



Ministry
of Defence

A Guide for Service Families

UK Education Systems



There are **four education systems** across England and the devolved administrations. Service-induced mobility for Service families with children presents a range of challenges, not least in relation to their children's education.

Moving within England or one of the devolved administrations can be difficult but moving across national boundaries within the UK can be particularly confusing.

Set out below are some of the most frequent areas of confusion arising for Service parents when crossing UK national boundaries:

Starting school for the first time

England and Wales

Children are entitled to enrol, on a part-time or full time basis in the first year of their statutory education from the beginning of the academic year (September) after their fourth birthdays. Once they have secured a school place for their child, parents are advised to discuss with the headteacher of the receiving school the most appropriate time for their child to start school. Children are legally required to start full time schooling from, at the latest, the beginning of the term after their fifth birthdays.

Scotland

Children are considered to have reached 'school age' if they are five when they start school at the beginning of the Autumn

Term (mid-August) or if they will reach this age by the subsequent 1st March. Parents who want to enrol their child in school at an earlier age than this must consult the local authority responsible for the receiving school.

Northern Ireland

Children may start school for the first time at the beginning of the Autumn Term (September), provided they have reached the age of four before the previous 2nd July. Children whose birthdays fall between 2nd July in one year and 1st July in the following year are legally required to start school on a full time basis from the beginning of the Autumn Term after their fifth birthdays.

NB Schools in Northern Ireland may, on a discretionary basis relating to the maturity/needs of the children concerned and the availability of space in the schools approached, make early admissions of Service children with July and August birthdays if they have come from outside and/or are likely to return to locations outside Northern Ireland.

Year Groups

The differences between the four UK administrations referred to above have knock on effects for mobile Service children of all ages moving between them. Parents have no statutory right to determine the year group into which their child is admitted other than the one which is chronologically appropriate under the terms of the locally applicable legislation. Northern Ireland is the only administration which makes, within its regulatory framework, explicit discretionary arrangements (as noted above) regarding placements in year groups for mobile Service children. However, Service parents concerned about this issue when their children move into other administrations in the UK should discuss their concerns with the receiving school and/or local authority; receiving schools and local authorities, subject to the availability of places in relevant year groups and the needs of the children concerned, may be prepared to place children in year groups above or below their chronologically appropriate ones.

You may find the following table useful in understanding the relationship between the year groups across the UK:

Corresponding Grades across UK Countries according to years in compulsory education

Year in school	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
1st	Reception (4 - 5)	Primary 1 (4.5 - 5.5)	Reception (4 - 5)	Primary 1 (4 - 5)
2nd	Year 1 (Y1) (5 - 6)	Primary 2 (5 - 6)	Year 1 (Y1) (5 - 6)	Primary 2 (5 - 6)
3rd	Year 2 (Y2) (6 - 7)	Primary 3 (6 - 7)	Year 2 (Y2) (6 - 7)	Primary 3 (6 - 7)
4th	Year 3 (Y3) (7-8)	Primary 4 (7 - 8)	Year 3 (Y3) (7 - 8)	Primary 4 (7 - 8)
5th	Year 4 (Y4) (8 - 9)	Primary 5 (8 - 9)	Year 4 (Y4) (8 - 9)	Primary 5 (8 - 9)
6th	Year 5 (Y5) (9 - 10)	Primary 6 (9- 10)	Year 5 (Y5) (9 - 10)	Primary 6 (9 - 10)
7th	Year 6 (Y6) (10 - 11)	Primary 7 (10 - 11)	Year 6 (Y6) (10 - 11)	Primary 7 (10 - 11)
8th	Year 7 (Y7) (11 - 12)	S1 (11 - 12)	Year 7 (Y7) (11 - 12)	Year 8 (11 - 12)
9th	Year 8 (Y8) (12 - 13)	S2 (12 - 13)	Year 8 (Y8) (12 - 13)	Year 9 (12 - 13)
10th	Year 9 (Y9) (13 - 14)	S3 (13 - 14)	Year 9 (Y9) (13 - 14)	Year 10 (13 - 14)
11th	Year 10 (Y10) (14 - 15)	S4 (14 - 15)	Year 10 (Y10) (14 - 15)	Year 10 (14 - 15)
12th	Year 11 (Y11) (15 - 16)		Year 11 (Y11) (15 - 16)	Year 12 (15 - 16)

Transition between phases of education

Not only are there differences between the administrations about when children start school for the first time but also when they move between phases of education (eg primary to secondary). England has the most complex patterns of school provision. Differences between local authorities in England result in children of a wide variety of ages having to change schools at different stages. Service parents moving to a different local authority should always try to obtain a clear understanding of the age ranges of local schools in the part of the authority in which they will be located.

NB Patterns of provision, in respect of transfer ages, can differ between different parts of one authority, as well as between authorities.

England

The age ranges of schools in England, for children of statutory school age (ie 4+ to 16), will be as follows:

- **Infant schools** (4+ to 7)
- **Junior schools** (7+ to 11)
- **Primary schools** (4+ to 11)
- **Middle schools:** the table overleaf sets out the age ranges and numbers of middle schools in local authority locations in England. Please note that a 'middle school deemed primary' offers a primary style curriculum and a 'middle school deemed secondary' offers a secondary style curriculum. It is quite possible that the local authorities listed below will also offer provision in schools with other age ranges (eg infant, junior, primary, secondary).

- **Secondary/High schools** (generally 11 to 16 or 11 to 18 but, in areas with middle schools, the starting ages for these schools may be 12, 13 or 14)

- **Studio schools:** for students aged 14-19 who require an education based on the world of work which promotes employability and citizenship

- **Sixth form colleges** (16 to 18)

- **State boarding schools:** most of these make provision only in the ages ranges served by secondary/high schools but two offer primary provision as well (7 to 18 and 4 to 16)

- **Special schools** offer provision for those children with more complex and long term special educational needs. Children placed permanently in special schools must have a Statement. Age ranges vary.

- **Academies** are state schools funded direct by central government, often established in collaboration with independent sponsors. They offer provision for any or several age ranges in both the main stream and special school sectors.

- **Free schools** are established, subject to the approval of the Secretary of State for Education, by any interested group(s) of people who believe that a new school, funded direct by central government, will better meet local needs in their area.

The age ranges provided for by schools in England are becoming more varied. Some academies are now offering an all through education from the first year

Age ranges and numbers of middle schools in local authority locations in England

LEA	4 - 12	4 - 13	8 - 12	9 - 12	9 - 13	10 - 13	10 - 14
Bedford					14		
Cambridgeshire					1		
Central Bedfordshire		1			23		
Dorset					14		
Hertfordshire					6		
Kirklees					4	2	
Leicestershire							8
Newcastle-upon-Tyne					3		
North Tyneside					4		
North Yorkshire						2	
Northamptonshire					2		
Northumberland					31		
Poole	6		8		1		
Somerset					9		
Staffordshire					14		
Suffolk					28		
West Sussex	3		5			1	
Windsor and Maidenhead					4		
Worcestershire	1			4	12	4	
TOTALS	10	1	13	4	170	9	8
215 Schools	28 deemed Primary			187 deemed Secondary			

of statutory education through to 18 and some schools in different phases of education are federated, which means they remain separate but under one overall management structure.

Scotland

There are three kinds of state maintained schools in Scotland:

- **Primary** (4.5 to 12)
- **Secondary** (12 to 16+ and 12 to 18)
- **Special** (Age ranges vary)

Wales

The educational system in Wales is currently configured identically to the one in England but there are no middle schools in Wales and there is only one state boarding school.

Further information about state boarding schools in England and Wales is obtainable from CEAS, whose contact details can be found at the foot of this document or the web site for the State Boarding Schools' Association: <http://www.sbsa.org.uk>

Northern Ireland

For children of compulsory school age, the different types of school are:

- **Primary** (4+ to 11)
- **Post-primary** (11 to 16 or 11 to 18)
NB Voluntary Grammar Schools, which are selective, charge Capital Fees which parents pay to the schools towards the capital cost of running them. The fee varies from school to school. Other secondary schools do not make this charge.
- **Special** (age ranges vary)



Curriculum

England and Wales

All children in state maintained schools (Reception - Year 11) follow the National Curriculum established in each administration. The content and structure are divided into four Key Stages:

- **Early Years' Foundation Stage** - from birth up to and including Reception (the first year of compulsory education)
- **Key Stage 1** - Year 1 to Year 2
- **Key Stage 2** - Year 3 to Year 6
- **Key Stage 3** - Year 7 to Year 9
- **Key Stage 4** - Year 10 to Year 11

Please note that, although the structures of the curricula in England and Wales are very similar, there are clear differences between them in terms of content.

Scotland

The Scottish national curriculum is called 'Curriculum for Excellence'. As in England, the curriculum is broken down into age related sections:

- **Early Level** - pre-school to the end of Primary 1
- **First Level** - Primary 2 to Primary 4
- **Second Level** - Primary 5 to P7
- **Third and Fourth Levels** - Secondary 1 to Secondary 3, with the fourth level broadly equivalent to SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework) level 4
- **Senior Phase** - Secondary 4 to Secondary 6, and equivalents in other settings

Movement between Levels can be earlier/ later for some children, depending upon individual needs and aptitudes; individual schools have discretion with this movement and, inevitably, there will be considerable variation between them.

Northern Ireland

The statutory curriculum in Northern Ireland is structured as follows:

- **Foundation Stage** - Primary 1 to Primary 2
- **Key Stage 1** - Primary 3 to Primary 4
- **Key Stage 2** - Primary 5 to Primary 7
- **Key Stage 3** - Year 8 to Year 10
- **Key Stage 4** - Year 11 to Year 12

Despite these structures across the four administrations, individual schools decide, within year groups and Key Stages, when to deliver the required components of each national curriculum. For mobile Service children, this can mean that they either repeat and/or miss out parts of their required studies; whilst schools must work with them and their families to ensure that any gaps are properly covered, this can place additional burdens on such children, in addition to any emotional turmoil they may experience through their mobility or a loved one's deployments. Parents should always discuss any concerns with their children's schools and, if further independent information or advice is required, they should contact CEAS, whose contact details can be found on page 14.

Leaving school

England, Wales and Northern Ireland

Currently, young people in Year 11 (England) and Year 12 (Northern Ireland) are able to leave compulsory education settings from the last Friday in June in the school year they reach the age of 16. However, from 2015, all young people in England will be required to participate in education and/or training up to the age of 18.

Scotland

Currently, young people in S4 (aged 14-15) are able to leave compulsory education settings at the end of school year in which they reach the age of 15.

provide impartial information, advice and support to Service families anywhere in the world and MOD personnel assigned overseas with any matter relating to their children's education.

Special educational needs/additional support needs (SEN/ASN)

NB The term SEN is used in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. In Scotland, the term ASN is used. This difference is more than semantic: the Scottish system for responding to children's additional needs encompasses a wider range of need than the systems in the other administrations and operates in a markedly different way to the other three systems.

All families who have children with SEN/ASN face challenges when engaging with schools, local authorities and other relevant public services. These include:

- Coping with the day to day implications of such needs
- Trying to absorb and understand the language used by professionals in assessing and meeting their children's needs
- In respect of those children with more complex needs, trying to understand the regulatory and legal frameworks which govern professional practice and decision making

It is not surprising that many such parents believe that they have to fight the system to ensure their children obtain proper access to all the provision they need.

Service families with such children face further challenges, particularly those affected by Service-induced mobility and deployments. These include:

- Differences between schools in approaches to and provision for meeting children's SEN/ASN
- Differences between local authorities in England in patterns of SEN provision and thresholds for centrally funded interventions (eg statutory assessments and additional/alternative provision made through Statements)
- Staged approaches, in all four administrations, to identifying, assessing and meeting SEN/ASN; these approaches are intended to take (reasonable periods of) time but are structured around the needs of non-mobile children and families
- Differences between all four administrations in the ways such needs are described, identified, assessed and met because of the different educational, regulatory and legal frameworks in each
- The reactive, rather than proactive, approaches of receiving schools, local authorities and other public services to meeting the needs of mobile Service children with SEN/ASN because of, for example, difficulties around the timely transfer between schools and local authorities of useful information, the late notification of Service Family Accommodation (SFA), the inflexibility of

some local funding arrangements and the financial and logistical constraints on all services for children.

All such families should be aware that help is available to them in navigating their ways through the difficulties referred to above. Families seeking information, advice or support in relation to their children's SEN/ASN should contact the Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS).

CEAS offers, for all Service families who have children with SEN/ASN, a registration service which enables parents to be supported through any education-related difficulties arising from their children's needs - particularly but not exclusively those difficulties connected with Service-induced mobility or deployments.

Please note that, for Army families with such children, registration with CEAS is mandatory (AGAI 108 Vol 3 Ch 81 refers), regardless of a family's actual or intended location but strongly recommended for RAF (AP 3392 Vol 2 Leaflet 2411 refers) and RN (BR3 2422 c refers) families when overseas assignments have been proposed.

The transfer of information on Service children

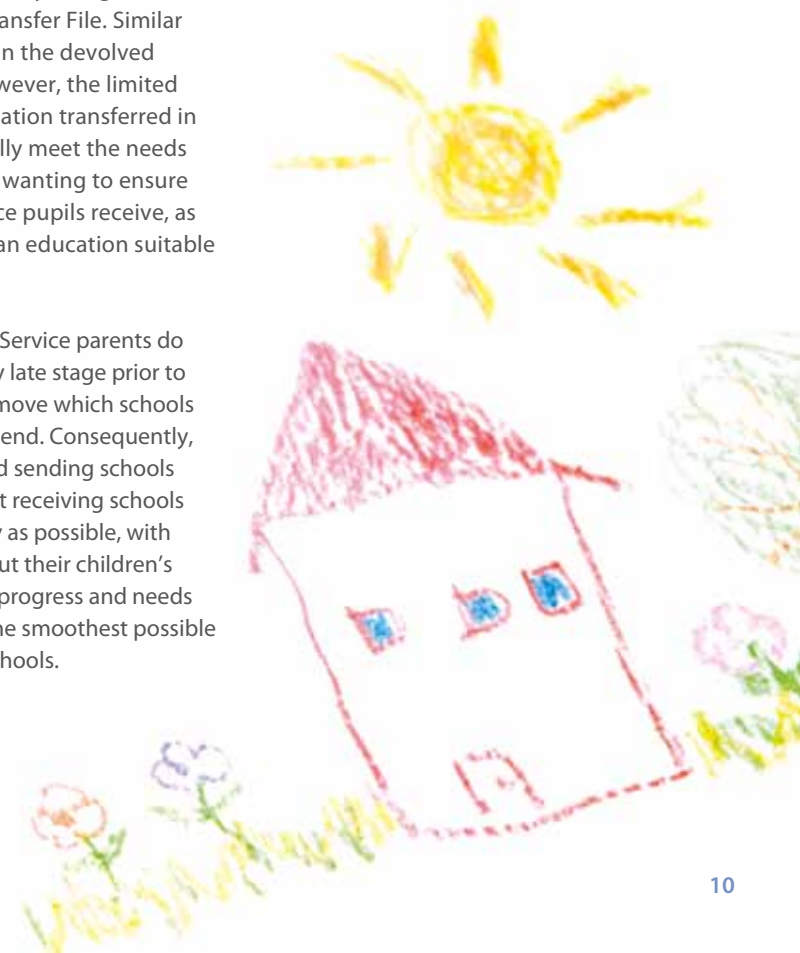
Schools across the UK and those maintained by Service Children's Education (SCE) overseas are all required to pass on to schools admitting incoming children information about the pupils who have been on their rolls.

In England, for example, basic information about children moving schools is transferred electronically, using a DfE form called a Common Transfer File. Similar arrangements exist in the devolved administrations. However, the limited nature of the information transferred in this way does not fully meet the needs of receiving schools wanting to ensure that incoming Service pupils receive, as quickly as possible, an education suitable to their needs.

Added to this, some Service parents do not know until a very late stage prior to (or even after) their move which schools their children will attend. Consequently, anything parents and sending schools can do to ensure that receiving schools are supplied, as early as possible, with any information about their children's educational history, progress and needs will help to ensure the smoothest possible transitions to new schools.

Retention of quarters

Parents living in Service Family Accommodation (SFA) who have concerns about the impact on their children's education of an impending move should contact CEAS. If there is clear, supporting evidence that a child's educational progress or well-being is likely to be significantly damaged by the move then CEAS may be able to secure, for a limited period of time after the serving parent has started their new assignment, the tenancy of the SFA in the 'old' location.



Home schooling

Some parents decide that they would prefer to educate their children at home, outside the formal school systems. In England, the legal term for this is 'education otherwise than at school'.

It is entirely lawful for any parent to decide to do this, provided they notify the local authority in which they are living. However, it is not a step that should be taken lightly or on the spur of the moment. Service parents considering this possibility are strongly advised to

approach organisations like 'Education Otherwise' www.education-otherwise.net for information and advice about this option and its implications. 'Education Otherwise' can put parents in touch with support groups across the UK and Northern Ireland.

If consideration is being given to this option because of difficulties encountered with any of the education systems or schools in the UK, Service parents are encouraged to contact CEAS for advice.



Further information

This document is not intended to provide detailed information about all four different education systems. If you require more detailed information, the following sources may be helpful:

England

- Schools and children's services nationally www.education.gov.uk
- Local authority contact details <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/intercountryadoption/b0065702/intercountry-adoption---links-and-addresses/local-authorities-a-b>
- Special educational needs <http://www.education.gov.uk/vocabularies/educationtermsandtags/761>
- Independent information about education for all parents <http://www.ace-ed.org.uk/>
- School and local authority inspections <http://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspection-reports/find-inspection-report>
- Boarding schools <http://www.boarding.org.uk/> and <http://www.sbsa.org.uk>
- Further (16+ outside schools) education <http://www.bis.gov.uk/>
- Higher education (universities) <http://www.universities.co.uk/>
- Careers advice <http://www.education.gov.uk/16to19/careersguidance/a0064111/connexions-direct>
- Child Care <http://childcarefinder.direct.gov.uk/childcarefinder>

Scotland

- Schools and children's services nationally <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education>
- Local authority contact details <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Education/Schools/Latest/schoolholidays>
- Choosing a school (guidance for parents) <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/11/10093528/0>
- Additional support needs <http://www.Itscotland.org.uk/parentzone/additionalneeds/index.asp> www.enquire.org.uk

- Wider educational information for parents
<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/parentzone/index.asp>
- School and college inspections
<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/>
- Boarding schools
<http://www.scis.org.uk/> and <http://www.qvs.org.uk/> (Queen Victoria School, Dunblane)
- Further and Higher education
<http://myworldofwork.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/considering-further-and-higher-education>
- Careers advice
<http://www.careers-scotland.org.uk/home/home.asp>
- Child Care
<http://www.scottishchildcare.gov.uk/>

Wales

- Education nationally
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/?lang=en>
- Local authority contact details
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/localgovernment/localauthorities/?lang=en>
- School admissions
<http://wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/publications/guidance/schooladmission/?lang=en>
- Additional educational needs
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/schoolshome/curriculuminwales/additionaleducationalneeds/?lang=en>
- School and local authority inspections
<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/english/>
- Boarding schools
<http://www.independentschools.com/wales/boarding.php> and <http://stb.d-wdl.net/>
(St Brigid's, a Roman Catholic State Boarding School)
- Further education
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/learningproviders/furthereducationinstitutions/FEIcontactdetails/?lang=en>
- Higher education
<http://new.wales.gov.uk/topics/educationandskills/highereducation/?jsessionid=V3n1TWnGp4fYjrKGMv3Is9LP2dW5nnKQy0YgHmBxvQhD1IGBv69w!981825250?lang=en>
- Careers advice
<http://www.careerswales.com/server.php?show=nav.5334&outputLang=>
- Child Care
<http://www.earlyyearsonline.co.uk/directory/Wales/>

Northern Ireland

- Education nationally and links to education and library board (local authority) web sites
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools.htm>
- Special educational needs
http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/7-special_educational_needs_pg/7-special_needs-a_guide_for_parents_pg.htm
- Access to schools and other state maintained educational provision for children and young people: given the unique context of accompanied service in Northern Ireland, Service parents moving there are strongly advised to seek information from the Children's Education Support Officer (CESO) for Northern Ireland on 028 92266347 or at 38X-AWS-CESO-D@mod.uk. Although the CESO works within the Army Welfare Service (AWS), she provides information, advice and support to Service parents on a tri-Service basis.
- Inspections of educational provision
<http://www.etini.gov.uk/>
- Boarding schools
<http://www.northernirelandboarding.org/index.php>
- Further and higher education
<http://www.delni.gov.uk/index/further-and-higher-education.htm>
- Careers advice
<https://www.careersserviceni.com/Cultures/en-GB/Homepage.htm>
- Pre-school education
<http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/pre-school-education-pg/16-pre-school-education-whatparentsneedtoknow-pg.htm>
- Inclusion and Diversity Service (including the provision of interpreters for parents and the translation of some documents in some minority languages)
<http://www.education-support.org.uk/>

Service parents or education professionals wanting information, advice or support about any issue regarding the education of Service children, in the UK or elsewhere in the world, should contact:

**The Children's Education Advisory Service (CEAS),
Trenchard Lines, Upavon, Pewsey,
Wiltshire SN9 6BE**

Tel: +44 (0)1980 618244 (Civilian)
94344 8244 (Military)
Email: enquiries@ceas.uk.com

www.mod.uk/ceas

Produced by CEAS, on behalf of the MOD's Directorate for Children and Young People.
If you have any comments on this document, CEAS would be pleased to hear from you.

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