

Welcome Pack for Immigrants in Clare

Education and training



Compiled by Clare Immigrant Support Centre



THREE LEVELS

Most education is free

The Department of Education and Science is responsible for the education of children in Ireland – www.education.ie

The Irish education system is made up of primary, second level (also called post-primary or secondary school), third level (university or institute of technology also known as VEC) and further education. State funded schooling is available at all levels unless you choose to send your child to a private institution.

All newcomer children, whether asylum seekers, convention or programme refugees or children of migrant workers between four and 18 years old have a right to the same primary and post-primary education as the rest of the Irish population.

The law requires that all children must take part in full-time education between the ages of six and 16 (although most children start school at age four or five).

Most children in Ireland can attend primary and secondary school for free



regardless of nationality or status. However, there are usually some costs involved like books, photocopying and school uniforms.

Some support is available to people on low income or receiving social welfare benefits. For example, the Back-to-School Clothing & Footwear Allowance may help with uniform costs. Transport is available to bring pupils to school if they live a particular distance from the school.

You may need to pay for this service. Information on transport is available from schools (see contact details on the back page). Many schools offer additional supports to pupils who have particular needs.

The school year starts in late August or early September and all schools close during July and August (secondary schools are also closed in June). Other school holidays take place at Christmas, Easter and between terms (usually end of October and February). Schools are closed on Bank Holidays and National Holidays.

Learning English

It is normal to place a child with very little English in a class with students of a similar age. The Department of Science and Education provides an English language support programme to non-Irish national students who need it.

Children under the age of five

There are some special facilities for children under five

Children with special educational needs are usually educated in mainstream schools but if this is not suitable, there are a number of options for students with learning difficulties or a disability. Your child can be enrolled in:

- a mainstream school with extra support from the Department of Education and Science, for example a Special Needs Assistant;
- a separate, special class in a mainstream school; or
- a special school which caters for the student's ability, for example a special school for children who are visually or hearing impaired.

For children under five with special needs, including speech and language therapy, services are provided by your Local Health Office.

Babies up to school age

By law all children should be in formal education by six years of age. Before this age there is a range of child care facilities available. A list of pre-school services that are notified to the HSE are available at the Pre-school Inspection and Information Service, HSE West, River House, Gort Road. (065) 686 3902. Notified pre-school services are inspected by the HSE every year.

You can get more information about crèches, playschools, childminders and child care training programmes from the Clare

County Childcare Committee. Phone: (065) 686 4862, www.clarechildcare.ie

Childcare facilities

Montessori groups

Montessori groups focus on:

- individualised education;
- teaching social skills; and
- maximising children's development.

Playschools

In playschools children are encouraged to share and take turns. They learn to understand the rules of the classroom such as listening and they have the opportunity to play with children of a similar age.

Naíonraí

These are nursery or playschools that use the Irish language.

Parent and toddler groups

A group of parents or guardians meet together with their children with everyone getting a chance to socialise.

Fees

Many of these childcare facilities are privately run and fees can be expensive. Some community facilities provide subsidised childcare for people in the area. These are funded by the Department of Education and Science: www.education.ie, Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co Offaly. Phone: (057) 932 4300.

Children aged 4-13 years old

Make sure to enrol your child in plenty of time

Primary school Education is free for children in Ireland. Children generally start primary school at age four or five. There are mixed schools for boys and girls and schools for either boys or girls. Primary school lasts eight school years: junior infants; senior infants; and first to sixth classes.

Class usually starts at 9 am and finishes at 2.30 pm (infants finish earlier). The school year runs approximately from September 1 to June 30. Contact the school directly to enrol your child. You should do this at least a year before your child plans to attend the school as many schools operate a waiting list. Phone the school and arrange a suitable time to pick up an enrolment form.

For more information contact your local school or the Department of Education and Science.

Irish language

The Irish language is a core curriculum subject and is compulsory.

Religious education

Most schools in Ireland are Roman

Schools offer various extra activities, such as sports, choir and dance. Ask your school what activities they provide. These are done outside school hours.

Catholic. If your child attends a Roman Catholic school and you do not want your child to attend religious classes, you can ask that your child be excused from them.

Gaelscoileanna

Gaelscoileanna are schools that teach every subject through the Irish language. They are very welcoming to all children including those with absolutely no Irish.

School holidays

The schools are generally on holidays at the following times.

- Mid-term break: for about one week at the end of October.
- Christmas holidays: starts around December 20.
- Second term: begins early January.
- Mid-term break: for about one week at the end of February.
- Easter holidays: last two days of Holy Week (the week leading up to Easter Sunday) and all of the following week.
- Third term begins: first Monday following Easter Monday.

See the back page for a list of schools in Ennis or check www.clarelibrary.ie for other schools in Clare

Children aged 12-19 years old

Ask other parents about the secondary schools near you

At age 12 or 13 most children attend secondary school. Students must attend school every day and are required to stay in school until they are 16 years of age. The school day is usually from 8.45 am to 3.30 or 4 pm. Secondary school takes six school years to complete. The school year runs from approximately 1 September to 30 May.

To enrol your child, phone the school principal and arrange a time to meet them.

There are both free and fee paying secondary schools available.

Exams

Junior Certificate

In secondary schools there are two cycles. A three-year programme from first to third year, which ends with the Junior Certificate state exam.

Leaving Certificate

Then from fourth to sixth year, there is a two or three-year programme ending with the Leaving Certificate state exam.



Bullying

Bullying does sometimes occur in schools or on the way to schools. If your son or daughter is being bullied do not confront the other child's parents. Try to resolve the problem by talking to the class teacher. Stay calm, explain to the child that they are not at fault and it is a problem that can be solved.

Signs of bullying

If your child is being bullied you may notice:

- they do not want to go to school or refuse to go;
- they refuse to say what is troubling them;
- their mood or behaviour changes; or
- they ask for extra money or steal money.

Bullying is defined as repeated verbal, psychological or physical aggression carried out by an individual or group against others.

Transition year is in fourth year. In most schools, students can choose whether to skip this year and go straight into fifth year. Transition year is designed to smooth the move from the more dependent format of the junior cycle to the more independent self-directed cycle of the senior cycle.

Rights and responsibilities

Children must take part in education

Attendance

Children must attend school everyday. Parents are responsible for telling the school why their child is absent from school – because of illness or other exceptional circumstances. You can call into the school, phone them or write a letter; a typical letter might be like this:

(Name of young person)
was absent from school today (date)
due to illness (or whatever reason)
Signed (your name)

Uniforms

Most schools in Ennis have uniforms – one for everyday wear and one for sports. The school will explain where you can buy the uniforms. Some secondhand shops often have uniforms in stock. If you have a problem with your son or daughter wearing the uniform for cultural reasons, you should discuss this with the school principal.

Homework

All pupils are expected to do homework. If they cannot get to complete it, send a note to the teacher explaining why. The class teacher decides how much homework to give the pupil. In secondary schools, homework takes around two to three hours a day.

Many schools have after-school study sessions which you pay for. Your school

may also have homework support services. Check with the Clare Immigrant Support Centre for more information about homework support. Help your child to study by having a quiet designated space and time to do their homework.

Books

You will be given a book list when your child starts school. If you cannot afford to pay the full cost of schoolbooks, you should talk to the school principal, who can help you to get the books.

Some schools have a book rental scheme. The Department of Education and Science provides an annual grant to schools to help with the cost of school books.

Parent-teacher meetings

These meetings normally happen once or twice a year. It is very important that parents attend. It is a chance for parents to discuss their child's progress with each teacher.

Social welfare supports

The HSE has an annual "back-to-school allowance" scheme that helps people who are on social welfare. You can get a form for this allowance at the reception area of: the Health Board Office, Sandfield, Ennis, Co Clare; the Citizens Information Centre or the Clare Immigrant Support Centre.

Third-level education

Places at third level are allocated based on exam results

Applying for a place

The Leaving Certificate

Universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education give places mainly based on the grades students get in the Leaving Certificate.

Central Applications Office (CAO)

The grades you receive in your Leaving Certificate exam are converted into points and used to allocate places in third level education. Applications for third-level courses are made through the CAO (central applications office), www.cao.ie. Your child's school will explain this in more detail to your child before they do their Leaving Certificate.

Exams in another country

If you have undertaken exams in another country, you will need to contact your college of choice to check if your qualification is enough to secure a place on the course of your choice. If you meet the requirements you should then apply through the CAO.

Types of third level college

Universities: Degree programmes at bachelor, masters and doctorate level are offered in Ireland's seven universities.

Technological sector: Institutions in the technological focus on business, science, engineering, linguistics and music to certificate, diploma and degree levels.

Colleges of education: There are five

colleges of education which specialise in the training of primary school teachers.

Third-level grant schemes

There is a grant scheme available to EU/EEA citizens, people with refugee status and some other categories of people with permission to remain in the state. Your income must be below a certain level to qualify. Contact: The Student Support Unit of the Department of Education. Phone: (057) 932 4381. Email: studentsupportunit-tullamore@education.gov.ie

Support for adults

There are also some Social Welfare grants for those returning to education. You must be a resident for a year before you apply. Contact Clare County Council, New Road, Ennis, Co Clare. Phone: (065) 682 1616. www.enviro.n.ie. See details on next two pages.



Support for adult learning

There are courses available for everyone

As well as providing income maintenance payments, the Department of Social and Family Affairs (DSFA) operates 'welfare-to-work schemes'. They are designed to help unemployed people to return to the active labour market either by taking up employment or becoming self-employed. They are aimed particularly at people who are:

- long-term unemployed;
- lone parents; and
- people who are receiving sickness payments.

The DSFA has a number of Job Facilitators who provide a service to help people get a job.

Phone (065) 682 9899.

Back-to-Work Scheme

The Back-to-Work Enterprise Allowance Scheme allows you to keep part of your social welfare payment if you take up self-employment and meet various conditions. The Jobs Facilitator will look at your business proposal and may discuss certain aspects of it with you.

Phone: (065) 682 9899.

Back to Education Scheme

The Back to Education Allowance Scheme allows jobseekers who qualify

for it to return to education and keep their welfare payment.

If you are awarded a statutory redundancy payment, you may benefit from the scheme as soon as you establish that you are entitled to a relevant social welfare payment.

Part-time options

If you are getting a jobseeker's payment and the course you choose is not covered under the Back to Education Allowance Scheme, you may still be able to keep your jobseeker's payment while doing a course of education, training or development. It must be clear that the course will improve your employment prospects.

A broad range of courses are approved – from basic education to general training or specific job skills. In addition, you may be able to keep your secondary benefits, depending on your circumstances.

You may get out-of-pocket expenses for a short-term course – about €2 a week if you are on a course for three or more days a week; about €10 a week if it is two days or less. Contact the Job facilitator at the local Social Welfare Office in Ennis to see if you qualify and to get approval for the course before you start it.

Phone (065) 682 9899.

To find out what courses are available contact your local VEC or third-level college. You can get more information on available educational courses on the website www.qualifax.ie

Regional Learning Centre

The Ennis Regional Learning Centre offers learners in the Clare region the chance to gain a third-level qualification and an educational guidance service. They also deliver free 'Return-to-learning' workshops to mature students; and to those who are socially, economically or culturally disadvantaged. For more information contact the Ennis Regional Learning Centre, Clare County Museum, Arthurs Row.

Phone (065) 686 6844.

ACCESS21

Access 21 offers school leavers and adult students who wish to go to third level (Galway, Mayo Institute and NUI Galway) a one-year training course, which if they complete, guarantees the student access to these colleges.

It is designed specifically for those who may have been unable or prevented previously from progressing into third level courses for a variety of reasons, including long-term unemployment or low income. For more information contact: Mid West Access Co-ordinator, Adult education Centre, Ennis.

Phone (065) 686 8374.

Clare Job Club

The Job Club aims to expand awareness and help those taking part to understand how using simple techniques can greatly enhance jobseeking skills. It is sponsored by the Clare Council of Trade Unions, Elevation Business Park, Clonroad, Ennis.

Phone (065) 684 4993.

Evening classes

There are a wide variety of classes available at VEC schools, colleges and centres throughout the county. Contact Clare VEC, Station Road, Ennis.

Phone (065) 682 8107.

See www.clarelearningnetwork.org.

See also next page.

Recruitment agencies

Contact the FAS Office in Ennis or Ennis Community Information Centre.

Third level grants

Clare VEC Grants Section, phone (065) 682 8107. Clare County Council, Third level Grants Section.

Phone (065) 682 1616.

English language classes

Check your local Citizens Information Centre (CIC) to see what local English language or adult training programmes are available.

Ennis CIC: Phone (065) 684 1221.

Clare Vocational Education Committee

Adult education is now a major service within Clare Vocational Education Committee (Clare VEC)

VTOS – for unemployed

Clare VEC offers a Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS). It is a two-year full-time certified programme, available at Ennis, Scarriff and Kilrush, for unemployed adults and other specific people receiving welfare payments.

Youthreach

This is a programme for early school leavers and operates at Kilrush, Scarriff, Shannon, Miltown Malbay and Ennis.

See www.clareadulteducation.org (to get straight to the relevant page use this link <http://tinyurl.com/mp74mz>).

Adult basic education

The Clare Adult Basic Education Service (CABES) offers one-to-one and group tuition in literacy and basic education to adults. Family learning programmes, workplace training and English language classes are also available.

See www.cabes.ie

English language classes: Clare Adult Basic Education Service offers English language programmes at all levels of English from

beginner to advanced. Most programmes, however, are aimed at those who have only a basic knowledge of English. Programmes are offered from Monday to Friday, morning, afternoon and evening. There are also programmes on Information Technology, Irish Culture and English for Specific Purposes.

Community education

The Clare VEC Community Education Service supports the development of relevant, locally based learning opportunities for adults in County Clare. It aims to promote community education opportunities across County Clare.

See www.clarelearningnetwork.org (to get straight to the relevant page use this link <http://tinyurl.com/mn3kak>).

Lifelong learning

The Clare Lifelong Learning Network aims to promote lifelong learning in County Clare. It supports learners and learning providers in working together.

See www.clarelearningnetwork.org

ADULT EDUCATION

VEC adult education is available at the following locations in Clare

Centre	Location	Contact
Clare VEC Head Office	Station Road, Ennis	(065) 682 8107
Adult and Community Education Centre	Clonroad, Ennis	(065) 682 4819
West Clare Adult Learning Centre	Cooraclare Road, Kilrush	(065) 705 2131 (065) 905 2799
East Clare Adult Learning Centre	Scarriff	(061) 640 760 (061) 921 863
West Clare Resource Centre	Ballard Road, Miltown Malbay	(065) 708 4774
Adult Learning Centre	Town Centre, Shannon	(061) 365 495

Adult guidance

The Clare Adult Guidance Service has been available since 2000. It offers educational information, advice and guidance to adults taking part in VTOS, BTEI, adult literacy and general adult education programmes throughout the county. Guidance resource rooms are available in Scarriff, Ennis and Kilrush.

See www.clareguidance.ie

Back to education

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) programme offers flexible part-time certificate programmes throughout the county. It is co-funded by the Irish Government and the European Union under the European Social Fund.

See www.clarelearningnetwork.org (to get straight to the relevant page use this link <http://tinyurl.com/m63cup>)

Childcare

The VEC has two crèches in Ennis and Kilrush to support adults attending VEC courses in these towns.

Evening classes

The VEC offers a wide variety of other courses at VEC Schools, Colleges and Centres throughout the county.

See www.clarelearningnetwork.org

St Joseph's Centre

St Joseph's Education Centre is one of a network of 33 Senior Travellers Training Centres in the country. The centre offers a number of programmes including literacy, FETAC (FETAC is the national awarding body for further education and training in Ireland) certified programmes and LCA (Leaving Certificate Applied) programmes. See www.stjotc.ie

Useful contacts

Primary schools in Ennis

School	Type of school, religion and location	Phone number
Chroíst Rí	Catholic primary, Cloughleigh.	(065) 682 0105.
Christian Brothers	Catholic primary, New Road.	(065) 682 2150.
Ennis Educate Together	Non-denominational (no particular religion), Gort Road.	(065) 682 6070.
Holy Family	Junior Catholic primary, Station Road.	(065) 682 9809.
Holy Family	Senior Catholic primary, Sation Road.	(065) 682 8893.
Ennis National School	Catholic primary, Kilrush Road.	(065) 682 9156.
Gaelscoil Mhichíl Cíosóg	Catholic primary, Irish Speaking, Gort Road.	(065) 682 1220.
St Annes	Special needs school, Corrovorrin.	(065) 682 9072.
St Clare's	Special needs school, Gort Road.	(065) 682 1899.

Secondary schools in Ennis

Name	Address	Phone number
Coláiste Mhuire	Harmony Row, Ennis, Co. Clare.	(065) 682 9497
Ennis Community College	Harmony Row, Ennis, Co. Clare.	(065) 682 9432
Rice College	New Road, Ennis, Co. Clare.	(065) 682 2105
St Flannan's College	Ennis, Co. Clare.	(065) 682 8019

More information about schools in Clare

For a list of schools in Co Clare see the Clare library website www.clarelibrary.ie
(or go directly to the relevant page by using this link <http://tinyurl.com/nuwy42>)