



Education





## Access to education based on immigration status

### Children

Children residing in Ireland are entitled to attend primary and post-primary school. However, there are specific guidelines for children of non-EEA students. For further information go to: [www.inis.gov.ie](http://www.inis.gov.ie)

### Adults

Anyone on stamp 1, 2, 3, or 4 can access education but may have to pay full tuition fees. However, if there is a paid work placement element to the course then this may require a change of immigration status to enable the person to work.

## Education for Children

Every child in Ireland is entitled to free, state-run primary and post-primary education. Attendance at full-time education is compulsory for all children between six and sixteen years of age. Although children in Ireland are not obliged to attend school until the age of six, the majority of children begin school in the September following their fourth birthday.

While primary and post-primary education is free, there are a number of costs involved. The main ones are uniforms and

books (see 'Back School Clothing and Footwear Allowance' in Family Chapter). It is also possible to send your children to fee paying secondary schools and to private primary and secondary schools.

### Do parents meet with the teachers?

Yes. At primary and post-primary level parent-teacher meetings are held during the school year. Your child's school will let you know the date and time of the meeting. If you wish to meet with the class teacher outside of these meetings you should contact the school and arrange a meeting.

### My child doesn't speak Irish (Gaeilge), will he/she have to learn it?

Irish is normally compulsory in primary and post-primary schools. However, the following students may be exempt from studying Irish:

- Students whose primary education up to 11 years of age was received in Northern Ireland or outside Ireland
- Students who were enrolled in a primary or post-primary school and who are now enrolling again having been abroad. The student must have been abroad for at least three years. The student must be at least 11 years of age when re-enrolling



- Students who function at an average or above-average level of ability, but who have a specific learning difficulty, or a general learning disability, so that they are not learning, or cannot reach expected attainment levels in their mother tongue.

## Primary Schools

The school year for primary school children is from September until the end of June. The primary school cycle is 8 years long starting with 2 years of infant classes and followed by 1st to 6th class.

### What types of primary schools are available?

The Irish primary education sector consists of state-funded primary schools and private primary schools. State-funded primary schools are also known as 'national schools'. Primary schools are generally administered by Boards of Management. State-funded schools include religious schools, non-denominational schools, multi-denominational schools and Gaelscoileanna (schools that teach through Irish). For a list of schools go to 'Education Provider Search' on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). You can also contact your local CIC (Citizens Information Centre), located nationwide.

### How do I get a place for my child in a primary school?

You should contact your local primary school to get a copy of its enrolment policy and a copy of its enrolment form. You should apply in writing for a school place as early as possible due to long waiting lists in many areas. You will need a copy of your child's Birth Certificate when enrolling your child in school. All schools are required to enrol in accordance with their enrolment policies. Problems can arise in securing a school place if classes are full and if there is a waiting list for school places. Some post-primary schools give priority to students from certain primary schools so it may be useful to plan ahead when choosing a primary school for your child.

### What role does religion play in Irish schools?

The majority of Irish primary schools are Roman Catholic. There are other denominational schools catering for children of the Protestant, Jewish and Muslim faiths. Roman Catholic children receive their First Holy Communion in second class and children in sixth class prepare for the Sacrament of Confirmation.

There are also many multi-denominational and non denominational schools. All schools are required by law to enrol children in accordance with their enrolment policy. That policy may state that the school may give priority to children



of a particular religious faith but it may also admit children with other or no religious beliefs. Children of other faiths do not have to attend religion classes. They have a legal right to this option under the Education Act, 1998.

For more information about primary schools go to: 'Parents & Community' then 'FAQs Primary' on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## Post-Primary or Secondary Schools

The post-primary school year generally runs from the first week in September to the first week in June but some schools are open in August. The State Examinations are sat during the month of June: [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie)

### What types of secondary schools are available?

The post-primary school system includes secondary schools (some of which are fee paying), vocational schools, community or comprehensive schools and private schools. Fees charged by private secondary schools can vary considerably. You will need to check with each individual school. Secondary schools are owned, managed and often run by religious orders, although the teachers in these schools are generally non-religious staff. Vocational schools and community or comprehensive schools/colleges often

provide additional further education opportunities for school-leavers and adults in the local community.

For a full list of post-primary schools go to 'Education Provider Search' on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

### How do I enrol my child in a post-primary school?

Contact the school directly. You should enrol your child as early as possible as many schools operate a waiting list.

### What is the curriculum in post-primary schools?

At post-primary level there are two cycles: the junior cycle which ends with the Junior Certificate examinations and the senior cycle which ends with the Leaving Certificate examinations. Generally students take 8 or 9 subjects for the Junior Certificate examinations and 6 or 7 subjects for the Leaving Certificate examinations. Core subjects include: Mathematics, Irish and English. Students sit the examinations at either Higher Level or Ordinary Level. Irish and Mathematics can also be studied at Foundation Level.

This level is for students who have difficulty with these subjects.



There are three options in the Leaving Certificate programme:

1. The Established Leaving Certificate Programme which is the most widely taken programme
2. The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) which is similar to the Established Programme with added vocational content and technical subjects
3. The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is a programme consisting of practical projects and portfolio work.

Some post-primary schools also offer the Transition Year programme between the junior cycle and senior cycle. For more information go to: <http://ty.slss.ie/>

For more information about post-primary schools go to 'Parents & Community' then 'FAQs Post-Primary' on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie).

Youthreach is an essential part of the national programme of second-chance education and training in Ireland. It is directed at unemployed young early school leavers between 15 and 20 years of age. For more information go to: [www.youthreach.ie](http://www.youthreach.ie)

## Third level education

Third level education consists of Higher Education and Further Education.

### What is Higher Education?

In Ireland Higher Education usually refers to courses in the:

- seven universities (National University of Ireland Maynooth, National University of Ireland Cork, National University of Ireland Galway, University of Limerick, Dublin City University, University College Dublin and Trinity College, Dublin)
- fourteen institutes of technology: [www.ioti.ie](http://www.ioti.ie)
- five teacher training colleges. These are state sponsored institutions but there are also some private fee-paying colleges.

These colleges can collectively be called Higher Education Institutions: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)



### How do I access Higher Education?

There are a number of criteria governing entry to Higher Education in Ireland. These include:

- course entry requirements
- age
- legal status

**Note:** There may be a separate application process for mature students (over 23 years of age)

Entrance to Higher Education in Ireland is generally decided by competition. At the end of your post-primary education, you sit the Leaving Certificate State Examination and the six best grades you receive (in the Leaving Certificate or Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme) are converted into points (see table below). These points are calculated and Higher Education places are awarded on this basis. 600 points is the highest that you can obtain. For entry to some Higher Education courses you must satisfy the course entry requirements, such as specific grades in listed subjects, for example, Maths and Irish.

Grade	Higher Level	Ordinary Level
A1	100	60
A2	90	50
B1	85	45
B2	80	40
B3	75	35
C1	70	30
C2	65	25
C3	60	20
D1	55	15
D2	50	10
D3	45	5

Applications for third level courses are made through the CAO (Central Applications Office): [www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie)

Tower House, Eglinton Street, Galway

Telephone: 091 509800

For a full list of Higher Education courses see:

[www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie)



### What if I completed my secondary school exams in another country?

If you have taken your post-primary school exams under another system in another country you will need to check whether your qualifications satisfy the course entry requirements. To do so it is advisable to contact the relevant course provider.

### Can I access financial support?

For information on fees go to: [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie)

### Is there tax relief on student fees?

Tax relief at standard rate is available for fees in approved Higher Education Institutions, contact your local tax office for more details.

### What about maintenance grants?

For information on maintenance grants and about different financial support options go to: [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie)

### What standard of English is required to be accepted to a Higher Education Institution in Ireland?

English is generally the main language of instruction at all Higher Education Institutions in Ireland so you will need to demonstrate that you have the required language proficiency

needed for the course. Institutions' requirements differ but generally they look for an acceptable English language proficiency test, for example the TIE (Test of Interactive English) or equivalent.

English classes are available throughout Ireland:

Vocational Education Committees (VEC) provide English classes: [www.ivea.ie](http://www.ivea.ie)

MEI is an association of 69 high quality English Language Schools, operating language courses in over 120 locations around Ireland: [www.mei.ie](http://www.mei.ie)

Lower Pembroke Street, Dublin 2

Telephone: 01 6180910/11

ACELS – The Advisory Council for English Language Schools was established in 1969 to control standards in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) schools and organisations:

[www.acels.ie](http://www.acels.ie)

Sandford Lodge, Sandford Close,  
Sandford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin 6

Telephone: 01 5292450

Email: [info@acels.ie](mailto:info@acels.ie)



## Further Education

### What is Further Education?

Further Education takes place following second level schooling and not in a Higher Education Institution. Some courses at this level may facilitate entry to Higher Education.

There are a variety of ways to continue your education. Your local VEC (Vocational Educational Committee) may have some suitable options – check [www.ivea.ie](http://www.ivea.ie) for contact details. FÁS also offers a wide variety of courses specifically designed to improve your prospects of getting employment: [www.fas.ie](http://www.fas.ie) Institutes of Technology and universities also offer adult and community education options and lifelong learning courses.

Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are open to school-leavers and adult participants who would like to gain vocational or technological skills. For a full list of PLC courses go to: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

QualifaX is Ireland's National Learners' Database and is part of National Qualifications Authority of Ireland: [www.qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie)

Learning Ireland provides information on classes and courses in Ireland: [www.learningireland.ie](http://www.learningireland.ie)

VTOS (Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme) offers unemployed people an opportunity of returning to structured learning: [www.vtos.ie](http://www.vtos.ie)

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides part-time Further Education programmes for young people and adults. It gives people an opportunity to combine education and learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Anyone who has left full-time education can take part in a course but priority is given to those with less than upper second level education. Fees will not be charged for people who are in receipt of social welfare entitlements or hold medical cards. For more information go to: [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

## Links

Department of Education and Science:

[www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

Marlborough Street, Dublin 1

Telephone: 01 8734700

For information in different languages go to 'Reports and Publications' and 'Translated Documents' on

[www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)



National Parents Council Primary works with parents, teachers and the Minister for Education to improve the education system and provide better resources for primary education: [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)

Telephone: 01 8874034 Helpline: 01 8874477

For information about the primary school system (in Arabic, Chinese and Russian) go to [www.npc.ie](http://www.npc.ie)

National Parents Council – Post Primary (NPCPP) is the voice and advocate for parents and guardians of young people in post-primary education. It serves and represents parents and guardians, principally through engagement with Parents Associations: [www.npcpp.ie](http://www.npcpp.ie)

The NPCPP also operates a Leaving Certificate Helpline which opens at 10am on the day the exam results are released: 1800 265 165

Telephone: 01 8302740 / 8302747

Email: [npcpp@eircom.net](mailto:npcpp@eircom.net)

State Examinations Commission is responsible for the provision and quality of Irish State Examinations: [www.examinations.ie](http://www.examinations.ie)

Telephone: 090 6442700

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment works to improve the quality of education through continuous review of curriculum and assessment provision: [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie)

Telephone: 01 6617177

Email: [info@ncca.ie](mailto:info@ncca.ie)

National Council for Special Education was set up to improve the delivery of education services to persons with special educational needs arising from disabilities with particular emphasis on children: [www.ncse.ie](http://www.ncse.ie)

Telephone: 046 9486400

Email: [info@ncse.ie](mailto:info@ncse.ie)

National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) is a service of the Department of Education and Science. NEPS psychologists work with both primary and post-primary schools and they are concerned with learning, behaviour, social and emotional development.

Telephone: 01 8892700

Email: [neps@neps.gov.ie](mailto:neps@neps.gov.ie)

National Education Welfare Board (NEWB) is the national agency with responsibility for encouraging and supporting regular school attendance: [www.newb.ie](http://www.newb.ie)

Telephone: 01 8738700

Email: [info@newb.ie](mailto:info@newb.ie)



Jesuit Refugee Service Ireland provides information on the education system in different languages and also template letters for parents and schools to use: [www.jrs.ie](http://www.jrs.ie) (go to 'Resources' then 'Schools')

13 Gardiner Place, Dublin 1

Telephone: 01 8148644

Della Strada, Dooradoyle Road, Limerick

Telephone: 061 480922

Crosscare Community Education Programme was established in 1989 in response to the needs of developing communities. The programme works to empower local people to access education through a process of personal development and participation.

Telephone: 01 8360011

Email: [marie.keegan@crosscare.ie](mailto:marie.keegan@crosscare.ie)