



SENDING YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL

Information on arrangements for:

- ◆ *The enrolment of children in primary and secondary schools*
- ◆ *Placing requests*



Sending your child to school 2026-2027



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General Information

Across Argyll & Bute there are 75 Primary Schools, (7 with Gaelic Medium provision) 10 Secondary Schools and 1 Learning Centre.

Responsibility for running the education service lies with the Executive Director and Heads of Education.

A list of names, addresses, telephone numbers and other relevant information on the schools within the authority can be found on the Council [website](#) including Gaelic Medium Education, Denominational and non-Denominational schools.

Choosing a School including Denominational and Gaelic Medium schools

Councils usually divide cities, towns and county regions into catchment areas, and children living in a catchment area usually go to their local school. Parents have the right to express a preference for a particular school and it is the Council's duty to accommodate this wherever possible. This is called a placing request.

A catchment school is the local primary school assigned to your home address. Each school in Argyll and Bute has a defined geographical area—known as a catchment area—and children living within that area are given priority for admission to the school.

This means that if you have a child who is due to start primary school or who will be transferring to secondary school soon, you have a right to express a preference for a particular school. You may be happy to use your catchment school, but you also have the right to choose a different school outwith your catchment area, by making a placing request.

The law also applies if you want your child to change school, as well as when he or she starts primary or secondary school. Details on this can be found in the placing request section.

In parts of Argyll & Bute there are denominational primary schools which serve a defined area. You may enrol your child, therefore, either at a local denominational school or at the non-denominational schools. If you want to enrol your child in a denominational school and you are not of the denomination faith, you will need to make a placing request and you should register for Education at your non-denominational catchment school. In certain rural areas, however, there are few denominational schools and this local choice is not possible in every part of Argyll and Bute.

To enrol your child for Gaelic Medium Education you will need to register for the Gaelic Medium school you want your child to attend. Gaelic Medium Education is offered in 7 Primary School establishments: Bowmore, Bunessan, Salen, Rockfield, Sandbank, Strath of Appin and Tiree.

Additional Support Needs

If your child has additional support needs (ASN) and requires support with their ASN, your child's Early Years Setting or current school will already have been working with you as part of the Scottish approach of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC). Your child's current setting will plan with you, and be part of transition discussions with your child's new school. This includes any child who has been offered a place in specialist provision.

Argyll and Bute Schools are inclusive settings for all children, with the expectation that children with additional support needs will be educated wherever possible in their catchment school and supported in their community. For children with more complex needs, schools and ELCs can apply to the Education Resource Group for consideration of a place at one of our specialist provisions. Argyll and Bute Council recognises that parents can express a preference for the school/provision they wish their child to attend. Please discuss this with your child's current school or ELC. For further information, please contact education.asl@argyll-bute.gov.uk

You can also find more information about ASN supports for your child through Enquire, the Scottish advice service for additional support for learning, by visiting their [website](#) or by phoning 0345 123 2303.

Pupil Travel and Accommodation

Apart from certain rural and island areas in Argyll & Bute, (and for some pupils attending specialist schools), pupils travel to school daily. Where, in exceptional cases, this is not possible, hostel accommodation or lodgings are provided. Further information on hostel provision may be obtained from Education.

Argyll & Bute Council provides free transport for all primary pupils who live more than two miles from their catchment area school (by the recognised shortest safe walking route) and for all secondary pupils who live more than three miles from their local school (by the recognised shortest safe walking route) in line with school transport policy. This policy is more generous than that prescribed by statute and therefore may be reviewed at any time. Arrangements for free transport may be made for children with additional support needs.

The education authority does not provide transport for those pupils in receipt of a placing request so this must be taken into consideration when making a placing request.

If your child's catchment area school is mothballed*, please note that school transport will not be provided if:

- your child has never attended their catchment area school, or
- your child was already enrolled at another school before the decision to mothball was made.

**Mothballing means a school is temporarily closed but not permanently shut.*

If spare seats exist on dedicated school transport vehicles, a child who does not meet the walking distance criteria, or a placing request (who would not normally qualify for transport) may be granted a privilege ride seat at a charge determined by the Council. It should be noted that these privileged places may be withdrawn at very short notice in the event of a change in circumstances.

Privilege rides are not available on journeys which operate as registered local bus services. In such cases non-entitled pupils can apply [online](#) for a Junior/NEC which allows free bus travel on registered services.

School Catering and Clothing Grant information

A midday meal is provided in all primary (excluding Iona and Ulva Primary Schools), secondary and special schools. Freshly prepared, nutritional lunches are available; currently a two course lunch is £2.40 in secondary schools and £2.30 in primary schools, which includes a drink of milk. Prices may be reviewed in April or August 2026. Children in Primary 1 to Primary 5 are eligible to receive a free school meal along with children in special schools or who attend a Learning Centre. Free School Meals are also available for children staying in the Hostels in Oban and Dunoon. From February 2025 pupils in P6 and P7, whose parents receive the Scottish Child Payment, will also be eligible for free school meals. In secondary schools the cafeteria service also offers an extended range of snacks. Pupils who wish to bring packed meals can also be accommodated in the school.

For secondary school pupils in receipt of free school meals, £2.40 will be added to their iPay account after morning break on a Monday. Any unused funds from the £2.40 will be carried over into the next day. All unused funds after lunch service has closed on a Friday afternoon will be cleared. Should pupils wish to add additional money for snacks/drinks over and above the £2.40, money can be added to their iPay account, either via parent upload or adding cash on via the re-val units in school.

All schools* use iPayimpact to allow parent/carers to make payments to their child's catering account. Information about this will be available from the school prior to your child starting school.

*Please note that Iona and Ulva Primary Schools do not have a meal service and parents of children eligible for a free school meal receive a payment of £2.30 for each day their child is recorded as attending school.

Children of parents receiving income support, income based jobseeker's allowance, any income related element of employment and support allowance, Universal Credit (monthly take home pay for period must be under **£850**) or support under Part VI of the immigration and Asylum Act 1999, are entitled to a free meal at lunchtime. If you do not meet the income-based eligibility criteria for Free School Meals and your child is in Primary 6 or Primary 7 only they are eligible for Universal Free School Meals **if you are in receipt of the Scottish Child Payment**.

Children of parents receiving income support, income based jobseeker's allowance, any income related element of employment and support allowance, Council Tax Rebate (25% Reduction For Single Occupancy is not included), Housing Benefit or Universal Credit (monthly take home pay for period must be under **£850**) may apply for a school clothing grant of £120 per pupil at Primary School and £150 per pupil at Secondary School

Please apply [online](#), noting that Clothing Grant and Free School Meal eligibility criteria are subject to change.

Registering your child in Primary School

School age children are those who are 5 years old by the time they start school in August or will turn 5 before the following March. Entry into Primary 1 is on a once a year basis in August. You should register your child for Primary 1 before the end of the preceding January. Local advertisements issued in January each year provide full details on how to register your child. Children should be registered for Education online.

Entry Age – Early Entry to Primary School

You can make a request for **early entry** to school for a child whose fifth birthday falls after the above period. A separate booklet, available from the education office in Argyll House or your local school contains full details. Details are also on the Council [website](#).

Requesting an Additional Year of ELC

From August 2023 children who will turn 5 between 2nd day of the school year in August and the end of February, are entitled to funded childcare if their parent/carer wants. Parent/carers can request an additional year of funded ELC during Primary One registration in November each year. Details can also be found on the Council [website](#).

Placing Requests

Your child will normally attend the catchment area primary/secondary school; however, you have the right to make a **placing request** for your child(ren) to be educated in a school other than the catchment area school. In November each year, the authority will advertise its arrangements in connection with placing requests. Regardless of your decision you should enrol your child at your catchment school and during P1 and S1 registration this will be done online.

There are sound educational reasons for trying to ensure that the transfer or admission of children to a school takes place at the start of a school session. The Education Service advises all parents that Placing requests should take effect at the start of the next school session. There will be exceptions to this such as moving home.

Should you wish to make placing requests in respect of more than one school for your child, the duty of the authority as defined by the Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 applies only to the first named school.

Every effort will be made to try to meet parental wishes, however it is not always possible to grant all Placing requests received into the Authority.

The education authority does not provide transport for those pupils in receipt of a placing request so this must be taken into consideration when making a placing request.

If your child's catchment area school is mothballed*, please note that school transport will not be provided if:

- your child has never attended their catchment area school, or
- your child was already enrolled at another school before the decision to mothball was made.

**Mothballing means a school is temporarily closed but not permanently shut.*

How to make a Placing Request (see separate procedure for P1/S1 requests below)

If you wish to make a placing request you must complete an [online](#) application form for each child involved or contact Education and request a paper application form. You must inform the head teacher of your catchment school that you are making a placing request.

If placing requests are submitted by 13th March 2026, every effort will be made to meet parents' requests within the limits of the accommodation and places available in schools.

Placing Requests made during Primary 1 registration period (Jan-Feb each year)

For session 2026/2027 Primary 1 registration must be made [online](#). You should indicate in the online form that you are making a placing request.

Placing Requests made during Primary 7 – S1 registration period (Oct - Dec each year)

For session 2026/2027 a form for S1 registration will be available [online](#). You should indicate on the form that you are making a placing request and include the name of the school you wish to make a placing request to.

Your placing request will be considered against a set of guidelines which set out the council's priorities for admission. As soon as a decision has been made you will be notified of the result. If your placing request is successful, you will be asked to contact the school to establish arrangements for enrolment.

If your Request is Refused

If your placing request is refused, or if you are not advised by the authority of its decision on your request by 30 April (or within 2 months for requests made at other times of the year), you may lodge an appeal with an appeal committee. Information on how to appeal may be obtained from the education office in Argyll House.

The appeal should be sent to the address below in the Contact Us section.

You will, by the time of the appeal, know the reasons why your placing request was refused and you will be given the opportunity to present your case in person or through a representative, whichever you prefer.

If the appeal committee refuses your request, you have the right of further appeal to the Sheriff (other than in the case of early entry requests, where there is no guarantee of appeal).

How Decisions are Made

The responsibility for decisions on placing requests rests with the Executive Director and Heads of Education.

However, where there are more requests than places available for a particular school or a particular stage in a school, all requests will be considered by a local attendance council who will then make recommendations to the responsible member within the Education Service.

You will be given the opportunity of presenting your case in person to the local attendance council. **Should this situation arise**, you will be advised in good time of the date and location of the appropriate meeting, and you will be asked at that time if you wish to attend. You may be accompanied at this meeting if you wish.

Guidelines and Criteria

The local attendance council and members of Education Service work to a set of guidelines in reaching decisions on placing requests. These guidelines set out the council's priorities for admission and can be summarised as follows:

Primary

Where there are places available in primary school, priority will be given to:

- ◆ those children who live in its catchment area but have been unable, for whatever reason, to be accommodated in the area school to date.
- ◆ Thereafter, to early entry children who live in the school's catchment area and who are considered suitable for primary education.

Secondary

Where there are places available in a secondary school, priority will be given in the granting of placing requests to:

- ◆ those children who live in its catchment area, where applicable, but have been unable, for whatever reason, to be accommodated in the area school to date.
- ◆ those children who live in the catchment area of an associated primary school but who have been unable to be accommodated in the area's secondary school to date

General

Thereafter, where there are more placing requests for primary or secondary than there are places available, priority will be given to:

- ◆ those cases which include medical grounds supported by the family doctor and the community medicine specialist.
- ◆ (*in the case of secondary schools with a catchment area*) those children who do not live in the catchment area, but who attend primary schools within it.
- ◆ the presence of older siblings in the school.

Other factors

Other factors which the local attendance council and the responsible member within Education Service may wish to take account of include:

- ◆ single parent families, where, for example, proximity of school to the parent's place of work would be advantageous for the care and well-being of the child.
- ◆ distance between home and school.
- ◆ the suitability of particular teaching methods to the child's needs or the availability of subjects which he/she was previously studying.

Where it is impossible to identify priority applications, local attendance councils have been advised that the only reasonable solution is to draw lots. This may be done by the local attendance council or the responsible member of Education Service.

Why the Requests are Sometimes Not Granted

The authority may refuse a placing request:

- (a) if placing the child in the specified school would –
 - (i) make it necessary for the authority to take an additional teacher into employment.
 - (ii) give rise to significant expenditure on extending or otherwise altering the accommodation at or facilities provided in connection with the school.
 - (iii) be seriously detrimental to the continuity of the child's education.
 - (iv) be likely to be seriously detrimental to order and discipline in the school.

- (v) be likely to be seriously detrimental to the educational well-being of pupils attending the school; or
- (vi) assuming that pupil numbers remain constant, make it necessary at the commencement of a future stage of the child's primary education, for the authority to elect to create an additional class (or an additional composite class) in the specified school or take an additional teacher into employment at the school.
- (b) if the education normally provided at the specified school is not suited to the age, ability or aptitude of the child.
- (c) if the education authority has already required the child to discontinue his/her attendance at the specified school.
- (d) if, where the specified school is a special school, the child does not have special educational needs requiring the education or special facilities normally provided at that school; or
- (e) if the specified school is a single sex school (within the meaning given to that expression by section 26 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975) and the child is not of the sex admitted or taken (under that section) to be admitted to the school.'

(References to the "specified school" are to the school specified in your placing request).

Additional Information

Although the information in this document is correct at the time of printing, it is possible that arrangements could change either before the commencement or during the school year in question or in relation to subsequent school years. This information leaflet provides only general guidance about placing requests.

Specific information may be found in:

- Scottish Legislation
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/browse/scotland>
- Education (School and Placing Information) (Scotland) Regulations 2012
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2012/130/pdfs/ssi_20120130_en.pdf
- Choosing a School – A Guide for Parents
<https://www2.gov.scot/Publications/2002/11/15640/12181>
- Argyll and Bute Management Circulars 3.01, 3.02, 3.09
<https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning/education-management-circulars>

Contact Us

Council website Education section	https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning
Address	Argyll House 91 Alexandra Parade Dunoon PA23 8AJ
Email	argyllhousereception@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Telephone	01369 704000