

Information for Parents: Education in Scotland

Children begin their education at the age of 3 in **nursery** (pre-school). At the age of 5, they progress to **primary school** (P1 - P7). At the age of 12, they move to **secondary school** (S1 - S6).

The **Broad General Education** phase stretches from the age of 3 until the age of 14 (end of S3). This is followed by the **Senior Phase**, from age 15 (S4) to age 18 (S6). In the Senior Phase, young people work towards national qualifications. They can choose to study at school, at college or in other ways (e.g. job training, distance learning).

The Scottish Curriculum - 'A Curriculum for Excellence'

The central aim of the Curriculum for Excellence is to give every child the best possible chance to realise their full potential and become:

successful learners - confident individuals - effective contributors - responsible citizens

Learning and Teaching: *What does learning look like in Scottish schools?*

The learning *experiences* of children and young people are placed at the heart of the curriculum, aiming to bring real life into the classroom and also take learning and lessons beyond the classroom.

The four **Contexts for Learning** are:

- Ethos and life of the school as a community
- Curriculum areas and subjects
- Interdisciplinary learning
- Opportunities for personal achievement

Teaching often involves group work and pupils are encouraged to be 'active' learners, asking questions, investigating and bringing their own experiences to the learning process. Lessons often involve ideas and information from a number of subject areas, and so teachers are working more and more in an inter-disciplinary way.

Curricular Areas: *What subjects will my child study?*

The Broad General Education is split into **8 curriculum areas**: expressive arts, languages and literacy, health and well-being, mathematics and numeracy, religious and moral education, sciences, social studies, technologies.

All teachers are also responsible for developing children's skills in three key areas:

Health and Well-being: there is a shared responsibility to take a holistic approach to ensure that children and young people are nurtured, respected, included, healthy, active, responsible, safe and achieving.

Literacy: all teachers help learners to improve their literacy skills by creating opportunities which extend pupils' experiences of reading, writing, talking and listening.

Numeracy: all teachers help learners to develop and apply their numeracy skills in a range of contexts.

Each of the Curricular Areas is broken down into a set of **Experiences and Outcomes** which reflect children's learning and achievements. These are statements from a pupil's perspective and often take the form of: "I can..." or "I have ...".

For example: Sciences: Planet Earth: Biodiversity

Early Level (pre-school to P1):

'I have helped to grow plants and can name their basic parts. I can talk about how they grow and what I need to do to look after them'

Fourth Level (S1 to S3)

'Through investigating the nitrogen cycle and evaluating results from practical experiments, I can suggest a design for a fertiliser, taking account of its environmental impact.'

Curricular Levels: *What are the levels of study?*

There should be continuity in learning and learners will have the opportunity to progress through six Curricular Levels, from the age of 3 to the age of 18. Each of the Levels generally spans three years. However, children progress at different rates and some may need additional support, while others will achieve certain learning skills sooner.

Level	Stage
Early	the pre-school years and Primary 1, or later for some
First	to the end of Primary 4, or later for some
Second	to the end of Primary 7, or later for some
Third and Fourth	from Secondary 1 to S3, or earlier/later for some
Senior Phase	from S4 to S6, in school/college/other type of study, until the age of 18

Throughout the first four levels all learners are offered a broad, deep, general education, which builds on prior learning. This provides a good foundation for moving on to studying for qualifications, at the right level for the pupil, in the later stages of secondary. Schools design their curriculum to suit their own school context and to meet all learners' needs. However the curriculum in every school is governed by the same seven principles: **Challenge and enjoyment; Breadth; Progression; Depth; Personalisation and choice; Coherence; Relevance.**

During the Third and Fourth Levels (S1-S3), learners and teachers, in partnership with parents, may decide if and when learners should begin to specialise in a subject. This increasing specialisation allows for learning at a more advanced level, depending on ability and interest. In S3, learners will choose which qualifications to take in the Senior Phase (see below).

Transition through the Levels *What are the key points in my child's education?*

Effective transition arrangements are especially important in Curriculum for Excellence to ensure continuity of learning for each pupil. Key transitions are:

- during the Early Level (from pre-school to primary)
- from the Second to the Third Level of learning (moving from primary to secondary)
- in S3, when learners choose which qualifications to take in the Senior Phase
- during the Senior Phase, so as to ensure a positive destination into higher education, work, training or college.

Parent involvement at all stages is very important in ensuring children make the best possible transitions. (For more information, see 'Parents as Partners in their Children's Education'.)

The Senior Phase *How will my child prepare for employment, further training or study?*

The Senior Phase runs from S4 to S6 (up to the age of 18). Learners can study in school, at college or in other ways (e.g. job training, distance learning). The Senior Phase aims to enhance knowledge, understanding and skills through qualifications and other learning. In this phase young people will study and be assessed for qualifications from S4 (age 15-16) onwards. (For more information on qualifications, see 'Assessment, Reporting and Qualifications'.)

Staying in learning after 16 (whether at school, at college, in training or a combination of these) offers young people the best chance of long term employability. Curriculum for Excellence aims to offer all young people appropriate, relevant and attractive choices to continue their learning when they reach the age of 16.

For more information speak to your local school or visit:
www.parentszonescotland.gov.uk
www.ltscotland.org.uk
www.sqa.org.uk

Other EAL Service information leaflets for parents:

Assessment, Reporting and Qualifications
Parents as Partners in their Children's Education