

education guide for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland

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EQUALITY

DIVERSITY

INCLUSION

CITIZENSHIP



one
scotland
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

education guide for
asylum seekers and refugees
in Scotland

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education guide for asylum seekers and refugees in Scotland

This guide gives asylum seeker and refugee parents some general information on school education in Scotland. In addition, it tells you where you can get support and more information. Parents can access relevant sections of the guide as and when required. Newly arrived young people may also find the information in this guide useful.

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section 1: general information

the education authority

Education authorities must make school education available to all children living in the authority area. Education authorities plan and deliver education in their areas. The majority of schools in Scotland are managed by the 32 education authorities.

Education authorities normally offer school places to children on the basis of catchment areas. These are geographical boundaries within each local authority. They determine which school each child is eligible to attend depending on the child's home address. Children living within a particular catchment area are given a place at the school in that area.

going to school

Every child has a right to a free place at school between the ages of 5 and 16. Education is compulsory between these ages. Children normally enter school in August when they are aged between 4 and 5 years old. If they go to an education authority managed primary school they will normally attend the school for 7 years. Primary school runs from P1 to P7. They will transfer to a secondary school at the end of P7, usually when they are between 11 and 12. Most secondary schools offer a 6-year programme of study (S1 to S6), of which children must usually complete the first 4 years.

The school session runs from August to June. Pupils starting school when they are 5 years old will be in Primary 1 (P1). Pupils automatically move to the next class at the beginning of the new school year. There is no need to pass a test or exam. Children who start school when they are older than 5 will normally be placed in a class according to their age. They do not need to start school again from the beginning.

- places in education authority schools are free. Books and materials are free. Parents should make sure that their children have a pencil and a school bag. There may be a charge for extra activities like trips.
- if you want information on financial assistance available for your child to stay in school beyond age 16, contact your education authority.
- most schools are mixed, with boys and girls learning together. Children are encouraged to learn through group discussion, experience, play, using ICT (Information & Communication Technology) and computers, written and reading tasks, and teacher presentations.
- information about a school, what it teaches, how it is run, its achievements, its policies on discipline, school uniform, homework, and contacting teachers, will be in the **school handbook**. Ask your school for a copy.
- as your child progresses through school they will be assessed in each area of the curriculum so that their progress can be monitored. Teachers assess pupils' progress by watching them work and discussing their work with them, and through tests and national assessments that often lead to formal qualifications.
- schools will have different **opening and closing times**. Find out what these are from your school. Some schools may organise after-school activities or homework clubs. After-school care for pupils is also offered in some primary schools. Contact your school about details and costs.
- you will get letters from your child's school with important **information** about events, school trips, etc. Always ask the school if you need help in understanding the letters.
- most schools have a dress code. This usually means wearing certain colours or school sweatshirts. You can often buy these through your school. Contact your education authority if you need financial assistance to buy school clothes.



choosing a school

Parents can ask their education authority for a place at a school outside their local catchment area. They can do this by submitting a placing request . You must contact your education authority for information on schools in your area, and for forms you need to fill in if you wish to submit a placing request. However, you cannot be guaranteed a place in a school of your choice. The Scottish Executive produces a booklet called *Choosing a School* which gives you more information. The booklet can be accessed from the Scottish Executive website:

www.scotland.gov.uk

denominational schools

Most schools in Scotland are non-denominational. You can choose to send your child to a denominational school — a school belonging to a particular faith group. Most of the denominational schools in Scotland are Roman Catholic. You do not have to be Roman Catholic to attend. These schools are managed in the same way as other education authority schools. However, teachers are approved by the religious body concerned and religious instruction in that faith is provided in the school. You can find out more about denominational schools in your area from your education authority.

independent schools

In addition to education authority schools, there are also a number of independent or privately-run schools in Scotland. These schools charge fees. You can get more information on independent schools through the Scottish Council for Independent Schools (SCIS) website www.scis.org.uk or they can be contacted on: 0131 226 2106.

It may be possible for your child to attend an independent school via scholarship. You should contact the individual schools directly for information on scholarships they may offer. Alternatively, you can get a copy of the Directory of Grant Making Trusts which contains details of

charitable trusts throughout the United Kingdom who offer assistance with school fees. It is published by the Charities Aid Foundation, 48 Penbury Road, Tonbridge, Kent, TN9 2JD.

home education

Parents can choose to educate their children at home. You must get permission from your education authority to remove your child from school. Education authorities must be satisfied that the education provided at home is suitable for the child. Education authorities can intervene if they feel that the parent is not providing suitable education.

centres of excellence

Scotland has nine centres of excellence run by education authorities. These schools cater for children who have particular talents. They provide both academic subjects and specialise in certain areas to offer a specific focus on the child's particular talent, like music, sports, dance, or language. Contact your education authority for more information, including advice on funding.

quality in education

All teachers in Scottish local authority schools must, by law, be registered with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). The GTCS is the professional self-governing body for public sector teachers in Scotland.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIE) monitors how well schools are performing. HMIE aims to raise standards and improve the quality of education. HMIE inspects schools (state and independent schools) and publishes reports. Parents have an important role to play in HMIE inspections. Before inspecting a school, HMIE will write to all parents asking for their views about the schools through a questionnaire. They are also given a telephone number to contact HMIE directly with their views. If your school has recently been inspected, you can get a copy of the inspection report from HMIE by calling 0131 244 0648 or through

www.scotland.gov.uk/hmie/



pre-school

Pre-school: ages 3 and 4 —Your education authority must, by law, provide a part-time pre-school education place for all eligible 3 and 4 year olds who live within the authority area, whose parents wish it. Pre-school provision is mixed, with boys and girls learning together. The nursery will be run by teachers and nursery nurses with at least one to every 10 children. Contact your education authority to arrange a pre-school education place for your child.

Involvement in your child's pre-school education — If you would like to become involved in your child's pre-school education you should speak to staff at your child's pre-school centre to see how you could do this. Staff may suggest helping your child at home on particular topics he/she finds interesting, or helping with outings.

section 2: what is taught and how it is assessed

the curriculum framework

The curriculum is what your child will study at school. In Scotland the curriculum is not set down by law. Education authorities and individual headteachers manage and deliver the school curriculum. The Scottish Executive Education Department and Learning and Teaching Scotland provide guidance on the curriculum from P1 until S2, in the form of the 5-14 National Guidelines. From S3 onwards the curriculum reflects the National Qualifications Framework.

The Scottish Executive Education Department is currently reviewing all stages of the curriculum with a view to having a single, coherent curriculum from age 3 to 18. Currently the curriculum framework is as follows:

age 3-5

The curriculum framework sets out how pre-school centres can plan activities and experiences that promote children's development and learning in five key areas:

- › emotional, personal and social development
- › communication and language
- › knowledge and understanding of the world
- › expressive and aesthetic development
- › physical development and movement.

Pre-school education centres are regulated by the Care Commission, who jointly inspect centres with HMIE. The Care Commission and HMIE will take account of the curriculum framework, national care standards and regulations when inspecting provision.



- Pupils can wear what they like. Lunch is not normally provided, but there are snacks and drinks.

age 5-14

There are five broad curricular areas within the 5-14 curriculum. These are:

- mathematics, e.g. numbers; money and measurement; shape, position and movement; problem solving; and information handling.
- language, e.g. reading; writing; talking; listening; and modern foreign languages. Some schools also teach Gaelic.
- environmental studies, e.g. science; society; and technology.
- expressive arts, e.g. music; art; drama; physical education.
- religious and moral education; personal and social development; and health education.

There are also a number of **cross curricular aspects** of the 5-14 curriculum, which address important and developing contemporary issues and prepare pupils for life in a society which is rapidly changing. They include:

- personal and social development
 - education for work
 - education for citizenship
 - the culture of Scotland
 - information and communications technology.
- **Education for Citizenship** is not a specific curriculum subject. It is taught across various areas of the curriculum. This is about schools working with parents to teach pupils respect for themselves and others, and about the rights, duties, and responsibilities of being a good citizen.

- **Religious and Moral Education (RME) and Religious Observance** — RME involves learning about all the world's religions, and about looking at, and discussing, moral issues. Religious observance aims to promote the spiritual development of all members of the school community and to express and celebrate the shared values of the school community. Education authorities and schools must make provision for RME and religious observance. You can choose to withdraw your child from RME and/or religious observance. Speak to your headteacher for more information on RME and religious observance in your school.
- **Language Learning** — Pupils are entitled to learn a modern language beginning no later than P6, for around 6 years of school. This learning should be continuous and progressive, spanning the primary and secondary stages. Pupils are encouraged to study for a national qualification in the language they have learned, although they do not have to do so. It may be possible for pupils to study their first language and get a qualification in it. You can find out more about this from your school.

assessment of the 5-14 curriculum programme

There are six levels in the 5-14 curriculum programme. These are A, B, C, D, E, and F. Children start at level A in P1 and progress up through the levels when the school thinks they are ready. Some levels take longer to achieve than others, and some children may progress more quickly than others. Children move through levels at a pace that suits their learning. Their progress is regularly assessed by teachers.

Parents are given annual written reports and opportunities to meet with teachers to discuss their child's progress, so that any difficulties can be dealt with quickly. What is expected of the child depends on his/her age and any special circumstances.



The 5-14 programme sets targets from A-F, which your child is expected to reach, during his/her progress from P1 to S2. These targets are what pupils can be expected to know and the skills they are expected to have at different levels.

testing

National and internal assessments are used to look at the progress and level of performance of each pupil in reading, writing, and mathematics. Information about national assessment is available on the website at www.aifl-na.net

Level A	Most pupils should attain this level by P3 or P4 (about age 5-7)
Level B	Most pupils should attain this level by P4 (about age 7)
Level C	Most pupils should attain this level by between P4 and P6 (about age 8-10)
Level D	Most pupils should attain this level by P6 or P7 (about age 10-11)
Level E	Some pupils will attain this level by P7, or by S1 or S2 (about age 11-13)
Level F	Some pupils may attain this level by S1 or S2

This table provides only a rough guide. Your child will move through the levels at a pace suited to his/her own learning. Pupils who are new to English, or whose education has been interrupted, may not attain these levels at the time laid out in the table.

age 14-18 (S3 to S6)

Schools offer National Qualifications in numerous courses to their pupils between S3 and S6. Similar to the earlier years of education, there is no curriculum which is laid down in law that schools are required to offer their pupils. However, guidance has been produced which states that during the S3 and S4 years, the core curriculum of all pupils should include study within each of the following areas:

- languages and communication
- mathematical studies and applications
- scientific studies and applications
- social and environmental studies
- technological activities and applications
- creative and aesthetic activities
- physical education
- religious and moral education.

A number of the courses available contribute to more than one of these areas.

In S5 and S6, schools tend to be more flexible in relation to their curriculum but will always take into account the needs of their pupils. The pupils are also given an increased role in making their subject choices and these will usually reflect their interests, future aspirations as well as their previous achievement(s).



choosing subjects

Students select their subjects and levels with help and advice from their teachers, lecturers and the careers service, based on their interests and career hopes. Parents play an important part in helping young people make these decisions. Students in S2 at school receive a booklet from Careers Scotland called *Which Way Now?* that includes advice about choosing appropriate National Qualification subjects. This booklet is available by calling 0845 8 502 502.

national qualifications (NQs)

NQs are qualifications for students in secondary schools although they are also offered in further education colleges. NQs cover hundreds of subjects to suit everyone's interests and skills and are available as Standard Grades, National Units and Courses at Access 1, 2 & 3, Intermediate 1 & 2, Higher and Advanced Higher levels.

Under the NQ programme students can study both academic subjects (e.g. history) and vocational subjects (e.g. hospitality). If a student wishes to take a course that is not offered at his/her school, it may be possible to take the course at a neighbouring school or nearby further education college. Your school can give you information on courses offered at schools/colleges within their areas.

Students can progress through the qualifications in a number of ways. The following Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) table shows how Scotland's qualifications relate to each other. Qualifications at the same level are considered broadly comparable in terms of knowledge, skills or competence required.

SCQF level	Schools	Schools and colleges	Colleges and universities	Workplace (Scottish Vocational Qualifications)
12			Doctorate	
11			Masters degree	SVQ 5
10			Honours degree	
9			Ordinary degree	
8			HND/Diploma of Higher Education	SVQ 4
7		Advanced Higher	HNC/Certificate of Higher Education	
6		Higher		SVQ 3
5	Standard Grade —Credit	Intermediate 2		SVQ 2
4	Standard Grade —General	Intermediate 1		SVQ 1
3	Standard Grade —Foundation	Access 3		
2		Access 2		
1		Access 1		

It is possible to progress from one level to the next. However, such progression is not appropriate for all students and it is also possible simply to move sideways into different subjects at the same level.

core skills

Core skills are seen as the essential skills that help people through their education, training, work and lives. They have been part of school and college learning for some time and the NQ system encourages their development and practice. Core skills are built into teaching and learning



in national units and national courses, so students do not have to sit additional exams to achieve them. There are currently five certified core skills. These are communication, numeracy, Information Technology (IT), problem solving, and working with others.

More information about NQs is provided in the booklet, *Scotland's National Qualifications — A Quick Guide* which is available in a number of languages, by calling the Scottish Qualification Authority customer contact centre on 0845 279 1000 and quoting BD2072.

section 3: parental involvement

how parents can get involved in their schools

Partnerships between schools and parents are a strength in Scottish education. When you take an interest in what your child is learning at school, and know how you can support them at home, it can make a real difference. Involvement in your child's learning has a positive effect on their achievement. Speak to your child's school about how you can be involved effectively.

- **Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs)** —PTAs are partnership bodies between parents and teachers and are involved in social activities and fund-raising. As a PTA member you can bring your own community's perspective to the PTA. It acts as an informal channel of communication between parents and staff. Being a member is a good way of meeting other parents and supporting your child's school.
- **School Boards** — A School Board is a partnership between parents, teachers, and members from the community, who are involved in running the school. It discusses and helps decide school policies. As a member you can improve the communication between the school and your own ethnic group, as well as with the wider community. Parent members are elected by other parents of the pupils in the school. You don't need professional qualifications to be on the School Board. You need to be keenly interested in the welfare of the children in your school and be willing to learn as you go along. You can get more information about School Boards from the Scottish School Board Association (SSBA) (telephone (01387) 260-428; e-mail ssba@schoolboard-scotland.com). If you want to become part of your School Board speak to your education authority.



- › **Parent Teacher Meetings** — All schools hold parents' meetings. These meetings let you speak to your child's teachers and find out how your child is performing and settling down at school. Some schools may provide an interpreter for parents who wish one.

homework

Homework is an important part of the progress children make at school. It helps children prepare for future work in the classroom, makes them take responsibility for learning themselves, and helps develop skills like planning and organising time. You can provide a quiet place for your child to do their homework; encourage your child to find their own style of study; listen to worries and complaints and be patient; and offer encouragement and praise when a task is finished. Talk about what is being learned and remember that learning is a social activity. You can talk about your child's homework in your own language. Ask your child's teacher to give you some ideas on how you can help your child at home.

section 4: additional support

english as an additional language (EAL)

Your child may need additional help in learning English. Some schools give EAL support for this. You should ask your headteacher about EAL provision in your school.

Children can learn English quickly. It is important that you speak with your child in your first language at home. A child should be encouraged to speak and take pride in his/her first language. This will develop good language skills, and enhance their sense of identity and self-esteem.

additional support needs

Some children or young people can receive extra help so that they are able to benefit fully from their time at school. Education authorities should identify and provide extra support when required. Additional support needs can be short or long term. For instance, additional support *may* be required for a child or young person who:

- › is being bullied
- › is deaf or blind
- › has a physical disability
- › is particularly talented
- › is bereaved
- › is not a regular attender at school
- › has difficulty with reading and writing.

These are just some examples.



Many additional support needs can be addressed quickly and with relatively simple measures, if they are identified early. A very small number of children experience profound, specific or complex needs. The education authority can make arrangements for the assessment of these children's educational needs and make provision to meet their needs. If you think your child might have additional support needs, you should discuss this with your child's school or your education authority.

You can contact the Enquire Helpline on: 0845 123 2303. They give advice on additional support for learning and special educational needs.

Textphone: 0131 22 22 439; E-mail:

www.enquire.org.uk/enquire/helpline.html

- The SQA makes arrangements for pupils with additional support needs during examinations. For example, bilingual pupils may be allowed to use a bilingual dictionary in some of their exams.

financial assistance

Education authorities can give financial assistance to help with the costs of school clothes for pupils, and the cost of travel to schools in their areas. They can also give grants to pupils who want to continue in school education after the compulsory school leaving age (16 years). You should contact your education authority for information on the financial assistance they offer. Your child may also be eligible for free school meals. To claim for these you should contact your child's school or your education authority.

school transport

Education authorities are required to provide transport for children attending schools in their areas. Transport is normally free for children who live 3 miles or more from their school (2 miles for children aged 5 to 8). However, some education authorities provide transport for children who live nearer or who would otherwise have to walk along a very busy or difficult route. Even if your child does not qualify for free transport, the education authority may be able to help you with the costs or offer you a spare place on a school bus, at an affordable cost. You should ask the education authority whether your child is entitled to free travel to school or assistance with costs.



section 5: the welfare of your child

attendance and absence

It is important that your child attends school regularly. Pupils who are off school too often risk falling behind with their work. If your child is going to be off school, you should telephone the school as early as possible on the first day that your child is absent from school, and write a letter to your child's teacher on return, explaining why your child is/was off school. It is important to be truthful and to give as much detail as possible, so that staff are aware of the situation and may be able to help if it affects the child's work. If your child is going to be absent from school to join the family in religious observance you should inform the headteacher in advance, so that their teacher can plan how disruption to your child's learning can be minimised.

Parents worried about their child missing too much school should contact the headteacher or the education authority. Many schools and education authorities have staff who specialise in helping families get children attending school regularly.

bullying and racial harassment

Bullying is when someone persistently hurts your child by what they say or do. Some things are normal, like quarrelling. But it is bullying if your child feels powerless to stop it. Bullying in all its forms is wrong and must be taken seriously. It can affect your child's performance at school, their confidence, and personal development.

If your child is being bullied, listen to them and ask for specific details of what happened (when, where, dates, places, names of others involved, etc). Speak to your child and make sure that they feel happy to go back to school. You should phone the school and ask to make an appointment to meet your child's class teacher or the headteacher. Ask for their help in

solving the problem. You can take someone with you to the meeting if you need support. Take a note of what action the school intends to take to deal with the problem. Your school should have an anti-bullying policy, which you can ask to see.

Racist bullying can range from saying hurtful things, which may not be intended to be hurtful, to deliberate physical attacks. Racist bullying can be identified by the motivation of the bully, the language used, and/or by the fact that the victims are singled out because of the colour of their skin, the way they talk, their ethnic background, their nationality, or by their religious or cultural practices. The school must have a race equality policy which you can ask to see. If your child is a victim of racist bullying it is important to tell the school so that they can record it and stop it. Schools will have clear procedures for dealing with racist incidents.

ChildLine Scotland provides a free telephone advice helpline to children who are being bullied. The lines are open from 15.30 — 21.30 Monday to Friday. The Anti-bullying Network also takes phone calls from many family members worried about a young person who has been bullied or accused of bullying others. Their information line is 0131 651 6100, and is open Monday to Friday 09.30 — 12.30 during school term time. Parentline plus provides advice for parents on a range of issues — 0808 800 2222.

- **Race Equality and the Law** — The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 aims to make race equality integral to all public services, including education. By law your school has to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, and promote equality and good race relations. You can ask to see your school's/education authority's race equality policy, which shows how they will do this. Your school must also look at its policies to make sure that they are fair and that they do not have a negative impact on parents and staff of different racial groups. The Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 is enforced by the Commission for Racial Equality, and you should contact them for more information on the Act or if you have a complaint.



health and welfare (counselling and psychological services, learning support, guidance teachers)

All education authorities have a psychological service which gives support to children and to schools. Psychologists help children with problems like learning difficulties, emotional or behavioural problems, language and communication difficulties, and physical disabilities. Parents can ask for help through the school. For more information on the psychological services, contact your headteacher or guidance/pastoral care teacher.

- **Guidance Teachers/Pastoral Care Teachers** — All education authority secondary schools have guidance teachers/pastoral care teachers. These teachers play an important role during the child's life at school. Their job is to help pupils with personal problems like bullying, to help pupils make subject choices, to monitor their progress and attainment across all subjects, and to give advice on the school curriculum, careers and further/higher education.
- Corporal punishment is against the law, and is not used to discipline children in schools. However, all schools have behavioural policies and strategies, and parents are expected to support schools in ensuring good behaviour of pupils.

section 6: frequently asked questions

› **What do I do if my child is unhappy at school?**

Speak to your child and then ask to talk with your child's teacher or headteacher to discuss what the problem might be and how it can be resolved.

› **How can I make a complaint?**

You should first phone, write to, or meet the headteacher of your child's school. If the complaint remains unresolved, or you are not happy with how it is being dealt with, contact your education authority and ask to meet with someone there who can help.

› **Why does the school want to know the ethnic background of my child?**

Collecting this data is important for education authorities to meet their duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. For example, they can see if a particular group of pupils is performing less well than another group, they can then look at the reasons for this (e.g. if there are any policies which are discriminatory and which have a negative impact on a particular ethnic group), and can take action to rectify it.

› **Will my child's details be safe?**

The information collected by schools is sent to the relevant education authority. All education authorities then send this information to the Scottish Executive Education Department. When the Scottish Executive gets this information, it is stripped of identification — so the information can't be linked to an individual pupil. The Scottish Executive will not use this information for anything but research and statistical purposes.



› **Can my child be excused for religious celebrations/observance?**

Attendance at school is important for all children. However, children can be excused from attending school for religious observance. This would normally be marked in the register as authorised absence. Parents should speak to the school before taking their child out of school for any reason during term-time.

› **What can I do if I can't afford to pay for school trips?**

Speak to the headteacher or contact your education authority to ask if they can give you financial assistance.

› **What if I need an interpreter?**

Contact your school in the first instance, and then your education authority, and ask if they can arrange to make one available.

section 7: contacts

32 Education Authorities — all authorities can be accessed through www.cosla.gov.uk

HM Inspectorate of Education — www.hmie.gov.uk

Scottish Qualifications Authority — www.sqa.org.uk; tel — 0845 279 1000

Learning and Teaching Scotland — www.ltscotland.org.uk; tel — 08700 100 279

Scottish Refugee Council — www.scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk; tel — 0141 248 9799

Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland — www.education.ed.ac.uk/ceres/

Commission for Race Equality (Scotland) — www.cre.gov.uk/scotland/; tel — 0131 524 2000

Save the Children — www.savethechildren.org

Scottish Parent Teacher Council — www.sptc.info; tel — 0131 226 4378

Scottish School Board Association — www.ssba.cc; tel — 01387 260 428

Children in Scotland — www.childreninscotland/org.uk; tel — 0131 22 22 425

Children in Scotland (enquire helpline) —

www.enquire.org.uk/enquire/helpline.html; tel — 0845 123 2303

ABN — www.antibullying.net; tel — 0131 651 6100

Scottish Council of Independent Schools — www.scis.org.uk; tel — 0131 220 2106

Parentzone — www.parentzonescotland.gov.uk





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