

## Scottish Schools Orienteering Festival 2026 FAQs

### What are the timings for the day?

- Start times are between 10am and 12pm. You can request a start block for your school when completing the entry form: early 10-10:30, middle 10:30-11:30 or late 11:30-12. We recommend you arrive 90 minutes before your start time to ensure you are not late - **there is a 15 minute walk (700m) from the car park to the assembly area**. Courses close at 1330. The prize ceremony will begin at around 1300 to allow everyone to get home within a reasonable time.

### How much does it cost?

- £3 per pupil, which includes a high quality waterproof map and is to cover the costs of the putting on the event which is mostly staffed by volunteers from local clubs.

### Can pupils run with a friend?

- Yes. We allow pupils to run in pairs or threes if they wish. Pupils running together should be entered together in the same row on the entry form.

### What course do I enter the pupils on?

- There are courses for each school year, from P5/6 up to S5/6 so you should enter the correct course for your school year. Some pupils get confused as they may have just changed years before the Festival - **enter the course for your school year in the 25/26 session**.
- An explanation of the length and difficulty of the courses can be found in the table below:

| Year Group | Target winning time (min) | Difficulty Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| P5/6       | 10-12                     | The easiest course, with all controls on paths and close together at every decision point.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| P7         | 12-14                     | Second easiest course, with controls mainly on paths but could be on other linear features such as streams or walls. Not a control on every decision point.                                                                                                   |
| S1         | 14-16                     | Second easiest course, with controls mainly on paths but could be on other linear features such as streams or walls. Not a control on every decision point.                                                                                                   |
| S2         | 16-18                     | A step up to encourage the use of a compass and route choice. May need to use obvious features such as a hill or change in vegetation to guide towards the control. Will still mostly be running along paths, with the option to cut corners through terrain. |
| S3         | 18-20                     | A step up to encourage the use of a compass and route choice. May need to use obvious features such as a hill or change in vegetation to guide towards the control. Will still mostly be running along paths, with the option to cut corners through terrain. |
| S4         | 20-25                     | More challenging and may need to navigate using contours and non-linear features. More time spent in the terrain and not on paths with a definite need to use a compass and understand route choice.                                                          |

|      |       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| S5/6 | 25-30 | The most technically challenging course that the area will allow. Needs to know how to understand and use contours for navigation, as well as being confident using a compass and judging distance travelled through the terrain. Skills allowing the ability to relocate are also useful. |
|------|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

### What prizes are awarded?

- There will be a prize giving ceremony as soon as possible after the event. There will be prizes for individuals and school teams (3 pupils to count) in each year group, for boys and girls. The overall schools result is based on the number of pupils that achieve a time less than twice the winning time. Past results (and current reigning champions!) can be found on the [SSOA website](#).

### How do I enter?

- Entries are made per school so please enter all your pupils in one go. There is a Google Form that summarises your entries and a spreadsheet that should be completed with all individual pupils. You can find the form and spreadsheet on the [SSOA website](#).

### When do I need to enter/pay by?

- The deadline for entries and payments is **Thursday 28th May**.

### What skills do the pupils need to know before I come to the festival?

- We recommend you work through the [Let's Get Started Orienteering](#) resource before attending. This will teach your pupils the basics, including the concept of maps, courses and controls, and setting the map.

### Do the pupils need any specialist kit?

- No! All you need is comfortable clothes and suitable footwear that you are happy to run in and potentially get a little dirty. SI dibbers (a special timing device) will be allocated to those that need them and can be picked up by the teacher at registration (there will be a £30 fee associated with any lost SI dibbers). There will not be compasses to borrow, but pupils are encouraged to bring their own if they feel it will help.

### How are you ensuring the safety of the pupils?

- The event is covered by [British Orienteering's public liability insurance policy](#), providing an indemnity of £15,000,000. A full Risk Assessment has been drawn up for the event, and courses are planned to mitigate any risks. There will be marshalls throughout the area to ensure pupils do not leave the park or to assist if they are lost.

### What happens if the pupils get lost?

- The event will be based at the BBQ area next to the small lake and Balvornie Meadow (this meadow will be strictly OUT OF BOUNDS to protect the flora and fauna). Pupils should be able to make their own way back here if they get lost. Otherwise, marshalls in hi-vis around the area will be able to assist. If there are still pupils missing at course closing time (1330) then a search party will be rallied.

**What happens if I get a control wrong or miss one out?**

- Unlike normal orienteering events, the SSOF has a policy that ensures no pupil will be disqualified from the results. If a pupil visits an incorrect control or misses one out, they will instead incur a 5 minute time penalty.

**Do I have to run or can I walk?**

- There is no pressure to run at all - you can go at whatever pace you want. It is a race at the end of the day though so if you want to WIN you will likely have to run!

**What facilities will be available?**

- There will be toilets available for use throughout the day in the form of 3 portaloos. There will also be a free maze for pupils to have a go at after their runs! At the Visitor Centre, there is a cafe as well as ice cream and confectionery, however this is a 700m walk away so we recommend bringing your own packed lunch, water and snacks, and maybe a rug to sit on.

**What happens in the event of bad weather?**

- Hopefully given the time of year there will be no issues with the weather, but in the case of bad weather, we would recommend bringing some shelter as there is no indoor space available. In the case of extreme bad weather the event may need to be cancelled. This will be communicated with all entrants the night before the event.

**Will there be space to bring a coach or minibus?**

- There will be ample parking on the day, including spaces for coaches and minibuses. You should inform us of the type of vehicle you plan to arrive in on the entry form so that we can plan to accommodate this.

**What if I have any more questions?**

- Contact [louise@scottish-orienteering.org](mailto:louise@scottish-orienteering.org) with any further queries about the festival or orienteering in general. Read about last year's event on the SOA website [here](#) and year about the experience of two schools that attended [here](#).