

# What happens when you can't go to school?



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**We hope you like this guide. We'd like to say thank you to the young people and adults who gave us their ideas and suggestions when we were writing it.**

# Introduction

This guide tells you what support you can get if:

- you are away from school for a long time
- you are only able to go to school occasionally.



## Your right to education

The law says that you have a right to receive education even if you are not at school.

The law also says that if you need extra support to get the most out of school **for any reason at all**, then your school must help you.



## Why you might not be at school

There are many reasons why you might be away from school for a long time, or not at school often.

It could be that:

- you are too ill to go to school
- you are caring for someone at home
- you are worried or anxious about some things at school
- you are from a Travelling community
- you have been excluded
- your parents have decided to teach you at home
- you are a refugee or asylum seeker.

## Getting support when you are not at school

If you are not at school, you can get extra support to help you carry on with your learning.

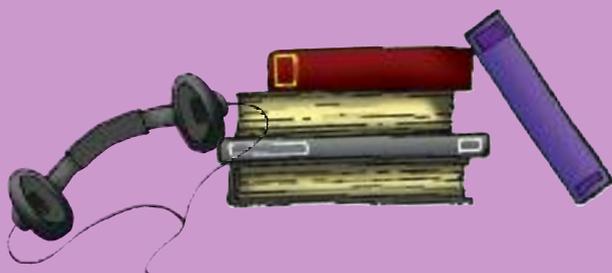
The kind of support you get will depend on what you need.

You will probably already have a **personal learning plan** that includes your learning goals. Because you are not at school regularly, you may also have a learning support plan or a **co-ordinated support plan (CSP)** to help make sure you get the support you need.

You can get more information about plans in Enquire's guide *What's the plan? Your education and support*. It's on [www.enquire.org.uk/yp](http://www.enquire.org.uk/yp)

Not being able to go to school can be very hard but there is help for you!

The next few pages explain the type of support you may get.



## When you are too ill to go to school

If you are not going to school because you are ill, then your school must help you continue your education. You are still a pupil of the school, even though you are not there.

Your doctor must write a letter to your school to tell them you are too ill to attend.

Your school should make special arrangements for you if:

- you are absent for 15 days in a row
- you go to school occasionally but miss a total of 20 days over a longer period of time.

The type of support you get will depend on how you are feeling. You may get the support in hospital, at home, or when you are back at school.

Here are some examples of the support you may get:

## At hospital

- Your school may send work to you and you can send it back to be marked.
- Teachers sometimes visit hospitals. They may sit with you at your bedside, or you may go to a classroom in the hospital with other young people.

## At home

- Your school may send work to you and you can send it back to be marked.
- A teacher may visit you at home. How often they come will depend on your needs. It will also depend on how well you are and how long you have to be away from school.

## Back to school

- If you are able to go back to school, you might do this gradually. To start with, you might go to school for just a couple of days a week.

- Your school should make sure any extra help you need is ready when you come back to school. For example, you might need help travelling to school or some special equipment.
- Your school can help you access learning resources at home, as well as at school. Lots of information and worksheets used in school can now be accessed online.
- When you are feeling ill, the idea of schoolwork and lessons might be daunting. Your school, or the teacher who visits you, should make sure that the work you have been given is right for you.



## When you are caring for someone at home

If you are away from school because you need to care for someone at home, then the school must help you so you can continue your education.

As well as caring for the person, you may be doing extra things to help your family. These might include making dinner, shopping, cleaning the house, and looking after your brothers and sisters. All these things take time and may make it difficult for you to be at school as often as your friends. It might also be difficult to have time to do homework and get ready for school.

If getting enough sleep is difficult for you, tell one of your teachers or a member of staff. They need to know because it will affect how you feel at school.



Your parent or parents might not be able to go to parents' evenings. Your school will understand this if you tell them before the meeting.

The type of support you get will depend on your needs and on how often you are able to go to school.

Here are some examples of the support you might get:

- extra help with work and homework
- extra time to do your work and homework and to study for exams
- help to set up a timetable for attending school that fits around what you do at home.

Your school can help you access learning resources at home, as well as at school. For example, lots of information and worksheets used in school can now be accessed online.

## When you are worried or unhappy about some things at school

If you are having problems that make you feel you don't want to go to school, you should speak to a teacher, or perhaps the headteacher or your guidance teacher. Tell them about any worries or problems you have.

If you don't want to do this by yourself, you can ask an adult, a friend or someone else to go with you.

Remember, the law says that if you need extra support to get the most out of school **for any reason at all**, then your school must help you.



Remember you can talk to ChildLine about any problem at all. They will listen and help you work out what you want to do.

Call them for free on 0800 1111 or visit [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk) to have a 1-to-1 chat, send an email, and get advice.

## When your parents have decided to educate you at home

Home education is when your family has taken responsibility for your learning. It is not about out-of-school support from the education authority.

You can go to your education authority for advice and where to find other sources of information and support.

If you think you need extra help with your learning, your parents (or you if you are 16 or older), can ask your education authority to do an assessment.

The assessment will help decide what kind of support you need. Your education authority can choose to give you the extra support, but the law says it doesn't have to.

You can contact organisations that specialise in home education, such as Schoolhouse. They can provide information about where to get other types of support and can also help put you in touch with local activity groups and families whose children are educated outside school.

Their website is [www.schoolhouse.org.uk](http://www.schoolhouse.org.uk)

Your parents or carers might also find it useful to look at Parentzone at

[www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/parentzone)

## When you have been excluded

If you have been excluded from school, you still have a right to education.

You may have been excluded for a certain number of days, which means you will be able to go back to your school. Or you may have been excluded permanently, which means you cannot go back to your last school.

In both cases, your last school must make arrangements for you to continue your education as soon as possible after you have been excluded.

If you were receiving extra support from people outside the school such as a speech and language therapist or a social worker, you should still be able to see them when you have been excluded.



Here are some examples of the support you might get if you have been excluded:

- The school sends work to you and you can send it back to be marked.
- You have some lessons with a teacher away from school, for example, in a local community centre.
- You go back to your last school, or a new school, gradually. You attend part-time (eg just a couple of days a week) for a short while.

If you have been excluded from school permanently, the school must arrange for you to receive your education elsewhere. This might be in a different school or in a different type of place such as a college.

## When you are from a Travelling community

If your family moves around and you live in different places throughout the year, it is still possible for you to have contact with a teacher.

Wherever you are in Scotland, you are entitled to support to help you make the most of your school education.

Here are some examples of the type of support you can get:

- ☼ A teacher in your usual school can give you and your parents advice about how to continue your education when you can't be at school.
- ☼ A teacher in your usual school can help make sure you can access learning resources at home. Some information and worksheets used in classes can now be accessed online.

- The Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP) can give your teacher or support service a plan called ‘My learning at a glance’. You can take this to every school you attend and use it to help you plan your learning when you are off school. It can include all the different types of learning you do - for example, working alongside other members of your family to learn a particular business or trade.

If your family is mobile, you can make contact with a teacher or support service. STEP has contact details on its website - [www.step.education.ed.ac.uk](http://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk) - go to SEARCH for education staff in your area.

STEP provides lots of information and advice for Travelling communities in Scotland. See its website or email [step@ed.ac.uk](mailto:step@ed.ac.uk) or call 0131 651 6444.



## When you are new to Scotland

If you have recently arrived in Scotland and are claiming asylum or seeking international protection, you have a right to receive free education at the local school.

You may have reasons for not being able to go to school as often as other pupils or reasons for needing extra support at school.

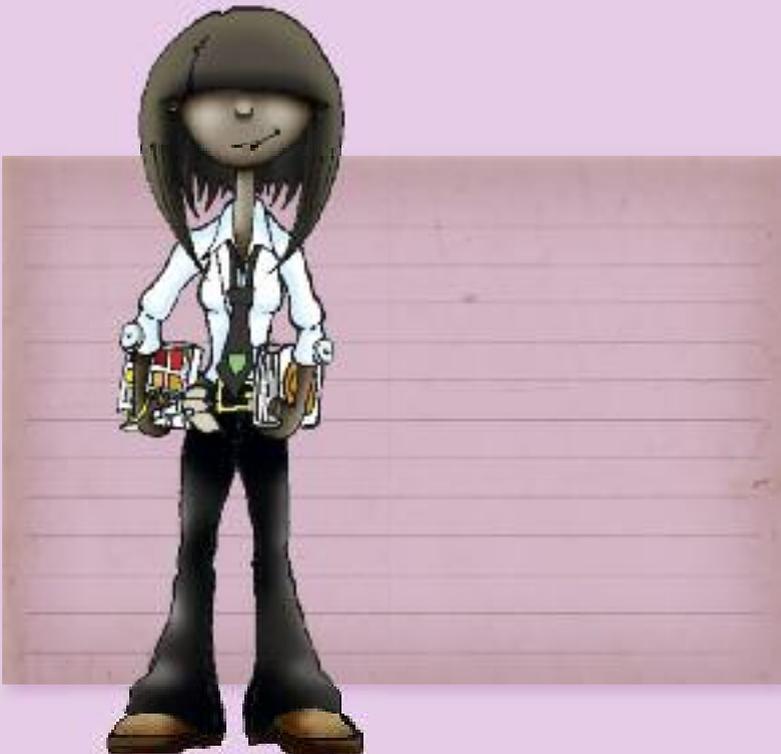
These reasons might include the stress that can come with moving to a new country or because something happened in your home country. Things might be very different in Scotland (for example the uniforms and the food eaten at school). You might be learning a new language and trying to feel part of the local community and you may have to attend interviews or other appointments.

You might feel excited, happy, nervous or sad or all of these together. You might be worried about family or friends back home or feel unsure about the future for you and your family. Schools are there to help and your teachers should make sure you get the right support.

The type of support you get will depend on your needs.

Here are some examples of support you might get:

- extra help with your language skills (through an interpreter, a 'language buddy' or other language support)
- a link person between all the people who are supporting you such as school staff, social workers, educational psychologists and other support agencies
- help, through the school guidance base, to settle in at school and meet new friends.



# Enquire

**helpline:** 0845 123 2303  
**email:** [info@enquire.org.uk](mailto:info@enquire.org.uk)  
**web:** [www.enquire.org.uk/yp](http://www.enquire.org.uk/yp)

Other Enquire guides for young people

- Going to a new school
- Getting ready to leave school
- Going to meetings
- Need extra help at school?
- What's the plan? Your education and support
- Nadia's story (online only)
- Extra support in exams (online only)
- Extra help at school when you are looked after

Contact us for copies or download from [www.enquire.org.uk/yp](http://www.enquire.org.uk/yp)

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