

Summary Report on the Results of the 2024 ADES Data Collection Exercise on the Population of Children from Armed Forces Families in Scotland.

1. Introduction

This report covers the fifth annual ADES data collection exercise on the enrolments of armed forces children in Scottish local authority schools. The datum point was the school census day to allow comparison with other pupil information and to better facilitate data collection. As in previous years the methodology was subject to prior consultation with a number of local authority officers responsible for management information.

For the second time information was requested on the numbers of armed forces children assessed as having additional support needs. This was also the first year for which information on the number of schools with armed forces children was collated.

2. Caveats on the Data

As in previous years a number of authorities chose to suppress the data where there were small numbers of children. The majority of these authorities chose “5 or less” as their suppression level. One authority however chose “10 or less”. Although there is a marginal inconsistency from this latter decision, the main effect overall is that since these small numbers are unknown there is a systematic under-reporting of figures. This together with difficulties in collecting figures in the early years sector as establishments are not on the SEEMiS system and the fact that either parents or schools may not register their armed forces status at enrolment means that the figures given in this report represent a conservative position on numbers.

No information was gathered from Queen Victoria School, Dunblane¹ or schools in the independent sector. Both of these sources would contribute additional numbers to those in local authority schools.

The quality of information supplied by authorities was variable. While some completed the proforma return consistently and accurately others contained arithmetic and presentational errors. Although these errors were fewer than in previous years they were still present this year.

The information gathered in relation to additional support needs is holistic. It does not discriminate between needs arising directly or indirectly from child’s armed forces status and needs which occur independently of that status.

3. The Number and Distribution of Armed Forces Children in Scotland

The number of armed forces children enrolled in Scottish local authority schools in 2024 is summarised in Table 1. This shows that all 32 local authorities have armed forces children. These vary from 32 in the Shetland Islands through to 1651 in Moray. The figures illustrate that a number of authorities with little or no obvious armed forces presence still have numbers in the hundreds – Dumfries and Galloway (550), East Ayrshire (250) and South Lanarkshire (603) are good examples. Conversely, some authorities notably Falkirk (58) and Dundee (98) have returned figures that appear anomalously low. Overall, with a total of 13,111 children, and taking account of the remarks in section 2 it is likely that there are substantially in excess of 13,500 armed forces children in Scotland

¹ Queen Victoria School is a grant aided school which makes exclusive provision for children whose parents are in the armed forces.

in the academic year 2024-25. Taking the numbers in primary and secondary schools (7689 and 4914) this represents some 1.8% of the total school-aged population.

Table 1: Number of Armed Forces Children Enrolled In:					
Local Authority	Early Years	Primary Schools	Secondary Schools	Special Schools or Units	Total
Aberdeen City	16	133	92	1	242
Aberdeenshire	34	336	199	6	575
Angus	14	277	123	0	414
Argyll & Bute	26	451	246	8	731
Clackmannanshire	4	114	51	1	170
Dumfries & Galloway	12	337	201	0	550
Dundee City	2	51	44	1	98
East Ayrshire	20	154	74	2	250
East Dunbartonshire	11	133	97	2	243
East Lothian	2	106	100	0	208
East Renfrewshire	1	94	69	1	165
Edinburgh City	26	373	246	13	658
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	5	43	16	0	64
Falkirk	0	29	27	2	58
Fife	51	824	455	22	1352
Glasgow City	1	149	68	1	219
Highland	31	414	459	0	904
Inverclyde	16	154	63	6	239
Midlothian	23	229	105	2	359
Moray	0	928	723	0	1651
North Ayrshire	10	181	81	6	278
North Lanarkshire	9	273	124	10	416
Orkney Islands	0	22	16	0	38
Perth & Kinross	7	218	137	1	363
Renfrewshire	17	248	87	7	359
Scottish Borders	18	201	116	0	335
Shetland Islands	0	22	10	0	32
South Ayrshire	18	332	258	3	611
South Lanarkshire	1	367	235	0	603
Stirling	1	99	79	1	180
West Dunbartonshire	12	142	106	8	268
West Lothian	10	255	207	6	478
	398	7689	4914	110	13111

4. The Service Background of Armed Forces Families in Scotland

The data in Table 2, below, is analysed by the service background of the families – whether a parent is a regular, reserve or veteran. Some families have parents with one parent as regular, reserve or veteran while the other parent also serves or has served under different conditions. The numbers of children from these latter families is shown in the fifth column of Table 2.

Local Authority	Regular	Reserve	Veteran	Combination of regular, reserve, veteran	Not declared	Total
Aberdeen City	49	26	110	0	57	242
Aberdeenshire	74	58	399	28	16	575
Angus	101	46	251	10	6	414
Argyll & Bute	432	26	226	25	22	731
Clackmannanshire	22	27	108	13	0	170
Dumfries & Galloway	104	55	345	26	20	550
Dundee City	20	6	60	8	4	98
East Ayrshire	56	26	162	6	0	250
East Dunbartonshire	42	36	150	13	2	243
East Lothian	31	22	139	14	2	208
East Renfrewshire	34	9	105	16	1	165
Edinburgh City	275	54	290	14	25	658
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	2	9	47	4	2	64
Falkirk	20	3	33	1	1	58
Fife	393	91	758	62	48	1352
Glasgow City	70	24	123	2	0	219
Highland	287	67	459	58	33	904
Inverclyde	60	34	128	14	3	239
Midlothian	132	45	175	6	1	359
Moray	906	39	580	65	61	1651
North Ayrshire	57	28	184	8	1	278
North Lanarkshire	92	45	276	0	3	416
Orkney Islands	3	2	28	5	0	38
Perth & Kinross	54	61	228	3	17	363
Renfrewshire	84	44	206	17	8	359
Scottish Borders*	73	47	204	10	1	335
Shetland Islands	0	2	29	0	1	32
South Ayrshire	42	29	258	275	7	611
South Lanarkshire	104	42	382	68	7	603
Stirling	40	18	116	6	0	180
West Dunbartonshire	79	13	153	20	3	268
West Lothian	89	47	307	26	9	478
	3827	1081	7019	823	361	13111

“The figures in red are an estimate based on the overall total for this authority.

Upon school enrolment a number of families have been content to declare their armed forces status, or have it noted, but have declined or failed to say whether they are regular, reserve or veteran. These families are shown as “not declared” in the penultimate or 6th column of Table 2. It will be seen that “not declared” status applies to 361 children, or about 2.7% of the total of armed forces children. This figure for 2024 is a considerable improvement on previous years. The failure to

declare may relate to a reluctance to declare arising from security concerns connected to their trade within the armed forces, a factor noted in Argyll and Bute and Moray. It should be noted that while the chain of command has a hunger for more specific data on the armed forces population in Scotland this will be unattainable while the present security condition is maintained.

It is also of note that in 2019 Argyll and Bute was recording 545 “Not declared”, the present position is only 22. This is a fall of 523. Over the same period, the total number of children is recorded as falling from 1399 to 731, an apparent loss of 668 children. Given the expansion of the Royal Navy at Faslane, in Argyll and Bute, this appears anomalous. It is unknown, therefore, whether this drop in numbers is real or attributable to families simply not recording that they are, or were, in the armed forces and they therefore do not appear in either the total, or “not declared” numbers. Such an explanation would be logical. If true, it is further grounds for believing that the national figures are understated.

5. Changes in the Armed Forces’ Children’s Population 2019 - 2024

The overall changing position between 2019 and 2023 is summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Summary of Changes 2019 -2024 (numbers)

	Early Years	Primary	Seconda ry	Special	Total	Regular	Reser ve	Vete ran	Regular /Reserve/ Veteran	Not decla red	Total
2019	401	7280	4061	74	11816	4067	1312	5067	427	943	11816
2021	432	7564	4427	74	12497	4162	1178	5857	428	872	12497
2022	446	7744	4259	109	12558	4097	1086	6123	400	854	12558
2023	424	7676	4610	118	12828	4092	1118	6501	487	630	12828
2024	398	7689	4914	110	13111	3827	1081	7019	823	361	13111
	-3	+409	+853	+36	+1295	-240	-231	+1952	+396	-582	+1295

Table 4: Summary of changes 2019 -2024 (percentages)

	Early Years	Primary	Seconda ry	Special	Total	Regular	Reser ve	Vete ran	Regular /Reserve/ Veteran	Not decla red	Total
2019	3.4	61.6	34.4	0.6	100	34.4	11.1	42.9	3.6	8.0	100
2021	3.5	60.5	35.4	0.6	100	33.3	9.4	46.9	3.4	7.0	100
2022	3.6	61.7	33.9	0.9	100	32.6	8.6	48.8	3.2	6.8	100
2023	3.3	59.8	35.9	0.9	100	31.9	8.7	50.7	3.8	4.9	100
2024	3.0	58.7	37.5	0.8	100	29.2	8.2	53.5	6.3	2.8	100
Change within category	-0.4	-2.9	+3.1	+0.2		-5.2	-2.9	+10.6	+2.7	-5.2	
Part of overall change	-0.2	+31.3	+66.0	+2.9	100	-18.5	-17.8	+150.8	+30.5	-45.0	100

Between 2019 and 2024 there has been an apparent gain of 1295 children with a rise from 11,816 to 13,111, this is an 11.0% growth. This may be attributable to a real increase in numbers, but could equally be due to more accurate recording at enrolment, the Argyll and Bute anomaly notwithstanding. The main growth is in the recording of veterans (10.6%). That growth has exceeded the reductions in recording of regular and reserve forces children.

The figures also show that the numbers in secondary schools are understated in relation to primary schools, although this has marginally changed over the four years from a 61.6%/34.4% split in 2019 to 58.7%/37.5% in 2024. This might be due to natural age-related progression of children from primary schools to secondary school, but could be equally attributable to better recording in

secondary schools. This notwithstanding the relatively low numbers in secondary schools would benefit from a close analysis.

6. Armed Forces Children with Additional Support Needs

For the second time, data on armed forces children with additional support needs was collected in 2024. The results are shown in Table 5 (numbers) and Table 6 (percentages)

Table 5: Number of Armed Forces Children with Additional Support Needs:					
Local Authority	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Special	Total
Aberdeen City	0	33	40	1	74
Aberdeenshire	8	161	110	6	285
Angus	0	80	37	0	117
Argyll & Bute	3	149	109	11	272
Clackmannanshire	1	12	6	1	20
Dumfries & Galloway	1	130	101	0	232
Dundee City	0	14	19	1	34
East Ayrshire	2	44	23	5	74
East Dunbartonshire	0	24	31	1	56
East Lothian	0	34	43	0	77
East Renfrewshire	0	34	18	1	53
Edinburgh City	4	157	127	13	301
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	0	20	6	0	26
Falkirk	0	9	10	2	21
Fife	5	207	197	22	431
Glasgow City	1	60	30	1	92
Highland	1	146	245	0	392
Inverclyde	14	96	41	6	157
Midlothian	3	85	51	2	141
Moray	0	244	317	0	561
North Ayrshire	0	66	33	6	105
North Lanarkshire	1	101	55	10	167
Orkney Islands	0	6	8	0	14
Perth & Kinross	0	74	61	1	136
Renfrewshire	0	29	32	2	63
Scottish Borders	1	83	51	0	135
Shetland Islands	0	4	0	0	4
South Ayrshire	2	109	85	0	196
South Lanarkshire	0	102	100	0	202
Stirling	0	34	30	1	65
West Dunbartonshire	3	55	45	8	111
West Lothian	1	52	44	6	103
	51	2454	2105	107	4717

Table 6: Percentage of Armed Forces Children with Additional Support Needs:				
Local Authority	Early Years	Primary	Secondary	Total
Aberdeen City	0.0	24.8	43.5	30.6
Aberdeenshire	23.5	47.9	55.3	49.6
Angus	0.0	28.9	30.1	28.3
Argyll & Bute	3.0	33.0	44.3	37.2
Clackmannanshire	25.0	10.5	11.8	11.8
Dumfries & Galloway	8.3	38.6	50.2	42.2
Dundee City	0.0	27.5	43.2	34.7
East Ayrshire	10.0	28.6	31.1	29.6
East Dunbartonshire	0.0	18.0	32.0	23.0
East Lothian	0.0	32.1	43.0	37.0
East Renfrewshire	0.0	36.2	26.1	32.1
Edinburgh City	15.4	42.1	51.6	45.7
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	0.0	46.5	37.5	40.6
Falkirk	0.0	31.0	37.0	36.2
Fife	9.8	25.1	43.3	31.9
Glasgow City	100.0	40.3	44.1	42.0
Highland	3.2	35.3	53.4	43.4
Inverclyde	87.5	62.3	65.1	65.7
Midlothian	13.0	37.1	48.6	39.3
Moray	0.0	26.3	43.8	34.0
North Ayrshire	0.0	36.5	40.7	37.8
North Lanarkshire	11.1	37.0	44.4	40.1
Orkney Islands	0.0	27.3	50.0	36.8
Perth & Kinross	0.0	33.9	44.5	37.5
Renfrewshire	0.0	11.7	36.8	17.5
Scottish Borders	5.6	41.3	44.0	40.3
Shetland Islands	0.0	18.2	0.0	12.5
South Ayrshire	11.1	32.8	32.9	32.1
South Lanarkshire	0.0	27.8	42.6	33.5
Stirling	0.0	34.3	38.0	36.1
West Dunbartonshire	25.0	38.7	42.5	41.4
West Lothian	10.0	20.4	21.3	21.5
	12.8	31.9	42.8	36.0

According to data published by the Scottish Government for 2024 the overall percentage of pupil with ASN was 40.5%. Table 6 shows that nationally the percentages of armed forces children with additional support needs appears to be 4.5% lower than the general population. Locally, however, there are significant differences, both above and below the national average. In Aberdeenshire, Edinburgh, and Inverclyde there are higher numbers than would be expected. This pattern of the incidence of ASN being lower in the armed forces children's population than the general population repeats the findings for 2023. Research work is being undertaken to gain a better understanding of this phenomenon which runs counter to qualitative accounts of the incidence of ASN for armed forces children.

7. Dispersion

For the first time authorities were asked the number of schools which have armed forces children on their roll. Some 1894 establishments do have armed forces children amounting to an average of 57.2% across Scotland. This figure varies from some 20% in Falkirk to over 90% in Clackmannanshire, Moray and Midlothian. A more detailed breakdown of percentages is given in Appendix 1.

8. Conclusion

This fifth data collection study confirms many of the observations associated with its predecessors. Overall, it indicates a continued need to understand the nature of this particular part of the school population. Specifically, the following areas merit further investigation:

- The nature and distribution of armed forces children with additional support needs.
- The significance of the “Not declared” part of the population.
- The implications of the growth in population attributable to veterans.
- The accuracy of school and authority administrative procedures.

As noted in earlier studies there is a continuing need to gather data on outcomes for children. On this evidence, present data systems are insufficiently robust to make such an exercise meaningful.

There is a desire within the military chain of command to achieve further granulation of the data with regard to the branch of the service (Royal Navy/Royal Marines, Army, Royal Air Force). Continued work with the military will be required to ensure that armed forces families feel in a position to disclose this information.

Carolyn MacLeod
National education and
Transitions officer

Graham Short
Professional Adviser

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Appendix 1: Percentage of armed forces children compared to overall number of children

Local Authority	Primary	Secondary	Total
Aberdeen City	1.0	0.7	0.9
Aberdeenshire	1.7	1.3	1.5
Angus	3.4	1.9	2.7
Argyll & Bute	9.8	5.3	7.1
Clackmannanshire	3.1	1.8	2.6
Dumfries & Galloway	3.5	2.4	3.0
Dundee City	0.5	0.5	0.5
East Ayrshire	1.8	1.1	1.5
East Dunbartonshire	1.5	1.2	1.3
East Lothian	1.3	1.5	1.4
East Renfrewshire	1.0	0.8	0.9
Edinburgh City	1.3	1.0	1.2
Eilean Siar (Western Isles)	2.6	1.1	1.9
Falkirk	0.3	0.3	0.3
Fife	3.1	2.0	2.6
Glasgow City	0.4	0.2	0.3
Highland	2.6	3.3	2.9
Inverclyde	3.6	1.4	2.4
Midlothian	3.8	1.7	2.4
Moray	14.0	13.2	13.6
North Ayrshire	2.0	1.0	1.6
North Lanarkshire	1.1	0.6	0.8
Orkney Islands	1.5	1.3	1.4
Perth & Kinross	2.2	1.7	2.0
Renfrewshire	1.9	0.8	1.4
Scottish Borders	2.7	1.8	2.3
Shetland Islands	1.3	0.7	1.0
South Ayrshire	4.5	4.0	4.3
South Lanarkshire	1.5	1.1	1.3
Stirling	1.6	1.3	1.4
West Dunbartonshire	2.3	2.0	2.1
West Lothian	1.7	1.7	1.7
	2.0	1.6	1.8