

## Education systems in the UK: Scotland

### Pre-primary education

Age	3-5
Duration	2 years
Description	Pre-primary education is optional and takes place in state-funded nursery schools and private nursery schools and playgroups. 83% of 3-year-olds and 99% of 4-year-olds take part in pre-school education.
Timetable	No formalised lessons, but approx 15 hours per week. Full time places are harder to secure in the state sector than the private sector.
School year and holidays	State nursery schools follow the school year, roughly from the middle of August till the end of June (exact dates vary slightly between local education authorities), with 2 weeks at Xmas and Easter, 1 week in October and 1 week in February. Private nursery schools run all year apart from public holidays.
Subjects	A curriculum framework helps pre-school centres plan activities that promote children's development and learning in the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emotional, personal and social development</li> <li>• communication and language</li> <li>• knowledge and understanding of the world</li> <li>• expressive and aesthetic development</li> <li>• physical development and movement</li> </ul>
Exams	None

### Primary education

Age	5-12
Duration	7 years
Description	Primary school classes are organised by age from Primary 1 (age 5) to Primary 7 (age 12). All primary schools contain both boys and girls. Each class normally has one teacher who teaches all or most of the curriculum.
Timetable	The division of the day is up to the individual teacher, and much of the work is cross-curricular. The day typically runs from 9am to 3pm, with 45 minutes to an hour for lunch
School year and holidays	The school year runs roughly from the middle of August till the end of June with 2 weeks at Xmas and Easter, 1 week in October and 1 week in February (exact dates vary slightly between local education authorities).
Subjects	There is no statutory curriculum in Scotland but the Scottish Executive offers guidance in the form of the 5-14 programme. This is divided into a number of broad areas and its aim is to provide breadth, balance, coherence and progression. The balance of the programme is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language 20%</li> <li>• Mathematics 15%</li> <li>• Environmental Studies, society, science and technology 15%</li> <li>• Expressive arts and physical education 15%</li> <li>• Religious and moral education 15% (incl. health education and personal and social development)</li> </ul> Flexible time 20%

Exams	5-14 test in English and Maths
Schools	<p>Primary schools vary considerably in size, from those in rural areas with fewer than 20 pupils and one teacher to those with over 500 pupils and several classes at each age. In some small schools, mostly those in rural areas, classes will contain children of several different ages.</p> <p>Independent schools make up 4% of the entire sector.</p>

## Secondary education

Age	Secondary education in Scotland extends from age 12 to 18 but is not compulsory after the age of 16.
Duration	6 years, although only 4 are compulsory
Description	<p>Lower secondary education (age 12 to 16) is divided into two stages – the first two years (S1 and S2) provide a general education based on the 5 -14 programme and the second two years (S3 and S4) contain specialist elements and vocational education.</p> <p>Upper secondary education (age 16 to 18 – S5 and S6) covers the final two years of secondary school and prepares pupils for vocational training, employment or higher education.</p> <p>Education can be provided outside the state system. A small proportion of children and young people (approximately 4%) attend fee paying independent schools.</p> <p>There is no legal requirement for independent schools to follow a particular teaching programme. They are inspected by HM Inspectorate of Education in the same way as state schools.</p>
Timetable	Typically 9am – 3.30pm, with 45 minutes for lunch. The timetable is divided into ‘periods’ of 40-45 minutes each.
School year and holidays	The school year runs roughly from the middle of August till the end of June with 2 weeks at Xmas and Easter, 1 week in October and 1 week in February (exact dates vary slightly between local education authorities).
Subjects	<p>The main subjects taught at secondary school are the same at each stage and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language and Communication</li> <li>• Mathematical Studies and Applications</li> <li>• Scientific Studies and Applications</li> <li>• Social and Environmental Studies</li> <li>• Technological Activities and Applications</li> <li>• Creative and Aesthetic Activities</li> <li>• Physical Education</li> <li>• Religious and Moral Education</li> <li>• Beyond these it is up to the school to decide.</li> </ul>
Exams	<p>S1-S2 exams are 5-14 curriculum tests.</p> <p>National qualifications are available at five levels in upper secondary.</p>

	<p>They bring together vocational and academic subjects, have core skills built into them and are designed to encourage progression.</p> <p>Standard Grades are usually taken at the end of S4, and Highers (required in various combinations for entrance to Scottish Universities) at the end of S5. Additional Highers are often taken at the end of S6, but the Higher course lasts 1 year. Advanced Highers, similar to English A-Levels, are taken at the end of S5.</p>
Schools	<p>Secondary schools vary in size from under 100 to around 2000. The majority of Scottish secondary schools have between 400 and 1,200 pupils.</p> <p>State schools (96% of the sector) are for both boys and girls; independent schools can be single-sex.</p> <p>There are some state-funded Catholic schools.</p>

### Upper secondary education

Age	16-18, ie S5 and S6
Duration	1-2 years
Scottish name	Upper secondary
Description	<p>Upper secondary education covers the final two years of secondary school and prepares pupils for vocational training, employment or higher education.</p> <p>See 'secondary education' section for details.</p>

### Vocational training

Age	14-18 (in schools); 16+ (in Further Education colleges)
Description	<p>Vocational training typically takes place in Further Education Colleges, but there are options for vocational education at secondary school (see 'secondary school' section)</p> <p>Further Education (FE) is central to lifelong learning in Scotland. Scotland's 46 colleges promote wider access for all and work with employers and partners to deliver innovative learning and training opportunities to help individuals, communities and employers maximise their potential, develop and grow.</p> <p>A typical FE college offers a wide range of courses at non-advanced and advanced levels. The FE curriculum spans much of the range of learning needs, from general educational programmes through to highly specialised vocational education and training. The level of provision ranges from essential life skills and provision for students with learning difficulties through to degree level and post-graduate work.</p> <p>The courses are mainly vocational in nature and include both theoretical and</p>

	practical work. Courses are mostly composed of units tailored to the needs of particular employment sectors or to individual student needs.
Scottish name	Further Education /FE
Timetable	Varies according to courses; students can attend day or evening classes.
School year and holidays	The school year runs roughly from the middle of August till the end of June with 2 weeks at Xmas and Easter, 1 week in October and 1 week in February (exact dates vary slightly between local education authorities).
Subjects	Types of course available at FE colleges include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• vocational and general education</li> <li>• link courses for school pupils</li> <li>• industrial pre-employment training</li> <li>• training for employees</li> <li>• courses in the work place</li> <li>• evening classes, vocational and non-vocational</li> <li>• distance learning</li> <li>• community education</li> <li>• access courses</li> </ul> English as a foreign language
Exams	Assessment is mainly by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The majority of courses lead to the SQA National Certificate or to a SVQ. FE colleges also offer SQA National Qualifications and Scottish Group Awards and at advance level courses such as HNC and HND and some colleges also offer degrees.
Schools	Secondary schools, FE Colleges.