

Education & Training



The education system in Ireland involves three main stages: Primary and Post Primary Education, (provided by schools) and Third Level Education (provided by universities or institutes of technology).

Pre-schools & Childcare

There is no state provision of pre-school services for young children. However, there is a range of childcare facilities available, including pre-schools, nurseries, crèches, playgroups and individual childminders. Many of these are privately run and fees can be high. Some community facilities provide subsidised childcare for people in the area. Demand for childcare is usually high and it may be difficult to secure a place for your child.

A list of childcare services and the

contact addresses of all the crèches, preschools etc can be obtained from the Southern Health Board (see page 37). Normally there is a long waiting list for most childcare places.

An alternative to creches and pre-schools is to find a private childminder. These are usually advertised in local papers, such as the Evening Echo. You may also be able to find the details of childminders and babysitters on the notice boards in shopping centres. The Cork City Childcare Company has produced a number of free guides to help inform parents – “A Guide to Choosing Childcare” and “How to Choose a Childminder”.

Further information

Cork City Childcare Company,
Penrose Wharf, Cork.
Tel 021 4507942
www.corkcitychildcare.ie



School System

The law requires that all children must participate in full time education between the ages of 6 and 16 (although most children start school at age 4 or 5). Most schools in Ireland are state-aided and attendance is free for all children – regardless of nationality or status. However, there are usually some costs involved (e.g. towards books, photocopying or school uniforms). Some support is available to people on low income or receiving social welfare benefits (e.g. the Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance and Exceptional Needs Payment may cover uniform costs – see page 21).

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

Primary Schools

When starting school, usually at age 4 or 5, children enrol in primary (or national) school, where they study for 8 years. You can send your child to any school of your choice, provided that a place is available there. Lists of local schools are available from the Department of Education & Science (contact details below).

Contact Details

Department of Education & Science,
Regional Office,
Heritage Industrial Estate,
Bessboro Road, Mahon, Cork.
Tel 021 4536300
email: ro_southern@education.gov.ie

Once you've chosen a school, contact the principal to see if a place is available. If not, he/she may be able to suggest an alternative school. Most primary schools are under the management of a church (the majority are Roman Catholic) but there are some multi-denominational and non-denominational schools.

Post Primary/ Second Level Schools

At age 12 or 13 children go to post primary/second level school. There are a number of different types of post primary schools – the most common is the secondary school. Other types of school include community and comprehensive schools and community colleges. As with primary schools, most second level schools are denominational. Children must stay in second level until they reach 16 years of age. While the Irish language is a compulsory subject some students may be exempt, e.g. children who attended education outside Ireland up to 11 years of age.

Second level education involves 2 cycles, each of which ends with an examination:

- Junior cycle – a three-year programme ending in a Junior Certificate exam
- Senior cycle – a two or three year programme (3 year programmes include a “transitional year” focusing on personal development, work experience and other new skills). Most students do the established Leaving Certificate programme, which involves 6 or 7 subjects. However, other options include the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied. Entry to third level education is usually linked to the results achieved in the Leaving Certificate, with the most popular courses taking only those with the highest scores.

Third Level Education

Third level education in Ireland is mainly provided by universities and Institutes of Technology – including University College Cork and the Cork Institute of Technology. Universities offer degree programmes at Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral level. Institutes of Technology provide programmes along a progression ladder from certificate to diploma to degree level, as well as postgraduate degrees. Each university and IT produces a prospectus every year,

which outlines all its courses and other services and is available free of charge.

Irish and other EU citizens pay no tuition fees for their first full-time, undergraduate course (provided they've been living in the EU for at least 3 of the previous 5 years and the course is at least 2 years). People with refugee status may also qualify for free fees. All other students, including non-EU citizens, post graduate students, part-time students etc must pay fees. Fees vary between colleges and courses and currently range from €6500 to €15,500 per year.

A number of grant schemes operate to support students on third level courses. The main grant is the Higher Education Grants Scheme which provides maintenance grants for eligible students attending full time courses. Additional “top-up” grants are available for disadvantaged students. The grant scheme is open to Irish and other EU/EEA citizens, people with refugee status and some other categories of people with permission to remain in the state. To qualify your income must be below a certain level and you must have lived in the area for one year before applying.

How to Apply for Third Level Education?

Applications for most full time, undergraduate courses are made once a year (closing date is usually 1 February) through the Central Applications Office (CAO). Applicants should indicate which courses and where they would like to study in order of preference. Once the Leaving Certificate results are available in August, offers of places are sent to applicants. Entry requirements are linked to Leaving Certificate results and some courses require very high results (e.g. medicine). A list of all courses and information on how to apply is available in the CAO handbook – CAO, 33 Eglinton St, Galway. Tel 091 5098000, www.cao.ie

Mature students (i.e. those aged 23 or over) may apply for third level courses regardless of their Leaving Certificate results. See the “Guide for Mature Students” available free of charge from the Dept of Education and Science. Supports, exemptions and application procedures for mature students differ between providers – many now have mature student officers who can provide advice and information.

If you already have a qualification and want to find out whether it's recognised in Ireland, contact the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland, 5th Floor, Jervis House, Jervis St, Dublin 1. Tel 01 8871500, e-mail: info@nqai.ie

Contact Details

Cork City Council,
Higher Education Grants section,
Tel 021 4924087/4924096
or 4924363,
e-mail: highereducation@corkcity.ie
www.corkcity.ie

Cork Institute of Technology,
Bishopstown, Cork.
Tel 021 4326100, www.cit.ie

University College Cork
Tel 021 4903000, www.ucc.ie

Further Education & Training

Between the level of post primary and third level education, there is also a variety of other further education and training courses. The City of Cork Vocational Education Committee (VEC) oversees three further education colleges:

- Cork College of Commerce, Morrisons Island, Cork. Tel 021 4222100.
- Coláiste Stiofáin Naofa, Tramore Road, Cork. Tel 021 4961020.
- St John's Central College, Sawmill St, Cork. Tel 021 4276410.

Each offers a range of one, two and three year full and part time courses

in a variety of subjects. Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are one-year courses, which focus on vocational and technological skills and take place in schools and community education colleges. There is no fee to attend these courses and participants on some programmes (e.g. the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme, VTOS) may receive a training allowance.

FAS is the national training agency and provides training in a range of skills for people in employment and those who are unemployed (but have the right to work). Training courses for many of its training programmes are aimed at those who are unemployed and these are usually free and may involve a training allowance (see contact details page 12).

Learning English

English language classes are provided, free of charge, by a number of groups. Access to some of these classes will depend on your status. The main providers include:

Cork Centre for the Unemployed,

13 North Main Street, Cork.

Tel 021 4275876,

e-mail: cctu@eircom.net

Classes are free and open to everyone, regardless of your status.

Welcome English, Convent Place, Cork – open to asylum seekers and

refugees. For further information drop into the Welcome English centre, open Monday – Friday, 10am – 4pm, or call Sister Celeste, tel 087 9189841

Integrate Ireland – classes are free, but only open to those with refugee status. To find out more call in to Tigh Filí, MacCurtain Street, Cork between 9am and 1pm, Monday – Friday.

There are also a number of **fee paying schools** which teach English. These include:

Cork International Language Academy (CILA), Fitzgerald House, Grand Parade, Cork. Tel 021 4905934. Open enrollment, pay per class, free internet & social activities.

Cork English College, 30-32 Patrick's Quay, Parnell Place, Cork. Tel 021 4551522, fees based on ten week courses, open enrolment for daytime classes, evening classes start September, January & March.

Cork Language Centre International, 16 St Patrick's Place, Wellington House, Wellington Quay, Tel 021 4551661. Daytime classes only – open enrolment.

The Language Centre, O'Rahilly Building, University College, Cork. Tel 021 4902043
e-mail: Info@langcent.ucc.ie
www.ucc.ie/esol Daytime and evening classes, enrolment September, January and Easter.