

Independent Schools in Scotland with Boarding

In Scotland, there are 21 independent schools that offer boarding. Ten are traditional boarding schools where the majority of pupils board at the school. The others are day schools with a smaller proportion of boarders. Most schools are coeducational. The boys' schools are Merchiston (boarding/day) and Stewart's Melville College (day/boarding). The girls' schools are Kilgraston (which has even numbers of boarding and day pupils), Mary Erskine and St George's (both schools are day/boarding). To accommodate different needs, weekly, flexi and full boarding are available. The list, below, shows the choice on offer:

School	Location	Age/Stage	Boarding/Day	Coed/Girls/Boys
Ardvreck	Crieff, Perth and Kinross	Prep	Day/Boarding	Co-educational
Belhaven Hill	Dunbar, East Lothian	Prep	Boarding/Day	Coeducational
Cargilfield	Edinburgh	Prep	Day/Boarding	Coeducational
Dollar Academy	Dollar, Clackmannanshire	All through	Day/Boarding	Coeducational
Fettes College	Edinburgh	All through	Boarding/Day	Coeducational
Glenalmond College	Perth	Secondary	Boarding/Day	Coeducational
Gordonstoun	Elgin, Moray	All through	Boarding/Day	Coeducational
Kilgraston	Bridge of Earn, Perth	All through	Day/Boarding	Girls (Boys 5-8)
Lathallan	Montrose, Angus	All through	Day/Boarding	Coeducational
Lomond	Helensburgh, Argyll and Bute	All through	Day/Boarding	Coeducational
Loretto	Musselburgh, East Lothian	All through	Boarding/Day	Coeducational
The Mary Erskine and Stewart's Melville Junior School	Edinburgh	Junior	Day/Boarding	Coeducational
Mary Erskine School	Edinburgh	Secondary	Day/Boarding	Girls
Merchiston	Edinburgh	Secondary	Boarding/Day	Boys
Queen Victoria School	Dunblane, Stirling	Secondary	Boarding	Coeducational
St George's School	Edinburgh	All through	Day/Boarding	Girls
St Leonards	St Andrews, Fife	All through	Boarding/Day	Coeducational
St Mary's Music School	Edinburgh	All through	Boarding/Day	Coeducational
St Mary's Melrose	Melrose, Scottish Borders	Prep	Day/Boarding	Coeducational
Stewart's Melville College	Edinburgh	Secondary	Day/Boarding	Boys
Strathallan	Forgandenny, Perth	Secondary	Boarding/Day	Co-educational

Added value

A significant benefit of boarding is the “added value” provided, in terms of after school activities – sports, outdoor pursuits, trips and clubs. Day pupils at boarding schools also benefit as they do everything the boarders do apart from sleep at the school. This, of course, is reflected in the fees which are higher than day fees at day schools. Another benefit of boarding schools is the strong sense of community that prevails.

Rural and urban

Most of the boarding schools in Scotland are situated in rural locations or have extensive grounds, providing a safe environment. There are concentrations of boarding schools in rural Perthshire and also in and around the city of Edinburgh. There are no boarding schools in Aberdeen. Gordonstoun in Elgin, Moray, is the furthest north. In the west of Scotland, the only school with a boarding house is Lomond in Helensburgh, Argyll and Bute.

Unique offering

While every boarding school in Scotland provides a rounded education with a focus on the development of the whole child, each school has something unique to offer – from a golf academy to a riding school.

Curriculum and qualifications

Independent schools in Scotland have a strong tradition of academic attainment, reflected in pupils’ performance in public exams. Most boarding schools follow the English curriculum, offering GCSEs, AS and A levels. Some schools follow the Scottish curriculum with exams awarded by the Scottish Qualifications Authority. A few now offer the International Baccalaureate and others are considering its merits. The qualifications offered at each school are listed in a PDF at www.scis.org.uk/for-parents/scottish-exam-system

Transport links

Transport links are good and airports are located in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Inverness and Dundee. There are daily flights to and from all parts of Europe while London Heathrow, London Gatwick, Manchester and Amsterdam Schiphol provide onward connections to cities all around the world.

Fact finding – websites, admissions packs, open days

School profiles, contact details and website links can be found at www.scis.org.uk where you can search for schools alphabetically or in the category of “Schools with Boarding”. Most schools’ websites contain clear information about the admissions process. They also give fee details, payment terms and information about financial assistance that’s available for families who are unable to afford the fees unaided.

SCIS has several leaflets, available online, which may be helpful, including *Boarding, A guide to the admissions process* and *Questions to consider when visiting a school*. All are available at www.scis.org.uk/publications

Admissions deadlines

Parents are advised to make enquiries early – preferably a year in advance – although schools will be as accommodating as possible. The usual admissions cycle is outlined below, although dates should be checked with individual schools.

September to November	Open days
November to December	Application deadlines
January to March	Entrance tests
June	Induction days
August to September	Start of school year

Fees, meeting the cost, financial assistance

Average fees for schools with boarding are currently (August 2010) as follows:

	Termly (3 terms each year)	Annual
Junior day fee	£3,647	£10,941
Junior boarding fee	£5,975	£17,925
Senior day fee	£5,466	£16,398
Senior boarding fee	£8,214	£24,642

Please note that the boarding fees shown, above, include tuition. The fees are average and reflect the range of fees at schools with boarding. Some schools make an additional charge for ‘extras’ while others charge an all-inclusive fee. All offer parents the convenience of paying my monthly direct debit.

For most parents, affording an independent education requires careful financial planning and long-term commitment. The best advice, to ease the financial burden, is to plan ahead and to consult a fee-based Certified Financial Planner. In doing so, a financial plan will be devised for you, designed to generate sufficient funds to meet the cost of school fees over the period of your child’s education, taking into account your current and future commitments and expenditure. This will give you confidence that you are receiving the best advice for your family’s particular circumstances. Fee assistance is provided by all boarding schools to enable pupils from lower income households to benefit. All schools assist senior pupils and most now assist junior pupils too. Awards are based on ability to pay, with priority given to those whose need is greatest. The level of support varies considerably, depending on a family’s circumstances. Some children receive a free place (where 100% of the fees are met by the school) while others receive a smaller contribution. Useful information is provided in a leaflet, *Meeting the cost of school fees*, available www.scis.org.uk/publications

Information, advice and guidance about choosing an independent, fee-paying boarding school in Scotland is available from the Scottish Council of Independent Schools (SCIS) – the foremost authority on independent education in Scotland. Visit www.scis.org.uk or call 0131 220 2106.