

Co-curricular activities at Scotland's independent schools

Scotland's independent schools offer a wealth of opportunities to learn outside the classroom. They provide opportunities for pupils to work together, make new friendships and rise to new challenges.

The term "co-curricular" is now more commonly used than "extra-curricular" indicating that such activities and pursuits are not bolted on to academic work but are integral to school life, woven into the curriculum and equally important as academic learning.

Such pursuits, which contribute enormously to the life of each school and its sense of community, also foster a sense of personal challenge, team spirit, and above all, enjoyment for the pupils involved. Pupils are encouraged to participate and to do their best, whatever their age and stage. Participation rates are high with many pupils enjoying at least three activities each week.

Examples of pursuits on offer include arts and crafts, dance, debating, drama, Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, ensembles, first aid, musical instrument tuition, orienteering, outdoor education, photography, Young Enterprise and a whole host of team and individual sports. Senior pupils also contribute a proportion of their time and energy to volunteering in the local community. Whether transforming an overgrown hospital garden or raising funds for charities, pupils are rolling up their sleeves and getting involved.

Clubs and societies, many of them organised and run by pupils, thrive. No matter what your child's interest, it's almost certain that others will share it. New groups are springing up all the time – film units, eco committees, a model UN debating group and Amnesty International.

Music is also central to school life. Choirs, orchestras, ensembles and many different types of bands – jazz, wind, folk bands, pipe and rock – are on offer and concerts and performances are staged throughout the school year.

Further information about independent schools in Scotland is available on the website of the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) at www.scis.org.uk