

ADMISSIONS GUIDANCE



**To help Local Authorities and their schools
support children from Armed Forces Families**



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ADMISSIONS GUIDANCE

This guidance is for Local Authorities and has been put together by Directors of Education, Education Officers and Headteachers from Local Authorities across Scotland.

The guidelines are based on personal experience of supporting Armed Forces families and are considered best practice by the Scottish Government, Ministry of Defence, and Local Authorities in Scotland.

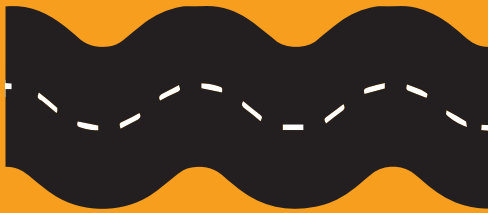


Starting a new school is a key moment in any child's life.

Children from Armed Forces Families move frequently so getting it right for them can greatly enhance their chances of success.



SUMMARY: 7 KEY GUIDELINES



Remember the child's journey



Consider full-day nursery



No going back from
secondary school



Remember you can make an
exception to age placements



Work closely with family
& MoD if child has already
started certificate courses



Reserve places for known
children arriving in
the next year



Contact the MoD

1 Remember the child's journey

Every child is unique and in Scotland we have an education system which is designed to put the needs of each child first. We have the flexibility to tailor decisions in the best interest of the individual.

When an Armed Forces Family registers a child in your school, you can look beyond the immediate situation when considering placement.

Make your decisions within the context of the child's entire educational journey. Where have they come from; what's their previous educational experience; how long are they going to be with you; and where are they going next?



2 Consider full-day nursery

Children in Scotland start primary school later than elsewhere in the UK.

When a child is coming from a different education system they may have already begun learning in a school environment. If they have been attending a full-time reception class at primary school they may find it difficult to return to nursery for only part of the day.

If you can, consider offering parents of children who have already started reception class in primary school the option of a full-day nursery place so they can spend both morning and afternoon in Early Years learning.



3 No going back from secondary school

Once a child has started at secondary school it can be detrimental to send them back to primary school.

If a Forces child has already started secondary school they should not automatically (based on age) be put back to primary school when they arrive in Scotland.

The exception to this would be at the wish of parents, child, and after discussion of child's curriculum journey to date.



4 Remember you can make an exception to age placements

Children in Scotland are placed in age-appropriate classes. Although this is the norm, exceptions can be made by Local Authorities if it is in the best interests of an individual child.

It is essential to view the placement of children from Armed Forces Families within the context of their entire learning journey.



5 Work with the family and the Ministry of Defence

If a child has started external certificate courses, discussions should take place with the family, before posting, to ease the transition process.

The family have the option of working with the MoD to change their moving date to allow the pupil either to complete their current certificate course or to move early so that they can take up a different certificate course elsewhere.

Both schools and parents can often be unaware that this option is available.



6 Reserve places for known children arriving in the next year

Many schools that are located close to military bases find it useful to hold places in reserve for known families arriving.

If you know that you are likely to have children from Armed Forces Families arriving mid-term, discuss with your Local Authority the possibility of reserving sufficient places in your school for the start of the year.



7 Contact the Ministry of Defence

Seek support from the MoD's **Directorate Children & Young People** if arrivals mid-term affect your staffing allocations. They have, in the past, provided some financial support.

Email: dcyp-ceas-pso-4@mod.uk



Transitions of Children and Young People of Armed Forces Families

Background and context

Children and Young People of Armed Forces Families have historically faced challenges when moving from one education system to another as a consequence of parental posting. Such moves are often perceived as problematic due to the variance in enrolment and admission cut-off dates used by different countries. Additionally, it is not always the case that such postings take place at the commencement of an academic year.

For these Forces children, there are particular issues around transition points in a child's academic career, most notably from nursery to primary education, at the point of transfer to secondary education and at the stage where study towards external examinations is undertaken. It is possible within the local context to provide a balanced approach to admissions to school which takes full account of the exceptional circumstances which individual Forces families face as a consequence of posting to Scotland.

The Scottish Government recognises that children from UK Armed Forces Families may at certain points of their education require additional support to benefit from school education in Scotland due to the nature of their parents' and carers' employment. Additional support needs encompass a wide range of issues, including those which might impact on children from Armed Forces Families, such as transitions, interrupted learning, periods of separation and dealing with bereavement.

The Scottish Service Children's Strategic Group (SSCSG), chaired by the Scottish Government, states its core purpose to work in collaboration with key stakeholders to support the education needs of children from Armed Forces Families in Scotland in accordance with the commitments set out in the Scottish Government's *Renewing Our Commitments* paper [www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/02/1650]. ADES and the National Transitions Officer are members of this group.

Some schools and local authorities in Scotland have faced additional challenges in recent years as a consequence of major moves initiated by the Strategic Defence and Security Review of 2010. Postings outwith this will continue to occur as usual for individuals across all three military services, including regular deployments. Such postings can typically vary in length from six months to two years.

Each local education authority has an admissions policy by which it is enabled to allocate and manage available places in pre-school provision and in primary and secondary schools.

In Scotland, all local education authorities use the SEEMiS management information system to maintain data on all pupils. This system includes information specifically on children of Forces families, included as part of the national data check form, and requires the prior permission of parents/carers.

The principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and ensuring the wellbeing needs of each individual child is of paramount importance. In terms of the curriculum which young people follow, Curriculum for Excellence allows teachers to support and encourage individual children to ensure their learning needs are being met.

The Armed Forces Covenant (UK wide)

All Scottish local authorities have made formal commitments under the Armed Forces Covenant; two requirements of which are notable in the context of admission to school.

1. Children of members of the Armed Forces should have the same standard of, and access to education (including early years services) as any other UK citizen in the area in which they live.
2. There should be special arrangements to support access to schools if a place is required part way through an academic year as a consequence of a posting.



Guidance on the admission of Children and Young People of Armed Forces Families to Scottish schools

For every Forces child there must be good practice at the points of transitions, as expected for all learners identified as having Additional Support Needs.

Children and Young People of Armed Forces Families are recognised as having 'short-term' Additional Support Needs at each point of transitions; this means that there must be links between schools (both sending and receiving).

Education authorities will wish to consider for each child and young person with Additional Support Needs whether the transitional duties should apply if they are otherwise at risk of not making a successful transition.

Armed Forces Families are, at times, required to move community and schools with limited prior notice. As with all learners with Additional Support Needs, it is important for Forces children that education records are up to date and evidence of learning is recorded.

It is possible within the local context to provide a balanced approach to admissions to school which takes full account of the exceptional circumstances which individual Forces families face as a consequence of postings to Scotland. The general principle of this advice does not preclude alternative provision being offered following consideration of an individual child's exceptional circumstances in discussion with, and by agreement of,

his/her parents/carers. The most common exceptional circumstance is interrupted learning as a consequence of mobility.

Senior Management should be very clear about their expectations that personalised transition plans should be considered for all Forces children and that staff need to work hard to help these children and young people to continue their education.

The following paragraphs provide advice on the main issues identified by individual education authorities in Scotland; to help consideration of the particular circumstances rather than provide a definitive response to a single set of challenges.

Advice note 1

With regard to nursery/reception issues, authorities are advised that it would be appropriate, if at all possible, to offer parents the equivalent of a full-day nursery place for any child arriving in Scotland, who had commenced in reception in the English education system. This should be seen in the more general context of future nursery provision in Scotland of 1140 hours per year.

Advice note 2

With regard to primary admission, a sufficient number of places at each stage should be reserved in their zone/catchment school for known children from Forces families who are expected to be transferred to the local authority area.

Advice note 3

With regard to primary admission, Authorities should note that, historically, financial support has been made

available to individual Education Authorities where the arrival of children of Armed Forces Families could not be foreseen at the point of teacher staffing allocations. Such support enabled the authority to offer places to children who moved part way through an academic year, and avoided the need to reconfigure classes within the school affected.

An early discussion with the ADES National Transitions Officer is advised. Support may also be sought from the Ministry of Defence's Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP) and the MoD's Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS).

Advice note 4

While some parents express concern that their child is 'being put back' due to the difference in enrolment dates between the Scottish and English education systems, it is important to adhere to the overarching principles in Scottish education, including the expectation that the vast majority of children and young people will have seven years of primary education before transitioning to secondary school. Education authorities must secure that the education is directed to the development of the personality, talents and mental and physical abilities of the child or young person, to their fullest potential. An alternative provision may be offered following consideration of an individual child's exceptional circumstances in discussion with, and by agreement of, his/her parents/carers. However, alternative provision will be rare as all aspects of a young person's development (learning, social and emotional), must be considered. The overall principle remains that young people will be placed in age-appropriate classes. Where a child is academically achieving levels beyond his/her peers, the class teacher

will ensure appropriate challenge is put in place. Equally, additional support will be provided to young people who are perhaps not achieving as well as other peers in their class grouping.

Advice note 5

Authorities should commit to maintaining a pupil within the secondary school sector if the pupil has already been admitted to that sector in the education system from which they are arriving, unless there are extenuating circumstances that would indicate otherwise.

Advice note 6

With regard to selecting courses which lead to external examination or certification, discussion should take place with the family prior to enrolment to consider all options

available to the student. Discussion may also be required with the relevant Military Welfare Officer and with MoD Directorate Children and Young People (DCYP).

This is particularly important if the posting is for a limited time period which is less than the full period of study. Schools will be aware that an adverse impact on a child's education may be a factor which merits review by MoD DCYP when considering individual posting arrangements of serving personnel.

Advice note 7

Overall, decisions should be taken in the best interest of the child and education authorities in Scotland will look beyond the immediate situation when considering placement.

CONTACT

For advice on specific cases, the first point of contact should be Carolyn MacLeod, National Transitions Officer, **info@forceschildrenseducation.org.uk**

Additionally, a set of scenarios on each of the advice notes will be available soon, to further assist local authorities in their decision making.

This guidance note will also be reviewed in light of practice in coming years.



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