

What is the Best Start Grant?

The Scottish Government has replaced the Sure Start Maternity Grant in Scotland with the Best Start Grant. The Best Start Grant provides financial support to families on low incomes at key transition points during a child's early years. It aims to help reduce financial pressure by helping people buy, for example, equipment that they'll need for a baby, or to help with costs when preparing for nursery or school. It's available both to people who work and those who don't, as long as they live in Scotland and get certain benefits or tax credits.

The Best Start Grant is made up of 3 separate payments:

- Pregnancy and Baby Payment.
- Early Learning Payment.
- School Age Payment.

The **Pregnancy and Baby Payment** helps with expenses in pregnancy or of having a new child, for example a pram or additional heating. It provides £600 for a first child and £300 for second and subsequent children. This lessens the financial burden on lower income families when they are expecting or have a new child. The application window is between the 24th week of pregnancy and 6 months after birth. The payment also provides support for people who have had a stillbirth.

The **Early Learning Payment** provides £250 per child to support child development, for example travel costs, changes of clothes for messy play, trips out and toys for home learning. The long application window, from 2-3½, captures the 2 common ages for starting nursery, depending on whether parents qualify for a free nursery place when the child is 2 or 3. There is no requirement to take up a place at nursery to qualify for a payment.

The **School Age Payment** provides £250 per child to help with the costs of preparing for school, for example educational toys or after school activities. The window to make claims for the Best Start Grant School Age Payment is from the first of June in the year that the child is first old enough to start school until the last day in February of the following year.

When to apply for the School Age Payment

You should apply for the School Age Payment from the beginning of June in the year your child turns 5 (or in the year your child turns 4 if they have a January or February birthday) to the end of the following February. This period is aligned with the time your child would normally first be old enough to start school.

For the first application period, between 3 June 2019 and 29 Feb 2020, children will be eligible if they were born between 1 March 2014 and 28 Feb 2015.

Eligibility – the period in which the child must be born	Application window - when to apply for a School Age Payment
before 1 st March 2014	child is too old to apply
between 1 st March 2014 and 28 th Feb 2015	between 3 rd June 2019 and 29 th Feb 2020
between 1 st March 2015 and 29 th Feb 2016	between 1 st June 2020 and 28 th Feb 2021

If you apply after these times, your application will be too late.

You do not need to apply for, or take up, a place at nursery or school to receive the Early Learning or School Age Payments.

What happens if I defer my child’s start date for Primary 1, or do not plan to send my child to school?

If you have deferred your child’s starting school until next year, or have no plans to start school, you should still apply from the beginning of June in the year your child turns 5 (or in the year your child turns 4 if they have a January or February birthday) to the end of the following February.

If you apply after this time your application will be too late.

Eligibility for the School Age Payment is based on the age of your child not when they actually start primary school. You do not need to apply for, or take up, a place at nursery or school to receive the School Age Payment.

If you defer your child’s start at school until a later year, you will receive the payment before the deferred school start date, which could help with costs associated with childcare, travel or educational toys.

For more information about the Best Start Grant, or to make an application:

- Visit www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-best-start-foods/.
- Phone Social Security Scotland’s freephone helpline on 0800 182 2222 (8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday).
- Download a paper application form from www.mygov.scot/best-start-grant-form/. A paper form can also be requested over the phone via the helpline number above. If requested over the phone a freepost envelope will also be provided.