

Boarding Schools in Scotland : Your questions answered

Children whose parents live abroad or frequently move location benefit from the security, stability and continuity provided by boarding schools in Scotland. Great importance is attached to the creation of a friendly, close-knit community in which children can settle, make firm friendships, feel at home and thrive. A close relationship with parents is actively encouraged. Typically, a rich variety of co-curricular activities are on offer to pupils at boarding schools, in the evenings and at weekends. To accommodate different needs, full, weekly and flexi-boarding may be available.

Q: Is boarding the right option for my child?

A: Modern boarding offers many positive advantages for families. Boarding pupils enjoy being part of a close-knit, secure and supportive community where, at the same time, they can develop their independence. They have the opportunity to take advantage of a varied programme of activities and pursuits in the company of their friends. Schools welcome enquiries from families interested in finding out more about the boarding option. They will be pleased to answer your questions and to arrange a visit for your family or an overnight stay for your son or daughter, so that they can 'try out' the boarding life.

Q: Who will care for my child?

A: The emphasis in any boarding house is on building a close-knit and supportive community in which every child feels secure. House Parents and Matrons play a key pastoral role. They ensure that care is provided round the clock and throughout the week. Older pupils fulfil the role of a big brother or sister and can help to support younger pupils who may be new to boarding. There will be a busy programme, with plenty of opportunities for each pupil to take part in options, activities and outings. Homework will usually be done in the boarding house, under supervision, to ensure that help is on, if required.

Q: I still want to be part of my child's school life. How can I continue to be involved?

A: Boarding schools welcome parental visits. There are plenty of opportunities for parents to support their children, as spectators on the sports field or in the audience at concerts and dramatic productions, for example. Boarding staff are sensitive to the importance of communication between home and pupil. Although many children have their own mobile phones, every boarding house also has a telephone located in an area where children can talk in private. All boarding houses have email facilities enabling pupils to keep in touch with their family and friends.

Q: How flexible are the arrangements for boarders?

A: To accommodate different family circumstances, boarding schools offering increased flexibility. Boarding can be offered on a full, regular, weekly, flexible or ad hoc basis. Families should discuss the options with schools so that they can take advantage of the type of boarding that would best suit the needs of their children.

Q: What are the boarding facilities like?

A: Big dormitories with long rows of beds in draughty rooms with no privacy are very much a thing of the past! It is recognised that younger children benefit from the camaraderie of sharing a room. Older pupils, who require peace and quiet for their more demanding study needs, are given greater privacy in twin or single study bedrooms. School will try to make accommodation comfortable and homely. Pupils are encouraged to bring their own personal effects to help make their individual areas their own.

Q: What checks are there to make sure that standards are met and maintained in boarding schools?

A: In Scotland, all schools are visited regularly by the national schools' inspection body, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education. Schools with boarding facilities are also inspected by the Care Commission which has a particular responsibility to ensure that the appropriate arrangements have been made for the care and welfare of residential pupils. Inspection reports are published for each school and can be obtained from the HMIE website at www.hmie.gov.uk

Q: Where can I find out more about what boarding could offer my child?

A: Contact SCIS for additional information and advice; look at individual school's websites; contact schools to request a prospectus and arrange a visit - you will be made welcome.

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