



Education jargon buster: a list of terms used in Scottish education

Active Learning	This is when children and young people have opportunities to think and reflect about their learning. By understanding <i>how</i> they are learning as well as <i>what</i> they are learning, children and young people can be actively involved, taking responsibility, making choices and gaining confidence in tackling unfamiliar activities.
Additional Support Needs and Additional Support for Learning	A child or young person has additional support needs if they need more – or different – support than what is usually provided in schools or early learning and childcare centres, to children of the same age. This support is usually referred to as additional support for learning. Whilst there is a range of support needs that can occur, it is likely that most children will require some additional support with their learning at some time in their education.
Assessment	This takes place throughout children's learning. Teachers use formal (eg tests) and informal (eg discussion, observation) and their own judgement to understand how a pupil is doing. Assessment helps teachers and learners to plan the next steps in learning and helps teachers to report accurately on progress to parents and others. It should involve teachers, learners and parents working in partnership.
Achievement and Attainment	Achievement is recognition of the success a learner has had, both in school and outside school. Attainment is part of achievement; it describes the levels and standards a learner has achieved eg completing a certain level or getting a qualification. Parents have an important role in both.
Attainment gap	This refers to any significant and long-term difference in performance or attainment between different groups of pupils.

Broad General Education	This is the learning which is done from the age of 3 to 15 – up to the end of S3. The aim is to make sure children have a wide range of learning experiences until S4 when they will start to specialise in different subjects.
Catchment area	A catchment area for each school is set by local authorities. Children living in a school's catchment area have a right to a place at that school. <i>(See Placing Request)</i>
Curricular Area	Curricular areas are broad areas of study. There are eight curricular areas in Curriculum for Excellence. They are: Expressive Arts, Languages (including English and literacy), Health and Wellbeing, Mathematics (including numeracy), Religious and Moral Education, Sciences, Social Studies (eg History, Modern Studies, Technologies (eg Computing, Graphic Communication).
Curricular Level	In the Broad General Education (early years to S3), there are five attainment levels – Early, First, Second, Third and Fourth. Learners progress through the levels at their own pace.
Curriculum	This refers to the planned timetable of lessons and subject areas taught in a school and the knowledge and skills pupils are expected to gather.
Curriculum for Excellence	Also known as CfE, this is the way schools and early learning and childcare centres organise learning and teaching for 3 to 18 year olds. It includes the Curricular Areas and Levels (see above).
Deferral	Deferred entry to school means that children start primary school one year later than the typical start date. In Scotland, children require to begin their education aged five. This means for those children who are invited to register at school aged four, parents and carers have a legal right to decline this invitation on the basis that their child is not yet five. Instead, parents and carers can choose to defer school start for one year. By agreement with the local authority, this can sometimes be extended to two years for children with complex needs. All 4yr old children deferring school start are automatically entitled to another year of early learning and childcare funding from their local authority.

Deprivation	The lack of things considered to be necessities for contemporary life by UK Governments. Without these essentials, families are considered to be living in deprivation or poverty.
Digital learning	Learning about computers and other technology, and how this can be used to develop learning and creativity.
Digital literacy	The ability to use computer technology and communication tools to find, evaluate, use and create information.
Early Learning & Childcare Centres (Settings)	Babies and young children learn all the time from their experiences. Early years and childcare centres are all those places offering learning and childcare for children up to school age. These include family centres, nursery schools, and nursery classes attached to schools, playgroups and childminders.
Eco Schools (Climate Action Schools)	An international initiative to encourage whole school action for the environment. Schools work to achieve the Green Flag Award by forming an Eco-Committee which completes an Environmental Review and creates an Action Plan with projects on litter and two other topics. The Climate Action Schools framework was announced in 2022 to build on existing activity across Scotland and increase opportunities for learning across five core components: learning for sustainability; climate emergency; biodiversity; litter and pollution; and amplifying pupil voices.
Educators	This is the general name for everyone involved in children's learning eg early years practitioners, teachers, family learning officers, community learning and development officers etc. Parents are often described as their children's 'first or primary educators'.
Emotional intelligence and emotional literacy	The ability to recognise, understand and manage our own emotions and behaviour and to recognise, understand and affect the emotions and behaviours of others. In schools, children and young people work on skills such as active listening, self-awareness, empathy, relationships and emotional control. Supporting children and young people's ability to 'self regulate' ie manage their own feelings, expression and behaviour is now a key part of this.
Equality	

	Equality is about making sure every person has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents. It is also the belief that no-one should have poorer life chances because of where they are from, what they believe, or whether they have a disability or other difference.
Equity	A key term in Scottish education policy, 'achieving equity' means ensuring every child has the same opportunity to succeed.
Ethos	How the values and culture in a school, or organisation, are reflected in the actions and interactions that happen every day.
Evaluation	Evaluation is when something is reviewed and analysed to see if it has been effective. For example, schools and teachers regularly evaluate their work, and whether it has made a difference to children's learning. This helps them to understand what works well, and what needs further development. Children and young people are also encouraged to develop evaluative thinking skills, so they can look at their work critically and can learn to improve.
Experiences & Outcomes	Schools deliver learning 'experiences' for children and young people in the different Curricular Areas (see above). The progress children make in their learning are the 'outcomes'. When schools share information about children's learning with parents eg when they report to parents, this is likely to refer to Experiences & Outcomes and the Curricular Levels that children are working at.
Expressive Arts	These include art and design, dance, drama and music. Children and young people will: • find out about and express their feelings and emotions and those of others • discover and develop their personal, social and cultural identity • learn to recognise and value their local, national and global culture.
Extra-curricular activities	An extra-curricular activity means it takes place in addition to regular school and class activities. This might be organised in the community, by a family or through the school. It includes such things as school clubs, local sports clubs or Scouts/Girl Guides.
Family Learning	Family Learning encourages family members to learn together. Family learning activities can be designed to help parents support their child's learning, as they learn and gain skills themselves at the same time.

Free School Meals	Every child in Scotland at a local authority school can get free school lunches in Primaries 1 to 5. After P5 up until a child is 16, they can get free school lunches if their family is getting certain benefits. Families should contact the local authority or the school's headteacher if they are unsure whether they qualify. Funding for schools from local authorities is often increased in relation to how many pupils they have who have means-related free school meals.
Gaelic Medium Education	Where pupils are mainly taught in Gaelic with English being taught as a second language.
Growth Mindset	This is used in many Scottish schools as a way to encourage children (and others) to learn from mistakes and view them as an opportunity to improve learning and skills. A fixed mindset is where someone believes their basic qualities (like their intelligence or talents) are fixed.. This may lead to avoiding challenges or giving up if something doesn't work. In a growth mindset, people believe their abilities can be developed through hard work and dedication. This creates a love of learning and a willingness to try again when things don't work out.
Health & Wellbeing	Health & Wellbeing is part of all learning and is also a Curricular Area which includes Home & Food Technology and Physical Education. The Health and Wellbeing learning offer to all children and young people covers: • mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing • planning for choices and changes in life • physical education, activity and sport • food and health • alcohol, drugs and risky behaviours • sexual health and relationships. See also Pastoral Care.
Kinship Carers	Kinship care is when a child lives full-time or most of the time with a relative or friend who isn't their parent, usually because their parents aren't able to care for them. That relative or friend is called a 'kinship carer', and it's estimated that around half of kinship carers are grandparents, but many other relatives including older siblings, aunts, uncles, as well as family friends and neighbours can also be kinship carers.

Learning for Sustainability (LfS)	Learning for Sustainability (LfS) is an approach to life and learning which enables learners, educators, schools, and their wider communities to build a socially-just, sustainable and equitable society. Learning experiences are enhanced through effective whole school and community approaches intertwining global citizenship, sustainable development education and outdoor learning to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences.
Literacy	Literacy is part of all learning in Curriculum for Excellence and is the responsibility of all teachers and staff. It is also part of the Languages Curricular Area. Literacy means being able to communicate by reading, writing, listening and talking.
Mothballing	Refers to a temporary decision by a local authority to close a school where the roll has fallen to zero or is very low, with the possibility that the school roll may increase by enough to re-open in the future. Parent Councils and parents should be aware that there is stringent legislation and guidance about closing schools and mothballing should not be used to circumvent these processes. The Scottish Government has issued statutory Guidance under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 , which deals with the issue of mothballing: Ref Para 63.
Numeracy	Numeracy is part of all learning and is the responsibility of all teachers. It is also part of the Mathematics Curricular Area. It means being able to use numbers to solve real-life problems by counting, doing calculations, measuring, understanding graphs, charts and results. It includes: • Number processes – eg addition, subtraction, multiplication and division • Money, time and measurement • Information handling
Outcomes	Outcomes are the skills and knowledge pupils achieve. Teachers weigh up (assess) what pupils know, understand and are able to do. These are eventually reflected in the achievement of Curricular Levels in Curriculum for Excellence.
Parent Council	This is the representative group for parents in schools. Parent Councils are statutory bodies which have rights and responsibilities and are the body which represents the Parent Forum (all the parents and carers with children at the school. (See

	Connect's web page 'What is a Parent Council?' https://connect.scot/resources/what-parent-council-resource
Parent Forum	All parents and carers of children at a school are automatically members of the Parent Forum.
Parental involvement/family engagement	Parental or family engagement can mean any and all involvement of families in the life and work of their child's school or early learning and childcare centre eg the Parent Council or PTA, volunteering with social and fundraising activities, helping in class, attending school shows and events, etc. The involvement of parents and families in learning and in the life of the school has been shown to improve children's outcomes. Children do best when families are involved, wherever this involvement takes place eg at an early learning and childcare centre, at school, in the home or the wider community. It can also mean helping and encouraging your child's learning at home (all learning, not just homework) and showing an interest in your child's school life.
Pastoral care	In early years or at school, there will be members of staff who have special responsibility for the health, wellbeing and education of children and young people, but it is also a responsibility of all staff who work in schools. It also includes responsibility for reporting any child protection concerns.
Pupil Equity Funding (PEF)	Scottish Government PEF is allocated directly to schools and is targeted at closing the poverty-related attainment gap. This funding is spent at the discretion of the headteacher working in partnership with the school community and their local authority. It is good practice for schools to consult the Parent Council, parents and children about PEF bids.
Placing request	Usually, children attend the school in the catchment area where they live. However, some parents may want to place their child in another school – this is known as a placing request. The request must be made to the local council.
Positive destination	A young person leaving secondary school has a 'positive destination' if they go into further education, higher education, training, voluntary work, employment or activity agreements. (Activity agreements are plans to help a young person move towards a positive destination with learning and activity based on their skills.)

Quality and Standards Report/Standards, Quality and Improvement Plan Report	All schools must produce a report that details what they have been doing to improve outcomes for children and young people. They must share this with parents annually. It is based on the school's improvement plan (see below) and what has been achieved in that.
Restorative justice	Restorative justice is an approach used to deal with harm caused by bad behaviour, bullying, or breaking school rules. The aim is to use discussion and agreement of ways forward that everyone involved feels happy with. This could be simply an apology or some tasks that put things right.
Rights Respecting Schools	The Rights Respecting School Award is run by UNICEF UK and encourages schools to have the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at the heart of its work with children.
School Exclusion	Exclusion means a child or young person is being removed from school. Schools must keep a record of exclusions and follow procedures when they exclude a pupil. Schools cannot exclude pupils if it has a 'detrimental impact' on the pupil. Exclusion is discouraged and must be a last resort; alternative arrangements for a child's education must be made by the local authority as soon as possible. https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-involved-part-2-positive-approach-preventing-managing-school/
School Improvement Plan	This plan should show improvement targets for a school. The Parent Council and Parent Forum should help draft this or be actively involved in agreeing priorities. Ideally, pupils should be involved too.
Scottish National Standardised Assessments	The Scottish Government expects pupils in P1, P4, P7 and S3 to complete these online assessments in literacy and numeracy. There is no pass or fail and revision is not required. Information from the SNSAs can be used by teachers to plan, with children and parents, next steps for learning. Parents can ask that their children do not sit these.
Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Awards	These are awards from the main national qualifications body for a wide range of skills and achievements.
Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) National Qualifications	National qualifications are courses taken by young people in secondary schools and colleges. These qualifications include National 1 to National 5, Highers and Advanced Highers.

Shared Care	This is when more than one person looks after a child or children, but those people live in separate homes.
Special school	In Scottish schools, there is a presumption of mainstreaming that means children and young people with additional support needs go to their local schools. When parents and the education authority agree the needs of a child cannot be met in a mainstream school, children may attend local authority-run or nationally grant-aided special schools and national centres.
Special unit	A special unit tends to be based in a school and will usually be targeted to specific needs, for example, an autism or language unit.
Transition	In education, transition refers to moving into education or work or from one stage of education to another. A 'smooth transition' aims to make learning continuous and the settling-in process comfortable for the child or young person, eg from nursery to primary school, primary school to secondary school and from secondary school to further learning, work or an apprenticeship. It can also mean changes from one curricular level to another, from one class to another, or from one year to another. Some children may need extra support at times of transition.
UNCRC	The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international human rights treaty that grants all children and young people (aged 17 and under) a comprehensive set of rights.

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