

Scottish education – a guide to phrases

Advanced Higher	Advanced Highers are National Qualifications and build upon the work done in the Higher awards. The awards are graded by performance in national examinations and also require candidates to pass all unit assessments associated with the course.
A level	A (advanced) levels are taken in some schools in Scotland, particularly independent schools. A levels are two-year study courses and in most cases pupils should have passed a GCSE or equivalent Scottish qualification in the subject they wish to take at A level.
CSYS	The Certificate of Sixth Year Studies has now been phased out and replaced by Advanced Higher.
Eco school	Eco Schools is a programme for promoting environmental awareness in a way that links to many curriculum subjects, including citizenship, personal, social and health education (PSHE) and education for sustainable development. It includes an award scheme that encourages schools to work with the wider community.
Free meal entitlement (FME)	In accordance with Scottish Executive legislation, students from low income families are entitled to free school meals.
Full-time equivalent (FTE)	This means there is the equivalent teaching time of, for example, 45.5 full-time teachers in a school. This will be made up of a variety of full-time and part-time posts.
Gaelic medium education	The purpose of Gaelic medium education (GME) is to educate children through the use of the Gaelic language. It aims to take children to the same level of fluency in Gaelic and English by the time they leave primary school. It is not necessary for parents to be Gaelic speakers for their children to follow GME. Most of the children in GME throughout Scotland come from homes where neither parent speaks Gaelic.
Gaelic medium unit	A Gaelic medium unit caters for pupils in mainstream education who are taught some curriculum subjects through the medium of Gaelic.
Grant-aided	Grant-aided schools are schools which are independent of local authorities but supported financially by the Scottish Executive. Often these schools provide education for children and young people with special educational needs.
Higher	Highers are National Qualifications and are usually taken in the fifth and sixth years of secondary education at about age 17 or 18. Highers are required for entry into higher education. The awards are graded by performance in national examinations and also require candidates to pass all unit assessments associated with the course.
Independent school	An independent school is a school which is not under the management of an education authority, which is not grant-aided and which provides full-time education for at least five pupils of school age. Member schools are registered with the Scottish Executive Education Department and are subject to inspection by Her Majesty's Inspectors. The Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) promotes and supports the contribution made by independent schools to education in Scotland. Details of schools in the rest of the UK are available on the Independent Schools Council website.
Integrated community school	An integrated community school encourages closer and better joint working among education, health and social work agencies and professionals, greater pupil and parental involvement in schools, and improved support and service provision for vulnerable children and young people.

Integrated special unit	An integrated special unit caters for pupils in mainstream education who, due to their additional support needs, require individualised or small group specialist teaching in specific areas of the curriculum.
National Qualifications (NQs)	Scotland's system of National Qualifications, which is managed by the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), ensures that learners receive recognised awards for their achievements. National Qualifications include Standard Grades, national units, national courses and Scottish Group Awards.
Pre-school/nursery facility	Some primary schools offer a nursery class for children aged between 3 and 5. Children can attend a morning or an afternoon session, or both in some cases. National guidelines for the education of children aged 3 to 5 have been published in the form of a Curriculum Framework for Children 3-5. Some independent schools also have nursery departments.
Primary	Children in Scotland usually go to school when they are between four-and-a-half and five-and-a-half years old. They spend seven years at primary school (P1-P7) before going on to secondary school around the age of 12 years old. Primary schools are organised in classes, by age, with a mix of boys and girls and children of all abilities. Each class is the responsibility of a class teacher, who will teach most or all of the curriculum, often with some support from specialist visiting teachers.
Secondary	Children in Scotland usually go to secondary school when they are between eleven-and-a-half and twelve-and-a-half years old, having completed seven years at primary school. They usually follow a broad curriculum for two years (S1-S2), at the end of which they choose to study a narrower range of subjects for two years (S3-S4). At the end of S4 they sit examinations in either Standard Grade or Intermediate. In their fifth year they study a smaller number of subjects, usually at Higher although it is also possible to study Standard Grade or Intermediate. In their sixth year they progress to Advanced Higher.
Special school	A school which provides a range of services that are not available in mainstream schools, offering enhanced provision for pupils who have additional support needs. These include social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, profound or complex learning needs and physical and sensory impairment.
Special unit	A special unit is a unit within a school that can offer the services of a special school but within the context of a mainstream school. The provision of a special unit can facilitate opportunities for pupils with additional support needs to work within the mainstream as well, thereby benefiting social development and inclusion.
Standard Grade	Standard Grades are National Qualifications and are generally taken over two years of study in third and fourth year at secondary school with an exam at the end of fourth year. There are three levels of study: credit, general and foundation. The awards are graded by performance in national examinations.

State funded

The majority of schools in Scotland are state funded, through the Scottish local authorities. The pupils' education, books and stationery are provided free. The funding for this is met from resources raised by local authorities (the council tax and non-domestic rates) and from an annual grant from the Scottish Executive. The education budget in each local authority is agreed by the local councillors. Headteachers manage at least 80 per cent of a school's budget, covering staffing, furnishings, repairs, supplies, services and energy costs. Expenditure on new buildings, modernisation projects and equipment is financed by the local authority within the limits set by the government.

Videoconferencing facilities

Some schools offer videoconferencing facilities, which enable two or more individuals in different locations to talk to and to see each other. Videoconferencing can be used to allow pupils and teachers to communicate with others with similar interests. For example, pupils can collaborate on projects with pupils in other schools; they can communicate with subject experts who cannot visit the school; they can access virtually places of educational interest which they might otherwise not be able to visit.