

**National summary sheets on
education system in Europe
and ongoing reforms**

2009 Edition

SCOTLAND

SEPTEMBER 2009

1. Education population and language of instruction

The total population of Scotland is 5.06 million. The General Register Office for Scotland's mid-year population estimates (30 June 2007) that there were 1 851 709 people aged 0-29 in the Scottish population (around 37 % of total population). In September 2008 there were 681 573 pupils in 2 722 publicly-funded schools: 370 839 pupils in 2 153 primary schools, 303 978 pupils in 376 secondary schools, and 6 756 pupils in 193 special schools. In compulsory education (P1 to S4, aged 5 to 16), there were 606 215 pupils in total.

Although the main language of instruction is English, Gaelic-medium education (GME) is also available in a number of Scottish primary and secondary schools.

2. Administrative control and extent of public-sector funded education

The First Minister for Scotland is responsible for the overall supervision and development of the education system. Day-to-day responsibility for education is delegated to the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning. She is supported by 2 Ministers – the Minister for Children and Young People and the Minister for Schools and Skills. They are served by the Scottish Government's Directorate General of Education. Ministers are advised by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) and the national bodies dealing with the development of the curriculum (Learning & Teaching Scotland) and public examinations (the Scottish Qualifications Authority). The Scottish Funding Council (SFC) is responsible for the funding of teaching and some research in the 42 publicly-funded colleges, and the 20 Scottish higher education institutions.

Approximately 96 % of the school age population is educated in a publicly funded school (although this drops to around 75 % in the capital, Edinburgh). 'Private' school education is defined as schools that are independent of local authority control and therefore receive no public money

The provision of publicly funded pre-primary and school education is the responsibility of the 32 unitary councils, known as Local Authorities (LAs). They have direct responsibility for schools, the employment of educational staff, the provision and financing of most educational services and the implementation of Scottish Government policies in education. Under the Concordat signed by Ministers and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) on 14 November 2007 they also have a shared role with Ministers in policy making and joint responsibility for the new National Performance Framework. Head teachers in schools are responsible for at least 80 % of the funding allocated to schools by LAs, often in reality nearer 90%. They are responsible for a wide range of aspects of the day to day running of the school, including providing leadership, good management and strategic direction of the school, staff management, development of the school curriculum and behaviour management. From August 2007, Parent Councils replaced School Boards, as the official forum for contact between parents and the individual school.

Further and higher education institutions are almost entirely autonomous. Although they receive substantial public funds from the SFC, they also generate their own income. The ratio of private: public funding varies between institutions but this does not affect their autonomous status. Each institution is therefore responsible for all aspects of administrative control, subject to legislative requirements and conditions of grant.

HM Inspectorate of Education (HMIe) is responsible for external evaluation of the authority education services by operating independently and impartially whilst remaining directly accountable to Scottish Ministers for the standards of its work.

Local authorities also carry out their own quality assessment of the various aspects of the educational provision which they make.

At institutional level schools and further education colleges are responsible themselves for monitoring and evaluating their performance and progress and they are required to produce both an annual Standards and Quality or self-evaluation report on their own work and a development plan, setting out the results of an internal audit and their plans and objectives for the future.

3. Pre-Primary education

The Scottish Government oversees and provides guidance on the provision of pre-primary education by Local Authorities and their voluntary and private partners. They work with Local Authorities, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education (HMIe), the Care Commission and the Scottish Social Services Council to promote high quality provision. Under 'The Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000', local authorities are under a duty to secure a part-time pre-primary education place for all three and four year olds whose parents want one. Attendance is not compulsory. The statutory minimum number of hours for free pre-primary education increased to 475 hours per annum in autumn 2007. Provision is usually delivered over five sessions a week, each of around 2.5 hours, over the school year (38 weeks), with the intention of delivering 570 hours a year for all 3 and 4 year olds by August 2010.

Pre-school education is fully integrated with school education through the new 3-18 curriculum in Scotland, Curriculum for Excellence.

In January 2009, there were 43 310 registrations for the ante-pre-primary year and 53 880 registrations for the pre-primary year of pre-primary education. This equates to c. 96 % of eligible

3 and 4 year olds respectively. However, as children are counted once for every pre-primary centre they attend, these figures may include some double counting.

There were 2780 local authority or partnership pre-primary education providers in Scotland in 2009. 54 centres reported providing pre-primary education in Gaelic. The majority of provision is in local authority run nursery classes or schools.

There were 2,880 nationally registered teachers in posts providing pre-school education under a regular arrangement in January 2009. This compares with 2 710 in 2008.

4. Compulsory education

(i) Phases

Primary schools (P1 – P7) –primary secondary education – ISCED 1	5–11 years of age
Secondary schools (S1 – S4,) – lower secondary education – ISCED 2	12–16 years of age

All children between the ages of 5 and 16 receive compulsory education.

(ii) Admissions criteria

Children are normally admitted to school at the beginning of the academic session in mid-August after their fifth birthday. Local authorities can set a date each year (normally 1 March) so that children born before that date can start school the August before their fifth birthday. In practice this generally means children born between the day term starts in August and the 28/29 February can start school before they are five. There are no restrictions on entrance e.g. entrance examinations. Most education authorities allocate children to schools in their area by defining catchment areas for each school. The Education (Scotland) Act 1980, as amended in 1981 and 2000, allows parents to express a preference for the particular school they want their child to attend, even if they do not live within the catchment area for that school. If parents express a preference for a particular school (through a 'placing request'), the education authority has a duty to grant the request wherever possible. Parents have a right to appeal against an education authority's decision not to grant their placing request, first to the authority itself and then to a court. Pupils are admitted to secondary education from primary schools when they have completed seven years of primary education.

(iii) Length of school day/week/year

Schools are open for 190 days a year. The local authority determines the actual dates of terms. The school year usually starts in mid-August and finishes around the end of June. Local authorities operate very closely to a standard norm for the number of weekly taught hours: 25 hours for primary schools (with reduced hours for infants) and 27.5 hours for secondary schools.

(The length of a lesson is usually between 40 and 50 minutes, and is decided by the school head).

(iv) Class size/student grouping

Since August 2001, classes in the first three years of primary school have had a maximum of 30, but in mixed-age (or 'composite') classes, local authorities try to maintain a limit of 25. The average class size in primary schools in September 2008 was 23.2 pupils. Composite classes had an average of 20 pupils. P1 classes had the smallest average size of single stage classes at 21.1 pupils. The 2008 pupil teacher ratio was 16 in primary schools and 11.8 in secondary schools. The 2008 pupil: teacher ratio in special schools was 3.3.

Pupils are generally taught in mixed ability classes at primary level by a generalist teacher. At secondary level, there is usually a combination of some mixed ability and some setting by ability depending on the subject and at the discretion of the school and the local authority. They may be taught as a whole class or in groups within the same class in order to differentiate teaching. Pupils have different specialist teachers for each subject.

(v) Curriculum control and content

The curriculum in Scotland is not prescribed in statute; by law there are only two subjects which must be taught by Scottish schools: religious education and religious observance and Gaelic in Gaelic speaking areas. At primary level, the curricular areas are Language, Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Expressive Arts, and Religious and Moral Education with Personal Social Development and Health Education. At lower secondary level the curriculum is divided into two stages. The first two years (S1 and S2) provide a general education following the National 5-14 Programme. The third and fourth years (S3 and S4) have elements of specialisation and vocational education for all. Teachers are free to select their own textbooks and teaching materials and resources, although some schools will have set textbooks for particular subjects at particular stages of learning.

The curriculum is currently being reviewed and revised in Scotland under Curriculum for Excellence (<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/>), the Government's reform programme of education which formally started on 1 November 2004 with publication of 'A Curriculum for Excellence – The Curriculum Review Group' and 'A Curriculum for Excellence – Ministerial Response'. Final guidance for teachers on the new 3-18 curriculum was published on 2 April 2009, superseding previous curricular guidance at 3-5, 5-14 and the upper secondary stages – <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/>. Schools will begin to adopt the new curriculum from August 2009, with schools expected to adopt Curriculum for Excellence in full from August 2010.

(vi) Assessment, progression and qualifications

Since 2002, 'Assessment is for Learning' (AifL) has been an important feature of school education. This model encourages schools to put the learner firmly at the centre of the assessment process and to use assessment as part of learning and teaching. In June 2005, the then Scottish Executive made an explicit commitment to introduce AifL approaches into all Scottish schools (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/06/2393450/34518>).

At primary level, teachers assess their pupils' progress in a variety of ways which include watching them work, discussing their work with them, setting special tasks in which the teacher can make judgements about the pupils' performance and setting tests, some of which will be school tests and others using national assessment materials. They are given guidance on the process of evaluation in the publication: 'National Guidelines: Assessment 5-14'. Teachers can use national assessment bank materials in English Language (reading and writing) and Mathematics to confirm their professional judgement of the attainment levels reached by pupils. There are no grade retentions. Pupils are admitted to secondary education from primary schools when they have completed seven years of primary education (age 12).

In secondary school, pupils are subject to continuous assessment according to the internal procedures of each school and are promoted automatically to the next class. In the first two years of lower secondary education (S1/S2) assessment is carried out in accordance with the national 5-14 guidelines. Usually from S3, pupils begin to study for National Qualifications (NQ) from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). These are intended to be attainable by all pupils, covers individual subjects (Maths, English, Geography etc) and core skills (communication, problem-

solving, team working etc). NQs use a combination of external examination and internal assessment moderated by the SQA. Since 2005, schools have been given the flexibility to present pupils for these exams earlier.

5. Post-compulsory education/upper secondary and post-secondary level

(i) Types of education

Secondary schools (S5 – S6) – general upper secondary education (ISCED 3)	16-18 years of age
Further Education Colleges – general and vocational upper secondary education and post-secondary non-tertiary (ISCED 3 and 4)	16+ years of age

Those pupils that do not leave formal education at the end of S4 (end of ISCED 2) will either progress to ISCED 3, normally at the same secondary school, or will move to one of 42 further education (FE) colleges for ISCED 3 and 4 level National Qualifications (NQ) or Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) courses. Local Authorities have also developed partnerships with local colleges to provide college courses, usually with a vocational focus (part-time or combined school and workplace courses), to school pupils, either in the school or college. The policy intention is to increase and further enhance such partnerships.

(ii) Admissions criteria

There are no admissions criteria for continuing to ISCED 3 in a secondary school. However, in order to take some courses, the school may impose specific requirements. Admission to colleges is at the discretion of each college.

(iii) Curriculum control and content

Students choose courses of study leading to nationally recognised Scottish Qualification Authority National Qualifications from the range offered by the school or colleges. Schools and LAs decide on what and how to teach at this level, as with lower secondary. Colleges are entirely free to decide on curricular content.

(iv) Assessment, progression and qualifications

A programme of National Qualifications for everyone studying beyond Standard Grade has been in place since August 1999 for schools, colleges and other centres. These are managed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority and certificates include grading on subject areas studied and core skills.

Forms of assessment depend on the qualification, but may include one or more of written, oral and practical examinations or continuous assessment. Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) are generally not assessed through examinations but require candidates to demonstrate their competence in specified tasks. Qualifications include the Scottish Qualification Certificate at Higher Grade (Highers), Advanced Higher Grade and Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs). The public consultation on future arrangements for National Qualifications under Curriculum for Excellence ran from June to end of October 2008.

6. Higher education

(i) Structure

There are 20 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), comprising 14 universities and six other institutions. HEIs offer university and non-university level programmes (degree and sub-degree).

Courses at higher education level are also offered by further education colleges (mainly Higher National Certificate –HNC- and Higher National Diploma – HND) and there are close collaborative links between the two sectors.

(ii) Access

All HEIs are autonomous bodies and each determines its own admissions policy and requirements for each course. In most cases, applicants require ISCED level 3 qualifications although other routes are offered to attract applications from people returning to study after a gap. In recent years greater provision for these students has led to the development of special access courses with guaranteed places for successful participants.

Since autumn 2000, tuition fees have been abolished for Scottish domiciled students and EU students who undertake full-time non-advanced degree courses. Some part-time students in receipt of state benefits may also be eligible to have their fees waived. In addition, from autumn enrolment 2008, a £500 part-time fee grant was introduced. Students whose individual income is £18 000 or less and who are studying at 50% or more of a full-time HNC/HND/Undergraduate Degree course (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework – SCQF level 7, 8, 9 and 10) will qualify for this funding. This will replace the current part-time loan and will be delivered through ILA (Individual Learning Accounts) Scotland.

From autumn 2007, children of asylum seeker families, and young asylum seekers enjoyed the same access as all children to full time further and higher education as long as they meet certain criteria, including age and time resident in Scotland, which are laid out in the Amendment of the Students' Allowances (Scotland) Regulations 2007.

(iii) Qualifications

Within the three cycle system, students can study a range of courses at higher education level, including: a generally one year Higher National Certificate (HNC); two year Higher National Diploma (HND); three year ordinary degree; and four year Honours degree, although there is flexibility depending on the subject and/or institution concerned. The Framework for Qualifications of higher Education Institutions in Scotland has been self-certified as compatible with A Framework for Qualifications of The European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

Higher National Qualifications such as HNC and HND are administered by SQA – Scottish Qualifications Authority. Degrees are awarded by HEIs with degree-awarding powers.

A new Scottish lifelong skills strategy 'Skills for Scotland' (<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/09/06091114/0>) was published in September 2007. The strategy is a call to action to create a cohesive system that supports the lifelong development and use of skills that is centred on the individual and is responsive to employer needs. It covers the development and use of skills at all stages of life, including the contribution of early years provision, schools, colleges, universities, community learning partnerships and workforce development. The strategy is now being implemented.

7. Special Needs

Pupils with special needs, or 'additional support needs' as these are known in Scotland, are educated within mainstream schools wherever possible, with targeted support, where this meets the best interests of the child. For pupils with very significant additional support needs, there is a variety of provision, including day or residential special schools or units and special classes.

Local authorities determine what special needs provision to make for their pupils, but for most pupils the provision is co-ordinated by specialist learning support teaching staff. Approximately 99% of pupils with additional support needs are educated in mainstream schools.

8. Teachers

In publicly funded schools, the total number of teachers in primary schools at September 2008 was 23 171, 92 % of whom were female and 12.4 % part-time. In secondary schools there were 25 767 teachers, 60 % female and 7.5% part-time. In Special schools there were 2 048: 81 % female and 11.6 % part-time.

School teachers in the public sector in Scotland are appointed and employed by local authorities, and do not have civil servant status. Their conditions of service are negotiated at the national level by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers (SNCT), a tripartite body comprising membership from the local authority employers, representatives from the teacher organisations and the Scottish Government.

All who wish to teach in publicly funded primary and secondary schools in Scotland are required to have undergone initial training and to hold a Teaching Qualification (TQ) in order to be registered as teachers with the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). Teachers who have achieved a Teaching Qualification (TQ) are provisionally registered with the GTCS. Through the Teacher Induction Scheme, all newly-qualified teachers in Scotland can gain access to a teaching post for one year immediately following qualification. Full registration then follows a period of probation and assessment (which generally lasts for one year). To become fully GTCS registered, probationers have to meet the standards set out in the Standard for Full Registration (SFR).

Most secondary teachers, after gaining a degree in the subject they wish to teach (e.g. Chemistry, English, and Physical Education etc) enter the teaching profession through undertaking a Professional Graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) course. A few enter through the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) degree route which is offered in a limited number of secondary subjects and a few through combined degrees which include subject study, study of education and school experience.

Teachers for primary schools and pre-primary education centres enter the profession through either a 4-year course leading to a B.Ed qualification or through a one-year PGDE (Primary) course. Graduates undertaking the PGDE (Primary) route are required to satisfy the entry requirements to courses of Initial Teacher Education in Scotland. All degree qualifications are acceptable for entry to the PGDE (Primary) course.

Teachers appointed to the post of Head teacher need to have met the Standard for Headship.

9. Current reforms and priorities

Since the Scottish Parliament elections in May 2007, Scotland has been governed by a Scottish National Party (SNP) minority administration. They have made a number of commitments concerning pre-school, school and post-school education since coming to power. A major administrative change at central level is that all levels of education are now governed by the same Ministry and Ministerial team, as described above in section 2.

Pre-Primary Education

The statutory minimum number of hours of free pre-primary education rose from 412 to 475 in August 2007 and currently remains at 475. The Concordat with local government includes a commitment to increase this to 570 hours in August 2010.

Over the next two years a new nutritional plan will be implemented using resources of £19 million to improve nutrition of women of child bearing age, pregnant women and children under 5 in disadvantaged areas.

School Education

The substantial review of the 3-18 school curriculum – **Curriculum for Excellence** – is nearing completion. Latest information can be found on the website: <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/>.

Guidance for teachers on the new 3-18 curriculum was published on 2 April 2009, superseding previous curricular guidance at 3-5, 5-14 and the upper secondary stages – <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/experiencesandoutcomes/index.asp>.

Schools will begin to adopt the new curriculum from August 2009, with all schools expected to adopt Curriculum for Excellence in full from August 2010. *Building the Curriculum 3*, the new framework for learning and teaching under the new curriculum, aims to provide a greater freedom for schools and for teachers around the design of the curriculum and how to deliver experiences and outcomes within and across curriculum areas – <http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/curriculumforexcellence/buildingthecurriculum/guidance/btc3/index.asp>

In June 2009 the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning announced changes to **National Qualifications under Curriculum for Excellence** from 2013/2014, following a public consultation. The changes will mean that a new qualification – the National award – will replace Intermediate and Standard Grade; new National Literacy and National Numeracy awards will be introduced, to be taken from S3 (age 15) onwards; and the existing Access, Higher and Advanced Higher qualifications will all be retained and updated to fully reflect Curriculum for Excellence. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2009/06/11154737>.

The Scottish Government introduced **new science and language baccalaureates** in August 2009. The Scottish Science Baccalaureate and Scottish Language Baccalaureate aim to encourage more young people to study sciences and languages in ISCED 3. The new element of the award is an interdisciplinary project to be undertaken by learners in S6 (aged 17/18). The first awards will be made in August 2010.

In a major drive **to cut class sizes** and protect the role of teachers in pre-primary education, local authorities were given funding to employ an additional 300 new teachers for the 2007/08 school year to be employed in pre-schools and primaries. 250 extra teacher training places were also made available in this year. The government are expecting approximately 20 000 new trainee teachers to have entered training by 2011. The current number of teachers in September 2008

stands at 53 597. The Scottish Government has been working with nutritionists to be able to establish new **nutritional guidelines** for school meals which came into force in August 2009. This put healthy options on the plates of pupils everyday in a bid to stop unhealthy habits taking hold. The Government has also extended entitlement to free school meals for all P1-P3 (aged 5-7) pupils and to children of families on both maximum child tax credit and maximum working tax credit. Additionally, as part of 'Building the Curriculum 3' there is a commitment that pupils should undertake 2 hours of physical education every week in schools in a drive to promote healthy living amongst school pupils.

An extra £40 million was added to **The Schools Fund** which provides capital grant funding to councils for the maintenance and refurbishment of school buildings last year. £3 billion has been made available (2008-11) to local authorities over the next three years to secure investment in infrastructure including schools, including an extra £115 million in 2008-09. A new school estate strategy will be announced at the end of September 2009 with a focus on 9 principles of good school building and design, including consultation with pupils and using schools effectively as whole community resources.

Post-School Education

Launched by Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong learning on 27 April 2009, **Valuing Young People** is a common reference point for anyone working with young people. It will support a much wider partnership in the delivery of outcomes and opportunities for young people. The common principles, to which 13 national organisation have signed up, should provide a shared understanding and some common ground to negotiate partnership working within and out with the youth sector. <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2009/04/21153700/8>.
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/270002/0080381.pdf>.

'Supporting a Smarter Scotland: A consultation on supporting learners in higher education', was launched by the Government in December 2008 and closed on 30 April 2009. This paper asked for the views of stakeholders about our intention to replace the current system of student loans with a fair and affordable system of means tested grants. The focus of the paper is the mainstream support available for those undertaking full-time undergraduate study in HE, whether at college or university. The aim is to issue a final report on the consultation by the end of September 2009.

'Skills for Scotland: A Lifelong Skills Strategy', published in September 2007, provides a new agenda for skills and learning in Scotland. Covering early years provision, schools, further and higher education, work related learning and informal learning opportunities, as well as looking at information, advice and guidance – it outlines the Government's aims, ambitions and plans for making Scotland's skills base truly world class, ensuring we develop the skills required for the 21st Century. In February 2009 a 'Skills for Scotland Update' was published by the Scottish Government. When the skills strategy was launched three major areas were identified in which the government wanted to effect change: a focus on individual development, a response to the needs of the economy and the demand of employers and the creation of cohesive structures. The Update captures progress that has been made in all three areas.

For more detailed information on education systems in Europe, you may consult the EURYDICE data base, EURYBASE (<http://www.eurydice.org>)