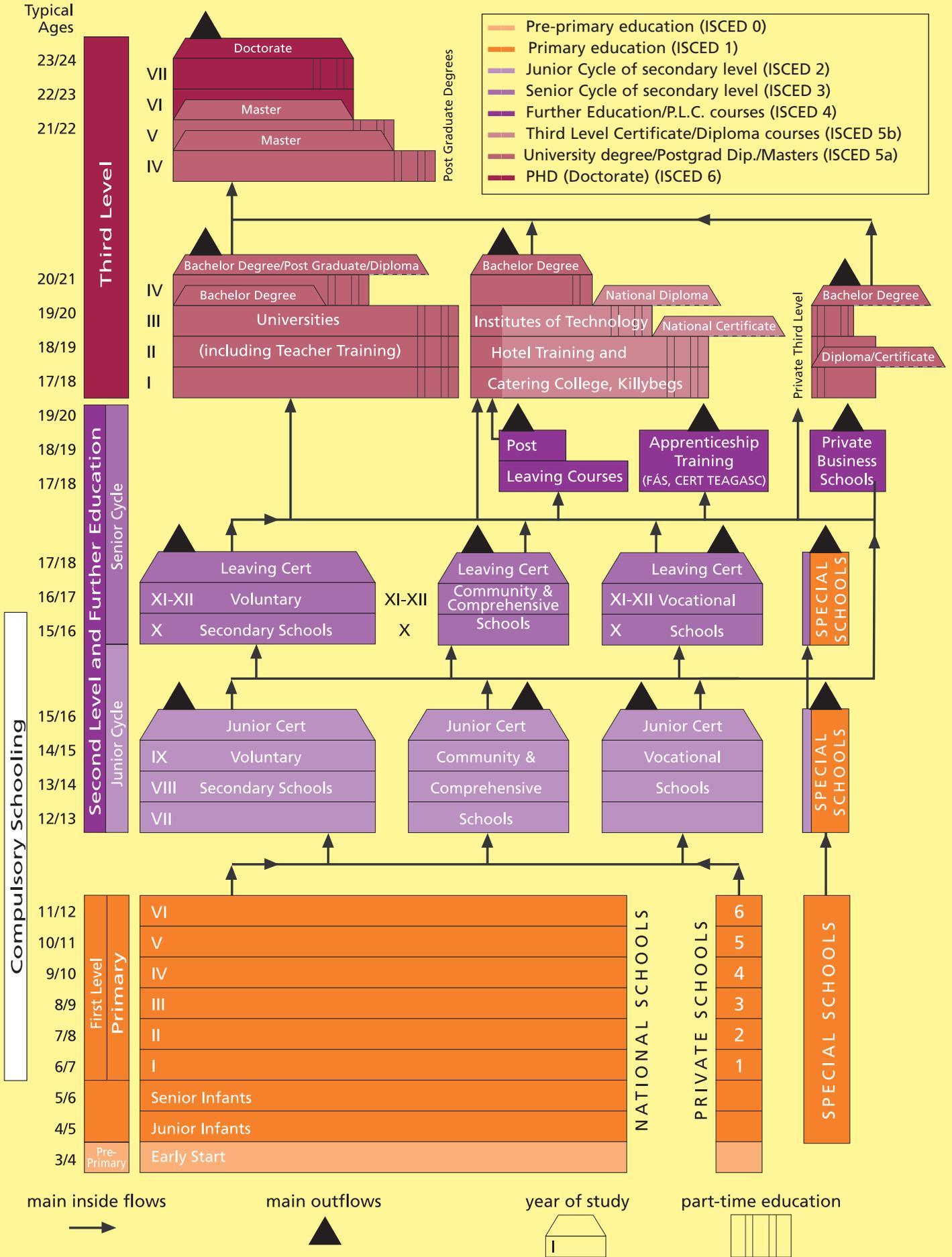




# A Brief Description of the Irish Education System

# Education System in Ireland



Note that infant classes correspond to Pre-Primary in the International Standard Classification of Education

# A Brief Description Of the Irish Education System

This document is intended as  
a brief guide to the Irish Education System.

Further information may be obtained on  
the Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)



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# Introduction

Education has always been highly valued in Ireland. Even in historic times of great political, economic and social difficulty, the desire for education was very much in evidence. Prior to the establishment of a national system of primary education in 1831, there was already in existence a vast network of schools, the great majority of them provided by a people who had been dispossessed of their lands and who were experiencing harsh penal legislation. In later times, whenever opportunities for education were provided, Irish people were quick to utilise and take advantage of them. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the prevailing political and social climate meant that many Irish people had to go abroad to access higher education, using the Irish Colleges network. This debt was more than repaid later by the great diaspora of Irish scholars, teachers and missionaries to the English-speaking world over the last two centuries.

Education is now regarded as a central plank in the economic, social and cultural development of Irish society. Governments and the social partners view it as strategically interlinked with national planning. There is a high level of public interest in educational issues, which has been further developed by the consultative approach adopted by the Government in the formulation of education policy. Irish pupils perform in the top sectors in international studies such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) PISA evaluations. Employers, both national and international, affirm the quality of graduates from the Irish education system.

Education in Ireland is compulsory from age 6 to 16 or until students have completed three years of second level (post-primary) education. While there is no national provision for pre-schooling in Ireland, first level schools accept children on or after their



fourth birthday. The typical first level school enrolls pupils by age into eight year-groups or classes, ranging from junior infants to sixth class. The vast majority of schools are State funded, privately owned "all-through" schools, catering for pupils from 4 to 12 years of age. The curriculum followed is a child-centred one and it allows for flexibility in timetabling and teaching methods.

The great majority of pupils transfer to second level school when they have completed the full first level course – generally at about 12 years of age. For registration in a second level school, students must be aged 12 on 1 January in the first year of attendance.

The second level education sector comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. While each category of school evolved from a distinctive historical context, and have different ownership and management structures, they have a great deal in common. They are largely State funded and follow the same State prescribed curriculum and take the same State public examinations.

The second level school span is predominantly a six-year cycle, taken by ages 12 to 18. The terminology of "lower secondary" and "upper secondary" is not used in Ireland, but the terms "Junior Cycle" and "Senior Cycle" are commonly used.

Apart from internal school tests, there are two key public examinations taken by students – the Junior Certificate (age 15/16) and the Leaving Certificate (age 17/18). These are external examinations set by the State Examinations Commission. A great deal of public attention is focused on the Leaving Certificate Examination as entry to third level education is closely linked to the results achieved by students at this examination.

Third level education in Ireland is provided mainly by universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education. In addition, a number of other third level institutions provide specialist education in a number of professions such as medicine and law. Most third level education institutions are supported very substantially by the State.

For young people and adults who have left education early or without adequate qualifications, second-chance and alternative programmes are available. Adult, further and community education all have a role to play in providing second-chance education opportunities, addressing skills needs and promoting equality and social inclusion.

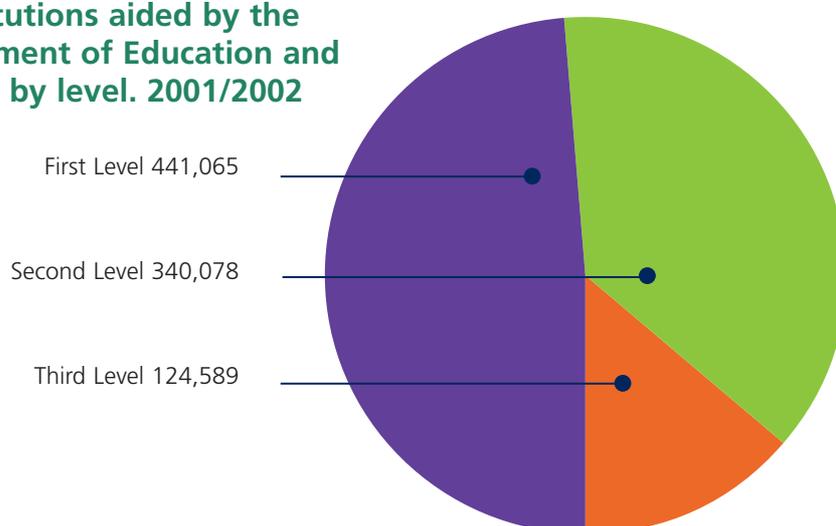
Many aspects of the administration of the Irish education system are centralised in the Department of Education and Science. The Department sets the general regulations for the recognition of schools, prescribes curricula, establishes regulations for the management, resourcing and staffing of schools, and centrally negotiates teachers' salary scales.

However in recent years the Department has undertaken a programme of restructuring which aims to delegate functions to external agencies (e.g. State Examinations Commission) and establish a network of regional offices. This will allow the Department to focus on policy issues and to meet the challenges and expectations for education into the future.

It is now widely recognised and accepted that education is a critical driver of economic success and social progress in modern society. There is a growing recognition, particularly in the European Union, that the provision of quality education and training is central to the creation of a high-skills, knowledge and innovation-based economy that will underpin ongoing and sustainable prosperity. Education and training are also crucial to achieving the objective of an inclusive society where all citizens have the opportunity and the incentive to participate fully in the social and economic life of the country.

In order to ensure that these objectives will be achieved, a vision for the future of Irish education is being developed through a process of broad public consultation. This vision will provide a framework for planned development of education in Ireland which will make a significant ongoing contribution to further increasing economic prosperity and supporting social cohesion.

### Number of full-time students in institutions aided by the Department of Education and Science by level. 2001/2002



# First Level Education (Primary)

There are over 440,000 children in first level education.

Although children in Ireland are not obliged to attend school until the age of six, almost all children begin school in the September following their fourth birthday. Therefore, most four-year-olds and almost all five-year-olds are enrolled in infant classes in first level schools (also called national or primary schools). In this way, much of what is considered pre-school education in other countries (from age four to six) is provided, free of charge, for all children in Ireland. First level education consists of an eight year cycle.

The general aims of first level education are:

- to enable the child to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual
- to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and co-operating with others and so contribute to the good of society
- to prepare the child for a continuum of learning.

The primary curriculum provides for an extensive learning experience and encourages a rich variety of approaches to teaching and learning that cater for the different needs of individual children.

The revised primary curriculum, launched in 1999, was the first complete revision of the curriculum since 1971. The revised curriculum is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life – spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical.

The curriculum reflects the educational, cultural, social and economic aspirations and concerns of Irish society. It also takes account of the changing nature of society and aims to help children to adjust to these changes.

The curriculum is divided into the following key areas:

- Language
- Mathematics
- Social, Environment and Scientific Education
- Arts Education, including Visual Arts, Music and Drama
- Physical Education
- Social, Personal and Health Education.



A detailed listing of all first level schools is available on the Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). The Education Provider Search, which can be found on the Department's homepage, offers a facility to search for schools.

## Pre-school Education

Pre-school education is provided in the main by privately funded childcare facilities. The Department of Education and Science funds a number of pre-school initiatives, focusing in particular on children at risk.

The Department published a White Paper on Early Childhood Education, Ready to Learn, in 1999. As part of the process of implementing the White Paper, the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education was established in 2001. The centre became operational in October 2002, and is responsible for:

- establishing a national quality framework for early childhood education in all its aspects which is capable of being applied in the various settings in which early education is provided;
- developing targeted interventions for children up to six years of age who are disadvantaged or who have special needs, building on the experience of existing initiatives and
- laying the groundwork for the establishment of an Early Childhood Agency as envisaged by the White Paper.

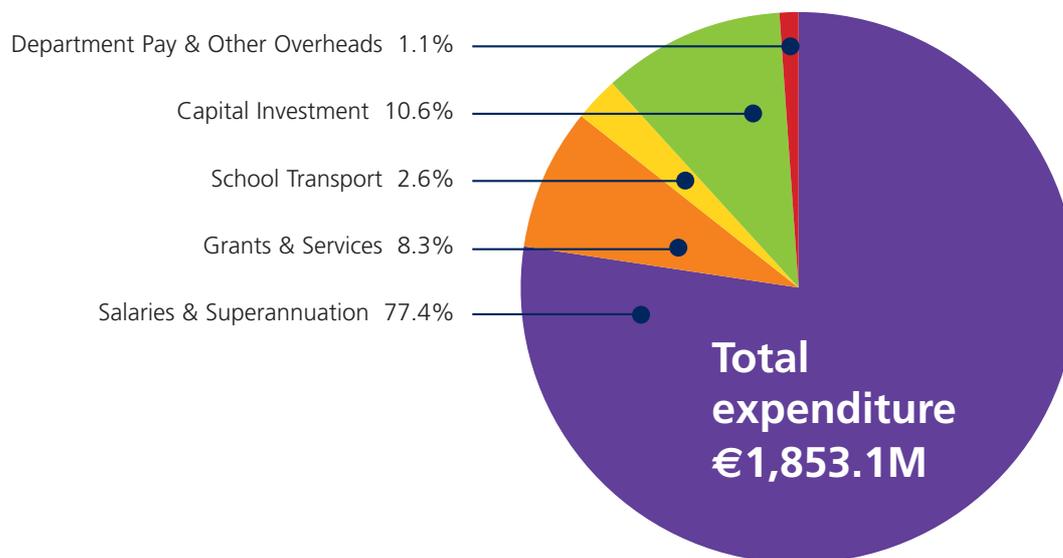
In addition to the services provided by the Department of Education and Science, a number of other Government Departments are involved in pre-school provision and care. These include the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; the Department of Health and Children; the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government.

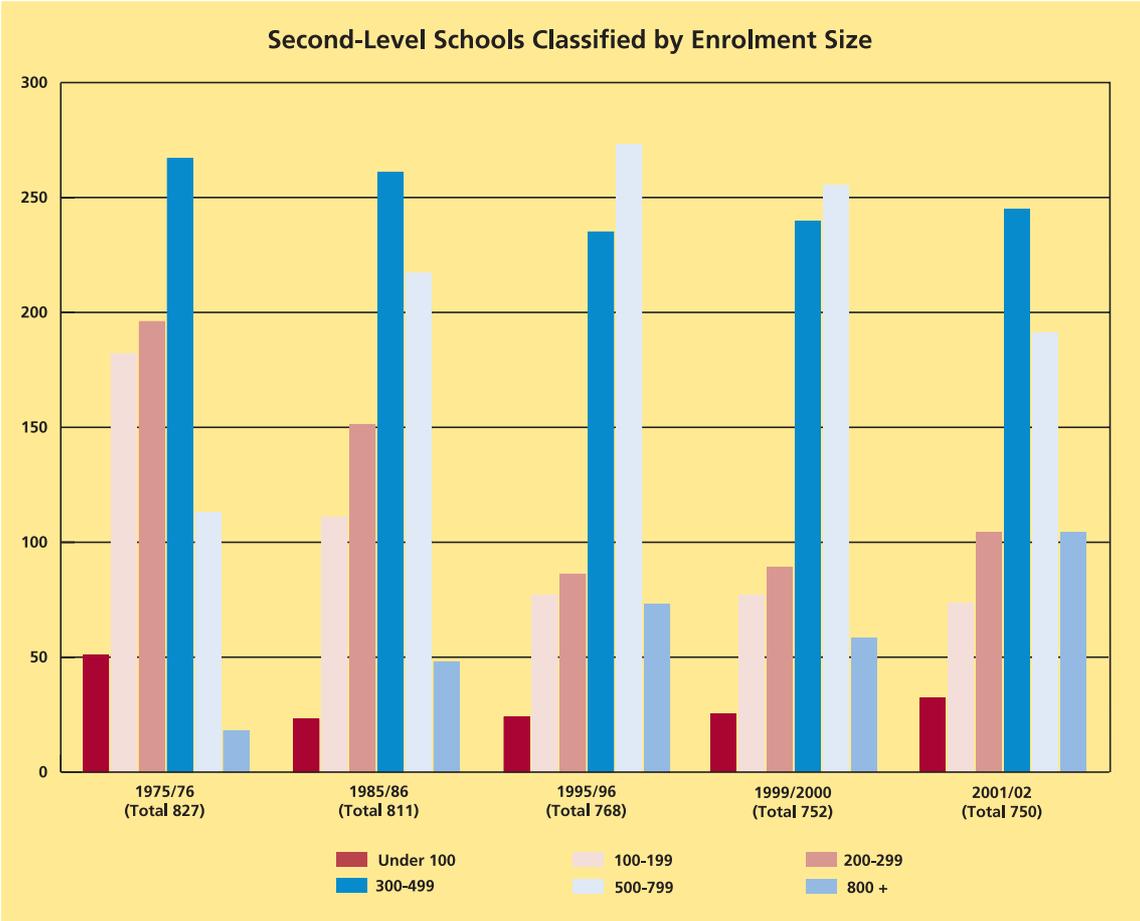
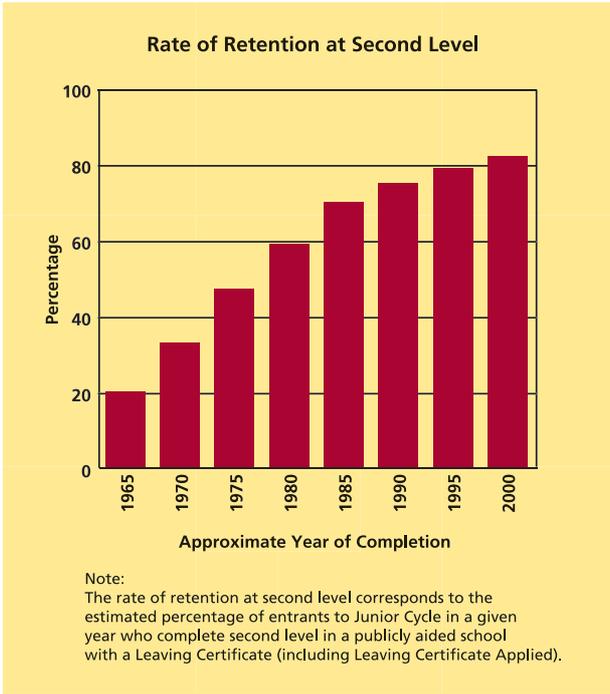
## Education and Related Expenditure on First Level in 2002

**3,282** schools aided by the Department, 2001/2002

**441,065** pupils in schools aided by the Department, 2001/2002

**23,935** teachers





## Second Level Education (Post-Primary)

**T**he second level education sector comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools. Secondary schools are privately owned and managed. The trustees of the majority of these schools are religious communities or Boards of Governors. Vocational schools are State established and are administered by Vocational Education Committees (VECs) while community and comprehensive schools are managed by Boards of Management of differing compositions.

Building on the foundation of first level education, second level education aims to provide a comprehensive, high-quality learning environment which aims to prepare individual students for higher or continuing education or for immediate entry into the workplace.

Second level education consists of a three-year Junior Cycle (lower secondary), followed by a two or three year Senior Cycle (upper secondary), depending on whether the optional Transition Year is taken.

It is usual for students to commence the Junior Cycle at age 12. A State Examination, the Junior Certificate, is taken after three years. The principal objective of the Junior Cycle is for students to complete broad, balanced and coherent courses of study in a variety of curricular areas, and to allow them to achieve levels of competence that will enable them to proceed to Senior Cycle education.

The Senior Cycle caters for students in the 15 to 18 year age group. It has undergone significant restructuring in recent years.

Transition Year, which has been one of the major innovations in Irish education, is an option which is now firmly embedded in the system. It immediately follows the Junior Cycle. It provides an opportunity for students to experience a wide range of educational inputs, including work experience, over the course of a year that is free from formal examinations. The aim of Transition Year is to educate students for maturity with an emphasis on personal development, social awareness and skills for life.

During the final two years of Senior Cycle students take one of three programmes, each leading to a State Examination – the traditional Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

### The Leaving Certificate

The long established, traditional Leaving Certificate examination is the terminal examination of post-primary education and is taken when students are typically 17 or



18 years of age. Syllabi are available in 34 subjects. All subjects are offered at two levels, ordinary and higher. Irish and Mathematics are also available at foundation level. Students following the established Leaving Certificate Programme are required to take at least five subjects, one of which must be Irish.

In 2003, over 53,000 students took the Leaving Certificate Examination. The Leaving Certificate is the main basis upon which places in universities, institutes of technology and colleges of education are allocated.

The last number of years have been characterised by a programme of revision and updating of syllabi for individual subjects. A key objective of such revision is to ensure that the broad range of abilities, interests, learning styles and special needs of students are well catered for.

### The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme

The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) was introduced in 1989 and modifies the traditional Leaving Certificate Programme, with a concentration on technical subjects and some additional modules which have a vocational focus. Due to its high vocational content, it attracts funding from the European Social Fund. In 1994, it was expanded to broaden the choice of subjects and to strengthen the vocational content of the programme by including three Link Modules – Enterprise Education, Preparation for Work and Work Experience.

Students opting for the LCVP must take:

- five Leaving Certificate subjects, including two subjects from a specified set of vocational subjects
- a recognised course in a modern European language
- the three mandatory Link Modules.

### The Leaving Certificate Applied Programme

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme was introduced in 1995 and is a self-contained two-year course. It is a person-centred course involving a cross-curricular approach rather than a subject based structure. It has as its primary objective the preparation of participants for adult and working life through relevant learning experiences, which develop the following areas of human endeavour: spiritual, intellectual, social, emotional, aesthetic and physical. The framework of the LCA Programme consists of a number of modules grouped under three general headings:

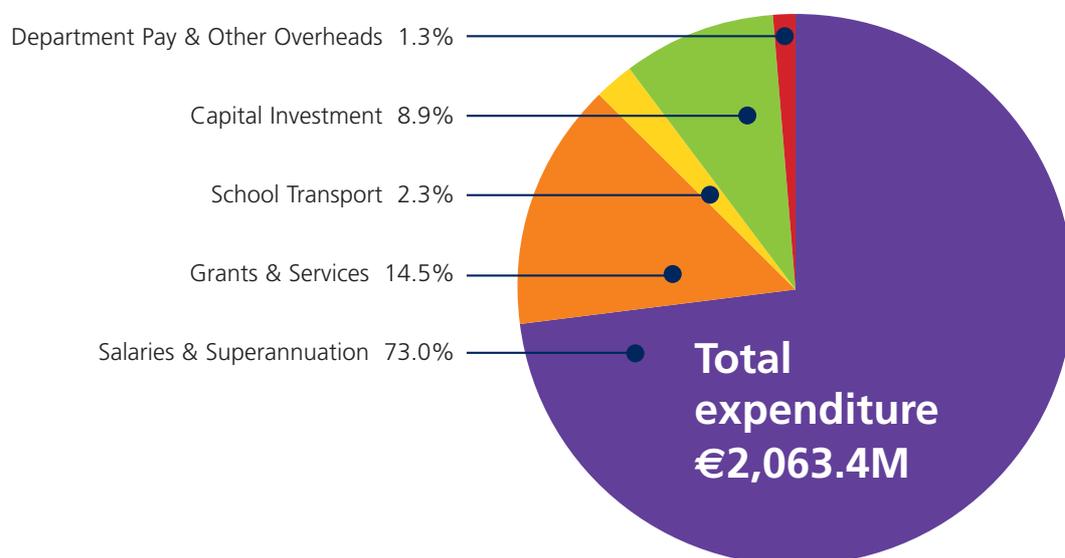
- 1 General Education
- 2 Vocational Education
- 3 Vocational Preparation

The LCA Programme is intended to meet the needs of those students who are not adequately catered for by other Leaving Certificate Programmes. Although certification in the LCA is not recognised for direct entry to third level courses, students who successfully complete the programme can proceed to Post-Leaving Certificate courses and thereby continue their education.

A detailed listing of all second level schools is available on the Department's website [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie). The Education Provider Search, which can be found on the Department's homepage, offers a facility to search for second level schools.

### Education and Related Expenditure on Second Level in 2002

**750** second level schools aided by the Department, 2001/2002  
**340,078** students in schools aided by the Department, 2001/2002  
**25,187** teachers (including full-time equivalents)



# Third Level Education

**T**raditionally the system of third level education in Ireland has comprised the university sector, the technological sector and the colleges of education, all of which are substantially funded by the State. In recent years, a number of independent private colleges have been established which offer a range of courses complementing the existing provision in the sector.

The 35 year period from 1965 to 2000 saw the number of students in third level education grow from 18,200 to almost 120,000. These rapidly growing numbers reflect increasing retention rates at second level, demographic trends and higher transfer rates into third level education.

## University Sector

The seven universities in the State are autonomous, self-governing institutions.

The Irish university system offers degree programmes – at Bachelor, Masters and Doctorate level – in the humanities, in the sciences (including technological and social) and in medicine. Some universities have introduced semesterisation and modularisation of courses, giving greater flexibility to students. Typically, teaching at undergraduate level is by way of a programme of lectures supplemented by tutorials and, where appropriate, practical demonstration and laboratory work. Masters degrees are usually taken by course work, research work or some combination of both. Doctoral degrees are awarded on the basis of research. Universities award their own degrees using external examiners to ensure consistency of standards. The universities also have continuing and some distance education programmes and engage in substantial amounts of research work.

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) is a statutory body whose functions include the funding of universities and other designated third level institutions, the development of third level education to meet the needs of the community and an advisory role in relation to all third level education.

The number of full-time students in university together with the number of new entrants is given below:

Academic year	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02
Total students	58,090	61,308	63,737	66,914	69,254	72,168
New entrants	13,717	14,868	15,779	16,505	16,210	16,654



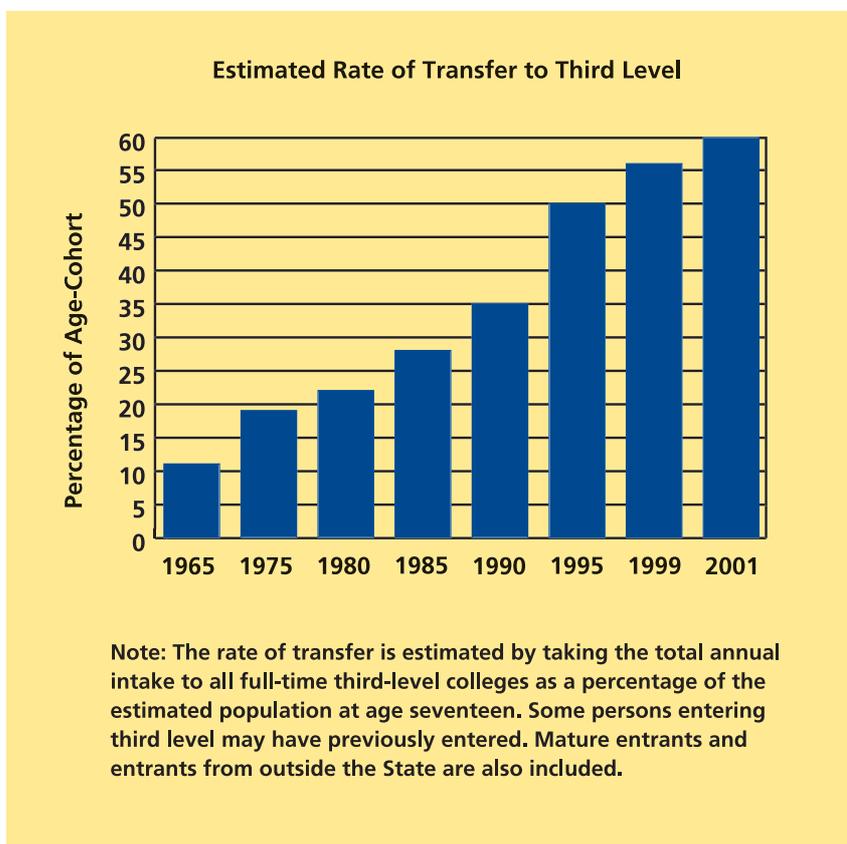
## Technological Sector

The Department of Education and Science has overall responsibility for the technological sector of third level education. This role includes responsibility for the formulation and review of policy and for the budgetary and regulatory framework.

Institutions in the technicological sector provide programmes of education and training in areas such as Business, Science, Engineering, Linguistics and Music to certificate, diploma and degree levels.

The number of full-time students in the Institutes of Technology and other Technological Colleges together with numbers of new entrants is given below:

Academic year	96/97	97/98	98/99	99/00	00/01	01/02
Total students	41,000	41,909	43,476	46,424	48,360	49,890
New entrants	17,784	17,102	17,612	18,401	18,530	17,768



### Colleges of Education

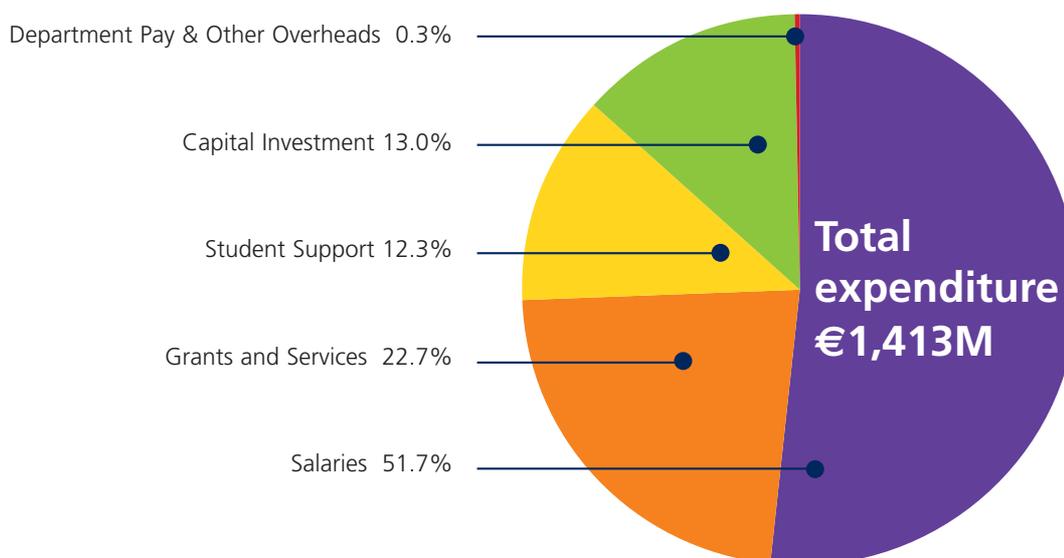
There are five Colleges of Education, which specialise in the training of first level teachers. They offer two courses – a three-year Bachelor of Education Degree and an eighteen-month Post Graduate Diploma.

The role of the Department in relation to the Colleges of Education is to ensure that the supply of teachers for first level schools is in accordance with identified needs

#### Note:

For second level teachers, training usually involves completing a primary degree in a university or other third level institution, and a one-year Higher Diploma in Education. There are also teacher training colleges that specialise in the training of second level home economics teachers, teachers of religion and physical education.

## Education and Related Expenditure on Third Level in 2002



## Further and Adult Education

The term "Further Education" embraces education and training which occurs after second level schooling but which is not part of the third level system. This includes programmes such as Post Leaving Certificate courses, the Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme (second chance education for the unemployed), programmes in Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres for early school leavers, adult literacy and basic education, and self-funded evening adult programmes in second level schools.

A distinctive feature of further education is its diversity and breadth of provision, and its linkages with other services such as employment, training, area partnership, welfare, youth, school, juvenile liaison, justice, community and voluntary sector interests. A wide range of Government Departments, statutory agencies and voluntary and community organisations provide services in this area.

Participation in the Further Education sector in 2002 was as follows:

Programme:	No. of Students
Post Leaving Certificate courses:	28,699
Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme:	5,174
Youthreach and Senior Traveller:	3,520
Adult Education Guidance Initiative:	17,089
Adult and Community Education:	25,000
Adult Literacy:	28,363
Self-funded part-time adult education in schools:	140,000 estimated

The White Paper on Adult Education: *Learning for Life*, published in 2000, defined adult education as any "systematic learning undertaken by adults who return to learning having concluded initial education or training". The concept includes

- re-entry by adults to further education
- re-entry by adults to third level education
- continuing education and training and professional development of people in or re-entering the workforce, regardless of the level
- community education
- other systematic learning undertaken by adults in a variety of settings and contexts, both formal and informal.

An extensive consultation process informed the White Paper *Learning for Life* and marked the adoption of Lifelong Learning as the governing principle of educational policy in Ireland.



# Administrative Framework

**T**he Irish Constitution (Bunreacht na hÉireann) provides for collective Cabinet responsibility. Ministers are thereby collectively responsible for all Government Departments and Offices. The Cabinet, comprising the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), the Tánaiste and 13 Ministers, decides on a range of issues across all Departments.

## The Minister for Education & Science

The Minister for Education and Science, who is a member of the Government and responsible to Dáil Éireann (the Irish Parliament) has specific responsibility for education policy issues ranging from pre-school education, through first level, second level, third level, adult and further education.

The Minister is assisted by a Minister of State in the Department of Education and Science with special responsibility for Youth Affairs, Adult Education and Educational Disadvantage, and by a Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children with special responsibility for children.

## The Department of Education & Science

The Minister's administrative agency is the Department of Education and Science. The Department was established under the Ministers and Secretaries Act, 1924. The aim of the Department is to ensure the provision of a comprehensive, cost-effective and accessible education system of the highest quality as measured by international standards. The mission statement of the Department is directed towards an education system that will "enable individuals to develop to their full potential as persons and to participate fully as citizens in society, and contribute to social and economic development".

At the head of the Department is the Secretary General, who acts as Chief Executive Officer. He has overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring policy and delivering outputs, and for providing policy advice to the Minister and Government. In managing the Department, the Secretary General is assisted by the Management Advisory Committee representing the most senior officials in the Department.

## Legislative Framework

Many aspects of the administration of the Irish education system are centralised in the Department of Education and Science. The Department sets the general regulations for the recognition of schools, prescribes curricula and establishes regulations for the management, resourcing and staffing of schools, and negotiates teachers' salary scales.



While in the past Ireland had a limited range of education legislation, recent years have witnessed a significant amount of new education legislation. Notable in this regard are the Universities Act, 1997 and the Education Act, 1998. See Appendix B.

The Education Act of 1998 ensures formal provision for the education “of every person in the State, including any person with a disability or who has other special educational needs”. The Act governs “primary, post-primary, adult and continuing education and vocational education and training”. It sets out the functions and responsibilities of all key partners in the schooling system. It seeks the establishment of Boards of Management for all schools. It requires schools to engage in the preparation of school plans. Schools are required to promote parent associations. Accountability procedures are laid down. Attention is paid to the rights of parents and pupils. The Act also includes statutory provision for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and it sets out roles for the regional Education Centres.

The majority of schools are privately owned and managed institutions, which, although funded by the State, enjoy a large degree of autonomy

The Education Welfare Act, 2000, repealed the 1926 Legislation on school attendance. It provides a framework within which issues relating to the educational welfare of children, including the causes and effects of non-attendance at school can be addressed effectively. The Act also provides for the first time for the identification of children who are being educated outside the recognised school system and for a structure to ensure that the education which is being provided to them meets their constitutional rights. The Act provided for the establishment of the National Educational Welfare Board (NEWB) which, through a network of educational welfare officers, will implement the provisions of the Act.

The Universities Act, 1997 is the first comprehensive legislation that affects all seven universities in the State. The Act sets out the relationship between the State and the universities. It confers autonomous statutory responsibilities on universities in relation to the day-to-day management of their affairs, designates modes of accountability and strategic planning procedures for quality assurance, while respecting the academic autonomy of the universities. The Regional Technical Colleges Act, 1992 and the Dublin Institute of Technology Act, 1992 provide autonomy to the Institutes of Technology within an overall policy, budgetary and quality assurance framework designed to ensure full accountability.

## Partnership

The education system is undergoing a sustained process of rapid change at all levels. The process of change is driven by, and is a response to, the changing circumstances and demands of Irish society. Very significant changes are taking place in economic, social and demographic structures, which have important implications for education provision. The establishment of a number of specialist agencies to assist and advise the Department regarding policy formulation is an example of the partnership model in operation. These agencies are listed in Appendix A.

Changes in education policy and practice in recent years have been characterised increasingly by an intensive process of consultation between the Department and the partners (parents, teacher representative organisations, Boards of Management) in education. The overall aim of this partnership approach is to have broad agreement on major areas of development in the education system.

## Quality Assurance

Quality learning outcomes are vital for the achievement of active citizenship, employment and social inclusion.

In Ireland, there has been a growing recognition that quality in schools is best achieved when a range of measures work together to improve learning and teaching, and where everybody involved in the education system is focused on improvement. Schools themselves take some of these measures while other initiatives, such as curriculum development and support for teacher education, are organised by the Department or other agencies. External evaluation makes a further critical contribution, while system-wide evaluations, sometimes undertaken in co-operation with other countries, provide valuable data and assist in policy development.

The role of the Department's schools Inspectorate is outlined in the Education Act, 1998. The Inspectorate is closely involved with many of the initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning at first and second levels. Together with the Higher Education Authority (HEA), the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland (NQAI), Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) and the Higher Education and Training Awards Council (HETAC), the Department has a role in quality assurance in further and third level education.



## Regional Offices

Many aspects of the administration of the Irish education system are centralised in the Department of Education & Science. The concept of the Regional Offices emerged from two concerns – the need to make the Department more accessible to the public and the need to free the Department from excessive preoccupation with details of the operation of the education system.

The Regional Offices will facilitate a two-way information flow between the educational users in the regions and the Department as well as promoting networking between the different educational partners.

Ten Regional Offices will operate throughout the country, each office serving a specific catchment area.

## Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

In carrying out functions and delivering services in the area of education, the Department is assisted by a number of agencies that operate under its aegis. These vary in their roles, structures and means of operation and have specific responsibilities in areas of special importance.



# Special Education for Students with Disabilities

**T**he Education Act, 1998 sets out the responsibility of the Minister for Education and Science to ensure 'that there is made available to each person resident in the State, including a person with a disability or who has other special educational needs, support services and a level and quality of education appropriate to meeting the needs and abilities of that person'.

At present, special educational provision for students with disabilities ranges from additional support in mainstream schools to specialist support in special schools. Essentially there are three models of provision. The student with a disability may be enrolled in

- a mainstream class with additional support
- a special class in a mainstream school
- a special school which caters for the student's category of disability.

The provisions of the Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill, published in July, 2003, is designed to further underpin the rights of students with disabilities. The purpose of the Bill is to make detailed provision for the education of children with educational disabilities.

The main provisions of the Bill include the following:

- Parents of children with disabilities to have a central role in all important decisions concerning the education of their children;
- Integrated, inclusive education to be the general approach to the education of children with special educational needs;
- A child with an assessed educational disability to have a detailed goals-driven individual education plan, which is to be regularly reviewed;
- The policies and operations of the various agencies engaged in delivering education-related services to be coordinated and consistent;
- The establishment of a National Council for Special Education (NCSE).



# Tackling Educational Disadvantage and Promoting Social Inclusion

**E**ducation has a crucial role to play in tackling social exclusion by providing full access to life chances and avoiding and breaking the cycle of disadvantage. Tackling educational disadvantage is set in the context of the Government's National Anti-Poverty Strategy (NAPS) and the Social Partnership Agreements. A central objective of the strategy is to ensure that all young people leave the education system with a high quality education and related qualifications to support their full participation in society and the economy. A related objective is to ensure that all those who have already left school have an opportunity to address any lack of educational and related qualifications that militate against their ability to participate fully in society, the economy and employment.

This approach is based on a continuum of provision, from early childhood through adulthood, with the focus on preventive strategies, targeting and integrated community responses. Some €460 million was provided in 2003 for measures designed to counter educational disadvantage. This provision encompasses pre-school initiatives, programmes for disadvantaged students at primary and post-primary level, Disadvantaged Youth Schemes and Further Education measures. A number of measures designed to broaden access to third level education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds have been put in place.

The statutory Educational Disadvantage Committee established under the Education Act, 1998, advises the Minister for Education and Science on the policies and strategies to be adopted to identify and correct educational disadvantage.

The main objective of the School Transport Scheme is the provision of transport for children at both first and second level who might otherwise find it difficult to attend school regularly. The School Transport Scheme provides a service each day to some 133,000 pupils/students on 5,750 routes, to primary and post-primary schools.



# Promoting Science and Technology in Education

**A**s Ireland develops as a knowledge-based economy, a key challenge for education is to develop the necessary mix of creativity and skills to respond to the needs of a changing labour market. Research, development and innovation are critical elements in achieving and maintaining economic competitiveness and securing continued prosperity. The availability of an adequate number of graduates skilled in the fields of Maths, Physical Sciences, Biological Sciences, Technology and Engineering will be a critical factor in supporting this strategy.

For Ireland, future economic growth relies on the ability to attract and retain higher value activities and higher skills with an emphasis on research, design and innovation. This involves moving from technology based development to innovation based development which is less vulnerable to competition from lower cost economies.

A revised science curriculum at first level was introduced in September 2003. The overall objectives of the curriculum include:

- \* Developing a scientific approach to problem solving which emphasise understanding and constructive thinking
- \* Encouraging children to explore, develop and apply scientific ideas and concepts through designing and making activities
- \* Fostering children's natural curiosity to develop independent enquiry and creative action.

This begins as early as the infant classes and continues throughout the primary cycle.

At second level, the introduction of a range of revised syllabi in science subjects at Senior Cycle is near completion. A revised syllabus in Junior Certificate Science was introduced in 2003, with a greatly increased emphasis on hands-on student investigative work and on the application of science process skills in student activities.

A Task Force on the Physical Sciences reported to Government in March 2002 setting out a range of recommendations aimed at addressing the declining level of participation in the physical sciences at second level and in higher education and at ensuring the provision of a well developed skills base in this area. Its recommendations are being implemented on a phased basis.

In 1998, the Government launched the Programme of Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTL). The programme, which is managed by the Higher Education Authority on behalf of the Minister for Education and Science, provides integrated financial support for institutional research strategies, programmes and infrastructure.



Since the launch of the programme, projects totalling €605 million have been approved. This funding has had a significant impact on the research and innovation landscape, through the completion of major Research Centres and the funding of major research projects.

The institutional research strategies supported by PRTL as well as the basic research activities supported from core funds provided for third level colleges have been complemented by support for individual research projects, facilitated by the establishment of the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) as well as the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS).

Strengthening the quality of science teaching and learning at every level of the system will continue to be an important strategic goal for the education system in the period ahead.

# Appendix A

## Bodies under the Aegis of the Department

Advisory Council for English Language Schools Ltd.  
 An Chomhairle um Oideachais Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta  
 Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education  
 Commission on School Accommodation Needs  
 Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies  
 Further Education and Training Awards Council  
 Higher Education and Training Awards Council  
 Higher Education Authority  
 Institiúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann / The Linguistics Institute of Ireland  
 Integrate Ireland Language and Training Ltd  
 International Education Board of Ireland  
 Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology  
 Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences  
 Léargas – The Exchange Bureau  
 National Adult Learning Council  
 National Centre for Guidance in Education  
 National Centre for Technology in Education  
 National Council for Curriculum and Assessment  
 National Council for Special Education  
 National Educational Psychological Service  
 National Education Welfare Board  
 National Qualifications Authority of Ireland  
 Residential Institution Redress Board  
 Royal Irish Academy/Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann  
 Royal Irish Academy of Music  
 State Examinations Commission  
 The President's Award – Gaisce



# Appendix B

## Education Legislation since 1924

### a) Primary Legislation

#### **Date Title**

1926	School Attendance Act
1930	Vocational Education Act (Amendment Acts were enacted in 1936, 1943, 1944, 1947, 1950, 1953, 1962 and 1970)
1967	School Attendance (Amendment) Act
1989	Dublin City University Act
1989	University of Limerick Act
1991	University of Limerick (Dissolution of Thomond College) Act
1992	Regional Technical Colleges Act
1992	Dublin Institute of Technology Act
1994	Dublin Institute of Technology (Amendment) Act
1994	Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act
1997	Universities Act
1997	Scientific and Technological Education (Investment) Fund Act
1997	Youth Work Act
1998	Education Act
1998	George Mitchell Scholarship Fund Act
1998	Scientific and Technological Education (Investment) Fund (Amendment) Act
1999	Regional Technical Colleges (Amendment) Act
1999	Qualifications (Education and Training) Act
2000	Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse Act
2000	Education (Welfare) Act
2001	Teaching Council Act
2001	Vocational Education (Amendment) Act
2001	Youth Work Act
2002	Residential Institutions Redress Act

## Education Legislation since 1924

### (b) Secondary Legislation

#### **Date Title**

1989	University of Limerick Act, 1989 (Commencement) Order
1989	Dublin City University Act (Commencement) Order
1991	European Communities (General System for the Recognition of Higher Education Diplomas) Regulations
1991	University of Limerick (Dissolution of Thomond College) Act (Commencement) Order
1996	European Communities (Second General System for the Recognition of Professional Education and Training) Regulations
1997	Universities Act, 1997 (Commencement) Order
1998	National University of Ireland, Cork (Change of Name of University) Order
1998	National University of Ireland, Dublin (Change of Name of University) Order
1999	Education Act, 1998 (Commencement) Order
1999	Education Act, 1998 (Commencement) (No. 2) Order
1999	County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (Membership) Regulations
1999	Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools 1999/00
2000	Education Act, 1998 (Commencement) (No. 3) Order
2001	Education(Welfare) Act, 2000 (Commencement) Order, 2001
2001	Vocational Education Amendment Act, 2001 (Section 8) (Commencement) Order, 2001
2001	Vocational Education Amendment Act, 2001 (Commencement) Order, 2001
2002	Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002 (Section 33) Regulations 2002
2002	Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002 (Section 17) Regulations
2002	Residential Institutions Redress Act 2002 (Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations 2002
2002	Education Act 1998 (Section 42) Designation of Organisations Order 2002
2003	National Council for Special Education (Establishment) Order 2003
2003	State Examinations Commission (Establishment) Order 2003
2003	Employment Equality Act 1998 (Section 12) (Church of Ireland College of Education) Order 2003



# Appendix C

## Contact Details for the Department of Education and Science

*To dial the Republic of Ireland direct from Northern Ireland or from abroad the prefix 00 353 is normally used and the first digit (0) of the area code omitted.*

The Department's main offices are located in Athlone, Tullamore and Dublin.  
The main telephone numbers and other contact details are as follows:

### Athlone

Cornamaddy, Athlone, Co. Westmeath  
Tel: 00 353 (0) 90 6483600

### Dublin

Marlborough Street, Dublin 1  
Tel: 00 353 (0) 1 8896400

### Tullamore

Portlaoise Road, Tullamore, Co. Offaly  
Tel: 00 353 (0) 506 24300

The Department's Website is **[www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)**

A request for information can be forwarded by E-Mail to: **[info@education.gov.ie](mailto:info@education.gov.ie)**