting period. Applying for a different school will not guarantee success of a place.

It is particularly important that if your child has complex/significant Additional Support Needs (ASN)\* that you contact the local authority **well in advance** of your move.

\*SEN could be the term used outside Scotland

#### EDUCATION IN SCOTLAND

Scotland has its own education system, and there are significant differences between here and in the rest of the UK.





### How will my child travel to and from school?

In particular cases, the local authority will make arrangements to get your child to a catchment school. These criteria can be found at

<http://mygov.scot/free-school-transport>

If you register your child in a non-catchment school through the 'placing request' process, YOU are responsible for getting them there, and there is no help from the local authority.

### What do I need to know about Free School Meals?

Every child in Scotland at a local authority school is entitled to get free school lunches in P1, P2 and P3.

This applies to all children in these years. Some children in funded childcare before starting school (early learning and childcare) can also get free meals.

### Are there Free School Meals after Primary 3?

Your child can get free school lunches after P3, right up until they're 16, if you're receiving certain benefits or tax credits. See [www.mygov.scot/school-meals](http://www.mygov.scot/school-meals) for details.



### How many denominational schools are there?

**370** state-funded faith schools across Scotland

Your local authority will give you information about the ones in your catchment area and how to apply for a place for your child.

### How do I find out about independent schools?

**100** independent schools across Scotland

The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) has information and contact details for each one. [www.scis.org.uk](http://www.scis.org.uk)

Queen Victoria School, Dunblane, Stirling is the only MOD education school in the UK. Full-boarding, Co-Ed. [www.qvs.org.uk](http://www.qvs.org.uk)

# Education choices

---

**LOCAL AUTHORITY/  
COUNCIL SCHOOL**



Find out which is your  
catchment school



Contact the school with your arrival date and  
ask for a place to be reserved for your child



Considering an alternate school?  
Once you have registered at a catchment  
school, you can make a placing request



Await response  
to process

**INDEPENDENT  
FEE-PAYING SCHOOL**



Go to [www.scis.org.uk](http://www.scis.org.uk)



**HOME**



Go to [http://bit.ly/home\\_educate](http://bit.ly/home_educate)



## 2 Overview - when do children start...

### Early years and starting primary school

Many toddlers and young children join a playgroup, before going on to attend an early-years centre as soon as they pass their third birthday. Most will progress to Primary 1 in the August of the year in which they turn five – in other words, they will be between four and a half and five and a half. A child must be at least four on 1 March in order to begin class in August.

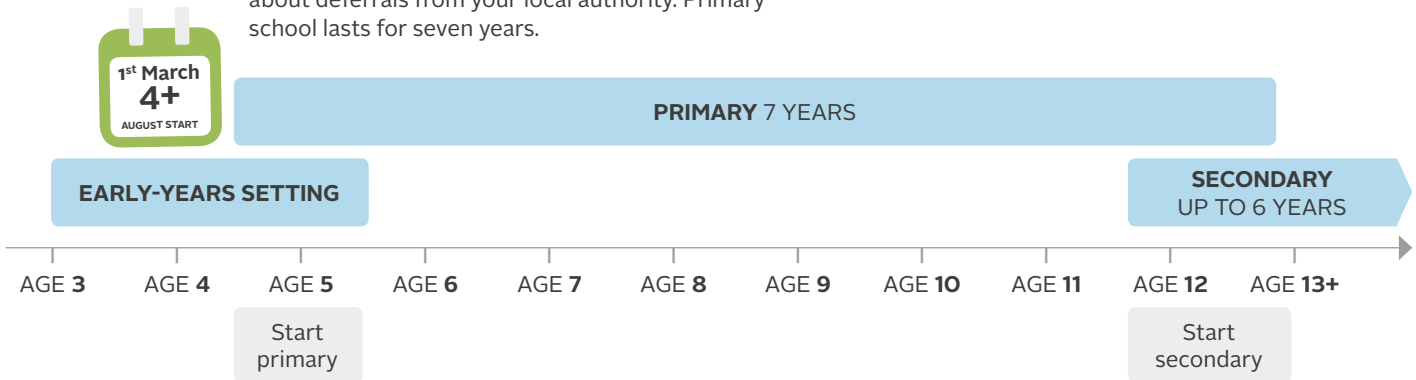
If your child was born between September and February (i.e. will still be four on the school start date), you can apply to defer their entry to primary school. A child with a January or February birthday can defer automatically, for other birth dates the procedure is more complex and you can obtain more information about deferrals from your local authority. Primary school lasts for seven years.

### When do children start secondary school

Pupils are usually 11 or 12 when they start secondary school. They enter S1, also known as first year. Local authority secondary schools in Scotland are fully comprehensive and non-selective, even if they include 'Grammar', 'Academy' or 'High School' in their name. It is compulsory to go to school until the age of 16, but many young people stay on beyond this to continue their education, sit exams and earn qualifications.

**Further information** can be found on the Scottish Government's Parentzone website. It has contact details for every school in the country.

<https://education.gov.scot/parentzone>



### 3 Arriving at a new school

#### What do I need to do?

The first visit to a new school is a good opportunity to tell the staff all about your child. Make an appointment before you visit, so the relevant staff are on hand to talk to you.

The old school will send transfer documents to the new school, but the easiest way for a teacher to assess your child is by looking at examples of their work. This will help the teacher to understand your child's needs, enabling your child to continue working at the right level and to settle in quickly.

**Bring:** personal details (a copy of your child's birth certificate, their doctor's details and proof of your address). As well as, as much information as you can about your child's schooling so far:

- A list of schools attended
- Examples of your child's work
- Information about what your child is good at or enjoys doing
- Details of their activities and interests
- Evidence of their achievements
- Their last school report card
- Details of any difficulties your child has had at school, such as settling in
- Information about any dietary requirements or medical conditions.

#### What is Additional Support for Learning?


You will find Scotland's approach to supporting Armed Forces children is different to elsewhere.

Some children and young people require additional help to get the most from their education. They may need extra support to help them settle into a new school, or specialist tutoring if their education had been disrupted.

Scotland's education is based on inclusion and a child 'needs led' system. This means a 'label', 'diagnosis' or 'Statement of Need' is not the determining factor for a child or young person to receive support.

Some children from Armed Forces families with special needs may be entitled to Additional Support for Learning (ASL).

You will find advice on how to get support for your child (including information about choosing a school and your appeal rights) in The Parents' Guide to Additional Support for Learning, published by Enquire, [enquire.org.uk](http://enquire.org.uk)



In Scotland, Additional Support for Learning legislation places duties on local authorities to make sure that all children, regardless of the reason why they need support, have "adequate and efficient" support so they can get the most from school. This includes during transitions between or into school. Specific funding to schools in the form of **Service Pupil Premium (SPP)**, which parents may be used to in England, is therefore not found in Scotland.



## 4 Understanding the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

All state schools follow the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). CfE has two stages: the broad general education (from the early years to the end of S3) and the senior phase (S4 to S6). (Find out more at [http://bit.ly/learner\\_journey](http://bit.ly/learner_journey))

### Broad General Education

The broad general education has five levels of learning and progress. Each is reached based on the teacher's assessment of a pupil's abilities and readiness to progress, but general year guidelines are:

- Early level: nursery to the end of P1
- First level: to the end of P4
- Second level: to the end of P7
- Third and fourth levels: S1 to S3

Between the early level and the second level in particular, there is an understanding that children progress at different rates and at different speeds. Learners are encouraged to work at a pace that suits them, with support and with enough challenges to stretch them. This allows a degree of flexibility for new pupils joining the school, as their abilities as well as their age will be taken into consideration. For example, when deciding whether they should join P3 or P4.

### Senior Phase

The senior phase builds on the broad general education and allows young people to take qualifications and courses that suit their abilities and interests, to go on to further study, improve their skills and get work experience.

## 8

### CURRICULAR AREAS

3 core subjects

**Literacy**  
**Numeracy**  
**Health & wellbeing**

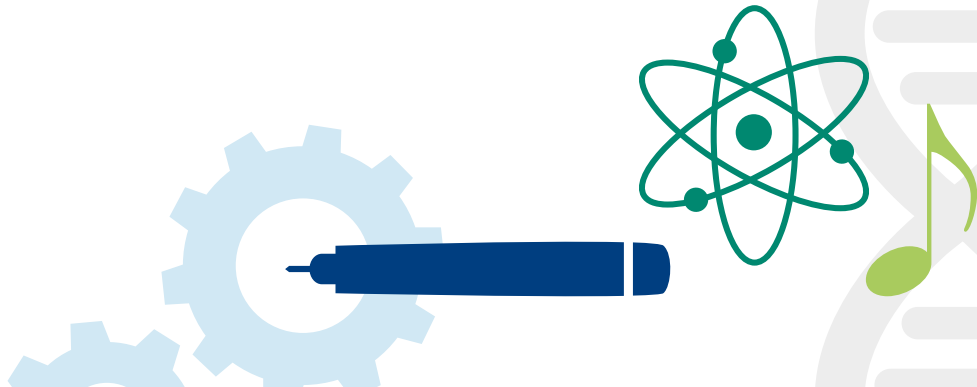
+  
Expressive arts  
Religious & moral education  
Sciences  
Social studies  
Technologies



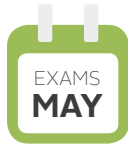


As learners move through the year groups, they will progress at their own pace through the Curriculum Levels

	All Scottish children from early years up until the end of S3 experience the <b>BROAD GENERAL EDUCATION</b>											From S4 to S6, young people learn in the <b>SENIOR PHASE</b>		
Level	Early level		First level				Second level			Third & fourth		Senior Phase		
Year in school	Pre-	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
School year	-	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
Age (years)	3-5	4½-5½	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-13	13-14	14-15	15-16	16-17



## Exams and qualifications



Exams are usually sat in May and are set by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

### Assessment in the broad general education

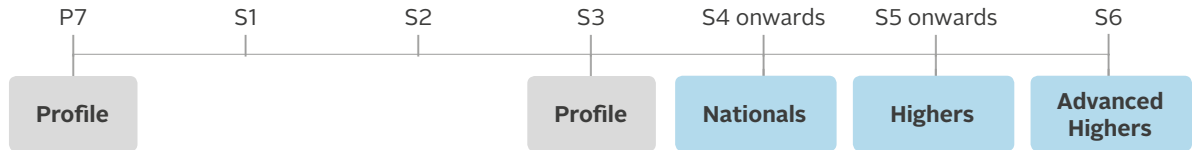
- During the broad general education, teachers regularly check what each pupil knows, understands and is able to do
- Teachers look at 'experience and outcomes'. This may be a mixture of written tests, artworks, projects, performances and presentations
- If a pupil has 'achieved a level', it means they have met the experiences and outcomes at that level and are ready to move on to the next
- Progress is communicated to parents via reports and parent/teacher meetings
- In P7 and S3 the school will produce a profile of learner achievement. This gives the pupil and their parents (and their future employers) full information on their potential and their achievements.
- Scottish National Standardised Assessments (SNSAs) are completed in P1, P4, P7 & S3 to help teachers identify children's progress in reading, writing and numeracy. There is no pass or fail and no need to revise or prepare for these assessments.

### Assessment in the senior phase

In Scotland, pupils sit exams called Nationals (instead of GCSEs) and Highers (instead of A-levels). Most pupils will be around 15 and in S4 when they take Nationals, and they normally study between six and eight subjects. English and maths are compulsory.

Pupils staying at secondary school after age 16 go on to sit Highers in S5 (or S6 if they choose to take them over two years). In S6, they can take additional Highers or opt to sit Advanced Highers. Pupils can go to university at the end of S5, as Highers provide the entry requirements for Scottish universities where degrees are normally four years long. The majority of English universities require Advanced Highers for entry level.

For more about qualifications, see [www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/70972.html](http://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/70972.html)




## How can I help support my child?

Let your school know that you are an Armed Forces family (Regular, Reserve, Ex-Service, Veteran), at registration and beginning of school year.

### Your involvement in your child's learning

Schools in Scotland recognise the vital role that parents play in supporting their child's learning. It is the law in Scotland that parents must be allowed to be:

- Involved with their child's education and learning
- Welcomed as an active participant in the life of the school
- Encouraged to express their views on school education generally.



CfE offers personalisation and choice so that everyone has the chance to learn successfully. There is more flexibility in how young people take qualifications. There is no 'one size fits all'.

CfE emphasises the development of skills for learning, life and work.



Check [www.npfs.org.uk](http://www.npfs.org.uk) for more helpful resources and ideas of ways to get involved.

The same level of involvement is encouraged and welcomed from Armed Forces families (regardless of how long you stay in Scotland). Research shows that parental involvement in children's learning has many benefits. For example:

- It is easier for children to learn when they get encouragement at home
- They will do better and achieve more when their parents are involved
- Children get access to more activities in and out of school when there are more adults to help
- Their concerns can be sorted out quicker when their parents have a positive relationship with school staff
- Parents are better able to help and encourage their children
- They have more information about their children's education
- Parents can build their own confidence and skills.

All parents are members of the parent forum at their school and are encouraged to join their school's Parent Council.

For more information about what you can do to help your child do well at school, see <https://education.gov.scot/parentzone/Documents/parents-as-partners-toolkit.pdf>





[www.parentforumscotland.org](http://www.parentforumscotland.org)  
[enquiries@parentforumscotland.org](mailto:enquiries@parentforumscotland.org)  
f parentforumscotland  
t parentforumscot



A dedicated website has been created for Armed Forces families who are moving to Scotland, with specific information to help you support your child moving into a Scottish school. Find out more at [www.forceschildreducation.scot](http://www.forceschildreducation.scot)