

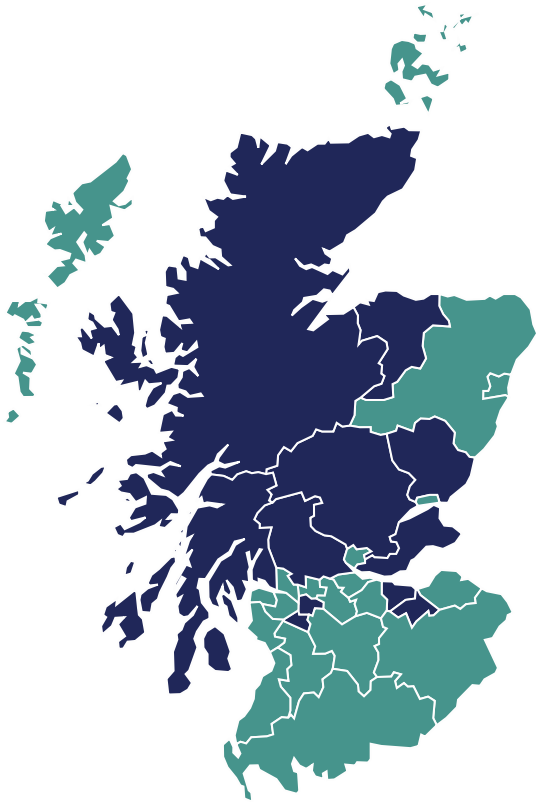
UNDERSTANDING THE SCOTTISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

An overview for Armed Forces Families



www.forceschildrenseducation.scot





Welcome to Scotland

Our education system is unique and we are proud of it. If you aren't familiar with it you may find it is quite different to what you are used to.

We have produced this guide to give you an overview of how our system works and help you identify some of the key areas where there may be differences.

Every teacher aims to give every child the very best education they can and the children from Armed Forces families are no exception.

Your children may only be with us for a short while but we will try and do our very best for them whilst they are in our schools.

Education is a devolved issue. Which means it is run by the Scottish Government, not the government in Westminster.

1. The education system in Scotland is completely different to that in England, Wales or Northern Ireland.

2. If you are an Armed Forces family posted to Scotland there will probably be a lot of things that you aren't familiar with.

3. We have excellent schools and teachers in Scotland and we will do everything we can to ensure your child thrives in our system.



We have
50,970 teachers

Teaching

684,415 pupils



At 2,524
state funded schools

Source: Scottish Government ' Summary Statistics for Schools in Scotland, No: 7-2016'

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SCOTTISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Scottish Government sets general guidelines about what should be taught but allows schools to make their own decisions on what, specifically, pupils will learn in lessons.

In Scotland the term 'curriculum' means everything that is planned for children and young people throughout their educational experience, not just what happens in the classroom.

The four core subjects that schools must provide are: health & wellbeing, literacy, numeracy and RME (Religious & Moral Education).



In addition to covering the four core subjects Headteachers are free to.....

1. Introduce projects that use skills and knowledge from more than one subject, leading to joined-up learning
2. Teach about people and places from their local area
3. Involve pupils in studying areas they're interested in.

The Curriculum for Excellence (CfE)

The general 'guidelines' are called the Curriculum for Excellence. [CLICK HERE](#) to read more about them in detail.



EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AGES 3 - 5

All children in Scotland between the ages of 3 and 5 are offered free, non-compulsory early learning.

This helps to give them a good start to their education. It encourages them to learn through play with other children and promotes the development of language and social skills in a safe and fun environment. It also helps them to prepare for school.

For most people early learning and childcare will mean a place at a nursery but it can also mean childminders, playgroups or other types of childcare providers.

PRIMARY EDUCATION AGES 5 - 12

Children in Scotland complete 7 years at Primary school.

They start primary school, depending on their date of birth, between the ages of 4.5 and 5.5 years old.

Primary schools follow the Curriculum for Excellence which is very flexible.

There are no formal external assessments whilst children are at Primary School.

The years are called Primary 1 to 7.

SECONDARY EDUCATION AGES 12 - 18

Secondary school is compulsory until the age of 16. (S1 to S4). Pupils have the option of a further 2 years of study (S5 & S6).

Pupil work towards Nationals, Highers and Advanced Higher qualifications. Most pupils will be around 15 when they take Nationals.

The years are called S1 to S6.

FURTHER EDUCATION AGES 16 ONWARDS

From the age of 16 education is no longer compulsory. Young people wishing to continue their education can:

Continue at secondary school
Attend a college of Further Education
Undertake an apprenticeship
Go directly into work or other forms of training

More information can be found at www.myworldofwork.co.uk

FIND A SCHOOL AND CONTACT THEM EARLY

As soon as you know you are being posted to Scotland start the process of identifying a school for your child(ren) and making contact with them.

The military are used to doing everything with only a few weeks' notice but schools are not. Schools do a lot of planning months before the new school term starts. It is more difficult for them to accommodate you, and give your child the best learning experience, if you don't give them much notice.



www.forceschildrenseducation.scot lists all the schools in Scotland that have areas of military housing in their catchment zones. Contact details for each school makes it easier for you to contact them.



Most schools, especially those that are close to military bases, are used to dealing with families who don't yet know their new address.

Each school will have supportive suggestions (although they may all have slightly different ways of doing it) and they will want to hear from you as soon as possible.

TELL THEM YOU ARE AN ARMED FORCES FAMILY

Every school in Scotland now records whether they have children from Armed Forces families on their roll.

When you contact the school make sure you tell them you are a Forces family. This should trigger an additional awareness and understanding of your circumstances. It will also help the head teacher to ensure you get the best possible experience moving into our system.



CATCHMENT AREAS

Councils in Scotland divide towns and country areas into catchment areas. Children usually go to the local primary or secondary school within their catchment area.

Most councils have a postcode search function on the education section of their websites. If you know your address you can use this to find your catchment school.



Choosing a school outside your catchment area...

1. In Scotland each address is part of a catchment area associated with a local school, and children usually go to the same local catchment school.
2. You have the right to request a different school if the catchment school is not the one you wish to send your child to.
3. Wishing to send your child to a school outside the catchment area is known as making a placing request.
4. The council will only grant placing requests if places are available.

Local Authorities (rather than the Scottish Government) are largely responsible for education.

This means that what happens in one area might not be the same in another.

A searchable list of all the catchment schools serving the main military bases in Scotland is available at www.forceschildrenseducation.scot.

If you are considering putting your child into a school that's not in the catchment area for the local base we recommend sending them to a school with at least a few other Armed Forces children in it.

Children like going to school with other Forces children. They don't like standing out and it makes them feel better being surrounded by other kids who understand what their lives are like.

How to find out what a school is like

1. Look at their website. Schools' websites have lots of the information you will need on them.

Use www.forceschildrenseducation.scot to find links to the websites of all the schools that serve military bases in Scotland.

2. Once you've made a shortlist give them a call and tell them you're interested in enrolling your child with them.

They will probably encourage you to visit them in person so they can show you around but for lots of Armed Forces parents a visit is not practical.

Ask if you can schedule a phone call with the headteacher instead.

3. We don't publish league tables in Scotland but if you want to read copies of the official government inspection reports on individual schools visit www.education.gov.scot/parentzone and type in the name of the school you are looking for.

4. You can also talk to other Forces families but bear in mind that every individual has a different point of view and experience.

What works for another family and is their child's experience won't necessarily be the same for you. You know your own child better than anyone. You know what they need and the kind of environment that would be best for them.



APPLYING FOR A PLACE

1. Identify the school you want your child to go to.
2. Contact the school and they will send you all the forms that you need to fill in to enrol your child.
3. If you are applying for a place at a school that is not in your catchment area you will need to make a placing request - the school will talk you through how to do this.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT NEEDS

(what you need to know if your child needs extra help)

In Scotland....

1. We support children according to need.
2. You don't need a formal diagnosis to get extra support.
3. It is assumed that the additional support needs of a child will be met within the mainstream school and that support will be provided there.
4. In Scotland there are additional support needs staff available to every school.



ENQUIRE is the additional support for learning advice and information service for parents in Scotland.

If you need personal advice on your specific circumstances contact them on 0345 123 2303.

ENQUIRE
Helping you understand additional support for learning

1 in 4 pupils in Scotland have an identified additional support need

Children and young people may require additional support for a variety of reasons either for short period of time or throughout their education. Reasons will vary but they could include:

- being particularly gifted
- moving frequently
- having English as a second language
- social, emotional or behavioural difficulties
- problems at home
- bullying
- a sensory impairment or communication problem
- a physical disability
- a learning difficulty
- being a young carer

There are 138 special schools in Scotland

The inclusion and education of children with additional support needs is generally met in mainstream schools.

Many mainstream schools are very successful in meeting the needs of all children. However, the needs of some children and young people will be better met in specialist settings rather than in mainstream schools.

It is important that parents' and children's views are taken into account when it comes to school placement and that there continues to be on-going discussion and an element of choice in provision.

Approaches differ between local authorities. Some authorities offer specialist settings (shared facilities) within mainstream schools; others do not have any special schools.

Many of our special schools are among the best schools in Scotland and ensure positive outcomes for children and young people and high-quality support for them and their families. Excellent education is offered, with very effective leadership from headteachers and principals.

GIRFEC. WHAT DO YOU NEED TO KNOW?

Getting It Right For Every Child (sometimes shortened to GIRFEC) is a national approach which schools and teachers in Scotland use in supporting the wellbeing of children and young people.

As an Armed Forces parent you need to know about the getting it right for every child approach because it is a central part of our education system and is how we offer support to children and families.



The approach ensures children and young people are supported individually and offered the right help, at the right time, from the right people.

Schools are able to offer direct advice or support from their own resources. If needed, and with parental agreement, they can also seek help from another service or practitioner.

WELLBEING

'Wellbeing' is at the heart of the getting it right for every child approach.

The Scottish education system recognises that a child or young person's wellbeing is influenced by everything around them.

If their wellbeing is suffering it may have an effect on their ability to achieve their goals.

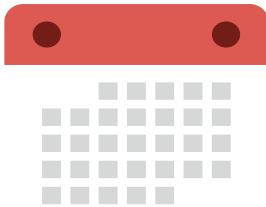


If your child is struggling at school or is unhappy speak to the school and tell them you are concerned about their wellbeing. Schools want parents to keep them informed about how their child is feeling so that they can support them.

CHECK THE HOLIDAY DATES



If you're coming to Scotland from another education system you will probably find that the holidays are significantly different.



It is common for Forces families to book a family holiday, get posted to Scotland, and then find out the schools are not on holiday when they are due to be away. If that happens to you, don't panic. Contact your child's school, BEFORE the holiday, and explain the situation.

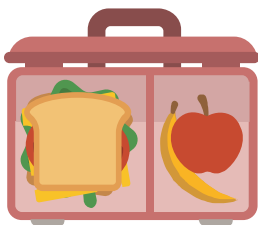


Schools will generally be more supportive when they know you are a Forces family as educators understand some of the challenges and mobility issues that face the military.

Bear in mind that neighbouring authorities may have different holiday dates. If you have children in schools in different authorities, or you work in one authority and your children go to school in another, you may find that their holiday dates are at different times. It is always good to check this before bookings are made.

Schools in Scotland break up for the summer holiday at the end of June and return in the middle of August.

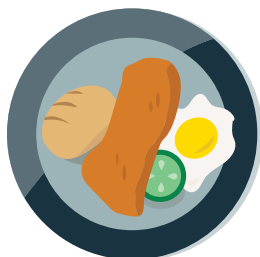
CHILDREN IN P1 - P3 GET FREE LUNCHES



In Scotland all children in Primary 1 to Primary 3 receive free school lunches.

Every Local Authority does it differently but there is usually a choice of a hot or cold meal.

Parents are also able to provide their child with packed lunches if they wish.



ADMISSION DATES - FEBRUARY (NOT AUGUST)

February



28th February (29th in a Leap Year) is the cut-off date for admission into the following school year.

Children born in Dec, Jan or Feb are the youngest in their year.

Children born in March, April or May tend to be the oldest.



As an Armed Forces family this should only affect you significantly if you move to Scotland when your children are aged 4 or 11.

Starting Primary School

Children aged 4 may have already started Reception class in Primary School elsewhere whereas in Scotland, depending on their date of birth, they will still be in Year 2 of Nursery.

The main difference is that nursery isn't a formal school environment - the children don't wear uniform and the days are shorter.

This can be concerning for parents but the things they are learning and the developmental stages they reach should be fairly similar.



What are your options if your child is at primary school in England but on moving to Scotland is still of nursery age?

- 1 The first thing is not to worry. Although it's a nursery rather than a school setting Reception at Primary School and Year 2 of Nursery are broadly similar.
- 2 Children in Scotland are put into age appropriate classes and at 4 years old children who are put with much older peers can struggle. Scottish parents may also ask to defer their child starting school until they are one year older. For that reason it's unusual for children to be moved into P1 if they should be in Year 2 of nursery.
- 3 However if you know you are only going to be in the Scottish system for a short while and will then be returning to England or if your child's birthday is very close to the 28th/29th February it may be possible to apply for early entry to primary school.

Starting Secondary School

The official guidance from the Association of Directors of Education to all schools is that if a child has already started at secondary school and they want to stay at secondary school when they arrive in Scotland, they should be able to.

Children in Scotland move up to Secondary school aged 11/12 which is similar to elsewhere.

Because of the difference in cut off dates (Feb v. Aug) you may find when you move here that your child who is in their first year at secondary school is, technically, supposed to be in their final year of primary school in Scotland.

What are your options if your child is at secondary school in England but on moving to Scotland is still of Primary school age?



1.

The official guidance to all schools is that if your child has already started at secondary school, are being successful and they want to stay at secondary school when they arrive in Scotland, they can.

2.

Bear in the mind that unless your child repeats Secondary 1 he or she will always be in a class with peers who are 12-18 months older than them.

3.

Your child may decide themselves that they want to repeat the few months of Primary school which will give them a chance to make friends and move up to Secondary with their peers.

4.

You could delay your move so that your child finishes their first year of Secondary school in England and then enters the first year of Secondary when they move to Scotland.

There is no single solution that suits everybody.

What you decide will depend on your own personal circumstances, what best suits your family and your child, and how long you think he or she will be in the Scottish education system.

As a parent, what can you do to help your child transition?

1. Try and get the school your child is leaving involved in the transition process.
2. Keep communicating with the new school, even after you've been there for a while.
3. Help the new school identify any gaps in your child's learning.
4. Be aware that your child might take longer than you think to settle.



Get the two schools talking

The process of a child moving from one school to another is called the 'transition process' by education professionals.

It will really help if you can get both schools involved and, ideally, talking to each other.

The school you are going to will want to contact the school you are coming from.

Try and find a specific person at your old school who can speak to the new school. Ideally it would be someone who knows your child and will be expecting the call.

Schools will want to get a copy of your child's school record. Tell your sending school so that they can get the information ready.

Often a lot of what schools need to know isn't in the personal files – it's things only you and your child can tell them. So make a list of what they have learned already or (if they're leaving in the middle of the year) the topics they know the class are going to cover but which they haven't come to yet.

Keep communicating

Life for Armed Forces families can change dramatically at very short notice. Even short deployments and the absence of a parent can have an impact.

Communication is crucial. Try and speak to the school and your child's teacher regularly.

It's not just events affecting your own family that can have an impact on your child – perhaps a neighbour is being posted and your child is finding the sight of a removal van upsetting. Or another unit is being deployed and it's making your child worry about their own parent going away.

All of these things can be unsettling for children and young people and have an impact on their ability to learn.

If you let the school know what is happening they will do what they can to help and support your child.

Identify gaps in their learning

One of the main difficulties for Armed Forces children when they move schools is what's called 'interruptions to their learning' - the gaps in their knowledge of a particular subject because they have missed work.

'Getting it right for every child' is at the core of the Scottish Education system which means that if schools and teachers are able to identify the gaps there are lots of ways that they can help your child catch up.

It will really help if the school knows what your child has covered in their previous school and what they were about to do. This is especially important if you are moving mid-term. You can make it as easy as possible for your new school by getting the sending school to make a list of all the topics they have and haven't done and sharing that with the new school.

The Scottish education system is very flexible with little nationally set curriculum. This means that teachers can fit lessons around individual children and help them catch up or give them additional work if they've already done a subject. But they can only do that if they know. Armed Forces children don't like to stand out so your child might not say anything to their teacher if they don't know something or if they're bored because they've covered something before.

Schools do understand some of the demands of Armed Forces life and when parents make them aware of their challenges, they will try and be flexible. For example if one parent can't make a parents' evening it may be possible to arrange a separate time when you can both attend.



Be aware it might take longer than you think

Although children are resilient, adults sometimes adapt to new environments a lot quicker than children do and it can take up to a year to settle in a new school. This is particularly true if they've had a number of school changes.

Be aware that your timeline might be different to your child's. You may find that you settle in much sooner than your child does.

Feel free to ask for regular catch ups with your child's teacher to see how they are doing.

Make sure you tell your child's teacher if they're unhappy or missing old friends.

WHERE TO FIND FURTHER INFORMATION

This document has been produced to give Armed Forces parents who are unfamiliar with the Scottish education system an overview of how schools in Scotland work.

There are a number of organisations doing some fantastic work to help support your children. Further detailed, in-depth information can be obtained from the following sites:



Website for parents giving information about education in Scotland and ideas to help parents support their children's learning.

www.education.gov.scot/parentzone

Includes choosing a school, the curriculum, Parent Councils and supporting learning at home.



Scottish Government's education department website.

www.education.gov.scot

Contains inspection reports on schools, policy documents and a detailed overview of the Scottish education system.



Scottish advice service for additional support for learning. Offers independent and impartial advice and information about how pupils should be helped to get the right support to be successful learners.

www.enquire.co.uk

Provides a range of clear and easy to read guides and factsheets explaining everything from how to find out if your child needs extra help at school to what should happen when they leave school.



Detailed guidance from the MoD on education in Scotland.

www.gov.uk/guidance/childrens-education-advisory-service



Website for Armed Forces parents and education professionals.

www.forceschildreducation.scot



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