# Overview of the Irish education system

* [Education in Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/overview-of-the-irish-education-system/#907799)
* [Pre-school education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/overview-of-the-irish-education-system/#415387)
* [Primary education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/overview-of-the-irish-education-system/#0b1053)
* [Post-primary education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/overview-of-the-irish-education-system/#09a6fc)
* [Special needs education for students with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/overview-of-the-irish-education-system/#ce619d)
* [Further and adult education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/overview-of-the-irish-education-system/#fa0b9c)
* [Third-level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/overview-of-the-irish-education-system/#2bae21)

## Education in Ireland

The Irish education system is made up of [primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/starting-primary-school/) and [post-primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/starting-post-primary-school/) (also know as secondary school). You must ensure that your child gets a [certain minimum education from the age of 6 to 16](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/) or until they have completed 3 years of post-primary education.

Primary and post-primary schools must provide places based on their [school admissions policy and admissions notice](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/).

Many people continue on after post-primary to [further education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational_education_and_training/) and [third-level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third_level_education/). State-funded education is available at all levels, unless you choose to send your child to a private school.

## Pre-school education

The [Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/) provides free early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age.

Other than the ECCE, [pre-school education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre_school_education_and_childcare/) is usually provided by privately funded childcare services. However, the [National Childcare Scheme (NCS)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/) provides financial support to help parents to meet the costs of private childcare.

The Department of Education also funds some [pre-school initiatives focused on children at risk](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/home-school-liaison/).

## Primary education

Children do not have to attend school until the age of 6.

Usually, children start primary school when they are 5 years of age. They start in September - the beginning of the school year.

The Irish [primary school curriculum](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-curriculum/) is child-centred.

Generally, children are required to study Irish in school. Some children may be [exempted from learning Irish in school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/).

Find out more about [choosing a primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/choosing-a-primary-school/) for your child.

## Post-primary education

Post-primary education is provided by different [types of post-primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/).

Post-primary education has 2 stages:

* Junior Cycle – age 12 to 15 (approximately)
* Senior Cycle - age 16 to 18 (approximately)

### Junior Cycle and examinations

Students generally start the [Junior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/) at the age of 12 and take the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) examination at the end of 3 years.

### Senior Cycle and examinations

Children can have a 2 or 3-year Senior Cycle. The Senior Cycle is 3 years, if you opt to include [Transition Year](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/transition-year/).

The Transition year allows students to experience a wide range of educational instruction and work experience.

During their final 2 years in the [Senior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/senior-cycle/), students take one of 3 programmes, each leading to a State examination:

* Established Leaving Certificate
* Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
* Leaving Certificate Applied

The [established Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/) is the main basis on which students are allocated places in universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education.

The [Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/) has elements of the established Leaving Certificate but concentrates on technical subjects and includes additional modules with a vocational focus.

The [Leaving Certificate Applied Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/) aims to prepare students for adult and working life through relevant learning experiences. It is for students who wish to follow a practical or vocational programme. It is not recognised for direct entry to third-level courses but it can enable students to take [Post-Leaving Certificate courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/).

## Special needs education for students with disabilities

Educational provision for [students with special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/) ranges from additional support in mainstream schools to specialist support in special schools. A student with a disability may be enrolled in a:

* Mainstream class with additional support
* Special class in a mainstream school
* Special school

## Further and adult education

After post-primary school many students move on to further education or third level (see third-level education below). The [National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications) has 10 levels of education and allows you to compare the different standards and levels of education available to you across the education system.

### Educational Training Board programmes

The [Education and Training Boards (ETBs)](https://www.etbi.ie/) run a range of adult and further education and training programmes nationwide including [Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/). PLCs offer technical and practical education as well as a route to higher and third-level education.

Other programmes offered through ETBs include the [Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/) (second-chance education for adults); [Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/) for early school-leavers; other literacy and basic education; and self-funded evening adult programmes.

### Apprenticeships

Apprenticeships provide on-the-job training and off-the job education. [Apprenticeships](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/) are offered in traditional craft trades such as plumbing and electrical engineering but also new apprenticeships such as ICT, finance, software development and hospitality.

You must be at least 16 years of age and may need a minimum grade in [Junior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/) or equivalent exam.

### Springboard+

[Springboard+](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/) provides free higher education courses for people who are unemployed (or were self-employed) and those looking to return to the workforce.

If you are working, you may have to pay a contribution towards course fees. Generally, courses are part-time for one year and offered at Level 6 to 9 on the NFQ. Courses offered include ICT, medical technologies, cybersecurity and sustainable energy.

## Third-level education

[Third-level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/) is made up of a number of sectors that are substantially funded by the State.

* University sector
* Technological sector
* Colleges of education

Universities in general are autonomous and self-governing. They offer degree programmes at bachelor, masters and doctorate level.

The technological sector includes [technological universities (TUs)](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/69b0f-minister-harris-officially-opens-new-atlantic-technological-university/) and institutes of technology (ITs) which provide programmes of education and training in areas such as business, science, engineering, linguistics and music to certificate, diploma and degree levels.

The [colleges of education](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/teacher-education/initial-teacher-education-ite.191.html) specialise in training for primary school teachers. Training for post-primary teachers is provided by many third-level institutions. Qualifax provides detailed information on [programmes for teacher training](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=614&Itemid=201).

In December 2022, the Government announced plans to develop joint further and higher education degree programmes. From September 2023, students may start some degree programmes in further education and progress to higher education.

**Page edited:** 13 December 2022

# ­­­­Exemption from studying Irish

* [What is an exemption from studying Irish?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/#ed90f5)
* [Who can apply for an exemption from studying Irish?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/#2a0749)
* [How to apply for an exemption from studying Irish](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/#65ee6a)
* [How to appeal a decision](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/#01c308)
* [Irish language requirements for third-level courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/#3d2a5d)

## What is an exemption from studying Irish?

Irish is one of the core subjects in the school curriculum in Ireland. All students must study Irish unless they are given an exemption from studying the subject. If you get an exemption, you do not have to study Irish at school.

You can apply for an exemption from studying Irish in primary and secondary school.

You can only apply if English is the main language of instruction in your school. You cannot get an exemption from Irish in a school where Irish is the main language of instruction.

An exemption is only given in certain circumstances. The student must meet certain criteria – see ‘Who can apply for an exemption from studying Irish’ below.

Detailed information about the exemption from studying Irish in school, is set out in the Department of Education’s Circular [54/2022](https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/28b2b-exemptions-from-the-study-of-irish-primary/) (for primary schools) and [Circular 55/2022](https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/f33d5-exemptions-from-the-study-of-irish-post-primary/) (for post-primary schools). An exemption from the study of Irish can only be made under the rules outlined in the Circular in place at the time of application. You can find more information about the rules governing the exemption from Irish before September 2022 from the Department of Education.

## Who can apply for an exemption from studying Irish?

If you are a parent or guardian, you can apply for your child to be exempt from the study of Irish if you think they meet the criteria. Your child must be enrolled in an English-medium mainstream school. A student over 18 years of age can also apply for an exemption.

Your child will only be considered for exemption from studying Irish in exceptional circumstances.

The decision to exempt a student is made by the principal of the school following discussion with a student’s parents or guardians, the class teacher, special education teachers and the student themselves.

If a child is granted an exemption, they can choose not to use the exemption and take part in Irish classes or examinations. However, they do not lose the right to use the exemption in the future.

### Students who may get an exemption from the study of Irish:

### Students moving from abroad

Students coming to live in Ireland from abroad may get an exemption if:

* A child is enrolling for the first time after completed a full course of primary education outside the State, and did not have the opportunity to study Irish
* A child aged 12 or over who received their education outside the State for at least 3 consecutive years, and did not have the opportunity to study Irish
* A child of a foreign diplomatic or consular representative in Ireland (primary schools only)

### Students with literacy difficulties

A student who has at least reached second class and meets all of the following conditions can also get an exemption:

* The student has significant literacy difficulty that persists after having access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy over time. This should be documented in a Student Support Plan.
* The student has a standardised score at or below the 10th percentile in word reading, reading comprehension or spelling.

The school must monitor a student’s needs and programme over time to identify that the student has significant and persistent literacy difficulties.

### Students with multiple and persistent needs

A student who has at least reached second class and meets all of the following conditions can get an exemption:

* The student has a high level of significant, multiple and persistent needs that affect their learning and participation in school life
* The student's school has substantial written evidence that the student's needs persist despite a Student Support Plan which has been implemented for at least 2 years
* The student has been given every reasonable opportunity to learn Irish in mainstream classes
* The principal is satisfied that giving an exemption is in the best interests of the student

**What are multiple and persistent needs?**

A student has a high level of multiple and persistent needs if their needs are enduring and severe in nature and significantly affect their daily functioning at school despite the support of an individualised support programme.

### Exemption for special schools and special classes in mainstream schools

A student is considered exempt and does not need to apply for a certificate of exemption if they are:

* A student in a special school or a special class in a mainstream school
* A student who has previously enrolled in a special school or class
* A student who is eligible and has been recommended to enrol in a special school or class.

Your child’s school can make decisions about the Irish language learning needs of a student in a special class. However, schools are expected to provide students with opportunities to take part in Irish language and cultural activities as much as possible.

You can read more about the exemption from Irish in the Department of Education’s [FAQ for parents](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/257933/33e14fff-9d78-4af0-9d04-77dd6f1e3611.pdf#page=null).

## How to apply for an exemption from studying Irish

You apply to the school principal for an exemption from studying Irish. You can get an application form on [gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/)

You should include the reason why you are applying for the exemption. Your child will only be considered for an exemption if they meet the criteria set out in the Department of Education circulars on exemption from the study of Irish - see 'Further information' above.

You must attach documentary evidence of your child's age and previous schooling if it is relevant to the reason for the exemption.

The school must confirm the outcome of your application, in writing, within 21 working days of getting your application.

You will be issued a certificate of exemption signed by the school principal if an exemption is granted.

### Evidence of a disability

Psychological assessments and cognitive ability (IQ) scores are no longer needed when applying for exemption from the study of Irish.

If the exemption is sought on the grounds of a literacy difficulty, your child must present with significant and persistent learning difficulties despite having had access to a differentiated approach to language and literacy learning over time. The school also must have evidence of your child having a standardised score at or below the 10th percentile in at least one literacy attainment test in either word reading, reading comprehension or spelling.

You can read more about the tests the school uses when considering an applicaion in [Exemption from the Study of Irish – Guidance on Test Selection (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/235577/ce43ee25-8dfb-43a4-a213-f1affb1fa1b6.docx).

### Student Support Plan

The school must keep documentary evidence for students with special educational needs in the Student Support Plan. The plan should include:

* Regular reviews of learning needs as part of an ongoing cycle of assessment
* Target-setting
* Intervention and review including test scores in word reading, reading comprehension, spelling or other scores of language or literacy

## How to appeal a decision

If you do not agree with the decision to refuse an exemption for your child, you can appeal the school’s decision to the Irish Exemptions Appeal Committee (IEAC) using the [official appeals form](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/#appealing-a-decision). You must appeal within 30 days from the date you are notified in writing of the school’s decision.

The Committee will consider the grounds given for the refusal using the Department’s criteria for exemption and any supporting documentation the school had at the time of the decision.

You can get more information and an Irish exemption appeal form to appeal the decision on [gov.ie](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/irish-exemption/)

You can reapply for an exemption if it was refused. You should discuss with the school if it has the correct evidence to support your application.

## Irish language requirements for third-level courses

**Exemption from Irish at school**

Some third-level courses require a student to have a certain mark in Irish at the Leaving Certificate examination. If you have been exempted from Irish at school, you may be exempted from the third level requirement for a course. However, this is a matter for each individual college.

If you want to do a particular course, you should check with the college that it allows exemptions from Irish for the course you want to apply for. You can also check the [CAO website](https://www.cao.ie/) for information about language exemptions.

If you are applying for a third-level course through the Central Applications Office (CAO), you should send a copy of the exemption certificate with your CAO application form.

**Exemption from Irish at third-level**

If you didn’t get an exemption from Irish in school under the rules set by the Department of Education, you can still apply to the third-level institute for an exemption from Irish in their entry level requirements. The third-level institute will decide on your application.

The college may also ask you to complete an exemption application form and to submit supporting documentation. You should check with the individual college for details on how to apply for an exemption.

**Page edited:** 31 May 2023

# Irish Constitution and education

* [Articles about education in the Constitution](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/constitution-and-education/#8f1717)
* [What these articles mean for education in Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/constitution-and-education/#7009e8)

## Articles about education in the Constitution

The [Constitution of Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government-in-ireland/irish-constitution-1/constitution-introduction/) has a number of articles that are relevant to the law on education.

Article 42 of the Constitution deals with education. Other articles also have a bearing on education law, in particular the articles dealing with the family and religion (Articles 41 and 44). You can [read the full text of the Irish Constitution](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/cons/en/html).

### Education

This is the text of Article 42 of the Constitution of Ireland:

"1: The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

2: Parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes or in private schools or in schools recognised or established by the State.

3.1°:The State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience and lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the State, or to any particular type of school designated by the State.

3.2°:The State shall, however, as guardian of the common good, require in view of actual conditions that the children receive a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social.

4:The State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other educational facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation."

### The Family

This is the relevant part of Article 41 of the Irish Constitution:

"1.1°: The State recognises the Family as the natural primary and fundamental unit group of Society, and as a moral institution possessing inalienable and imprescriptible rights, antecedent and superior to all positive law.

1.2°: The State, therefore, guarantees to protect the Family in its constitution and authority, as the necessary basis of social order and as indispensable to the welfare of the Nation and the State."

### Religion

This is the relevant part of Article 44 of the Irish Constitution:

2.2°: The State guarantees not to endow any religion.

2.3°: The State shall not impose any disabilities or make any discrimination on the ground of religious profession, belief or status.

2.4°: Legislation providing State aid for schools shall not discriminate between schools under the management of different religious denominations, nor be such as to affect prejudicially the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction at that school.

2.5°: Every religious denomination shall have the right to manage its own affairs, own, acquire and administer property, movable and immovable, and maintain institutions for religious or charitable purposes.

2.6°: The property of any religious denomination or any educational institution shall not be diverted save for necessary works of public utility and on payment of compensation.

## What these articles mean for education in Ireland

### Education and the family – Article 41 and Article 42

These articles have been the subject of a number of court decisions. In simple terms, the essential points about these articles are:

* The family is the main source of education for the child. Parents are entitled to provide education outside the school system if they wish.
* The state may not force parents to send their children to any school or any particular kind of school. Parents may decide the school to which they wish to send their children but there is no constitutional obligation on a particular school to accept individual children.
* The state may require that the children receive a certain minimum education. This certain minimum has not yet been defined in legislation or in official policy. Many of the court cases have been about the precise meaning of that phrase.
* The state is obliged to provide for free primary education. It is not obliged to provide that education directly. In practice, there are some state schools but the majority of primary schools are privately owned and largely state funded. See [ownership of primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/ownership-of-primary-schools/)
* The state is not obliged to directly provide schools but it is not prevented from doing so either.

### Minimum education

The [Education (Welfare) Act 2000](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0022/index.html) does not give a definition of a "minimum education". However, it does provide that the Minister may set out a "prescribed minimum education". That minimum standard may be different for children of different ages and of different capacities - including physical, mental and emotional capacities.

The Act also provides that [children educated outside the mainstream school system](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/) should be identified and assessed to ensure that the education they are getting meets the minimum standards. The register is maintained by [Tusla - the Child and Family Agency](https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/alternative-education-assessment-and-registration-service/).

### Free primary education

In the Sinnott case, the Supreme Court decided that the right to free primary education ends at age 18 and does not continue on the basis of need.

### Religion - Article 44

This article means that there may not be discrimination between the different denominations and that children have the right to attend state aided schools without attending religious instruction. In practice, certain time periods may be set aside for religious instruction and the parents have a right to withdraw the child at these times. However, the nature of the curriculum is such that there is not generally a rigid divide between subjects and the school ethos tends to pervade all subjects.

It has been argued that Article 44 means that a child may not be refused access to a publicly funded school on the basis of the child's religious beliefs.

Educational establishments in Ireland are subject to the [Equal Status Acts 2000-2018](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0008/index.html). Educational establishments refers to preschools, primary, post-primary, an institution providing adult, continuing or further education, a university, third level or higher level institution whether or not they are publicly funded. You can find an information booklet about [Schools and the Equal Status Acts (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/25063/a6e913a466344dce9530ce261b41d6c5.pdf) on the Department of Education website.

**Page edited:** 17 January 2022

# Special needs education

* [What is special needs education?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/#78aa2e)
* [Special needs education supports](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/#b3d3a5)
* [Organisations with a role in special needs education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/#0c30c8)
* [The law on special needs education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/#b0cd31)

## What is special needs education?

Special needs education is the educational arrangements that are put in place for children with disabilities. Not all children with disabilities have special education needs.

You are a person with special educational needs if your capacity to participate in and benefit from education is restricted due to an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability.

The Department of Education's policy is to provide special needs education in mainstream settings as far as possible. The [Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (pdf)](http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2004/A3004.pdf) provides that children are to be educated in an inclusive setting unless this would not be in the best interests of the child or the effective provision of education for other children in mainstream education. You can find out more about ‘The law on special needs education’ below.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has published an information booklet for parents, [Children with Special Educational Needs (pdf)](http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ChildrenWithSpecialEdNeeds1.pdf).

You can read more about [school admission for students with special education needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/).

## Special needs education supports

Education for children with special needs may be provided in mainstream classes in mainstream schools, in special classes in mainstream schools or in special schools.

**Mainstream classes**

Many children with disabilities or special needs are in mainstream classes in mainstream schools. They may get help from learning support and resource teachers and care support from special needs assistants (SNAs). You can read more about these supports for children with special educational needs in our documents on special needs education in [primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/) and [post-primary schools.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/)

**Special classes in mainstream schools**

Some children attend special classes in mainstream schools. These classes generally have low pupil/teacher ratios.

**Special schools**

There are around 140 special schools providing for particular types of disability and special needs. Among them are: special schools for students who have a general learning disability at a mild or moderate level; schools for visually impaired and hearing impaired students; a few schools for students with physical disabilities; a small number of special schools for students who are emotionally disturbed.

You can find the special schools in your area on the website on the [NCSE](https://ncse.ie/) website.

**Education plans**

Under the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (the EPSEN Act) each child assessed with a special educational need should have a personal education plan. This system is not yet in place but its implementation is being coordinated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which has published [Guidelines for the Individual Education Plan process (pdf)](http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/final_report.pdf).

The NCSE has also published Implementation Report: Plan for the Phased Implementation of the EPSEN Act 2004. This sets out how the Act can be implemented. However, there is currently no date for the implementation of the assessment of need and individual education plans.

#### Allocation Model

Since 2017, the new system, each mainstream school gets a single allocation of special education teachers. The number of special education teachers allocated to a school is determined by the size of the school and its educational profile.

Schools are provided with the necessary resources in advance so that students with special educational needs can be enrolled into schools and access additional supports. The enables a school to be inclusive and put in place additional teaching support for students who need it. The Department of Education provides [information for parents and guardians on how your child can get additional teaching support in school (pdf)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4c96e-a-new-model-for-allocating-special-education-teachers-to-mainstream-schools/).

It was announced in May 2021, that the introduction of the frontloaded Allocation Model for Special Needs Assistants for students in mainstream classes in primary and post-primary schools will be deferred to the 2022-2023 school year.

You can read more about the allocation model in our document on special needs education in primary and [post-primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/).

#### Transport

[Special transport arrangements,](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/) including escorts and safety harnesses are available for children with disabilities attending school.

**Nursing supports to attend school**

For the school year 2022-2023, a new [pilot scheme will run to put nursing supports in place so that children with complex healthcare need can attend school](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cf321-national-nursing-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs-pilot-scheme/). Find out more about [applying for the pilot scheme](https://ncse.ie/national-nursing-programme-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs).

## Organisations with a role in special needs education

**The National Council for Special Education**

The [National Council for Special Education (NCSE)](http://ncse.ie/) works with the Department of Education to improve the delivery of special needs education.

The NCSE:

* Plans and co-ordinates the provision of education and support services to children with special educational needs (with schools and the Health Service Executive (HSE))
* Plans the implementation of the Education for Persons with Special Needs Act – see above
* Provides information on best practice for the education of children with special educational needs
* Provides information to parents on the entitlements of children with special educational needs
* Assesses and reviews resources for children with special educational needs
* Ensures that progress of students with special educational needs is monitored and reviewed
* Reviews education provision for adults with disabilities
* Advises educational institutions on best practice
* Consults with voluntary bodies
* Advises the Minister for Education on special education matters
* Conducts research and publishes findings
* Nominates a person to carry out an assessment of education need on behalf of the HSE

The [Disability Act 2005](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html) provides for an Assessment of Need (AON) to identify your child's health needs and what health services are needed to meet these needs. The assessment is carried out by the HSE for children or young people with a disability. Since 2021, the NCSE must nominate a person to carry out an assessment of education needs on behalf of the HSE when an AON is in process. Find out more about the [Assessment of Need for children or young people with a disability](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-services/health-services-for-people-with-disabilities/assessment-of-need-for-people-with-disabilites/).

Since 2017, the Special Education Support Service, the National Behaviour Support Service and the Visiting Teacher Service have moved to the NCSE. The NCSE support service was set up to provide a more integrated service to children and their families as well as to teachers and schools.

The NCSE has published information for parents, including the following:

* [Frequently asked questions](https://ncse.ie/faqs)
* [Information on special classes in schools](https://ncse.ie/special-classes)
* [Information booklets and pamphlets](https://ncse.ie/information-booklets-pamphlets-2)

**Special Educational Needs Organisers**

The NCSE employs Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs).

SENOs are responsible for resources to support the special educational needs of children with disabilities at local level. SENOs are local points of contact for parents and guardians and schools.

Your local SENO will:

* Provide support and advice to parents and guardians on the facilities services and resources available to assist your child
* Identify possible school placements for your child
* Process applications for resource teacher support for your child
* Assist with applications for transport and Assistive Technology
* Liaise with the school, the HSE and other services
* Help plan for your child when starting school, moving between schools and their life after school.

You can find the [contact details for SENOs on the NCSE website.](https://ncse.ie/seno-contact-information)

**The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) advises the Minister for Education on the curriculum and syllabus requirements of students with disabilities or with special educational needs. The Council has published [Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Disabilities.](https://www.ncca.ie/media/2509/sen_introduction.pdf)

The NCCA has also produced [draft guidelines for teachers of exceptionally able students](https://www.ncca.ie/media/1974/exceptionally_able_students_draft_guidelines_for_teachers.pdf).

**The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)**

NEPS provides [psychological services to primary and post-primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/), both State and private schools

NEPS provides training and advice to schools on applying for 'reasonable accommodation' in the [State examination arrangements for children with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/).

## The law on special needs education

In the Irish Constitution there is information about the role of the State in [providing education and the rights of parents](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/constitution-and-education/).

All children have a constitutional right to free primary education and children with special educational needs have the right to free primary education up to age 18

There have been significant legal changes concerning special needs education.

### Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004

The [Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act 2004 (pdf)](http://www.oireachtas.ie/documents/bills28/acts/2004/A3004.pdf) - also known as the EPSEN Act - provides for the education of children aged under 18 years with special educational needs. The Act focuses on children’s education but there are references to further and adult education. You are a person with special educational needs if your capacity to participate in and benefit from education is restricted due to an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability. While the Act is passed, all parts of it are not fully in effect.

The Act:

* Provides that people with special educational needs are educated in an inclusive environment, as far as possible
* Establishes that people with special educational needs have the same right to avail of and benefit from education as children who do not have those needs
* Provides for the greater involvement of parents in the education of their children and decision making
* Establishes the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) on a statutory basis
* Gives statutory functions to the Health Service Executive with regard to the education of people with special educational needs
* Establishes an independent appeals system – the Special Education Appeals Board – where decisions made about the education of people with special educational needs can be appealed

The Act sets out a range of services to be provided to people with special educational needs. These include assessments, education plans and other support services. Parents can seek assessments of a child’s educational needs. Assessments can be initiated by the Health Service Executive (HSE), by a school principal or by the National Council for Special Education. The system for personal education plans is not yet in place and its implementation is being co-ordinated by the NCSE.

The HSE is currently responsible for providing health services to pre-school children and may provide speech and language therapy services. The NCSE will be responsible for providing services to school-going children.

In line with the EPSEN Act, the Department of Education provides supports to children with a disability.

### The Special Education Appeals Board and mediation

The 2004 Act provides for alternative methods of dispute resolution and encourages a move away from the courts as the forum for redress. The Special Education Appeals Board was established in 2006 for the resolution of disputes and the determination of appeals and the first Board members were appointed. [The Board is not yet in operation.](http://debates.oireachtas.ie/dail/2011/05/04/00043.asp)

When the Appeals Board comes into operation, the Act provides for the following:

* If the council refuses to arrange an assessment of a child or to prepare an education plan, the parents of the child or the school principal may appeal to the Appeals Board.
* The Appeals Board will have the power to direct the council to arrange the preparation of an assessment or of an education plan. In this case, the council must comply with the direction of the Appeals Board.
* The Appeals Board may dismiss the appeal of the parents or principal. The 2004 Act also provides for a process of mediation following the exhaustion of any rights of appeal under the legislation.

### The Education Act 1998

The [Education Act 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/index.html) deals with education generally but emphasises the rights of children with disabilities and with other special educational needs. This Act is in effect and provides that every person concerned with the implementation of the legislation must have regard to a number of objectives including:

* To give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children including children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education
* To provide that, as far as is practicable and having regard to the resources available, a level and quality of education appropriate to the needs and abilities of the people of the country

The Minister for Education is obliged, among other things, to ensure that everyone living in Ireland (including people with disabilities and people who have other special educational needs) has available support services and a level and quality of education appropriate to his/her needs and abilities.

### Funding

The 1998 Act gives the Minister for Education certain functions in respect of funding, including the funding of support services for students with disabilities.

Schools must use their available resources to ensure that the educational needs of all students, including those with disabilities, are identified and provided for.

Boards of Management are required to use the State resources provided to the school to make reasonable provisions and accommodation for students with disabilities or other special education needs, including, where necessary, alteration of buildings and the provision of appropriate equipment.

The Act also provides that the criteria for funding of schools may allow for the payment of additional grants to schools, having regard to the level of educational disadvantage.

### Support services

The 1998 Act defines support services as including, among other things:

* Assessment of students
* Guidance and counselling services
* Technical aids and equipment, including means of access to schools, adaptations to buildings to facilitate access and transport for students with special needs and their families
* Provision for students learning through Irish sign language or other sign language, including interpreting services
* Speech therapy services
* Provision for early childhood, primary, post-primary, adult or continuing education to students with special needs otherwise than in schools or centres for education

The [Education (Provision in Respect of Children with Special Educational Needs) Act 2022](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2022/22/eng/enacted/a2222.pdf), allows the Minister to direct a school to work with the NCSE and put a special class in place. The Department of Education has published information for schools about [providing for children with special education needs](https://assets.gov.ie/240372/f025d1bf-0cb9-44cb-9eed-b4d092fc9158.pdf).

### The Equal Status Acts 2000-2011

The [Equal Status Act 2000](http://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/2000/act/8/revised/en/html)-2011, outlaws discrimination in areas of life - mainly the provision of services. The Acts apply to educational services, including private schools and pre-school facilities.

There are certain specific provisions in the Acts in relation to education and some of these deal with people with disabilities or people who have special needs.

The Equal Status Acts outlaw direct and indirect discrimination on a number of grounds including gender, religion, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community.

Under the law, a school may not discriminate in relation to:

* The admission or the terms and conditions of admission of a student
* The access of a student to any course, facility or benefit provided
* Any other term or condition of participation in the school by the student
* The expulsion of a student or any other sanction

### Discrimination on grounds of disability

The Equal Status Acts set out certain activities that do not constitute discrimination. The following relate to discrimination on the grounds of disability:

* Schools may make different arrangements for sport for children on the basis of age, gender or disability if these are reasonably necessary.
* Schools will not be considered to discriminate against a student with a disability if compliance with the provisions of the legislation would have a seriously detrimental effect on or make impossible the provision of services to other students.
* In certain circumstances, discrimination on the grounds of disability can occur if there is a failure to do all that is reasonable to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability. If a person with a disability cannot avail of a service without the provision of special treatment or facilities then the service provider may be required to provide such special arrangements if there is only a nominal cost involved.
* The Act includes a provision that clarifies that the nominal cost issue does not prejudice or dilute the various provisions in the Education Act 1998 in relation to children with a disability. It should be noted that these provisions all relate to the use of public funds. This means that private primary schools are only obliged to make special provision for children with disabilities if there is only a nominal cost involved.

### Special Education Section

Department of Education and Skills

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 648 3754

**Homepage:** <http://www.education.ie/>

**Page edited:** 6 December 2022

# Teaching your child at home

* [Home schooling](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/#d2a347)
* [Educating your child at home](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/#7721ec)
* [Registering to teach your child at home](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/#9b72ae)
* [Support for teaching your child at home](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/#88bc9f)
* [State exams and third level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/#03778b)

## Home schooling

You have a constitutional right to educate your child at home. The [Irish Constitution](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/constitution-and-education/) recognises the family as the primary educator of the child and defines the duties and responsibilities for parents and the State in the education of children.

If you choose to teach your child at home, often called home schooling or home education, you do not need a formal teaching qualification. You do not need to follow the national curriculum, but you must ensure that your child receives a certain minimum education.

You can choose a suitable approach to teaching your child based on their learning needs and what is appropriate to their age, aptitude and ability.

The information in this document is for people who choose to teach their child at home on a long-term basis. You can also find the answers to some [frequently asked questions about home schooling](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/AEARS-GDE01.2_Home_Education_Frequently_Asked_Questions_.pdf).

## Educating your child at home

To teach your child at home, you must:

* Provide a minimum education
* Register with TUSLA's Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS)

### Minimum education

[Section 14](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0022/sec0014.html#partiii-sec14) of the [Education (Welfare) Act 2000](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0022/index.html) provides for parents to educate their children in places other than recognised schools, such as in the home or in private schools. You do not need to follow a national curriculum. However, the Act states that parents must ensure their child receives *a certain minimum education.*

A *recognised school* is a school overseen by the Department of Education. An independent school (or non-recognised school) is a school that is not overseen by the Department of Education.

There are detailed [Guidelines on the Assessment of Education in places other than recognised schools (pdf)](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/guidelines_assessment_education_outside_schools.pdf). The guidelines provide a working definition of *a certain minimum education*. They describe home-based education and how it is assessed.

The education should:

* Be suited to your child's age, ability, aptitude and personality
* Be responsive to your child’s individual needs and take account of the areas of learning that interest your child
* Ensure that your child's personal potential is enhanced and not suppressed
* Address the immediate and future needs of your child in the context of the cultural, economic and social environment
* Provide a reasonably balanced range of learning experiences, so that no one aspect of your child’s learning is emphasised to the exclusion of others
* Develop your child's personal and social skills and prepare them to be a responsible citizen
* Contribute to your child's moral development
* Provide opportunities for your child to develop their intellectual capacities and understanding

The basic skills that are part of a minimum education include development and progression in oral language, literacy and numeracy. A child would be at a serious disadvantage if their home education programme did not develop these basic skills.

### Register with Tusla

You must register your child with Tusla if you plan to teach them at home.

If your child attends an independent school, you should apply to register them through the school. Registration is a legal obligation, but it is not automatic. Parents or guardians are responsible for making an application on behalf of their child. See ‘Registering to teach your child at home’ below.

## Registering to teach your child at home

You [apply directly to Tusla's Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS)](https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/alternative-education-assessment-and-registration-service/) to register to teach your child at home.

AEARS can send you an application form and a copy of the [Guidelines on the assessment of education in places other than recognised schools (pdf)](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/guidelines_assessment_education_outside_schools.pdf). You can find more in [frequently asked questions](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/AEARS-GDE01.2_Home_Education_Frequently_Asked_Questions_.pdf).

Tusla then assesses your application to register.

**Tusla interview and assessment**

When you return the application form, the person who will carry out the assessment will contact you. They will arrange a time and date to interview you. This assessor is experienced in education and is authorised by Tusla to carry out the assessment.

The assessment will focus on:

* The details of the education being provided to your child
* The materials used in the course of the education
* The time spent providing the education

The interview can take place in a venue of your choice and will be based on what you have said in your application. This is called the **preliminary assessment**. Your assessor will complete a draft assessment report and a copy of this will be forwarded to you for comment. Following the report, your child’s name will either be entered into the register or your case will be referred for a comprehensive assessment.

If Tusla is not able to decide whether you are providing a minimum education, a **comprehensive assessment** will be carried out. This is more in-depth. The assessor spends some time with you, observing how you teach or work with your child, inspecting your educational materials and talking to your child.

### Appealing a decision

If Tusla decides that you are not providing a certain minimum education for your child, it can refuse to register or remove your child’s name from the register. It must inform you of its decision in writing.

You have 21 days to appeal against the decision. The Minister will appoint a committee to hear the appeal and decide on the case.

An appeal committee is made up of a District Court judge, an inspector and another person. You and the assessor are invited to make submissions. Depending on their decision, the committee will:

* Uphold the decision of Tusla to remove or refuse to add your child’s name to the register
* Require Tusla to add your child’s name to the register
* Require Tusla to add your child’s name to the register if you agree to comply with any requirements the appeal committee considers appropriate.

## Support for teaching your child at home

If you educate your children at home or in a place other than a recognised school, you are not entitled to financial support from the State.

### Home Education Network

The [Home Education Network](http://www.henireland.org/) (HEN) is a support and lobby group for home educators in Ireland.

HEN aims to help parents use available resources to develop educational techniques suitable for each child’s needs. Members exchange ideas and experiences of home education through regular meetings and newsletters. Its website has links to research and online information about home education. The network also operates a library service of books on home education for members.

## State exams and third level education

### State examinations

Your child can sit [Junior](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/) and [Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/) examinations at any school by registering with the school in early January of the year that your child will take the exams. Further information is available from the [State Examinations Commission](http://www.examinations.ie/).

### Third-level education

If your child does not sit State examinations, then entry to third-level education in Ireland is difficult. The normal route into Irish third-level institutions is through the Leaving Certificate.

However, it may also be possible to enter third-level education at aged 17 or 18 without the Leaving Certificate by interview only. You will need to approach your chosen institution to discuss this possibility. There are a variety of courses for the 16-plus age group which are accepted as valid for entry to third-level courses.

You can find out more about further and higher education and training courses from [Qualifax - The National Learner's Database](http://www.qualifax.ie/).

**Page edited:** 9 August 2023

# Parents and education

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/parents-and-education/#2473e9)
* [Going to school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/parents-and-education/#331dec)
* [Further information and support](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/parents-and-education/#af05aa)

## Introduction

The [Irish Constitution](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/constitution-and-education/) states that parents have primary responsibility for educating their child.

It also says that the State requires that children receive 'a certain minimum education'. This certain minimum has not yet been defined in legislation or in official policy. Under the [Education (Welfare) Act 2000](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0022/index.html) parents must make sure that their children get a certain minimum education from the age of 6 to the age of 16.

You can send your child to school or teach your child at home. However you choose to educate your child, at home or at school, you must ensure that your child gets a [certain minimum education from the age of 6 to the age of 16](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/).

## Going to school

You can decide to send your child to any school, but there is no constitutional obligation on a particular school to accept individual children. However, each school must follow its own [admissions policy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/) when offering school places. Schools cannot discriminate on any of the following grounds:

* Gender
* Civil status
* Family status
* Sexual orientation
* Religion
* Disability
* Race
* Membership of the Traveller community
* Special educational needs

There are some exceptions, you can find out more about [admission policies in schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/).

You can find out more about [choosing a primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/choosing-a-primary-school/) and [post-primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/).

Parents are also entitled to provide education outside the school system if they want. This could mean [home education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/) or private schools.

## Further information and support

There is a range of organisations and schemes providing support and information to parents. They include the following:

### Child and Family Agency

The [Child and Family Agency](http://www.tusla.ie/) (Tusla) is responsible for making sure that children [attend school regularly or otherwise get an education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/).

The educational welfare officers (EWOs) also act as advocates or supports to parents, guardians and children experiencing difficulty with school attendance or educational welfare.

### Parents’ associations

Parents have a legal right to set up a parents’ association and membership must be open to all parents in the school. The parents’ association aims to:

* Represent the interests of parents of children attending the school and to promote good relationships between parents and the school board of management, the principal and the teachers.
* Make representations to the school on issues of policy
* Advise the principal and board on any matter affecting the school.
* Adopt a programme of activities that will promote the involvement of parents in the management of the school.

You can find out more about the role of parents associations in [primary schools (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/15714/9e1e958902424a79b2aefc12ce5a040e.doc) and [post-primay schools (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/15717/50ee4541edfe4d83a40d21952f65eae5.doc) from your child's school and the [Department of Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/).

### National Parents Councils

The [National Parents Council – Post Primary](http://www.npcpp.ie/) (NCPpp) runs a [Leaving Certificate results helpline](http://www.npcpp.ie/leaving-cert-helpline) every August in association with the Institute of Guidance Counsellors.  
The [National Parents Council (Primary)](http://www.npc.ie/) has published guidelines on [Working Effectively as a Parent Association (pdf)](https://www.into.ie/ROI/InfoforTeachers/ParentTeacherRelations/ParentsAssociations/Parents_Associations.pdf). NPCpp gives information to parents about parents' associations and children’s learning.

### Boards of management

Most schools have a board of management. Under the [Education Act 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/index.html) the [board of management in a school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/) has a duty to ensure that:

* The school is run for the benefit of the students and their parents.
* An appropriate education is provided for each student at the school.

One of the responsibilities of the board of management is to promote contact between the school, the parents and the community. The Board also helps the parents’ association in its formation and activities.

### Home School Community Liaison Scheme

The [Home School Community Liaison Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/home-school-liaison/) is aimed at children in primary and post-primary schools who are at risk of dropping out of school or of not reaching their potential in the education system because of [economic or social disadvantage.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/)

In each local area the scheme co-ordinator is a qualified teacher from the staff of the school. The co-ordinators work full-time outside the classroom to build relationships with the children’s parents or guardians. They act as a link between home and school, encouraging parents to become more involved in their children’s education.

### Early Start Programme

The [Early Start Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/) is for children between the ages of 3 and 4 living in socially disadvantaged areas who are at risk of not reaching their potential within the school system.

The programme aims to expose young children to an educational programme which would enhance their overall development and prevent school failure and to offset the effects of social disadvantage.

Parents of participating children are involved in their children's learning. Early Start staff work with Home School Community Liaison co-ordinators to encourage parents to take part in both the everyday management and in the organisation of activities in the Early Start centre.

### National Council for Special Education

The [National Council for Special Education (NCSE)](http://www.ncse.ie/) is responsible for improving the delivery of education services to people with [special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/).

It gives parents information about the entitlements of children with special educational needs in [primary](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/) and [second-level](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/) schools.

The NCSE employs Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) who are responsible for allocating additional teaching and other resources to support the special educational needs of children with disabilities at local level.

### National Educational Psychological Service

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) provides an [educational psychology service](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/) to primary and post-primary schools. NEPS psychologists specialise in working with teachers, parents and children in identifying educational needs and providing a consultation service for teachers and parents. Children are normally referred to NEPS through the school principal and parents should discuss any concerns regarding learning difficulties with school staff.

### Young parents programmes

The Department of Health produced a report on [young parents in education (pdf)](https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/invisible_students.pdf) as part of its support of the [Teen Parents Support Programme](http://www.tpsp.ie/). There is a Home Tuition grant available from the Department of Education for students on maternity related absence. For more information on this see [Circular 0052/2017 (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/12603/df7fdae5b11f4b88b3ad930406f77fae.pdf).

Early school-leavers programmes such as the [Schools Completion Programme](https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/scp/), the [Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/), [Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/) and [Post Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) courses are aimed at increasing the number of young people staying in second-level schools or helping people get access to second-chance or alternative education.

The [Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/) can also support parent’s to return to education.

### Tusla - Child and Family Agency

Brunel Building  
Heuston South Quarter  
Dublin 8  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 771 8500

**Homepage:** <https://www.tusla.ie/>

**Email:** [info@tusla.ie](mailto:info@tusla.ie)

### National Parents Council Post-Primary

Unit 6 - Building 125  
OMNI Shopping Centre  
Santry  
Dublin 9  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 862 3346

**Homepage:** <http://www.npcpp.ie/>

**Email:** [manager@npcpp.ie](mailto:manager@npcpp.ie)

### National Parents Council Primary

12 Marlborough Court  
Dublin 1  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 887 4034, Information/Helpline (01) 887 4477 Mon–Fri

**Fax:** (01) 887 4489

**Homepage:** <http://www.npc.ie/>

**Email:** [info@npc.ie](mailto:info@npc.ie)

### National Educational Psychological Service

Frederick Court  
24-27 North Frederick St  
Dublin 1  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 889 2700

**Fax:** (01) 889 2755

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

### National Council for Special Education

1-2 Mill Street  
Trim  
Meath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (046) 948 6400

**Fax:** (046) 948 6404

**Homepage:** <http://www.ncse.ie/>

### Ombudsman for Children

Millennium House  
52-56 Great Strand Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 F5P8  
Ireland

**Tel:** +353 1 865 6800

**Locall:** Freefone 1800 20 20 40

**Homepage:** <http://www.oco.ie/>

**Email:** [oco@oco.ie](mailto:oco@oco.ie)

**Page edited:** 10 May 2022

# Measures to address educational disadvantage

* [Educational disadvantage](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/#66f0fc)
* [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/#bbf416)
* [Special projects for disadvantaged youth](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/#b0ae4a)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/#ec2268)

## Educational disadvantage

Educational disadvantage is when some individuals get less benefit from the education system than their peers. The [Education Act 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/index.html) defines educational disadvantage as “the impediments to education arising from social or economic disadvantage which prevent students from deriving appropriate benefit from education in schools”. Educational disadvantage is demonstrated in many ways, most often in poor levels of participation and achievement in the formal education system.

There are other ways in which children may be disadvantaged, for example as a result of a disability, literacy difficulties, ill health or poverty. Read about the supports for children's education in [special needs education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/), [psychological services for schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/) and [financial help with going to school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/financial-help-with-school/).

## Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)

In 2005, the Department published [DEIS - Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools: an action plan for educational inclusion (pdf)](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/). The plan brought a number of programmes together under the framework of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). DEIS is a more integrated approach to the issue of educational inclusion which provides for:

* A standardised system for identifying and regularly reviewing levels of disadvantage and
* A new integrated School Support Programme (SSP) to bring together and build upon the previous schemes and programmes

In the [DEIS Plan 2017(pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/24451/ba1553e873864a559266d344b4c78660.pdf), the Department set out its aims and objectives to build on the existing DEIS action plan for educational inclusion. Areas for action include:

* Develop best practice in identification of schools needing support
* Improve the learning experience and outcomes of pupils in DEIS schools
* Pilot innovative and creative approaches to tackle educational disadvantage that can be mainstreamed over time
* Improve services to schools through collaboration with other Departments and Agencies
* Provide DEIS schools with the research, information, evaluation and feedback to track the progress being made towards achieving the goals of the Plan

You can read an [FAQ on the DEIS Plan 2017(pdf)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0fea7-deis-plan-2017/).

There is a [list of current DEIS schools](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/39195/d56ceff4f65d4782b1cc87323a5f72c5.xls). From September 2022, [more DEIS schools](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7938e-list-of-schools-into-deis/) will be added.

The School Support Programme supports [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/DEIS-Delivering-Equality-of-Opportunity-in-Schools-/) and involves the following programmes:

* The Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL)
* The School Completion Programme (SCP)
* The Visiting Teachers Service for Travellers (VTST)

### Early Start Pre-School Scheme

Early Start is a one-year preventative intervention scheme offered to pre-school children (3 to 5 years old) in some schools in designated disadvantaged areas. [More detailed information about Early Start is available](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/).

### School Completion Programme

The [School Completion Programme](http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/school-support-services-under-the-deis-initiative/school-completion-programme) aims to help students from disadvantaged areas stay in school to complete their Leaving Certificate. It forms part of the Department of Education social inclusion strategy Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) to help children and young people who are at risk of or who are experiencing educational disadvantage.

### Home-School Community Liaison Scheme

The [Home-School Community Liaison Scheme](https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/scp/) aims to improve co-operation between home, schools and communities to advance the educational interests of disadvantaged children.

### The Learning Support Teacher Scheme

Learning support teachers provide extra support teaching for children experiencing learning difficulties, particularly in the core areas of literacy and numeracy. Generally this extra support is provided in the form of extra teaching in small groups or individually.

### School Meals Programme

The [School Meals Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/29a3ff-school-meals-scheme/) aims to supplement the diets of school-going children from disadvantaged backgrounds to help them fulfil their potential within the educational system and to reduce the risk of early school-leaving. There are two schemes.

The **Urban Scheme** supports school meals for primary schools in urban areas. This programme consists of daily sandwiches or buns and milk. The scheme is not a replacement for home meals.

The **Local Projects Scheme** gives funding directly to national and secondary schools, local groups and voluntary organisations, which operate their own school meals projects (the meals may be hot or cold). It also covers nursery schools catering for disadvantaged pre-school children. These meals must be targeted at areas of disadvantage or at children with special needs. Funding is allocated on the basis of a rate per meal per child.

Funding for school meals comes from the Department of Social Protection and local authorities.

## Special projects for disadvantaged youth

These projects are aimed at young people in the second-level education age group but they are also relevant for some primary school students.

### DCEDIY Projects for Disadvantaged Youth

[UBU - Your Place Your Space](https://ubu.gov.ie/) is funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to provide out of school supports to young people. It gives grants for special projects for disadvantaged young people. Priority is given to projects for special youth work initiatives, young homeless people, young substance abusers and young Travellers.

The projects are aimed at facilitating the personal development and social education of young people at risk of drug abuse, juvenile crime, early school leaving, social exclusion, unemployment, welfare dependence, [homelessness](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/losing-your-home-and-homelessness/homelessness/) and marginalisation. In particular, they aim to help young people realise their potential and give them the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for their integration in society.

### Youth Information Centres

The DCEDIY funds the network of [Youth Information Centres](https://www.youthworkireland.ie/what-we-do/youth-information/). The centres provide young people with access to information on rights, opportunities, benefits, health, welfare and other matters.

## Further information

For further information on DEIS contact the [Social Inclusion Unit](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/6bb5d4-social-inclusion-unit/) of the Department of Education.

For further information on the School Completion Programme contact the Co-ordination Service in the Curriculum Development Unit.

For further information on the School Meals Scheme contact your [local authority](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/942f74-local-authorities/) or the Department of Social Protection. There is an [application form for the School Meals Local Projects Scheme (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/37908/801ed9543b0d4bbdaf28c624e172f645.pdf). You can also get the [Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/128268/d07bed24-dd1d-4055-8ced-5e381621ca65.pdf) .

Contact your local [Education and Training Board (ETB)](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) for funding for DE Projects for Disadvantaged Youth.

Contact the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-children-equality-disability-integration-and-youth/) for funding for the YPFSF.

### Social Inclusion Unit

The Department of Education  
Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 648 3600

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/6bb5d4-social-inclusion-unit/>

### Curriculum Development Unit

Sundrive Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 453 5487

**Fax:** (01) 453 7659

**Homepage:** [http://www.curriculum.ie](http://www.curriculum.ie/)

**Email:** [lcapplied@cdu.cdvec.ie](mailto:lcapplied@cdu.cdvec.ie)

### School Meals Programme

Department of Social Protection

College Road  
Sligo  
Ireland

**Tel:** (071) 913 8625 or (071) 915 7100

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/29a3ff-school-meals-scheme/>

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# Admissions policies in primary and secondary schools

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/#2473e9)
* [The law around school admissions](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/#af8927)
* [How schools select and prioritise students who apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/#9d5adb)
* [Selection criteria for Irish languageschools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/#d36def)
* [Admission of students with a disability or with special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/#b3eeca)
* [Applying to more than one school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/#7d0aff)
* [What happens if my child is not acceptedinto a school?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/#349a44)
* [How do I appeal if a school decides not to accept my child?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/#dd86cf)

## Introduction

In Ireland, students usually attend their local school but you can apply for your child to attend any school in the country.

You can send your child to the school of your choice, provided there is a place available for them.

Where there is a shortage of places, the school must give priority based on their admissions policy and Annual Admission Notice. These must be approved by the school’s [board of management](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/). They should be published on the school’s website and available in writing to you when you ask for them.

## The law around school admissions

The [Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en) aims to make the rules around admissions to schools more structured, fair and transparent.

#### Fees and contributions

Schools cannot charge fees or ask for contributions as a condition for admission or continued admission, with the exception of fee-charging secondary schools, boarding schools and admission to post leaving certificate or further education courses run by post-primary schools.

#### Religion

Primary schools cannot use religion as a basis for admission and cannot prioritise students based on their religious beliefs. However, there are some exceptions to this:

* A school that provides religious instruction or education in a minority religion can prioritise a student of that religion who is looking for admission to a school that provides religious instruction or education consistent with, or similar to, their religious beliefs
* A school that aims to promote certain religious values can refuse to admit a student who is not of that religious denomination if it can prove that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school

#### Admittance based on the date of application

Schools cannot use the time and date on which they get an application as a basis for admission. This means that applications cannot be allocated on a first-come first-served basis.

Schools must admit pupils based on their admissions policy and admission notice.

#### Admission notice

A school’s board of management must publish an annual admission notice before accepting any applications for a given year. The notice must be published on the school’s website and be available to you on written request.

The admission notice must tell you

* How to get a copy of the school’s admission policy
* How to get an application form for admission
* The date when the school will start to accept applications for the year
* The deadline for receiving applications
* The date the school will inform you of their decision
* The date by which you must accept a place

If a school is not over-subscribed, the school should continue to accept all applicants even after that deadline has passed.

The admission policy must state that the school will [accommodate the admission of children with a disability or other special educational needs](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2022/22/eng/enacted/a2222.pdf). It must co-operate with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) in providing special needs education.

#### Waiting lists

Schools must phase out existing waiting lists by 31 January 2025. In the future, a school can keep a list of students who were unsuccessful because the school was over-subscribed. The school must use this list to fill any vacancies that arise during the school year.

#### Reasons a school cannot use for selection

A school cannot take the following reasons into account when selecting students:

* A student’s attendance at a pre-school (although they may consider attendance at an early-intervention class or early-start pre-school)
* A student’s academic ability, skills or aptitude (although these may be considered in applications for post-leaving certificate courses or further education courses or certain circumstances in special education (see below)
* The occupation, financial status, academic ability, skills or aptitudes of a student’s parents
* Attendance by the student or their parents at an interview or open day (although an interview may be taken into account for admission to the residential element of a boarding school)
* The date and time the application was received by the school as long as it is submitted during the period set in the admission notice)

#### Withdrawal of applications

A school may withdraw its offer of acceptance if:

* You have given wrong or misleading information in the application
* You fail to confirm acceptance of the offer by the date set by the school in its annual admission notice
* You fail to confirm in writing that you accept the school’s behaviour policy and that you will make all reasonable efforts to ensure compliance with the policy when required to do so by the school
* You do not tell the school about any offers from other schools

## How schools select and prioritise students who apply

In general, schools must accept all students who apply to them unless they get more applications than there are places (in other words, if the school is over-subscribed).

All schools must have an admissions policy. This outlines the rules that are applied if the school is over-subscribed. These selection rules help the school decide which students to accept and in what order.

Schools cannot discriminate on any of the following grounds:

* Gender
* Civil status
* Family status
* Sexual orientation
* Religion
* Disability
* Race
* Membership of the Traveller community
* Special educational needs

There are some exceptions to these rules:

**Gender**

If a school admits only students of one gender (such as an all-girls or all-boys school), it does not have to accept a student of a different gender.

**Religious ethos**

Many schools in Ireland promote certain religious values. These schools are not allowed to discriminate by admitting students of a particular religion in preference to others, except in the following circumstances:

* If a school aims to promote certain religious values, it can refuse to admit a student who is not of that religious denomination if it can prove that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.
* If a school provides religious instruction or education in a minority religion, it can prioritise a student of that religion who wants to attend a school that provides religious instruction or education consistent with, or similar to, their religious beliefs

Students have the right to attend a religious school without getting any religious instruction.

## Selection criteria for Irish languageschools

Irish language schools can give priority to students who have a reasonable, age-appropriate level of oral fluency in the Irish language and the school is satisfied that student's fluency would regress if they were not admitted to the Irish language school.

An Irish language post-primary school may give priority to students who have attended an Irish language primary school.

## Admission of students with a disability or with special educational needs

Schools cannot discriminate based on a child having a disability or a special educational need. In theory, this means that you should be able to apply to any school and that school should be able to accommodate your child. However, in practice, some schools do not have the facilities to accept students with severe special needs.

If you prefer your child to attend a special school or a special class in a school that caters for specific types of disabilities the selection criteria above apply.

If the school you are applying to is a ‘special school’, it can refuse to admit your child if they do not have the specified category of special need concerned. The school must state this in its admission notice.

If you are applying for your child to enter a ‘special class’ in a school that was established to provide exclusively for students with certain categories of special needs, the school can refuse to admit your child to that class if they do not have the specified category of special need concerned. The school must state this in its admission notice.

**What if I can’t find an appropriate school for my child with special needs?**

Some schools do not have the facilities to accept students with severe special needs. If there is no school in your area with facilities for your child, the [National Council for Special Education (NCSE)](https://ncse.ie/for-parents) or [Tusla – the Child and Family Agency](http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services) can help you. They can designate a school in your area for your child and that [school must make additional provisions](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/8a499-statement-from-minister-of-state-for-special-education-and-inclusion-josepha-madigan-td-announcing-significant-increase-in-special-education-provision-in-dublin/) for your child to attend.

The [Education (Provision in Respect of Children with Special Educational Needs) Act 2022](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2022/22/eng/enacted/a2222.pdf) makes additional provision for children with special educational needs. The Department of Education has published information for schools about p[roviding for children with special education needs](https://assets.gov.ie/240372/f025d1bf-0cb9-44cb-9eed-b4d092fc9158.pdf).

## Applying to more than one school

You can apply to more than one school but you cannot accept more than one place.

If you accept an offer from one school and you have applied to one or more other schools, you must tell the school that you are accepting the offer from about any offers you have or are expecting from the other schools you have applied to.

You should check the schools admission policy for the rules around how you should notify the school.

Under the Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018, school boards of management can share information with each other about applications received, offers made and offers accepted.

## What happens if my child is not acceptedinto a school?

If your child is not accepted into a school you have applied to, the school should write to you and give you the reason or reasons for the refusal. It should also give you information about your child’s place on the waiting list and explain your child’s ranking against the school’s selection criteria.

The school may recommend another suitable school for you to apply to if they cannot accept your child.

If you have difficulty finding a place for your child in a local school, contact the [Educational Welfare Service of Tusla – the Child and Family Agency](http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services) on 01-7718500.

## How do I appeal if a school decides not to accept my child?

You can appeal a school’s decision not to enrol your child.

**If a school refuses to enrol your child because it is oversubscribed**, you must first request the school’s board of management to review this decision. You must make your request for a review using the [Board of Management Request Form (BOMR1)](https://assets.gov.ie/93551/715a4155-c441-45fc-ab46-b5690c47b532.pdf). The board of management must notify you of the outcome of your request for a review within 42 days from the date of the decision to refuse admission to the school.

You can make a Section 29 appeal to the Department of Education, when you have received the outcome of the review by the board or 42 days after the decision to refuse admission is made - whichever of these is earliest. However, you must make your Section 29 appeal to the Department of Education no later than 63 days after the school's original decision to refuse admission. You make your appeal using a [Section 29 appeal application form](https://assets.gov.ie/97231/64a395b0-fce6-4449-a540-4464e059909a.pdf). The Department has [Frequently Asked Questions about Section 29 appeals when a school is oversubscribed](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/90de23-appeal-against-permanent-exclusion-suspension-or-refusal-to-enrol/).

**If a school refuses to admit your child for a reason other than the school being oversubscribed**, you can make your appeal to the Department of Education using a [Section 29 appeal application form](https://assets.gov.ie/97228/f013becd-f43a-4d92-9bdd-151265cad74a.pdf).

Before making a Section 29 appeal, you can request a review of the board of management's decision not to admit your child. To get a review, you use the [Review by the Board of Management Request Form (BOMR1)](https://assets.gov.ie/93551/715a4155-c441-45fc-ab46-b5690c47b532.pdf). If you request a review, the board of management must notify you of the outcome within 42 days from the date of the decision to refuse admission to the school.

If you don’t want a review, you can immediately apply for an independent Section 29 appeal.

Your Section 29 appeal must be made no later than 63 days following the original decision by the school to refuse admission.

The Department has [Frequently Asked Questions about Section 29 appeals for reasons other than a school being oversubscribed](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/90de23-appeal-against-permanent-exclusion-suspension-or-refusal-to-enrol/).

### Department of Education

Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit  
Department of Education  
Friar’s Mill Road  
Mullingar  
Co Westmeath  
N91 H30Y

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/>

**Email:** [section29@education.gov.ie](mailto:section29@education.gov.ie)

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# Your childcare options

* [Choosing childcare](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/your-childcare-options/#e30f11)
* [Types of childcare options](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/your-childcare-options/#ab4f7f)
* [Childcare support programmes](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/your-childcare-options/#ad03f4)
* [Rates for childcare](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/your-childcare-options/#c37018)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/your-childcare-options/#10ea51)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/your-childcare-options/#b48c08)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/your-childcare-options/#ec2268)

## Choosing childcare

Deciding on childcare is a big decision for any parent. There are a number of factors you need to consider. These include:

* Your child’s age
* Whether you need full or part-time care
* The hours you need services (regular, daytime, evenings or weekends)
* Your budget
* Services available in your area.

It is important to discuss with the childcare service provider your child’s needs and the service they can provide. You should check that staff are qualified and the provider has appropriate childcare policies and procedures in place for example, child protection, behaviour management and accidents.

It is also important to check fees, hours, and holiday periods.

**Visit the childcare provider**

Make sure to visit when there are children present, so you get a feel for the atmosphere. The Child and Family Agency (Tusla) has published a useful list of [tips on choosing a pre-school](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/tips-for-parents).

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has published a [list of early years recognised qualifications](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/239042/?page=null) for childcare programmes.

Pre-school and school-age childcare facilities are regulated and inspected by Tusla, the Child and Family Agency. You can access the [Child and Family Agency Inspection Reports on Childcare Services](https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/creche-inspection-reports/). More detailed information about the [regulation of pre-school childcare services](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-childcare-services/) and [regulation of school-age childcare services](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-school-age-childcare/) is available from [Tusla](https://www.tusla.ie/).

Your [City or County Childcare Committee](https://myccc.ie/) can provide a list of childcare providers in your area. They can also put you in touch with your local early years/pre-school inspector - see 'How to apply' below.

## Types of childcare options

Some childcare options are different simply because of their opening hours or management structures, and others by the curriculum they use. You can read more about [early childhood education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-education/).

Staff training can also determine the type of service available, as can the general needs of parents in your area.

Different types of childcare services include:

**Full day care**  
Full day care is a structured care service for more than 5 hours per day and may include a sessional service. Some may also include an after-school facility. In full day care, sleeping arrangements and food preparation must meet standards laid down by Tusla. Providers include day nurseries and crèches.

**Sessional services**Sessional services offer a planned programme of up to 3.5 hours per session (such as a morning or an afternoon). These services also may be provided for younger children. A provider of a sessional childcare service must have a recognised childcare qualification. Sessional services include:

* **Montessori groups** focus on individualised education.
* **Naíonraí** are nursery schools or playschools operating through Irish.
* **Playschools** give children an opportunity to play with other children of a similar age, learn to share and take turns and to understand the rules of the classroom, such as listening.
* **Early Start Programme** is a one-year preventative intervention scheme offered in selected schools in designated disadvantaged areas to three- and four-year-old children.

### Childminders

Childminders care for children in the minder’s own home. A childminder can care for up to 5 children under 6 years of age (including the childminder’s own). The service is usually offered for the full working day or for different periods during the day. Parents and childminders arrange their own terms and conditions.

As part of the National Childminding Initiative, childminding development grants and a [guide to becoming a childminder (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/128614/c62e56d6-a51f-4b57-8efa-6f8e73c0b142.pdf) are available to childminders from their local City or County Childcare Committee (CCC).

There is a [childminder’s tax relief](https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/children/childcare-services/index.aspx) for childminders who look after up to 3 children in the minder’s own home. There was a temporary exception to this during the COVID-19 public health emergency when a childminder who looked after the [child of an essential worker in the child's own home](https://www.revenue.ie/en/tax-professionals/ebrief/2020/no-1542020.aspx) could claim the tax relief.[OO1] [GG2]

### Parent and toddler groups

Parent and toddler groups are where a group of parents, guardians or carers and children come together for supervised play and companionship for their parents.

### Drop-in centres

A drop-in centre offers a service for short periods during the day. These centres are often provided in shopping centres, leisure centres and accommodation facilities. The service is provided as part of a customer or client service and children are looked after while the parent is availing of a service or attending an event.

### School-age childcare

Services for schoolchildren can include breakfast clubs, after school clubs and school holiday programmes such as summer camps. Depending on the service, there may also be homework supervision, planned activities or a nutritious meal. School-age childcare services must be registered with Tusla. You can read more about the [regulation of school-age childcare](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-school-age-childcare/).

## Childcare support programmes

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth funds support programmes to help parents access quality childcare at a more affordable cost. For more information on support programmes you may be eligible, and childcare services in your area, contact your local City or County Childcare Committee - see 'Where to apply' below.

### National Childcare Scheme

The [National Childcare Scheme (NCS)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/) helps parents to meet childcare costs.

Childcare subsidies are available to families with children aged between 6 months (24 weeks) and under 15 years who are attending any participating [Tusla registered childcare service](https://ncs.gov.ie/en/childcare-search/), including Tusla registered childminders and school aged childcare services.

Detailed information on the supports available can be found on the [National Childcare Scheme website](https://ncs.gov.ie/parent).

**Community Childcare Subvention and Community Childcare Subvention Plus:** The [Community Childcare Subvention (CCSP) programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/community-childcare-subvention-programme/) helps parents on lower incomes to access childcare at a reduced cost in participating community childcare services. The CCSP is closed to new applicants.

**Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme**

The [Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/) is a universal free preschool programme available to all eligible children for up to 2 years before starting primary school.

**Universal childcare subsidy**

A [universal childcare subsidy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/universal-childcare-subsidy/) is available to all children in Tusla registered childcare who are above the age of 6 months but below the age when they can start the free pre-school ECCE programme. The subsidy is not means-tested.

The subsidy is deducted from the overall bill the parent receives from their childcare service.

**Detailed information about childcare subsidies is available on** [**ncs.gov.ie**](https://ncs.gov.ie/)**.**

## Rates for childcare

Childcare costs depend on the type of childcare you choose, the number of hours and the level of staff training in that facility.

**ECCE**

There is no charge for the pre-school education provided under the Early Childhood Care and Education scheme.

## How to apply

Your local [City or County Childcare Committee](https://myccc.ie/) will have a list of childcare providers in your area. You can also apply to the [early years/pre-school inspector](http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/early-years-inspectors/) for information about childcare services locally. [Public health nurses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-services/care-in-your-community/public-health-nurses/) will often be familiar with local services and childminders within your area and can be contacted at your local health centre.

There is a list of [national voluntary childcare organisations](https://www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/EarlyEducationandChildcare/Pages/CCCs.aspx) which promote quality in childcare.

You can [apply online for the National Childcare Scheme](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/application-form-guide/).

To apply online you need a verified MyGovID. You can get more information on getting and using a verified MyGovID on the [MyGovID website](https://www.mygovid.ie/).

You will need the Personal Public Service (PPS) numbers for each child that you are applying for, as well as your partner’s details (if you have one).

You can make a paper-based application. You can apply by post by contacting the Parent Support Centre – see where to apply below. Paper-based applications take longer to process and may affect the start date from which your subsidy can be paid.

You can get a [list of contracted childcare providers](https://ncs.gov.ie/en/childcare-search/).

## Where to apply

Contact your local [City or County Childcare Committee.](https://myccc.ie/)

Contact the [Child and Family Agency](http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch).

Contact your [local health centre](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/2/healthcentres/).

Contact your [Local Health Office](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/LHO/).

Visit [ncs.gov.ie](https://ncs.gov.ie/) for more information on the National Childcare Scheme or contact the National Childcare Scheme Parent Support Centre. Call: 01 906 8530 (9am - 5pm Monday to Friday).

## Further information

**City and County Childcare Committees**

The [City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs)](https://myccc.ie/) develop and implement a strategy to provide quality, affordable and accessible childcare within each county.

The CCCs help communities identify gaps in childcare services and develop new services to meet those needs. They provide information on funding and grant applications and facilitate a co-ordinated approach to childcare training at all levels.

**Policy Framework**

The [Children and Young People’s Policy Framework,](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/63a1ff-report-of-the-national-policy-framework-for-children-young-people-20/) sets out the Government’s policy priorities for children and young people until 2020. You can read more in [Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028](https://assets.gov.ie/31184/62acc54f4bdf4405b74e53a4afb8e71b.pdf).

**Page edited:** 20 September 2023

# Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/#2473e9)
* [Is my child eligible for ECCE?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/#72c245)
* [Is there a charge for ECCE?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/#563dc9)
* [How to apply for ECCE](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/#d3ba25)
* [Where to apply for ECCE](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/#e07e73)

## Introduction

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme provides early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age.

Children can start ECCE when they are 2 years and 8 months of age and continue until they transfer to primary school (provided that they are not older than 5 years and 6 months at the end of the pre-school year) - see 'Is my child eligible for ECCE' below.

The State pays participating playschools and daycare services a set amount per child for the ECCE service. In return, participating centres and playschools provide a pre-school service free of charge to all children within the qualifying age range. The service is for a set number of hours over a set period of weeks see ‘How the ECCE scheme is provided’ below.

You may get financial support from the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) towards the cost of childcare for the hours spent outside of ECCE.

Your child cannot be enrolled in the ECCE Programme and [Early Start Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/) at the same time.

## Is my child eligible for ECCE?

**Eligible age range**

The programme is available to children who have turned 2 years and 8 months of age before 1 September. Children can continue in the programme until they transfer to primary school if they are not older than 5 years and 6 months at the end of the pre-school year on 30 June.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has an [eligibility calendar showing when your child can participate in the ECCE programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2459ee-early-childhood-care-and-education-programme-ecce/).

**Exemptions from age limit**

If your child has special needs they may get an exemption from the ECCE upper age limit. For more information and to apply for an exemption contact [EYQueries@equality.gov.ie](mailto:EYQueries@equality.gov.ie).

There are no exemptions to the lower age limit.

### How the ECCE scheme is provided

The childcare provider must provide ECCE for 3 hours a day, 5 days a week for 38 weeks a year.

**Sessional services**

If your child attends a half-day or “sessional” service, such as a playschool, naíonra, Montessori or parent and toddler group, the normal pattern for the free ECCE scheme school year is 3 hours a day for 5 days a week over the school year. If your child attends for more than this, you will be charged for the extra time.

A small number of sessional services that cannot open for 5 days a week provide 3 hours and 30 minutes a day for 4 days a week over the school year. This only applies to services which have already been granted permission.

**Daycare services**

For full-time or part-time daycare services, the normal pattern for the free ECCE scheme is 3 hours per day for 5 days a week. If your child attends for longer than this each day, you will be charged for the extra time.

**If your child does not attend**

Your child may lose their ECCE place, if they have not attended ECCE for 4 consecutive weeks. In special circumstances, a child can keep their place if they are absent for more than 4 consecutive weeks. For example, in the case of a prolonged illness a place can be kept for up to 12 weeks. A place may be kept for up to 6 weeks in the case of a bereavement.

### Content and quality of service

Childcare services taking part in the ECCE scheme must provide an appropriate pre-school educational programme which adheres to the principles of [Síolta](http://www.siolta.ie/) and [Aistear,](https://ncca.ie/media/4152/aistear_siolta_similarities_differences_.pdf) the national frameworks for early years care and education. Síolta co-ordinators and staff of the local City/County Childcare Committee (CCC) will support participating services with assistive visits and advice.

The website of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has [further information on the ECCE scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2459ee-early-childhood-care-and-education-programme-ecce/).

### Children with special needs

The [**Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)**](https://aim.gov.ie/) supports children with disabilities to access the ECCE programme. The model is based on the needs of the child and does not require a diagnosis of disability.

AIM has 7 levels of support, moving from universal to targeted support depending on the needs of the child and the pre-school provider. The model offers tailored, practical supports based on a child’s needs.

All children can access Levels 1 – 3 of the model. These involve a suite of universal supports which are designed to promote and support an inclusive culture within pre-school settings by means of educational and capacity-building initiatives for providers and practitioners.

Where a pre-school service provider, along with the parent, considers that additional support may be necessary to meet a child’s needs, they can apply for one or more additional targeted supports under levels 4 – 7 of the model.

Additional targeted supports may include:

* Expert educational advice and mentoring – Level 4
* Specialised equipment, appliances and minor alterations – Level 5
* Therapeutic supports – Level 6
* Additional capitation to fund extra assistance in the ECCE pre-school room – level 7.

When you have identified a pre-school for your child, your service provider, in consultation with you, will consider what supports may be needed to ensure your child’s participation in pre-school.

Where it is considered that your child needs additional support, your pre-school service provider can apply, in partnership with you, for targeted supports under AIM.

The [AIM website](https://aim.gov.ie/) provides [information for parents](https://aim.gov.ie/parents/) and [Frequently Asked Questions](http://www.preschoolaccess.ie/faqs/) on supports available. Your local City or County Childcare Committee will also be able to provide you with information and guidance on AIM.

## Is there a charge for ECCE?

There is no charge to parents for the playschool or daycare hours provided under the ECCE scheme. The Department pays the playschool or daycare service to provide these ECCE hours. However, if your child attends for extra hours, you will have to pay for these extra hours in the normal way.

A service may charge parents for extra activities. However, these must be optional and the service must provide other appropriate activities to children who don’t take part in the optional activity being charged for.

**Booking deposits**

The service may ask you for a booking deposit, which cannot be more than 4 weeks of ECCE capitation payments. Any deposit you pay must be repaid to you by the end of October of the year your child starts.

**Rates for service providers**

For providers of daycare and sessional services, the Department pays a weekly fee for each child over the school year. Daycare and sessional playschools with more highly qualified staff may be able to qualify for a higher fee.

## How to apply for ECCE

To get a place for your child, apply to a participating playschool or daycare centre. You can get a list of participating services from your local City or County Childcare Committee (CCC) – see ‘Where to apply’ below.

You will need to provide a copy of your child's birth certificate or passport and [PPS number](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/irish-social-welfare-system/personal-public-service-number/).

**Supports for children with special needs**

If your child needs additional support, your pre-school provider can apply, in partnership with you, for targeted supports under AIM. Applications are made through the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP) on the Pobal website. Your pre-school service provider will be familiar with the Pobal website and with PIP.

The application process is open and will remain open throughout the year.

Applications can only be made with your full consent.

For advice and support from the Early Years Specialist Service (Access and Inclusion) contact (01) 511 7222 or e-mail: Onlinesupport@pobal.ie

## Where to apply for ECCE

To find a childcare provider near you, contact your local [City or County Childcare Committee (CCC)](https://myccc.ie/).

You can get the [list of contracted childcare providers](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/childcare-search/).

### Childcare Directorate

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Block 1, Miesian Plaza,  
50 – 58 Lower Baggot Street  
Dublin  
D02 XW14  
Freepost F5055

**Tel:** (01) 647 3000

**Fax:** (01) 647 3224

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/dcediy>

**Email:** [contact@equality.gov.ie](mailto:contact@equality.gov.ie)

**AIM**

Applications are made via the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP) on the Pobal website. Your service provider will be familiar with the Pobal website and with PIP.

**Page edited:** 5 October 2023

# National Childcare Scheme (NCS)

* [What is the National Childcare Scheme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/#dabe3a)
* [What happens to existing childcare programmes?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/#4bdf40)
* [Which subsidy can I apply for?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/#26bbbb)
* [Am I eligible for the National Childcare Scheme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/#e6812c)
* [National Childcare Scheme Rates](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/#de49ac)
* [How to apply for the National Childcare Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/#16f160)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/#ec2268)

## What is the National Childcare Scheme?

The National Childcare Scheme (NCS) helps parents to meet childcare costs.

The scheme provides 2 types of childcare subsidy for children aged over 6 months (24 weeks) and up to 15 (children aged 15 do not qualify):

* A **universal subsidy** which is not means tested. The universal subsidy was extended to children aged up to 15 on 29 August 2022.
* An **income-assessed subsidy** which is means tested.

You cannot get the Universal Subsidy and an income-assessed subsidy at the same time. However, you can choose which subsidy is of greatest benefit to you.

You must apply for a subsidy, but it is paid directly to your childcare provider. Your provider then will subtract your subsidy from your childcare bill.

You can apply online and you can apply by paper application form – see ‘How to apply’ below.

Your childcare provider (this includes childminders and school-age childcare services) must be registered with Tusla and have a National Childcare Scheme contract with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

## What happens to existing childcare programmes?

The Community Childcare Subvention Plus programme is closed to new applicants. If your childcare is subsidised by the CCSP, you can continue on the programme as long as you continue to be eligible.

## Which subsidy can I apply for?

You can apply for the subsidy that is best for your family situation.

**Key points about the universal subsidy**

* It is available to parents of any income level and it is not means tested
* Your child must be aged between 6 months (24 weeks) and 15 years (children aged 15 do not qualify)
* The subsidy rates are based on the number of hours your child is attending childcare. See our page on the [universal childcare subsidy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/universal-childcare-subsidy/) for subsidy rates.
* Children must be attending a childcare provider who is registered with Tusla

**Key points about the income-assessed subsidy**

* It is for children aged between 6 months (24 weeks) and 15 years
* It is means tested and available to families with an annual reckonable income of up to €60,000. See ‘Rules’ below.
* Your hourly subsidy rates are based on your individual circumstances (depending on your reckonable family income and the age and educational stage of your child). See ‘Rates’ below.
* During school terms, you can use your subsidised hours for before-school and after-school childcare costs
* Children must be attending a childcare provider who is registered with Tusla
* You do not have to be employed but the number of subsidised childcare hours available will depend on the hours you and your partner work, study or train. See ‘Rules’ below.

## Am I eligible for the National Childcare Scheme?

You must meet certain conditions to be eligible for the NCS:

* **Relationship to the child:** You or your current partner must be a parent of the child or acting in *loco parentis* (this means acting as a parent to the child).
* **Residency status:** You must be [ordinarily resident](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-system/entitlement-to-public-health-services/) in Ireland and have a legal right to live here (that is, you are either a national of an EU/EEA member state or Switzerland, UK citizen, or have immigration status (this includes the [EU Temporary Protection Directive](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/the-asylum-process-in-ireland/temporary-protection-directive/)) or leave to remain).
* **PPS numbers:** You must provide your own [PPS number](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/irish-social-welfare-system/personal-public-service-number/) and the PPS number of the child or children you are applying for.
* **Age of the child:** To qualify for the subsidies your child must be over 6 months and under 15 years of age.

You can read more about the eligibility criteria for subsidies in the [NCS policy guidelines (pdf)](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/NCS_policy_guidelines.pdf).

### How is income assessed for the NCS?

You can choose to have your income assessed automatically or manually for the income-assessed subsidy. Your application will take longer if you choose the manual method.

**Automatic method** (Fast Track): Your income can be assessed automatically using information available from Revenue and the Department of Social Protection (DSP). If you agree to this, the NCS will get the information directly from Revenue and the DSP using your PPS number and your partner’s PPS number.

**Manual method:** You can ask for your income to be assessed manually. You must provide documents such as payslips or DSP declarations which show your income. These are reviewed and assessed by Pobal (the scheme administrator). You can get a full list of the documents accepted as proof of your income (*income proofs*) in Appendix 1 of the [NCS policy guidelines (pdf)](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/NCS_policy_guidelines.pdf).

You must declare additional income, such as any maintenance you pay or receive, any income that requires a Revenue Form 12, and any foreign income.

### What assessment period is used?

Your income is normally assessed based on your reckonable income from all sources for the previous tax year.

For the 2023-2024 programme year, the previous tax year is 2022 (1 January 2022 to 31 December 2022).

You can choose to have the current year assessed if you believe your income from the current year will be significantly less than your income from the previous year. You may be asked to provide information to support this. Your application is then manually reviewed and assessed.

You can read more about current year assessments in the [NCS policy guidelines (pdf)](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/NCS_policy_guidelines.pdf).

Self-declarations and supporting documents may be checked on a sample basis.

### What is reckonable income?

If you are applying for an income-assessed subsidy, the rate you qualify for depends on your *reckonable income*.

Your reckonable income is the total amount of your net family income. This is income from all sources (including most social welfare payments), **after** tax, PRSI and USC have been deducted.

However, some social welfare payments and other *allowable items* or *allowable deductions* are excluded from reckonable income under the NCS – see below.

### What is counted as family income?

If you are **parenting alone**, only your reckonable income is calculated and assessed. If you are living with another adult who is not your partner (such as a parent or other relative), their income is not taken into account.

If you are **living with your partner** (such as a spouse, civil partner or co-habitant) your combined reckonable income is assessed. Your partner’s income will be included even if they are not your child’s parent or guardian. If your partner is living apart from you temporarily their income is still included.

### What are allowable deductions?

When the NCS assesses your income, some of it is not taken into account. These are called *allowable deductions* or *allowable items*. Your reckonable income is reduced by the amount of the allowable deductions. Allowable deductions include:

* A multiple child discount of €4,300 if you have 2 children under 15
* A multiple child discount of €8,600 if you have 3 or more children under 15
* Pension contributions, within the limit allowed by Revenue
* Maintenance payments you make to a child or a former spouse
* The following social welfare payments:
  + [Aftercare Allowance](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/4254-TUSLA_Finance_Aftercare_v3.pdf)
  + [Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/)
  + [Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/back-to-school-clothing-and-footwear-allowance/)
  + [Back to Work Enterprise Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/social-welfare-payments-and-work/back-to-work-enterprise-allowance/)
  + [Back to Work Family Dividend](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/back-to-work-family-dividend/)
  + [Blind Welfare Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-services/health-services-for-people-with-disabilities/blind-welfare-allowance/)
  + Caranua services support
  + [Carer’s Support Grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/carers/carers-support-grant/)
  + [Constant Attendance Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/disability-benefit/)
  + [DE Third Level Bursary Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/)
  + Diet Supplement
  + [Domiciliary Care Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/domiciliary-care-allowance/)
  + [Exceptional Needs Payments](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/supplementary-welfare-schemes/additional-needs-payment/)
  + [FET Training Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-allowances/)
  + [Foster Care Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/birth-family-relationships/adoption-and-fostering/fostering/)
  + [Guardian’s Payment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/death-related-benefits/guardian-and-orphan-payments/)
  + [Humanitarian Assistance Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/supplementary-welfare-schemes/humanitarian-assistance-scheme/)
  + [Mobility Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/travel-and-recreation/transport-and-disability/mobility-allowance/)
  + [Personal Reader Grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-and-disability/personal-reader-grant/)
  + [Rent Supplement](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/supplementary-welfare-schemes/rent-supplement/)
  + [Short-Term Enterprise Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/social-welfare-payments-and-work/short-term-enterprise-allowance/)
  + [Springboard+](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/)
  + [Student Assistance Fund](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/)
  + [Student grant (SUSI)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/)
  + [VTOS Training Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/)
  + [Youthreach Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/)

### How many subsidised childcare hours am I entitled to?

The number of childcare hours you can get depends on the hours you (and your partner) work, study or train.

* **Enhanced hours subsidy:** If you (and your partner) **are** working, studying or training – you will be entitled to up to 45 hours of subsidised childcare per week.
* **Standard hours subsidy:** If you (and your partner) **are not** working, studying or training – you can qualify for up to 20 hours of subsidised childcare per week.

Since 2 May 2022, hours spent in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) or school are not deducted from a family’s entitlement to [subsidised hours under the National Childcare Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/00676-expansion-of-ncs-wrap-around-hours-for-after-school-childcare/).

### How are work, study and training hours assessed?

Any part-time hours, casual working, or hours in labour activation schemes such as Gateway and SOLAS programmes, are counted as work.

If you are studying for a higher education course on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), this is counted under studying and training.

You may be asked for proof of work, study or training. You can read more about what is accepted as proof of work, study or training in the [NCS policy guidelines (pdf)](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/NCS_policy_guidelines.pdf).

### What if my circumstances change?

**Change of income:** If your income suddenly changes for reasons outside your control (for example, if you lose your job or your hours at work are reduced), you can apply for a sudden change assessment. You can do this online at [ncs.gov.ie](https://ncs.gov.ie/en/) or by post. This does not apply if you choose to change your income (for example, by going on a shorter working year or term-time working arrangement).

Your new income assessment is based on the 4 weeks immediately before your application. Any subsidies awarded under a sudden change assessment are for 6 months only. After this, you must re-apply for a new subsidy.

**No longer eligible:** You must also notify Pobal if you are no longer eligible for the subsidy, for example, you are no longer caring for the child for whom you were given a subsidy. If you or your partner no longer meet the criteria for the enhanced hours subsidy, the subsidy ends 20 working days after the notification.

**Loss of work or study:** If you stop working or studying, you may no longer qualify for an enhanced hours subsidy. However, you get the enhanced hours for 4 weeks from the end date of your work or study. Your subsidy is then reduced to standard hours. You or your partner’s income will be assessed at the next renewal date unless you ask for an assessment of income before that.

## National Childcare Scheme Rates

Your reckonable income must be less than €60,000 per year to qualify for an income-assessed subsidy. You are entitled to the maximum subsidy rates if your reckonable income is €26,000 or less. If your reckonable income is over €60,000 you can still apply for a [Universal subsidy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/universal-childcare-subsidy/).

You can use the [subsidy calculator](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/childcare-subsidy-calculator-input/) on the NCS website to help you work out what your entitlement will be.

If you are currently on the [CCSP](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/community-childcare-subvention-programme/), you can use the subsidy calculator to see which scheme will benefit you most: the NCS or your current programme.

## How to apply for the National Childcare Scheme

You can apply online at [ncs.gov.ie](http://www.ncs.gov.ie/).

To apply online, you need:

* A verified [MyGovID](https://www.mygovid.ie/) account
* Your children’s information, including their date of birth and PPS numbers
* Your employment and income-related details
* Your partner’s PPS number (your partner does not need a verified MyGovID account)
* Your partner’s employment and income-related details

You can get more information about getting a verified MyGovID from the [MyGovID](https://www.mygovid.ie/) website.

The NCS website has a [step-by-step guide to the online application process](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/application-form-guide).

You can apply by post by contacting the Parent Support Centre – see ‘Further information’ below. These applications will take longer to process and may affect the start date of the subsidy payment.

Subsidies are awarded on a yearly basis. Parents and childcare providers will be notified when a subsidy is due for renewal. You will get this notification at least 20 working days before your subsidy payment is due to expire.

A 6-month renewal date will be set in some situations – set out in the [NCS policy guidelines (pdf)](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/NCS_policy_guidelines.pdf).

### What happens when my application has been approved?

When your application is approved:

1. You get a unique code called a CHICK (Childcare Identifier Code Key) when your application is approved
2. Your provider then uses the CHICK and your child’s name and date of birth to register your child on the National Childcare Scheme
3. You get a notification on your portal asking you to confirm that the hours of childcare are correct
4. Your subsidy is paid directly to your childcare provider on your behalf
5. Your childcare provider subtracts the subsidy from your childcare bill

If you choose to use 2 different childcare providers for a single child (for example on different days of the week) you can use a single CHICK for both providers.

If you are separated from the parent of your child and you are both awarded a subsidy for the child, you each get a different CHICK.

You can find out more in the [NCS claims guide](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/claims-guide).

### What if I'm not satisfied with the decision?

If you are not satisfied with a subsidy award or the amount of the subsidy, you can have the decision reviewed by Pobal. You must request a review within 30 working days of the decision.

If you are still not satisfied following the outcome of the review, you have a right of appeal to an appeals officer (independent of the scheme administrator). You must appeal within 30 working days of the review decision.

You can get detailed information on process for reviews and appeals in the [NCS policy guidelines (pdf)](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/NCS_policy_guidelines.pdf).

### Can I use any childcare provider?

Childcare providers must be registered with Tusla and have a National Childcare Scheme contract with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

You can get a list of contracted childcare providers from the [National Childcare Scheme website](https://ncs.gov.ie/en/childcare-search/).

You can also get information from your local [City and County Childcare Committee](https://myccc.ie/).

## Further information

You can contact your local City or County Childcare Committee for information on the scheme and services in your area.

Visit [ncs.gov.ie](http://www.ncs.gov.ie/) for more information on the National Childcare Scheme or contact the National Childcare Scheme Parent Support Centre. Call (01) 906 8530 (9am - 5pm Monday to Friday)

You can get detailed information on the [NCS in the policy guidelines (pdf)](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/NCS_policy_guidelines.pdf)

### Childcare Directorate

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Block 1, Miesian Plaza,  
50 – 58 Lower Baggot Street  
Dublin  
D02 XW14  
Freepost F5055

**Tel:** (01) 647 3000

**Fax:** (01) 647 3224

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/dcediy>

**Email:** [contact@equality.gov.ie](mailto:contact@equality.gov.ie)

### Pobal

Holbrook House  
Holles Street  
Dublin 2  
D02 EY84  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 511 7000

**Fax:** (01) 511 7981

**Homepage:** <http://www.pobal.ie/>

**Email:** [enquiries@pobal.ie](mailto:enquiries@pobal.ie)

**Page edited:** 20 September 2023

# Early Start Programme

* [What is the Early Start Programme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/#4acba5)
* [How Early Start operates](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/#3bb21c)
* [Grants available under the Early Start scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/#fae73b)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/#b48c08)

## What is the Early Start Programme?

The Early Start Programme is a one-year preventative intervention scheme offered in selected schools in designated disadvantaged areas. The objective of the pre-school programme is to tackle educational disadvantage by targeting children who are at risk of not reaching their potential within the school system. The programme is managed, funded and evaluated by the Department of Education.

Children must be aged more than 3 years 2 months and less than 4 years 7 months on the 1st day of September of the year in which they are enrolled.

Children may either be enrolled in Early Start or in the [Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/). Children are not eligible to be enrolled in both schemes at the same time.

The Early Start Pre-School Programme was introduced in 1994. You can get [a list of the schools in the Early Start Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/78ff8-early-start-programme/) on the Department of Education website.

The aims of Early Start are:

* To implement an educational programme that will enhance the overall development of young children and prevent school failure
* To counteract the effects of social disadvantage.

The desired outcomes of Early Start are:

* That the children involved in the programme will develop confidence in their ability to learn
* That the children involved in the programme will develop learning styles, which are led by motivated, organised and appropriately independent behaviour
* That the children involved in the programme will develop their language, cognition and social/personal skills to the extent that they will be able to easily adapt to school life in the future
* That the 'learning through play' approach used in the programme will be positive and enjoyable for the children involved
* That the parents of participating children will become actively involved in their children's education.

## How Early Start operates

Early Start pre-schools are accommodated in vacant classrooms in primary schools. The teachers and childcare workers in Early Start are members of staff and are under the general supervision of the Board of Management and the principal teacher. Early Start is regarded as an integral part of the primary school and benefits from the managerial and administrative services of the school.

A full unit caters for a total of 60 children and a half-unit caters for 30. Each teacher and childcare worker caters for 15 children between 09.00 and 11.30 and a different 15 from 12.00 to 14.30 each day. A full Early Start unit is staffed by 2 trained teachers, 2 trained childcare workers and parent volunteers. A half-unit is staffed by one trained teacher and a trained childcare worker. The board of management of the school where Early Start is established appoints the childcare workers and the principal of the school assigns the teachers to work in Early Start.

Parental involvement is also a key element in the Early Start project, both in everyday management and in the organisation of activities. Working in conjunction with the school's [Home School Community Liaison](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/home-school-liaison/) Co-ordinator, the Early Start staff encourage parents to take part in the centre's activities. A rota is agreed and parents take turns to spend time each week in the centre.

The curriculum of the programme prioritises the four core areas of language, cognition and social and personal development. This is done by engaging the children in structured play activities, aimed at enhancing their development in the core areas. Within these play activities, teachers set specific learning objectives for each child. Play and positive adult-child interaction are the cornerstones of the Early Start activities.

After completing the Early Start programme, children proceed to the junior infants class.

### Qualifications

The teachers are fully qualified primary school teachers.

The minimum qualification for childcare workers in Early Start is a one-year full-time [QQI](http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Programme-Validation07.aspx) Level 5 qualification in Childcare, Pre-school Childcare or Social Care or equivalent.

## Grants available under the Early Start scheme

The Department of Education provides full and half-unit grants for schools participating in the Early Start Programme:

* €2,539.48 (full) €1,523.69 (half) per centre per annum for the purchase of materials/equipment
* €1,904.60 (full) €952.30 (half) per centre per annum for the development of parental involvement

In addition, an annual capitation grant of €95.23 per pupil is paid to the school's Board of Management, which is to be used as funding support for day-to-day running costs of the centre.

## Where to apply

### Department of Education

Early Years Education Policy Unit  
Block 1  
Miesian Plaza  
50-58 Baggot Street Lower  
Dublin 4  
D02 WX14

**Tel:** (076) 1108967 or (076) 1108968

**Page edited:** 6 October 2021

# Early childhood education

* [What is early childhood education?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-education/#acf156)
* [Department of Education's role in early education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-education/#c58bb2)
* [Government policy on early childhood education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-education/#58b3c8)

## What is early childhood education?

Early childhood education generally means education before the start of formal schooling or before the age at which children are generally required to attend school. It covers the period from birth to 6 years. Legislation on school attendance requires children to be at school (or receiving an education) from the age of 6. In practice, almost all 5-year-olds and about half of 4-year-olds actually attend primary schools.

Early childhood education services include infant classes in [primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/) and a range of [childcare and preschool services](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/your-childcare-options/). Pre-school childcare services are [regulated by Child and Family Agency](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-childcare-services/).

### Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme

The [Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/) provides early care and education for children of pre-school age. In general, the provision amounts to 3 hours per day, 5 days a week over certain number of weeks for children enrolled in participating playschools.

The ECCE scheme is administered by the [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/2459ee-early-childhood-care-and-education-programme-ecce/) .

## Department of Education's role in early education

The Department of Education's role in early childhood education focuses mainly on interventions for children who are disadvantaged or have special needs. The Early Years Education Policy Unit of the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) work on policy issues affecting early childhood care and education.

### Infant classes in primary school

There is a special grant allocation to national schools to help buy equipment and materials for infant classes in primary schools.

### Early Start

The [Early Start Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/) aims to tackle educational disadvantage by targeting children who are at risk of not reaching their potential within the education system. It is a one-year preventative intervention scheme offered to pre-school children (3 to 4 years old) in some schools in disadvantaged areas.

### Children under 4 with special needs

Local Health Offices and/or voluntary bodies provide services for young children with severe or profound disabilities.

Pre-school children do not have a specific right to education. However, they are entitled to certain health services which are related to education. The Health Service Executive is responsible for providing psychological services and speech and language therapy services for pre-school children with disabilities who are assessed as needing these services. [Assessments](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-services/health-services-for-people-with-disabilities/assessment-of-need-for-people-with-disabilites/) of children under the age of 5 are carried out under the assessment of need provisions of the Disability Act 2005.

The [Visiting Teacher Service](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/) of the Department of Education provides a service to young children with visual and/or hearing impairment, from the age of 2 years.

There are a small number of special pre-school class units for children with autistic spectrum disorders. These units are attached to primary schools.

**Supports to access ECCE**

A new Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) was introduced for children with special needs starting ECCE.

When you have identified a pre-school for your child, your service provider, in consultation with you, will consider what supports may be needed to ensure your child’s participation in pre-school.

Where it is considered that your child needs additional support, your pre-school service provider can apply, in partnership with you, for targeted supports under AIM.

The [AIM website](https://aim.gov.ie/) provides [information for parents](https://aim.gov.ie/parents/) and [Frequently Asked Questions](http://www.preschoolaccess.ie/faqs/) on supports available. Your local City or County Childcare Committee will also be able to provide you with information and guidance on AIM.

## Government policy on early childhood education

The White Paper on Early Childhood Education 'Ready to Learn' is concerned with children from birth to 6 years. It sets out the core objective of early childhood education as 'supporting the development and educational achievement of children through high quality early education, with particular focus on the target groups of the disadvantaged and those with special needs'.  
It sets out a number of guiding principles:

* Quality will underpin all aspects of early education provision.
* The State will build on existing provision and use the existing regulatory framework, where possible.
* Implementation will be undertaken on a gradual, phased basis to allow all the participants in the system to prepare adequately for the challenges that lie ahead.
* Progress will be achieved through a process of consultation, dialogue and partnership.

The White Paper proposes early support for families of children with special needs; such parents should have access to an early education expert, initially as an advisor to parents, then as a teacher.

[Síolta: the National Framework for Quality in Early Childhood Education](http://www.siolta.ie/) was published in 2006. The Early Years Education Policy Unit of the Department of Education manages the implementation of Síolta.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has developed [Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (pdf),](https://ncca.ie/media/4151/aistear_theearlychildhoodcurriculumframework.pdf) for children from birth to 6 years of age. This framework, published in 2009, describes the types of learning that are important for children of this age group and sets out broad learning goals for all children.

**Page edited:** 15 October 2020

# Regulation of pre-school childcare services

* [Pre-school childcare](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-childcare-services/#f8e20a)
* [Registration of childcare providers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-childcare-services/#ac3cdf)
* [Childcare Regulations and inspections](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-childcare-services/#166cf1)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-childcare-services/#ec2268)

## Pre-school childcare

Pre-school children are children under 6 years of age, who are not attending a primary school or equivalent.

Pre-school services include pre-schools, play groups, day nurseries, crèches, childminders and other similar services looking after more than 3 pre-school children.

Tusla is required to inspect and regulate pre-school childcare services and has published [a list of tips on choosing a pre-school](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/tips-for-parents).

The regulation of pre-school childcare services is set out in the [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1991/en/act/pub/0017/index.html). The Regulations describe the standards of health, safety and welfare that must be in place before such services can be provided.

Other key legislation for childcare is the [Child Care Act 1991](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1991/en/act/pub/0017/index.html) as amended by the [Child and Family Agency Act 2013](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2013/act/40/enacted/en/html) and the [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendments) Regulations 2016](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/632/made/en/print).

Tulsa is responsible for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pre-school children attending pre-school childcare services. The [Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)](https://assets.gov.ie/13135/8f7b2b9a0ef343289bf5a979af7787d8.pdf) has overall responsibility for developing policy and regulations in this area.

## Registration of childcare providers

Tusla is required to inspect and regulate pre-school childcare services. This means that pre-school childcare providers must notify Tusla that they are providing a service.

### Pre-school childcare services that must register with Tusla

The different types of pre-school childcare services that must register with Tusla are described in the Regulations. These are:

* Sessional services
* Part-time day care
* Full day care
* Childminders caring for more than 3 children – see ‘Childminders’ below
* Pre-school service in a drop-in centre

**Sessional services**Playgroups, crèches, Montessori groups, playschools, naionraí and childminders looking after more than 3 children offer sessional pre-school services. Services normally offered are planned programmes, consisting of up to 3.5 hours per session (for example, a morning or an afternoon). They generally cater for pre-school children in the 3-5 year age bracket.

**Part-time day care**  
This offers a structured day care service for pre-school children for more than 3.5 hours and less than 5 hours per day.

**Full day care**  
This is a structured day care service for more than 5 hours per day. Providers include day nurseries and crèches.

**Childminders**  
Childminders care for children in the childminder’s own home. Throughout the year, they offer this service for the full working day or for different periods during the day. Parents and childminders negotiate their own terms such as hours, rates and duties. As part of the National Childminding Initiative, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has published [guidelines for childminders (pdf).](https://assets.gov.ie/23804/b4fbc4db075b488fae44bb82a66a3851.pdf) You may have to [pay PRSI if your earnings are over a certain amount](http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Self-Employed-Contributions.aspx).

A childminder can care for no more than 5 pre-school children at any given time, including the childminder's own pre-school children. Only childminders caring for more than 3 children are covered by the Child Care Act, 1991.

A [**childminding tax relief**](https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/children/childcare-services/index.aspx) applies to people who mind up to 3 children in the minder's own home. The childminder does not have to pay tax if their earnings are less than €15,000 per year. If their earnings are more than this amount, tax is payable on the full amount. Childminders must include their childminding income in their annual tax return. They must also notify their local City or County Childcare Committee that they are providing a childminding service.

**Pre-school service in a drop-in centre**  
A pre-school service in a drop-in centre is where a pre-school child is cared for over a period of not more than 2 hours while the parent or guardian is availing of a service or attending an event. Such services are mainly located in places such as shopping centres or leisure centres.

### Who does not have to register with Tusla?

Certain pre-school care providers do not have to notify Tusla - the Child and Family Agency. These include:

* A relative of the child or the spouse of such a relative (that is, the brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent or step-parent of the child)
* If you are caring for 1 or more pre-school children of the same family and no other children (other than your own) in your own home
* If you are caring for not more than 3 pre-school children from different families (other than your own) in your own home

## Childcare Regulations and inspections

Anyone delivering pre-school childcare must ensure that the service meets the measures set out in the [Childcare Regulations of 2016 (pdf)](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Stamped_copy_of_amended_Regs.pdf).

Tusla has published a [Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF)](https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/), to help childcare services to meet the Regulations.

### The Regulations for childcare providers include:

**Health, welfare and development of the child**A person carrying on a pre-school service should ensure that each child’s learning, development and well-being is facilitated within the daily life of the service through the provision of the appropriate interaction, materials and equipment, appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child and appropriate suitable care practices.

**First aid and medical assistance**  
There should be a suitably equipped first-aid box for children and arrangements to call emergency medical help. A person trained in first aid for children must be available at all times.

**Management and staffing**A person carrying out a pre-school service must ensure that a sufficient number of suitable and competent adults are working directly with the children at all times. The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has published a [list of recognised qualifications (pdf)](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/239042/?page=null) for the purposes of the Department's childcare programmes.

Anyone working with pre-school children must have [appropriate qualifications or be planning to get such qualifications](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2023/si/387/made/en/pdf).

All staff, students and volunteers who have access to a child should be appropriately [Garda vetted](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/data-protection-at-work/garda-vetting/).

**Adult/child and space ratios**

| **Pre-school service** | **Age of children** | **No. of adults** | **No. of children** | **Floor area per child** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sessional services | 0-1 years | 1 | 3 | 1.818 sq. metres, maximum of 22 per room |
|  | 1-2.5 years | 1 | 5 | 1.818 sq. metres, maximum of 22 per room |
|  | 2.5-6 years | 1 | 11 | 1.818 sq. metres, maximum of 22 per room |
| Full/part-time day care\* | 0-1 year | 1 | 3 | 3.5 sq metres |
|  | 1-2 years | 1 | 5 | 2.8 sq. metres |
|  | 2-3 years | 1 | 6 | 2.35 sq. metres |
|  | 3-6 years | 1 | 8 | 2.3 sq. metres |
| Drop-in centres | 0-6 years | 1 | 4 (only 2 or less under 15 months) | 1.818 sq.metres, maximum of 24 per room |
| Childminders | 0-6 years | 1 | 5 (including his/her own) | No more than 2 children under 15 months |
| Overnight pre-school service | 0-1 years | 1 | 3 |  |
|  | 1-6 years | 1 | 5 |  |

\*When a full day care service also takes children not on a full day basis, sessional service adult numbers apply. The minimum floor area for a sessional service for each child also applies for that session.

Tusla can limit the maximum number of pre-school children who may be cared for at the same time. This is to prevent over-crowding in pre-school services. If Tusla proposes to limit numbers, they will notify the provider who can appeal or make representations about this decision.

**Behaviour management**  
Anyone providing a pre-school childcare service must ensure that no corporal punishment is inflicted on any child attending the service. The provider should have written policies and procedures to manage a child’s challenging behaviour and to assist the child to manage his or her behaviour.

**Register of pre-school children**A pre-school childcare provider must keep a register with details of each child attending the service including name, date of birth, contact numbers for parents and child’s doctors.

**Information for parents**  
Parents must be given information about the service including details of the person in charge and other staff, the adult/child ratios, the age range of the children, the type of care, facilities, opening hours and fees.

**Premises and facilities**  
Pre-school services (including childminders, drop-in centres, crèches, etc.) must ensure their standards meet certain standards and provide certain facilities. These rules include ensuring that:

* The premises are of sound and stable structure and are suitable for providing pre-school services
* Adequate space per child is provided in the premises
* Fixtures, premises and fittings are kept in a proper state of repair and in a clean and hygienic condition
* There must be adequate and suitable furniture, play and work equipment and materials available on the premises of the pre-school service
* There are adequate and suitable facilities for a pre-school child to rest and to play indoors and outdoors during the day

Pre-school childcare providers must ensure that the building has suitable and adequate heating, ventilation and lighting and sanitary facilities.

**Safety measures**

All reasonable measures must be taken to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of a pre-school child attending the service and ensure that the environment of the service is safe.

Registered childcare providers must have a safety statement and policies on areas including managing behaviour, the administration of medication, infection control and safe sleep.

**Food and drink**  
A pre-school service should ensure that food is nutritious and meets with dietary and religious requirements.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has published [Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Services](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/255611/6513f6cd-5b1b-45ab-a11f-e16193b146c9.pdf#page=null). It advises that children in day care for more than 5 hours per session (full day care) should be offered at least 2 snacks and 2 meals, including one hot meal.

**Insurance**  
The provider should ensure that the pre-school children are adequately insured against injury while attending the service.

## Further information

If you need [further information about the standards and regulation of childcare services](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/) for pre-school children you should contact the [early years/pre-school inspector](http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/early-years-inspectors/).

If you need information on local childcare services for your child or other issues relating to the care of young children, you should contact your local City/County Childcare Committees (CCC), if you need further information on local childcare services for your child

Contact your local [City or County Childcare Committee](https://myccc.ie/).

### Tusla - Child and Family Agency

Brunel Building  
Heuston South Quarter  
Dublin 8  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 771 8500

**Homepage:** <https://www.tusla.ie/>

**Email:** [info@tusla.ie](mailto:info@tusla.ie)

**Page edited:** 1 August 2023

# Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) programme

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/community-childcare-subvention-programme/#2473e9)
* [Am I eligible for Community Childcare Subvention Plus?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/community-childcare-subvention-programme/#c8d924)
* [Rates for Community Childcare Subvention Plus](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/community-childcare-subvention-programme/#ec6b79)
* [How to apply for Community Childcare Subvention Plus](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/community-childcare-subvention-programme/#173b4b)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/community-childcare-subvention-programme/#b48c08)

## Introduction

The [Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d7a5e6-early-childhood-care-and-education-ecce-or-free-preschool/#targeted-schemes) helps disadvantaged parents and parents in training, education or low-paid employment to get childcare at reduced rates. The subvention is available to children going to a participating [Tusla registered childcare service](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/list-of-pre-school-services-by-county).

The [National Childcare Scheme (NCS)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/) replaced a number of childcare supports including the CCSP. You can chose to stay on the CCSP as long as you are eligible or until you transfer to another scheme. However, the CCSP is closed to new applicants.

Parents cannot get the [Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-care-and-education-scheme/) and a CCSP fee reduction at the same time. You can decide which scheme would be of greater benefit to you.

### Free childcare for homeless children

Children aged 0-5 years whose parents are homeless (and those moving from homelessness to permanent accommodation) can get [free childcare for up to 25 hours](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d7a5e6-early-childhood-care-and-education-ecce-or-free-preschool/#targeted-schemes) a week. It includes 15 hours of free pre-school (ECCE) or school hours where children are eligible. It also includes a daily meal. Parents should not be asked to pay any top–up or co-payment for these part-time hours.

## Am I eligible for Community Childcare Subvention Plus?

You may have qualified for assistance with your childcare costs for a child under 15 years of age on 1 September, if you are a parent or guardian and you:

* Have a medical card or GP visit card
* Have a low income
* Are in school
* Are in further education
* Are job training
* Are getting a social welfare payment.

There are 4 different bands with different rates of subvention. You must be in Band A, Band AJ, Band B or Band D – see ‘Rates’ below

## Rates for Community Childcare Subvention Plus

The CCSP programme funds participating Tusla-registered services to provide reduced weekly childcare fees to certain parents and guardians as follows:

**Band A** – You can get a weekly fee reduction of €145 for a full-time service, €80 for a part-time service, €45 for a sessional service and €22.50 for a shorter hours service.

This band applies to parents or guardians who have a medical card and are getting one of the following:

* Most social welfare payments
* Certain employment schemes

The child of a **secondary school student with a medical card** can qualify for a childcare place under Band A, whether or not the secondary school student (the parent) has a qualifying social welfare payment.

**Band AJ** – You can get a fee reduction of €80 for a full-time service, €80 for a part-time service, €45 for sessional service and €22.50 for a shorter hours service.

This band applies to parents or guardians who have a medical card and are getting one of the following:

* Jobseeker’s Benefit or Jobseeker's Allowance
* Supplementary Welfare Allowance

**Band B** – You get a fee reduction of €70 for a full-time service, €35 for a part-time service, €25 for a sessional service and €12.50 for a shorter hours service.

This band applies to parents or guardians in one of the following situations:

* Have a medical card but don’t have a payment listed in Band A or AJ
* Have a payment listed in Band A or AJ but don’t have a medical card

**Band D** - You get a fee reduction of €50 for a full-time service, €25 for a part-time service, €17 for a sessional service and €8.50 for a shorter hours service.

This band applies to parents or guardians in one of the following situations:

* Have a GP visit card where a child is 6 years of age or older
* No longer qualify for Band A or AJ this year, but who were verified as being on Band A or AJ at the end of the previous school year

You can find out more about the [CCSP subvention bands and rates](https://www.laoischildcare.ie/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Community-Childcare-Subvention-Band-of-Supports.pdf).

## How to apply for Community Childcare Subvention Plus

To continue on the CCSP programme contact your childcare provider.

You may need to provide a letter from the Department of Social Protection (DSP) confirming you are getting an eligible payment or [a statement from the automated facility on the DSP website](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/request-a-statement-of-social-welfare-payments/).

The CCSP programme is closed to new applicants.

If you don't qualify for CCSP, you can apply for support under the [National Childcare Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/).

## Where to apply

To find childcare providers operating the CCSP programmes in your area, you should contact your [City or County Childcare Committee](https://myccc.ie/).

**Page edited:** 27 July 2022

# Regulation of school age childcare services

* [School age childcare](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-school-age-childcare/#0d1a4e)
* [Registration of school age childcare services](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-school-age-childcare/#ed3ecb)
* [School Age Childcare Regulations and inspections](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-school-age-childcare/#b6ebaa)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/regulation-of-school-age-childcare/#ec2268)

## School age childcare

School age childcare services provide childcare outside of school hours to children in school and under the age of 15. It includes early years services, day nursery, crèche and day-care.

Childcare services for school age children must:

* Register with the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) before providing any services
* Comply with the standards of health, safety and welfare set out in the [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018 (pdf)](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/575/made/en/pdf)

Tusla – the Child and Family agency - is responsible for the inspection and registration of all childcare services including pre-school and school age children.

Parents can check the [register of school age childcare services](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/03_March_End_External_Register_-_School_Age.pdf).

## Registration of school age childcare services

School age childcare providers must be registered with Tusla. If a provider offers services for school-age and pre-school children, they must be registered to provide each service.

Any new service must register with Tusla 3 months before opening the school age service. You can check the [register of school age childcare services (pdf)](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/03_March_End_External_Register_-_School_Age.pdf).

### Who must register with Tusla and comply with the Regulations?

Childcare providers covered by the Regulations who must register are:

* Centre-based childcare services
* Childminding services

### Who does not have to register with Tusla?

Childcare providers exempt from the Regulations include:

* A relative of the child or the spouse of such a relative (that is, the brother, sister, aunt, uncle, grandparent or step-parent of the child)
* A childminder caring for not more than 6 children (other than their own) at the same time. Not more than 3 of the children can be of pre-school age
* Childcare services in drop-in centres. These are centres that provide occasional care to children
* Temporary school-age childcare services

### Re-registration

All services must re-register with Tusla every 3 years, during that time they will be inspected by Tusla.

### Registration certificate

From 31 January 2023, all childcare services must display a certificate of registration in a prominent position in their childcare setting.

## School Age Childcare Regulations and inspections

The [Regulations for childcare providers](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/575/made/en/print) cover a number of areas.

**Health, welfare and development of the child**

Childcare providers must safeguard the health, safety and welfare of children attending their service. The [Regulations (pdf)](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/si/575/made/en/pdf) set down the standards that must be in place before childcare services can be provided to children. Some of the areas covered by the Regulations include:

**Management and staffing**  
Childcare services must ensure that children are appropriately supervised at all times.

All staff, students and volunteers who have access to a child must be [Garda vetted](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/data-protection-at-work/garda-vetting/). Childminders (other than those exempted from registration – see above) must also be Garda vetted

All registered childcare services must have another person available at all times to assist in case of emergency.

**Ratios of early years children allowed in centre-based services**  
Centre-based services must ensure there is a minimum ratio of 1 adult to 12 school age children at all times.

**Ratios of early years children allowed in childminding services**  
There is a limit on the maximum number of children who can attend a childminding service at the same time.

Childminding services caring for both pre-school and school age children, must adhere to strict ratios that apply to children who are in care **at the same time**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | |
| **Number of children that may be cared for in a childminding service** | |
| **Number of pre-school children being cared for** | **Maximum number of school age children** |
| 0 | 12 |
| 1 | 10 |
| 2 | 7 |
| 3 | 5 |
| 4 | 2 |
| 5 | 1 |

**Behaviour management**  
The provider should have written policies and procedures to manage challenging behaviour and bullying.

**Premises**Childcare services (including childminders) must ensure their premises meet certain standards. Children must have access to outdoor space on a daily basis, either on the premises or an alternative outdoor space.

**Information for parents**  
You should be given information about the service including details of the person in charge and other staff, the adult/child ratios, the age range of the children, the type of care, facilities, opening hours and fees.

**Safety measures**  
Registered providers must have policies on the administration of medication, infection control, fire safety and dropping off and collection of children.

**Insurance**  
Childcare providers must have adequate insurance cover in place for children in their care.

**Complaints**  
Registered services must have a complaints policy for recording and dealing with complaints about the service. Parents must be made aware of the policy.

## Further information

If you need [further information about the standards and regulation of childcare services for children (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/88025/5e6c734d-7d21-47f2-ae28-b84b581939d9.pdf) in your area, you should contact the [early years inspector](http://www.tusla.ie/get-in-touch/early-years-inspectors/).

If you need information on local childcare services and other issues relating to the care of young children you should contact your [local City/County Childcare Committee (CCC)](https://myccc.ie/)

The [register of school age childcare service (pdf)](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/External_Register_School_Age_0811.pdf) gives you information including the name of the provider, the age profile of the children and number of children the service can accommodate.

School age service providers can find more information about [registering and re-registering a school age service](https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/school-age-services/re-registration-of-school-age-services/).

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has also published an [action plan on school age childcare](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/89f0b1-action-plan-on-school-age-childcare/).

### Tusla - Child and Family Agency

Brunel Building  
Heuston South Quarter  
Dublin 8  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 771 8500

**Homepage:** <https://www.tusla.ie/>

**Email:** [info@tusla.ie](mailto:info@tusla.ie)

**Page edited:** 16 November 2022

# Universal childcare subsidy

* [What is the Universal Subsidy?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/universal-childcare-subsidy/#dad8e7)
* [How to qualify for the Universal Subsidy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/universal-childcare-subsidy/#4788a7)
* [Rate of the Universal Subsidy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/universal-childcare-subsidy/#06c10b)
* [How to apply for the Universal Subsidy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/universal-childcare-subsidy/#138d8c)
* [Where to apply for the Universal Subsidy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/universal-childcare-subsidy/#530746)

## What is the Universal Subsidy?

The Universal Subsidy is a childcare subsidy for children over 6 months but under 15 years who are in Tusla-registered childcare.

The subsidy is deducted from the overall bill you get from your childcare provider.

## How to qualify for the Universal Subsidy

To qualify for the Universal Subsidy:

* Your child must be over 6 months (24 weeks) but under 15 years of age.
* Your childcare provider must be [registered with Tusla](https://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-providers/register-of-early-years-services-by-county/) and in a contract with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to offer the Universal Subsidy.

The subsidy is not means-tested.

You cannot get the Universal Subsidy and an income assessed subsidy at the same time. However, you can choose which subsidy is of greatest benefit to you.

## Rate of the Universal Subsidy

The universal childcare subsidy is paid at €1.40 an hour up to a maximum of 45 hours a week to all eligible children.

You can use the [subsidy calculator](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/childcare-subsidy-calculator-input/) on the NCS website to help work out what your entitlement will be.

For example, if your child is attending childcare for 45 hours a week, the subsidy you could get is €63 per week (€1.40 x 45 hours).

For example, if your child is attending childcare for 20 hours a week, you could get a subsidy of €28 per week (€1.40 x 20 hours).

## How to apply for the Universal Subsidy

You should apply for the universal subsidy under the National Childcare Scheme at [ncs.gov.ie](https://ncs.gov.ie/en/). You will need:

* A verified MyGovID account
* The date of birth and Personal Public Service (PPS) number for each child you are applying for.

You can apply by post by contacting the Parent Support Centre – see ‘Where to apply’ below. If you apply by post it will take longer to process and may affect the start date when your subsidy can be paid.

The subsidy will be paid directly to your childcare provider and will be deducted from the cost of your childcare.

Your childcare provider must be registered with Tusla. You can get a list of contracted childcare providers on [ncs.gov.ie](https://ncs.gov.ie/en/childcare-search/).

You can read more in our document on the [National Childcare Scheme (NCS)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/).

## Where to apply for the Universal Subsidy

To find childcare providers in your area offering the Universal Subsidy contact your [City or County Childcare Committee](https://myccc.ie/).

You can get a list of contracted childcare providers from the [National Childcare Scheme website](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/childcare-search/).

For more information on the National Childcare Scheme visit [www.ncs.gov.ie](https://ncs.gov.ie/) or contact the National Childcare Scheme Parent Support Centre. Call (01) 906 8530 (9am - 5pm Monday to Friday).

**Page edited:** 5 October 2023

# Starting school

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/starting-primary-school/#2473e9)
* [Enrolling your child at primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/starting-primary-school/#0295fe)
* [Resolving problems](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/starting-primary-school/#741b35)
* [Absence and leaving school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/starting-primary-school/#12537a)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/starting-primary-school/#ec2268)

## Introduction

Most children in Ireland start their first-level education in primary schools (also called *national schools)* at the age of 4 or 5 years of age. Legally, children can be enrolled at primary school from the age of 4 upwards and must have started their formal education by the age of 6 years. The primary school cycle is 8 years long. Schools generally have 2 years of infant classes, followed by class 1 to class 6.

The primary education sector is made up of different types of primary school including denominational schools, multi-denominational schools, Irish-speaking schools (called *Gaelscoileanna*), special schools and non-State-aided private primary schools. Education in State primary schools is free of charge. The current and capital costs of primary schools, including teachers' salaries, are funded mainly by the Government and supplemented by local contributions.

## Enrolling your child at primary school

You can send your child to the primary school of your choice, provided there is a place available for them. Where there is a shortage of places the school must give priority on the basis of their admissions or enrolment policy. This is drawn up by the [board of management](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/) and should be available to you on request. You can find out more about [different types of primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/choosing-a-primary-school/) and their [admissions policies](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/).

To enrol your child in primary school, you should first [check the list of primary schools in your area](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/find-a-school/). Then you should contact the school of your choice to see if there is a place available. The school of your choice may place your child on a waiting list or you may need to contact other schools to find a place.

[Children with special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/) are generally educated in mainstream schools.

### Your child in school

The length of the school day in primary school is 5 hours and 40 minutes. This includes assembly time, roll-call and breaks which are usually around 11am and 12.30pm. Primary schools may reduce the school day by an hour for children in their first 2 years at primary school (commonly called *junior infants* and *senior infants*) and in their third year at primary school (commonly called *first class*). You can read the [Department of Education Circular 11/95 Time in School (Primary) (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/15685/6e55f1a07b994e57870eb6dd83edf415.pdf).

Overall, primary schools must be open for a minimum of 183 days in each school year. All schools must close for the months of July and August. [Christmas, Easter and mid-term breaks are standardised](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-terms-in-primary-and-postprimary/) in both primary and post-primary schools.

While students do not have to wear a uniform at primary school, many schools (in consultation with parents) have introduced school uniforms. Check with your school about their policy. There is an agreed [set of recommendations on school uniform policy.](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/12693/bc12da7233094cada435344e1898decc.pdf) There is also a [DE Circular on the weight of schoolbags.](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/38263/57a592bfdedc4b97a12404a7f0b853fb.pdf)

The principal is responsible for running the school. Each class has a class teacher who teaches all subjects to their class. In some smaller schools the teacher has more than one class. There may be other teachers in the school such as a [language support teacher](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/resources-for-non-english-speakers/) to help learn English or a learning support teacher to help children who are having difficulty with the curriculum. Schools set their own policy in relation to homework.

Children starting school for the first time will be in junior infants class. If your child has attended school before, the principal, you and the class teacher will decide together which class your child will be in. Children are only allowed to repeat a year for educational reasons and in special situations. You can get more information in the [DE Primary Circular 32/03 Retention of Pupils in Same Grade in Primary Schools (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/15376/27b5fe97641e4ea7b137bfd125bb5e4b.pdf).

Under the Education Act 1998 the school must provide reports for each child and the school must allow parents to have access to their child's school record. Schools usually hold a parent/teacher meeting during the year. If you are concerned about your child's progress at any stage during the year, you can speak to the class teacher.

## Resolving problems

If your child has a problem that you cannot sort out, you can arrange to speak to the class teacher. If this doesn't resolve the problem you can speak to the school principal.

If you have a complaint about a teacher or about the school, the first step is usually to speak to the class teacher. Then, if the complaint is not resolved, speak to the school principal. The next step is to approach the chairperson of the school's board of management.

If you have exhausted the school's complaints procedure and are still not satisfied, you can appeal to the Ombudsman for Children.

If your [complaint is about a teacher’s fitness to teach](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Professional-Standards/Complaints-about-Registered-Teachers/), you should first use the school’s complaints procedure. If you have exhausted this procedure and are not satisfied with the outcome, you can [make a complaint to the Teaching Council](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Professional-Standards/Complaints-about-Registered-Teachers/Making-a-Complaint/).

The Department of Education has no legal powers to investigate individual complaints about schools or to instruct schools to follow a particular course of direction with regard to individual complaints. The Department provides information on the [complaints procedure in primary school](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/complaints-about-schools/#parental-complaints).

## Absence and leaving school

If your child cannot attend school you must tell the school the reason for the absence. Write a short note to the school to explain why your child was out and send it in with your child when they go back to school.

If you are changing school you should tell the school that your child is leaving and will not be returning. You can ask the principal to give you a report on your child's progress which can be given to the new school when you are enrolling your child.

## Further information

You can find documents on our website about [preschool education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-education/), [teaching your child at home](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/parents-and-education/), [admissions policies in schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/), the [curriculum in primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-curriculum/), the [ownership of primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/ownership-of-primary-schools/), [school discipline](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/), [bullying](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/bullying-in-schools-in-ireland/), [school attendance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/), [help with costs of books and uniform](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/financial-help-with-school/) and [school health screenings](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-services/children-s-health/school-health-services/). You can also find out more about programmes that address educational disadvantage such as [tackling disadvantage in primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/giving-children-an-even-break-by-tackling-disadvantage/), the [Early Start Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/) and [special educational arrangements for Travellers.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/educational-arrangements-for-travellers/)

**Page edited:** 14 January 2021

# Choosing a primary school

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/choosing-a-primary-school/#2473e9)
* [Types of primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/choosing-a-primary-school/#6271a9)
* [Finding a school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/choosing-a-primary-school/#dbb21d)
* [Applying to a school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/choosing-a-primary-school/#08978c)

## Introduction

Children usually start primary school when they are 5 years of age. They start in September - the beginning of the school year.

However, you can start your child at primary school from the age of 4.

You can also choose to teach your child at home.

However you choose to educate your child, at home or at school, you must ensure that your child gets a [certain minimum education from the age of 6 to the age of 16](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/).

## Types of primary school

There are 2 types of primary school:

* National primary schools – often called national schools – they are funded by the State and do not charge fees
* Private primary schools – charge fees.

The majority of children in Ireland go to a State funded national primary school.

### National primary schools

Many national primary schools are owned and supported by the different churches. The Department of Education is supporting the setting up of more multidenominational schools, and non-denominational such as [Educate Together schools](https://www.educatetogether.ie/).

National schools are funded by the State and you do not pay a fee.

They often use the initial letters below with the school’s name to describe them as a national school:

NS - National School

GNS - Girls' National School

BNS - Boys' National School

SN - Scoil Naisiúnta

Some schools use the Irish form of their name, such as Scoil Bhríde NS. However, a school with an Irish name does not mean they teach through Irish.

#### Gaelscoileanna

[Gaelscoileanna](http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/) are schools that teach through Irish. Gaelscoileanna are state funded. They often have the word *Gaelscoil* in their title.

#### Special schools

Most children with special educational needs attend their local primary school in a mainstream class with other children and with additional support. They may also attend a special class within a mainstream school.

[There are also several special schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/) - including residential care units and schools for children with disabilities, young offenders, children at risk, children with specific learning disabilities and emotionally disturbed children.

### Private primary schools

Private primary schools have the freedom to choose the curriculum, school day, school year. In practice, many private primary schools provide the same basic curriculum set out for national schools, but they do not have to follow it.

## Finding a school

To find a school you can search primary schools by type and area using the Department of Education’s [Find a School](https://www.education.ie/en/Find-a-School/) tool.

You can filter your search results by ethos, language of instruction, and gender. You will be presented with a map showing the schools that meet your selection.

Most schools have a website with information about their ethos, policies, curriculum and extra-curricular activities on offer.

## Applying to a school

You should apply to the school in writing. If they have an application form, complete the form or apply by letter.

All primary schools must publish an admissions notice and an admissions policy.

The **admissions notice** tells you:

* When the school will start accepting applications for the year (when to apply)
* When you will get the decision on your application
* When you must accept a place

The **admissions policy** describes the rules the school will follow for selecting students and how they make their decisions. It also states what happens if the school is over-subscribed.

### Discrimination

Schools cannot discriminate if your child has a disability, is of a different race or a member of the Traveller community. They cannot discriminate because of a child’s family status, sexual orientation, marital status, gender or religion.

However, in some circumstances a school can prioritise a student of a minority religion who wants a school providing religious instruction similar to that religion or belief.

You can read more about [admissions policies in schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/).

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# Curriculum in primary schools

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-curriculum/#2473e9)
* [What do children learn at school?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-curriculum/#1a944e)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-curriculum/#ec2268)

## Introduction

The curriculum sets out the subjects that children study in school.

It sets out what your child is taught and how learning in each subject is assessed.

Ireland's primary and post-primary schools is determined by the Minister for Education who is advised by the [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)](https://ncca.ie/en).

## What do children learn at school?

The primary school curriculum consists of 6 curriculum areas that are further divided into 11 subjects. The 6 areas are:

* Language: [Gaeilge (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/920c3fd9-1f53-4163-a045-90f07ebb6b71/PSEC01b-Gaeilge_curriculum.pdf), [English (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/5b514700-e65c-46a7-a7d0-c8e05e115bf9/PSEC01a_English_Curriculum.pdf)
* Mathematics: [Mathematics (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/9df5f3c5-257b-471e-8d0f-f2cf059af941/PSEC02_Mathematics_Curriculum.pdf)
* Social, Environmental and Scientific Education: [History (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/4b95f9d8-a307-4ef0-bbf0-b3b9047f31f0/PSEC03a_History_Curriculum.pdf), [Geography (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/6e999e7b-556a-4266-9e30-76d98c277436/PSEC03b_Geography_Curriculum.pdf), [Science (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/346522bd-f9f6-49ce-9676-49b59fdb5505/PSEC03c_Science_Curriculum.pdf)
* Arts Education: [Music (pdf),](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/6d3a3e34-69ed-464e-9d3e-002ab7e47140/PSEC04c_Music_Curriculum.pdf) [Visual Arts (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/0e0ccff3-97c4-45c8-b813-e7c119a650c3/PSEC04A_Visual_Arts_Curriculum.pdf), [Drama (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/f2199a0a-9562-4643-b95f-a2fc272ccf13/PSEC04b_Drama_Curriculum.pdf)
* Physical Education: [Physical Education (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/ca8a385c-5455-42b6-9f1c-88390be91afc/PSEC05_Physical-Education_Curriculum.pdf)
* Social Personal and Health Education: [Social, Personal and Health Education (pdf)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/462570f8-27cc-4f5b-a13e-d1e2de8c18d2/PSEC06_SPHE_curriculum.pdf)

The curriculum aims to ensure that all children are provided with learning opportunities that recognise and celebrate their uniqueness and develop their full potential.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) provides [information for parents](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary) about the curriculum. It also provides advice on how you can support teaching and learning at home and in school.

The Department of Education provides answers to [frequently asked questions about the curriculum in primary schools](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/96759/39feebcb-24a8-47e7-a3f4-ce7d9d1c3af8.pdf).

### Assessment of children in school

Schools must regularly evaluate students and periodically report the results of the evaluation to the students and their parents.

Children's learning and achievement are regularly assessed in primary schools using a variety of tests and other methods.

All Irish primary schools must administer [standardised tests in English and Mathematics](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/14911/56cab197b2c14c60a222cfdd4219c1ee.doc) to their pupils twice during their primary school years:

* At the end of first class or at the beginning of second class and
* At the end of fourth class or at the beginning of fifth class.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has published [Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools (pdf)](https://www.ncca.ie/media/1351/assessment-guidelines.pdf). It has also published [explanatory leaflets for parents about the standardised tests](https://www.ncca.ie/en/primary/resources-for-parents).

## Further information

### The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

24 Merrion Square  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 661 7177

**Fax:** (01) 611 7180

**Homepage:** <http://www.ncca.ie/>

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

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# Boards of management in primary schools

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/#2473e9)
* [Why does a school have a board of management?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/#1f7468)
* [What does the board of management do?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/#248697)
* [How the board of management operates](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/#e3e431)
* [Who is on the school board?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/#a8809b)
* [How long can a person serve on a school board?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/#8937cc)

## Introduction

Primary schools are not required to have boards of management. Each school is established by a ‘patron’ who can decide whether or not to have a board of management. In practice, most primary schools have boards.

The [Education Act 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/index.html) sets out the responsibilities of boards of management in primary schools.

The 4-year term of office for boards of management of all primary schools started on the 1 December 2019 – see ‘Term of office of the board’ below.

## Why does a school have a board of management?

Under the Education Act 1998, the patron of the school must, where it can, appoint a board of management.

The composition of the board of management should be agreed between school patrons, national associations of parents, school management organisations, teacher representatives and the Minister for Education.

The board is appointed by the patron. When the patron appoints a board it must comply with Ministerial directions about gender balance. The board must also follow the [Governance Manual for Primary Schools](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/34186/31f98d651a6147ef91d781fa3805ccc7.pdf).

If the patron decides that it is not able to appoint a board, they must give reasons to the parents, teachers, staff and the Minister but they cannot be forced to appoint one.

## What does the board of management do?

The board's main function is to manage the school on behalf of the patron and for the benefit of the students and to provide an appropriate education for each student at the school. The board is accountable to the patron and the Minister for Education. The school principal is responsible for the day-to-day management of the school and is accountable to the board.

In carrying out its functions, the board must

* Follow the Ministerial policies
* Support the ethos of the school and be accountable to the patron for this
* Comply with the law and with any deed, charter, or similar instrument relating to the school.
* Consult with and inform the patron of decisions and proposals
* Publish the school's admissions and participation policies, including its policy on expulsion and suspension of students and the admission and participation by students with disabilities or with special educational needs
* Ensure that the school's admissions policy respects parents’ choices and the principles of equality, complies with Ministerial directions and considers the school ethos and the constitutional rights of all involved
* Comply with the school’s admissions policy in line with the [Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/14/enacted/en/html). The Act aims to make the rules around admissions to schools more structured, fair and transparent.
* Regularly consider the teaching and learning in the school and ensure appropriate targets are set
* Ensure a [School Self-Evaluation Report](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/3f07cf-school-self-evaluation/) and School Improvement Plan is prepared each year and share a summary of the plan with the whole school community annually
* Observe the principles and requirements of a democratic society and promote respect for the diversity of values, beliefs, traditions, languages and ways of life in our society
* Make efficient use of resources (particularly the grants provided by the State)
* Consider the public interest in the affairs of the school and be accountable to students, parents and the community
* Use the resources provided by the State to help meet the needs of students with disabilities or special needs, including, if necessary, the adaptation of buildings or provision of special equipment
* Recognise the leadership roles of principals, deputy principals and assistant principals in the school as part of the goal to achieving high quality outcomes for students
* Co-operate with the NCSE in providing special needs education. Under the [Education (Provision in Respect of Children with Special Educational Needs) Act 2022](https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/act/2022/22/eng/enacted/a2222.pdf), a school must comply if the Minister directs a school to open a special needs class. The Department of Education has published [frequently asked questions for schools about providing for children with special education needs](https://assets.gov.ie/240372/f025d1bf-0cb9-44cb-9eed-b4d092fc9158.pdf).

## How the board of management operates

All boards of management must follow the governance manual set by the Department of Education. The boards must follow the terms of the [Governance Manual for Primary Schools 2019-2023 (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/34186/31f98d651a6147ef91d781fa3805ccc7.pdf). The manual sets out the key activities of the Board.

Essentially, the board manages the school to provide all students with the best possible education.

Among its responsibilities, the board:

* Must draw up the school plan and ensure that it is acted on
* Appoint the principal, the teachers and other staff.
* Ensure that the school fulfils its functions as set out in the [Education Act 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/section/15/enacted/en/html#sec15)
* Promote contact between the school, the parents and the community and must facilitate and give all reasonable help to a parents' association in its formation and its activities
* Have overall responsibility for the school's finances. It must ensure the school has comprehensive insurance cover, keeps proper accounts, which may be audited by the Department of Education and/or the Comptroller and Auditor General. Its annual accounts must be available to the patron and the school community.
* Ensure that child protection and welfare are considered in all of the school’s policies, practices and activities. The board must ensure that the [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/d7be05-child-protection/) are fully applied by the school.
* Ensure the school has a code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy
* Comply with garda vetting requirements before employing, contracting or placing any person in contact with children or vulnerable persons
* Keep discussions and documents confidential unless otherwise agreed by the board. Members should disclose any interest they have that may conflict with the work of the board

The board must have a procedure for informing parents about its activities – this could include an annual report. [More information on boards of management](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/143bed-schools-boards-of-management/) is available on the website of the Department of Education.

## Who is on the school board?

The composition of the board of management for schools with more than one teacher is

* Two direct nominees of the patron
* Two parents of children enrolled in the school (one mother and one father) elected by the parents
* The principal
* One other serving teacher elected by the teaching staff
* Two extra members agreed by the representatives of the patron, teachers and parents

There are particular rules for boards of management for convent and monastery schools in relation to the teacher representatives. If the principal is a religious, the elected teacher-member must be a lay person and, if the principal is a lay person, it is recommended that the elected teacher-member be a religious. In one-teacher schools, there is one direct nominee of the patron, one teacher representative, one parent and one extra member proposed by these nominees.

There are certain criteria set out for choosing the 2 community representatives on the board of management.

* The people appointed must have a commitment to the ethos of the school. In the case of Catholic schools, they must have an understanding of and commitment to Catholic education as outlined in the Deed of Trust for Catholic Schools. For Church of Ireland schools, they must be members of that Church; in Presbyterian schools, they must also be church members and in Muslim schools they should be members of the Muslim community in Ireland (in all cases the patron of the school can decide otherwise). For Educate Together schools they must have a commitment to the ethos of the school.
* They must have skills that are complementary to the board's requirements
* They must be interested in education but normally should not be parents of students currently attending the school or teachers currently on the staff
* In Gaeltacht schools and Gaelscoileanna, they are expected to have a good knowledge of the Irish language.
* The need to maintain a gender balance must be a consideration

The patron appoints the chairman of the board.

The [rules set out in detail](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/34186/31f98d651a6147ef91d781fa3805ccc7.pdf) how the parents' representatives are to be chosen, including the notice to be given to all parents and how replacements are chosen.

In general, members of the board may not hold any interest in the school property or get paid for serving on the board. The Education Act 1998 explicitly clarifies that being on the board does not confer any property interest on a board member. Employees, other than the teacher representatives, may not be on the board.

**Pilot shared governance arrangements**

Under the shared governance arrangements two schools under the same patronage can operate a shared governance arrangement if this has been agreed with the patron. This is a pilot scheme introduced in 2015 and extended until 2023.

There are separate rules for a pilot shared governance arrangement. The board must comply with the [Governance Manual 2019-2023](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/34186/31f98d651a6147ef91d781fa3805ccc7.pdf). Each school will have a separate 12- member Board, but there will be just one election/nomination process across both schools and the 12 people who are elected/nominated will serve on the Boards of both schools.

Each Board operates as a separate legal entity with the same group of people managing issues in a consistent manner in each of the two schools. Further information is in the governance manual on the terms of this arrangement.

The board of a shared governance arrangement are made up of:

* 3 direct nominees of the patron
* 3 parents of children enrolled and in attendance in either of the two schools. At least must be a mother and at least one must be a father and each school must have at least one parent of a child enrolled and attending its school on the Board). The parents must be elected by the general body of parents of children who are enrolled and have started attendance at either of the two schools.
* The principals of the 2 schools.
* One serving teacher on the staff of one of the schools, elected by vote of the joint teaching staff.
* 3 extra members proposed by those above nominees.

Each board is a separate legal entity. Each school must hold its own separate board meetings and keep a separate bank account.

**People who are not eligible for board membership**

The following people are not eligible for membership of a board:

* A person who is an undischarged bankrupt or was involved in a court procedure for settling with creditors in the previous 3 years
* A person who received a prison sentence in the previous 5 years.
* A person, other than the principal or the elected teacher nominee, who is employed by the board of management or ETB

A board member can be removed from the Board or the board can be dissolved by the patron with the consent of the Minister.

## How long can a person serve on a school board?

The term of office for a board is 4 years and members can hold office only for 4 years although members are eligible for reappointment when their term of office expires.

**Page edited:** 6 December 2022

# Ownership of primary schools

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/ownership-of-primary-schools/#l0b797)
* [The school patron](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/ownership-of-primary-schools/#l83ea9)
* [Funding of schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/ownership-of-primary-schools/#l5fcdd)
* [Running costs of schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/ownership-of-primary-schools/#l18b8e)

## Introduction

Many primary schools in Ireland are owned and supported by the different churches. The State pays the bulk of the building and running costs. Also, a local contribution is often made towards the running costs.

In the case of Catholic and Church of Ireland schools, the owners are usually the diocesan trustees. Other denominational schools usually have a board of trustees nominated by the church authorities. Multi-denominational schools are usually owned by a limited company or board of trustees.

Where primary schools are owned by the religious denominations. There are deeds of trust signed by the owners, which ensure that the school will continue to be used as such.

Gaelscoileanna may be denominational and come under the same patronage as Catholic schools, but some have their own limited company. You can get more information in our document about different [types of primary schools.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/choosing-a-primary-school/)

The special schools have a range of different owners - some are owned by the [Department of Education,](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/) some by the Commissioners of Public Works, some by the [Health Service Executive](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-system/health-service-executive/) and some by religious orders.

There are a small number of 'model schools', which are owned by the State.

The Department of Education is supporting the establishment of multidenominational schools with the transfer of patronage from certain Catholic schools. The Department has published [information about the transfer of patronage and the change of ethos in schools](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/811e2-schools-reconfiguration-for-diversity/).

## The school patron

The [Education Act 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/index.html) gives a statutory basis to the role of the patron and sets out the rules for determining who the patron is. The patron may manage the school personally or may appoint a board of management to act as manager. Under the Act the patron has the power to remove the board and take over managing the school or appoint another board.

A register of patrons is kept by the Department of Education so it is possible for anyone to check exactly who the patron of any national school is.

In general, the patron of a school is representative of the owners and can be an individual or a group. For example:

* If the Catholic and Church of Ireland bishops are the patrons of the schools within the diocese, with the parish priest usually carrying out the functions on behalf of the bishop.
* The patron of a multi-denominational school is usually the board of trustees or the limited company [Educate Together](http://www.educatetogether.ie/).
* Gaelscoileanna may be under the patronage of the church authorities but may opt to be under the patronage of [Foras Pátrúnachta na Scoileanna Lán-Ghaeilge,](http://www.foras.ie/) which is a limited company set up for the purpose.

## Funding of schools

Traditionally, the site for national schools was provided locally - either directly by the patron or as a result of local fundraising. There was also a local contribution to the building costs and the running costs. Changes were made over the years as multi-denominational schools and Gaelscoileanna were being built and did not have a 'local' funding base.

Private primary schools get no State funding.

### Cost of site - new primary schools

The State pays the full cost of the site. The patron still has the choice of funding the site cost. If the State pays, then the State owns the school building and leases it to the patron under a lease or a deed of trust.

If the patron pays, the patron owns the school. If the State pays, it does not change who the patron is.

The Education Act 1998 clarifies and restates the fact that the [board of management](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/boards-of-management/) does not acquire any right over or interest in the land or buildings of the school for which it has responsibility.

### Gaelscoileanna

The funding for new Gaelscoileanna is now on the same basis as other new schools. The previous arrangement continues for Gaelscoileanna that have either permanent or provisional recognition from the Department of Education. The previous arrangement for Gaelscoileanna meant that the Department bought the site and paid the full building cost. Where Gaelscoileanna are in rented accommodation and the state pays the rent.

[Gaelscoileanna Teo](http://www.gaelscoileanna.ie/) is a voluntary body (supported by An Foras Teanga), which is the co-ordinating body for Irish language schools and helps parents to set up new Gaelscoileanna.

## Running costs of schools

The State pays a direct capitation grant per student to each primary school. The State pays the teachers' salaries. Enhanced capitation grants are paid for children with special educational needs in special schools or who attend special classes in mainstream schools. Capitation grants are used for the day-to-day running of schools and for teaching materials and resources.

Primary schools also receive a grant for caretaking and secretarial services (called the Ancillary Services Grant Scheme). A local contribution was formerly required but has now been abolished.

Each school also receives a book grant.

Each school gets a grant towards the cost of minor works.

Some schools qualify for enhanced funding under various schemes for [tackling disadvantage in primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/giving-children-an-even-break-by-tackling-disadvantage/) such as DEIS and [Early Start](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-start/).

**Page edited:** 23 March 2022

# Tackling disadvantage in primary schools

* [Tackling educational disadvantage](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/giving-children-an-even-break-by-tackling-disadvantage/#l3d0d3)
* [School Completion Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/giving-children-an-even-break-by-tackling-disadvantage/#l9a9d2)
* [School Meals Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/giving-children-an-even-break-by-tackling-disadvantage/#l4af74)
* [School Milk Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/giving-children-an-even-break-by-tackling-disadvantage/#lc4f60)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/giving-children-an-even-break-by-tackling-disadvantage/#l23f7d)

## Tackling educational disadvantage

The Department of Education has several schemes aimed at tackling educational disadvantage in primary schools. Some of these come within the framework of the Department’s initiative [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/). This initiative brings together a range of [national programmes to address educational disadvantage](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/) throughout the school system.

## School Completion Programme

The [School Completion Programme (SCP)](https://www.tusla.ie/tess/information-for-parents-and-guardians-tess/school-completion-programme-pg/), focuses on young people between the ages of 4 and 18 years of age. The Programme is part of the Department of Education social inclusion strategy, [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS),](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/) to help children and young people who are at risk of or who are experiencing [educational disadvantage](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/).

The School Completion Programme aims to keep young people in school until they complete the senior cycle or equivalent, and to generally improve their participation and educational attainment. Each project is managed by a local management committee. The committee provides a tailored programme of in-school, after school and holiday time interventions to specific children and young people who are at risk of leaving school early.

Schools can develop effective strategies, such as out-of-school support and outreach, family support, mentoring, staff development and parental involvement.

## School Meals Programme

The [School Meals Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/29a3ff-school-meals-scheme/) is funded by the Department of Social Protection and local authorities. It aims to supplement the diets of school-going children from disadvantaged backgrounds to help them fulfil their potential in school and to reduce the risk of early school leaving. There are two schemes:

* The **Urban Scheme** supports school meals for primary schools in urban areas. This programme consists of daily sandwiches or buns and milk. The scheme is not a replacement for home meals.
* The **Local Projects Scheme** gives funding directly to national and secondary schools, local groups and voluntary organisations, which run their own school meals projects (the meals may be hot or cold). The scheme has been extended to nursery schools catering for disadvantaged pre-school children. These meals must be targeted at areas of disadvantage or at children with special needs. Funding is allocated on the basis of a rate per meal per child.

From September 2023, the Hot School Meals Programme will be [extended to all DEIS primary schools](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/3d5f9-minister-humphreys-announces-plans-for-roll-out-of-hot-school-meals-to-all-primary-schools/). In 2024, the programme will be introduced in phases to remaining primary schools.

## School Milk Scheme

The School Milk Scheme entitles school-going children to a quarter litre of milk on each school day. Pre-schools, primary and second-level schools are eligible for the Scheme, which is funded by the EU and the Irish Government. Crèches and other childminding businesses are not eligible under the [rules of the School Milk Scheme](https://www.agriculture.gov.ie/farmerschemespayments/otherfarmersschemes/euschoolmilkscheme/).

## Further information

For further information on DEIS, contact the [Social Inclusion Unit](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/6bb5d4-social-inclusion-unit/) of the Department of Education.

Read more about the [DEIS programme on citizensinformation.ie](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/).

For further information on the Schools Meals Scheme, contact the [local authority](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/942f74-local-authorities/) or the [Department of Social Protection.](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/29a3ff-school-meals-scheme/)

You can get an [application form for the School Meals Local Projects Scheme (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/37908/801ed9543b0d4bbdaf28c624e172f645.pdf). You can also get the [Nutrition Standards for Hot School Meals (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/128268/d07bed24-dd1d-4055-8ced-5e381621ca65.pdf).

### Social Inclusion Unit

The Department of Education  
Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 648 3600

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/6bb5d4-social-inclusion-unit/>

**Page edited:** 11 April 2023

# Special needs education in primary schools

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#2473e9)
* [Special education teachers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#a62c1d)
* [Special needs assistants](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#6ef85f)
* [Home Tuition Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#6bd3c5)
* [Summer education programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#91f4ca)
* [Irish Sign Language (ISL) scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#aaa188)
* [Visiting Teacher Service](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#be79f3)
* [Other supports](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#2ef470)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#10ea51)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/#b48c08)

## Introduction

Children with [special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/) may be in ordinary classes in mainstream primary schools or in special classes in these schools. They may get additional educational support from special education teachers and care support from special needs assistants (SNAs).

## Special education teachers

**Allocating special education teachers to schools**

Each school gets a single allocation of special education teachers. The number of special education teachers allocated to a school is determined by the size of the school and its educational profile.

A school’s educational profile is broadly based on the number of students with complex special educational needs, the results of standardised tests and the social context of the school taking account of disadvantage and gender.

The arrangement recognises that all schools need an allocation for special needs support, but provides a graduated allocation which takes into account the actual level of need in each school.

Schools are provided with the necessary resources in advance so that children with special educational needs can be enrolled into schools and access the additional teaching supports they need.

You can find further information in the Department of Education’s [Circular 0013/2017](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/12768/ca1cbebc2e764367a9611b23b5886073.pdf).

**Providing special education teachers to pupils**

All schools have an allocation of special education teachers which they can use to provide additional support to children who need it. Support is provided taking into account a child’s learning needs. It is no longer based on a diagnosis of a particular disability.

The additional teaching may be provided in the classroom or in small separate groups. Some pupils may need additional one-to-one teaching for a specified period.

Schools use the [Guidelines for primary schools supporting pupils with special educational needs](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/86911/e2ab0e65-f360-45a4-8075-37a4123838c3.pdf) to help them identify pupils who require support and to plan individualised learning programmes.

Parents or guardians do not have to source or pay for assessments for their child to get extra teaching support in school and schools don’t have to wait for these assessments to give children the extra teaching support they need.

The Department of Education provides [information for parents and guardians on how your child can get additional teaching support in school (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/123794/92dd3bfe-cc8d-4238-80f5-2592cee9d137.pdf).

**If you have concerns about the support given to your child with special needs**

If you have concerns with the level of support being given to your child, you should discuss this first with your child’s class teacher or special education teacher. You could also discuss these issues with the school principal. If you continue to have concerns, you can discuss with the Chairperson of your Board of Management.

The allocation of special education teachers is provided on the basis that no child will be refused enrolment on the grounds that the school does not have sufficient teaching resources to meet that child’s needs. If your child is refused enrolment to a school you may [appeal this decision to a Section 29 Appeal Committee](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/90de23-appeal-against-permanent-exclusion-suspension-or-refusal-to-enrol/).

## Special needs assistants

Special needs assistants (SNAs) are allocated to schools to work with children who have specific care needs. They provide non-teaching care support.

SNAs support pupils who have care needs resulting from a disability, behavioural difficulties or a significant medical issue. This might include a significant impairment of physical or sensory function or where their behaviour makes them a danger to themselves or other pupils.

Pupil's needs can vary. A pupil may need an assistant for a few hours each week (for example, to help feed or change or bring them to the toilet) ot they may require a full-time assistant.

SNAs may work with more than one child and can also work on a part-time basis. The Department provides more information about the [Special Needs Assistants Scheme in Circular 0030/2014](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/13324/62fdf3b19c674eab80fd98468a00290a.pdf). Schools allocate SNA support to ensure that students with the greatest need get the greatest level of support.

The Department of Education has published arrangements to review schools’ [Special Needs Assistance Allocation 2022-2023 (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/225884/21b9ba96-7577-4e21-8d58-7c28ea974a99.pdf).

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) has published an information booklet for parents, [Children with Special Educational Needs (pdf)](http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/ChildrenWithSpecialEdNeeds1.pdf).

## Home Tuition Scheme

The [Home Tuition Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d15f58-home-tuition/) provides funding to parents to provide education at home for children who (for a number of reasons, such as chronic illness) are unable to attend school. The scheme is also available to children with special educational needs who are awaiting a suitable educational placement.

## Summer education programme

The [Summer Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/summer-education-programme/) (also called July Provision) provides funding for special schools and mainstream primary schools with special classes to extend their education services during the summer holiday period. The funding may also cover transport for the children.

A [home-based summer programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a0e87-summer-provision-home-based-programme/) is available to certain children, if their school is not participating in the Summer Programme or cannot offer them a place.

## Irish Sign Language (ISL) scheme

The [Irish Sign Language (ISL) scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3283c-irish-sign-language-isl-scheme/) is for children who are Deaf and are attending primary school, post-primary school or special school and whose main means of communication is using Irish Sign Language. Children must be attending a recognised school.

The National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE) manages the scheme which provides:

* An ISL Specialist Classroom Support (ISL-SCS) for individual students to help access teaching and learning.
* An ISL Advisor who can provide training and support for schools and staff to communicate using ISL

The [first phase of the scheme supports children attending mainstream schools](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4de54-ministers-foley-and-madigan-announce-implementation-of-the-first-phase-of-isl-scheme/).

You apply through your child’s school for the ISL Scheme. The school applies to the NCSE.

The scheme is being introduced on a phased basis and is offered in addition to provision already in place for the student.

Find out more about [how to qualify for the ISL Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4de54-ministers-foley-and-madigan-announce-implementation-of-the-first-phase-of-isl-scheme/).

## Visiting Teacher Service

The [Visiting Teacher Service](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/) provides a teaching and support service to parents of deaf or hard-of-hearing children and children with visual impairment.

## Other supports

**Speech and language disorder**

Special classes for pupils with specific speech and language disorder are attached to mainstream primary schools. Pupils who meet specific criteria may be eligible for such classes. The Department sets out the [Criteria for Enrolment in Special Classes for Pupils with Specific Speech and Language Disorder](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/14776/b7bfe9ed47824285a55184b83b050b3c.doc)

Schools may apply to the Special Educational Needs Organiser to establish these classes. Schools must have at least 5 eligible pupils to retain a class. A full-time teacher is assigned to each special class with a pupil/teacher ratio of 7:1. Eligible pupils may spend up to 2 years in a special class. An enhanced capitation grant is paid for each pupil enrolled in these classes.

The Health Service Executive funds the [speech and language therapy services](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-services/care-in-your-community/speech-and-language-therapy-services/) for the children attending these classes.

If a school has such a class and there are places to spare, these places may be offered to a maximum of 2 pupils who do not meet the eligibility criteria but who could benefit from enrolment in the class. The offer of a place must be supported by the recommendation of a speech and language therapist and/or a psychologist.

In general, a child who is eligible for placement in a special class is also eligible for [free transport](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/) to their nearest class.

Pupils who meet the criteria for classes may also qualify for additional teaching support (even if there is a special class available). You may apply for this support to the Special Educational Needs Organiser - see 'How to apply' below.

Pupils with mild speech and language difficulties may qualify for teaching support from the school’s general allocation of teaching resources as outlined above.

**Autism**

Children on the autistic spectrum may avail of special needs education in the same way as other children with special needs. There are also specific provisions for them.

There are a number of special classes for children with autism, which are attached to special and mainstream schools, as well as several special classes for children with Asperger’s Syndrome. There are early intervention classes (attached to some primary schools) for children of pre-school age who are on the autistic spectrum.

The [Home Tuition Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d15f58-home-tuition/) funds home programmes for pre-school children on the autistic spectrum who need early educational intervention. The grant aid is for 10 hours' home tuition a week for children aged 2½ to 3 and 20 hours a week for children aged 3. The funding is not provided if there is a place in school or early education available to the child.

There are also a number of stand-alone facilities providing an applied behavioural analysis (ABA) specific methodology.

**Dyslexia**

There are [4 special reading schools](https://dyslexia.ie/info-hub/reading-schools-and-classes/). There are also special classes attached to some mainstream primary schools which support the needs of children with dyslexia. They have a reduced pupil/teacher ratio of 9:1 and an increased level of capitation grant.

**Hearing impairment**

There are [3 schools for students with hearing impairment](https://www.irishdeafsociety.ie/information-for-parents/educational-options/). There are also special classes attached to some mainstream schools. The special classes have a pupil/teacher ratio of 7:1. Schools can access enhanced funding and grant aid towards special equipment.

There is a weekly home tuition Irish Sign Language Support Scheme for deaf pre-school children and deaf school going pupils to provide training in Irish Sign Language (ISL) for these children, their siblings and parents.

**Nursing supports to attend school**

For the school year 2022-2023, a new [pilot scheme will run to put nursing supports in place so that children with complex healthcare needs can attend school](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cf321-national-nursing-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs-pilot-scheme/). Find out more about [applying for the pilot scheme](https://ncse.ie/national-nursing-programme-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs).

**Assessment of education needs**

The [Disability Act 2005](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html) provides for an Assessment of Need to identify your child's health needs and what health services are needed to meet these needs. It is an assessment carried out by the HSE for children or young people with a disability.

Since 2021, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) must nominate a person to carry out an assessment of education needs on behalf of the HSE when an Assessment of Need is in process. Find out more about the [Assessment of Need for children or young people with a disability](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-services/health-services-for-people-with-disabilities/assessment-of-need-for-people-with-disabilites/).

## How to apply

If your child has special educational needs, you should talk to the school principal about the type of education that would suit your child's needs. You can also discuss with your local [Special Educational Needs Organiser](http://ncse.ie/faqs) what learning supports or additional resources may be available.

Schools should apply to the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) which administers and processes applications for special educational resources using its network of Special Educational Needs Organisers.

[Application forms for special educational resources](http://ncse.ie/for-schools) and [a list of Special Educational Needs Organisers](https://ncse.ie/special-educational-needs-organiser-seno) are available on the NCSE website.

Application forms for the [Home Tuition Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d15f58-home-tuition/) are on the website of the Department of Education.

You apply for the [home-based Summer Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a0e87-summer-provision-home-based-programme/) through your child's school.

You can get information about [applying for the pilot nursing supports to attend school scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cf321-national-nursing-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs-pilot-scheme/).

## Where to apply

### National Council for Special Education

1-2 Mill Street  
Trim  
Meath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (046) 948 6400

**Fax:** (046) 948 6404

**Homepage:** <http://www.ncse.ie/>

**Page edited:** 14 June 2023

# Primary school transport scheme

* [What is the primary school transport scheme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-transport-scheme/#0e8e30)
* [Who can use the School Transport Scheme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-transport-scheme/#dd541a)
* [Payment of School Transport fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-transport-scheme/#0afdbf)
* [How to apply for the School Transport Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-transport-scheme/#8f10dd)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-transport-scheme/#b48c08)

## What is the primary school transport scheme?

The school transport scheme provides transport for children who live 3.2 km or more from their local primary school. The [scheme is funded by the Department of Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/school-transport/).

School transport services for the 2023-2024 school year started on **28 August 2023.**

**School Transport Scheme 2023-2024**

Applications for the [School Transport Scheme 2023-2024](https://schooltransport.buseireann.ie/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2F) closed on 28 April 2023. Your medical card details or payment for tickets had to be submitted by **9 June 2023**. If you paid for your ticket or submitted your medical card details after 9 June 2023, your application is considered late and you are not guaranteed a seat.

For the school year starting in September 2023, the School Transport Scheme fee for a primary school child is €50 and for a post- primary school child is €75. The maximum fee for a family is €125.

**If your school transport service has not started**

If you have a school transport ticket and your service has not started, you may get an Exceptional No Service Interim Grant. The grant is to help with the cost of transport to school while you are waiting for your school transport to start.

The grant will be paid at €5 per day, per family. It is based on the number of days your child attends school from the date the service was due to start up to the date the service actually starts. It will be paid as a once-off payment after your school transport service starts.

The Department will contact you directly about the grant.

**Pupils from Ukraine**

Pupils from Ukraine should visit [gov.ie/ukraine](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/320e9-employment-and-education/#education) for details on how to apply for school transport. They should not apply on the Bus Eireann website. Applications will continue to be accepted as families are relocated or as new families arrive.

## Who can use the School Transport Scheme?

To qualify for school transport, a child must be aged between 4 and 12 years and living 3.2 km or more from the nearest suitable national school.

[Children with special needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/) are also eligible for free transport to and from special schools and to special classes.

If there are spare seats available, children who are not eligible can be carried on school transport.

Bus Eireann provides a list of [FAQs about the School Transport Scheme](https://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=354).

### Schools

The Department of Education decides what the nearest suitable school is. If a child is attending a school that has more than one teacher and there is a one-teacher school nearer the home, that fact will not usually disqualify the child from using the school transport scheme.

Children attending multi-denominational schools or Gaelscoileanna (Irish-speaking schools) are eligible if they meet the distance requirements to their school. They are not disqualified because there is another national school nearer to them. There are also special arrangements for Protestant children attending Protestant schools and children living in remote areas.

### Pick-up points

The scheme is not a door-to-door service. Parents/guardians are responsible for bringing their children to the nearest pick-up point to avail of the service. Generally, routes are planned so pupils don't have to travel more than 2.4 km to their nearest pick-up point.

If there is no school transport service available, you may be able to get a grant towards the costs of private transport for a child who cannot get to school without transport due to an illness or disability.

### Establishing and retaining a school transport service

There must be enough children to use the service. This means that there must be a daily average (over a school term) of at least 10 eligible children in a distinct area attending their nearest suitable school.

### Closed or merged schools

The following rules applied in the school year 2011-2012.

* Children in a closed school area who are living **within 3.2 km** from a ‘school of amalgamation’ are no longer eligible for transport to that school, but they may apply for concessionary transport if there are seats available
* Current pupils who are eligible for transport under the Central/Closed School Rule (CSR)\*, and who live **3.2 km or more** from their school of amalgamation will remain eligible for the rest of their primary schooling

\*In the school year 2010-2011 when 2 or more primary schools merged, the children for whom the closed school would have been the nearest could only have transport to the school that was the result of the merger. Under the CSR some children living less than 3.2 km from such a ‘school of amalgamation’ were eligible for school transport.

From the 2012-2013 school year, eligibility based on the CSR ceased for all new pupils entering primary schools. This may mean that where there is now a school that is nearer than the school of amalgamation, siblings in some families may have school transport eligibility to different schools from the 2012-2013 school year onward.

The Department of Education publishes detailed information on [the conditions governing the primary school transport scheme (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/38417/dc25dd9e2e894e18b9efaeb5ceba75b3.pdf).

### Remote area grants

Remote area grants are payable by the Department as a contribution towards private transport arrangements for eligible pupils for whom no transport service is available. These grants may also be paid for eligible pupils who live 3.2 km or more from the nearest pick-up point for school transport.

## Payment of School Transport fees

The School Transport Scheme 2023-2024 fee for a primary school child is €50 and for a post- primary school child is €75. The maximum fee for a family is €125.

You must pay for tickets or submit medical card details on the Bus Eireann website by **9 June 2023**.

**Payments made or medical card details submitted after the deadline date are considered late** and families are not be guaranteed seat.

## How to apply for the School Transport Scheme

The scheme is operated by Bus Éireann on behalf of the Department. If your child is enrolling in national school for the first time, you can apply for school transport [online on the Bus Éireann website](http://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=257).

Applications for the 2023-2024 school year closed on Friday, 28 April 2023. Your medical card details or payment for tickets had to be submitted by 9 June 2023. If you paid for your ticket or submitted your medical card details after 9 June 2023, your application is considered late and you are not guaranteed a seat.

If you have queries about School Transport you can [contact Bus Eireann](https://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=290#contact) or call LoCall 0818 919 910 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

For enquiries about timetables, pick-up points, routes and applications for transport grants, you should contact your [local Bus Éireann school transport office](https://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=523).

### Applications for the remote area grant

You should apply in writing directly to the School Transport section of the Department of Education at the address below.

### Appeals

If you wish to appeal a decision on your application for school transport, you should download the [appeal form (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/87018/dca9ecde-01ec-498a-bd03-f60dd97bbdb4.pdf) and send the completed form to the [School Transport Appeals Board](https://www.schooltransportappeals.ie/) c/o the Department of Education at the address below.

## Where to apply

### Department of Education

School Transport Section  
Portlaoise Road  
Tullamore  
Offaly  
Ireland

**Tel:** (057) 932 5466/7

**Locall:** 0818 919 910

**Fax:** (057) 932 5477

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/school-transport/>

**Email:** [school\_transport@education.gov.ie](mailto:school_transport@education.gov.ie)

**Page edited:** 20 September 2023

# School transport for children with special needs

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/#2473e9)
* [Who can use special needs school transport?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/#ecc054)
* [Is there a charge for special needs school transport?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/#7d4a7c)
* [How to apply for special needs school transport](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/#413f76)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/#b48c08)

## Introduction

The [Department of Education](http://www.education.ie/) provides school transport services for [children with special educational needs.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/)

Bus Éireann (the State public transport operator) operates the school transport service on behalf of the Department. The school transport service may not be available in all areas. Where the transport cannot be provided, you may be eligible for a Special Transport Grant to help with the cost of making private transport arrangements.

**If your school transport service has not started**

If you have a school transport ticket and your service has not started, you may get an Exceptional No Service Interim Grant. The grant is to help with the cost of transport to school while you are waiting for your school transport to start.

The grant is based on the number of days your child attends school from the date the service was due to start up to the date the service actually starts. It will be paid after your school transport service starts and at the same rate as the Special Transport Grant – see ‘Rates’ below.

The Department will contact you directly about the grant.

## Who can use special needs school transport?

The [School Transport Scheme (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/45227/d922064305f44236b0ae2748ff194fbb.pdf) applies to children with a special educational needs recognised by the Department of Education. The child must be attending the nearest recognised mainstream school or special class/special school or a unit resourced to meet their special educational needs.

If your application has been refused, you are entitled to appeal the decision. You can appeal to the School Transport Appeals Board online on the [School Transport Appeals](https://www.schooltransportappeals.ie/) website. Appeals can be made:

* If the Department is not in a position to provide a transport service due to excessive cost
* Where the maximum level of grant offered does not cover the assessed cost of the journey involved.

### Escort provision

The Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO) can make an application to the Department to employ an escort to accompany a child, if the child’s care and safety needs require that support.

### Special class arrangements

Transport services for children with special needs are only provided for the period of enrolment in a special class. If the child returns to mainstream classes, special transport arrangements will not be provided.

Eligible children who are enrolled in an autism class/unit attached to a mainstream school and who subsequently mainstream in that school will retain their transport eligibility for the duration of their primary education in this school. However, a new application must be made if they transfer to a new school.

## Is there a charge for special needs school transport?

Eligible children do not pay a charge for school transport.

A Special Transport Grant towards the cost of private transport arrangements may be provided at the discretion of the Department in certain situations.

Special Transport Grant rates are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | |
| Kilometres (km) | Rate per km |
| Up to 6437 | 39.12 cent |
| Over 6437 | 21.22 cent |

## How to apply for special needs school transport

You should apply to the school principal who will contact the school’s [Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)](https://ncse.ie/special-educational-needs-organiser-seno) about applying for special transport. If the SENO is satisfied that your child is enrolled in the nearest suitable school, and that school transport is required, a recommendation will be sent to the School Transport Section of the Department of Education.

[Applications for Special Transport Grant (pdf)](https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/SEN-School-Transport-Application-Form.doc) may also be forwarded to the School Transport Section through the SENO, before to your child’s enrolment in school. If grant aid is sanctioned, applications for payment of the grant should include a completed [Statement of Attendance form](https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/NCSE-Form-6-Student-Attendance-Confirmation-Form-2021-SS-1.doc). Applications may be made at the end of the school year by the parent or guardian of the child to the School Transport Section.

## Where to apply

### Department of Education

School Transport Section  
Portlaoise Road  
Tullamore  
Offaly  
Ireland

**Tel:** (057) 932 5466/7

**Locall:** 0818 919 910

**Fax:** (057) 932 5477

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/school-transport/>

**Email:** [school\_transport@education.gov.ie](mailto:school_transport@education.gov.ie)

### School Transport Appeals Board

c/o Department of Education  
Portlaoise Road  
Tullamore  
Co. Offaly  
R35 Y2N5

**Email:** [schooltransportappealsboard@education.gov.ie](mailto:schooltransportappealsboard@education.gov.ie)

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# Starting post-primary school

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/starting-post-primary-school/#2473e9)
* [Choosing a post-primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/starting-post-primary-school/#9a1d74)
* [Enrolling your child at post-primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/starting-post-primary-school/#f68e10)
* [Starting post-primary education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/starting-post-primary-school/#64d1f6)

## Introduction

The post-primary or second-level education caters for students aged 12 to 18 years. Attendance at school is compulsory for students aged under 16. Most children start in post-primary school at the age of 12 or 13. They must be at least 12 years of age on 1 January in the year they start second-level education in order to be registered in a post-primary school. There are different [types of post-primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/).

## Choosing a post-primary school

In most rural and provincial areas, there is generally one school that is attended by all the students in that area. However, some parents and students, especially in large population centres, may have a choice of schools. The factors to consider when choosing a school include:

* **The admissions policy**: This should be described in the school plan, which the school is obliged to publish
* **The curriculum:** the range of subjects offered by the school
* **School discipline:** Under the [Education (Welfare) Act 2000](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2000/en.act.2000.0022.pdf) (pdf) the board of management is obliged to draw up a code of behaviour for students
* **Programmes offered**: Junior Certificate and Junior Certificate School Programme, Transition Year, established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational and other programmes to support personal and social development
* **Streaming of students:** Streaming students means dividing them into different classes for all subjects from the time they start secondary school, based on the school's assessment of their ability.
* **Assessment of students' progress and feedback to parents and students:** Checking of students' progress, feedback to parents, arrangements for parent-teacher meetings
* **Facilities:** What student facilities are provided, for example a library, access to computers, a language laboratory and facilities for lunch, PE and recreation.
* **Support services:** guidance counsellor, remedial support for students, pastoral care
* **Extra-curricular activities**: sports, clubs, debating etc.
* **Other factors** including the school ethos (details should be in the school plan); student and parental involvement in life of school - whether it has a student council and/or a parents' association

## Enrolling your child at post-primary school

You can send your child to the post-primary school of your choice, provided there is a place available. Where there is an accommodation problem, the school must give priority on the basis of its enrolment policy. This is drawn up by the board of management and should be available to you on request. While most post-primary schools are in a position to enrol all children who apply, there is no automatic guarantee of a place in the school you choose.

In order to enrol your child, you should first check [the list of post-primary schools in your area](http://www.education.ie/en/find-a-school). Then, you should contact the school of your choice to see if there is a place available. The school of your choice may place your child on a waiting list or you may need to contact other schools to find a place.

The Department of Education held a [consultation on the options for the regulation of school enrolment](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/c5bd9f-school-enrolment/).

## Starting post-primary education

The vast majority of post-primary schools do not charge fees. However, students must pay for books and examination fees. In addition, there are other costs, such as school uniform. There are schemes to help low-income families meet the [costs of schooling.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/financial-help-with-school/) The Department of Education has published a [circular on the weight of schoolbags](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/38307/374308eaf81b4758ad9e4afe9c8e58fd.pdf).

Second-level education consists of a three-year [Junior Cycle,](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/) followed by a two-year or three-year Senior Cycle. The [Junior Certificate Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/) examination is taken at the end of the Junior Cycle. In the [Senior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/senior-cycle/), there is an optional one-year [Transition Year](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/transition-year/) programme followed by a choice of three Leaving Certificate programmes. Each of these 3 Leaving Certificate programmes - the [Established Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/), the [Leaving Certificate Applied](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/) and the [Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/) - is a two-year programme.

Other aspects of post-primary education include:  
• Education for students with [special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/) • [Assistive technology grant for students with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/)  
• [Examination arrangements for students with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/)  
• [School transport for post-primary students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-school-transport-scheme/)  
• [Special educational arrangements for Travellers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/educational-arrangements-for-travellers/)  
• [Measures to address educational disadvantage](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/)  
• [Resources for non-English speakers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/resources-for-non-english-speakers/).  
• Your options when [leaving school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/leaving-school/)

**Page edited:** 8 October 2021

# Choosing a post-primary school

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/#2473e9)
* [What to consider when choosing a school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/#c64c1d)
* [Types of post-primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/#6620d4)
* [Fees for school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/#829730)
* [Finding a school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/#dbb21d)
* [Applying to a post-primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/#1aa4ba)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/types-of-post-primary-school/#ec2268)

## Introduction

Children usually start post-primary school when they are 12 or 13 years of age.

Most post-primary schools (also called secondary schools) are funded by the State and do not charge a fee. Most children attend these schools

## What to consider when choosing a school

When choosing a school for your child, you need to know is the school:

* Fee paying or non-fee paying
* Single sex or co-educational
* Religious or non-denominational
* Providing language of instruction in English or Irish
* Providing extracurricular activities such as sports, arts or music

Religious denominational schools are generally Roman Catholic or Protestant. Non-denomination are not religious run.

## Types of post-primary schools

There are 3 types of post-primary or secondary schools:

* **Voluntary secondary schools**
* **Community colleges**
* **Community schools**

Each school type has a different ownership and management. School management boards must include parents and teacher representatives. In the past, the type of school usually determined whether the school focus was on academic or vocational achievements.

Schools must deliver the curriculum set by the Minister of Education. Every school must have a [fair policy for handling admissions](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/admissions-policies-in-primary-and-secondary-schools/) and make this information available to parents.

**Voluntary secondary schools** are privately owned and managed post-primary schools, usually under the patronage of an individual body such as a religious community, a charitable trust or a private charitable company. The national representative body for the boards of management of voluntary secondary schools is the [Joint Managerial Body](http://www.jmb.ie/).

**Community colleges** are established by the local Education and Training Board (ETB). The ETB is the sole patron of the school. The national representative body for the Education and Training Boards is the [Education and Training Boards Ireland.](http://www.etbi.ie/)

**Community schools** are established either by one or more private or religious patrons coming together with an ETB patron or as the result of the amalgamation of voluntary secondary and ETB schools. The representative body for the schools is the [Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools.](http://www.accs.ie/)

## Fees for school

**Non-fee-paying schools**  
The majority of post-primary schools in Ireland do not charge fees.

Non-fee-paying voluntary secondary schools, community colleges and community schools are all funded on an annual budget by the Department of Education. They get grants from the Department to help with their running costs. The grants are based on the number of pupils attending the school. If the [school is rated as disadvantaged](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the_irish_education_system/measures_to_address_educational_disadvantage.html), it gets an additional grant per pupil.

**Additional school costs**  
If your child attends a non-fee-paying school, they must still pay for books and examination fees. In addition, they may have other costs, such as school uniforms. There are [various schemes to help low-income families meet the costs of schooling](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary_and_post_primary_education/educational_supports/school_books_scheme.html).

**Fee-paying schools**  
Fee-paying schools do not get any State grants towards their running costs. However, the State pays the salaries of all teachers working in recognised voluntary schools. Fees are set each year by the school.

## Finding a school

To find a school in your area you can use the Department of Education’s [Find a School tool](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/find-a-school/) . You can search the school list by ethos, gender and language of instruction (English or Irish).

You can find out more about a school from:

* The school website
* [School inspection reports](https://www.gov.ie/en/school-reports/)
* School visit (it may have an open day or parents evening)

## Applying to a post-primary school

To apply to a school, you should contact the [post-primary school of your choice.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary_and_post_primary_education/going_to_post_primary_school/post_primary_education_life_event.html)

All schools must publish an [admissions policy and admissions notice.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the_irish_education_system/admissions_policies_in_primary_and_secondary_schools.html)

The admissions policy describes the rules the school follows for selecting students, how they make their decisions and what happens if the school is over-subscribed.

The admissions notice tells you:

* The date when you can apply
* The deadline for applications
* The date when you get the decision on your application
* The date by which you must accept a place

### Discrimination

Schools cannot discriminate if your child has a disability, is of a different race or is a member of the Traveller community. Schools cannot discriminate because of a child’s family status, sexual orientation, marital status, gender or religion.

However, in some circumstances a school can prioritise a student of a minority religion who wants a school providing religious instruction similar to their religion or belief.

You can read more about [admissions policies in schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the_irish_education_system/admissions_policies_in_primary_and_secondary_schools.html).

## Further information

You can [find a post-primary school](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/find-a-school/).

You can read about steps to [enrol your child in secondary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/returning-to-ireland/education-and-schooling/enrolling-your-child-in-a-secondary-school-after-returning-to-ireland/).

### Department of Education

Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 889 6400

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/>

**Email:** [info@education.gov.ie](mailto:info@education.gov.ie)

**Page edited:** 30 May 2023

# Junior Cycle

* [What is the Junior Cycle?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/#123df9)
* [Junior Cycle subjects](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/#c8556d)
* [Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/#2bbc81)
* [Where to apply for Junior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/#ed740b)

## What is the Junior Cycle?

The Junior Cycle covers the first three years of secondary school. Children start secondary school (post-primary school) around the age of 12 or 13.

You can study a range of subjects during the Junior Cycle. Students are assessed and an examination is held at the end of the Junior Cycle. Students normally sit the exam at the age of 15 or 16.

## Junior Cycle subjects

There are many [Junior Cycle subjects](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/), but all subjects are not offered in every school.

All students must study Irish (unless you have an [exemption from studying Irish)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/), English, Maths and History. Depending on your school, other subjects may also be compulsory.

English, Irish and Maths are studied at either ordinary or higher level. All other subjects are studied at common level. The classroom-based assessments in second and third year are also set at common level.

## Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)

In 2022, the [Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) fully replaced the Junior Certificate](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-is-changing). It adds a classroom-based assessment to the Junior Cycle.

The classroom-based component of the JCPA is based on work completed by the student during second and third year. The written examination takes place in June of the third year of the programme

The Department of Education has published the [assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle 2023](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/50564-leaving-certificate-2023/#assessment-arrangements-for-junior-cycle-and-leaving-certificate-examinations-2023).

You can find [more information about Junior Cycle exams and results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/).

### The Junior Certificate School Programme

The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) is designed to help young people who are at risk of leaving school early and who would benefit from special support when they are working towards the Junior Cycle exams.

Students taking the Junior Cycle exams study the normal Junior Cycle syllabus. All students participating in the Junior Certificate School Programme must be entered for the Junior Cycle exams. All JCSP students are entitled to a profile - this is an individualised record of their achievement.

### Junior Cycle and special education needs

The Junior Cycle has a qualification for students with [special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/). Student numbers qualifying for Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) are small (one or two in a typical school) and each student has their own Individual Education Plans (IEPs). You can find more information on [L2LPs](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Level-2-LPs).

## Where to apply for Junior Cycle

Contact your nearest post-primary school about their Junior Cycle programme and the subjects available. The Department of Education has a [find a school](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/find-a-school/) facility on their website.

**Mature students**

There are organisations who can provide information about returning to education as an adult.

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

**Page edited:** 29 November 2022

# Transition Year

* [What is Transition Year (TY)?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/transition-year/#ldd77a)
* [Transition Year programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/transition-year/#l249c2)
* [TY assessment and certification](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/transition-year/#lef2e4)

## What is Transition Year (TY)?

Transition Year (also called TY) is a one-year programme between Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. It is designed to act as a bridge between the two by helping the transition or change from the more dependent learning of the Junior Cycle to the more independent self-directed learning required for the Senior Cycle

All second-level schools have the option of offering the Transition Year programme to their students and most of them do offer it.

The Transition Year programme follows the [Junior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/) and is generally seen as the first year of a 3-year [Senior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/senior-cycle/) programme. However, Transition Year is not the first year of the [Leaving Certificate programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/), which is a 2-year cycle.

### Aims of the Transition Year programme

The Transition Year offers students an opportunity to:

* Engage in independent, self-directed learning
* Develop general, technical and academic skills
* Develop work-related skills
* Develop social skills such as communitions and building self-confidence
* Mature and develop without the pressure of an examination.

The Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) has detailed information about the [Transition Year programme](https://www.pdst.ie/node/347).

## Transition Year programme

Each school designs its own TY programme, to suit the needs and interests of its students. Schools must design the TY programme within set [guidelines for schools](https://ncca.ie/en/updates-and-events/latest-news/2022/may/ty-guidelines-for-schools-are-being-updated/).

Areas of study may include:

* Environmental studies
* Chinese culture and language studies
* Global development issues
* Debating development
* Tourism studies
* Student safety in the workplace
* Soap operas and popular culture
* Food matters
* Legal studies
* Sports coaching
* Introduction to genetics and biotechnology
* Media and communications
* Japanese studies

Students can sample a wide range of subject areas and can make more informed choices about the kind of Leaving Certificate programme they want to take after the Transition Year. Work experience is a core aspect of the Transition Year programme. It aims to bring new kinds of learning opportunities to students by experiencing adult and working life.

You can find more information about the [TY curriculum](https://www.pdst.ie/TY/curriculum) on the websites of the [PDST](http://www.pdst.ie/TY/curriculum) and the [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment](https://www.ncca.ie/en/senior-cycle/programmes-and-key-skills/transition-year).

Transition Year is optional and admission criteria vary from school to school.

### Parental involvement in the Transition Year

When drawing up the Transition Year programme, schools are encouraged to involve parents in the decision-making process and planning for TY.

Most schools arrange sessions for parents of third-year students to discuss the Transition Year programme. Aschools can run a 'Student Introduction to Transition Year' seminar for Junior Cycle students.

Some parents make their expertise available to the school during the Transition Year as visiting speakers. Other parents may assist in the Work Experience Programme. All parents are invited to contribute to the evaluation of the programme. You can find further information in [this list of frequently asked questions on the Transition Year Programme.](http://www.pdst.ie/node/347)

## TY assessment and certification

There is no end-of-year state examination in the Transition Year. This is to ensure that the focus of the year is learning-led rather than exam-driven.

The activity-based learning ethos of the year requires each school to engage in school-based assessment, which helps students to identify their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as develop the skills of self-assessment and reflection.

Assessment is ongoing, with portfolio assessment, project work, and exhibitions of students' work. Oral aural, practical and written activities all form part of this assessment process.

Evaluation of work experience or community service activities can involve the providers or hosts of the activities.

Students who have successfully completed the Transition Year Progamme are usually awarded a certificate of participation by their school.

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# Senior Cycle

* [Senior Cycle programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/senior-cycle/#45f9ad)
* [Compulsory subjects](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/senior-cycle/#694a7f)

## Senior Cycle programme

After completing the [Junior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/) students begin the Senior Cycle programme. The Senior Cycle generally caters for students from 15 to 18 although the Leaving Certificate is not limited to second-level students. The main programmes that students can follow at Senior Cycle are:

* [The Transition Year](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/transition-year/)
* [The Established Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/)
* [The Leaving Certificate Applied](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/)
* [The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/)

Not all of these programmes are followed in every school. You must find out what is available in your school or the school you are thinking of attending.

### Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate reform

The Department of Education plans to reform the Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate and set up the [Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/a727e-minister-foley-announces-the-establishment-of-the-senior-cycle-redevelopment-programme-delivery-board-and-deferral-of-planned-move-of-paper-one-in-leaving-certificate-english-and-irish-examinations/) to oversee this work.

You can read more about the planned [changes to the Senior Cycle](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f53c6-senior-cycle-reform/) and [what these changes mean for students](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/45b09-senior-cycle-redevelopment-what-does-this-mean-for-me/).

## Compulsory subjects

Within these programmes, there are a number of compulsory subjects. The subjects that are compulsory vary for different programmes and different types of school. All third-level courses have [minimum subject requirements for entry](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/). These often include Maths, English and Irish. You should check these minimum requirements before deciding which subjects to take for the Leaving Certificate.

Irish is compulsory in most programmes. [In some very limited circumstances, a student may not have to study Irish](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/exemption-from-irish/).

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# Special needs education: post-primary

* [Students with special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l14baf)
* [Mainstream schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l2b98e)
* [Special schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l6662e)
* [State examinations](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l8104b)
* [Assessment of education needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l3965b)
* [Irish Sign Language (ISL) scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#aaa188)
* [Nursing supports to attend school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l4b673)
* [Home Tuition Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l7fe80)
* [Pilot project for young school leavers with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l783dd)
* [Further education and training](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l1e1bd)
* [How to apply for special educational supports](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l5863b)
* [Where to get special educational advice](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/#l755bc)

## Students with special educational needs

Students with [special educational needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/) may be in ordinary classes in mainstream post-primary schools or in special classes in these schools or in special schools. They may get help from special education teachers and care support from special needs assistants (SNAs).

## Mainstream schools

Post-primary students with special educational needs may attend a mainstream post-primary school. They may be in mainstream classes with the support of a special education teacher and/or the care support of a special needs assistant or may be in a special class.

A school may apply for a grant to make the school accessible for a student with a disability, for example, to put in a ramp or accessible toilet accommodation. Information about this provision can be obtained from the Building Unit of the Department of Education – see 'How to apply' below.

The following support services are available for students with disabilities and special educational needs attending post-primary schools:

* Special education teacher
* [Special needs assistants](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/13324/62fdf3b19c674eab80fd98468a00290a.pdf)
* [Equipment grants](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/)

#### Special education teachers

Special education teachers provide extra teaching assistance.

Schools are provided with the [necessary resources in advance](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/12734/fa931838eef742f095d1c2c7b0aa6bcf.pdf) so that students with special educational needs can be enrolled into schools and access additional supports. The enables a school to be inclusive and put in place additional teaching support for students who need it. The Department of Education and Skills provides [information for parents and guardians on how your child can get additional teaching support in school (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/123794/92dd3bfe-cc8d-4238-80f5-2592cee9d137.pdf).

If you have concerns with the level of support being given to your child you should discuss this first with your child’s class teacher or special education teacher. You could also discuss these issues with the school principal and if necessary at a later point if you continue to have concerns with the Chairperson of your Board of Management.

The allocation of special education teachers are being provided on the basis that no child will be refused enrolment on the grounds that school does not have sufficient teaching resources to meet that child’s needs. If your child is refused enrolment to a school you may [appeal this decision to a Section 29 Appeal Committee](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/90de23-appeal-against-permanent-exclusion-suspension-or-refusal-to-enrol/).

#### Special needs assistants

Special needs assistants (SNAs) are allocated to schools to work with students who have specific care needs. They provide non-teaching care support. SNAs support students who have care needs resulting from a disability, behavioural difficulties or a significant medical issue.

It was announced in May 2021, that the introduction of the frontloaded Allocation Model for Special Needs Assistants for students in mainstream classes in primary and post-primary schools will be deferred to the 2022-2023 school year.

## Special schools

There are special schools throughout the country for students with general learning disabilities. These schools provide education for students from 5 to 18 years who have a general learning disability at a mild or moderate level. In addition, there are post-primary schools for visually impaired and hearing impaired students in Dublin. These schools cater for both day students and boarders. There are a small number of schools for students with physical disabilities and a small number of special schools for students who have behavioural and emotional difficulties.

Students usually take the [Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/).

The schools also make provision for students whose level of disability would make it very difficult for them to benefit from the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes. In some schools for students with mild learning disabilities, students may be offered the opportunity to take part of the Junior Certificate curriculum.

## State examinations

Students with specific disabilities may be exempt from part of the examination in a particular subject. In such cases, the certificates awarded may note that the student has not sat an element of the examination. The annotation is made where a core area of a subject is not assessed, or where the mode of assessment used has the same effect. For example, hearing impaired students may be exempt from the aural component of the examination. The certificate would note that all elements of the subject were examined except the aural element. Similarly, students with dyslexia may have spelling and grammar waivers in language subjects and their certificates would note this.

The Equality Tribunal ruled in 2006 that this annotation was contrary to the Equality Acts. On appeal, the Circuit Court found that the system of exemption and related notation is a reasonable accommodation in the context of the Equal Status legislation, and in June 2010 the High Court confirmed this finding. This decision has since been appealed to the Supreme Court.

There are [arrangements in place for reasonable accommodation for students with disabilities sitting examinations](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/).

## Assessment of education needs

The [Disability Act 2005](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2005/act/14/enacted/en/html) provides for an Assessment of Need to identify your child's health needs and what health services are needed to meet these needs. It is an assessment carried out by the HSE for children or young people with a disability.

Since 2021, the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) must nominate a person to carry out an assessment of education needs on behalf of the HSE when an Assessment of Need is in process. Find out more about the [Assessment of Need for children or young people with a disability.](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cf321-national-nursing-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs-pilot-scheme/)

## Irish Sign Language (ISL) scheme

The [Irish Sign Language (ISL) scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/3283c-irish-sign-language-isl-scheme/) is for children who are Deaf and are attending primary school, post-primary school or special school and whose main means of communication is using Irish Sign Language. Children must be attending a recognised school.

The National Council for Special Education Needs (NCSE) manages the scheme which provides:

* An ISL Specialist Classroom Support (ISL-SCS) for individual students to help access teaching and learning.
* An ISL Advisor who can provide training and support for schools and staff to communicate using ISL

The [first phase will support children attending mainstream school](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4de54-ministers-foley-and-madigan-announce-implementation-of-the-first-phase-of-isl-scheme/). You apply through your child’s school for the ISL Scheme. The school applies to the NCSE.

Find out more about [how to qualify for the ISL Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/4de54-ministers-foley-and-madigan-announce-implementation-of-the-first-phase-of-isl-scheme/).

## Nursing supports to attend school

For the school year 2022-2023, a new [pilot scheme will run to put nursing supports in place so that children with complex healthcare need can attend school](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cf321-national-nursing-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs-pilot-scheme/). Find out more about [applying for the pilot scheme](https://ncse.ie/national-nursing-programme-pilot-for-children-with-complex-healthcare-needs).

## Home Tuition Scheme

The [Home Tuition Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/d15f58-home-tuition/) provides funding to parents to provide education at home for children who (for a number of reasons, such as chronic illness) are unable to attend school. The scheme is also available to children with special educational needs who are awaiting a suitable educational placement

## Pilot project for young school leavers with disabilities

From 2022, the NCSE will oversee a [2-year pilot project to help students aged 16 with intellectual disabilities and complex educational needs](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/58fb9-ministers-foley-and-madigan-announce-pilot-project-to-support-young-school-leavers-with-disabilities/) to plan for their future options when leaving school. The pilot will run in selected schools in Dublin and Galway.

## Further education and training

The National Council for Special Education has published a [guide to post school education and training (pdf)](http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/NCSE-Post-School-Education-Training.pdf) which provides information on the options available to school leavers with disabilities.

## How to apply for special educational supports

If your child has special educational needs you should talk to the school principal about what learning supports are available in the school. If you need advice about a post-primary school which could meet your child's needs you should contact your [local Special Educational Needs Organiser](https://ncse.ie/special-educational-needs-organiser-seno) - see 'Where to apply' below.

Schools should contact the Building Unit of the Department of Education and Skills for information about making schools accessible. Call the main Department telephone number for assistance - see 'Where to apply'.

Schools should contact the National Council for Special Education (NSCE) which administers and processes applications for special educational resources using its network of Special Educational Needs Organisers (SENOs) - see 'Where to apply'.

## Where to get special educational advice

[Contact your local Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO).](https://ncse.ie/special-educational-needs-organiser-seno)

### National Council for Special Education

1-2 Mill Street  
Trim  
Meath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (046) 948 6400

**Fax:** (046) 948 6404

**Homepage:** <http://www.ncse.ie/>

### Department of Education

Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 889 6400

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/>

**Email:** [info@education.gov.ie](mailto:info@education.gov.ie)

**Page edited:** 22 November 2022

# School transport for post-primary students

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-school-transport-scheme/#2473e9)
* [Who can use the School Transport Scheme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-school-transport-scheme/#dd541a)
* [Payment of School Transport fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-school-transport-scheme/#0afdbf)
* [How to apply for the School Transport Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-school-transport-scheme/#8f10dd)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-school-transport-scheme/#b48c08)

## Introduction

The Department of Education provides subsidised school transport for post-primary pupils who live more than 4.8 kilometres away from the appropriate school.

Bus Éireann runs the school bus service and the Department of Education decides the annual fares. The Department and Bus Éireann determine what is the relevant school, having regard to ethos, language and the shortest traversable route from the child’s home.

The service is only provided where there are at least 10 eligible pupils in a distinct locality that can be economically serviced by a bus route. Even when a pupil meets the age and distance criteria for school transport, there is no legal entitlement to transport.

Details of the [Post-Primary School Transport Scheme (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/38419/97bf79d78dcd476096f3b19d1613696c.pdf) are published on the Department’s website.

There are some [special transport arrangements for pupils with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/).

School transport services for the 2023-2024 school year started on **28 August 2023**.

**School Transport Scheme 2023-2024**

Applications for the [School Transport Scheme 2023-2024](https://schooltransport.buseireann.ie/Account/Login?ReturnUrl=%2F) closed on 28 April 2023. Your medical card details or payment for tickets had to be submitted by **9 June 2023**. If you paid for your ticket or submitted your medical card details after 9 June 2023, your application is considered late and you are not guaranteed a seat.

For the new school year starting in September 2023, the School Transport Scheme fee for a primary school child is €50 and for a post- primary school child is €75. The maximum fee for a family is €125.

**If your school transport service has not started**

If you have a school transport ticket and your service has not started, you may get an Exceptional No Service Interim Grant. The grant is to help with the cost of transport to school while you are waiting for your school transport to start.

The grant will be paid at €5 per day, per family. It is based on the number of days your child attends school from the date the service was due to start up to the date the service actually starts. It will be paid as a once-off payment after your school transport service starts.

The Department will contact you directly about the grant.

**Pupils from Ukraine**

Pupils from Ukraine should visit [gov.ie/ukraine](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/320e9-employment-and-education/#education) for details on how to apply for school transport. They should not apply on the Bus Eireann website. Applications will continue to be accepted as families are relocated or as new families arrive.

## Who can use the School Transport Scheme?

To be eligible for school transport, a student must:

* Be enrolled in a recognised post-primary school
* Live 4.8 kilometres or more from the nearest school.

Bus Eireann provides a list of [FAQs about the School Transport Scheme](https://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=354).

### Changes from 2012

The school’s *Catchment Boundary Area* was used up to 2012-2013 to determine the eligibility of post-primary pupils for school transport. Under this system, pupils living more than 4.8 kilometres from the post-primary school catering for the catchment area where they live are fully eligible for school transport to their school. Pupils who became eligible for transport under this arrangement continue to be eligible so long as their circumstances remain the same, for example where they continue to reside at the same address and attend the same school.

Since September 2012, pupils who start post-primary school will not be assessed under the catchment area system. They must be living 4.8 km or more from the nearest post-primary education centre, having regard to ethos and language, in order to qualify for transport.

There are also changes for pupils with medical cards - see 'Rates' below.

### Transport arrangements

Parents must arrange to bring their child to the nearest pick-up point on the bus route. Generally, bus routes are organised so that no pupil has more than 3.2 kilometres to travel to a pick-up point.

There is provision for parents to pay for the bus service to be extended to a closer point, where this is feasible from the point of view of time and where it would not result in a major disruption to other pupils using the service.

Pupils attending a recognised post-primary school that is not the post-primary school for their area can use the service if there is room on the bus, provided they live at least 4.8 kilometres from the school in question.

Pupils may be given transport to enable them to attend the nearest all-Irish post-primary school or a post-primary school for their particular ethos if they live at least 4.8 kilometres or more from that school.

### Concessionary transport

Children who are not eligible for school transport may be allowed to use it on a concessionary basis and pay the full charge – there is no waiver for pupils with medical cards.

Detailed conditions are published in the [Post-Primary School Transport Scheme (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/230699/d035eca6-3ba5-4193-b4ae-c37da6acd487.pdf).

### Remote area grants

Remote area grants are payable by the Department as a contribution towards private transport arrangements for eligible pupils for whom no transport service is available. These grants may also be paid for eligible pupils who live 3.2 kilometres or more from the nearest pick-up point for school transport.

### Standards

Children using school transport are expected to behave responsibly and to have regard for their own safety and the safety of others. There are [guidelines (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/38516/43682ade1760443190db6e368e385bce.pdf) covering the standards expected and how any alleged misbehaviour will be handled.

### Reduced fares on public transport

[Dublin Bus](http://www.dublinbus.ie/Fares-and-Tickets/), the [LUAS](https://luas.ie/ticket-types.html) and the [DART](https://www.irishrail.ie/en-ie/accordion/single-return-tickets/schoolchild) offer concessionary fares during school terms.

## Payment of School Transport fees

The School Transport Scheme 2023-2024 fee for a primary school child is €50 and for a post- primary school child is €75. The maximum fee for a family is €125.

Your medical card details or payment for tickets had to be submitted by 9 June 2023.

If you paid for your ticket or submitted your medical card details after 9 June 2023, your application is considered late and you are not guaranteed a seat.

### Pupils with medical cards

Pupils who are eligible for school transport (see above) and who hold a valid medical card are entitled to free school transport to the nearest school.

If a pupil with a medical card is not attending the nearest school:

In previous years, eligible pupils using school transport to a school outside their catchment area could have the charge waived if they held a valid medical card. This arrangement will continue for pupils who are already availing of the waiver.

From 2012-2013 on, a medical card holder who is starting to attend a post-primary school further away than the nearest education centre is not entitled to free transport to that school.

## How to apply for the School Transport Scheme

If your child is enrolling in post-primary school for the first time, you can apply for school transport [online on the Bus Éireann website](http://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=257). You can also [contact Bus Eireann](https://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=523) with questions about your application or ticket.

Applications for the 2023-2024 school year **closed on Friday, 28 April 2023.** Your medical card details or payment for tickets had to be submitted by 9 June 2023. If you paid for your ticket or submitted your medical card details after 9 June 2023, your application is considered late and you are not guaranteed a seat.

If you have queries about School Transport you can [contact Bus Eireann](https://www.buseireann.ie/inner.php?id=290#contact) or call LoCall 0818 919 910 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

### Applications for the remote area grant

You should apply in writing directly to the School Transport section of the Department of Education at the address below.

### Appeals

If you wish to appeal a decision on your application for school transport, you should complete the [appeal form](https://www.schooltransportappeals.ie/) online. You can send any additional documents to the [School Transport Appeals Board](https://www.schooltransportappeals.ie/) c/o the Department of Education at the address below.

## Where to apply

### Department of Education

School Transport Section  
Portlaoise Road  
Tullamore  
Offaly  
Ireland

**Tel:** (057) 932 5466/7

**Locall:** 0818 919 910

**Fax:** (057) 932 5477

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/school-transport/>

**Email:** [school\_transport@education.gov.ie](mailto:school_transport@education.gov.ie)

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# Organisations and resources for second-level schools

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/organisations-and-resources-for-post-primary-schools/#2473e9)
* [Parents and students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/organisations-and-resources-for-post-primary-schools/#d603a8)
* [Teachers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/organisations-and-resources-for-post-primary-schools/#f2604f)
* [Languages](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/organisations-and-resources-for-post-primary-schools/#db07be)

## Introduction

The following websites and list of organisations have been compiled to help parents and teachers. You may find them particularly helpful if your child is starting second-level education in Ireland for the first time. You may also find these resources useful if you will be [moving to Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/moving-to-ireland/) or [returning to Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/returning_to_ireland/) soon and are looking for [information on the post-primary or second-level education system here.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/)

## Parents and students

### Scoilnet

The official education portal provided by the Department of Education and Skills is called [Scoilnet](http://www.scoilnet.ie/). It aims to support Ireland’s education community by providing information and advice to students, teachers and parents. Scoilnet offers resources on a wide range of subjects that have been evaluated by subject matter experts to make sure they are relevant to the curricula. These are resources such as lesson plans, interactive and printable worksheets, notes and multimedia content. Teachers and parents can also get information on current news and events relating to education and parenting. Scoilnet has a 'Schools Online' section, which is devoted to profiling schools and teachers. It also includes information on building school websites and ways to integrate digital technologies into teaching, learning and assessment. Scoilnet provides a searchable database of primary and secondary schools, many of which have established their own web pages on this site.

### Curriculum online

The [website of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/) provides information on the curriculum and subjects up to Senior Cycle. You can find useful resources and the latest news about what is happening in education, including new subjects, subjects under review and changes under the Junior and Senior cycle.

### Educate Together

[Educate Together](http://www.educatetogether.ie/) represents the multi-denominational Educate Together primary and second-level schools and associations throughout Ireland. The schools operated by the member associations of Educate Together are fully recognised by the Department of Education and Skills. Although they work under the same regulations and funding structures as other national schools, they have a distinct ethos. Educate Together schools guarantee equality of access to children irrespective of their social, cultural or religious backgrounds. They also have a high level of parental participation in the operation of the school.

The Educate Together website has a complete list of Educate Together schools in Ireland. It also has information on how you can organise a start- up group and participate in the establishment a new school.

### Gaeloideachas

[Gaeloideachas](https://gaeloideachas.ie/) is the main co-ordinating body for education through Irish for pre-school, primary and second-level. It aims to advance the use of Irish as the language of instruction at all levels in schools around the country. Support is provided to parents who want their children educated through Irish, and to local committees who want to establish all-Irish schools in their own locality.

### National Parents Council Post Primary

The [National Parents Council - Post Primary (NPCpp)](http://www.npcpp.ie/) is a nationwide organisation that represents the interests of parents with children in second-level education.

The NPCpp aims to:

* Actively involve parents in all aspects of their children’s education
* Provide a voice for parents in the development of parent groups
* Monitor educational development and educational opportunities

The NPCpp also works as an umbrella organisation for parents associations in second-level schools. It aims to have an effective parents association in place in every school.

### Online Patronage Process System

The new [Online Patronage Process System (OPPS)](https://patronage.education.gov.ie/) allows parents and guardians to express their preference for the model of patronage for new schools in their area.

The website lists all schools currently going through the patronage process, and provides objective information to parents and guardians to help them make an informed choice about their preferred model of school patronage.

### Webwise

[Webwise.ie](https://www.webwise.ie/) provides advice and resources for parents and teachers on internet safety. Parents can access expert advice, information on the latest apps and social networks, and a how-to guide on setting up parental controls – on its [parents’ hub](https://www.webwise.ie/parents/). There is a range of second-level teaching resources created to address issues including cyberbullying, non-consensual image-sharing, social media and developing digital citizenship skills on its [teachers hub](https://www.webwise.ie/teachers/).

### Spunout.ie

[Spunout.ie](https://spunout.ie/) is Ireland’s youth information website. It provides information and support for young people on a range of topics covering education, employment, health and life events. Education-related articles include advice on transitioning from school to college, everything you need to know about CAO offers and how to handle exam results anxiety and stress, among many others.

### Irish Second-Level Students Union

The [Irish Second-Level Students Union (ISSU)](http://www.uss.ie/) is the national umbrella body for school student councils.

It aims to:

* Represent and connect second-level students throughout Ireland
* Empower students through training, guidance and advice to equip them to become actively involved in the decision-making processes in their own school communities
* Work in partnership with other organisations to bring the views of second-level school students in relation to educational issues to the attention of policy-makers and the media
* Strive for innovation and democracy within the education system.

### Home Education Network

If you choose to [educate your child at home](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/), the [Home Education Network](http://www.henireland.org/) may be a good source of information for you. It is a support and lobby group for home educators in Ireland. It aims to help parents use the available resources to develop educational techniques suitable for each child’s needs.

The network provides a forum for home educators to exchange ideas and experience through regular meetings and newsletters. Its website contains links to research and online information about home education. It also operates a library service of books on home education that is available to members.

## Teachers

### Teachers Union of Ireland

The [Teachers Union of Ireland (TUI)](http://www.tui.ie/) represents teachers and lecturers in vocational schools, community colleges, community and comprehensive schools, institutes of technology, further education and other specialist areas. The TUI has produced a number of policy documents on issues such as bullying and sexual harassment in schools. They also provide details of conditions of service and contracts for their members, including the full text of the conciliation and arbitration scheme for teachers.

### Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland

The [Association of Secondary Teachers of Ireland (ASTI)](http://www.asti.ie/) is the main second-level teachers’ union in Ireland. ASTI members teach in voluntary secondary schools, community and comprehensive schools and colleges. ASTI is a source of information on pay and conditions for teachers and provides its members with a professional advocacy service. It also runs a professional development service for teachers. ASTI has produced a number of information leaflets for teachers covering issues such as discipline in schools, bullying and guidelines for professional behaviour.

### Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)

The [Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI)](http://www.etbi.ie/) (formerly called Irish Vocational Education Association) represents the interests of the 16 Education and Training Boards (formerly called Vocational Education Committees). It aims to promote and enhance the interests of vocational education and training. The ETBI offers training and continued professional development to its members, contributes to national policy discussion and has produced a number of booklets on issues such as managing allegations of child sexual abuse and policies on educational provision for asylum seekers and refugees.

### National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals

The [National Association of Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD)](http://www.napd.ie/cmsv1/) represents principals and deputy principals at second-level. The organisation has a network of nine regional branches and a range of sub-committees working on specific areas of education. It ensures that members are represented on all relevant national and international bodies and that principals and deputy principals are consulted on education policy initiatives that may affect their role. The NAPD also provides support and advice for principals and deputy principals through a secretariat.

### The Teaching Council

The [Teaching Council](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/) promotes and develops teaching as a profession at primary and second-levels. It provides a forum for presenting the views of the profession on all aspects of the teaching career from initial recruitment to in-career professional development. The Council maintains a register of all teachers who teach in recognised schools. As the regulatory body for teachers in Ireland, the Teaching Council produces a code of professional conduct for teachers, which covers standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence.

## Languages

### Foras na Gaeilge

The body responsible for promoting the Irish language is [Foras na Gaeilge](http://www.gaeilge.ie/?lang=en). Its website covers a number of topics including the roots of the Irish language and some background on the Gaeltacht areas. The site has a comprehensive list of Irish courses available to both children and adults and covers how Irish is taught in schools.

Foras na Gaeilge also provides teaching resources to Irish teachers who want to update their skills and offers advice to parents who want to help improve their child’s Irish. The website gives details of social outlets where Irish is spoken and provides a list of Irish language organisations and groups.

### Languages connect

[LanguagesConnect.ie](https://languagesconnect.ie/) is a resource for schools and students that helps to spread awareness of the personal, social, professional and economic benefits of language learning. It is part of Ireland’s [Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/52f94d-framework-for-consultation-on-a-foreign-languages-in-education-strat/). The website has separate sections for [students](https://languagesconnect.ie/students/), [parents](https://languagesconnect.ie/parents/), [educators](https://languagesconnect.ie/educators/) and [businesses](https://languagesconnect.ie/business/).

### English as a second language

A number of schools have been set up in Ireland to offer tuition in [English as a second language](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/coming-to-ireland-to-study/english-language-education/).

**Page edited:** 21 May 2021

# Educational supports

[Financial help with going to school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/financial-help-with-school/)

There are several schemes to help with the costs of going to school.

[Visiting Teacher Service](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/)

The Department of Education operates a Visiting Teacher Service for deaf children and children with visual impairments.

[Resources for non-English-speaking pupils](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/resources-for-non-english-speakers/)

This document describes the educational supports for non-English-speaking students in primary and post-primary schools.

[Psychological assessment at school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/)

The National Educational Psychological Service provides psychological services in primary and post-primary schools.

[Educational arrangements for Travellers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/educational-arrangements-for-travellers/)

This document provides information on the arrangements in place for the education of Traveller children

[Assistive technology grant for students with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/)

This document describes a scheme that provides a grant to schools to allow them to buy equipment for students with disabilities at post-primary level.

[Early school leavers programmes](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/early-school-leavers-programmes/)

There are a number of education schemes for young people and others who have left school without a recognised qualification.

[Schools and information technology](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/schools-and-information-technology/)

This document outlines the development and support of information and communications technology in schools.

# Financial help with going to school

* [Help with the cost of school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/financial-help-with-school/#3ffbf1)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/financial-help-with-school/#ec2268)

## Help with the cost of school

You may get some help with the cost of your child going to school.

The main supports are the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, free primary school and special school books and the school book rental scheme. You may also get help with exam fees, school transport fees, school boarding and assistive technology depending on your situation.

### Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The [Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/back-to-school-clothing-and-footwear-allowance/) helps meet the costs of uniforms and footwear for students going to school.

To get the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, you must be getting certain social welfare payments or taking part in certain education and training or employment schemes and your total household income must be below a certain amount.

### School books

**Free primary and special school books**

From September 2023, parents of children in primary school and special school do not have to pay a contribution fee towards [schoolbooks, workbooks and copybooks](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/250812/c0e12161-a64b-4dce-88d8-c7e6a6ed4a68.pdf#page=null).

The school will provide the free books on loan. Parents must return them at the end of the school year. If parents have to buy additional items, the school will notify them. Parents can find more information on the [Free Primary Schoolbooks scheme (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/250686/b1aa4f60-a8d7-4a8c-8257-6f585bb87a10.pdf).

**Post-primary schools**

State post-primary schools can help students with the cost of school books from [funding under the Free Education Scheme (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/13419/bf4ace94081d441aa455c0d1e713bcb5.pdf). The funding comes from the Department of Education and the scheme is administered in each school by the school principal.

It is for students from low-income families and families experiencing financial hardship. It can be used to set up a book rental scheme within the school or help individual students buy books. The Department of Education prefers schools to use it to set up book rental schemes as this helps more students from low-income families.

You can find out more about the scheme in the Department's publication [A Guide for Parents: Textbook Rental Scheme in Schools (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/39088/f6a23749787e4ee88d4fd0bcc1c8e62d.pdf).

You can get information about the how the scheme operates in your child's school from the school principal. To apply for assistance, you must contact the principal of your child's school. The principal has total discretion in deciding which students are most in need.

### Exam fees

Students whose parent or guardian have a [medical card](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/medical-cards-and-gp-visit-cards/medical-card/) do not have to pay the examination fees for Junior or Leaving Certificate. Details of the medical card are put on the fee payment form and the parent then sends the form back to the school.

If you are exempt from fees because your parents have a medical card you will have to pay late fees if you apply after the deadline. More detailed information is available on [Leaving Certificate examination fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-fees/) and [Junior Certificate examination fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/).

### School transport

The school transport scheme provides transport for children who live 3.2 km or more from their local school. School transport may be free to medical card holders, if the school transport scheme is operating in your area and your child is eligible.

Find out more about [school transport for primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-transport-scheme/) and [school transport for post-primary school.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-school-transport-scheme/)

**Special needs school transport**

Free [transport is available to children with special needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/) to and from special schools and classes. If transport is not available a Special Transport Grant may be an option.

**Remote Area Boarding Grant**

Students who live far from a school can get funding to support them to attend suitable free second-level education, under the Remote Area Boarding Grant scheme

To qualify for a boarding grant you must live at least 4.8 km from a second-level school and more than 3.2 km from a pick-up point on a transport service to such a school. You must be unable to obtain a place in a suitable second-level school within 25 km of your home and must be attending a second-level school providing free second-level education for day pupils.

Students living on offshore islands which do not have a school providing suitable free second-level education may also qualify for assistance under the scheme. Read more about the [Remote Area Boarding Grant.](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/remote-area-boarding-grant/)

### Special needs and physical disability

The assistive technology grant scheme for primary schools provides grant-aid to schools to help them purchase specialist equipment. You can get more detailed information on the [Assistive technology grant for students with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/).

Organisations and, in some cases, parents or guardians can access additional grants for special education including home tuition, Irish sign language, typing scheme and part-time teaching hours are available. More detailed information is available from the Special Education Section of the [Department of Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/b05378-special-education-section/).

You can read more about support for special needs education in [primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/) and [post primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/).

## Further information

### Department of Education

Schools Division Financial

Cornamaddy  
Westmeath  
N37 X659  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 648 3600

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/>

**Email:** [info@education.gov.ie](mailto:info@education.gov.ie)

**Page edited:** 12 April 2023

# Visiting Teacher Service

* [What is the Visiting Teacher Service?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/#5cd57a)
* [Visiting teachers for blind and visually impaired children](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/#a017ea)
* [Visiting teachers for deaf children](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/#c86810)
* [Assistive technology and mobility](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/#d509bb)
* [Free Visiting Teacher Service](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/#209691)
* [How to get a visit from the Visiting Teacher Service?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/visiting-teacher-service/#3ce693)

## What is the Visiting Teacher Service?

The [Visiting Teacher Service (VTS)](https://ncse.ie/visiting-teachers) is provided by specially trained teachers to children who are deaf or hard of hearing or blind or visually impaired and their parents or guardians. The teacher will visit the child at home.

The VST support can begin shortly following the birth of the child and continue through primary and post-primary education where appropriate.

If necessary, the VST can provide a teaching service for the [pre-school child](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/early-childhood-education/) in the home.

You can find out more the Visiting Teacher Service on the [National Council for Special Education (NCSE) website](https://ncse.ie/).

The Visiting Teacher Service is free of charge.

## Visiting teachers for blind and visually impaired children

Visiting teachers work with blind and visually impaired children and provide guidance and support to their parents.

The visiting teacher can assess the effects of visual impairment and explain the needs of each child now and in the future.

In addition, they provide information and advice on educational planning for children and young people with visual impairments. Visiting teachers advise schools (including pre-schools) about suitable teaching methods, classroom management strategies and environmental adaptions to support students with visual impairments in mainstream schools.

They conduct assessments and give advice on equipment commonly used by people who are visually impaired and advice on additional personnel resources, when needed.

## Visiting teachers for deaf children

Visiting teachers work with deaf or hard-of-hearing children and provide guidance and support to their parents.

Applications for home tuition in sign language should be made to the visiting teacher.

Visiting teachers also monitor the child’s language development and communication skills and give information and advice to parents on pre-school and school placements.

The visiting teacher works with the principal and other staff to plan and put in place suitable supports for your child at school. They can provide tuition with special emphasis on language development and monitor the educational progress of your child.

## Assistive technology and mobility

Visiting teachers can refer children for assessment of low-vision aids and then train the children in their use. They help children develop tactile and other sensory skills and give advice on self-help skills and other skills needed for independent living.

They provide support in the development of pre-Braille skills where necessary and give some instruction in mobility where appropriate. Teachers can also refer the child for further mobility instruction where required.

Visiting teachers evaluate the acoustic environment for a deaf or hard-of-hearing child and help them manage audiology equipment.

## Free Visiting Teacher Service

The service is free.

There is no fee for the Visiting Teacher Service. It is open to all children living in Ireland who need the service.

## How to get a visit from the Visiting Teacher Service?

Before a child is assessed for the Visiting Teacher Service, you must complete a [referral form for the Visiting Teacher Service (pdf)](https://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/Referral-Form_Visiting-Teacher_NCSE_14.04.22.doc).

You must provide an up-to-date audiology or ophthalmology report, with your form.

You should send the referral application directly to the [local Visiting Teacher](https://ncse.ie/vt_contact_details).

The following can make a request to the VST:

* Parents/guardians
* Schools
* The [Health Service Executive](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/health-system/health-service-executive/) (HSE)
* Eye clinics
* The [National Council for the Blind of Ireland](http://www.ncbi.ie/)
* DeafHear
* The [Cochlear Implant Unit, Beaumont Hospital](http://www.beaumont.ie/index.jsp?p=350&n=407&a=0)

Any health professional who wishes to refer a child should first discuss their concerns fully with the child's parents or guardians.

The VST will assess your child to find out if the service is suitable for your child.

No child is too young to get a visit from the visiting teacher service

**The Visiting Teacher Service also accepts referrals regarding children where the visual impairment or deafness is the compounding rather than the major disabling condition.**

**Page edited:** 28 June 2022

# Resources for non-English-speaking pupils

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/resources-for-non-english-speakers/#2473e9)
* [Levels of support for English as an additional language (EAL)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/resources-for-non-english-speakers/#006e39)
* [Assessment of language proficiency](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/resources-for-non-english-speakers/#28a9f0)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/resources-for-non-english-speakers/#ec2268)

## Introduction

This document looks at the additional supports available for pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL).

## Levels of support for English as an additional language (EAL)

The Department of Education (DE) provides additional educational resources for pupils who are learning English as an additional language (EAL) in primary and post-primary schools.

Full details of the resources available for EAL support are set out in [DE circular 0018/2020 (pdf](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/70882/cb3e5c3690e6438e838a2de0369bea3f.pdf)).

Here is a link to [frequently asked questions on DE circular 0018/2020 (pdf)](https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/0f30adef861f4c589e920fd2ae456fa6/).

Where at least 20% of the total enrolment of the school is made up of pupils that require EAL support, the Board of Management can lodge an appeal for a review of the proposed allocation for pupils requiring EAL support.

## Assessment of language proficiency

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has [Primary](https://www.ncca.ie/media/2172/primary-school-assessment-kit.pdf) and [Post-Primary Assessment Kits](https://www.ncca.ie/media/3306/eal-fv_1.pdf) on its website. The kits can be used to assess non-English-speaking pupils.

## Further information

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment has published the following guidelines for schools: [Intercultural Education in the Primary School (pdf)](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/236745b0-a222-4b2a-80b1-42db0a3c7e4c/Intercultural-Education-in-Primary-School_Guidelines.pdf).

The [website of the English Language Support Programme](http://www.elsp.ie/index.shtml) has activities related to the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate curriculums.

**Page edited:** 14 December 2020

# Psychological assessment at school

* [What is a psychological assessment?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/#1eddd7)
* [How is a child selected for a psychological assessment?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/#0aaf9f)
* [Who does the psychological assessment?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/#0202fd)
* [Protection of your child's interests](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/#ce267c)
* [Who pays for a psychological assessment?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/#13ef31)
* [How to apply for a psychological assessment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/psychological-assessment-school/#ff6208)

## What is a psychological assessment?

A psychological assessment can help find out if your child has special needs at school.

The school will involve a psychologist only after they have considered the child’s needs.

If your child has learning, emotional or behavioural difficulties, the school your child attends is responsible for getting an assessment of your child’s needs. The assessment will help the school to plan your child’s education and remedial intervention.

You can read about the process schools use to consider the [special education needs of a child](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/).

## How is a child selected for a psychological assessment?

If a teacher thinks that your child has difficulty coping with the normal curriculum, you should be made aware of this.

Before getting a psychological assessment for a child, school staff should consider supplementary teaching.

If the school decides that an assessment is needed for your child, the principal or teacher should arrange a meeting with you as the parent or legal guardian.

The reasons for the assessment should be discussed and each section of the consent form for [psychological assessment - form 1 (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/41788/9f0a90d1dbdf426bad660fee65c7981e.pdf) explained before you are asked to sign the form.

Psychologists who carry out assessments must meet with you, explain their findings and give you a copy of the psychological report.

Psychological assessments in schools are provided by the [National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/).

You can get a [NEPS information leaflet for parents (pdf).](https://assets.gov.ie/41219/9407bf80d6f54e4c85732884fb535490.pdf)

## Who does the psychological assessment?

The [National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/) provides psychological services in public and private primary and post-primary schools and in related educational centres.

You can read more about NEPS services in the booklet [Working Together to Make a Difference to Children (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/41219/9407bf80d6f54e4c85732884fb535490.pdf) on gov.ie.

NEPS is located in 8 regions. It works with schools to:

* Engage in individual casework with children and young people
* Provide a consultation service for teachers and parents
* Participate in school-based projects relevant to educational psychology
* Promote mental health in schools

If your school does not have a service from NEPS they can use the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessment (SCPA).

### What is the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA)

If your school is not located in a region with a NEPS service, they can use the Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessment (SCPA).

The SCPA helps schools to meet the urgent need for psychological advice while the NEPS service is being expanded to all schools. Only psychologists named in the current list are eligible to carry out work under the SCPA scheme. You can read further information on the [Scheme for Commissioning Psychological Assessments (SCPA)](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/#scheme-for-the-commissioning-of-psychological-assessments-scpa).

## Protection of your child's interests

Psychological assessment services are in place so that children with special learning needs can take advantage of the necessary resources. However, some children will be nervous at the thought of meeting a psychologist. If a child is aware that they have difficulties at school, the prospect of a meeting with a psychologist may confirm to them a perceived weakness. For this reason, a school should only commission an individual assessment if, having spoken with the child's parents, it is absolutely convinced that the result will benefit the child.

NEPS provides [advice on whether you should tell your child](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/#information-for-parents) that their learning needs will be assessed by a psychologist.

For the protection of your child's confidentiality, they are referred to by their initials only in all documentation submitted by school authorities to NEPS.

All psychologists on the NEPS panel must have obtained Garda clearance. It is also recommended that a member of the school staff look in on the assessment interview once or twice.

In general, an assessment should be carried out in your child's school, where the surroundings are familiar. A separate room in the main building and near the school office is an ideal venue.

## Who pays for a psychological assessment?

NEPS makes a payment directly to the psychologist. NEPS does not reimburse schools or parents for assessments.

NEPS cannot reimburse you if you are a parent who has commissioned a private psychological assessment. In this case, you can claim [tax relief on medical expenses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/money-and-tax/tax/income-tax-credits-and-reliefs/taxation-and-medical-expenses/) after the year has ended. You can get more information on [Revenue’s website](https://www.revenue.ie/en/Home.aspx).

## How to apply for a psychological assessment

Children are normally referred to NEPS through the school principal. You should discuss any concerns regarding learning difficulties with school personnel first. If you have questions about the NEPS service and assessments, you should make them directly to school personnel.

In general, you apply for NEPS services through the school principal of your child's school.

### National Educational Psychological Service

Frederick Court  
24-27 North Frederick St  
Dublin 1  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 889 2700

**Fax:** (01) 889 2755

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

You can find contact information for the [NEPS offices in Ireland (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/42216/a099e1bbae0041f2950becf6ee53cf09.pdf).

**Page edited:** 10 May 2022

# Educational arrangements for Travellers

* [Traveller education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/educational-arrangements-for-travellers/#f416d5)

## Traveller education

Traveller children have the same rights to education as settled children. They are also subject to the same rules on [school attendance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/).

A Traveller child can access additional learning [supports in primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/special-needs-education-primary-schools/) and [supports in post-primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-education-for-students-with-special-needs/) if there is an identified educational need.

Travellers were formally recognised as a distinct ethnic group within the Irish State in March 2017. The [National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy 2017-2021(pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/43310/d7d54fbff0f4418982856e7dddaf78c1.pdf) is a cross-Departmental initiative to improve the lives of the Traveller and Roma communities in Ireland. The Department of Education, Tusla and Traveller Representative Groups collaborate on education related measures proposed in the strategy, to improve Traveller engagement with education.

### Co-ordination of Traveller education

The Advisory Committee on Traveller Education published a [Report and Recommendations for a Traveller Education Strategy (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/24633/d2c07c84c48f4a6e9984f15ff6d34728.pdf). A key objective of the report was the phasing out of segregated Traveller provision and the inclusion of Traveller children and young people in mainstream education.

Guidelines on Traveller education in primary schools and post-primary schools are available from the Department of Education.

The Department of Education is responsible for the [co-ordination of Traveller education](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/531ef5-co-ordination-of-traveller-education/) at primary and post primary level.

The Department of Further and Higher Education is responsible for Traveller education at further education and higher education.

**Page edited:** 1 February 2023

# Assistive technology grant for students with disabilities

* [What is assistive technology?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/#989b64)
* [Help to buy assistive technology](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/#6d7564)
* [Can I take my assistive technology home from school?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/#02b210)
* [What amount can I get with the Assistive Technology Grant?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/#e045e0)
* [How to apply for the Assistive Technology Grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/#af6013)
* [How to appeal if you are refused the Assistive Technology Grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/assistive-technology-grant-students-with-disabilities/#e02890)

## What is assistive technology?

Assistive technology helps students with a disability who have difficulty communicating through speech and writing to fully participate in education.

Some examples of assistive technology include laptops or tablets with modified software, joysticks, keyboards, touch pads, tapes, braille equipment and audiology equipment.

Schools can get an Assistive Technology Grant from the Department of Education to buy computers and specialist equipment for students with a disability.

## Help to buy assistive technology

Schools can get an Assistive Technology Grant from the Department of Education

To get a grant, a student must have a physical disability or a general learning disability that makes ordinary communication through speech and writing impossible.

The assistive technology grant is for equipment that is essential for the student to access the school curriculum.

Some examples of assistive technology used include laptop or tablet computers with modified software, joysticks, keyboards, touch pads, tapes, braille equipment and audiology equipment.

Not covered by the grant are telephones, smart phones, iphones, ipods, televisions, plasma screen TV’s, internet access or phone connectivity charges.

Schools must wait for approval before buying equipment. When the equipment has been bought, the school should send the full receipts and invoices with claims for payment. Copies of these should be kept in the school accounts. Applications can also be made for approved equipment repair.

## Can I take my assistive technology home from school?

Usually the equipment provided under the grant is kept in the school. However, the Board of Management can give permission for a student to use the equipment at home.

The equipment remains the property of the school and will usually be passed on to another student or to another school, when the school no longer needs it.

The Board of Management of the school is responsible for insurance, maintenance, repair and service charges. One teacher should be given the responsibility for managing the equipment and making sure that it is used effectively in the school.

## What amount can I get with the Assistive Technology Grant?

The rate of the grant will be the cost of the equipment. There is no upper limit.

## How to apply for the Assistive Technology Grant

Your school should apply for special equipment to the [Special Needs Education Organiser (SENO)](https://ncse.ie/seno-contact-information) with responsibility for that school. The SENO will apply to the Department of Education for the Assistive Technology Grant. Medical reports and assessments may be required.

You will find a [contact list of SENOs](https://ncse.ie/for-parents/ncse-school-information-map) and [an application form](http://ncse.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/NCSE-Application-Form-3-Application-for-Assistive-Technology.final_.23.02.15.doc) on the website of the National Council for Special Education.

Applications for students with visual or hearing impairment should be made to the [Visiting Teacher Service for Children with Sensory Impairment](https://ncse.ie/visiting-teachers). The Visiting Teacher Service will then advise the SENO.

You can get more information on ICT for [Special Education Needs on the National Centre for Technology in Education (NCTE)](https://www.sess.ie/links/sen-ict-and-assistive-technology) website and the [National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS).](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5ef45c-neps/)

You can read more about the [Assistive Technology Grant](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/237c68-assistive-technology-grant/).

## How to appeal if you are refused the Assistive Technology Grant

A school can appeal the decision where:

* Assistive technology has not been granted, or
* Assistive technology has been granted but the school wants to appeal the amount of the grant, or the specific equipment provided.

A school must complete and submit the [appeal form](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/38628/?page=1).

When submitting the [appeal form](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/38628/?page=1) the school should not re-submit the original application or professional reports supplied to the SENO.

If there are new or updated reports – different to the original application – then these can be submitted to the SENO in support of a new application.

### National Council for Special Education

1-2 Mill Street  
Trim  
Meath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (046) 948 6400

**Fax:** (046) 948 6404

**Homepage:** <http://www.ncse.ie/>

**Page edited:** 7 July 2022

# Early school leavers programmes

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/early-school-leavers-programmes/#2473e9)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/early-school-leavers-programmes/#10ea51)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/early-school-leavers-programmes/#b48c08)

## Introduction

The legal definition of early school leaving refers to non-participation in school before reaching the age of 16 years or before completing 3 years post-primary education, whichever is later. A more specific definition of early school leavers is those who leave the education system without a minimum of 5 passes in the Leaving Certificate or equivalent qualification. Young people who leave education without recognised qualifications are at a disadvantage in the labour market and are at increased risk of poverty and social exclusion.

For those people who have already left school and would like to further their education and training, there are a number of schemes in place. These are non-formal education facilities that aim to provide high quality, relevant and efficient education and training opportunities outside the mainstream education setting.

### School completion programme

The [School Completion Programme (SCP)](https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/scp/) aims to help students from disadvantaged areas stay in school to complete their Leaving Certificate.

SCP forms part of the Department of Education social inclusion strategy [Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS)](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/4018ea-deis-delivering-equality-of-opportunity-in-schools/) to help children and young people who are at risk of or who are experiencing [educational disadvantage](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/). Each project is managed by a local management committee and provides a tailored programme of in-school, after school and holiday time interventions to targeted children and young people who are at risk of early school leaving.

### Back to Education Initiative

The Back to Education Initiative provides opportunities for second chance education to adult learners and early school leavers who want to upgrade their skills. The initiative builds on existing schemes such as Youthreach and Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) - see below. It also includes [adult literacy schemes](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/adult-literacy/), community education and [Post Leaving Certificate (PLC)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) courses.

### Youthreach programme

[Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/) is a joint programme between the Department of Education and the Department of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation. It is intended to help young people return to learning and prepare for employment and adult life. It also provides them with opportunities to get certified qualifications. The programme is aimed at unemployed early school leavers aged 15 to 20. The Youthreach programme is delivered through Youthreach centres and [Community Training Centres](http://www.iacto.ie/learners/ctcs/).

### Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

The [Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/) is a special range of courses designed to meet the education needs of unemployed people who are early school-leavers. The scheme aims to give them a choice of options from basic education and training to advanced vocational preparation and training. It targets people over the age of 21 who have been getting unemployment payments or [signing for credits](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/irish-social-welfare-system/social-insurance-prsi/credited-social-insurance-contributions/) for at least 6 months. It is delivered through the [Education and Training Boards (ETBs)](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) at centres all over Ireland - see 'Where to apply' below.

### Department of Justice workshop programme

The Department of Justice runs employment placement, education and training services for offenders where they can train to develop work-related skills. Many of the available training opportunities carry accreditation or certification for people who complete the required course to the approved standard.

## How to apply

Many of the early school leavers programmes have age limits and are targeted at young people who may need help improving their future employment prospects. For more details about the entry requirements, you should contact the individual programmes – see ‘Where to apply’ below.

## Where to apply

For Youthreach contact your local ETB or your local [Community Training Centre.](http://www.iacto.ie/learners/locations/)

Contact [your local ETB](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) for details of adult literacy, adult education programmes and VTOS.

For information about the Department of Justice workshops contact the [Probation Service](http://www.probation.ie/en/PB/officecontactspage?readform).

**Page edited:** 21 December 2020

# Schools and information technology

* [Information technology plan for schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/schools-and-information-technology/#bee538)
* [Supporting ICT in schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/schools-and-information-technology/#08efdf)

## Information technology plan for schools

The [Department of Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/44f263-ict-information-and-communications-technology-policy-unit/) is responsible for developing Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in schools. The Department’s ICT Policy Unit promotes the integration of ICT in teaching and learning.

The Department has published the [Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027](https://assets.gov.ie/221285/6fc98405-d345-41a3-a770-c97e1a4479d3.pdf). The Strategy aims to support schools so that all students will have the opportunity to gain the ICT skills they need.

## Supporting ICT in schools

The Department supports the [Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)](https://www.pdst.ie/schoolsupport) to promote ICT in schools and upskill teachers.

The PDST:

* Provides in-career [ICT training programmes for teachers](https://pdst.ie/ICT%20integration)
* Develops and maintains [ScoilNet](http://www.scoilnet.ie/) - an online educational portal. It also has responsibility for the development of other websites with specific relevance to the curriculum and content to support teachers providing distance learning
* Supports the innovative use and integration of ICT in schools through pilot projects
* Provides a general ICT advice service to schools

**Broadband in schools**

PDST also manages the [Broadband Service Desk](https://www.pdsttechnologyineducation.ie/technology-infrastructure/schools-broadband-programme/). This is a single point of contact for schools for all broadband related issues.

**Internet safety**

PDST is responsible for managing and developing internet safety programmes and subject modules, and advising on the development and use of Acceptable Use Policies (AUPs) in schools. [Webwise](https://www.webwise.ie/), the Irish Safer Internet Centre promotes the safe, responsible use of the internet and mobile devices by children and young people. It is co-funded by the European Union Safer Internet Programme and the Department.

**Special education and ICT**

PDST provides advice relating to the use of technology with students who have special educational needs.

Department of Education also provides assistive technology grants for individual students with special educational needs. Applications for this funding must be made by the local [Special Educational Needs Organiser (SENO)](https://ncse.ie/special-educational-needs-organiser-seno).

**Page edited:** 20 April 2022

# Child protection in school

* [What is child protection?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/child-protection-in-school/#7658ff)
* [Child Safeguarding Statement](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/child-protection-in-school/#018a2c)
* [Duty of school staff to report child abuse](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/child-protection-in-school/#0171d2)
* [Getting advice on child protection](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/child-protection-in-school/#cacfd6)

## What is child protection?

Schools have a general [duty of care to their students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teachers-duty-of-care/).

The [stay safe programme](http://www.staysafe.ie/) assists teachers to help children in primary school to develop their self-esteem and the necessary skills to cope with possible threats to their personal safety both within and outside the school.

Schools have a statutory responsibility under the [Children First Act 2015](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2015/act/36/enacted/en/html) and must develop specific policies and procedures on how to create a safe environment to prevent deliberate harm or abuse to the children using their services.

Registered teachers are also *mandated persons* under the Children First Act 2015. A *mandated person* is a person who has ongoing contact with children and families and because of their qualifications, training and experience is in a key position to protect children from harm.

You can find more information about [child abuse, recognising the signs and reporting child abuse](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/birth-family-relationships/services-and-supports-for-children/child-abuse-and-protection/).

From 1 September 2023, the [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/268613/39868a39-1de4-4890-97a0-2fa388a8a2a9.pdf#page=null) come into effect.

## Child Safeguarding Statement

A Child Safeguarding Statement is a written statement of the service being provided and the procedures to ensure that a child using the service is safe from harm. The statement includes a risk assessment.

Primary and Post-Primary Schools must have a Child Safeguarding Statement.

The Child Safeguarding Statement must be given to all school staff. It must be displayed publicly and be made available to parents and guardians and members of the public upon request.

## Duty of school staff to report child abuse

The [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/268613/39868a39-1de4-4890-97a0-2fa388a8a2a9.pdf#page=null) apply to all school staff. The school board is responsible for the Child Safeguarding Statement.

If a child tells a teacher or other member of school staff that a parent or carer or any other person is harming or at risk of harming them, the person who receives the information should listen carefully and supportively. This also applies if a parent or carer or any other person discloses that they have harmed or are at risk of harming a child.

School staff can access the support and advice of the school’s Designated Liaison Person (DLP).

**What is the Designated Liaison Person?**

The Designated Liaison Person is a resource to any staff member or volunteer who has a child protection or welfare concern. The Designated Liaison Person should be well-informed about child protection. They will help any person in their organisation who is considering making a report to Tusla (the Child and Family Agency) and will liaise with outside agencies.

Tusla also provides [A Guide for the Reporting of Child Protection and Welfare Concerns](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/4214-TUSLA_Guide_to_Reporters_Guide_A4_v3.pdf).

**Registered teachers must report child protection concerns**

Registered teachers are *mandated persons* under the Children First Act 2015. A *mandated person* is a person who has ongoing contact with children and families and because of their qualifications, training and experience is in a key position to protect children from harm. This means that among their responsibilities they must report child protection concerns over a defined threshold to Tusla.

**Protection for those reporting child abuse**

No person will be penalised for making a report of child abuse in good faith to Tusla or the Gardaí, under [Section 4](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/49/section/4/enacted/en/html#sec4) of the [Protection for Persons Reporting Child Abuse Act, 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0049/index.html). If you have been penalised, you can make a complaint under the 1998 Act.

**Boarding schools and child protection**

Boarding school management may appoint a single Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for the school and for the boarding facility. Alternatively, it may appoint a separate DLP for each.

Where there are separate DLPs, data protection arrangements must be in place to ensure communication between the DLPs. If a concern relates to the school, it should be reported to the school DLP. If a concern relates to the boarding facility, it should be reported to the boarding facility DLP.

Boarders and parents should have an accessible way to raise concerns about child protection and safeguarding.

Staff and management of boarding schools must:

* Comply with the [Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (revised 2023)](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/268613/39868a39-1de4-4890-97a0-2fa388a8a2a9.pdf#page=null)
* Comply with the [Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 (pdf)](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/25844/b90aafa55804462f84d05f87f0ca2bf6.pdf#page=null).
* Implement procedures set out in the [Child Protection and Safeguarding Procedures for Boarding Facilities associated with Recognised Schools 2023 (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/251765/a12ebf27-df94-418b-9124-271d358ccd7f.pdf).

**The school management's role in child protection**

School managers in primary and post-primary schools should:

* Implement an effective child protection programme
* Monitor the effectiveness of the programme
* Manage any risk identified to a child using the service
* Implement agreed reporting procedures
* Plan and implement appropriate staff development and training programmes

**Board of Management's role in child protection**

The Board of Management must:

* Ensure, as far as practicable, that children are safe from harm while using the school’s services (while attending the school or while participating in school activities)
* Carry out an assessment of any potential for harm to children while they are attending the school or while they are participating in school activities (this is known as a risk assessment)
* Ensure that a Designated Liaison Person is appointed
* Prepare and display a written Child Safeguarding Statement as required by the Act
* Appoint a relevant person as the first point of contact for the school’s Child Safeguarding Statement
* Provide a copy of its Child Safeguarding Statement to members of school personnel and, where requested to parents, members of the public and to Tusla

You can find further information and forms on [child protection procedures in schools](https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/12bee3-child-protection-procedures-in-schools/).

## Getting advice on child protection

The [Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)](http://www.ispcc.ie/) operates the [Childline service](http://www.childline.ie/) - a telephone listening service for children. Childline is provided free of charge 24 hours per day, all year round.

**Freephone Childline:** 1800 666 666

**Freetext Childline:** Text the word "Talk" to 50101

You can find more information about child protection and welfare and reporting a concern on the [Tusla website](https://www.tusla.ie/).

### Tusla - Child and Family Agency

Brunel Building  
Heuston South Quarter  
Dublin 8  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 771 8500

**Homepage:** <https://www.tusla.ie/>

**Email:** [info@tusla.ie](mailto:info@tusla.ie)

**Page edited:** 7 September 2023

# School terms in primary and post-primary school

* [When does the school year start and end?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-terms-in-primary-and-postprimary/#df8843)
* [School holidays](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-terms-in-primary-and-postprimary/#525257)
* [School year 2022-2023](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-terms-in-primary-and-postprimary/#1379be)
* [School year 2023-2024](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-terms-in-primary-and-postprimary/#28600b)
* [School year 2024-2025](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-terms-in-primary-and-postprimary/#76db5d)

## When does the school year start and end?

The dates for the start and the end of the school year are not the same for all schools. Schools can decide when students start school in the autumn, and when they finish school in the summer.

The school year normally starts in the week in which 1 September falls.

Post-primary schools usually close before the June public holiday (the first Monday in June) due to the start of State exams in June. Primary schools usually close in the last week of June.

All schools are closed for July and most (or all) of August.

## School holidays

## School year 2022-2023

Every school year, primary and post-primary schools also close for:

* Autumn mid-term break
* Christmas
* February mid-term break
* Easter

These holidays are standardised. The [dates are set by the Department of Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/0a2b0-standardisation-of-the-school-year-in-respect-of-primary-post-primary-schools-for-the-years-202324-202425-and-202526/). See dates for the 'School year 2023-2024' below.

At the start of the school year, you will get a list of days that the school will be closed during the year, including holidays and training days for teachers. If there are other unexpected closures, the school will let you know in advance.

### Discretionary days

Every school must be open for a minimum number of days:

* Primary schools - 183 days
* Post-primary schools - 167 days

Schools can use any remaining days at their discretion to extend the summer holiday period or to close on religious or other holidays.

However, schools cannot use the discretionary days to extend the Christmas, Easter or mid-term breaks (unless a religious observance day(s) falls at that time for schools of a particular denomination or faith). If a school does not have enough discretionary days left for a religious holiday, it can choose not to have classes on that day.

Some schools use their discretionary days to extend bank holiday weekends and others extend the May bank holiday break to a full week. You should check with your school for details of the school holidays and any other planned closures..

## School year 2023-2024

### October 2023 mid-term break

All schools close from Monday, 30 October 2023, to Friday, 3 November 2023 inclusive.

### Christmas 2023

All schools close on Friday, 22 December 2023, which is the final day of the school term. All schools re-open on Monday, 8 January 2024.

### February 2024 mid-term break

All **primary schools** close on Thursday, 15 February 2024, and Friday, 16 February 2024. Primary schools can use 3 discretionary days to extend this to a 5-day break starting on Monday, 12 February 2024 unless they need these days to make up for time lost due to unforeseen school closures.

Unforeseen school closures might happen, for example, due to bad weather.

**Post-primary schools** close for a week, from Monday, 12 February 2024, to Friday, 16 February 2024 inclusive, unless changes are needed to make up for time lost due to unforeseen school closures.

If a post-primary school needs to make up such time, it can shorten the mid-term break by staying open, up to and including Wednesday, 14 February 2024.

### Easter 2024

All schools close on Friday, 22 March 2024, which is the final day of the school term, unless changes are needed to make up for time lost due to unforeseen school closures. If a school needs to make up such time, it can shorten the Easter break by staying open, up to and including Wednesday, 27 March 2024.

All schools re-open on Monday, 8 April 2024.

## School year 2024-2025

### October 2024 mid-term break

All schools close from Monday, 28 October 2024, to Friday, 1 November 2024 inclusive.

### Christmas 2024

All schools close on Wednesday, 20 December 2024 which is the final day of the school term. All schools re-open on Monday, 6 January 2025.

### February 2025 mid-term break

All **primary schools** close on Thursday, 20 February 2025, and Friday, 21 February 2025. Primary schools can use 3 discretionary days to extend this to a 5-day break starting on Monday, 17 February 2025 unless they need these days to make up for time lost due to unforeseen school closures.

Unforeseen school closures might happen, for example, due to bad weather.

**Post-primary schools** close for a week, from Monday, 17 February 2025, to Friday, 21 February 2025 inclusive, unless changes are needed to make up for time lost due to unforeseen school closures.

If a post-primary school needs to make up such time, it can shorten the mid-term break by staying open, up to and including Wednesday, 19 February 2025.

### Easter 2025

All schools close on Friday, 11 April 2025, which is the final day of the school term, unless changes are needed to make up for time lost due to unforeseen school closures. If a school needs to make up such time, it can shorten the Easter break by staying open, up to and including Wednesday, 16 April 2025.

All schools re-open on Monday, 28 April 2025.

**Page edited:** 12 September 2023

# School discipline

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/#2473e9)
* [Code of behaviour for students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/#2345e9)
* [Discipline in schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/#08220d)
* [What happens if my child is suspended from school?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/#376fc0)
* [What happens if my child is expelled from school?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/#73da5f)
* [How to appeal a suspension or expulsion from school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/#6d7636)
* [Where to send your appeal](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/#70ad90)

## Introduction

The board of management of a school [must draw up a code of behaviour for students](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0022/index.html). The code must also set out how students will be punished for breaching it.

Disciplinary procedures can include suspension and expulsion. To appeal a suspension or expulsion, you must do so in writing within 42 days of the decision by the board of management. For more information on how to appeal a suspension or expulsion from school – see below.

## Code of behaviour for students

When your child starts school, the principal must give you a copy of the school’s code of behaviour. You may also be asked to agree to make all reasonable efforts to ensure that your child complies with the code.

A code of behaviour in a school must set out the following:

* Types of behaviour by the student that may need disciplinary measures
* Nature of the disciplinary measures that must be taken
* Procedures to be followed before a student is suspended or expelled
* Grounds for lifting a suspension

Department of Education guidelines recommend that the prevention of bullying should be a fundamental part of a written code of behaviour and discipline in all schools.

Codes are drawn up with input from teachers, parents and the educational welfare officer. Educational welfare officers work for the [Tusla (the Child and Family Agency)](http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/) and they help co-ordinate all policies concerning both [attendance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/) and broader educational welfare.

There are [Guidelines for Schools on Developing a Code of Behaviour (pdf)](http://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/guidelines_school_codes_eng.pdf) and [information for parents and guardians about schools](https://www.tusla.ie/tess/information-for-parents-and-guardians-tess/) on the Tusla website.

## Discipline in schools

Schools have considerable independence in the area of discipline. However, they must use fair procedures. This includes hearing the student's case.

Schools must have a code of behaviour that sets out how students will punished for breaching it. It is assumed that parents agree to the punishments set out in the code of behaviour, if they are told about the code when their child starts school. As a result, if the punishment is detention, the parents or student cannot claim that the student has been falsely imprisoned.

The Department provides [guidelines to primary schools about developing policy on school discipline](https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/35916bd98c30416abf63e1a9242f8d4a/) and [guidelines to second-level schools about developing policy on school discipline](https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/35916bd98c30416abf63e1a9242f8d4a/).

### Corporal punishment

Under Section 24 of the [Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1997/en/act/pub/0026/index.html), corporal punishment of students may be a crime. However, Sections 18 and 20 of the Act permit the justifiable use of force in certain circumstances, for example, self defence or defence of others.

### National Behaviour Support Service

A [National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS)](http://www.nbss.ie/index.php) was set up to help second-level schools deal with disruptive behaviour. The service works with selected schools that have significant discipline problems. The NBSS operates through 4 regional behaviour support teams. A team of professionals, including psychologists, works intensively with a school over a period of time to help identify the school's problems and improve student behaviour. In some cases the team may recommend setting up a behaviour support classroom in a school.

## What happens if my child is suspended from school?

If there has been serious misbehaviour, the school’s board of management or the school principal may decide to suspend your child. The process for suspension should be set out in the school’s code of behaviour.

The school will notify the parents of the suspension. If your child is suspended they will keep their place in the school. This means that they can return to the school at the end of their suspension.

If your child is suspended from school for 20 days or more in a school year, you have the right to appeal this decision to the Department of Education. You must appeal within 42 days of the decision to suspend your child – see ‘How to appeal a suspension or expulsion from school’ below.

## What happens if my child is expelled from school?

Before your child is expelled, the school must tell the educational welfare officer in writing of its decision. The educational welfare officer may then try to find a solution. Your child cannot be expelled until 20 days after the educational welfare officer has been notified about the case.

If your child is expelled they will lose their place at the school.

You can appeal the decision to expel your child from school to the Department of Education. You must appeal within 42 days of the decision – see ‘How to appeal a suspension or expulsion’ below.

## How to appeal a suspension or expulsion from school

If your child is expelled from school or suspended for 20 days or more in a school year, you have the right to appeal the decision under [Section 29, of the Education Act 1998](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/51/section/29/enacted/en/html).

**You must appeal in writing within 42 days of the decision by the board of management.**

The following people can make an appeal:

* The student’s parent(s)
* The student, if they are aged over 18
* Tusla may in certain cases appoint an independent person to appeal the suspension or expulsion of a student

You must complete and return a [Section 29 Appeal form](https://assets.gov.ie/97232/45221182-a823-4768-8649-f06a8c2eb2ec.pdf) to the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit within 42 days of the date of the decision by the board of management – see ‘Where to send your appeal’ below.

### Appeal hearing

You will be asked to attend an appeal hearing. You can bring 2 other people with you. However, they cannot make a statement at the hearing unless the appeals committee allows them to do so.

If the student is aged over 18, he or she can attend the hearing.

The hearing is normally held within 21 days of the Department getting your completed Section 29 appeal form.

At the hearing, your appeal will be heard by an appeals committee of 3 people. You and the school can present your case and have a right of reply. Members of the appeal committee may ask you questions.

The appeals committee may invite people with relevant expertise to attend or make a statement such as Tusla or the [National Council of Special Education](https://ncse.ie/).

The committee is appointed by the Minister of Education, but independent of the Department. In making its decision, the appeal committee must consider factors such as the nature of the behaviour, the explanation offered, the efforts made by the school to help the student, educational interests of your child and the effect on other students. They will also consider any safety, health and welfare issues for students and staff.

**Outcome of your appeal**

After the hearing, the appeals committee will write to you and the other participants with their preliminary decision and the reasons for their decision.

You and the other participants have an opportunity to respond in writing within 7 days of the preliminary decision being issued.

The appeals committee will then make its final decision. You will be sent a copy of the final decision and the reasons for the decision.

### If your appeal is allowed

If the final decision of the appeal committee is to allow your appeal, your child will be readmitted to the school.

The suspension or expulsion will be removed from your child’s school record.

### If your appeal is refused

If the appeal committee agrees with the decision to suspend your child from school, your child can return to their school at the end of their suspension.

If the appeal committee agrees with the decision to expel your child from school, your child cannot return to their school. However, [Tusla’s Education Support Services (TESS)](https://www.tusla.ie/tess/) can assist you in getting a new school placement for your child.

The Department of Education has [answers to frequently asked questions on appealing a suspension or expulsion (pdf).](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/90de23-appeal-against-permanent-exclusion-suspension-or-refusal-to-enrol/)

## Where to send your appeal

You must complete and return a [Section 29 Appeal form](https://assets.gov.ie/97232/45221182-a823-4768-8649-f06a8c2eb2ec.pdf) to the Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit within 42 days of the date of the decision by the board of management.

### Department of Education

Section 29 Appeals Administration Unit  
Department of Education  
Friar’s Mill Road  
Mullingar  
Co Westmeath  
N91 H30Y

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/>

**Email:** [section29@education.gov.ie](mailto:section29@education.gov.ie)

During the COVID-19 public health emergency, you must send your appeal by email.

**Page edited:** 14 December 2020

# Home School Community Liaison Scheme (HSCL)

* [What is the Home School Community Liaison Scheme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/home-school-liaison/#333c58)
* [How can I access the Home School Community Liaison Scheme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/home-school-liaison/#8d5b38)

## What is the Home School Community Liaison Scheme?

The [Home School Community Liaison Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/6c72da-home-school-community-liaison-scheme-hscl/) (HSCL) supports students with poor attendance at school and who are at risk of leaving school early.

The Scheme is funded through the Department of Education and is managed by [Tusla’s Educational Support Service (TESS)](https://www.tusla.ie/tess/) .

The HSCL Scheme aims to:

* Support parents to be a resource to their own children and become involved in their child’s education
* Promote co-operation between home, school and relevant community agencies in the educational interests of the child
* Work with parents to prepare and support them as a resource to their own children and encourage parents to become involved in their child’s education
* Help the child’s learning and improve their chances of staying in school

The HSCL co-ordinator is a designated teacher in the school. The HSCL co-ordinator can:

* Make home visits
* Organise parent classes and other courses
* Support families as their child moves through the education system

The coordinator works closely with the [School Completion Programme and the Educational Welfare Service](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/).

### HSCL home visits

The home visit is one of the key ways the HSCL co-ordinator works with the family to improve the child’s progress at school.

The co-ordinator visits parents in the family home or can meet them in the child’s school, Family Resource Centre or other suitable location, if necessary.

During the home visit the HSCL co-ordinator hears parent’s views and brings information about the school and services in the community.

## How can I access the Home School Community Liaison Scheme?

The HSCL is available in all urban DEIS schools (band 1 and band 2) and in all DEIS post-primary schools. You can see the [list of DEIS schools](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7938e-list-of-schools-into-deis/).

The school will identify children who need HSCL support.

You should contact the school principal if you need further information.

You can read more in the [Information booklet for DEIS schools participating the Home School Liaison Scheme](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/39197/?page=1) and on the [Department of Education’s website](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/6c72da-home-school-community-liaison-scheme-hscl/).

**Page edited:** 29 June 2022

# School attendance

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/#2473e9)
* [The Child and Family Agency](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/#20be04)
* [Rules on school attendance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/#108810)
* [Parents' responsibilities and duties](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/#7b0ed7)
* [Difficulties attending school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/#ffeea0)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-attendance/#ec2268)

## Introduction

The legislation governing school attendance in Ireland is the [Education (Welfare) Act 2000.](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/2000/en/act/pub/0022/index.html) Under the Act the minimum school leaving age is 16 years, or until students have completed 3 years of second-level education, whichever is the later.

Parents must ensure that their children from the age of 6 to the age of 16 attend a recognised school or receive a certain minimum education. There is no absolute legal obligation on children to attend school nor on their parents to send them to school.

A *recognised school* is a school overseen by the Department of Education. An independent school (or non-recognised school) is one that is not overseen by the Department of Education.

The Irish Constitution recognises the family as the primary educator of the child. It guarantees to respect the right and duty of parents to provide (according to their means) for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children. Parents are free to provide this [education in their homes](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/) or in schools recognised or established by the State.

## The Child and Family Agency

The [Child and Family Agency (Tusla)](http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/) is responsible for ensuring that every child attends school regularly, or otherwise receives an appropriate minimum education. It also advises the Government on school attendance and education provision. Tusla's emphasis is on helping schools, families and children, rather than imposing penalties for non-attendance at school. Tusla employs educational welfare officers at local level throughout the country to provide support and advice to parents and schools and to follow up on absences from school. They also help to co-ordinate all policies concerning attendance and educational welfare.

Tusla also:

* Monitors school attendance, and takes a range of measures where children do not attend school
* Maintains a register of children who are not attending a recognised school
* Maintains a register of young people aged 16 and 17 years who leave school early to take up employment and makes arrangements for their continuing education and training in consultation with providers and employers
* Collects data on school attendance and non-attendance, suspensions and expulsions
* Intervenes in relation to proposed school expulsions

Tusla publishes [reports on school attendance at primary and secondary schools](https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/information-for-schools-inc-absence-reporting/reporting-absenteeism/).

## Rules on school attendance

### Schools' responsibilities

Schools must keep a register of the students attending the school. They must also maintain attendance records for all students and inform the Child and Family Agency's educational welfare services if a child is absent for more than 20 days in a school year.

The principal must also inform the Child and Family Agency's educational welfare services if, they think a student has an attendance problem. This may be because the student is not coming to school or has been suspended. You can find more information about [school discipline](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/). Schools can make [attendance returns to Tusla online](https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/information-for-schools-inc-absence-reporting/reporting-absenteeism/guide-to-submitting-school-absence-returns-online/).

**School Attendance Strategy**

The Board of Management in each school must prepare a school attendance strategy and send it to the Agency.

This strategy encourages regular school attendance and an appreciation of learning within the school. The strategy may:

* Reward students who have good attendance records
* Identify students who are at risk of dropping out early
* Establish closer contacts between the school and the families concerned
* Co-ordinate programmes with other schools aimed at promoting good behaviour and encouraging attendance
* Identify aspects of the operation and management of the school and the curriculum that may contribute to student absence and remove these if they are not necessary for the running of the school.

**Enforcement**

The Child and Family Agency can arrange for an examination of a child's intellectual, emotional or physical development, with a parent's consent. If the parent refuses consent, Tusla can apply to the [Circuit Court](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/justice/courts-system/circuit-court/) for an order that the examination be carried out. The Circuit Court can grant the order if it is satisfied that the child's behaviour, lack of educational progress or regular absence from school without a reasonable excuse warrants an examination.

### If your child’s time at school is reduced by the school

Your child should attend the full school day and the full school week. Sometimes a school will use a *reduced school day* for a child, for example, to help a child back into a school routine. However, a reduced school day should only be put in place in limited circumstances and for a set period of time.

A *reduced school day* is when the school decides that:

* A student arrives to school after the usual starting time or leaves before the end of the school day
* A student may not attend the full 5 days each week

The Department of Education has introduced [guidelines on the use of reduced school days](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/63545-the-use-of-reduced-school-days/). The guidelines recommend that a student should not be on a reduced school day for more than 6 weeks and there should be a plan to support the student’s return to a full-time school day.

**From 1 January 2022**, if the school is restricting your child’s full attendance at school, the school must notify the [Tusla Education Support Service (TESS)](https://www.tusla.ie/) that your child’s school day is reduced. Schools must also review the circumstances for any child currently on reduced school days before the start date of the guidelines.

If your child’s school day is reduced the school must ensure that:

* The reduced school day or week is necessary and lasts only as long as necessary
* You (or the student if they are over 18) consent to the reduced school day or week. If you don’t consent and the school implements the reduction anyway it is the same as [being suspended from school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline#l284dd).

If you have any concerns about the use of reduced school days for your child, you can contact the [Tusla Education Support Service](https://www.tusla.ie/) for advice.

## Parents' responsibilities and duties

Under the Education Welfare Act 2000 parents must inform the school if their children will be absent from school on a school day and the reason for the absence, such as illness. It is best to do this in writing. The Child and Family Agency strongly advises against taking children out of school to go on holiday during term-time.

Parents and guardians have a legal obligation to ensure that their child attends a school or else receives an education. If Tusla considers that a parent is failing in his or her obligation, it must send the parent a School Attendance Notice. The warning outlines that legal action will follow if the child does not attend school regularly. Tusla must make reasonable efforts to consult with the parents and the child, before sending the warning.

If the parent fails to comply with a warning, they may be prosecuted. If convicted, the parent may be fined and/or imprisoned for a month and also fined for each subsequent day that they fail to send the child to school. If the parent claims that suitable alternative education is being provided, they must prove this. It will be a defence for the parents to show that they have made all reasonable efforts to send the child to school - in such cases, the Child and Family Agency must be informed.

Tusla has a leaflet for parents [Don't let your child miss out.](https://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/publications/parents-information/)

### Education outside the school system

The Minister can set minimum standards of education for [children educated outside the recognised school system](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/home-education/).

The Child and Family Agency must keep a register of children who are receiving education but not attending a recognised school. This register will show the names of children who are educated at home or in an independent school. It is not a register of school dropouts.

All parents or guardians who want to educate their children at home, must register their child with Tusla. If the parent agrees, Tusla's [Alternative Education Assessment and Registration Service (AEARS)](https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/alternative-education-assessment-and-registration-service/) will assess the educational arrangements in place for the child and determine whether you are providing a minimum education. If Tusla is satisfied, it may enter the child's name on the register.

If Tusla is not satisfied, it can:

* Require the parents to comply with its requirements to ensure the child receives the prescribed minimum education and then register the child

Or

* Refuse to register the child.

There are also provisions for removing a child's name from the register.

### Obligation to attend school

Parents do not have to send their children to a recognised school if:

* The child is on the register (described above)
* Parents have applied to have their child included on the register but a decision has not been made or an appeal is pending
* The child is being educated outside the state
* There is a good reason for the child not attending school

If Tusla refuses to register a child, or requires an undertaking from a parent or removes a child from the register, you can appeal to the Minister. The Minister will appoint an appeal committee. The committee will decide whether to:

* Register the child
* Refuse to register the child, or
* Require the parent to comply with any requirements Tusla considers appropriate.

Where no appeal is brought, Tusla must make every reasonable effort to have the child enrolled in another school. If this fails, Tusla must ensure that the child receives a prescribed minimum education.

## Difficulties attending school

If you have difficulty ensuring your child attends school, you can contact an educational welfare officer for advice and help. [View the contact list for educational welfare officers.](http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/educational-welfare-service-contacts)

If your child is unwell and you are concerned about sending your child to school, you can contact your school for advice. You can also get further information on [hse.ie](https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/colds-coughs-children/).

## Further information

### Educational Welfare Services

Child and Family Agency (TUSLA)

Tusla Educational Support Service,  
Child and Family Agency,  
4th Floor, Brunel Building,  
Heuston South Quarter,  
Dublin 8

**Tel:** 01-7718586

**Homepage:** <http://www.tusla.ie/services/educational-welfare-services/>

**Email:** [tessinfo@tusla.ie](mailto:tessinfo@tusla.ie)

**Page edited:** 9 August 2023

# Bullying in schools

* [What is bullying?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/bullying-in-schools-in-ireland/#902a7b)
* [How do I know if my child is being bullied?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/bullying-in-schools-in-ireland/#0fde13)
* [What can I do if my child is a bully?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/bullying-in-schools-in-ireland/#c72796)
* [How is bullying stopped?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/bullying-in-schools-in-ireland/#dd02f3)
* [Where to get help](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/bullying-in-schools-in-ireland/#7ba3e7)

## What is bullying?

Bullying is defined by the Department of Education as unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

Placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed or repeated by other people is also regarded as bullying behaviour.

### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying through the internet or mobile phone, often through social networking sites used by young people. A booklet [GET WITH IT! A guide to cyberbullying (pdf)](https://www.hotline.ie/library/documents/Cyberbullying.pdf) has been produced as a joint initiative between the [Office for Internet Safety](http://www.internetsafety.ie/) and [Barnardos.](http://www.barnardos.ie/) The booklet aims to increase awareness of all aspects of cyberbullying including how to identify it and how to prevent it.

## How do I know if my child is being bullied?

Many children who are being bullied are afraid to speak out. They are scared of reprisals if they tell someone. Reports have shown that as young people grow older, they are less likely to tell someone. They become more and more isolated, experience depression and, in extreme cases, can harm themselves or attempt suicide.

### Signs of bullying

The [signs of bullying](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Parents_Coping_with_Bullying_d3.pdf) can be:

* Fear of going to school
* Poor or deteriorating schoolwork, inability to concentrate
* Withdrawn behaviour
* Depression
* Loss of confidence
* Reluctance to go out
* Shortage of money
* Torn clothes, broken glasses, missing schoolbooks
* Repeated signs of bruising and injuries

## What can I do if my child is a bully?

If you think your child might be a bully it is important to recognise this and help them to deal with it. You should talk to the class teacher about this bullying behaviour and how it could be changed.

## How is bullying stopped?

Intervention from adults is usually necessary. Bullying behaviour must be challenged or it will become regular and get worse.

If you think someone is being bullied, you should talk to the class teacher or the principal.

If the matter cannot be resolved by the school staff, you can report the matter to the Chairperson of the school’s Board of Management.

The Board of Management is legally responsible for the day to day running of the school and has a duty of care to its school's students. The school’s Board of Management in turn is responsible to the [school patron](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/ownership-of-primary-schools/) for the exercise of its duties under the Education Act 1998.

The [Department of Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cb6966-anti-bullying-procedures-for-primary-and-post-primary-schools/) can advise you on how to proceed with a complaint. The Department of Education itself does not have any power to investigate complaints.

The [Tackle Bullying website](https://tacklebullying.ie/) is a national website to prevent, intervene and resolve bullying and cyberbullying for young people, parents and teachers.

Serious instances of bullying, where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, must be reported to [Tusla](https://www.tusla.ie/) or the [Garda](https://www.garda.ie/en/contact-us/station-directory/).

### Anti-bullying procedures in schools

Bullying can occur at any age and in any environment. Bullying in schools is a particular problem because children spend so much of their time there and are in large social groups.

The school authorities are responsible for dealing with bullying. All schools should have an anti-bullying policy as part of their overall code of behaviour. The Department has published [Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (pdf)](https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/govieassets/24429/3b6f3db2de154ebaa1f69a0856c97c8e.pdf).

## Where to get help

If your child is being bullied, you should [contact your child’s school](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/find-a-school/).

You can find useful websites and organisations that may provide guidance and support on the [Department of Education’s website](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/cb6966-anti-bullying-procedures-for-primary-and-post-primary-schools/).

Barnardos provides [resources about bullying for young people](https://www.barnardos.ie/resources/young-people/bullying).

Serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive must be reported to [Tusla](https://www.tusla.ie/) or the [Garda](https://www.garda.ie/en/contact-us/station-directory/).

The Department has published a new anti-bullying strategy, [Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/241000/eb57d761-2963-4ab0-9d16-172b2e3be86d.pdf), and an [implementation plan for 2023-2027.](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/52aaf-cinealtas-action-plan-on-bullying/#cinealtas-implementation-plan-2023-2027)

**Page edited:** 11 April 2023

# Inspection of schools

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/schools-inspectorate/#l0b797)
* [Inspection reports](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/schools-inspectorate/#lbddc5)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/schools-inspectorate/#lef21f)

## Introduction

All State primary and post-primary schools in Ireland must be inspected by the Department of Education on a regular basis. The purpose of a school inspection is to ensure that educational standards are maintained.

The Department has a special division called the Inspectorate that carries out school inspections. The legislation dealing with school inspection is the [Education Act (1998)](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/1998/en/act/pub/0051/index.html) which sets out the responsibilities of the Inspectorate.

The Inspectorate evaluates and reports on the quality of education provision and is involved in:

* Inspecting and evaluating the education system at primary and post-primary level
* Giving advice to those working in the education system
* Contributing to education policy development

The [National Council for Special Education](http://www.ncse.ie/) supports and advises school in the provision of special education. The Inspectorate continues to evaluate the services for students with special educational needs.

The [Child and Family Agency](https://www.tusla.ie/) is responsible for assessing the [education provision for children who are not attending school](https://www.tusla.ie/tess/information-for-schools/).

## Inspection reports

The Inspectorate carries out inspections in schools and centres for education and reports on these school inspections.

Whole School Evaluations (WSE) complements school inspections. The WSE has been developed using a partnership approach. It includes pre-evaluation meetings with staff and management, meeting with parents’ association, school and classroom visits, preparation of a draft report, post-inspection meetings with staff and management, finalisation of the WSE report and issue of report to school.

You can find [inspection reports for individual schools](https://www.gov.ie/en/school-reports/?school_roll_number=&report_title=&school_level=Post+Primary&school_level=Primary&school_level=Special+Education&report_date_from_day=&report_date_from_month=&report_date_from_year=&report_date_to_day=&report_date_to_month=&report_date_to_year=) and [Whole School Evaluations](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b9e7d3-inspection-reports/#inspections-in-primary-and-post-primary-schools) on the Department of Education’s website.

## Where to apply

### Department of Education

Inspectorate Secretariat  
Department of Education  
Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 RC96  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 889 6553

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation-information/818fa1-inspectorate/>

**Email:** [inspectorate@education.gov.ie](mailto:inspectorate@education.gov.ie)

**Page edited:** 29 April 2021

# Teachers duty of care

* [Accidents at school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teachers-duty-of-care/#f07827)
* [Teachers' duty of care](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teachers-duty-of-care/#216ba2)
* [Making school safe](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teachers-duty-of-care/#d91b6b)
* [Making a complaint about a teacher](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teachers-duty-of-care/#a3efce)

## Accidents at school

If a child has an accident in the school, in the schoolyard, on the way to school, on the school bus or while on a school trip, the question of whether or not the school or the teachers were negligent may arise.

There is no simple answer to the question of when the school may be liable. Everything depends on the facts of the individual case.

## Teachers' duty of care

The general law of negligence provides that a person may be negligent if:

* They owe a duty of care to the person injured and
* They did not carry out that duty to the legal standard required and
* The person suffered damage as a result of the failure to observe the duty of care.

In any given case, the actual facts must be examined closely to see if all these elements are present.

There is no doubt that teachers owe a duty of care to students. There is no simple answer as to when this duty starts, where it ends and precisely what constitutes a breach of duty.

The following general principles apply:

* Teachers must take reasonable care to ensure that their students do not meet with foreseeable injury. They have a duty to protect the children against foreseeable risks of personal injury or harm.
* The standard of care is that of a reasonably careful parent. The degree of care depends on factors such as the age of the students.
* There must be an effective system of supervision in operation in the school.

The duty of care applies while the students are on the school premises during school opening hours. It can also apply if the students are present outside of official school hours, for example, if they arrive early or leave late and the teacher or school has agreed to the students being present.

The same duty of care applies if a teacher voluntarily supervises children.

Teachers must follow good standards and approved practice. Risky classes and activities require a greater degree of supervision. If goggles, protective clothing, etc., are supplied for certain activities, it is the teacher's duty to ensure that they are worn.

Teachers are not insurers and cannot be responsible for every accident in school hours. The courts accept that some accidents will happen no matter how well supervision is carried out and, in such cases, the teacher or school cannot be held liable.

## Making school safe

### Safety standards in schools

Schools must follow the usual safety rules that apply to public buildings and the normal rules that apply to employee safety at work.

### School discipline

Schools must have a code of behaviour in relation to [school discipline](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/) and [bullying](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/bullying-in-schools-in-ireland/) and teachers are obliged to behave in accordance with that code.

### Child abuse

There are specific rules and [guidelines for teachers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/child-protection-in-school/) if an issue of child abuse arises.

### Insurance

The Board of Management is generally liable for the negligence of its teachers. That means that the school’s board is normally sued in such cases.

The school’s board is obliged to have comprehensive insurance cover for the school. This insurance must cover public liability, negligence by staff or defects in the buildings. The insurance policy must be available for inspection.

Some parents take out insurance to cover children against accidents at school that are not the responsibility of the school. Some schools encourage parents to do this. This is entirely a matter of personal choice. The general health services are available to children in the normal way if they suffer an injury at school.

## Making a complaint about a teacher

If you have a complaint about a teacher or about the school, the first step is usually to speak to the class teacher. Then, if the complaint is not resolved, speak to the school principal. The next step is to approach the chairperson of the school's board of management.

If you have exhausted the school's complaints procedure and are still not satisfied, you can appeal to the Ombudsman for Children.

If your [complaint is about a teacher’s fitness to teach](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Professional-Standards/Complaints-about-Registered-Teachers/), you should first use the school’s complaints procedure. If you have exhausted this procedure and are not satisfied with the outcome, you can [make a complaint to the Teaching Council](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Professional-Standards/Complaints-about-Registered-Teachers/Making-a-Complaint/).

The Department of Education has no legal powers to investigate individual complaints about teachers or to instruct schools to follow a particular course of direction with regard to individual complaints. The Department provides information on the [complaints procedure in primary school](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/complaints-about-schools/#parental-complaints).

**Page edited:** 20 May 2022

# Teacher qualifications

* [The regulation of teachers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teacher-qualifications/#b1e248)
* [Teacher education and qualifications](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teacher-qualifications/#661d6c)
* [Teachers who qualified outside Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teacher-qualifications/#99580b)
* [Continuing professional development](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teacher-qualifications/#6c62d3)
* [Registration of teachers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teacher-qualifications/#9f5e57)

## The regulation of teachers

The [Teacher Education Section](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d5f08-initial-teacher-education-and-professional-development-section/) of the [Department of Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/) oversees teacher education policy and practice for [primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary_and_post_primary_education/going_to_primary_school/) and [post-primary schools](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary_and_post_primary_education/going_to_post_primary_school/).

The Teaching Council is the professional standards body for teaching and regulates the teaching profession in Ireland. The Teaching Council produces a code of professional conduct for teachers, which covers standards of teaching, knowledge, skill and competence. It also maintains a register of teachers – see ‘Registration of teachers’ below.

## Teacher education and qualifications

### Primary teachers

Primary school teachers must be qualified to teach the range of [primary school subjects](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/primary-school-curriculum/) to children aged 4 to 12 years. You can find information on the [qualifications you need to be a primary school teacher](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/Registration/How-do-I-register-/Qualifications/Primary-Teachers-Qualified-In-Ireland/Qualification-Requirements-for-Primary-Teachers-Qualifications-Awarded-in-Ireland-.html) on the Teaching Council's website.

A [list of recognised colleges](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/teacher-education/initial-teacher-education-ite.191.html) providing approved programmes is available on the website of the Teaching Council.

**Irish language requirements:** Primary school teachers must be able to teach the Irish language and the range of primary school subjects through Irish.

### Post-primary teachers

Post-primary teachers are normally required to teach at least 1 subject which they have studied to degree level. Post-primary teachers do not need to have a qualification in the Irish language unless they are employed by a Gaeltacht school or a school where Irish is the medium of instruction.

Qualification is usually achieved by gaining a primary degree from a [recognised third-level institution](https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/6f762-employing-a-teacher/). This degree must include at least 1 subject from the [post-primary schools’ curriculum](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/Curriculum/) for the Leaving Certificate Programme. The Teaching Council is the professional standards body for teaching. The Council promotes and regulates the profession. The primary degree is followed by a postgraduate qualification in education such as the Professional Masters in Education (PME).

### Recognition of qualifications

The [Teaching Council](https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/) is the statutory body that sets the standards of academic achievement and professional training required of teachers.

### Student teachers

[Student teachers](https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/news-events/latest-news/2023/teachers-who-qualified-abroad-can-apply-for-registration-and-complete-their-induction-in-ireland-on-a-time-bound-basis.html) who have successfully completed the first 2 years of an accredited undergraduate Initial Teacher Education programme can apply for registration with the Teaching Council.

## Teachers who qualified outside Ireland

### Recognition of qualifications

If you are a primary or post-primary school teacher who qualified outside Ireland and you wish to teach in a recognised school, you must apply for recognition of your qualifications prior to registration. The [Teaching Council processes applications](https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/) and regulates admissions to the teaching profession in Ireland.

Qualifications obtained outside the Ireland must be acceptable to the Council. Once your qualifications have been recognised, you may then apply for registration. The Teaching Council provides more [information for teachers who qualified abroad](https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/news-events/latest-news/2023/teachers-who-qualified-abroad-can-apply-for-registration-and-complete-their-induction-in-ireland-on-a-time-bound-basis.html).

### Foreign language assistants scheme

This scheme allows for language assistants from France, Germany, Spain, Austria, Italy and Belgium/Wallonia-Brussels to be assigned to post-primary schools and colleges in Ireland. Their fluency can help students understand and speak a foreign language and give them a better understanding of the way of life and customs of other countries. In the same way Irish students of French, German, Italian and Spanish can apply to work as English language assistants in the countries listed above. You can find details of the [English Language Assistant scheme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/a960dd-english-language-assistant-scheme/) on gov.ie.

## Continuing professional development

There are a number of supports available to teachers for [continuing professional development](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/25737e-professional-development/). The Department of Education provides support to school leaders and teachers in a number of areas such as curriculum reform, improving principals’ skills as leaders and managers, facilitating the management of schools and increasing the involvement of parents in the education of their children.

It also provides support to particular projects and initiatives including priority areas of education provision such as [disadvantage and inclusion](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/), [education for students with special educational needs,](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/special-education/) [positive behaviour management](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/attendance-and-discipline-in-schools/school-discipline/) and language support for [foreign national students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/educational-supports/resources-for-non-english-speakers/).

### Education centres

The nationwide [network of education centres](https://esci.ie/education-centres.html) organise the local delivery of national programmes of teacher professional development on behalf of the Department of Education. The centres also organise a varied local programme of activities for teachers, school management and parents in response to demand.

### Professional Development Service for Teachers

[Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)](https://www.pdst.ie/) provides professional development and support to help teachers and schools to provide the best possible education for all pupils and students. Continuing Professional Development opportunities are provided for teachers nationwide and in collaboration with the Education Centre network.

### Training for special educational needs

The [Special Education Support Service](http://www.sess.ie/) co-ordinates, develops and delivers a range of professional development initiatives and support structures for school personnel working with students with special educational needs in a variety of educational settings. These include mainstream primary and post-primary schools, special schools and special classes attached to mainstream schools.

## Registration of teachers

Teachers employed in State-funded teaching positions in recognised schools must be registered with the [Teaching Council](https://www.teachingcouncil.ie/en/) in order to be paid from public funds.

[Garda vetting](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/data-protection-at-work/garda-vetting/) and a character reference is required to register. The Teaching Council provides [details of registration for teachers](http://www.teachingcouncil.ie/registration/applying-to-register.195.html).

**Page edited:** 9 February 2023

# Summer education programme

* [What is the Summer Programme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/summer-education-programme/#0516bb)
* [Who qualifies for the Summer Programme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/summer-education-programme/#ed7104)
* [School-based programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/summer-education-programme/#973603)
* [Home-based programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/summer-education-programme/#9033b9)
* [DEIS schools summer camp](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/summer-education-programme/#f77c30)
* [Can I get school transport during the Summer Programme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/summer-education-programme/#bf8d8a)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/summer-education-programme/#ec2268)

## What is the Summer Programme?

The Summer Programme provides educational supports during the summer to children with special needs and those at most risk of educational disadvantage.

The Summer Programme 2023 includes:

* School-based summer programme for children with special educational needs and children who are at risk of educational disadvantage. It includes children in special classes, special schools and mainstream schools
* Home-based provision for children with complex needs (where a school-based programme is not available)
* Summer camps in DEIS schools focusing on numeracy and literacy

All primary schools and post-primary schools including DEIS schools have the opportunity to provide a summer programme for mainstream pupils with complex needs and those at greatest risk of educational disadvantage.

The Summer Programme is based on the *July Provision* which was delivered to children with special educational needs in previous years by the Department of Education.

## Who qualifies for the Summer Programme?

The following children qualify for the school-based programme:

* Children in a special school or a special class
* Children in mainstream classes in schools who are accessing the highest level of the continuum of support. This includes children with autism, Down syndrome, sensory impairments, and certain other disabilities

You can find more information about [who qualifies for the school-based summer programme](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/246835/f963c458-bef5-4c5c-bff5-4ac5357cd9fe.pdf#page=null).

### Priority places

Schools will give first place on the school-based programme to students with complex needs in special classes and mainstream classes. The remaining places will be given on the basis of need and availability.

### Remaining places

When the priority places have gone, the remaining places may be offered to:

* Children identified by the school as being most at risk of educational disadvantage and early school leaving
* Children accessing Special Education Teacher (SET) or Special Needs Assistant (SNA) support
* Children from Traveller and Roma communities
* Children who have recently arrived from Ukraine and other countries who need support with English language or integration

You can find more information about [who qualifies for the school-based summer programme](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/246835/f963c458-bef5-4c5c-bff5-4ac5357cd9fe.pdf#page=null).

## School-based programme

All primary schools and post-primary schools have the opportunity to provide a [summer programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5d15a-summer-programme/) for mainstream pupils with complex needs and those at greatest risk of educational disadvantage.

The programme will take place for a set number of weeks in the child’s school during the school summer holidays.

You should contact your child’s school to find out about its summer programme.

**Special school**

All special schools have the opportunity to provide a summer programme. The programme will take place for a set number of weeks in the child’s school during the school summer holidays.

Contact your child’s school to find out about their summer programme.

If your child’s school is not providing a school-based summer programme, or is unable to offer your child a place, contact the Summer Programme National Coordinator, email: [schoolsummerprogramme@education.gov.ie](mailto:schoolsummerprogramme@education.gov.ie). They will help your child access the school-based summer programme in their own school or at another location.

If your child cannot get a place on a school-based summer programme, they may access the home-based programme.

You should contact your child’s school about the summer programme.

You can find more [information on the special school summer programme](https://assets.gov.ie/255364/9dd2dc16-2de7-4c17-ae58-66582bf77226.pdf).

## Home-based programme

The home-based summer programme is only available to children with complex special educational needs who are in a special school or special class. You can apply for the home-based programme if your child’s school is not running a summer programme or it is unable to offer your child a place.

If your child qualifies for the home-based summer programme, they will get 10 hours support per week for 4 weeks.

You can apply for the home-based summer programme through your child’s school.

You should not start a home-based programme until the Department of Education has confirmed that your child qualifies for the home-based summer programme.

In 2023, the home-based programme allows a teacher to tutor a group of up to 3 children. Previously, the home-based programme was only offered as one to one or siblings’ tuition.

If approved by the Department, a private group provider may provide for four or more children.

You can find more about the [home-based summer programme](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/256750/ab9a3f8a-d33c-4856-bcb3-b9a5f1b91d7f.pdf#page=null).

## DEIS schools summer camp

All DEIS schools can run a school-based summer programme. DEIS primary schools may run literacy and numeracy camps for children in addition to a school-based summer programme.

Literacy and numeracy camps are for children who are considered by the school to have the greatest level of need. Each camp is for 1 week and provides 4 hours of instruction each day. The summer camps also provide well-being and school engagement programmes for children at risk of educational disadvantage. The camps can be run through English or Gaeilge.

Primary schools can allocate places to children of any age, including sixth class, and can choose children who would most benefit from the programme.

You can read information for parents about the [school-based programme and DEIS summer camps](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/255541/ef804445-5c47-4ba0-acaf-38b2513aa976.pdf#page=null).

## Can I get school transport during the Summer Programme?

If you normally use the [special education needs (SEN) transport scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-primary-school/school-transport-for-children-with-special-needs/), it may be provided. If SEN transport services are not available, you can apply for grant funding after your child has completed the programme.

The Department’s [School Transport Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/post-primary-school-transport-scheme/) will not run during the summer programme. If your child normally uses the School Transport Scheme, your school may make local transport arrangements. You should contact your school for more details.

## Further information

You should contact your child’s school about its school-based summer programme.

You can get more information about the Summer Programme from the [Department of Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5d15a-summer-provision/) and at [gov.ie/summerprogramme](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/5d15a-summer-programme/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/summerprogramme/).

The Summer Programme helpline will operate Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm, call 0906 484292.

If you have any questions about the school-based programme you can contact your child’s school or email [schoolsummerprogramme@education.gov.ie](mailto:schoolsummerprogramme@education.gov.ie)

**Page edited:** 25 May 2023

# State examinations

[Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/)

Information about the established Leaving Certificate programme in 2023.

[Leaving Certificate 2021 and accredited grades](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-cert-accredited-grades/)

In 2021, Leaving Certificate students had the choice to sit the written examination or get an accredited grade from the State Examination Commission (SEC).

[Leaving Certificate examination fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-fees/)

Students taking the State Leaving Certificate examinations must pay examination fees. Information on fees and exemptions from them.

[Leaving Certificate Applied](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/)

The Leaving Certificate Applied is a two-year, self-contained programme aimed at recognising the talents of all students and providing opportunities to prepare for working and adult life.

[Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/)

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is a senior cycle programme designed to give a strong vocational focus to the established Leaving Certificate.

[Junior Cycle exam and results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/)

The Junior Certificate was replaced by the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). The written exam is held at the end of the three-year Junior Cycle in second-level schools.

[Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations (RACE)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/)

Special arrangements are in place for children with disabilities who are taking State examinations

[Appealing the Leaving Certificate results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/)

Describes the procedures to follow if you wish to appeal the results of your Leaving Certificate examinations.

[The State Examinations Commission](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/the-state-examinations-commission/)

Describes the work of the State Examinations Commission.

# Leaving Certificate

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/#2473e9)
* [Leaving Certificate 2024](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/#30e5e6)
* [Leaving Certificate 2023](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/#5637bb)
* [Leaving Certificate subjects and assessment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/#9782b0)
* [Leaving Certificate exam fee](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/#3ec819)
* [Getting a copy of your old Leaving Certificate results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/#0e6f78)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/#ec2268)

## Introduction

Most [Senior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/senior-cycle/) students choose the established Leaving Certificate programme. This 2-year programme covers a wide range of subjects.

Subjects are normally studied at either Ordinary or Higher Level. Irish and Mathematics can be studied at Foundation Level. Foundation Level is geared to the needs of students who might have difficulty with subjects at Ordinary or Higher Level.

## Leaving Certificate 2024

You can get information about the [assessment arrangements for the Leaving Certificate 2024 exams](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/270733/9d77a9be-41ac-4494-887d-b1963c81cd0a.pdf#page=null).

The [State Examinations Commission](https://www.examinations.ie/) will publish the exam timetable for Leaving Certificate 2024.

## Leaving Certificate 2023

The Leaving Certificate 2023 written exam ran from 7 June 2023 to 27 June 2023.

The Leaving Certificate 2023 results were issued on the [Candidate Self Service Portal (CSSP)](https://www.examinations.ie/cssp/2023/) on **Friday, 25 August 2023.**

## Leaving Certificate subjects and assessment

The Department of Education publishes [syllabus and curriculum information](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy/655184-education/). The [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment](https://ncca.ie/) provides a [list of Leaving Certificate subjects](http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/Curriculum).

### Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate reform

The Department of Education has announced plans to [reform the Senior Cycle and Leaving Certificate](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/f7bf7-minister-foley-announces-plan-for-reform-of-senior-cycle-education-equity-and-excellence-for-all/). It has set up the [Senior Cycle Redevelopment Programme Delivery Board](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/a727e-minister-foley-announces-the-establishment-of-the-senior-cycle-redevelopment-programme-delivery-board-and-deferral-of-planned-move-of-paper-one-in-leaving-certificate-english-and-irish-examinations/) to oversee changes. A selection of schools will be invited to become pilot schools. You can read about [changes to the Senior Cycle](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f53c6-senior-cycle-reform/).

### Marking system for examination grades

The examination scale has 8 grades, the highest grade is Grade 1 and the lowest grade is Grade 8.

The 8-point grading scale replaced the 14-point scale at both Higher and Ordinary levels in 2017.

Marks between 100% and 30% are divided into seven grade bands (1-7). Each band is 10% wide.

The scheme means that the Common Points Scale used by the CAO to determine entry into higher education institutions, was also revised in 2017. [You can read more on transition.ie.](http://www.transition.ie/)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Grading scale for Leaving Certificate from 2017** | |
| **New grades\*** | **% Marks** |
| H1/O1 | 90 - 100 |
| H2/O2 | 80 < 90 |
| H3/O3 | 70 < 80 |
| H4/O4 | 60 < 70 |
| H5/O5 | 50 < 60 |
| H6/O6 | 40 < 50 |
| H7/O7 | 30 <40 |
| H8/O8 | 0 < 30 |

\*Grades at Higher level are prefixed with H. Grades at Ordinary level are prefixed with O.

**Marking system (2015/16)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Percentage Range | Grade |
| 90% or over | A1 |
| 85% but less than 90% | A2 |
| 80% but less than 85% | B1 |
| 75% but less than 80% | B2 |
| 70% but less than 75% | B3 |
| 65% but less than 70% | C1 |
| 60% but less than 65% | C2 |
| 55% but less than 60% | C3 |
| 50% but less than 55% | D1 |
| 45% but less than 50% | D2 |
| 40% but less than 45% | D3 |
| 25% but less than 40% | E |
| 10% but less than 25% | F |
| Less than 10% | No grade |

## Leaving Certificate exam fee

There was [no exam fee in 2023](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/70aba-minister-foley-welcomes-60m-in-education-measures-as-part-of-government-cost-of-living-package/).

## Getting a copy of your old Leaving Certificate results

You may be asked for evidence that you have completed State examinations when you apply for a job or for further education. It is always useful to have a copy of your results as well as the original Certificate, especially if you plan to work or study outside Ireland.

The State Examinations Commission can give you a certified [statement of your results](https://www.examinations.ie/statement-of-results/).

## Further information

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

**Page edited:** 25 September 2023

# Leaving Certificate 2021 and accredited grades

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-cert-accredited-grades/#2473e9)
* [Leaving Certificate written exams](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-cert-accredited-grades/#6f8be6)
* [How are accredited grades worked out?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-cert-accredited-grades/#309d9f)
* [Leaving Certificate results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-cert-accredited-grades/#440d72)
* [How to appeal your results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-cert-accredited-grades/#34719e)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-cert-accredited-grades/#ec2268)

## Introduction

If you were a Leaving Certificate student in 2021, you could choose to sit the written exam in June 2021 or get an [accredited grade from the State Examination Commission (SEC)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7a163-a-guide-to-state-examinations-and-accredited-grades-for-leaving-certificate-2021/) or both.

If you opted for both the written exam and an accredited grade in a subject, you will have your best grade recorded in your Leaving Certificate results.

The Leaving Certificate results issued on the Candidate Self Service Portal - see ‘Leaving Certificate results’ below.

The Department of Education has information about [Leaving Certificate 2021](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d3ea2-leaving-certificate-2021/).

## Leaving Certificate written exams

The Leaving Certificate written exams ran from 9 June to 29 June 2021.

The oral and coursework components of the exams were not included in the accredited grade process.

You can read about changes made to [assessment arrangements for Leaving Certificate 2021 examinations](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/70c4d-further-adjustments-to-the-written-examinations/) to take account of the disrupted learning experienced by students during school closures in 2020 and 2021.

## How are accredited grades worked out?

An *accredited grade* is based on an estimated mark you would get in that subject in the Leaving Certificate exam. In 2020, the term *calculated grade* was used.

SEC accredited grades are offered to students taking the following Leaving Certificate programmes:

* [Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/) - for your subjects
* [Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/) - for your outstanding assessments, including your subjects, vocational specialisms and tasks due to be completed in the current LCA session.

[Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/) - for your LCVP Link Modules.

There are a number of steps involved to an accredited grade:

**Step 1:** Estimated mark by your teacher

Your [teacher gives you an estimate of the mark](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/4f535-a-guide-to-state-examinations-and-accredited-grades-for-leaving-certificate-2021-step-1-teachers-estimation/) based on your likely performance if you were to sit the 2021 Leaving Certificate exam.

Your teacher uses records of your performance and progress to get your estimated percentage mark, for example: classwork and homework, class assessments and your coursework over the 2 years of the Leaving Certificate cycle.

**Step 2:** In-school alignment by subject teachers in your school

Subject teachers in your school then review the estimated percentage marks of students in the school. Your teacher finalises their estimated percentage marks following this [alignment process](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/64f8b-a-guide-to-state-examinations-and-accredited-grades-for-leaving-certificate-2021-step-2-school-alignment-of-marks/).

If your school has only one teacher of a subject, that teacher will conduct the in-school alignment process with the deputy principal of your school or with another teacher of the same subject in your school who does not have a Leaving Certificate class in 2021. Your principal must agree to the arrangement.

**Step 3:** Oversight of marks by the school principal

The school principal reviews the estimated percentage marks and assures themself that the process has been fair.

**Step 4:** National standardisation

Your school principal submits the estimated marks for national standardisation by 3 June 2021.

After the [standardisation process](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e442c-a-guide-to-state-examinations-and-accredited-grades-for-leaving-certificate-2021-standardisation-and-processing-of-data-by-the-state-examinations-commission/), the marks are converted into SEC accredited grades.

You can read a guide to [State examinations and accredited grades for Leaving Certificate students 2021 (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/124752/1e91aa2d-db43-4f18-8c3f-10c738cffb28.pdf) and a guide to [State examinations and accredited grades for Leaving Certificate Applied students 2021 (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/125709/7cd88f6a-a09c-49b6-b102-16f215248f5c.pdf) for more detailed information.

You can read [guides for schools on how to provide estimated percentage marks](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/d3ea2-leaving-certificate-2021/) on gov.ie.

## Leaving Certificate results

The Leaving Certificate results issued on the Candidate Self Service Portal (CSSP) in September 2021.

If you opted for both the written exam and an accredited grade in a subject, you had your best grade recorded in your Leaving Certificate results.

Your results were provided directly to the CAO to process your application for entry to higher education. First round [CAO offers for colleges and universities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/) issued on 7 September 2021.

From 7 September, you could access details of the component marks for the written exams and the estimated percentage mark for accredited grades on the CCSP. You could also apply to view scripts for written exams in person in your school.

Applications to view scripts closed on 8 September 2021.

The Department has published [information for Leaving Certificate 2021 students](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/9f53d-leaving-certificate-2021-information-for-students/).

You can read more in the [Candidate Information Guide to Results and Appeals](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/35c7c-candidate-information-guide-to-results-and-appeals/) for Leaving Certificate 2021.

## How to appeal your results

### Written exam

If you are not satisfied with the marks you get in one or more subjects of your written Leaving Certificate exam, you can appeal those results to the State Examinations Commission (SEC).

Your script will be sent to an appeal examiner for re-marking. You can find out more about [appealing the Leaving Certificate written exam result](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/).

### SEC accredited grade

If you appealed an accredited grade, the appeal would only check that your school data was correctly transferred to the SEC and that it was correctly processed by the SEC. If you were still unhappy at the end of this process, you could get verification of the SEC’s processes by independent appeal scrutineers.

**Under the accredited grades system, the estimated percentage mark provided by the teacher could not be reviewed.**

Students who considered that their case had not been processed correctly after the appeals process could make a complaint to the [Ombudsman](https://www.ombudsman.ie/) or, in the case of students under 18 years of age, the [Ombudsman for Children](https://www.oco.ie/).

## Further information

You can find out more in [A Guide to State Examinations and Accredited Grades for Leaving Certificate 2021](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/7a163-a-guide-to-state-examinations-and-accredited-grades-for-leaving-certificate-2021/). You can read [key dates and information for Leaving Certificate 2021(pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/126098/eb518b98-43d5-4649-9e1f-08eb1eff297e.pdf).

The Citizens Information Board has published a booklet called [Information for school leavers (pdf)](https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/downloads/guides/Information_for_school_leavers_2021_en.pdf) that covers many of the practical questions about education and employment that you may have.

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

### Department of Education

Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 889 6400

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-education/>

**Email:** [info@education.gov.ie](mailto:info@education.gov.ie)

**Page edited:** 26 January 2021

# Leaving Certificate examination fees

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-fees/#2473e9)
* [How to pay exam fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-fees/#ea28e3)
* [Exam fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-fees/#836277)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-fees/#b48c08)

## Introduction

Students who are taking or repeating the Leaving Certificate pay examination fees to sit the exams. If you or your parent(s) or guardian(s) hold a medical card, you are exempt from fees.

There was no exam fee to sit the Leaving Certificate exams in 2023.

## How to pay exam fees

If you are taking the Leaving Certificate in a school setting, your school will give you a form. You make the payment through a bank and the bank must stamp the form. You then return the form to the school.

If you, your parent(s) or guardian(s) hold a current [medical card](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/medical-cards-and-gp-visit-cards/medical-card/) you do not have to pay the fee. Put the details of the medical card on the fee payment form and return the form to the school.

**External students**

If you are an external student (that is, you are sitting your examinations outside of a school setting), you can either [apply and pay online](https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=ca) or get a form from the Entries section of the State Examinations Commission (see 'Where to apply') and pay through a bank.

## Exam fees

There was [no exam fee for the Leaving Certificate 2023](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/70aba-minister-foley-welcomes-60m-in-education-measures-as-part-of-government-cost-of-living-package/).

## Where to apply

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

**Page edited:** 30 August 2023

# Leaving Certificate Applied

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/#2473e9)
* [Leaving Certificate Applied courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/#d642b9)
* [Leaving Certificate exam fee](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/#3ec819)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/#10ea51)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/#b48c08)

## Introduction

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) is a distinct 2-year Leaving Certificate programme which prepares students for adult and working life.

The programme helps students apply what they learn to the real world.

The 2-year programme consists of 4 half-year blocks called sessions. Achievements are credited in each session.

You can get information about the [assessment arrangements for the Leaving Certificate Applied 2024 exams](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/270737/ff594633-bfc2-4885-9f9b-9895ec1465a9.pdf#page=null).

The established Leaving Certificate is a different programme covering a wide range of subjects taken over 2 years. You can read about the [Leaving Certificate.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/)

## Leaving Certificate Applied courses

Courses are offered in 3 main areas:

* Vocational preparation, involving work experience, enterprise and communication
* General education, offering life skills, the arts, social education, leisure and language
* Vocational education

### Course structure

Each course consists of a [number of modules](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/LCA/). Each module takes place over half a year. There is also a wide range of practical courses, called vocational specialisms, from which the student can choose.

### Assessment and examinations

Students are assessed continuously throughout the course and there is a final examination.

Students are assessed on the completion of modules and practical activities that allow you to integrate learning from different courses.

The final examination must be taken in:

* English and communication
* Two vocational specialisms
* Mathematical applications
* Language
* Social education

There are written and oral examinations in all languages. There are practical examinations in the vocational specialisms. The written examinations usually take place in June, at the same time as the examinations for the established Leaving Certificate.

Since September 2022, students taking the LCA programme can choose to take the established Leaving Certificate Mathematics and an established Leaving Certificate Modern Language.

You can find out more about [how the Leaving Cert Applied is assessed](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Senior-cycle/LCA/).

### The certificate awarded

Students who successfully complete the programme are awarded a Leaving Certificate from the Department of Education. The certificate is awarded at three levels:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Level | Marks and Credits Required |
| Pass | 60-69% (120-139 credits) |
| Merit | 70-84% (140-169 credits) |
| Distinction | 85-100% (170-200 credits) |

Candidates who get less than 60% (120 credits) or who do not complete the course, are awarded a record of experience.

### Eligibility for further education and third-level courses

If you are awarded the Leaving Certificate Applied, you can go on to a wide range of [Post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/). PLCs take place in your Education and Training Board (ETB) schools, colleges and education centres.

Courses offered include Art and Design, Business, Science, Services and Leisure, and Communications and Media studies.

PLC courses can lead to an award recognised by the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). You can [find out if your course is recognised by NFQ](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=19&Itemid=21).

Students with the Leaving Certificate Applied cannot gain direct entry through the [Central Applications Office (CAO) system](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/) to the universities or institutes of technology. Many PLC courses lead to either a level 5 or level 6 award. In some cases, you can progress with this award to a third level course in a higher education institution such as an institute of technology or a university. You should discuss your options for progression with your course provider.

Students cannot go directly to nursing but may be eligible to apply as a mature student with certain qualifications or relevant experience.

Students with the Leaving Certificate Applied can also go on to [apprenticeship programmes](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/). Many students go directly to employment.

## Leaving Certificate exam fee

There was [no exam fee for the Leaving certificate 2023](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/70aba-minister-foley-welcomes-60m-in-education-measures-as-part-of-government-cost-of-living-package/).

## How to apply

If you are a post-primary school student, your details will be sent to the State Examinations Commission by your school. If you are an external (non-school) candidate for the Leaving Certificate Applied, [you can apply online or on the application form from the SEC.](https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=ca)

You can find the following documents on the State Examinations Commission website:

* [Application form from the State Examinations Commission (SEC)](https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=ca)
* [Previous Leaving Certificate Applied examination papers on the SEC website](http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=en&sc=ep&ty=e)

## Where to apply

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

### Curriculum Development Unit

Sundrive Road  
Crumlin  
Dublin 12  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 453 5487

**Fax:** (01) 453 7659

**Homepage:** [http://www.curriculum.ie](http://www.curriculum.ie/)

**Email:** [lcapplied@cdu.cdvec.ie](mailto:lcapplied@cdu.cdvec.ie)

**Page edited:** 25 September 2023

# Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

* [What is the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/#8d4b4e)
* [Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme subjects and assessments](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/#5895db)
* [Access to further study](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/#f25056)
* [Exam fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/#836277)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/#10ea51)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/#b48c08)

## What is the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme?

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) is a Leaving Certificate with a strong vocational focus and is distinct from the [established Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/).

The LVCP focusses on developing students' practical skills for the world of work alongside their academic subjects.

LCVP students must take:

* 5 established Leaving Certificate subjects including Irish
* 2 link modules on enterprise education and preparation for work

If you are exempt from Irish, you must choose another subject to ensure you have 5 established Leaving Certificate subjects.

The Department of Education has published the [assessment arrangements for Leaving Certificate 2024](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/270733/9d77a9be-41ac-4494-887d-b1963c81cd0a.pdf#page=null).

You can read information about [Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/).

## Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme subjects and assessments

### The link modules

Students must take 2 link modules:

* Preparation for the world of work
* Enterprise education

The link modules are activity-based and are taken over the 2 years of the programme.

The 2 modules usually take a total of 2 to 3 class periods per week, compared with a Leaving Certificate subject, which generally takes 4 to 5 class periods in a week.

The link modules help students to apply the knowledge and skills they gain through their chosen subjects with the world outside the school.

You can read more about the [programme modules and requirements](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/997056e3-2792-4ef6-8b6c-ef80c0dfccd8/Revised-LCVP-Programme-Statement_June-22_EN.pdf)

### Assessment and examinations

The Leaving Certificate subjects are examined through the standard [Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/) examination.

The link modules are assessed by:

* A written examination representing 40% of total marks
* A portfolio of coursework representing 60% of total marks

### Certification

Students receive the same certificate as other Leaving Certificate students, but their Leaving Certificate includes an additional statement of the results of the link modules (pass, merit or distinction).

## Access to further study

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) gives students the same opportunity to proceed to universities and colleges as the students taking the [established Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/).

A new grading scheme for the Leaving Certificate was introduced in 2017. The new scheme means that the Common Points Scale used by the CAO to determine entry into higher education institutions, has also been revised.

Since 2017, institutes of technology and the universities recognise the link modules as follows:

Distinction: 66 points

Merit: 46 points

Pass: 28 points

[You can read more on transition.ie.](http://www.transition.ie/)

## Exam fees

There was [no exam fee](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/70aba-minister-foley-welcomes-60m-in-education-measures-as-part-of-government-cost-of-living-package/) for the Leaving Certificate 2023.

## How to apply

If you are a post-primary school student, your details will be sent to the State Examinations Commission (SEC) by your school. If you are an external (non-school) candidate for the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, you can apply online by completing the [application form available on the SEC website](https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=ca).

## Where to apply

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

**Page edited:** 29 August 2023

# Junior Cycle exam and results

* [Junior Cycle exam](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/#5e37de)
* [Junior Cycle awards and grades](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/#381595)
* [Junior Cycle exam fee](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/#7652a5)
* [Junior Cycle results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/#dc5832)
* [How to appeal your results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/#34719e)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/#ec2268)

## Junior Cycle exam

The Junior Cycle examination is held at the end of the [Junior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/junior-cycle/) in post-primary schools. [The Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) has replaced the Junior Certificate](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-is-changing). It adds a classroom-based assessment based on the work completed by the student during second and third year.

The written examination takes place in June of the third year of the Junior Cycle.

You can get information about the [assessment arrangement for the Junior Cycle 2024 exams](https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/270733/9d77a9be-41ac-4494-887d-b1963c81cd0a.pdf%22%20\l%20%22page=null) and [previous Junior Certificate examination papers](http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=en&sc=ep&ty=e).

### Junior Cycle exam 2023

The [Junior Cycle 2023 written exam](https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-77789709.pdf) ran from 7 June 2023 to 19 June 2023.

You can get information about the [assessment arrangements for Junior Cycle 2023](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/50564-leaving-certificate-2023/#assessment-arrangements-for-junior-cycle-and-leaving-certificate-examinations-2023) and [previous Junior Certificate examination papers](http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=en&sc=ep&ty=e).

The Junior Cycle 2023 exam results are expected to be published on **18 October 2023**.

## Junior Cycle awards and grades

In 2022, the [Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-cycle/Junior-Cycle-is-changing) fully replaced the Junior Certificate. It adds a classroom-based assessment to the exam which is based on work completed by the student during second and third year.

More information about the changes to the Junior Cycle is available from the [National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)](https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Junior-Cycle/Junior-Cycle-is-changing/).

**Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement grades**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Percentage Range** | **Grade** |
| 90 or over | Distinction |
| 75 but less than 90 | Higher Merit |
| 55 but less than 75 | Merit |
| 40 but less than 55 | Achieved |
| 20 but less than 40 | Partially Achieved |
| Less than 20 | Not Graded |

From 2014 to 2021, both the old Junior Certificate grade bands of “A-NG” and the new Junior Cycle descriptors of “Not Achieved-Distinction” appeared on the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement Award.

## Junior Cycle exam fee

There was [no exam fee](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/70aba-minister-foley-welcomes-60m-in-education-measures-as-part-of-government-cost-of-living-package/) for the Junior Cycle exam 2023.

Students sitting for the Junior Cycle usually pay an examination fee. In early February of the exam year, the school sends parents who are paying the examination fee a form. The parent makes the payment through a bank and the bank must stamp the form. The parent then returns the form to the school.

## Junior Cycle results

You can get your results from your school and on the [State Examinations Commission website](https://www.examinations.ie/). To access your results online you need your examination number and PIN number. You can get both these numbers from your school.

### Getting your results from previous years

To get a certified statement of examination, you can either apply in [writing or use the application form](https://www.examinations.ie/?l=en&mc=ca&sc=sor). You must provide the following personal details:

* Full name
* Name at the time of the examination (if different)
* Current address
* Daytime phone number
* Date of birth
* Year of examination
* Name and address of school attended
* Examination number (if known)

Send your completed application form together with the appropriate fee to the State Examinations Commission.

## How to appeal your results

If you want to [appeal your Junior Cycle examination results,](http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=gj) you should apply through your school.

In 2023, the State Examinations Commission (SEC) will confirm if there is any appeal fee. In 2019, the appeal fee was €32.

## Further information

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

**Page edited:** 25 September 2023

# Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations (RACE)

* [Exam arrangements for students with special needs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/#059db2)
* [What 'reasonable accommodations' are available?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/#fd725d)
* ['Accommodations' that can be approved by your school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/#a2030a)
* [Rules on 'reasonable accommodation' for exams](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/#691e9f)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-arrangements-for-students-with-disabilities/#b48c08)

## Exam arrangements for students with special needs

Secondary school students with special needs may have special arrangements made for them while sitting State examinations such as the Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate. Candidates with disabilities (for example, visual impairments, learning difficulties, motor and mobility impairments and so on) can apply through their school for the Scheme of Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examinations (RACE).

Reasonable accommodations are designed to remove, as far as possible, the impact of a disability on a candidate's performance and enable the candidate to access the state examinations on an equal basis with other students. It does not give the candidate an unfair advantage over other candidates in the same examination.

## What 'reasonable accommodations' are available?

Examples of reasonable accommodations include the following:

* You may get enlarged and/or Braille versions of questions, if you have a visual impairment
* You may use voice-activated computers, tape recorders or scribes (other people to do the writing)
* You may use assistive technology to access the examination paper, for example reading pens, magnifiers or screen readers
* You may do your examination in a hospital or in any other stand-alone centre
* If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you may be exempted from the aural part of the examination

## 'Accommodations' that can be approved by your school

Your school has the authority to make special provisions for students with special needs during State exams on the basis of what is best for you. Some of the special provisions your school can make include:

* Taking medicine, food or drinks into the examination centre where this is required for medical reasons.
* Use of a special desk or chair that is used in your classroom
* Use of low-vision aids that you normally use in the classroom
* Ensuring that deaf and hard-of-hearing students are seated close to the examination superintendent
* Granting breaks or rest periods in each examination session warranted by your physical or medical condition. (Under this special provision, the time taken for rest or as a break can be compensated for at the end of each examination period to a maximum of 20 minutes.)

If you are not satisfied with the arrangements made, you may appeal to an independent appeals forum. The members of the forum are from outside the Commission and all appeals are considered in light of the [Framework of Principles](http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=rc) set out by the Expert Advisory Group on State Examinations.

## Rules on 'reasonable accommodation' for exams

The State Examinations Commission has responsibility for ensuring the proper conduct of State examinations in Ireland. The Commission has a [stated policy regarding the issue of reasonable accommodations of students](http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=ra) with special needs during examination time.

However, schools also have the authority to make a number of specified arrangements to facilitate examination candidates with special needs without requesting advance permission from the Commission.

You can find more [information and key dates in the guide for students on reasonable accommodations](https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-94915644.pdf).

## Where to apply

You can download the application form and further information on reasonable accommodations from [examinations.ie](https://www.examinations.ie/schools/circulars/reasonable-accommodations/).

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

**Page edited:** 8 October 2021

# Appealing the Leaving Certificate results

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/#2473e9)
* [Leaving Certificate 2023 appeal results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/#eb1864)
* [Appealing your mark in the exam](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/#0910f1)
* [Viewing your exam script](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/#7be74b)
* [Exam appeal fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/#1aa354)
* [How to apply to appeal your results](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/#6b75ee)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/#b48c08)

## Introduction

You can appeal your Leaving Certificate results.

If you appeal your mark in a written exam, your script will be sent to an appeal examiner for re-marking.

## Leaving Certificate 2023 appeal results

If you appealed your Leaving Certificate 2023 written exam results, you can see your appeal results on the [Candidate Self Service Portal](https://www.examinations.ie/cssp/2023/) from **11am on 29 September 2023.**

You can call the SEC Candidate helpline on 1800 111 135 or 1800 111136 on the following dates:

* Friday, 29 September 2023 (11am to 5pm)
* Monday, 2 October until Friday 13 October 2023 (9am to 5pm)

You can also email [candidateportal@examinations.ie](mailto:candidateportal@examinations.ie)

**Viewing your exam script**

You must **apply to view the appeals exam script**. You must complete the [application form (pdf)](https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/BI-EX-64155091.docx) and email it to [candidateportal@examinations.ie](mailto:candidateportal@examinations.ie) by **5pm on** **Monday 2 October 2023.**

You can view appealed scripts from **10am on Wednesday 11 October until 5pm on Thursday 12 October 2023**.

If you are still unhappy with the outcome of your appeal, you can refer your examination appeal to the Independent Appeal Scrutineers. You must do so by **5pm on 13 October 2023** – see ‘appeals process’ below.

You can find out more in the [Guide to your appeal results and post appeal process (pdf)](https://www.examinations.ie/misc-doc/EN-EX-57144525.pdf).

Changes to exam results from the appeals process have been sent to the [Central Applications Office](https://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=offerdates).  Final [CAO offers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/) will be made on 3 October 2023.

## Appealing your mark in the exam

If you are not satisfied with the marks you get in one or more subjects of the Leaving Certificate examination, you can appeal those results to the [State Examinations Commission](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/the-state-examinations-commission/).

Before you appeal your results, you can view your examination script and then decide if you still want to appeal. See ‘Viewing your exam script’ below.

### Appeal process

Your script will be sent to an appeal examiner for re-marking. This will not be the same person who originally marked your work. The same marking scheme is used for re-marking. This means that appeal examiners apply the same standards in re-marking as were applied to all candidates in the original examination.

For Leaving Certificate 2023, a post-marking adjustment was made to all results.  These are additional marks awarded to a candidates’ component results. Post-marking adjustments cannot be appealed. However, the post-adjustment changes if your overall mark changes following the appeal.

There is further information about the [appeal process on the SEC’s website](https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=gl).

If you are not happy with the outcome of your appeal, you may request an [appeal review by the Independent Appeals Scrutineers](https://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=gu). Application forms for an appeal review are provided with your appeal results.

### Rectification outside of the appeal process

If you have viewed your script and believe there is a clear discrepancy between the mark awarded and the subsequent grade awarded, you also have means of redress. You should ask the Organising Superintendent at the viewing session for a *Rectification Outside of the Appeal Process Form*.

This rectification service applies **only** where it is clear that the total mark is inconsistent with the grade awarded and where this matter can be resolved administratively. [Information on appealing your results and rectification outside of the appeal process is available on the SEC's website](http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=ca&sc=ga).

## Viewing your exam script

When you get your exam results, you can apply to view your examination script. This allows you to see how your work was marked so you can make an appeal if you think there was a mistake.

## Exam appeal fees

In 2023, the fees to appeal each subject are:

* Leaving Certificate €40 per subject
* Leaving Certificate Applied €15.50 per subject

If your appeal is successful and your subject result is upgraded, you will get a refund of the appeal fee for that subject.

## How to apply to appeal your results

You could apply to appeal your 2023 results and pay the fee through the Candidate Self Service Portal from **3 September 2023 until 4 September 2023**.

More information about appeal applications for 2023 is published on the [State Examinations Commission](https://www.examinations.ie/?l=en&mc=ex&sc=aa) website.

## Where to apply

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

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# The State Examinations Commission

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/the-state-examinations-commission/#l0b797)
* [SEC responsibilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/the-state-examinations-commission/#lc5c17)
* [Rates](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/the-state-examinations-commission/#l62fd2)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/the-state-examinations-commission/#ld1a9a)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/the-state-examinations-commission/#lef21f)

## Introduction

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) oversees the State examinations at second level in Ireland. These examinations are the Junior Cycle (previously Junior Certificate) and the Leaving Certificate. It also organises certain trade and professional examinations.

Since 2003, the Commission is responsible for the development, assessment, accreditation and certification of the State certificate examinations. It works in partnership with school authorities and education providers to run the examination and assessment system in a fair, accountable and accessible way.

## SEC responsibilities

The State Examinations Commission (SEC) is responsible for the operation of all aspects of the [established Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/), [Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-vocational-programme/), [Leaving Certificate Applied](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/) and [Junior Cycle](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/) examinations including written, oral, aural and practical components and assessed course work in some subjects. This includes preparing examination papers and other examination material. The Commission is also responsible for deciding how State examinations are conducted and choosing suitable venues where they can be held. It has an [archive of past examination papers available on its website.](http://www.examinations.ie/index.php?l=en&mc=en&sc=ep&ty=e)

The Commission determines the procedures for the conduct and supervision of examinations and arranges to have the examinations marked. This includes the recruitment of contract staff to supervise the examinations and to draft and mark examination components. It is responsible for charging and collecting [fees for examinations](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/examination-fees/).

### Examination results

The Commission is responsible for issuing the results of all State examinations. It also decides the procedures which allow for the review and appeal of examinations at the request of candidates. You have the right to [appeal the results of a state examination](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/appeal-leaving-cert/) to the State Examinations Commission. The Commission holds records of all State examination results and you can apply to it for a certified copy of your results – see 'How to apply' below.

### Online services

The Commission operates a service where candidates can get their examination results by telephone or over the internet using a Personal Identification Number (PIN). These services are not intended to replace the service and advice provided by schools but are intended as an alternative service for candidates who cannot avail of the results service offered by their schools.

## Rates

**Statement of results**: there is a charge of €14.50 for each certified copy of results.

## How to apply

You can apply for a certified copy of your results by [downloading an application form (pdf)](http://www.examinations.ie/candidates/statementofexamresults1.pdf) from the [State Examinations Commission website](https://www.examinations.ie/statement-of-results/) or by writing to the Commission.

## Where to apply

### State Examinations Commission

Cornamaddy  
Athlone  
Westmeath  
Ireland

**Tel:** (090) 644 2700

**Fax:** (090) 644 2744

**Homepage:** <http://www.examinations.ie/>

**Page edited:** 17 February 2021

# Leaving school

* [Options for school leavers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/leaving-school/#4e3e5b)

## Options for school leavers

This page summarises some of the options you have after leaving school.

The Citizens Information Board has also published a booklet called [Information for school leavers (pdf)](https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/en/publications/information/leaflets.html) that covers many of the practical questions about education and employment that you may have when you leave school.

If you intend [going on to third-level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/going-to-college/) on leaving school, you can find out how to apply in our document on [college application procedures](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/). Offers of places on courses are mainly decided by Leaving Certificate results but some institutions offer outreach programmes. If you have a disability you may be eligible for the [DARE access route](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/) and if you come from a disadvantaged background you may be eligible for [HEAR](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/).

Another option is a [Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) - aimed at school-leavers who want to develop vocational and technological skills.

[Further Education and Training (FET) courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/) and [apprenticeships](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/) for first-time jobseekers cover a wide range of areas.

[Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/) also runs paid training courses for school-leavers.

The [Right Course](https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/f205a-the-right-course/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/therightcourse/) is an online portal with information on further education and training places, higher education courses and information if you are on a social welfare payment and want to begin a course.

If you are taking up a job, you should familiarise yourself with your [employment rights](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/). Find out about [minimum rates of pay](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/pay-and-employment/minimum-wage/) , [contracts of employment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/contracts-of-employment/contract-of-employment/) , [holidays and leave](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/leave-and-holidays/), particularly if you are [starting work](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/starting-work-and-changing-job/) for the first time. You may also plan to [work abroad.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/moving-abroad/)

The [National Council for Special Education](http://www.ncse.ie/) has published a [guide to post school education and training (pdf)](https://ncse.ie/post-school-education-and-training-options-for-people-with-disabilities) which provides information on the options available to school leavers with disabilities.

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# Further education and training (FET) courses

* [What is further education and training (FET)?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/#f9869c)
* [Finding the right FET course](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/#ad1666)
* [Further education and training qualifications](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/#866f40)
* [Supports to access education and training](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/#b20296)
* [Financial supports](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/#dec193)

## What is further education and training (FET)?

Further education and training (FET) covers any education and training after second-level education ([post-primary school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/)) and up to [third-level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) (higher level education).

FET is for adults and young people aged over 16.

You can still participate in a FET course, if you left school and didn’t complete your second-level education.

FET can help you get new skills if you are:

* [Leaving school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational-education-and-training/leaving-school/)
* Unemployed
* Looking for your first job
* Changing direction in your career

You can choose from a large number of FET courses and programmes.

FET includes [apprenticeships](https://www.etbi.ie/apprenticeship/), [traineeships](https://www.etbi.ie/traineeship/), [Post Leaving Cert (PLC) courses](https://www.etbi.ie/post-leaving-certificate-courses/), as well as [community education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning-to-education/adult-education/) and [adult literacy and numeracy skills](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning-to-education/adult-literacy/).

## Finding the right FET course

There is a wide range of further education and training (FET) courses available. You have the option of [full-time courses](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/fulltime) or [part-time courses](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/parttime).

[Qualifax](http://www.qualifax.ie/) has a database of all further education courses. It also provides the information you need to make an informed choice about your education, training and career path. How to qualify and what training allowances are available vary from course to course, so check the details of each course carefully.

You can get also get more information on FET courses, how to access them and the [financial supports](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/58c68-get-financial-support-for-training-or-education/) available on the [therightcourse](http://www.gov.ie/therightcourse) website.

### Help to find the right course

If you need help to find a FET course, you can contact the [Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0da49-career-guidance-and-information/).

This service is available to:

* Everyone over 18
* People over 16 who are not in full-time education.

The service will give priority to people who are unemployed.

You can get more [information on returning to education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning-to-education/sources-of-information-on-returning-to-education/).

## Further education and training qualifications

**The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)** allows the different levels qualifications to be compared. There are 10 Levels on the NFQ. FET courses are provided at Levels 1 to 6 on the [National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)](https://nfq.qqi.ie/).

**Progression to third-level education**

If you have a qualification at NFQ Level 5 and Level 6, you can progress to third-level education with the [Higher Education Links Scheme](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/qqi-awards/going-to-higher-education-using-my-qqi-award-learner).

The Tertiary Education Programme is a new pathway to third level education. You start in a further education institution and progress to a higher education institution to complete a degree with the [Tertiary Education Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/fd38f-tertiary-programmes/).

It is also possible to [access third-level education as a mature student](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/).

## Supports to access education and training

There are a number of programmes that can support you to access further education and training.

### If you are unemployed

[**Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)**:](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning-to-education/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/) If you are an unemployed or getting certain social welfare payments VTOS can help you to return to full-time education. VTOS courses are particularly suitable if you have been unemployed or out of school for some time.

[**Back to Education Programme**](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-programme/): This can help you to return to part-time or full-time education and keep your social welfare payment or get a [Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/).

[**Work Placement Experience Programme (WPEP)**](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment-and-redundancy/employment-support-schemes/work-placement-experience-programme/): WPEP can provide you with work experience if you have never had a job or have lost your job. You must be getting a qualifying social welfare payment for a minimum time. If you qualify, you will get a weekly WPEP allowance.

[**Training Support Grant (TSG)**](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/11dbee-training-support-grant/#what-the-training-support-grant-is): TSG can help you access short-term training that is not immediately available from a State provider or that will help you get a job quickly. It is available to jobseekers and people getting certain other social welfare payments. All applications must be made to a case officer at your local [Intreo Centre or Social Welfare Branch Office](https://www.gov.ie/en/directory/category/e1f4b5-intreo-offices/?referrer=http://www.gov.ie/en/service/40cf48-find-your-local-intreo-office/).

[**FIT (Fastrack to IT)**](http://www.fit.ie/) provides information technology training for people who are getting certain social welfare payments or [signing for credits](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/irish-social-welfare-system/social-insurance-prsi/credited-social-insurance-contributions/). Courses include office administration, web design and programming, broadband communications and PC maintenance.

[**The Traineeship Programme**](https://www.solas.ie/programmes/traineeship/trainees/) provides training and work experience. The duration of the programme will depend on the [your area of training](https://www.solas.ie/programmes/traineeship/). You may keep your social welfare payment or get a FET training allowance. To get a FET training allowance you must be entitled to a qualifying social welfare payment, such as [Jobseeker's Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-allowance/) or [Jobseeker's Benefit.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-benefit/)

[**Specific Skills Training**](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/fulltime) allows you to learn new work-related skills. The [courses on offer](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/types) vary from centre to centre and from year to year with different levels of certification. The courses are run during the day and in the evenings. Priority on daytime courses is given to unemployed people. A day course is free to all unemployed people, even if you are not getting a social welfare payment. An evening course is not free unless you are getting a social welfare payment.

You may be able to keep your social welfare payment or get a FET training allowance if you are doing a day course. To get a FET training allowance you must be entitled to a qualifying social welfare payment, such as [Jobseeker's Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-allowance/) or [Jobseeker's Benefit.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-benefit/)

[Local Training Initiative Programme (LTI)](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/fulltime) is for people who are unemployed and finding it difficult to get a job. It is for people aged 18 – 35. Courses are full-time and lead to major awards on the NFQ at levels 3, 4 and 5.

### For younger people

[**Youthreach**](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational-education-and-training/youthreach/): If you are between 15 and 20 years of age and have left school without any formal qualifications, the Youthreach programme will provide you with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience.

[Community Training Centres (CTCs)](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/fulltime) are independent community-based organisations, which provide training and education for early school leavers, primarily aged between 16 and 21. Courses are generally for one year, full-time, and lead to major awards on the NFQ at levels 3 and 4.

### Online learning

[**eCollege**](https://www.ecollege.ie/course/) is the national online learning service for further education and training.

[Learn with NALA](https://www.learnwithnala.ie/) can help you improve your reading, writing, maths and digital skills up to Level 3.

### Access to higher education

[Tertiary Education Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/fd38f-tertiary-programmes/): With this programme you start in a further education setting and progress to a higher education institution to complete a degree.

[**Springboard**](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/) provides free higher education places for unemployed people. You can keep your social welfare payment for as long are you are entitled to it while you are participating on a Springboard course. If you are working, only level 6 courses are free.

### If you are working

[**Skills for Work**](http://skillsforwork.ie/) can help you to improve the basic skills you need in the workplace such as literacy, numeracy and IT skills. It is delivered by the Educational and Training Boards for those in part-time or full-time employment.

[**Skillnet Ireland**](https://www.skillnetireland.ie/) supports groups of private sector companies to set up training networks to deliver a range of accredited or industry-recognised programmes. Skillnet Ireland offers some training to [unemployed people](https://www.skillnetireland.ie/about/developing-your-skills/developing-irelands-future-workforce/). If you are unemployed you will not pay for this training.

## Financial supports

The financial supports available will depend on your situation.

There are a range of possible supports such as the [Back to Education Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-programme/) and the [Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/) and [training allowances](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-allowances/).

You can find out more about financial supports available to you from your local [Citizens Information Centre](https://centres.citizensinformation.ie/).

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# Apprenticeships

* [What is an apprenticeship?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/#e383f6)
* [Types of apprenticeships](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/#ab83fa)
* [Funding supports for apprenticeships](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/#9b55fd)
* [Apprenticeship fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/#0698c9)
* [Apprenticeship wages and allowances](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/#17961e)
* [How to qualify for an apprenticeship](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/#85e065)
* [How to apply for an apprenticeship](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/#c39cb1)
* [For more information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/#82e0be)

## What is an apprenticeship?

An apprenticeship is how people are trained in a craft trade or profession. You can get training in a traditional craft apprenticeship such as plumbing or carpentry or a new apprenticeship such as accounting technician – see ‘Types of apprenticeships’ below.

An apprenticeship programme provides on-the-job training with an employer along with off-the-job training in an education centre. An apprenticeship can last 2 to 4 years, during which time you will spend some time in off-the-job training.

When you complete an apprenticeship programme, you will get a recognised qualification at Level 5 or above on the NFQ framework.

You can start an apprenticeship from age 16 to 18 years depending on the apprenticeship programme. There is no upper age limit.

You can get advice on apprenticeships: Freephone 1800 794 487 from 12 noon to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

## Types of apprenticeships

There are 2 key types of apprenticeships. The main craft trades and professions are set by SOLAS, employers and unions.

### Craft apprenticeships

A craft apprenticeship will generally last for 4 years, during which time you will spend 3 different periods in off-the-job training.

Generally, you will start the first off-the-job training phase in an [Education and Training Board (ETB)](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/). Later, your off-the-job training will be in a Technological University or [Institute of Technology](http://www.thea.ie/about-thea/).

The skills you develop will be assessed through on-the-job competence testing as well as off-the-job modular assessment and examinations. If you complete these assessments successfully, you will be awarded an Advanced Certificate – craft (level 6 on the [National Framework of Qualifications](http://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx)).

Craft apprenticeships include carpentry, plumbing, motor mechanics and electrical apprenticeships.

### New apprenticeships in other industries

New apprenticeships introduced since 2016 lead to an award between Levels 5-10 on the National Framework of Qualifications. Each apprenticeship programme is between 2 and 4 years.

There are a number of models of on-the-job and off-the-job training, as well as different models of delivery and different target groups (including people already in employment).

Industry-led groups (consortia), work with education and training providers and other partners, to oversee the development and roll-out of new apprenticeships.

New apprenticeships in ICT, finance, hospitality, [farming](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/a1762-minister-harris-announces-new-farming-apprenticeships-are-open-for-applications/) and the [public service](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/194f4-ministers-harris-and-donohoe-launch-public-service-apprenticeship-plan/) offer apprenticeship jobs in software development, accounting technician, commis chef, farm management and digital marketing.

You can search for apprenticeships on [apprenticeship.ie](https://apprenticeship.ie/career-seekers/jobs).

## Funding supports for apprenticeships

There are a number of supports for apprentices and employers. You can check for supports on the [apprenticeship.ie](https://apprenticeship.ie/) website and with your local ETB.

**Apprentice supports**

The [Traveller Apprenticeship Incentivisation Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/01abc-minister-harris-announces-roll-out-of-450000-in-funding-for-travellers-in-apprenticeships/) pilot project offers bursaries for members of the Traveller community to access apprenticeships.

You can apply for an [Access and Inclusion bursary](https://apprenticeship.ie/news-events/news/access-and-inclusion-bursary) if you have completed an Access to Apprenticeship Programme.

The bursary provides eligible learners up to €3,000 to support costs for travel, accommodation and materials.. You can request an application form and information from [apprenticeship@nao.ie](mailto:apprenticeship@nao.ie)

**Employer supports**

Certain employers who provide apprenticeships can get an [apprenticeship employers grant](https://apprenticeship.ie/news-events/news/apprenticeship-employer-grant-2022) of €2,000 per year for each registered apprentice.

Employers can get a [gender-based bursary](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/2689f-minister-harris-announces-new-gender-based-funding-for-apprenticeship-employers/).

Small and micro business employers can get financial and training supports through [One More Job](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/e56f4-minister-harris-launches-financial-and-training-supports-for-employers-taking-on-apprentices/) if they employ one or more apprentices in 2023.

## Apprenticeship fees

Generally, an apprentice does not pay fees. However, apprentices pay a pro-rata registration fee (student contribution) if their off-the-job training takes place within a college such as an Institute of Technology or Technological University. The registration fee is generally based on the amount of time the apprentice spends in the college. You can find information about the pro-rata registration fee on apprenticeship.ie.

Apprentices are not eligible for the [student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/).

## Apprenticeship wages and allowances

Rates of apprenticeship wages and allowances can vary depending on the type of apprenticeship and the industry you have chosen:

* **Apprenticeships developed before 2016**: While you are training on the job, your employer will pay you a recommended apprenticeship wage. The ETB pay a weekly allowance equivalent to that wage while you are training off the job. In some cases, the ETB will contribute to your travel and accommodation costs. You can get information about [off-the-job training payments and allowances for craft apprentices](https://apprenticeship.ie/news-events/news/off-the-job-training-payments-allowances-for-craft-apprentices).
* **Apprenticeships developed from 2016**: Your employer will pay you for the duration of the apprenticeship. The rate of pay is agreed between you and your employer.

**Annual leave:** Your [statutory holiday entitlements](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/employment-rights-and-conditions/leave-and-holidays/annual-leave/) continue to accrue during the off-the-job phases, but must be taken during the on-the-job phases at times agreed with your employer.

**Apprentices who have children:** [Working Family Payment (WFP)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/working-family-payment/) is a weekly tax-free payment for employees with children. If you are an apprentice and you have at least one child you may qualify for WFP, if you meet the conditions for WFP.

### Other allowances

You should check with your employer or local ETB if you are entitled to any allowances such as a [tool allowance](https://assets.gov.ie/205625/60b7c894-c1ac-4f5b-9143-915f8884653b.pdf). You should also check if you qualify for [employment tax credits and reliefs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/money-and-tax/tax/income-tax-credits-and-reliefs/employment-tax-credits-and-reliefs/).

## How to qualify for an apprenticeship

To be eligible for an apprenticeship, you must be at least 16 years of age and have a minimum of grade D in 5 subjects in the Junior Cycle or equivalent exam. However, higher educational qualifications and other requirements may be required by employers.

If you don't have these qualifications, you may still register as an apprentice with an employer if you:

* Complete an approved preparatory training course followed by an assessment interview.
* Are over 18 years of age and have at least 3 years of relevant work experience, in which case you will also be asked to do an assessment interview.

You will be asked to pass a colour-vision test for some apprenticeships.

You can find the qualifications needed in the programme information for each [apprenticeship programme](https://apprenticeship.ie/pages/discover).

## How to apply for an apprenticeship

### Preparation programmes

**Access to Apprenticeship Programme**

You can apply for an Access to Apprenticeship Programme. The programme supports people aged 16 to 24 years from under-represented groups into national apprenticeships. The 12-week programme is currently provided by [TU Dublin](https://www.tudublin.ie/study/apprenticeships/access-to-apprenticeship/) and [TU Shannon](https://lit.ie/en-ie/study-at-lit/course-information/apprenticeships/access-to-apprenticeship).

**Pre-Apprenticeship course**

If you don’t have the minimum entry requirements, you can take a pre-Apprenticeship course. For information, you can contact [SOLAS](https://www.solas.ie/) or your local [Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational-education-and-training/youthreach/).

You can also prepare for an apprenticeship by doing a [Post Leaving Certificate (PLC)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) course in a related topic such as construction. Contact your local [Education and Training Board](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/).

### Apply directly to an employer

You can [find apprenticeship jobs](https://apprenticeship.ie/career-seekers/jobs) for craft and new apprenticeships on [apprenticeship.ie](https://www.apprenticeship.ie/). Apply directly to the employer before the closing date.

You can also approach an employer to ask if they will consider taking you as an apprentice.

All employers must be approved by SOLAS before they can hire an apprentice. Employers can find information about [how to become an apprentice employer](https://apprenticeship.ie/career-seekers/jobs).

Employers and apprentices must sign a formal contract agreeing they will meet certain conditions and that the employer will pay you for the length of the apprenticeship.

**Craft apprenticeship**

If you are interested in a craft apprenticeship, you can also contact the Apprenticeship Section of your [local ETB](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs) for details about applying.

**Apprenticeships in other areas of industry**

Apply to the industry lead or co-ordinating provider for the apprenticeship you are interested in. You can also contact the Apprenticeship Section of your [local ETB](https://apprenticeship.ie/more/apprenticeship-directory) for information.

## For more information

For advice on getting an apprenticeship, call Freephone 1800 794 487 from 12 noon to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

**Page edited:** 30 August 2023

# Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses

* [What is a PLC course?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/#414a55)
* [PLC courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/#2c3ab7)
* [Who can apply for a PLC course?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/#14e25f)
* [PLC course fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/#1ac69a)
* [How to apply for a PLC course](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/#d04f5f)

## What is a PLC course?

Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are full-time courses for people who have finished post-primary school (second-level education) and adults returning to education. PLC courses usually last one to 2 years.

If you have finished secondary school and want to get further education and training or skills for work, a Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) course may be the course for you.

PLC courses take place in your local Education and Training Board (ETB) schools, colleges and education centres. The course may also provide work-based experience.

**Courses leading to a degree**

PLC courses develop your technical and practical skills for an industry-recognised qualification. They can also offer you a way into higher education and can give you the opportunity to try out a subject of interest to you. You can discuss your options with the PLC course provider.

From 7 July 2023, you can apply for one of 23 [courses that will guarantee you entry to a third level degree programme](https://nto.hea.ie/courses/). The new programme allows you to start your degree at an Education Training Board and complete it in a university.

**Leaving school**

The Citizens Information Board booklet, [Information for school leavers](https://www.citizensinformationboard.ie/en/publications/information/leaflets.html), covers many of the practical questions about education and employment that you may have when you leave school.

## PLC courses

PLC courses last one to 2 years and lead to an award on the [National Framework of Qualifications](https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx) at NFQ Level 5 or NFQ level 6 – see below.

Most PLC courses are delivered by [Education and Training Boards (ETBs)](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/). You can find a complete list of all the PLC courses available on [Qualifax - the national learners' database](https://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&Itemid=42&limitstart=5). You can [search for a course on Qualifax](https://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=211&Itemid=49).

PLC courses cover a wide range of areas including:

* Business
* Electronics engineering
* Computing
* Catering
* Sport and leisure
* Theatre and stage
* Art craft and design
* Equestrian studies
* Multi-media studies and journalism
* Tourism
* Childcare and community care
* Hairdressing and beauty care
* Horticulture

See all the courses available on [Qualifax](https://www.qualifax.ie/).

**National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**

The qualification you get at the end of your training will depend on the type of course you have chosen. Many of the one-year PLC courses offer [Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)](http://www.qqi.ie/) accreditation at level 5 on the [National Framework of Qualifications](http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/learner.html), while other more advanced courses may offer QQI level 6, which can lead to further studies at third level. Other qualifications such as City and Guilds are also available. It is important to check out the qualification attached to a particular course before you decide to enrol.

**National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)**

The National Framework of Qualifications is made up of different levels. It shows learners their progression through the education system.

## Who can apply for a PLC course?

In general, you should have finished your secondary education and completed your Leaving Certificate to be eligible for a PLC course.

However, you may be able to apply for a PLC course if you have not completed your Leaving Certificate. If you have work experience relevant to the course or think you can show an ability in that area, you should contact the college where the course will take place. Explain your circumstances and ask to meet the co-ordinator of the course.

## PLC course fees

Since September 2022, you do not have to pay a participant contribution fee for a PLC course.

Colleges offering PLC courses usually have an additional 'course charge' to cover such expenses as books, uniforms, student services, professional registration fees and exam fees. The amount varies from college to college. Everyone has to pay the 'course charge'.

### Financial supports

You may qualify for a [student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) or a [Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/), depending on your circumstances. Find out more about [who qualifies for a student grant and how to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/).

If you are a refugee from Ukraine and covered by the EU Temporary Protection Directive, you can get financial support from the [PLC Bursary for Displaced Persons (Ukraine) Scheme 2023-2024](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/b95e5-ukraine-student-fees-and-financial-support-update/#plc-bursary-for-displaced-persons).

## How to apply for a PLC course

Use the national learners' database [qualifax.ie](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=15) to find the course in which you are most interested. Apply directly to the school or college offering that course. Many PLC courses take place in your local Education and Training Board (ETB).

You may be called for an interview before a final selection is made because the courses are work-related. These interviews are often quite informal and offer you the opportunity to discuss your particular interest in the course.

**Page edited:** 12 September 2023

# Returning to education

* [Adult learners returning to education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/returning-to-education/#1e6b91)
* [Courses with low or no entry requirements](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/returning-to-education/#5df9da)
* [Courses with an entry requirement](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/returning-to-education/#fef58d)
* [Can I get a qualification with adult education?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/returning-to-education/#ae3159)
* [Help for adults returning to education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/returning-to-education/#75f74f)
* [Financial supports](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/returning-to-education/#dec193)
* [How to apply for adult education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/returning-to-education/#4172d4)

## Adult learners returning to education

You may have left school early, be unemployed or want to reskill for a new job.

No matter your reason for wanting to return to education, there are many options available to you and a range of supports.

You can return to education with a [full-time course](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/fulltime) or a [part-time course](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/parttime).

This page provides information about returning to education and the organisations providing support. You can find out more about [further education and training courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/).

You can also Freephone AONTAS on 1800 303 669 for advice.

## Courses with low or no entry requirements

You don't need to have a Junior Certificate or Leaving Certificate to take part in many [full-time courses](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/fulltime) or [part-time courses](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/parttime).

There are [adult literacy](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning-to-education/adult-literacy/) supports to help with reading, writing and maths. There are opportunities to study for [the Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/going-to-post-primary-school/senior-cycle/) or other certificates. There are also a wide range of courses linked to business and industry.

Many courses are provided by your local [Education and Training Board](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/).

You may also qualify for a free course under the [Back to Education Initiative (BTEI)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f4113d-operational-guidelines-back-to-education-part-time-education-option/).

#### Evening classes

Evening classes can offer you a social way to learn or to get a qualification.

Evening classes take place during term time in [Education and Training Boards (ETBs)](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/), schools, colleges and universities throughout the country. The courses on offer vary from centre to centre so it is worth looking around if you have a particular interest you would like to pursue.

## Courses with an entry requirement

Some courses are only open to you if you have completed your second-level education (post-primary school). However, you should check the with the school or college as some courses make exceptions for mature students and people returning to education.

Courses with an entry requirement can include [Post-Leaving Certificate courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) and college-based training courses for [apprentices](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/vocational-education-and-training/apprenticeships/), as well as [Springboard](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/) and full-time and part-time [third-level courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/).

## Can I get a qualification with adult education?

Yes. Many courses offer a qualification.

Getting a qualification is not always a goal for learners, but you can get advice from your local ETB.

The [National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications) outlines the levels of qualifications across the Irish education and training system. It shows how you can move from informal education (starting with a part-time course or evening class) to further education and then to higher education.

## Help for adults returning to education

#### Education and Training Boards

[Education and Training Boards (ETBs)](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs) are the main providers of [adult education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning-to-education/adult-education/), through local schools and colleges. It also provides a [list of Adult Guidance Services](https://www.etbi.ie/fet-guidance/contact-a-local-adult-guidance-service/).

#### The right course

You can get also get more information on courses, how to access them and the [financial supports](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/58c68-get-financial-support-for-training-or-education/) available on the [therightcourse](http://www.gov.ie/therightcourse) website.

#### Qualifax

[Qualifax](http://www.qualifax.ie/) has a database of all further education courses. It also provides the information you need to make an informed choice about your education, training and career path.

#### Adult educational guidance and information

The [Adult Educational Guidance and Information Service](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0da49-career-guidance-and-information/) provides free career and education guidance to adults who want to return to education and training. This service is available to everyone over 18 and people over 16 who are not in full-time education. It prioritise people who are unemployed.

The service is confidential and you can get one-to-one guidance or group guidance to help you make an informed decision about your education, career and life choices

#### AONTAS

[AONTAS](http://www.aontas.com/) (the Irish National Association of Adult Education) provides adult education and lifelong learning. [AONTAS has an information and referral service](http://www.aontas.com/information) to make the adult learner's first encounter with education as easy as possible.

The AONTAS [One Step Up](http://www.onestepup.ie/#mainDiv) website helps all adults to enhance their learning by promoting access to learning opportunities.

It provides:

* A [Freephone Helpline](http://www.onestepup.ie/contact/): 1800 303 669
* Answers to [frequently asked questions](http://www.onestepup.ie/faqs/)
* A [calendar of learning events](http://www.onestepup.ie/calendar/).

#### National Adult Literacy Agency

The [National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)](http://www.nala.ie/) helps [adults with literacy difficulties](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/returning-to-education/adult-literacy/).

NALA can [help you improve your reading, writing, maths or use of technology](https://www.nala.ie/). You can learn with NALA in a group, one-to-one, online or over the phone.

You can contact NALA on Freephone 1800 20 20 65 or text LEARN to 50050 and they will call you back.

You can also use their website [Learn with NALA](https://www.learnwithnala.ie/) to get a qualification up to Level 3.

#### Guide for mature students

Check out the [Mature Students Ireland website](http://www.maturestudents.ie/) for information on admission requirements for higher education.

#### National Centre for Guidance in Education

The [National Centre for Guidance in Education (NCGE)](http://www.ncge.ie/) provides advice and information to people who wish to study or train in another EU country.

## Financial supports

The financial supports available will depend on your situation.

There are a range of possible supports such as the [Back to Education Programme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-programme/) and the [Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/) and [training allowances.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-allowances/)

You can find out more about financial supports available to you from your local [Citizens Information Centre](https://centres.citizensinformation.ie/).

## How to apply for adult education

Your [local ETB](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) and college can give you details on the courses in your area.

Enrolment usually takes place around mid-September and again in mid-January.

You can also search for courses on [Qualifax](https://www.qualifax.ie/resources/adult-learners) or the [further education and training course hub](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/).

Courses can also be advertised locally in your local newspaper, community centre, school or parish hall.

**Page edited:** 5 October 2023

# Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

* [What is the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/#7dfab2)
* [What kinds of VTOS courses are available?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/#e96fc9)
* [How to qualify for VTOS](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/#25b3f5)
* [Rates for VTOS](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/#49deea)
* [How to apply for VTOS](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/#181e80)

## What is the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (VTOS)?

The Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme (VTOS) provides courses to improve your general level of education.

VTOS courses can help you to develop your skills and prepare you for employment, self-employment or further education and training.

You can apply for VTOS if you are over 21 years of age, unemployed and have been getting certain social welfare payments for at least 6 months.

You may keep your social welfare payment or get a VTOS Allowance.

VTOS is run by the local [Education and Training Boards](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) and is aimed in particular at unemployed people who are early school-leavers.

## What kinds of VTOS courses are available?

The courses range from basic education and training to advanced vocational training and there is a wide choice of subjects. The courses are full-time, about 30 hours a week (for example, 6 hours a day for 5 days) and can last up to 2 years.

Many courses lead to qualifications such as the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and awards at Levels 3, 4, 5 and 6 on the [National Framework of Qualifications.](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications)

You can find a list of [VTOS courses](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=15&Mainsec=courses&Subsec=search_courses&CRAsort=&action=search&display=&CSH_ID=18&PREV_CSH_ID=&AdvancedKeyword=&keywords_and_titles=&all_or_any_words=&full_or_part_words=&FCT_ID=&FDM_ID=&keywords=&CRT_ID=25&QUA_ID=0&CTP_ID=0&COL_ID=0&RES_ID=0&points=&CRS_CODE=&CRA_ID=0&ATT_ID=0&PRV_ID=0&COU_ID=0&DST_ID=0) on the [Qualifax website.](http://www.qualifax.ie/)

## How to qualify for VTOS

You may qualify for VTOS if you are aged 21 years or over and you are:

* Getting, [Jobseeker’s Benefit](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-benefit/) or [Jobseeker’s Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-allowance/) or signing for credits for at least 6 months (156 days) or
* Getting [One-Parent Family Payment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/one-parent-family-payment/), [Disability Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/disability-allowance/), [Illness Benefit](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/disability-benefit/)\* or [Invalidity Pension](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/invalidity-pension/) for at least 6 months (156 days) or
* Getting [Blind Pension](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/blind-persons-pension/), Deserted Wife’s Allowance/Benefit, [Widow's, Widower’s or Surviving Civil Partner’s Contributory Pension](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/death-related-benefits/widowed-persons-contrib-pension/), [Widow's, Widower’s or Surviving Civil Partner’s Non-Contributory Pension](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/death-related-benefits/widowed-persons-non-contrib-pension/) or Prisoner’s Wife’s Allowance for at least 6 months (conditions may apply in the case of these payments) or
* A dependent spouse, civil partner or cohabitant of an eligible person
* A person who received statutory redundancy but who has not been in receipt of a qualifying payment for the required period.

Periods spent on [FET training courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/), [Community Employment Schemes](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/employment/unemployment-and-redundancy/employment-support-schemes/community-employment-scheme/), [Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/) programmes and time in prison can count towards the qualifying period.

\* If you are claiming Illness Benefit, you should contact your local social welfare office about exemption/entitlement to continuation of your Illness Benefit payment.

## Rates for VTOS

### For people getting jobseeker's payments

In general, VTOS participants who move from jobseeker's payments get a VTOS training allowance at the maximum rate of the jobseeker's payment.

Generally, your entitlement to a VTOS training allowance will not be reassessed if there is a change to your circumstances (including means).

**VTOS training allowance and work:** If you are returning to your course for a second year, you will continue to get your VTOS allowance during the summer months. You can also take up full-time work during the summer months and your VTOS payment is not affected.

**VTOS training allowance and dependants:** If you want a dependent adult or child added to your payment you must notify the Department of Social Protection (DSP). DSP will then notify the ETB of any changes to your VTOS training allowance.

### Other supports

People on [Post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) who are getting VTOS allowances are not eligible for student support grants. However, this does not affect any entitlement they may have to exemption from college fees or student contributions.

There are no fees for VTOS courses and you will get free books and materials at the start of the course. Depending on your individual circumstances you may be eligible for the following:

* Meal allowance
* Travel allowance
* Childcare supports for your child under the [National Childcare Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/)

You can get more [information about VTOS](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/474eb7-vocational-education-and-training-options-vtos/).

VTOS training allowances are not taxable.

## How to apply for VTOS

You can apply for a place on a VTOS course through your [local ETB](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/).

Your local ETB will have the most up-to-date information about the qualifying conditions for VTOS courses.

The Qualifax website has a [list of frequently asked questions about VTOS](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=591%3Avtos-faq&catid=70&Itemid=238)

**Page edited:** 28 September 2023

# Youthreach

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/#2473e9)
* [How Youthreach works](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/#ef82dd)
* [Who is eligible for Youthreach?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/#e4dd3a)
* [Rates for Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/#cd40ee)
* [How to apply for Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/#f41c1d)

## Introduction

If you have left school without any formal qualifications, the [Youthreach programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/5666e9-youthreach/) can provide you with opportunities for basic education, personal development, vocational training and work experience.

The programme is generally full-time, although part-time courses can be arranged. You can concentrate on a core training area of your choice but basic subjects, such as English, maths and life skills, are generally covered by all trainees.

Opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy are available at all Youthreach centres.

### How Youthreach works

The course generally lasts from 1 to 2 years, although it can be flexible, depending on your individual needs. If you complete the basic training successfully, you will be awarded a Foundation Certification from [Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)](http://www.qqi.ie/) or the [Junior Certificate.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/junior-cycle-exam-and-results/) Having completed a Foundation Programme, you may continue to a Progression Programme. This will give you the opportunity to progress to the [Leaving Certificate Applied](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate-applied/) course or a higher-level QQI award or you can choose to continue other skills training, such as an [apprenticeship](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/) course.

The courses take place in Youthreach centres managed by Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and Community Training Centres. Generally, Youthreach centres are open for 35 hours per week (9 a.m. - 4.30 p.m., Monday to Friday).

If you qualify for Youthreach, you may also be eligible for the [Back to Education Initiative](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/24e75-back-to-education-initiative/).

**Education and Training Boards**

Since 1 July 2013, Education and Training Boards (ETBs) replaced Vocational Educational Committees (VECs). All services provided by VECs will continue to be provided by ETBs. FÁS training centres have also transferred to ETBs.

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**Education and Training Boards**

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## Who is eligible for Youthreach?

The criteria you must meet to access the Youthreach programme depends on whether you apply to a Youthreach centre managed by an Education and Training Board (ETB) or a Community Training Centre.

**ETB Youthreach programme**

If you apply for Youthreach provided by your local ETB, you should be between 15 and 20 years of age. You must be unemployed and an early school leaver without any vocational training and who has not attempted the Leaving Certificate. Some exceptions can be made to this rule, for example if you are a lone parent.

**Community Training Centre Youthreach programme**

If you apply for Youthreach provided by your local [Community Training Centre](http://www.iacto.ie/learners/ctcs/), you should be between 16 and 21 years of age. However, young people under the age of 25 who are disadvantaged and unemployed may attend the programme with agreement from SOLAS.

The training on offer varies from centre to centre, often depending on the facilities available. If you have an interest in a particular career, you should look for a centre offering a suitable course rather than applying automatically to the centre nearest to you.

**Jobseeker’s payment**

Participants leaving Youthreach can apply for a [jobseeker’s payment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/signing-on/). The [3 month disqualification rule](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/1a5134-operational-guidelines-jobseekers-allowance/?referrer=https://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/Jobseekers-Allowance.aspx#disqualifications) which applies to many students does not apply to Youthreach participants.

## Rates for Youthreach

Courses are free. Trainees aged over 16 get a weekly allowance. You will get a travel allowance if you have to travel 5 km or more to the centre. You may also qualify for [free childcare](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/pre-school-education-and-childcare/national-childcare-scheme/) and a meal allowance - you should check with the centre.

From January 2023, weekly allowances are as follows:

| **Trainee(s)** | **maximum payment per week** |
| --- | --- |
| 16 - 17 years | €45 |
| 18 years and over | €220.00 (with some exceptions) |

If you were getting a reduced age-related Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) before starting Youthreach any means that were deducted from your JA will also be deducted from your training allowance. This also applies to people getting a reduced age-related basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA).

If you are over 18 years of age and you are currently getting a social welfare payment of more than €220, you will continue to get the higher amount while you are on Youthreach as long as you are eligible.

You can take up part-time work while on Youthreach without it affecting your training allowance.

## How to apply for Youthreach

Youthreach courses are held year-round and you can apply to join a course at any time.

Contact your local [Community Training Centre](http://www.iacto.ie/learners/locations/) and talk to staff about your training needs and interests. You can also contact your l[ocal employment services office](https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/d6f636-employment-services-offices/) or [ETB.](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) Staff members are available at these centres to help you with application forms if necessary. You can find [contact details for your local Youthreach service](https://www.etbi.ie/youthreach/youthreach-directory-contacts/).

**Page edited:** 30 January 2023

# Adult literacy

* [What is literacy?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/adult-literacy/#75035f)
* [How can I improve my literacy?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/adult-literacy/#559d4f)
* [Your local Education and TrainingBoard (ETB)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/adult-literacy/#78550f)
* [National Adult Literacy Agency(NALA)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/adult-literacy/#24d571)
* [Trade Unions](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/adult-literacy/#717e1e)

## What is literacy?

Literacy is more than just reading and writing. Literacy skills also include listening, speaking, using numbers and using everyday technology.

We all need literacy skills to communicate, access services, and make informed choices. Literacy skills help us to enjoy a good quality of life within our families, in our communities and at work.

### Did you know?

* If you think you could improve your reading and writing skills, you are not alone. 1 in 6 Irish adults find reading and understanding everyday texts difficult.
* Many people would like to be more confident with numbers. 1 in 4 Irish adults has problems doing maths.
* Almost half of Irish adults do not have the digital skills they need to use everyday technology.

This means that everyday tasks are difficult for a large number of people. These can include:

* Filling in forms
* Paying bills
* Helping children with their homework
* Reading the instructions on a medicine bottle
* Shopping online

There are many ways to improve your reading, writing, maths and digital skills at any age.

## How can I improve my literacy?

People of every age and from every background can have low levels of literacy. It does not matter if you have finished school or done exams, you can improve your skills at any time for any reason.

You can get free adult literacy classes locally, by phone or online.

Some of the places that offer classes are:

* Education and Training Boards (ETBs)
* National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA)
* Trade unions

## Your local Education and TrainingBoard (ETB)

The adult literacy service in your local Education and Training Board (ETB) gives reading, writing, maths and computer classes for adults. They have centres around the country.

All ETB tutors are specially trained to help you feel at ease and support you to get the most out of your classes. You can use the service for as long as you want, and you can take a break from a class and come back to it later.

### Classes at the ETB

Literacy classes at your local ETB are:

* Open to all adults who want to improve their reading, writing, maths or computer skills
* Planned around what you want to learn
* Free
* Usually 2 hours per week

### How to sign up

If you want to take literacy classes from your local ETB, you can find their contact details on the [Adult Literacy for Life website.](https://www.adultliteracyforlife.ie/find-your-local-service/)

## National Adult Literacy Agency(NALA)

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity that works to improve adult literacy in Ireland.

All of NALA’s literacy services are free and you can:

* Learn with a tutor on the phone or by post
* Learn online at your own speed

### Learn with a tutor on the phone or by post

NALA can work with you over the telephone, through the post or on the internet.

* You decide what to study. There is no set course.
* NALA calls when it suits you. There is no class schedule.
* Normally it is one call per week for up to 30 minutes.
* NALA keeps working with you until you meet your goals.
* Classes are available 7 days a week, early morning to late evening.

### Learn online with NALA

[Learn with NALA](https://www.nala.ie/free-courses/learn-with-nala/) helps you to improve your reading, writing, maths or digital skills. You can study online by yourself or combine it a NALA tutor by phone.

[Help My Kid Learn](https://www.helpmykidlearn.ie/about/about-nala-this-project) helps parents with fun learning activities for primary school children. You can [watch a video about what Help My Kid Learn can do for you](http://www.helpmykidlearn.ie/).

### How to sign up

To sign up, contact NALA by **Freephone 1800 20 20 65** or **text 'LEARN' to 50050**.

## Trade Unions

If you are a member of a trade union, ask your union representative what classes are available. Some unions offer free literacy classes for members. Many unions offer computer courses.

**Page edited:** 17 September 2021

# Back to Education Initiative

* [What is the Back to Education Initiative?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/back-to-education-initiative/#ace158)
* [Who can qualify for the Back to Education Initiative?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/back-to-education-initiative/#0a9c1c)
* [Training allowances for Back to Education Initiative](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/back-to-education-initiative/#8727dc)
* [How to apply for Back to Education Initiative](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/back-to-education-initiative/#030e16)
* [Where to apply for Back to EducationInitiative](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/back-to-education-initiative/#23cf61)

## What is the Back to Education Initiative?

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides part-time further education courses mainly for young people and adults who have not completed the Leaving Certificate or an equivalent qualification. The courses are free from some participants - see 'Free courses' below.

It gives you the opportunity to combine learning with family, work and other responsibilities. Anyone who has left full-time education can take part in a course, but priority will be given to those without a Leaving Certificate.

BTEI courses are usually level 3 and 4 on the [National Qualification Framework (NFQ)](http://www.nfq.ie/nfq/en/FanDiagram/nqai_nfq_08.html). The [BTEI](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/24e75-back-to-education-initiative/) allows you to study part-time (up to 400 hours per year). It is possible to get a major award at NFQ levels 1-6 when part-time courses are combined to complete a major award.

## Who can qualify for the Back to Education Initiative?

The Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) provides part-time courses for adults and young people aged over 16 who left school with few or no formal qualifications or low literacy levels.

The groups given priority access to the BTEI are listed in the [Back to Education Initiative Operational Guidelines (pdf)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f4113d-operational-guidelines-back-to-education-part-time-education-option/). Within these groups, priority is given to people most educationally disadvantaged.

You can also take part in BTEI if you are working and on a low income. The aim of BTEI is to give people an opportunity to combine their learning with family, work and other commitments.

### Free courses

You will qualify for free tuition with BTEI if you:

* Have less than upper-second level education or
* Are getting a jobseeker’s payment or means-tested social welfare payment (there is a list of eligible payments in the [BTEI Operational Guidelines (pdf)](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f4113d-operational-guidelines-back-to-education-part-time-education-option/)) or
* Are getting [Working Family Payment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/working-family-payment/) or
* Have a [medical card](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/medical-cards-and-gp-visit-cards/medical-card/) or
* Are eligible to participate on [VTOS](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/) or [Youthreach.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/)

All other participants are charged a fee. For information about fees, you should contact your local [Education and Training Board](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/).

## Training allowances for Back to Education Initiative

In general, a training allowance is not paid, but a pro-rata training allowance may be paid to a participant who is not entitled to a social welfare payment but is eligible for [Youthreach](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/youthreach/).

If you are getting a social welfare payment, you can keep your payment and participate in BTEI as long as you continue to satisfy the conditions attached to your payment. If you are getting a jobseeker’s payment you will need to apply for the [Part-Time Education Option](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/part-time-education-option/).

## How to apply for Back to Education Initiative

For further information on BTEI options in your area, contact the Guidance Officer at your local [Education and Training Board (ETB)](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) and the local Adult Guidance Service. You can also search for BTEI courses on the [Further Education and Training Course Hub](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/) .

## Where to apply for Back to EducationInitiative

Apply to your local [Education and Training Board](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/).

The ETB provides opportunities for adult learners and early school-leavers who want to upgrade their skills.

**Page edited:** 5 October 2023

# Further Education and Training (FET) allowances

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-allowances/#2473e9)
* [Social welfare payments and the FET training allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-allowances/#fed3ce)
* [FET Training Allowance Rates](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-allowances/#dea665)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-allowances/#10ea51)

## Introduction

[Further Education and Training (FET) training courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/) provided in Education and Training Boards (ETB) training centres are free (except for evening courses) and you may be paid a [training allowance](https://www.fetchcourses.ie/courses/grants) for the duration of your course.

To get a FET training allowance you must be entitled to a qualifying social welfare payment, such as [Jobseeker's Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-allowance/) or [Jobseeker's Benefit.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-benefit/) However, if you are aged under 18 and attending a Community Training Centre you will get an age-related training allowance – see ‘Rates’ below.

**Travel and meal allowance**

You can also claim an accommodation allowance if you need to live away from home for the duration of the course or a travel allowance if you live 3 miles or more from the course centre. You may qualify for a [free childcare place](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-allowances/child_care_support_during_fas_training_courses.html) for your child. FET allowances are not taxable.

**FÁS, SOLAS and ETBs**

FÁS was dissolved and some of its functions were transferred to [SOLAS](http://www.solas.ie/) - the new further education and training authority.

In 2014, the FÁS training division was transferred to the 16 [Education and Training Boards (ETBs)](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) which replaced VECs.

## Social welfare payments and the FET training allowance

Your payment when on a FET training course will depend on the social welfare payment you are getting. There is no qualifying period, which means you do not need to have been getting a social welfare payment for a certain period of time.

**Qualified adult dependant**: If you are getting an [Increase for a Qualified Adult](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/irish-social-welfare-system/claiming-a-social-welfare-payment/claiming-an-increase-in-your-social-welfare-payment-for-an-adult-dependant/) for your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant as part of your social welfare payment, you can continue to get this while your adult dependant is participating on a [FET course](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/training-courses/). Your adult dependant will not get a FET training allowance. However, they may qualify for travel and other allowances. Check with the course provider if these allowances are available with their course.

### Jobseeker's Allowance or Supplementary Welfare Allowance

If you are aged 25 or over and getting Jobseeker's Allowance (JA) or Supplementary Welfare Allowance (SWA) you will have your payment suspended, but **you will get an FET training allowance of the same amount**.

If you are getting a reduced age-related Jobseeker's Allowance you will have your payment suspended, but you will get a FET training allowance of €220. Any means that were deducted from your JA will also be deducted from your FET training allowance. This also applies to people getting a reduced age-related basic Supplementary Welfare Allowance.

If your entitlement to Jobseeker's Allowance or Supplementary Welfare Allowance stops during the FET course, your FET training allowance will stop.

### Jobseeker's Benefit

If you are getting [Jobseeker's Benefit](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/jobseekers-benefit/) your social welfare payment will stop and you will get a FET training allowance of the same amount. If you do not find employment when your course ends, you can reapply for Jobseeker’s Benefit. Your Jobseeker’s Benefit [claim may be linked](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e95f88-operational-guidelines-jobseekers-benefit/#waiting-days-and-claim-linking) to your previous claim for Jobseeker’s Benefit - this means that your claim is not treated as a new claim.

### Disability Allowance or Blind Pension

Your [Disability Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/disability-allowance/) or [Blind Pension](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/blind-persons-pension/) is suspended but **you will get an FET training allowance of the same amount**. The rules that apply to your original social welfare payment also apply to your FET training allowance. You must inform social welfare of any changes to your circumstances.

You will also keep any secondary benefits, such as your medical card or travel pass.

If you have a disability, the Education and Training Board will apply flexible sick leave arrangements if necessary.

### Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension

You will keep your [Illness Benefit](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/disability-benefit/) or [Invalidity Pension](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/disability-and-illness/invalidity-pension/) (but you must get an exemption from the Department of Social Protection authorising you to do the FET course). The rules that apply to your social welfare payment will continue to apply while you are on the FET course. You will keep your secondary benefits.

### One-Parent Family Payment

You will keep your [One-Parent Family Payment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/one-parent-family-payment/).

## FET Training Allowance Rates

Weekly training allowances are as follows:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | |
| **FET training allowance** | **Rate per week (full-time)** |
| Jobseeker's Allowance or SWA (aged 25 and over) | same rate as your social welfare payment |
| Jobseeker's Allowance or SWA (under 25) | €220\* |
| Jobseeker's Benefit | same rate as your social welfare payment |
| One-Parent Family Payment or Illness Benefit or Invalidity Pension  or Farm Assist or Fish Assist | keep your existing social welfare payment |
| Disability Allowance | same rate as your social welfare payment |
| Aged 16-17 and no social welfare payment | €45 |

\*If your social welfare payment is more than this amount, you will get the same rate as your social welfare payment.

Since 1 January 2014, people getting one of the social welfare payments listed below do not get a FET training allowance. However, they will continue to get their social welfare payment.

* Invalidity Pension
* Illness Benefit
* One-Parent Family Payment
* Farm Assist
* Fish Assist

## How to apply

In order to apply for a place on a FET course, you should register with your [local employment services office](https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/d6f636-employment-services-offices/) or [Intreo centre](https://www.gov.ie/en/directory/category/e1f4b5-intreo-offices/). You will be interviewed in order to identify the course that will best suit your needs. Due to the pressure on some courses, you may not get a place immediately on the course of your choice. For more information about available training courses [contact your ETB Training Centre](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/).

**Page edited:** 30 January 2023

# Going to college

* [Thinking of going to college](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/going-to-college/#4cadc5)
* [Applying to college](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/going-to-college/#d169ef)
* [Paying for college](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/going-to-college/#72ea81)
* [Finding somewhere to live](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/going-to-college/#945550)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/going-to-college/#ec2268)

## Thinking of going to college

You may be planning to go to college when you [leave school](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/leaving-school/) or after your [Leaving Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/). Some people work for a number of years and then go to college as [mature students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/).

The [Qualifax website](http://www.qualifax.ie/) has a wide range of information about higher and further education courses, from university degrees to certificates and diplomas in further education colleges and institutes of technology. You can find more information about [further and higher education qualifications](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/fet-qualifications/) which are all included in [the National Framework of Qualifications](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications).

## Applying to college

You should check the [application procedures for third-level college](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/) as soon as possible. If you are thinking of [studying in the UK](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/) or [abroad](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-outside-ireland/) you will need to find out what is involved and you may wish to visit a college before you apply. [If you have a disability](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/) or you are a [school-leaver from a socially disadvantaged background](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/), there are supports to help you to access third-level education.

## Paying for college

You should check whether you have to pay [fees for your college course.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/) Most students doing undergraduate courses do not have to pay the fees. If you do have to pay fees you may claim [tax relief on the fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/) for most third-level courses.

There are [means-tested maintenance grants](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) for students doing third-level courses. The website [studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/) has information about the full range of grants and supports available.

## Finding somewhere to live

Many students live at home while at college but you may live too far away to travel there every day. Many colleges have residences for some students but you may have to [rent accommodation](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/renting-a-home/) near the college. You may be [looking for a house or flat to rent](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/renting-a-home/looking-for-a-flat-or-house-to-rent/) and, if you find one, you should be aware of [your rights as a tenant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/housing/renting-a-home/tenants-rights-and-responsibilities/tenants-rights-and-obligations/).

## Further information

When you are choosing a college course, it is important to find out as much information about the course and the college you wish to attend. [There is a list of higher education institutions on the Higher Education Authority's website.](http://hea.ie/higher-education-institutions/?v=l)

**Page edited:** 13 January 2022

# Further and higher education qualifications

* [Who awards further and higher education qualifications?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/fet-qualifications/#79e40d)
* [Quality and Qualifications Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/fet-qualifications/#828dc6)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/fet-qualifications/#ec2268)

## Who awards further and higher education qualifications?

Further education and training covers education and training after post-primary level and up to higher education.

[Higher education and training](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/third-level-education-in-ireland/) is provided mainly in universities and colleges of technology or equivalent bodies.

Different bodies are entitled to award or validate qualifications in the further and higher education sectors such as:

* Universities:The State-supported universities all award their own degrees and other awards.
* Technological sector: The institutes of technology grant degrees, diplomas and certificates which are validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland.
* Other colleges: The other State-supported colleges generally grant awards that are validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland.
* Private colleges: The private colleges make awards, some of which are validated by foreign universities and some of which are validated by Quality and Qualifications Ireland. Some of the awards by private colleges are not validated by any outside body.

## Quality and Qualifications Ireland

[Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)](http://www.qqi.ie/) is the state agency responsible for promoting the quality, integrity and reputation of the further and higher education system in Ireland.

It has taken over the functions of the following 4 bodies:

* National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI)
* Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC)
* Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC)
* Irish Universities Quality Board (IUQB)

If you have an award or qualification made by FETAC and HETAC, these continue to be recognised because they are on the [National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications).

### The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)

The NFQ describes what you need to know about qualifications as a learner. It allows you to compare qualifications, to make decisions about your choice of course and to know that it will be recognised in Ireland and abroad. The framework is made up of 10 levels from certificate to doctoral level and describes qualifications across the Irish education and training system.

### Transfer and progression

All providers of education and training must inform you of the transfer and progression routes available if you undertake a particular course. This will help you find a pathway between programmes or courses to achieve the award and qualification you want.

### Validation of individual learning

As an individual learner, you can contact QQI directly to find out how to get certification or recognition for your existing knowledge, skill or competence. QQI will decide how this prior learning and prior experience can be assessed and they may look for help and advice from the providers of education and training in making this assessment.

When you apply to a college they may take into account your educational background, work history, community involvement and other achievements when deciding your suitability for the course. This system is known as the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) or [Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)](https://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=161&Itemid=198).

### Verification of previous awards

You can apply to QQI to [verify your qualifications](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/qqi-awards/verification-of-qualifications-learner) for the following awards:

* QQI
* HETAC
* FETAC
* NCEA (replaced by HETAC)
* NCVA (replaced by FETAC)

There is a small fee for this service.

### Recognition of awards from abroad

If you earned your qualifications abroad, QQI has an online [foreign qualifications recognition service (NARIC)](https://qsearch.qqi.ie/WebPart/Search?searchtype=recognitions). You can also read more about [recognition of professional qualifications](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/returning-to-ireland/starting-work/Recognition-of-professional-qualifications-in-ireland/).

### Protection for learners

QQI will only validate programmes that provide protections for the learner.

If a provider has a programme of 3 months or more and charges a fee, they must ensure you can complete the course you have started if they stop offering the programme for any reason. The provider must also have a reserve fund and be adequately insured.

## Further information

### Quality and Qualifications Ireland

26/27 Denzille Lane  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 905 8100

**Homepage:** <http://www.qqi.ie/>

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# Third-level education in Ireland

* [Third-level educational institutions](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/third-level-education-in-ireland/#bb55a9)
* [Third-level qualifications](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/third-level-education-in-ireland/#911649)
* [How to apply for third-level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/third-level-education-in-ireland/#1338c7)
* [Where to apply for third-level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/third-level-education-in-ireland/#a2ccf0)
* [Postgraduate study](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/third-level-education-in-ireland/#c6962a)

## Third-level educational institutions

A wide range of institutions in Ireland provide third-level education. The university sector, the technological sector and the colleges of education are substantially funded by the State. In addition, there are a number of independent private colleges.

The [Higher Education Authority](http://www.hea.ie/) is the statutory agency responsible for the funding of universities, institutes of technology and certain other higher education institutions. It has an advisory role in relation to the whole sector of third-level education.

### University sector

Most universities in Ireland are State-funded, but they are generally autonomous. The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) is a private university.

The universities in Ireland are:

* The National University of Ireland (NUI) which is the umbrella university covering [University College Dublin (UCD),](http://www.ucd.ie/) [University of Galway](http://www.nuigalway.ie/), [University College Cork,](http://www.ucc.ie/en/) and [National University of Ireland, Maynooth](http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/).
* The University of Dublin, which is generally known as [Trinity College Dublin (TCD)](http://www.tcd.ie/)
* [The University of Limerick (UL)](http://www.ul.ie/)
* [Dublin City University (DCU)](http://www.dcu.ie/)
* [RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences](https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/)

### Technological sector

The technological sector includes technological universities (TUs) and institutes of technology (ITs).

The [Technological Universities Act 2018](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2018/act/3/enacted/en/html) allows institutes of technology to apply to become a new type of higher education institution with technological university status. TUs and ITs provide programmes of education and training in areas such as business, science, engineering, linguistics and music to certificate, diploma and degree levels.

There are 5 technological universities:

* [Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)](https://www.tudublin.ie/) – formerly Dublin, Tallaght and Blanchardstown institutes of technology
* [Munster Technological University MTU)](https://www.mtu.ie/) – formerly Cork and Tralee institutes of technology
* [Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS)](https://tus.ie/) – formerly Limerick and Athlone institutes of technology
* [Atlantic Technological University (ATU)](https://www.atu.ie/) – formerly Galway-Mayo, Sligo and Letterkenny institutes of technology. Students graduating in 2021-2022 from those institutes will graduate with university qualifications
* [South East Technological University (SETU)](https://www.tuse.ie/) – formerly Carlow and Waterford institutes of technology. Students graduating in 2021-2022 from those institutes will graduate with university qualifications.

There are 2 institutes of technology:

* [Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)](http://www.iadt.ie/en/), Dun Laoghaire
* [Dundalk Institute of Technology](http://ww2.dkit.ie/)

### Colleges of education

Several colleges of education in Ireland provide specialised training for primary school teachers. They offer a 3-year Bachelor of Education degree and an 18-month postgraduate diploma. Post-primary teachers generally do a primary degree, followed by a postgraduate diploma. You can find more information in our document on [teacher qualifications](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/primary-and-post-primary-education/teachers-and-schools/teacher-qualifications/).

### Other colleges

In addition to State-funded colleges, a number of fee-paying third-level educational institutions offer courses, mainly in professional vocational training and business. Some of these colleges are linked to universities or professional associations and their qualifications may be accredited accordingly – see below.

## Third-level qualifications

**The National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)** is a system of 10 levels which allows the different standards and levels qualifications to be compared. A [diagram of the NFQ](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications) is on the website of the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI). Third-level qualifications are Levels 6-10 in the Framework.

### Award of qualifications

In the university sector the awarding bodies are the National University of Ireland (UCD, UCC, UG and Maynooth), Dublin University, Dublin City University, the University of Limerick, and the RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences. Technological universities (TUs) make their own awards. Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is the awarding body for third-level educational institutions outside the university sector. QQI is also the awarding body for further education and training. It also awards Higher Certificates (NFQ Level 6). More detailed information is in our document on [further and higher education qualifications.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/fet-qualifications/)

**Universities:** The State-supported universities all award their own degrees and other awards. University students qualify with Ordinary Bachelors degrees (NFQ Level 7) or Honours Bachelors degrees (NFQ Level 8). Universities also offer Masters (NFQ Level 9) and Doctoral (NFQ Level 10) postgraduate degrees.

**Technological sector:** Technological universities (TUs) make their own awards. Institutes of technology (ITs) grant degrees, diplomas and certificates, which are validated by QQI. Students of TUs and ITs generally qualify with Higher Certificates (NFQ Level 6) or Ordinary Bachelors degrees (NFQ Level 7). Honours Bachelors degrees (NFQ Level 8), Postgraduate Diplomas (NFQ Level 9) and Higher Doctorate (NFQ Level 10) are also available.

**Other colleges:** The other State-supported colleges generally grant awards that are validated by QQI. The private colleges make awards, some of which are validated by foreign universities and some of which are validated by QQI. Some of their awards are not validated by any outside body.

**Progression** is a feature of the National Framework of Qualifications. Often a Level 6 certificate awarded by QQI can offer the opportunity to continue on to a NFQ Level 7 or Level 8 degree. The [Higher Education Links Scheme](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/qqi-awards/going-to-higher-education-using-my-qqi-award-learner) allows those with a QQI Level 5 and Level 6 (NFQ) qualification to progress to higher education. You can get more information on the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) website.

## How to apply for third-level education

If you are thinking of [going to college](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/going-to-college/) you can search the [Qualifax website](http://www.qualifax.ie/) for details of courses. Generally, applications for undergraduate courses in Ireland are made through the [Central Applications Office (CAO).](http://www.cao.ie/) You can find more information in our documents on [application procedures and entry requirements](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/), [third-level fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/) and [tax relief for third-level fees.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/) See below for information about postgraduate study.

If you think you might qualify for a grant, you will find information on [maintenance grant schemes for students on third-level courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) and [grants and funds available for mature students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/grants-for-mature-students/).

## Where to apply for third-level education

[You can find contact details for third-level education institutions on the CAO website](http://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=hei)

## Postgraduate study

You need to consider what kind of postgraduate study you wish to do, what are the most suitable courses for you and your career and what costs are involved. Postgraduate study can be a taught course or based on research and generally falls into one of the following categories:

* **Postgraduate diploma:** Often this is a vocational course, linked to professions such as teaching or librarianship. The subject may be different from the primary degree.
* **Masters degree:** This can be a taught course or based on research. It lasts 1-2 years and usually involves course work and a thesis.
* **PhD:** This is a doctorate awarded for a thesis based on research. It takes at least 3 years' study and it must be an original contribution to knowledge.

### Funding postgraduate study

In general, you will have to pay fees for postgraduate courses. You may be able to get [tax relief on the fees.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/) If you got a third-level grant for your undergraduate course, you may qualify for a grant for postgraduate study in Ireland, including Northern Ireland.

There are different sources of funding for postgraduate students. Sometimes financial support is available from the university that is running the postgraduate course; sometimes you need to apply to an external body. A number of research bodies provide funding for postgraduate research in Ireland, including the [Irish Research Council](http://www.research.ie/) and [Science Foundation Ireland.](http://www.sfi.ie/)

A number of scholarships and fellowships for study abroad are awarded annually by foreign governments to Irish students who are engaged in, or have completed, a course of third-level education. You can find information about [opportunities for postgraduate study abroad](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/third-level-scholarships/) on the Department of Further and Higher Education website and on the [European University Institute](https://www.eui.eu/en/home) website. If you wish to [study in the UK](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/) there is a graduate website for the UK called [Prospects](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/cms/ShowPage/Home_page/p!eLaXi).

### Applying for postgraduate courses

For postgraduate courses you generally apply directly to the university or college. You can find information about postgraduate courses and applications from the careers office in your college or university. If you are applying for postgraduate courses in the UK you may apply online to certain universities and colleges.

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# College application and entrance requirements

* [Applying to college](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/#d169ef)
* [College entry requirements](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/#d17203)
* [CAO application fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/#d2fd56)
* [How to apply to college](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/#a298b0)
* [Key dates for CAO applications 2023-2024](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/#b4b03c)
* [CAO contact details](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/application-procedures-and-entry-requirements/#a6d44e)

## Applying to college

You apply for almost all full-time undergraduate courses through the Central Applications Office (CAO).

The undergraduate courses in the universities and institutes of technology include Higher Certificates - Level 6, Ordinary Bachelor degrees - Level 7 and Honours Bachelor degrees - Level 8. You can find more information about these qualifications in our document on [third-level education in Ireland.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/colleges-and-qualifications/third-level-education-in-ireland/)

The [CAO provides a handbook](http://www.cao.ie/handbook.php) that lists all the courses on offer and gives information on how to apply.

You can apply to participate in higher education institutions through the [CAO portal](https://www.cao.ie/apply.php). You can also find information on your options for further education and [apprenticeships.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/apprenticeships/)

There is no central applications body for [Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/). Students must apply directly to the individual colleges.

**Degree courses without CAO points**

From 7 July 2023, you can apply for a third-level degree programme without CAO points through[the National Tertiary Office](https://nto.hea.ie/) website. The programme allows you to start your degree at an Education Training Board and complete it at a university.

### CAO applications for 2023-2024

CAO applications for 2023-2024 open from 4 November 2022.

### Changing your mind

You can change your course choices online up to 5pm on 1 February 2023, free of charge. Changes made from 3 February 2023 to 5pm on 1 March 2023 cost €10.

There is a further chance to change your mind, free of charge, from 5 May 2023 until 5pm on 1 July 2023.

### Closing date and late applications

The closing date for CAO applications is 1 February 2023.

You can make a late application until 5pm on 1 May 2023.

You will not be considered for [HEAR](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/) or [DARE](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/) or assessed as a mature student, if you make a late application.

Applications for some *restricted courses* cannot be made after 1 February.

### Courses in medicine

EU applicants to undergraduate courses in medicine in 2022 had to take the Health Professions Admissions Test (HPAT). [There is more information on the HPAT-Ireland website.](https://hpat-ireland.acer.edu.au/about-hpat-ireland) You can find information about graduate entry programmes in medicine in 2023 on the CAO website.

The HPAT Test will be held between 17-20 February 2023.

The HPAT test centre sitting will be on 25 February 2023.

## College entry requirements

### Points

Students who have taken the [Leaving Certificate examination](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-certificate/) are allocated points for the results they get in their 6 best subjects at a single sitting of the Leaving Certificate. The points awarded depend on the level of achievement in the subject. You can use the [points calculator](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=306) on qualifax.ie to work out what points are awarded for any particular set of results.

The [State Certificate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/state-examinations/leaving-cert-accredited-grades/) offered to students for Leaving Certificate 2021 has the same status as the Leaving Certificates awarded to students in previous years.

The number of entry-level points needed for any course depends on the number of places and the number of applicants for those places so the entry level varies from year to year. Higher points are awarded for Higher-Level papers than for Ordinary-Level papers.

Under a pilot scheme operated from Leaving Certificate 2012, the seven universities, Dublin Institute of Technology (now part of [Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)](https://www.tudublin.ie/)) and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland allocate [extra bonus points for Higher-Level mathematics](http://www.iua.ie/students-graduates/admissions/bonus-points-for-maths/).

The CAO publishes the [minimum points required for admission to courses](http://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=points) as each round of offers is made. You can also check the points required in previous years.

**Disability Access Route to Education**

You may qualify for the Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) scheme, which aims to improve access to [higher education for school-leavers with disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/).

**Higher Education Access Route**

The [Higher Education Access Route (HEAR)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/) admissions scheme allocates a number of third-level places on a reduced points basis to school-leavers from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. To be eligible for the scheme you must meet certain criteria related to your financial, social and cultural circumstances.

### Specific academic entry requirements

A student must also have the particular academic entry requirements (also called matriculation requirements) for the course they want to take. You can get detailed information about the academic entry requirements from each university, college or institute.

#### University sector

Most universities in Ireland are State-funded, but they are generally autonomous. The Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) is a private university.

The universities in Ireland are:

* The National University of Ireland (NUI) which is the umbrella university covering [University College Dublin (UCD),](http://www.ucd.ie/) [University of Galway](http://www.nuigalway.ie/), [University College Cork,](http://www.ucc.ie/en/) and [National University of Ireland, Maynooth](http://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/).
* The University of Dublin, which is generally known as [Trinity College Dublin (TCD)](http://www.tcd.ie/)
* [The University of Limerick (UL)](http://www.ul.ie/)
* [Dublin City University (DCU)](http://www.dcu.ie/)
* [RCSI University of Medicine and Health Sciences](https://www.rcsi.com/dublin/)

#### Technological sector

The technological sector includes technological universities (TUs) and institutes of technology (ITs).

There are 5 technological universities in Ireland:

* [Technological University Dublin (TU Dublin)](https://www.tudublin.ie/) – formerly Dublin, Tallaght and Blanchardstown institutes of technology
* [Munster Technological University MTU)](https://www.mtu.ie/) – formerly Cork and Tralee institutes of technology
* [Technological University of the Shannon: Midlands Midwest (TUS)](https://tus.ie/) – formerly Limerick and Athlone institutes of technology
* [Atlantic Technological University (ATU)](https://www.atu.ie/) – formerly Galway-Mayo, Sligo and Letterkenny institutes of technology. Students who graduated in 2021-2022 from those institutes graduated with university qualifications
* [South East Technological University (SETU)](https://www.tuse.ie/) – formerly Carlow and Waterford institutes of technology. Students who graduated in 2021-2022 from those institutes graduated with university qualifications.

There are 2 institutes of technology:

* [Institute of Art, Design and Technology (IADT)](http://www.iadt.ie/en/), Dun Laoghaire
* [Dundalk Institute of Technology](http://ww2.dkit.ie/)

#### Colleges of education

Colleges of education provide specialised training for primary school teachers. There are specific minimum grades for Maths and English. The entry requirements to specialised teacher training are set out by the Department of Education.

#### PLC courses

Places on [Post-Leaving Certificate courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) are not allocated on the basis of points, but applicants must be of Leaving Certificate standard. Most colleges interview candidates to determine their suitability.

## CAO application fees

**The CAO application fees for 2023-2024:**

| **Application** | **Rate** |
| --- | --- |
| Online (or paper) discounted rate by 20 January | €30 |
| Online application by 1 February | €45 |
| Late online application by 1 May | €60 |

You can change your course choices online up to 1 February, free of charge. Changes made from 3 February to 1 March cost €10.

The *Change of Mind* facility from 5 May to 1 July is free.

## How to apply to college

**Applying through the CAO:** For participating higher education institutions (HEIs), [you can apply online through the CAO.](http://www.cao.ie/apply.php)

**When to apply directly to the colleges:** You should apply directly to the HEI (not through the CAO) in the following cases:

* Postgraduate courses.
* Entry to courses at post-initial-year level.
* Short duration, one-term, part-time and occasional courses.
* Re-admission to Dublin City University, Mary Immaculate College, Trinity College and University of Limerick.
* Follow-on courses at the institutes of technology.
* Any course not mentioned in the CAO Handbook.
* Certain mature applicants.
* Graduate/mature applicants to the Royal College of Surgeons.

### Resident outside the EU

If you are or have been resident outside the EU you may have to apply directly to some HEIs. You need to contact the admissions office of HEIs to enquire whether you should apply through the CAO or directly to the HEI. **It is very important to check application procedures for courses since errors may be difficult or impossible to rectify.**

You should make your enquiries well before the closing date of 1 February, preferably not later than early in the previous December.

## Key dates for CAO applications 2023-2024

4 November 2022 – Online applications open at 12 noon

20 January 2023 – Closing date for online applications at discounted fee

1 February 2023 – Normal closing date for applications

March and April – Interviews and portfolio presentations for most of restricted courses**\***

1 May 2023 – Closing date for late applications

5 May 2023 – Online change of mind facility opens

1 July 2023 – Final date for changing your mind about course selections on your previously submitted CAO form

6 July 2023 – Round A offers are made by the CAO (for applicants who are not awaiting their grades for the 2022 Leaving Certificate for example mature students, candidates who deferred places, people who need visas and some others)

3 August 2023 – Round Zero offers are made by the CAO (for graduate entry medicine candidates and some other categories)

9 August 2023 – Closing date for Round Zero offers

25 August 2023 – Leaving Certificate results come out

30 August 2023 – Round One offers are made by the CAO

31 August 2023 – [Available Places facility opens](http://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=aboutVPL)

5 September 2023 – Closing date for acceptance of Round One offers

11 September 2023 – Round Two offers available online

13 September 2023 – Closing date for acceptance of Round Two offers

Offers will be issued as necessary to fill any vacancies

5 October 2023 – offers end

6 November 2023 – CAO applications open for 2024

You can get further information on important dates and times on the [CAO website](https://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=timetableevents&bb=importantdates).

**\***Some courses are restricted application courses. Such courses have early assessment procedures (sometimes as early as February) and must be mentioned in your CAO application in time for the relevant higher education institution (HEI) to arrange the procedure. This means that you cannot apply for such courses in a late application. The CAO publishes a [calendar of these tests and interviews](http://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=testandinterviews).

## CAO contact details

### Central Applications Office

Tower House  
Eglinton Street  
Galway  
Ireland

**Opening Hours:** Office Hours 9:30-17:00

**Tel:** (091) 509 800

**Fax:** (091) 562 344

**Homepage:** [http://www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie/)

**Page edited:** 27 July 2023

# DARE admissions scheme for students with disabilities

* [What is DARE?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/#8fc591)
* [How the DARE scheme works](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/#9025ae)
* [How to qualify for DARE](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/#4e72b3)
* [How to apply for DARE](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/#65f481)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/#b48c08)

## What is DARE?

The Disability Access Route to Education (DARE) supports students with disabilities to access college.

There are several support systems for students with disabilities who are undertaking courses at third level. Many third-level colleges have a disability or access service which is responsible for giving support and advice to students with disabilities.

The Association for Higher Education Access and Disability (AHEAD) has information about [student services](http://www.ahead.ie/studentservices). It also has information about [accessing college](http://www.ahead.ie/accessingcollege).

**DARE 2023/2024**

You must apply for CAO by 1 February 2023. You must submit your completed application for DARE by 1 March 2023. You must submit all your supporting documents by 15 March 2023.

### Telling the college about your disability

If you have a disability, a specific learning difficulty or a significant ongoing illness, you can let the third-level institution know about it - either during the application process or at any time during your course - so that they can consider, in consultation with yourself, any specific support needs you may have in college. If you choose to give this information during the application process (though you are not obliged to do this) you should tick the relevant box on your application form to the Central Applications Office (CAO). Giving this information on the form will not adversely affect your application in any way. In fact, it is by ticking this box that you get the option of the Disability Access Route to Education - see below.

## How the DARE scheme works

The [Disability Access Route to Education](http://www.accesscollege.ie/dare/index.php) (DARE) aims to improve access to college for school-leavers with a disability or specific learning difficulty by allocating a number of third-level places to them on a reduced points basis.

## How to qualify for DARE

If your disability has negatively affected your second-level education, you may qualify for DARE. To be considered for DARE, you must:

* Be aged under 23 on 1 January of the year the course starts
* You must provide [information about your disability](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/providing-evidence-of-your-disability/)
* You must provide [information about how your disability has affected your education](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/making-an-application/educational-impact/)

Read more in ‘How to apply for DARE’ below.

When you have been accepted as eligible for DARE, you then compete for the reduced point places based on your Leaving Certificate results.

A reduced point place means that you may get a place on a third-level course with fewer than the full CAO points. For example, if you are eligible for DARE and you get 350 Leaving Certificate points, you may be offered a place on a course that requires 360 points through the standard CAO procedure. However, you must meet the college matriculation requirements and any specific course entry requirements.

Each of the third-level colleges participating in the scheme has reserved a number of course places for school-leavers who are eligible for DARE. You can find details of the places available through DARE on the [websites of the participating third-level colleges.](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/participating-colleges/)

### Additional supports

Whether you apply for college through DARE or through the standard CAO procedure, there are supports for student with disabilities while they are at college.

Supports available vary from college to college but may include:

* Orientation programme
* Study skills and extra tuition if required
* Access to assistive technology and training
* Mentoring.

## How to apply for DARE

If you wish to apply for a college place under the DARE scheme you should apply through the [Central Applications Office (CAO)](http://www.cao.ie/index.php). When you are filling in the CAO form online you must complete the part of the form to say that you have a disability or specific learning difficulty.

You will then be directed to the separate online Supplementary Information Form.

You can request a paper version of the form from the CAO.

The Supplementary Information Form has 3 sections:

* **Section A** asks for information on your disability and if you wish to be considered for DARE.
* **Section B** is an [Educational Impact Statement](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/making-an-application/educational-impact/), to be completed by your school. It provides information about your educational experience and assists the decision about the third-level supports you need.
* **Section C** is [Evidence of Disability](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/providing-evidence-of-your-disability/) which must be completed by the [accepted medical consultant or specialist](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/providing-evidence-of-your-disability/) for your particular disability. It provides verification of your disability and helps the decision about the third-level supports that you need. Sections B and C can only be sent to the CAO in paper form. The CAO advises all students to get a certificate of posting when sending documents by post.

**Supports for students with disabilities**

If you have indicated on your CAO form that you have a disability or specific learning difficulty, the college's [Disability Service](http://www.ahead.ie/yourdisabilityoffice) will be informed as soon as you accept a place, and they will get in touch with you to work out what supports they can provide.

Even if you didn't tick this box on the CAO form, you can still access the available supports by contacting the college's Disability Service at any stage during your time in college.

**Key dates for 2023 applications using DARE**

**4 November 2022** - the [online CAO application facility](https://www.cao.ie/apply.php) for 2023 opens.

**1 February 2023** - your main application must reach the CAO by 5 p.m. Late CAO applications are not considered for DARE.

**1 March 2023** - the following items must reach the CAO by 5 p.m.

* Indicate that you wish to be considered for DARE by ticking 'Yes' on question 1.
* Complete Section A of the Supplementary Information Form.

**15 March 2023**, the rest of the Supplementary Information Form must reach the CAO by 5 p.m. These are:

* Section B (the Educational Impact Statement)
* Section C (evidence of a disability)

**No applications will be accepted after these closing dates**. The closing dates are very strict because DARE is an additional application procedure which needs extra processing time.

You should be notified by post by the end of **June 2023** (after the Leaving Certificate exam) telling you whether you are eligible for the DARE scheme. If you are told you are not eligible you can ask for your application to be reviewed. If you are not eligible for DARE you can still get into college if you meet the entry requirements for your chosen course.

The CAO helpline at (091) 509 800 can help you with your DARE application. You can find further information in this list of [frequently asked questions](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/help/) on the [Access College website](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/). You can also contact the [access services of the colleges participating in the DARE scheme](http://www.ahead.ie/yourdisabilityoffice).

The DARE programme runs nationwide [information sessions](http://accesscollege.ie/dare/events/) for students and their parents/guardians to deal with queries about preparing the application.

You can download a detailed [Application Handbook and checklists](https://accesscollege.ie/dare/making-an-application/handbooks-forms/) to help with your application.

You can also access information about DARE on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/accesscollege).

## Where to apply

You apply for DARE [online through the CAO](https://www.cao.ie/apply.php).

### Central Applications Office

Tower House  
Eglinton Street  
Galway  
Ireland

**Opening Hours:** Office Hours 9:30-17:00

**Tel:** (091) 509 800

**Fax:** (091) 562 344

**Homepage:** [http://www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie/)

**Page edited:** 11 October 2022

# HEAR admissions scheme for students from disadvantaged backgrounds

* [What is HEAR?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/#7e21a0)
* [How to qualify for the HEAR scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/#b22b1f)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/#10ea51)
* [Where to apply for the HEAR scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-from-disadvantaged-backgrounds/#f8191e)

## What is HEAR?

The Higher Education Access Route (HEAR) is an admissions scheme for students from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

The scheme aims to improve access to college for school-leavers from socio-economic backgrounds that are under-represented in third-level education. Under the HEAR scheme a number of third-level places are allocated to school-leavers on a reduced points basis. To be eligible for the scheme you must meet certain indicators (or criteria) related to your financial, social and cultural circumstances – see ‘Indicators’ below.

### How the HEAR scheme works

Each of the third-level colleges participating in the scheme has reserved a number of places on its courses for school-leavers who are eligible for HEAR. You can find details of the places available through HEAR on the [websites of the participating third-level colleges](http://accesscollege.ie/hear/participating-colleges/).

You apply for HEAR through the Central Applications Office (CAO) – see ‘How to apply’ below.

Once you have been accepted as eligible for HEAR, you then compete for the reduced point places based on your Leaving Certificate results. A *reduced point* *place* means that you may get a place on a third-level course with fewer than the full CAO points. For example, if you are eligible for HEAR and you get 350 Leaving Certificate points, you may be offered a place on a course that is 360 points through CAO. However, you must meet the college matriculation and any specific course entry requirements.

### Additional supports

If you get a place through HEAR you will also be offered a range of supports while you are studying at college, such as an orientation programme, extra tuition, study skills and mentoring. The supports available will vary from college to college.

## How to qualify for the HEAR scheme

To qualify for HEAR you must meet certain indicators or criteria related to your financial, social and economic circumstances.

You must also be under 23 years of age on 1 January of the year the course starts.

### Indicators

* **Financial (for entry autumn 2023):**
* 1. **Income**: Your total family income (that is gross income before tax and PRSI are deducted) for the year 2021 was within the HEAR income limits (see table below)
* 2. **Medical card**: You, your parent(s) or guardian(s) hold a [medical card](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/medical-cards-and-gp-visit-cards/medical-card/) or [GP visit card](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/health/medical-cards-and-gp-visit-cards/gp-visit-cards/) on 31 December 2022
* 3. [**Social welfare**](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/): Your parent(s) or guardian(s) were getting a means-tested social assistance payment for at least 26 weeks in 2021
* **Social and cultural:**
* 4. **Group**: You come from a [socio-economic group that is under-represented in higher education](http://accesscollege.ie/hear/making-an-application/eligibility-indicators/socio-economic-group/), for example: non-manual workers; semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers; agricultural workers
* 5. **School**: You have completed 5 years of second-level education at a school in the [DEIS](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/the-irish-education-system/measures-to-address-educational-disadvantage/) (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) programme
* 6. **Area**: You are living in an [area of concentrated disadvantage and social exclusion](http://accesscollege.ie/hear/making-an-application/eligibility-indicators/area/) with, for example, high unemployment and poverty and few community facilities

**HEAR income limits 2023**

| **Number of dependent children\* in your family** | **Family income in 2021** |
| --- | --- |
| Fewer than 4 | €46,790 |
| 4-7 | €51,325 |
| More than 8 | €55,630 |
| Add €4,785 to the total income for every sibling/parent enrolled in a full-time college, university or Post-Leaving Certificate further education course. | |

\*A 'dependent child' is a child under age 16 on 1 October 2022 or a parent or child over 16 who is attending a full-time educational institution or is medically certified as permanently unfit for work.

### Fulfilling the indicator requirement

Of the 6 indicators above you must meet the low income indicator 1 and a combination of 2 other indicators. There are 4 different combinations as follows:

| A | Indicator 1 | Plus 2 | Plus 4 or 5 or 6 |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| B | Indicator 1 | Plus 3 | Plus 4 or 5 or 6 |
| C | Indicator 1 | Plus 4 | Plus 5 or 6 |
| D | Indicator 1 | Plus 5 plus 6 |  |

### Documentation required

As part of your application you must provide documentation to show that you meet the required indicators. Examples of the documentation required are:

* Statement of Liability from the Revenue Commissioners for 2021. The [Statement of Liability has replaced the P21](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/money-and-tax/tax/income-tax/how-to-review-your-paye-tax/). You can get a Statement of Liability through [Revenue's myAccount service](https://www.ros.ie/myaccount-web/sign_in.html?execution=e2s1).
* Statement of welfare benefits received from the Department of Social Protection in 2021 (download this page from your online HEAR application form)
* Confirmation from your Local Health Office of a medical or GP visit card valid on 31 December 2022 (download this page from your online HEAR application form)

## How to apply

To get a college place under the HEAR scheme you must [apply online through the CAO](http://www.cao.ie/apply.php). Your CAO application must reach the CAO by **5pm 1 February 2023**. Late CAO applications are not considered for HEAR.

When you are filling in the online CAO form you must complete the part of the form to say you wish to apply for the HEAR scheme. You will then be directed to a separate HEAR application form. You must complete this part of your application by **5pm 1 March 2023**.

Then on the HEAR application form you must answer questions on your family’s income, your parents’ employment status and the schools you attended.

By **5pm 15 March 2023** your supporting documents must reach the CAO, providing evidence of your circumstances.

**No applications will be accepted after the closing dates.** The closing dates are very strict because HEAR is an additional application procedure which needs extra processing time.

You will get a letter in late **June 2023** (after the Leaving Certificate examination) telling you whether you are eligible for the scheme. If you are told you are not eligible you can ask for your application to be reviewed. Your HEAR application does not affect your CAO application, which will be processed in the usual way after you get your Leaving Certificate results.

The CAO helpline at (091) 509 800 can assist school-leavers with their HEAR application. You can find further information in this [list of frequently asked questions](http://accesscollege.ie/hear/help/) on the [Access College website](http://www.accesscollege.ie/). You can also contact the access services of the colleges participating in the HEAR scheme.

The HEAR programme runs nationwide [information sessions](http://accesscollege.ie/hear/events/) which aim to answer questions that students (or their parents/guardians) may have about preparing the application for HEAR.

You can download [an application handbook and information leaflets](http://accesscollege.ie/hear/making-an-application/handbooks-forms/) to help with your application.

You can also access information about HEAR on [Facebook](http://www.facebook.com/accesscollege).

## Where to apply for the HEAR scheme

You apply for HEAR [online through the CAO](http://www.cao.ie/apply.php).

### Central Applications Office

Tower House  
Eglinton Street  
Galway  
Ireland

**Opening Hours:** Office Hours 9:30-17:00

**Tel:** (091) 509 800

**Fax:** (091) 562 344

**Homepage:** [http://www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie/)

**Page edited:** 5 October 2022

# Third-level courses for mature students

* [Who is a mature student?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/#a4098a)
* [Study options for mature students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/#c6dee5)
* [College entry requirements for mature students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/#a573e7)
* [Fees for mature students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/#d087fc)
* [How to apply as a mature student](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/#81e6b8)
* [Where to apply as a mature student](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/#491c6f)

## Who is a mature student?

Generally, you are considered to be a mature student if you are at least 23 years of age on 1 January the year you start your course and you are starting college for the first time.

Sometimes, if you started but didn’t finish your course, you can still be considered a mature student if you are aged 23 or over. However, you won’t get a student grant unless you have completed a full break in studies of at least 5 years. You should ask the college where you want to study how it defines a mature student.

Depending on your course and circumstances, as a mature student you may qualify for a student grant or help with fees. See ‘University access programmes’ and ‘Fees for mature students’ below.

## Study options for mature students

### Full-time study

Third-level colleges reserve a small number of places for mature students who want to do a full-time day course. If you are aged over 23\* you can apply for one of these places. This means that you will compete for your place on a different basis to those who are just leaving school. The number of places reserved for mature students are limited, so it is likely that you will still have to compete with your peers.

\*You should check with the college where you want to study how it defines a mature student.

If you opt for a full-time course in this way, you will be expected to attend classes or lectures every day and you will be assessed in the same way as the other students on your course.

Many colleges and universities hold information events for people who want to study as mature students.

The Qualifax website has a calendar of [career events](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_wrapper&view=wrapper&Itemid=22) that run throughout the year.

### Part-time options

If you don’t want to study full time, there are other options available including part-time courses, modular programmes and distance learning.

If you choose to study on a part-time or modular basis, you can spread your studies over a number of years. This gives you the opportunity to organise your time and to study when it is most convenient for you. It will take longer to complete than a full-time course, but it has the advantage that it allows you to work at your own pace, gradually building credits towards your qualification.

### Modular programmes

A modular programme is made up of separate modules - these are self-contained units within a course. You can study and complete each module separately at different stages during that course. Modular programmes can take place in regular classroom settings or can be part of a distance learning programme. Modular courses are available at degree level in some universities.

### Distance learning

Distance learning takes place away from the physical classroom and the tutor. It covers a wide range of learning programmes. If you take part in a distance learning programme, you may use different learning materials and media throughout your course.

On some courses students may come together to study for a day, a weekend or a week at a time.

### University access programmes

University access programmes aim to increase the participation of under-represented groups at third-level. They support young adults and mature students to study at third-level colleges.

You may qualify for a [student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/), if you are attending an access or foundation course on the [Department of Education’s approved list](https://susi.ie/undergraduate-student/approved-institutionscourses-for-undergraduate-students/#:~:text=Approved%20undergraduate%20courses%20must%20be,specified%20in%20the%20Student%20Support). However, you will not qualify for a grant if the courses is not on the approved list.

If you are getting a social welfare payment, you may be able to take part in an access or foundation course and get the [Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/).

You should check access programmes with the university of your choice or local [Education and Training Board.](http://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/)

## College entry requirements for mature students

Generally, you will need to have completed your Leaving Certificate to attend third level education. However, if you are applying for a place as a mature student, you will not be asked to meet the usual entry requirements.

Different courses operate different entry procedures, but, usually, colleges will take into account your educational background, work history, community involvement and other achievements and interests. This system is known as the Accreditation of Prior Experiential Learning (APEL) or [Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=161&Itemid=198).

It is useful to find out whether the college of your choice uses the APEL system before you apply.

[The Qualifax website has information about mature student entry requirements for full-time undergraduate courses](http://www.qualifax.ie/index.php?option=com_wrapper&Itemid=17&Mainsec=courses&Subsec=search_courses&action=reset&CSH_ID=7&view=wrapper).

In some cases, you may be asked to take an entrance exam.

## Fees for mature students

### Full-time study

If you qualify for the [Free Fees Initiative](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/), you will not have to pay fees in a publically funded college. However, you will have to pay the student contribution unless you also qualify for the [student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/).

If you are getting a social welfare payment, you should find out if you qualify for the [Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/).

You cannot get the [student grant and the Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/social-welfare-payments-and-the-student-grant/) at the same time, but if you are eligible for both, you can check which you would be better off applying for.

You can apply for tax relief if you are paying for the course from your own income or another person can claim if they are paying fees on your behalf. To qualify for the tax relief on your fees, your course must be an [approved course at an approved college](https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/tuition-fees-paid-for-third-level-education/approved-colleges-and-courses.aspx).

### Part-time, modular and distance education

You usually have to pay fees for all part-time, modular and distance education courses. The costs vary from course to course. However, you may apply for [tax relief](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/) if you are participating on an approved course.

## How to apply as a mature student

To apply for a third-level course as a mature student, you should first contact the college of your choice directly. The Admissions Office or Mature Students Officer will have information about any specific requirements or extra information you need to provide when applying for your course. Some courses have different age requirements, so you should check if this applies.

The college will also tell you if you need to submit an application to the college directly or use the [CAO application process](https://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=mature) or both.

If the college wants you to apply through the CAO and you wish to be assessed as a mature student, you must make your CAO application **before 1 February of the year you start your course**.

You will be in competition with other mature students for a place on the course so make sure to include as much detail as possible regarding your educational background, work experience and other interests.

### Applying for part-time and university access programmes

Contact the university of your choice or [local Education and Training Board](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/) for information about university access programmes and part-time courses.

You can find detailed information about college requirements and supports for mature students in the [Mature Student Directory of Irish Third-Level Institutions (pdf)](http://www.qualifax.ie/attachments/096_Mature.pdf).

## Where to apply as a mature student

If you are applying for a [post leaving certificate (plc)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) or access programme you can contact [your local ETB](https://www.etbi.ie/etbs/directory-of-etbs/).

You can apply directly to [private colleges](https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/tuition-fees-paid-for-third-level-education/approved-colleges-and-courses.aspx) for full-time, part-time and post graduate courses.

If you are applying for a course at [university, technological university or institute of technology](https://hea.ie/higher-education-institutions/), you should contact the college about their application requirements.

Many colleges also require you to apply through the [CAO](https://www.cao.ie/index.php?page=mature).

### Central Applications Office

Tower House  
Eglinton Street  
Galway  
Ireland

**Opening Hours:** Office Hours 9:30-17:00

**Tel:** (091) 509 800

**Fax:** (091) 562 344

**Homepage:** [http://www.cao.ie](http://www.cao.ie/)

**Page edited:** 24 February 2022

# Returning to education with Springboard+

* [What is Springboard+?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#5afc60)
* [Am I eligible for Springboard+?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#5cc2b0)
* [If you are unemployed](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#85857e)
* [If you were previously self-employed](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#de9f5e)
* [If you are employed](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#d4eeb1)
* [If you are a recent graduate](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#c8457d)
* [If you are returning to education or work after being a carer or homemaker](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#f31a4b)
* [If you want to do an ICT skills conversion course](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#9e721f)
* [Springboard+ fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#67359a)
* [How to apply for Springboard+](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#524a4e)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/#ec2268)

## What is Springboard+?

Springboard+ provides free higher education courses if:

* You are unemployed
* You are looking to return to work

You can also apply for a Springboard+ course if you are working, but you must pay a 10% contribution towards the course fee. (Level 6 courses are free).

**What courses can I do?**

Springboard has part-time courses from certificate (level 6) to master's degree (level 9) on the [National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ)](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications). Most of the courses are part-time and last for one year or less, but there is an increasing number of full-time courses and 2-year courses. Most courses are delivered online or as blended learning that combines online and classroom learning.

Courses offered include:

* Information and communications technology (ICT)
* Medical technologies
* Cybersecurity
* Sustainable energy
* Creative industries
* Online retail

Find out more about the [courses you can do with Springboard+](https://springboardcourses.ie/search).

Springboard+ courses 2023-2024 open for applications from **7 June 2023** see ‘How to apply’ below.

## Am I eligible for Springboard+?

You can apply for Springboard+ if you are:

* Unemployed
* Employed
* A recent graduate
* Returning to education or work after being a carer or homemaker
* Updating your ICT skills

You must:

* Be living in Ireland
* Have your PPS number
* Meet the [residency requirements](https://springboardcourses.ie/eligibility) .

If you have been granted International Temporary Protection in Ireland, you may also be eligible.

Read more about eligibility for Springboard+ below.

Places on Springboard+ courses are limited. People who are on a qualifying social welfare payment will have priority when places are allocated.

## If you are unemployed

To qualify for a free Springboard+ course you must

* Be unemployed
* Be actively seeking work
* Be available to take up work.

#### Qualifying social welfare payments

When starting a Springboard+ course, you must either be getting a qualifying social welfare payment or be in one of the other eligible categories listed below.

Qualifying social welfare payments include:

* Jobseeker’s Benefit
* Jobseeker’s Allowance
* One-Parent Family Payment
* Disability Allowance
* Carer’s Allowance
* Farm Assist/Fish Assist
* Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner's (Contributory) Pension
* Widow's, Widower's or Surviving Civil Partner’s (Non-Contributory) Pension
* Blind Pension
* Deserted Wife’s Allowance

You can also apply for Springboard+ if:

* You are a [qualified adult](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/springboard/Qualifying%20social%20welfare%20payments) of working age (under 66) on someone else’s social welfare payment
* You are signing for [social insurance credits](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/irish-social-welfare-system/social-insurance-prsi/credited-social-insurance-contributions/)

#### Employment support schemes

You are also eligible for Springboard+ (with approval from a Department of Social Protection case officer) if you are on one of the following schemes or payments:

* Community Employment
* Rural Social Scheme
* Tús
* Back to Work Enterprise Allowance
* Short-Term Enterprise Allowance.

#### Is there an age limit?

Generally, there are no age restrictions unless you are a qualified adult on someone else’s social welfare payment. However, you must meet the eligibility criteria for both Springboard+ and your chosen course.

## If you were previously self-employed

You are eligible for Springboard+ if you were previously self-employed but are now unemployed and actively seeking work. You don’t need to be getting a social welfare payment.

You must meet the [residency criteria](https://springboardcourses.ie/eligibility) and provide a letter or statement from Revenue stating that you are no longer trading (or a similar letter from your former accountant).

## If you are employed

If you are employed or self-employed and meet the nationality/ visa and residency requirements, you can apply to any available Springboard+ courses.

## If you are a recent graduate

Only one-year full-time and 2-year part-time ICT skills conversion courses are open to recent graduates.

However, to participate on a NFQ level 9 (post-graduate) course, it must be at least one year since you completed your full-time undergraduate degree course (Level 8).

## If you are returning to education or work after being a carer or homemaker

You are eligible for Springboard+, if you have been out of the work environment due to childcare or other caring obligations and require upskilling or reskilling to get back to the workforce.

To qualify you must meet the [residency criteria](https://springboardcourses.ie/eligibility) and one of the following requirements:

* You have been on home or other caring duties for 9 of the previous 12 months or
* You are economically dependent on a partner or spouse and have been unemployed for 9 of the previous 12 months

You must provide supporting documentation and swear a [declaration before a Commissioner for Oaths](https://springboardcourses.ie/pdfs/Declaration%20for%20Returners%20(V2%202018).pdf) about your status.

## If you want to do an ICT skills conversion course

An ICT skills conversion course is when you retrain to start a career in the technology sector.

If you were getting Jobseekers Benefit or Jobseekers Allowance for at least 9 of the previous 12 months, you may get a Back to Education Allowance while participating on a one-year, full-time ICT skills conversion course.

You are not eligible for a 2-year part-time ICT conversion courses if:

* You are getting a jobseeker’s payment (including Farm Assist)
* You are a qualified adult of working age on someone else’s social welfare payment.

## Springboard+ fees

### Unemployed people

You do not have to pay any course fees or charges if you are unemployed.

If you take up a Springboard+ course, you can keep your existing social welfare payment if you continue to fulfil the conditions for the payment. If you have started a course and lose your qualifying social welfare payment, you can continue on your course.

If you are getting a jobseeker’s payment and participating on a part-time Springboard+ course, you will continue to get your jobseeker’s payment under the [Part-Time Education Option (PTEO)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/part-time-education-option/).

If you are getting a jobseeker’s payment and you are on a full-time course, you may have the option to transfer to a [Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/).

If you take up a job while on a course, Springboard+ will fund the fees for the full academic year.

If your course extends into another academic year(s), the fees will be decided by your college.

### Employed people

If you are employed, you must pay 10% towards the course fee at level 7, 8 and 9 on the NFQ. However, level 6 courses are free.

If you are getting the Working Family Payment (WFP) at the start of the course, you will not have to pay the 10% course fee contribution.

### Recent graduates

Recent graduates must pay 10% of the tuition fee for ICT skills conversion courses.

## How to apply for Springboard+

Applications for Springboard 2023-2024 open from **Wednesday, 7 June 2023**.

To apply for a Springboard+ course, you choose the course(s) you are interested in on [springboardcourses.ie](https://springboardcourses.ie/search) and apply online.

Please follow the [instructions](https://springboardcourses.ie/howToApply) on the website.

If you are getting a social welfare payment, you should:

* Contact [your Intreo Centre or local Social Welfare Branch Office](http://www.welfare.ie/en/Pages/List-of-Social-Welfare-Local-and-Branch-Offices-by-County.aspx)
* Check what further steps (if any) you need to take.

You can apply for up to 10 courses but you can only take one course at a time.

## Further information

There are detailed [Frequently Asked Questions](https://springboardcourses.ie/faq) on springboardcourses.ie. You can [contact Springboard+ online](https://springboardcourses.ie/contactUs).

From mid June, you can call to speak to a guidance counsellor for advice on your course options. Freephone the Springboard+ helpline on 1800 303 523.

If Springboard+ doesn’t meet your needs, there are several other ways to go back to education.

**Page edited:** 7 June 2023

# Third-level student fees and charges

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/#l0b797)
* [Third-level fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/#lb01ca)
* [Student contribution](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/#ld8ce9)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/#ld1a9a)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/#lef21f)

## Introduction

Most undergraduate students attending publicly funded third-level courses do not have to pay tuition fees. Under the terms of the [Free Fees Initiative](http://www.studentfinance.ie/mp9377/course-fees/index.html), the Department of Further and Higher Education pays the fees to the colleges instead.

A separate annual charge is payable to colleges for the costs of student services and examinations – see ‘Student contribution’ below.

Charges for Post-Leaving Certificate courses (PLCs) operate under different rules - see [our document on PLCs](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/).

## Third-level fees

### Free fees

To qualify for free fees, you must meet criteria based on:

* Residence and
* Nationality and immigration status and
* Course requirements

**Residence**

You must have been living in an EEA member state or Switzerland or United Kingdom (UK) **for at least 3 of the 5 years before starting your course**. The members of the EEA (the European Economic Area) are the member states of the EU, along with Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

**Nationality and immigration**

You must also meet **one** of the following 6 criteria as regards nationality and immigration status in Ireland:

You must:

1. Be a citizen of an EEA member state (see above) or Switzerland or UK or
2. Have official [refugee status](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/refugee-status-and-leave-to-remain/your-rights-when-you-get-international-protection/) or
3. Be a [family member of a refugee](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/refugee-status-and-leave-to-remain/family-reunification-for-refugees-in-ireland/) and have been granted permission to live in the State or
4. Be a [family member of an EU national](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/moving-to-ireland/rights-of-residence-in-ireland/residence-rights-eu-national/) and have permission to live in the State, with a stamp “4EUFAM” on your residence card or
5. Have been granted humanitarian [leave to remain](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/asylum-seekers-and-refugees/refugee-status-and-leave-to-remain/permission-to-remain/) in the State or
6. Have been granted permission to remain in the State by the Minister for Justice and Equality, following a determination by the Minister not to make a deportation order under Section 3 of the Immigration Act 1999.

**Course requirements**

You must also meet **all** of the following 3 course requirements:

1. You must be undertaking a full-time undergraduate course of at least 2 years' duration (or certain shorter courses in institutes of technology).
2. You must be a first-time full-time undergraduate. However, students who already hold a Level 6 or a Level 7 qualification and are progressing to a Level 8 qualification on the [National Framework of Qualifications](https://www.qqi.ie/what-we-do/the-qualifications-system/national-framework-of-qualifications) may possibly be deemed eligible for free fees - you should check with the college providing the level 8 course. Also, you may be eligible for Free Fees, if you attend a course but did not complete it and are returning following a break of at least 5 years to pursue an approved course at the same level.
3. In general, you must not be repeating the year because of failing your exams or changing course. This requirement may be waived if you repeat a year due to certified serious illness.

**The undergraduate courses for which the free fees arrangements apply are courses in:**

* Universities
* Institutes of technology
* Publicly funded colleges of education
* National College of Ireland
* A number of religious education institutions

You cannot get free fees for courses in private colleges, whether they have [Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)](http://www.qqi.ie/) approval or not. The fact that a course is listed by the [Central Applications Office](http://cao.ie/index.php) (CAO) is not enough to make it a free fees course.

You can get detailed information about assistance with tuition fees on [studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/mp9377/course-fees/index.html).

### EU fees

If you do not qualify for free fees you may still be eligible for EU fee rates. EU fee rates are set by each individual third-level educational institution. You should contact the one you are interested in to find out about the EU fee rate and whether you qualify.

Some examples of when people might qualify for an EU fee rate are as follows:

* You originally qualified for free fees and are now **repeating a year** that you failed.
* You do not fulfil any of the 6 nationality and immigration status criteria listed above but have been **tax resident** for a number of years in an EEA member state or Switzerland. (However, as the third-level institutions are autonomous bodies, this is at the discretion of the institution concerned.)

**Since September 2014**, an Irish, EU, EEA or Swiss student who has spent at least five years in primary school or second level school in Ireland can avail of EU fee rates.

If you do not qualify for EU fees you can be charged non-EU fees. Each third-level educational institution sets its own fee rates. You should contact the ones you are interested in to find out more about their fees - see 'Where to apply' below.

### Postgraduate fees

In general, you will have to pay fees for a postgraduate course. However, you may get [financial assistance under the Student Grant Scheme.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/postgraduate-student-grant/)

Postgraduates under the [Graduate Skills Conversion Programme](http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Press-Releases/2013-Press-Releases/PR13-02-01A.html), courses are free, full-time and intensive.

## Student contribution

Most colleges charge an annual student contribution, formerly called the student services charge. It is also known as a registration fee and it covers student services and examinations. The amount of the contribution varies from one institution to another.

The maximum rate of the student contribution for the academic year 2023-2024 is €3,000.

The [student contribution 2022-2023](https://www.gov.ie/en/news/1ab10-budget-2023-susi-student-grant-scheme-measures/#student-maintenance-grant-measures) was €2,000.

If you are getting [Back to Education Allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/) (BTEA) you may qualify for exemption from the student contribution. More information about the BTEA and the student contribution can be found in our document about [social welfare payments and the student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/social-welfare-payments-and-the-student-grant/).

### Student grants

Student grants provide financial support to eligible students. There are 2 elements to the student grant - a maintenance grant and a fee grant. A maintenance grant is a contribution towards your living costs. A fee grant can cover:

* All or part of your tuition fees
* All or part of the student contribution
* Costs of essential field trips

If you have qualified for a maintenance grant, you will generally qualify for a fee grant.

If you do not qualify for a maintenance grant, but your family’s reckonable income is below certain limits, you may qualify for a partial fee grant. This means that you will either be exempt from 50% of the student contribution, or exempt from 50% of any tuition fees and all of the student contribution.

The Student Grant Scheme is described in our document on [Grants for students in further and higher education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/).

### ****Tax relief****

You may be able to claim tax relief on tuition fees that you have paid. Families who pay student contributions for more than one student in a year can also claim tax relief on the second and subsequent contributions. Read more in [our document on tax relief for third-level fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/).

## How to apply

There is no separate application for the Free Fees Initiative. Your eligibility will be assessed on the basis of the information you give when applying for a college place.

## Where to apply

For information about fees contact the [third-level educational institution](http://hea.ie/higher-education-institutions/?v=l) of your choice.

**Page edited:** 21 March 2023

# Tax relief for third-level fees

* [Can I get tax back on third-level fees?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/#a2a75e)
* [Payments that qualify for tax relief](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/#032ed8)
* [Courses that qualify for tax relief](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/#c2ee8e)
* [Rate of tax relief](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/#4ea4d9)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/#10ea51)

## Can I get tax back on third-level fees?

You may get tax relief on tuition fees paid for:

* Undergraduate courses
* Postgraduate courses
* Information technology (IT) and foreign language courses.

[Lists of courses and colleges approved](http://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/tuition-fees-paid-for-third-level-education/approved-colleges-and-courses.aspx) for tax relief each year are published on the Revenue website.

You can claim tax relief if you have paid the fees, either on your own behalf or on behalf of another person.

You **cannot** claim tax relief on:

* Examination or administration fees
* Any part of the tuition fees that is met directly or indirectly by a grant, a scholarship or otherwise (for example, where fees are reimbursed by an employer).

Read more about [tuition fees and the Student Contribution](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/).

## Payments that qualify for tax relief

The maximum amount of fees (including the **Student Contribution**) that can qualify for tax relief is €7,000 per person, per course, per academic year.

**Full-time student**: There is no tax relief on the first €3,000 spent on tuition fees (including the Student Contribution) for [each tax year](http://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/tuition-fees-paid-for-third-level-education/index.aspx).

**Part-time student**: There is no tax relief on the first €1,500 spent on tuition fees (including the Student Contribution) for each tax year.

**More than one student**: If you are claiming for more than one student, you will get full tax relief on tuition fees (including the Student Contribution) for the second or subsequent students.

You can find examples of [how the tuition fees tax relief works](https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/tuition-fees-paid-for-third-level-education/how-do-you-calculate-the-relief.aspx) on the Revenue website.

## Courses that qualify for tax relief

### Undergraduate courses

Tax relief is available for tuition fees paid for:

* Approved full-time and part-time undergraduate courses in both private and publicly funded third-level colleges in the State
* Approved full-time and part-time undergraduate courses in both private and publicly funded third-level colleges in any EU member state or in the UK. This includes courses in medicine, veterinary medicine, dentistry and teacher training.
* Full-time and part-time undergraduate courses operated by colleges in any EU member state and in the UK providing distance education in the State.

### Conditions for granting tax relief for undergraduate courses

* Courses must be for at least 2 years' duration
* Colleges and courses within the State must be approved by the Department of Education and Skills

### Postgraduate courses

Tax relief is available for tuition fees paid for:

* Approved postgraduate courses in private and publicly funded colleges in the State
* Postgraduate courses in a university or publicly funded college in another EU member state or the UK, including such colleges that provide distance education in the State
* Postgraduate courses in a university or publicly funded third-level college in non-EU countries.

### Conditions for granting tax relief for postgraduate courses

* Courses must be for at least one academic year but not more than 4 academic years in duration and must lead to a postgraduate award based on either a thesis or an examination.
* The person taking the course must already have a primary degree or an equivalent qualification.

### Information technology and foreign language courses

You can get tax relief on fees paid for training courses in information technology and foreign languages (other than postgraduate courses) if the course:

* Is less than 2 years' duration
* Awards a certificate of competence (and not just a certificate of attendance)
* Is on [Revenue's list of approved courses](http://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/foreign-language-and-it-courses/index.aspx).

### Details of schemes

Revenue publishes detailed [information about tax relief for tuition fees](http://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/tuition-fees-paid-for-third-level-education/index.aspx), covering tax relief for undergraduate and postgraduate courses and tax relief for [information technology and foreign language courses](http://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/foreign-language-and-it-courses/index.aspx).

## Rate of tax relief

Tax relief is given at the standard rate of 20%.

There is no limit on the number of people for whom you can claim.

**Paying fees in instalments**

If you pay fees in instalments and at least one instalment is paid in the tax year following the year your course started, then the relief for fees relating to that academic year may be granted either:

* In the tax year the course started, or
* The tax year in which the instalment was paid.

It is generally more beneficial for you to claim tax relief in the tax year that the course started. You can find [examples of when it is of greater benefit to claim on Revenue’s website](https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/education/tuition-fees-paid-for-third-level-education/paying-tuition-fees-in-instalments.aspx).

Relief will only be granted in respect of amounts actually paid and subject to the maximum relief available in that year.

**Undergraduate and postgraduate courses**:

The maximum amount of fees (including the Student Contribution) that can qualify for tax relief is €7,000 per person, per course, per academic year.

**Information technology and foreign language courses**:

The course fees paid must not be less than €315 and not more than €1,270 (these refer to the course fee and are not simply an amount per annum).

## How to apply

You can claim tax relief on fees paid for undergraduate, postgraduate, IT and foreign language courses using Revenue's [myAccount service](https://www.ros.ie/myaccount-web/home.html).

If you’re self-employed, you can apply for tax relief on tuition fees by using [Revenue’s Online Service (ROS)](https://www.revenue.ie/en/online-services/support/help-guides/ros/guide-to-ros.aspx).

Alternatively, you can download the application form to [claim tax relief on undergraduate or postgraduate tuition fees (pdf)](https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/documents/education/form-it31.pdf) or to [claim tax relief on IT and foreign language tuition fees (pdf)](https://www.revenue.ie/en/personal-tax-credits-reliefs-and-exemptions/documents/education/form-it31.pdf) and return it to [your Revenue office](http://www.revenue.ie/en/contact-us/index.aspx).

**Keeping receipts for Revenue:** You do not need to submit your receipts for fees paid with your claim, but you must keep them as Revenue may ask to see them.

Once you have made your claim, you must keep your receipts for fees paid for 6 years. You can use Revenue’s [receipt tracker service](https://www.revenue.ie/en/online-services/support/mobile-and-desktop-applications/revenue-receipts-tracker-app.aspx) to keep a digital record of your receipts.

Further information on tax relief on third-level fees is available from [your Revenue Office](http://www.revenue.ie/en/contact-us/index.aspx).

**Page edited:** 23 March 2023

# Student Grant Scheme

* [What is the Student Grant Scheme?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#70e5ed)
* [Who qualifies for a student grant?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#19584a)
* [Student support scheme for asylum seekers](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#f09c38)
* [How much will I get?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#4c1dac)
* [How to apply for a student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#4d7e38)
* [Appealing a decision](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#cc08ae)
* [Contact SUSI](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#3a7dd4)
* [Approved colleges and courses](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#dd5a71)
* [Other financial supports for students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/#d3f6a9)

## What is the Student Grant Scheme?

The Student Grant Scheme is the main financial support scheme for students studying in Ireland and abroad. It is also known as the SUSI grant because the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) is the awarding authority for the Student Grant Scheme.

Student grants are divided into:

* Maintenance grants
* Fee grants

Maintenance grants help students with their living costs. Fee grants pay tuition fees for students who do not qualify for the [Free Fees Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/). Fee grants can also pay the Student Contribution and the cost of essential field trips.

If you qualify for the maintenance grant, you also get the fee grant. Some people only get a fee grant - see ‘How much will I get?’ below.

You cannot get some types of [social welfare payments and the student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/social-welfare-payments-and-the-student-grant/).

Postgraduates can get information about financial assistance in our page on [postgraduate student grants](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/postgraduate-student-grant/).

**Student Grant Applications 2023-2024**

If you are already getting the Student Grant, [renewal applications for 2023-2024 opened on 9 March 2023](https://www.susi.ie/renewal-applications/index.html). SUSI contacts renewal applicants directly about reapplying.

New applications for Student Grant 2023-2024 are open from **Thursday, 13 April 2023**.

### Studying in the UK

[Eligible Irish students studying in the UK](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ee9f4-further-and-higher-education-and-brexit/) and eligible UK students studying in Irish higher education institutions can apply for a student grant.

## Who qualifies for a student grant?

To qualify for a student grant, you must meet all the conditions of the scheme. These include:

1. **Nationality condition**
2. **Residence condition**
3. **Means test**
4. **Approved course of study:** you must be attending an approved course of study
5. **Progression:** you must be progressing from your previous level of study
6. **Maximum period of grant assistance**

We cover each of these conditions below.

### 1. Nationality condition

To get a student grant you must be a citizen of:

* Ireland
* UK
* An EU or EEA country
* Switzerland

If you are not a citizen of one of these countries, you may still qualify for a grant if you have refugee status, or have an [immigration status or leave to remain permission accepted by SUSI](https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/nationality-criteria/).

### 2. Residence condition

You must have been resident in the State for 3 of the previous 5 years to qualify for a maintenance grant. However, if you are temporarily resident elsewhere in the EU in order to pursue a course of study for a recognised qualification, and you were resident in the State for 3 of the 5 years before starting that course, you satisfy this requirement.

If you fulfil all the criteria for a maintenance grant except for the residence condition in the State, you may still qualify for a fee grant or a postgraduate fee contribution as a **tuition student**.

### 3. Means test

The means test for a student grant in 2023-2024 is based on you or your family's gross income for the previous full tax year (2022). However, if you or your family have had a [change of circumstances](https://www.susi.ie/applications-in-progress-next-steps/change-in-circumstances/index.html) (which is likely to be permanent) since 31 December 2022, your changed circumstances will be taken into account.

[Reckonable income](https://susi.ie/income/) for a student grant is gross income from all sources. Some social welfare payments and financial support payments are excluded from 'reckonable income' for the purposes of student grants - see [more details on reckonable income on susi.ie](https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/income/index.html) and also in the [Student Grant Scheme 2023](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2023/en.si.2023.0094.pdf).

If you were ordinarily resident with your parent(s) from 1 October of the year before the year of entry to the course, you are considered **dependent on your parent(s**) and your income (if any) is assessed together with your parents' income(s). An allowance is made for your earnings outside of term-time – up to €6,552. Outside term time is 2 weeks at Christmas, 2 weeks at Easter and 12 weeks during the summer months of June, July and August only. (Holiday pay earned outside these periods may also be allowed on receipt of a letter from the school/college confirming the exact dates of term).

The [COVID-19 Pandemic Unemployment Payment (PUP)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/unemployed-people/covid19-pandemic-unemployment-payment/) is reckonable income for the student grant means test. The allowance for earnings outside term-time earning cannot be deducted from PUP paid during that time.

**Independent mature candidates** are candidates aged 23 or over on 1 January in the year of entry to the course. To be assessed as an independent mature candidate you must also live separately from your parents from 1 October of the year before the year of entry to the course. If you are an independent student, you are assessed on your own income (and that of your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant, if applicable).

The only points at which you can be reclassified from a dependent student to an independent student are when you:

* Progress from further education to higher education or
* Have a 3-year break in your studies or
* Are returning as a second-chance student after a 3-year break in your studies.

#### Income limits for maintenance grant and full fee grant

The family income limits for eligibility for a maintenance grant in 2023-2024 are set out below. These income limits are applied after your means are assessed - see 'Means test' above. The income limits also apply to the grant (that is, if you don't qualify for the free fees scheme and are eligible for a fee grant).

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of dependent children** | **Full maintenance** | **Part maintenance (75%)** | **Part maintenance (50%)** | **Part maintenance (25%)** |
| Less than 4 | €40,875 | €41,970 | €44,380 | €46,790 |
| 4 to 7 | €44,810 | €46,025 | €48,670 | €51,325 |
| 8 or more | €48,575 | €49,890 | €52,760 | €55,630 |

#### Income limits for partial fee grant

The family income limits for eligibility for a **partial fee** **grant** in 2023-2024 are set out below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Number of dependent children** | **50% tuition fees and 100% student contribution** | **50% student contribution only** | **€500 grant for your student contribution** |
| Fewer than 4 | €50,840 | €62,000 | €100,000 |
| 4 to 7 | €55,765 | €68,014 | €109,600 |
| 8 or more | €60,455 | €73,727 | €118,806 |

The 50% tuition fee is not payable if your fees are covered under the [Free Fees Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/).

#### Other family members in college

The reckonable income limits may be increased for each additional family member who is doing a full-time course of at least one year’s duration:

* In full maintenance and partial fee grant categories by €4,950
* In part maintenance 75%, 50% and 25% categories by €4,785

If you are an independent applicant, the family member taken into account is your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant. If you are dependent on your parents, the family members taken into account are your parent(s) and their other dependent children.

### 4. Approved course of study

You must be attending a course that is approved for a student grant. You can read a [list of approved courses](https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/approved-courses/) on SUSI's website. They are also listed in legislation - see 'Approved colleges and courses' below.

### 5. Progression

In general, you do not get a grant for repeating a year or attending a course at a level that does not represent progression from your previous studies. However, you may get a student grant for the following:

* You attended a further or higher education course and left before it finished. In this case, you may get a portion of a student grant once you have completed the repeat period of study. For example, you did 3 months of a level 7 course and left. You are now starting a new level 7 course. You will not get a student grant for the first 3 months of your new course.
* You are repeating a year due to [exceptional circumstances](https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/e5add-2023-student-grant-scheme-guidelines-for-an-awarding-authority/)
* You are starting a PLC course as part of the [Tertiary Education Programme](https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/approved-courses/tertiary-education-programmes/). The course must be leading to a qualification at a higher level than your previous further education or undergraduate qualification.
* You are a *second-chance student* – see below

A *second-chance student* is someone who is aged over 23, did not successfully complete an earlier course and is returning to do an approved course (at PLC, undergraduate or post-graduate level) after a full break in studies of at least 3 years. You may do a course during this 3-year break and still qualify as a second-chance student, if the course was below undergraduate level, meets the progression rules and is not part of the [Tertiary Education Programme](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2023/si/427/made/en/print).

You can find out more about [previous education and progression](https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/previous-education-and-progression/) on the SUSI website.

### 6. Maximum period of grant assistance

You do not qualify for the Student Grant Scheme if you have already got a grant for the [maximum number of years allowed](https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/previous-education-and-progression/index.html) for the level of study you are undertaking.

## Student support scheme for asylum seekers

The [International Protection Student Scheme (for Further and Higher Education Students) 2023-2024](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/e786a-student-support-scheme-for-asylum-seekers/) provides supports in line with the Student Grant Scheme to students who are in the international protection system.

The criteria for the Scheme include:

* You must meet the definition of a protection applicant or a person at leave to remain stage
* You must be accepted on an approved Post Leaving Certificate course or an approved undergraduate course or an approved postgraduate course
* You must be part of an application for protection or leave to remain for a combined period of 3 years or more before the start date of the course
* You must be resident in the State for a combined period of 3 years or more before the start date of the course

You do not meet the criteria for the student support scheme if you have been issued with a deportation order.

You should apply before **30 November 2023**.

**Applicants** **during 2022-2023**

If you successfully applied under the scheme in 2022 and are still a protection applicant, you can renew your application. SUSI will email you a renewal form.

If you got your status during the last year, you no longer qualify for the International Protection Student Scheme but you may qualify for the Student Grant Scheme.

## How much will I get?

The SUSI grant rate 2023-2024 that you get depends on the following factors:

* Your assessed means
* The distance you normally live from the college you are going to attend
* If you are a disadvantaged student

The means test (as described in ‘means test’ above) determines whether you qualify for a full or partial grant.

If you normally live 30 kilometres or less from your college you get **the adjacent rate**. If you live further away than 30 kilometres, you get **the non-adjacent rate**. This is based on the distance of where you ordinarily lived in the year before you started college.

Disadvantaged students can qualify for a **special rate of maintenance grant**. To qualify, you must fulfil all the normal criteria for the grant and have a total reckonable income in the tax year January to December 2022 of less than €25,000, not including Qualified Child Increases and standard exclusions.

For students, including mature students, who are assessed on parent(s)/guardian(s) income, their parent(s)/guardian(s) must, on 31 December 2022, have been:

* Getting long-term social welfare payments, or
* Getting a [Working Family Payment](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/families-and-children/working-family-payment/) or
* Taking part in designated programmes (for example, a Community Employment Scheme).

These payments and programmes are listed in [Schedule 2 of the Student Grant Scheme 2023](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2023/en.si.2023.0094.pdf).

If you are assessed on your own income, on 31 December 2022 you must have been getting one of these social welfare payments or taking part in a designated programme.

### Rates for the Student Grant Scheme 2023-2024:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | | |
| Type | Non-adjacent rate | Adjacent rate |
| Special rate | €6,971 | €2,936 |
| Full maintenance  Band 1 | €3,677 | €1,613 |
| Part maintenance (75%)  Band 2 | €2,717 | €1,221 |
| Part maintenance (50%)  Band 3 | €1,887 | €886 |
| Part maintenance (25%)  Band 4 | €1,051 | €556 |

### Student Grant 2022-2023: special cost of living supports

In January 2023, students getting the Special Rate and Band 1 maintenance grant rates got a 14% increase in their SUSI maintenance grant. Students on all other maintenance grant rates got a 10% increase in their maintenance grant. See [Student maintenance grant measures](https://www.gov.ie/en/news/1ab10-budget-2023-susi-student-grant-scheme-measures/#student-maintenance-grant-measures) from January 2023.

## How to apply for a student grant

Renewal applications are open from 9 March 2023. SUSI contacts renewal applicants directly about reapplying.

New applications for the student grant 2023-2024 are open from **Thursday, 13 April 2023**.

**Applying online**

You must apply for your grant online. You do not need to know what course you will be taking to apply online.

To register with SUSI and [apply online for a student grant](https://www.grantsonline.ie/eseries/esr.elogin), you will need your [Personal Public Service (PPS) number](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/irish-social-welfare-system/personal-public-service-number/), an email address and a phone number.

You can use your [verified MyGovID account](https://www.mygovid.ie/en-IE/MyGovIDVerified) to automatically create and log in to your SUSI account without having to register directly with SUSI.

SUSI has a helpdesk for email and telephone queries - see 'Help with your student grant application' below.

You can use [SUSI’s online application tracker](https://www.susi.ie/applications-in-progress-next-steps/application-tracker/index.html) to get the most up-to-date information about your student grant application and confirm that your supporting documentation has been received.

**Supporting documentation**

If you are considered eligible on initial assessment of your application, you will get a provisional grant approval in the post and a personalised list of the supporting documents that you need to provide. You should send the necessary documents (photocopies, not originals) as soon as possible in the envelope supplied.

SUSI will then process your application to award stage, subject to confirmation of your acceptance on an approved course.

**All documents and correspondence should be sent to P.O. Box 869, Togher, Cork.**

### Help with your student grant application

If you have any questions or need help applying online contact the SUSI Support desk Monday to Friday (9.00am – 5.30pm):

Email: [support@susi.ie](mailto:%20mailto:%20support@susi.ie)

Phone: 0818 888 777 or (01) 524 2257, if calling from abroad.

All documents and correspondence should be sent to P.O. Box 869, Togher, Cork.

#### Disability access officer

If you have a disability, SUSI’s Access Officer can assist you with your student grant application. For further information, email: [AccessOfficer@susi.ie](mailto:AccessOfficer@susi.ie)

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, you can access SUSI’s services through the Irish Remote Interpreting Service (IRIS). An Irish Sign Language (ISL) interpreter service is provided free of charge by the Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS). To book an appointment with SUSI for this service, email: [AccessOfficer@susi.ie](mailto:AccessOfficer@susi.ie)

## Appealing a decision

If you are unhappy with the outcome of your grant application, you may [appeal to SUSI](https://susi.ie/quick-links/appealing-your-grant-decision/) using the [form appealing your grant decision](https://www.susi.ie/applications-in-progress-next-steps/appeal-your-grant-decision/index.html). You must appeal within 30 days of getting your decision. If your appeal is turned down, and you feel that the conditions have not been interpreted correctly, you can make a further appeal.

#### Further appeals

If you have received an appeals decision letter from a SUSI appeals officer and you are not satisfied with the decision, you can make a further appeal to the Student Grants Appeals Board. You should submit your appeal online to the Student Grants Appeals Board. Your appeal must be submitted within 30 days from the date of the letter from the appeals officer in SUSI.

Please note: you can only appeal to the Student Grants Appeals Board after you have exhausted the SUSI Appeals Process and received notice of an appeals officer’s decision.

## Contact SUSI

**You can contact SUSI for student grant information**, Monday to Friday (9.00am – 5.30pm), excluding public holidays.

**Email:** [support@susi.ie](mailto:%20support@susi.ie)

**Phone:** 0818 888 777 or +353 1 524 2257 if calling from abroad

#### Postal address

All documents and correspondence should be sent to SUSI at: P.O. Box 869, Togher, Cork.

## Approved colleges and courses

The approved institutions and courses are listed in Schedule 1 and 2 of the [Student Support Regulations 2023](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2023/en.si.2023.0093.pdf) and the [Student Support Amendment Regulations 2023](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2023/si/427/made/en/print).

## Other financial supports for students

You can read more about the Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Student Assistance Fund and some third-level scholarships in our document on [Financial supports for students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/).

There is detailed information on the range of grants and funds for students in further and higher education on the website [studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/).

**Page edited:** 2 October 2023

# Grants and funds for mature students

* [Who is a mature student?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/grants-for-mature-students/#a4098a)
* [Help with fees and maintenance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/grants-for-mature-students/#193b8c)
* [Other support funds for mature students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/grants-for-mature-students/#765685)
* [Studying abroad as a mature student](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/grants-for-mature-students/#53f9c7)
* [How to apply for funding as a mature student](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/grants-for-mature-students/#a7f6a7)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/grants-for-mature-students/#b48c08)

## Who is a mature student?

If you wish to enter or return to third-level education and you are over 23 years of age you can be considered a mature student. Irish third-level colleges have set aside a number of [places for mature students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-courses-for-mature-students/).

You will have to consider the costs of fees and maintaining yourself while studying. The cost will depend on whether you are going to do a full-time or a part-time course.

Depending on your circumstances, you may be eligible for [free fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/fees/) and a [student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) - see ‘Help with fees and maintenance’ below. The website [studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/) has detailed information on the range of grants and funds for students in further and higher education.

## Help with fees and maintenance

#### Student grant and free fees initiative

If you meet certain criteria and attend a course approved by the [Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)](https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science/) you may get help with fees and maintenance under the Free Fees Initiative and the Student Grant.

You can make a [student grant application](https://www.susi.ie/how-to-apply/index.html) to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI).

There is no separate application for the Free Fees Initiative. Your eligibility will be assessed based on the information you give when applying for a college place.

If you are applying for an undergraduate course and you have already completed an undergraduate course, you are **not** eligible for either a student grant or free fees. However, you may be eligible for a grant if you are starting a PLC course as part of the [Tertiary Education Programme](https://www.gov.ie/en/policy-information/fd38f-tertiary-programmes/) leading to a higher-level qualification than your previous undergraduate qualification.

If you are applying for a **postgraduate course** you will have to pay fees, unless you get a partial student grant.

The student grant and free fees scheme does not cover part-time or distance learning courses.

#### Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)

If you are getting an unemployment, One-Parent Family or disability payment, the [Back to Education Allowance (BTEA)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/) allows you to study at second and third level without losing your benefits. You must meet certain criteria to be eligible for the BTEA. If you are studying part-time you may be able to keep your benefits under the [Back to Education Programme.](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-programme/)

If you are getting the Back to Education Allowance or you are on a [Post-Leaving Certificate course](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/post-leaving-certificate-courses/) and getting a [VTOS allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/), you are not eligible for the maintenance component of the student grant. However, you may get an exemption from college fees or the student contribution so you should complete a student grant application.

Read more about the [Student Grant Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) and about [social welfare payments and the student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/social-welfare-payments-and-the-student-grant/).

#### Tax relief on fees

If you have to pay fees you may be able to get tax relief at the standard rate.

## Other support funds for mature students

There are several other funds available to support you in third-level education. These include:

**Fund for students with disabilities**

If you have a disability, you may be entitled to some financial support. The Department administers a [special fund that helps students with disabilities](http://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/) during the period of their studies.

#### Student Assistance Fund

The [Student Assistance Fund](http://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/student-assistance-fund/) is for students who, having started a third-level course, experience financial hardship and, therefore, may be unable to continue their studies. You can apply for funding through the access/disability officer in your college.The Fund is administered on a confidential, discretionary basis.

#### The 1916 Bursary Fund

The [1916 Bursary Fund](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/1916-bursary-fund/) provides funding for students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are significantly under-represented in higher education. First time mature student are eligible to apply. You must be able to demonstrate that you would qualify for the special rate (the highest level) of SUSI grant and/or you are getting a long-term means-tested social welfare payment.

## Studying abroad as a mature student

If you plan to [study abroad,](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/) you may be eligible for a student grant from the Irish Government. A range of approved undergraduate courses in the UK and in other European Union states are covered. Find out more about [European education programmes](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/).

Under the Student Grant Scheme there are no age limits for the student grants for studying in another EU state but it must be your first undergraduate course.

The EU has published a series of guides about living, working, studying and moving within the EU which will explain your rights. You can also find information on studying abroad on the [Euroguidance Ireland](https://euroguidance.ie/home) website.

If you are interested in [studying in the UK](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/), you should contact the [British Council](https://www.britishcouncil.org/) to get information on the courses available and the application process for each course.

If you are interested in studying outside of the EU, you should get in touch with the Irish embassy/consulate in that state for further information.

## How to apply for funding as a mature student

Generally each college has a mature students officer who can provide information about supports for mature students.

#### Student grants

Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI) handles all applications for student grants. All grant applications must be made to [SUSI online](https://susi.ie/your-susi-application/).

#### Back to Education Programme

For the Back to Education Allowance or other strands of the Back to Education Programme, apply by filling in the [Back to Education Allowance application form (pdf)](https://assets.gov.ie/34307/dc7a224c23e9494caaa434e133e74d0b.pdf), which is also available from your Intreo Centre.

#### The Special Fund for People with Disabilities

You need to contact the Student Counsellor or Disability Support Officer at the college of your choice when you are registering. Read more about the Fund for Students with Disabilities on the [Higher Education Authority](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/) website.

## Where to apply

Contact the mature students officer or the admissions officer at the college of your choice.

Make your [online application for a grant through SUSI](https://www.susi.ie/how-to-apply/index.html).

For the **Back to Education Programme**, send the form to the office that deals with applications from people on your particular payment. These offices are listed on the back of the form.

For the **Special Fund for People with Disabilities**, apply to the Student Counsellor or Disability Support Officer at the college of your choice.

**Page edited:** 3 October 2023

# Postgraduate student grants

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/postgraduate-student-grant/#2473e9)
* [Postgraduate student grant](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/postgraduate-student-grant/#8d93de)
* [Other supports](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/postgraduate-student-grant/#2ef470)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/postgraduate-student-grant/#b48c08)

## Introduction

If you are enrolling in a postgraduate course, you may get financial support under the Student Grant Scheme.

You apply online for a student grant - see 'How to apply' below.

The [International Protection Student Scheme (for Further and Higher Education Students) 2023-2024](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/e786a-student-support-scheme-for-asylum-seekers/) provides supports in line with the Student Grant Scheme to students who are in the international protection system.

## Postgraduate student grant

You may get financial assistance under the Student Grant Scheme with the cost of tuition fees for approved postgraduate courses in Ireland and Northern Ireland. There is no support under the Scheme for courses elsewhere in the EU.

You can qualify for assistance under the Student Grant Scheme in 2 ways. You may either:

1.Get a new flat rate fee contribution of €4,000 (2023-2024 academic year), if you pass the **fee contribution means test** – see below

Or

2.Get all your tuition fees paid and essential field trips (up to €6,270), if you meet the qualifying conditions for the **special rate of grant for disadvantaged students** – see below

You must qualify for the special rate of grant for disadvantaged students to get a postgraduate maintenance grant – see below. No maintenance grant is paid to other postgraduate students.

To qualify for assistance under the Student Grant Scheme, you must also meet nationality, immigration and residency criteria. You can get more information about these criteria in our document on the [Student Grant Scheme](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2023/en.si.2023.0094.pdf).

### Fee contribution means test

The means test may be carried out on your income or your parent’s income. This depends on whether you are dependent on your parents or you are considered an independent student.

**Dependent on parents**

If you were ordinarily resident with your parents from October 1 of the year before the year of entry to higher education on an approved course, you are considered dependent on your parents. In this case, your income (if any) is assessed together with your parents' income(s). An allowance is made for a certain amount of your earnings outside term-time (up to €6,552).

**Independent students**

Independent students are mature students aged over 23 who live separately from their parents from 1 October of the year before the year of entry to higher education on an approved course. If you are an independent student, you are assessed on your own income (and that of your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant, if applicable).

If you were classified as a dependent student you cannot be reclassified as an independent student unless there is a 3-year break in your studies.

**How is the means test calculated?**

The means test for the fee contribution under the Student Grant Scheme in 2023-2024 is based on your family's reckonable income for the previous full tax year (2022). If your family’s reckonable income is over the limit set by the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science, you do not qualify for the fee contribution. Some social welfare payments are excluded from 'reckonable income' for the purposes of the means test - see [more details on reckonable income on susi.ie](https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/income/index.html) and also in the [Student Grant Scheme 2023](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2023/en.si.2023.0094.pdf).

If you or your family has had a [change of circumstances](https://www.susi.ie/eligibility-criteria/income/index.html) after 31 December 2022, which has reduced your income permanently, your new reckonable income will be taken into account.

If you are eligible for full tuition fees from any other source, including sponsorship or an award, you do not qualify for the postgraduate fee contribution. If you are eligible for partial fees, your postgraduate fee contribution is reduced by the amount of assistance you receive.

#### Income limits for the fee contribution

The family income limits for a postgraduate fee contribution in 2023-2024 are set out in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | |
| Number of dependent children | Reckonable income limits |
| Less than 4 | €55,240 |
| 4-7 | €60,595 |
| 8 or more | €65,700 |

The reckonable income limits may be increased by €4,950 for each additional family member who is on a full-time course of at least one year’s duration.

If you are an independent student, the family member taken into account is your spouse, civil partner or cohabitant. If you are dependent on your parents, the family members taken into account are your parent(s) and their other dependent children.

### Special rate of grant for disadvantaged students

Disadvantaged postgraduate students who meet a number of conditions can get their tuition fees paid and essential field trips (up to €6,270). If you meet the criteria you may also qualify for a special maintenance grant – see below.

To qualify for the special rate of grant for disadvantaged students:

* You must have satisfied the conditions for the standard maintenance grant under the Student Grant Scheme for the academic year 2023-2024. You can get detailed information on the standard maintenance grant in our document on the [Student Grant Scheme.](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2023/en.si.2023.0094.pdf)
* Your total reckonable income in the tax year January to December 2022 must be €25,000 or less, not including [Qualified Child Increases](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/irish-social-welfare-system/claiming-a-social-welfare-payment/claiming-and-increase-in-your-payment-for-a-child-dependant/) and standard exclusions
* Your parents or guardian (or you, if you are an **independent student**), must be getting certain social welfare payments or participating in a designated programme on 31 December 2022 – see below.

**Qualifying social welfare payments and programmes**:

* Long-term social welfare payments
* Working Family Payment (WFP)
* Designated programmes (for example, a Community Employment Scheme)

These payments and programmes are listed in Schedule 2 of the [Student Grant Scheme 2023](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2023/en.si.2023.0094.pdf).

**Maintenance grant (special rate)**

A maintenance grant is also available for postgraduate students who qualify for the special rate of grant. The rates of maintenance grants are listed in Schedule 3 of the [Student Grant Scheme 2023](https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/pdf/2023/en.si.2023.0094.pdf).

If you are getting a [Back To Education Allowance (BTEA)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/social-welfare/social-welfare-payments/back-to-education/back-to-education-allowance/), a [Vocational Training Opportunities Schemes (VTOS) allowance](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/further-education-and-training/vocational-training-opportunities-scheme/) or you are a [tuition student,](https://susi.ie/undergraduate-student/residency-criteria/) you cannot get the special rate of maintenance grant. A tuition student is someone who fulfils all the conditions for a student grant except for residence in the State, but who has been resident in an EEA state or Switzerland for 3 of the last 5 years.

## Other supports

[Tax relief](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/) is available on postgraduate tuition fees.

You should contact your college or university to find out about scholarships or bursaries. There is also some information on [studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/mp9490/other-finance/index.html).

[Financial institutions](http://www.studentfinance.ie/mp9499/financial-institutions/index.html) give loans to students to pay for postgraduate courses. Shop around for the best rates.

## Where to apply

**New postgraduate student grant applications**

[Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI)](https://www.grantsonline.ie/) is the single grant-awarding authority that handles all grant applications. You must make your grant application online. You can get more information on how to apply in our document on the Student Grant Scheme

From **9 March 2023**, you can make a [postgraduate student grant renewal application online](https://grantsonline.ie/eseries/esr.elogin) for the 2023-2024 academic year.

New postgraduate student grant applications are accepted by SUSI from **13 April 2023**.

The closing date for applications last year was November. The closing date for student grant applications in 2023 is to be confirmed.

After you apply, your application will be:

* Awarded: An award letter is sent to you offering you a grant and highlighting the further steps you need to take before your grant can be paid.
* Refused: A refusal letter is sent to you. The letter will also highlight the further steps you can take if you want to request a review of your grant decision.

Your grant/fee contribution is awarded when you confirm acceptance of your place (usually late August/early September) and is paid into your designated Irish bank account.

**Renewal of postgraduate student grant applications**

Postgraduate student grants are reviewed each year. If you had a grant in one academic year and are continuing your studies on the same course in the following year, SUSI will contact you by email and post to remind you to renew your grant application.

**Page edited:** 1 August 2023

# Financial supports for students

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/#2473e9)
* [Student Assistance Fund](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/#30ac4d)
* [Fund for Students with Disabilities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/#7965a6)
* [Bursary for Care Experienced Young People](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/#fba45d)
* [Other bursaries and scholarships](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/#14eaaa)
* [More information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/financial-supports-for-students/#f925f9)

## Introduction

The [Student Grant Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) is the main financial support scheme for students.

This document deals with the other financial supports for students in further and higher education. Other supports available include:

* Student Assistance Fund
* Fund for Students with Disabilities
* Bursary for Care Experienced Young People
* 1916 Bursary Fund
* Other bursaries and scholarships

There is more detailed information on all of these supports on [studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/).

## Student Assistance Fund

The Student Assistance Fund (SAF) provides financial support to full-time or part-time students in higher education who are experiencing financial difficulties.

The SAF is available to help students with the following costs:

* Books and class materials
* Rent, heating and lighting bills
* Food
* Essential travel
* Childcare costs for students that are parents
* Medical costs
* Family difficulties, for example bereavement

The SAF is designed to provide financial support in addition to the student grant. Tuition fees, registration fees, student loan repayments or any costs borne by your college are not covered by the SAF.

### Participating colleges

Universities, institutes of technology and other approved colleges participate in the SAF scheme. See the [full list of participating colleges](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/student-assistance-fund/).

The SAF is not available to students in further education or post-leaving certificate colleges.

### Qualifying for the Student Assistance Fund

To qualify for the SAF, you must be a full-time or part-time student in a university, institute of technology or other approved college. You must be on a course leading to a higher education award ([National Framework of Qualifications](https://www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/National-Framework-of-Qualifications-(NFQ).aspx) level 6-10).

### Rates

Funding amounts vary and will be decided by your college following an assessment process.

### How to apply

Students must apply for the SAF directly to the individual colleges. If you are in financial difficulty you should contact the access or student services section in your college for more information on how to apply for the SAF.

It is important to apply for funding as soon as you can. Some colleges have a closing date for applications. You should check with the access service or student services section of your college to find out when this is.

Your college will advise you on the documentation needed to support your application to the SAF. This may include proof of your own or your parents’ income and receipts for costs such as rent, bills or childcare.

Applications are assessed by individual colleges and final decisions on awards may be taken by a small committee, including the access officer and student welfare officer.

You can read [more information on the SAF on studentfinance.ie](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/student-assistance-fund/).

## Fund for Students with Disabilities

The Fund for Students with Disabilities (FSD) is one of the main funding sources for students with disabilities. The fund ensures eligible students have the necessary help and equipment so that they can participate on an equal basis with other students.

You may be entitled to support under the FSD even if you did not access college through the [Disability Access Route to Education (DARE scheme)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/applying-to-college/third-level-admissions-scheme-for-students-with-disabilities/).

The FSD covers the following supports:

* Assistive technology equipment and software
* Non-medical helpers (for example, personal assistants or notetakers)
* Academic or learning support
* Deaf supports including sign language interpreters and speedtext
* Transport support

You can get more information on the [supports not covered under the FSD](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/).

### Participating colleges

The FSD is available to full-time or part-time students in universities, institutes of technology and other colleges, including UK and EU colleges. The FSD is also available to students in further education or post-leaving certificate colleges.

See the [full list of participating colleges](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/).

Funding is allocated to the college to support a student’s needs as decided by a needs assessment. The college is responsible for managing the funding and has full discretion on how the FSD is allocated.

### Qualifying for the Fund for Students with Disabilities

To qualify for the FSD, you must fulfil the following conditions:

* Have a disability in one or more of the categories outlined below
* Meet the nationality and residency criteria outlined below
* Be a full-time or part-time student
* Have a verified need for specific supports in order to attend your chosen course

#### Qualifying disabilities

Disabilities that qualify under the FSD are:

* Autistic Spectrum Disorder
* Attention Deficit Disorder
* Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
* Blind or vision impaired
* Deaf or hard of hearing
* Developmental co-ordination disorder (dyspraxia/dysgraphia)
* Mental health condition (for example bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, clinical depression, severe anxiety, severe phobias, OCD, severe eating disorders and psychosis)
* Neurological condition
* Significant ongoing illness
* Physical or mobility
* Specific learning difficulties (dyslexia or dyscalculia)

#### Residence

You must have been resident in the State for 3 of the previous 5 years before your approved course commences to qualify for support under the FSD. If you do not qualify at the beginning of your course, it is still possible to meet this requirement during the course of your studies. This should be reviewed at the beginning of an academic year.

#### Nationality and immigration status

In order to get the FSD you must be a national of an EEA member state or Switzerland, or have immigration status or leave to remain. You can read more detail on the [nationality and residency criteria](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/).

### How to apply

You cannot apply directly to the FSD, applications should be made on your behalf by your college.

You must register with the disability support services in your college. You will need to show medical verification of your disability (for example, a consultant’s report). The college will then carry out a needs assessment to identify the appropriate supports required.

You should contact the student services or disability office in your college for more information.

You can read [more information on the FSD on studentfinance.ie](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/fund-for-students-with-disabilities/).

## Bursary for Care Experienced Young People

The [Bursary for Care Experienced Young People](https://www.tusla.ie/services/alternative-care/after-care/bursary-scheme/) is available, if you have had care experience of at least 6 months before your 18th birthday.

You must be aged over 18 and not getting financial support for your education or training fees from SUSI, Tusla or any other source. However, you can still qualify if you are getting the aftercare allowance from Tusla.

The Bursary supports access to education and career development such as a new course or continuation on an existing course. The Bursary can help with course fees and anything that you need to participate on the course such as tools to complete an apprenticeship, laptop and printer.

You can find [more information about the Bursary for Care Experienced Young People](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Applicants_Eligibility_bursuary_Scheme_Team_MT.pdf) and an [application form for the Bursary for Care Experienced Young People](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Bursary_Scheme_Application_Form_MT.docx) on the TUSLA website.

## Other bursaries and scholarships

The [1916 Bursary Fund](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/1916-bursary-fund/) provides funding to encourage participation and success by students from disadvantaged backgrounds that are significantly under-represented in higher education. This usually means that you live in an area of urban or rural disadvantage where not many people from that area go on to third level education, you may have attended a DEIS school or your family income may mean that you may not be able to go to college without financial help.

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) runs a number of scholarship schemes including the [Third Level Bursary Scheme (pdf)](https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Services/Scholarships/Third-Level-Bursary-Scheme-Information-Flier.pdf), the Ernest Walton STEM bursary (pdf), the Professor William C Campbell Bursary Scheme (pdf), the [All Ireland Scholarship Scheme](http://www.allirelandscholarships.com/) and the [European University Institute Scheme](https://www.eui.eu/).

You can get detailed information on the range of bursary and scholarship schemes on [studentfinance.ie](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/other-finance-bursaries-scholarships/).

## More information

The Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Student Assistance Fund and the 1916 Bursary Fund are managed by the Higher Education Authority on behalf of DFHERIS.

The 1916 Bursary Fund is funded under Strand Two of the [Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)](https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/path/).

There is more detailed information on the range of grants and funds for students in further and higher education on [studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/).

### Higher Education Authority

Shelbourne Buidlings  
Crampton Avenue  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 231 7100

**Locall:** 1890 200 637

**Fax:** (01) 231 7172

**Homepage:** [http://www.hea.ie](http://www.hea.ie/)

**Page edited:** 7 July 2022

# Financial supports for students

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You can find [more information about the Bursary for Care Experienced Young People](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Applicants_Eligibility_bursuary_Scheme_Team_MT.pdf) and an [application form for the Bursary for Care Experienced Young People](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Bursary_Scheme_Application_Form_MT.docx) on the TUSLA website.

## Other bursaries and scholarships

The [1916 Bursary Fund](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/1916-bursary-fund/) provides funding to encourage participation and success by students from disadvantaged backgrounds that are significantly under-represented in higher education. This usually means that you live in an area of urban or rural disadvantage where not many people from that area go on to third level education, you may have attended a DEIS school or your family income may mean that you may not be able to go to college without financial help.

The Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) runs a number of scholarship schemes including the [Third Level Bursary Scheme (pdf)](https://www.education.ie/en/Learners/Services/Scholarships/Third-Level-Bursary-Scheme-Information-Flier.pdf), the Ernest Walton STEM bursary (pdf), the Professor William C Campbell Bursary Scheme (pdf), the [All Ireland Scholarship Scheme](http://www.allirelandscholarships.com/) and the [European University Institute Scheme](https://www.eui.eu/).

You can get detailed information on the range of bursary and scholarship schemes on [studentfinance.ie](https://hea.ie/funding-governance-performance/funding/student-finance/other-finance-bursaries-scholarships/).

## More information

The Fund for Students with Disabilities, the Student Assistance Fund and the 1916 Bursary Fund are managed by the Higher Education Authority on behalf of DFHERIS.

The 1916 Bursary Fund is funded under Strand Two of the [Programme for Access to Higher Education (PATH)](https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/path/).

There is more detailed information on the range of grants and funds for students in further and higher education on [studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/).

### Higher Education Authority

Shelbourne Buidlings  
Crampton Avenue  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 231 7100

**Locall:** 1890 200 637

**Fax:** (01) 231 7172

**Homepage:** [http://www.hea.ie](http://www.hea.ie/)

**Page edited:** 7 July 2022

# Studying in the UK including Northern Ireland

* [Studying in the UK](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/#l8e4f9)
* [College courses in the UK](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/#l30370)
* [UK tuition fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/#le0b28)
* [Applying to study in the UK](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/#l36ac4)
* [Useful contacts](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/#le9f3d)

## Studying in the UK

If you are currently living in Ireland and thinking of doing a third-level course in Northern Ireland (NI) or elsewhere in the United Kingdom (UK) there is a very wide range of courses available.

Most UK undergraduate courses last 3 years but in Scotland they last 4 years. In addition, the application process starts earlier than in Ireland. This means you should begin looking at courses at least 12 months before you plan to start studying. The application procedure for all UK undergraduate courses is the same.

Before you apply, you should find out about the different structures and costs for [third-level education in the UK](https://www.gov.uk/student-finance), in particular fees and living costs. The United Kingdom (UK) includes England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. There are [different fee arrangements for each country within the UK](http://www.ucas.com/how-it-all-works/student-finance).

The [Common Travel Area (CTA)](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government-in-ireland/ireland-and-the-uk/common-travel-area-between-ireland-and-the-uk/) gives Irish and UK citizens the right to access all levels of education and training, and associated student support, in each other’s state, on terms no less favourable than those for the citizens of that state. However, you must also meet the residency criteria.

You must be resident in Ireland or the UK for 3 years before the start of your course to be eligible under the CTA. You can find more information in [New Eligibility Rules for Home Fee Status and Student Finance for the 2021/2022 Academic Year (pdf)](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/956894/New_eligibility_rules_for_home_fee_status_and_student_finance_for_the_2021_to_2022_academic_year.pdf).

If you are an Irish citizen student and meet the residency criteria, you can study in the UK for the same rate of fees as British students in the UK and may be eligible for a maintenance grant under the Irish [Student Grant Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) - see below.

## College courses in the UK

### Finding a course

If you do not know the course you wish to study or if you want to find out about different courses or colleges there are useful online resources to guide you. The [British Council website Education UK](https://study-uk.britishcouncil.org/) allows you to search for undergraduate and postgraduate courses on a particular subject, in a particular university or in a specific area such as Northern Ireland. It contains a summary of information about each college or university with contact details and you can make online request for brochures about the courses. It also has general information about living in the UK including accommodation and working while studying. You can find [information about UK higher education institutions and courses](https://www.gov.uk/higher-education-courses-find-and-apply) on the GOV.UK website.

### Undergraduate course

[UCAS (University and Colleges Admissions Service)](http://www.ucas.com/) is the central applications body for full-time undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges. Its website contains all the information you need to apply to college including: how to apply, fees and information about the colleges. Applications must be made online through the UCAS website. You can apply through your school or as an individual.

[Use the UCAS tariff calculator](https://www.ucas.com/ucas/tariff-calculator) which is a points system used for entry to higher education. It allows you to compare Leaving Certificate and GCSE A level grades. A Leaving Certificate subject at honours level is approximately equivalent to two-thirds of an A level.

[There is a complete list of dates for applications on the UCAS website](https://www.ucas.com/ucas/undergraduate/getting-started/when-apply).

### Postgraduate study

There are 2 types of postgraduate study: taught courses and research. Taught courses often last just 1 year while research can continue for 3 years or more. You need to consider what kind of postgraduate study you wish to do, what are the most suitable courses for you and your career and what costs are involved. [Prospects](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/) is the official graduate prospects website for the UK. It has information on postgraduate study, jobs and career advice. It has information on full-time and part-time courses and you can search by geographical area and by subject. For postgraduate courses in the UK you apply directly to the university or college. Most of them have the application forms available online.

## UK tuition fees

As an Irish Citizen within the Common Travel Area you will be treated in the same way as regards fees as UK students. Tuition fees are not the only expense when studying in the UK you also need to consider accommodation and living costs.

### Undergraduate courses

**England, Wales and Northern Ireland:** Since 2012-2013 universities and colleges can charge new students up to £9,250 sterling a year for undergraduate courses. You can apply for a tuition fee loan which you only have to [repay after you have graduated](https://www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan/when-you-start-repaying). However, you are not entitled to maintenance support in the same way as home students. If you are an EU national who has been settled in the UK for over 3 years you will be classed as a home student and will be able to apply for financial support for living costs.  
**Scotland:** Irish and EU students who start their first full-time degree course in Scotland in 2021-2022 will pay. You can apply for a tuition fee loan if you meet the [relevant residence criteria](https://www.saas.gov.uk/need-to-know/brexit).

You may be eligible for a maintenance grant if you meet the criteria for the Irish [Student Grant Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) but this does not include funding for tuition fees. You may claim [tax relief on third-level fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/). There is detailed information on the range of Irish grants and funds for students in further and higher education at studentfinance.ie.

The [GOV.UK website](https://www.gov.uk/browse/education/student-finance) has information on the financial supports available for EU students studying in the UK including Northern Ireland.

### Postgraduate courses

The tuition fees for postgraduate study vary from institution to institution and course to course, but usually run to several thousand pounds. Postgraduate prospectuses give up-to-date fees.

There are different sources of funding for postgraduate students. Some courses are advertised in the newspapers and include funding. Sometimes financial support is available from the university that is running the postgraduate course; sometimes you need to apply to an external body. Awards are available for a range of subjects, both for taught courses and research programmes. They vary as to amount, duration and whether they only cover fees or include maintenance as well. There are strict eligibility rules and deadlines for application and you should be aware that there are a large number of postgraduates competing for limited funding.

Funding is available under the [Student Grant Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) for postgraduate study in Northern Ireland but not for postgraduate study in Britain. You may claim [tax relief on third-level fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/).

A number of scholarships and fellowships for study abroad are awarded annually by foreign governments to Irish students who are engaged in, or have completed a course of third-level education. The [North-South Masters Bursaries](http://universitiesireland.ie/bursaries-scholarships/) fund a small number of Irish students to study in Northern Ireland together with some Northern Irish students studying in Ireland.

Check the following websites which have information on postgraduate funding:  
[Research Councils UK](https://www.ukri.org/councils/)  
[Prospects](https://www.prospects.ac.uk/)  
[Scholarship Search UK](http://www.scholarship-search.org.uk/pls/mon/hc_edufin.page_pls_user_studmoney?x=16180339&y=&a=220707)

## Applying to study in the UK

UCAS (University and Colleges Admissions Service) is the central applications body for full-time undergraduate courses at UK universities and colleges.

If you need help or advice on your UCAS application, contact the Customer Service Unit and remember to quote your UCAS Personal ID/application number.

If you are an EU student, and applying through UCAS, they will send you an application form for a tuition fee loan when you are offered a place on a course.

## Useful contacts

### UCAS (Universities and Colleges Admissions Service)

Customer Service Unit

PO Box 28  
Cheltenham  
GL52 3LZ  
United Kingdom

**Opening Hours:** Monday to Friday, 8:30 am- 6 pm

**Tel:** +44 871 468 0 468

**Homepage:** <http://www.ucas.ac.uk/>

**Email:** [enquiries@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:enquiries@ucas.ac.uk)

### Student Finance Services European Team

Student Loans Company

PO Box 89  
Darlington  
County Durham  
England  
DL1 9AZ

**Tel:** +44 141 243 3570

### Student Awards Agency Scotland

Saughton House  
Broomhouse Drive  
Edinburgh  
EH11 3UT

**Tel:** +44 300 555 0505

**Homepage:** <https://www.saas.gov.uk/>

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# Studying outside Ireland

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-outside-ireland/#l0b797)
* [Studying in the EU](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-outside-ireland/#lef7cc)
* [Funding](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-outside-ireland/#l68288)
* [How to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-outside-ireland/#ld1a9a)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-outside-ireland/#lef21f)

## Introduction

If you are interested in studying in a European Union member state, another European country or a country outside Europe this document covers the options available to you. For information about the UK, you can read our document about [studying in the UK including Northern Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/studying-abroad/studying-in-the-uk-including-northern-ireland/).

People choose to study abroad for a number of reasons. Entry requirements may be easier, you may have access to courses that are not available in Ireland or you may simply want the experience of studying outside Ireland. It is important to know the differences between studying in Ireland and studying abroad. You should find out about the application procedures, length of courses, fees and living expenses before you make a final decision on whether a course of study abroad is suitable for you.

### Finding out about courses and studying abroad

If you are a third-level student in Ireland, your university or college may have information about opportunities for studying outside Ireland. You can also get information by applying directly to a third-level institution for a prospectus. If you do not have a specific course or institution in mind, there are a number of sources of information on studying abroad:

* The [European Commission provides information about studying](http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/education/university/index_en.htm) in Europe. It provides information on admission, fees and other areas of interest while studying in Europe..
* The [European Youth Portal](https://europa.eu/youth/EU_en) is a source of information for young people about [studying in Europe](http://europa.eu/youth/EU/education-and-training/school-and-university_en) both in the European Union and in non-EU countries. It has information on a wide range of other topics for young people including [working](http://europa.eu/youth/EU/employment-and-entrepreneurship/jobs_en), [travelling,](http://europa.eu/youth/country/76/theme/117_en) and [volunteering](http://europa.eu/youth/EU/voluntary-activities/volunteering-opportunities_en) in Europe.
* UNESCO produces an international [guide to studying abroad.](http://www.unesco.org/education/studyingabroad/networking/study.pdf) It includes a searchable online database of higher-education study opportunities and the scholarships offered by higher education institutions and international organisations in many countries. It also has contact details and information on admission requirements, application deadlines, financial aid, fees, living expenses and other relevant information for all courses.
* [WorldWide Classroom](http://www.worldwide.edu/) is a source of information on courses, student services and practical country information worldwide. You can use the international programme finder to search for a course in the country and language of your choice.

### Student exchange programmes

Many Irish third-level institutions offer their students the opportunity to travel through their course of study, often through student exchange programmes. Irish institutions establish initial contact with institutions abroad and maintain an ongoing relationship with them. Students move between the two institutions on study and work placements and are offered services such as student orientation, language training, and accommodation services. Contact your college for information about any student exchange programmes they may offer.

## Studying in the EU

[Erasmus+](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/) provides opportunities for participants who include students and education staff, to study, train, get work experience and volunteer abroad. In addition to providing grants for individuals, Erasmus+ supports transnational partnerships among education, training and youth institutions and organisations. It also supports national efforts to modernise education, training and youth systems. It also provides support to sport initiatives.

## Funding

The [International Education Financial Aid (IEFA)](http://www.iefa.org/) website provides a database of financial aid information for students who want to study in a foreign country. The site contains a comprehensive list of grants, scholarships, loan programmes and other information that may be helpful to those interested in studying abroad.

### EU grants

Erasmus+ provides students with a mobility grant.

### Irish maintenance grants

In Ireland maintenance grants under the [Student Grants Scheme](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/student-grant-scheme/) are available for undergraduate courses of at least 2 years’ duration in a publicly-funded third-level institution in another EU member state. Depending on your income you may be eligible for a maintenance grant if you fulfil the conditions for residence, age, academic attainments and nationality. You can find detailed information on the range of Irish grants and funds for students in further and higher education on the website [www.studentfinance.ie](http://www.studentfinance.ie/).

### Funding for postgraduate study

There are different sources of funding for postgraduate students. Some courses are advertised in the newspapers and include funding. Sometimes financial support is available from the university that is running the postgraduate course; sometimes you need to apply to an external body. Awards are available for a range of subjects, both for taught courses and research programmes. They vary as to amount, duration and whether they only cover fees or include maintenance as well. There are strict eligibility rules and deadlines for application. In addition, there are a large number of postgraduate students competing for limited funding.

**Postgraduate research/study scholarships:** A number of scholarships for study abroad are awarded annually by foreign governments to Irish students who are engaged in, or have completed a course of third-level education. Details of scholarships are circulated to universities and other relevant third-level institutions of education. Details of scholarships may also be published on the [Department of Further and Higher Education](https://www.gov.ie/en/service/third-level-scholarships/) website and on the [European University Institute](https://www.eui.eu/en/home) website. If you are interested in applying for these scholarships, you should contact the Higher Education Equity of Access section of the Department of Further and Higher Education and ask to be placed on a mailing list for the scholarship offers. Application forms and relevant details will then be posted to you when the offers are open to receive applications.

### Tax relief on tuition fees

If you are not eligible for a maintenance grant you or your parent may claim [tax relief on third-level fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/fees-and-supports-for-third-level-education/tax-relief-for-third-level-fees/) as follows:

**Undergraduate courses:** Tax relief is available for tuition paid for approved full-time/part-time undergraduate courses in both private and publicly funded third-level colleges in any EU member state. It is also available on full-time/part-time undergraduate courses operated by colleges in any EU member state providing distance education in the State.

**Postgraduate courses:** You can claim tax relief on third-level fees for postgraduate courses in a university or publicly funded college in another EU member state, including colleges that provide distance education in the state. Tax relief is also available for postgraduate courses in a university or publicly funded third-level college in non-EU countries.

## How to apply

Application forms for student grants are available from [Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI).](https://www.grantsonline.ie/)

You can claim tax relief on tuition fees using Revenue's [myAccount service](https://www.ros.ie/myaccount-web/home.html).

## Where to apply

### Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 RC96  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 889 6400

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science/>

**Email:** [press@dfheris.gov.ie](mailto:press@dfheris.gov.ie)

### Higher Education Authority

Shelbourne Buidlings  
Crampton Avenue  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 231 7100

**Locall:** 1890 200 637

**Fax:** (01) 231 7172

**Homepage:** [http://www.hea.ie](http://www.hea.ie/)

### Léargas

Kings Inn House  
Parnell Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 A3Y8  
Ireland

**Fax:** (01) 873 1316

**Homepage:** <https://www.leargas.ie/>

**Email:** [info@leargas.ie](mailto:info@leargas.ie)

**Page edited:** 1 February 2023

# English language education

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/coming-to-ireland-to-study/english-language-education/#2473e9)
* [Travelling to Ireland to study](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/coming-to-ireland-to-study/english-language-education/#49de5c)
* [Fees](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/coming-to-ireland-to-study/english-language-education/#72abbc)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/third-level-education/coming-to-ireland-to-study/english-language-education/#ec2268)

## Introduction

There are many schools and courses for students who want to improve their English language skills.

The majority of English language education (ELE) schools in Ireland are privately run and offer preparation programmes for the major English language examinations, such as TOEFL, IELTS, Cambridge and Trinity College (London). English language teaching (ELT) programmes are also available at many private schools and a number of universities ([University College Dublin](http://www.ucd.ie/), [University College Cork](http://www.ucc.ie/), [NUI Galway](http://www.ucg.ie/), [Dublin City University](http://www.dculs.dcu.ie/) and [University of Limerick](http://www.ul.ie/)).

Many can provide students with a full package of tuition, homestay accommodation and extra-curricular activities.

The Accreditation and Co-ordination of English Language Services (ACELS) runs a quality assurance scheme for ELE organisations who are registered with it.

The [list of ELE schools and organisations in Ireland recognised by ACELS](http://www.acels.ie/schools) is published annually.

A new International Education Mark for the ELE sector is due to be introduced.

## Travelling to Ireland to study

If you are a non-EEA national coming to study in Ireland you must be enrolled in a full-time course on the [Interim List of Eligible Programmes (ILEP)](https://www.irishimmigration.ie/coming-to-study-in-ireland/what-are-my-study-options/a-third-level-course-or-a-language-course/#eligiblecourses). Citizens of certain countries must apply for a [student visa to enter Ireland](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/travel_and_recreation/travel_to_ireland/student_visas.html) before they travel here to study. You can find out more in our document on [the immigration rules for non-EEA students](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/moving-to-ireland/studying-in-ireland/immigration-nonEEA-students/).

You can also find out more about [moving to Ireland for third-level education](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/moving-country/moving-to-ireland/studying-in-ireland/third-level-education/).

## Fees

Tuition costs for English language courses in Ireland vary depending on the English language school and the type of programme you choose. You should check fees with your English language school.

## Further information

### Irish Council for International Students

41 Morehampton Road  
Donnybrook  
Dublin 4  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 660 5233

**Fax:** (01) 668 2320

**Homepage:** <https://www.internationalstudents.ie/>

**Email:** [office@icosirl.ie](mailto:office@icosirl.ie)

### Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science

Marlborough Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 RC96  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 889 6400

**Homepage:** <https://www.gov.ie/en/organisation/department-of-higher-education-innovation-and-science/>

**Email:** [press@dfheris.gov.ie](mailto:press@dfheris.gov.ie)

### Quality & Qualifications Ireland

The Accreditation and Co-ordination of English Language Services (ACELS)

26-27 Denzille Lane  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 905 8185

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

**Page edited:** 26 January 2022

# Erasmus +

* [What is Erasmus+?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/#4031ad)
* [What country can I travel to with Erasmus+?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/#444902)
* [What costs does Erasmus+ cover?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/#3d3d17)
* [What projects does Erasmus+ fund?](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/#0d6859)
* [How to apply for Erasmus+](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/#ed9fcc)
* [When to apply for Erasmus+](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/#7af9cc)
* [Other EU funded opportunities](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/#aada5c)

## What is Erasmus+?

Erasmus+ is an EU programme that can help you travel to experience work, study or train in another country. Your time abroad on Erasmus+ can be from 2 days to 30 days or from 2 weeks to a year depending on the type of project you are on.

Erasmus+ is open to many people including:

* Pupils in school
* Students in higher education
* Students in vocational education and training
* Young people in youth organisations
* Adult learners

Staff in educational settings and youth workers can also access Erasmus+.

You cannot apply directly to Erasmus+. You must apply through a participating organisation such as your school or college or place of work.

If the application is successful, you will get funding that usually covers your travel costs and the cost of living abroad. You may get funding to cover other costs too.

You can also get [Online Linguistic Support](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/online-linguistic-support_en) to help you learn the language you will use when you are abroad with Erasmus+.

The year you turn 18 years old you can apply for a [DiscoverEU rail pass](https://europa.eu/youth/discovereu_en) as part of Erasmus+, if you are an EU citizen.

You can find out more about Erasmus+ on the website, [erasmusplus.ie](http://erasmusplus.ie/).

## What country can I travel to with Erasmus+?

You can go to any EU country and some countries outside of the EU with Erasmus+.

Programme countries are eligible for all parts of Erasmus+. Programme countries include all EU member states, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, the Republic of North Macedonia, Turkey and Serbia.

Partner countries can take part in some aspects and must meet specific conditions.

The European Commission website has a [list of countries that can take part in Erasmus+](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/programme-guide/part-a/eligible-countries).

**Northern Ireland students**

The UK ended its participation in the Erasmus+ programme on 31 December 2020.

The Irish Government will [support higher education students in Northern Ireland to avail of mobilities and internships across Europe.](https://www.gov.ie/en/press-release/29934-minister-harris-announces-mobility-funding-for-northern-ireland-higher-education-students/)

## What costs does Erasmus+ cover?

You will generally get Erasmus+ funding to help cover your travel costs and living expenses such as accommodation and food. Any costs not related to these you will have to cover yourself. The amount of funding you get depends on the type of project you are on.

Extra funding is available to support people with disabilities and from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Higher education students will not have to pay fees for tuition, registration, examinations, and charges for access to laboratories or libraries in the institution where they are studying with Erasmus+. Fees for insurance or student union membership may still apply.

You can find information on grant levels and types of funding in the [Erasmus+ Programme Guide](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/resources/programme-guide_en). You may get additional grants from your institution, government or other sources. Check the [European Funding Guide](http://www.european-funding-guide.eu/).

## What projects does Erasmus+ fund?

Only organisations can apply for Erasmus+ funding. This includes schools, higher education and training institutes, youth and sport organisations.

Applications from participating organisations must support one or more of the four priorities of the Erasmus+ programme 2021-2027.

* Inclusive Erasmus+ aims to ensure equal opportunities for everyone
* Digital Erasmus+ aims to develop accessible and high-quality digital learning and training
* Green Erasmus+ encourages participants to build knowledge and understanding of sustainability and climate change and to use lower carbon transport
* Erasmus+ participation in democratic life supports active engagement in society

If you are at school, you can spend time abroad studying at a partner school. You can also go as part of a group to learn with other school students abroad.

If you are in higher education, your study period abroad can combine with a traineeship.

If you are a trainee or apprentice, you can be hosted in a workplace or in another institution for trainees for work-based learning. Your traineeship can last from 2 weeks to 12 months.

If you are an adult learner, you can spend time at an adult learning organisation which may include class or work-based learning or job-shadowing. You can also study abroad as part of a group.

Young people in youth organisations and volunteers can travel for training or a youth exchange and take part in workshops, debates and outdoor activities.

Internship vacancies are offered by companies and organisations on Erasmusintern.org website.

You can find information on all [projects funded under the Erasmus+ programme](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/projects/) on the Erasmus+ Project Results platform.

## How to apply for Erasmus+

### School children

If you are in a school, applications for Erasmus+ must be made through your school. The school must be fair, inclusive and transparent when selecting candidates for Erasmus+.

Your school can apply to Erasmus+ directly or through a [consortium of schools](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/individuals/staff-training/school-education-staff-training).

Your school can explore Erasmus+ opportunities through the [eTwinning platform](https://www.etwinning.net/en/pub/index.htm) and the [School Education Gateway](https://www.schooleducationgateway.eu/en/pub/index.htm).

### Students in higher education institutions

If you are a student at third-level, you can apply for your Erasmus+, traineeship or a combined Erasmus+ and traineeship through the international or Erasmus+ office of your higher education institution.

You must be registered in a higher education institution and studying for a recognised degree or third level qualification and be in at least your second year. The study abroad or traineeship must be [relevant to your degree or your personal development needs](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/individuals/students/studying-abroad).

If you are a recent graduate, you must be selected for a traineeship during your last year of study and must complete the traineeship within one year of graduating.

If you have completed a primary degree you can apply for an [Erasmus Mundus Joint Masters Scholarship](https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/opportunities/individuals/students/erasmus-mundus-joint-masters-scholarships).

You can do an Erasmus+ many times. However, you can only do one Erasmus+ during each Bachelor, Masters, Doctoral degree or equivalent.

### Vocational education and training (VET) learners or apprentices

If you are an apprentice or attending a vocational education and training (VET) course, contact Leargas for information on organisations or employers that you can apply for Erasmus with.

Your local Education and Training Board (ETB) would be considered a VET organisation for Erasmus+. Leargas publishes a [list of vocational education and training (VET) organisations that are eligible for Erasmus+](https://www.leargas.ie/resource/erasmus-vet-ka1-eligible-organisations-2023/).

### Youth participants, volunteers and youth workers

Young people in youth organisations or volunteers should apply through a [youth organisation or group](https://www.leargas.ie/application-process/a-quick-guide-to-erasmus-plus-european-solidarity-corps-eligibility/).

You can find Information on Erasmus+ and other [youth opportunities](https://www.leargas.ie/explore-youth-opportunities/) on the Léargas website.

## When to apply for Erasmus+

There are generally two application deadlines for organisations each year, one in spring and one in autumn.

Application dates for schools, vocational education and training, apprenticeships, adult education and youth organisations are published on the [Léargas website](https://www.leargas.ie/application-process/deadlines/).

Applications dates for higher education institutes are published on the Higher Education Authority’s Erasmus+ website [euireland.ie](https://eurireland.ie/).

## Other EU funded opportunities

Young people can take part in [volunteering projects and solidarity projects](https://www.leargas.ie/european-solidarity-corps/) in Ireland or in another country through a different programme called the European Solidarity Corps. You can register on the [European Solidarity Corps Portal](https://europa.eu/youth/solidarity_en) or visit europeansolidarity.ie to find out more.

You can find opportunities to travel, work, study and volunteer in Europe on [Eurodesk.ie](https://eurodesk.eu/about/).

Young people and youth organisations can find information on the [European youth portal](https://europa.eu/youth/home_en) and [Youthpass](https://www.youthpass.eu/en/) websites.

### Higher Education Authority (HEA)

International Education Section

3 Shelbourne Buildings  
Crampton Avenue  
Shelbourne Road  
Dublin 4  
D04C2Y6

**Tel:** 01 2317 100

**Homepage:** <https://eurireland.ie/>

**Email:** [erasmus@hea.ie](mailto:erasmus@hea.ie)

EURIreland.ie is the Erasmus+ for Higher Education website, managed by the HEA.

### Léargas

Kings Inn House  
Parnell Street  
Dublin 1  
D01 A3Y8  
Ireland

**Fax:** (01) 873 1316

**Homepage:** <https://www.leargas.ie/>

**Email:** [info@leargas.ie](mailto:info@leargas.ie)

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# Europass

* [Introduction](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/europass/#l0b797)
* [Europass platform](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/europass/#l48a92)
* [Rates](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/europass/#l62fd2)
* [Further information](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/europass/#l23f7d)
* [Where to apply](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/europass/#lef21f)

## Introduction

Europass is an online platform that can help you make your skills and qualifications clearly understood by employers and educators in other [EU countries](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/government-in-ireland/european-government/european-union/european-union/).

It brings together a number of documents that both learners and workers may need.

The documents include:

* [Europass CV](https://europa.eu/europass/en/create-europass-cv)
* [Mobility Document](https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-mobility-stakeholders)
* [Certificate Supplement](https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-certificate-supplement-stakeholders)
* [Diploma Supplement](https://europa.eu/europass/en/diploma-supplement-stakeholders)

These documents are helpful when you move between EU countries to work or study. Using Europass can make it easier for employers to understand your qualifications from another EU State.

## Europass platform

A [Europass profile](https://europa.eu/europass/en/europass-profile-tool-help-people-manage-their-learning-and-careers) is a record of your skills and qualifications. You can record your work, education, training, language skills and achievements. You can use the information in your Europass profile to create CVs for jobs or courses that you may be applying for.

You can complete your profile online using the [Europass platform](https://europa.eu/europass/en).

The Europass platform also allows you to [create your e-Portfolio](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/europass/e-portfolio) and keep [digitally-signed credentials](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/europass/digitally-signed-credentials).

## Rates

There is no charge for Europass documents and application is free of charge.

There is also no funding available under this programme towards the costs of training abroad. EU funding is available for mobility programmes through [Erasmus +](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/education/european-education-programmes/eramus-plus/).

## Further information

For information about using or learning more about Europass, contact the National Europass Centre. [Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)](http://www.qqi.ie/Pages/Recognition-of-Foreign-Qualifications-.aspx) is the designated [National Europass Centre in Ireland](http://www.europass.ie/).

## Where to apply

### National Europass Centre

Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI)

26-27 Denzille Lane  
Dublin 2  
Ireland

**Tel:** (01) 905 8100

**Homepage:** <http://www.europass.ie/>

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