

Teacher - Primary or Early Years

Primary and early years teachers teach, prepare and organise all the activities in the classroom for children aged 3 to 12. They follow the guidelines set up by the Curriculum of Excellence, which sets out to improve and enhance learning in Scottish schools.

The Work

The subjects you would teach might vary according to national or local guidelines. Specialist teachers may help with subjects like modern languages or physical education, but you would always have to teach a wide range of subjects such as:

- expressive arts
- health and wellbeing
- languages
- mathematics
- religious and moral education
- sciences
- social studies
- technologies.

You could be:

- using a variety of teaching aids including workbooks, textbooks, interactive whiteboards, computers and materials you have prepared yourself
- using different methods of teaching including group work, whole class work, demonstrations, experiments and play
- encouraging pupils to research topics themselves, and helping and supporting individual pupils as required
- setting assignments, projects and tests, carrying out continuous assessment, marking pupils' work and writing reports
- specialising in teaching pupils who have additional learning needs
- keeping good order in the classroom and dealing with discipline issues
- doing administrative work, including keeping a register of pupils
- preparing for and attending parent-teacher meetings and staff meetings
- sometimes supervising activities such as parties or outings.

Pay

Teachers in Scotland are paid on a national salary scale. The starting annual salary for a probationer teacher is £35,022 (April 2026).

If you do your probationary period on the Teacher Induction Scheme, and are prepared to work anywhere in Scotland during that probationary year, you can also apply for the Preference Waiver Payment. For primary school teachers, the payment is up to £6,000 before tax and national insurance.

After your probationary year, your salary will increase to £42,018 and increase an increment each year up to £52,740 (April 2026).

Where a teacher is employed in a remote school on a distant island both the remote schools allowance and the distant islands allowance are paid, in addition to the teacher's normal salary.

Lead teachers earn between £59,871 and £85,047.

A principal teacher earns between £57,498 and £74,205 a year, while the scale for depute head teachers and head teachers ranges from £65,214 to £120,450 a year, depending on the size of school.

(April 2026)

Salaries in independent schools may differ slightly.

Conditions

- You would usually work in a classroom, but may be outdoors for games, sports or environmental studies.
- Your working hours are based on a 35-hour week, working in a classroom 9.00am to 3.00pm. You would use the rest of the time for preparation and marking.
- You may have to do some preparation and assessment work at home, in the evenings or at weekends.
- You would have 13 weeks holiday each year, but might use some of this time to prepare the next term's work.
- You would have to prepare for and attend parent-teacher meetings, which are usually in the evening.
- You should be aware that teaching is a mentally and physically demanding job.

Getting In

- To become a primary teacher you could complete a four or five year degree (SCQF Level 10) including a teaching qualification. Several universities in Scotland offer an MA or BA Hons with a teaching qualification. The University of Glasgow offers an MEd Hons in Primary Education.
- Alternatively you could also do a degree in any discipline followed by a one year Professional Graduate Diploma (SCQF Level 11) in Education (PGDE) Primary Education. The PGDE is offered by the Universities of Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh, Glasgow, the Highlands and Islands (at a number of the colleges), Strathclyde and the West of Scotland.
- Entry to degree courses usually requires a minimum of 4-5 Highers including English plus Maths and another subject at National 5 or equivalent. Competition for places means that actual entry requirements are likely to be higher than the minimum.
- For entry to the one-year PGDE course you must have an approved degree and also Higher English together with Maths at National 5. You must normally have studied at least 2 of the following subjects in your degree or elsewhere: science, social studies, expressive arts, religious and moral education, technology, modern foreign languages.
- National 5 Applications of Maths is accepted in place of Maths.
- Another route into primary teaching is by first completing an HNC (SCQF Level 7) or HND (SCQF Level 8) in Childhood Practice at college. You would then go onto year 2 or 3 of a relevant degree course at university. Before starting the degree you must have Higher English and National 5 Maths.

- If you do not have the entry requirements for a degree course, you may be able to get into a one year Access course (SCQF Level 6) at college. This programme is aimed at those who have been out of education for at least five years.
- You will require a satisfactory criminal record check from Disclosure Scotland to show that you are suitable for this type of work. Contact [Disclosure Scotland](#) for details on the type you would need.

There is a lot of competition for places in all of these courses. It helps if you have experience of working with children in a primary school or a similar setting. You also need a good understanding of the Primary Education system.

Newly qualified teachers who want to teach in local council schools must complete a probationary period to demonstrate that they meet the Standard for Full Registration of the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland). Those who wish to teach in independent schools may also require to be registered.

You are guaranteed a teaching post with a Scottish local authority for a full school year to complete this probationary period.

What Does It Take

You need to have:

- an interest in child development and an understanding of how children learn
- patience and adaptability
- enthusiasm and energy
- confidence
- a firm and assertive approach when necessary
- good organisational skills
- a sense of humour and a positive outlook.

You need to be able to:

- communicate with children of all abilities, hold their interest and encourage them
- work on your own and also as part of a team, and stay calm under pressure
- get on well with other staff members, parents and carers.

Training

- You will do in-service training (often provided by local councils) throughout your teaching career.
- You might take additional part time university courses in areas such as teaching pupils with special educational needs.

Getting On

- With experience you may progress to principal teacher, depute head teacher, then head teacher of a primary school.
- You may be able to move into primary schools advisory work or primary schools inspection work.

- Nursery teachers could open up their own nursery.

More Information

Most teachers work in local council schools but there are also jobs in independent schools, British schools abroad, such as schools for the children of British armed services and in private tuition. Job vacancies are normally advertised on local authority websites or look on [myjobscotland](https://www.myjobscotland.gov.uk) website.

Contacts

Education Scotland

Tel: 0131 244 4330

Email: enquiries@education.scot.nhs.uk

Website: [education.gov.scot](https://www.education.scot.nhs.uk)

X: @EducationScot

General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTC Scotland)

Tel: 0131 314 6000

Email: gtcs@gtcs.org.uk

Website: www.gtcs.org.uk

X: @gtcs

Teach in Scotland

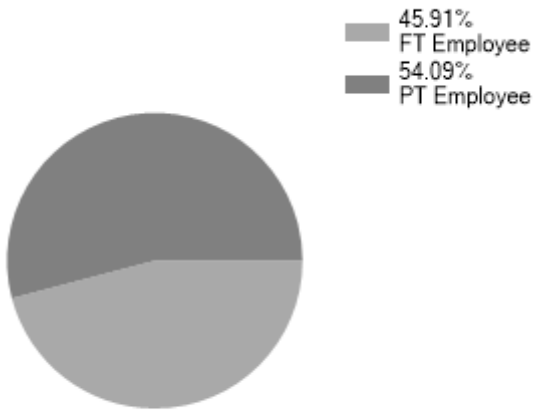
Tel: 0845 345 4745

Email: teachinScotland@gtcs.org.uk

Website: [teachinScotland.scot](https://www.teachinScotland.scot)

Statistics

Employment Status UK %



Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

LMI data powered by [LMI for All](#)

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.