An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Education Indicators for Ireland

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Department of Education

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Introduction and Background

Education Indicators for Ireland aims to present a comprehensive set of educational indicators for the Education system in Ireland. The indicators in this report cover all levels of education starting with early years and working through school education, further and higher education and through to lifelong learning. In doing so the report provides an overview of the work of both the Department of Education and its sister department the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science.

This indicator set is designed as part of the wider planning framework across the education sector. By covering a wide range of topics the report attempts to present not only an overview of the work of the two Departments but also to provide indicators of progress on different educational strategies across all of education from early years through to lifelong learning. The data published in this report also acts as a key component of the Performance Budgeting and Revised Estimate Volume (REV) processes.

The indicators are based on a variety of sources. These include the Department of Education's pupil databases, the statistical bulletin and other statistical reports such as pupil projections and retention; data is also provided by DFHERIS and its agencies, such as SOLAS, the HEA and QQI.

This indicator set provides a good picture of the progress made in 2019 towards achieving the five high level goals for the education sector, as published in *the 2019-2021 Statement of Strategy – Cumasú: Empowering through Learning* Shape

1. Shape a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners.
2. Advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential.
3. Equip education and training providers with the skills and support to provide a quality learning experience.
4. Intensify the relationships between education and the wider community, society and the economy.
5. Lead in the delivery of strategic direction and supportive systems in partnership with key stakeholders in education and training.

The report is broken down into four sections:

- **Enrolment and Capacity** covering enrolments at all levels of education, and education providers at all levels.
- **Early Years, Primary and Post-primary Education** covering teachers, inspections, teacher development, the National Educational Psychology Service (NEPS), school types, Leaving Certificate pathways, retention, STEM education, foreign languages, social inclusion, Special Education Needs and school transport.

- **Further Education and Higher Education** covering transition rates from post-primary to Further Education and Higher Education, access to Higher Education, international students, research and skills.
- **Outputs and Outcomes** covering awards, general level of education of the population, awards by age and lifelong learning across the continuum of education.

The link between the various indicators and the Action Plan 2019 is presented below. It is planned to develop this indicator set over time as data becomes available or policy initiatives evolve.

Link to Action Plan for Education 2019

Overview of the education system				
Schools, colleges and universities *page 8*	Enrolments *page 6*	Graduates *page 32*	Educational attainment *page 34*	Awards by age *page 35*

Action Plan for Education 2019				
GOAL 1	**GOAL 2**	**GOAL 3**	**GOAL 4**	**GOAL 5**
We will shape a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners.	*We will advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs in order to support them to achieve their potential.*	*We will equip education and training providers with the skills and support to provide a quality learning experience.*	*We will intensify the relationships between education and the wider community, society and the economy.*	*We will lead in the delivery of strategic direction and supportive systems in partnership with key stakeholders in education and training.*
Wellbeing *page 13*	DEIS retention *page 20*	Inspections *page 11*	Patronage *page 14*	School buildings *page 8*
Leaving Certificate pathways *page 15*	SEN supports *page 21*	Teachers *page 9*	FET and Skills *page 30*	FET and HE providers *page 8*
Foreign languages *page 18*	SEN in mainstream *page 21*	Teacher development *page 12*	Employment outcomes *page 34*	New capacity *page 8*
STEM education *page 16*	Access to higher education *page 26*		International students *page 28*	School transport *page 23*
Transitions *page 24*	Part-time study *page 26*		Research students *page 29*	

Enrolments and Capacity

1. Enrolments

Full-time enrolments at all levels of education have risen strongly in recent years driven by a combination of demographic pressures and increased participation. Enrolments have been projected to peak in 2018 at primary level, in 2024 at post-primary and in 2031 at third level.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of pre-school children in ECCE (part-time)	77,449	120,843	118,906	108,188	105,978
Number of pupils in primary school	553,380	558,314	563,459	567,772	567,716
Number of pupils in post-primary school	345,550	352,257	357,408	362,899	371,450
Number of persons enrolled full-time in FET – all NFQ	*n/a*	*n/a*	44,719	44,408	*Q1 2021*
Number of full-time higher education students	179,354	180,610	183,642	185,474	*Q1 2021*
of which universities	*100,793*	*105,051*	*107,114*	*108,982*	*Q1 2021*
of which institutes of technology and colleges	*78,561*	*75,559*	*76,528*	*76,492*	*Q1 2021*
of which undergraduates	*156,717*	*157,518*	*159,823*	*160,619*	*Q1 2021*
which post-graduates	*22,637*	*23,092*	*23,819*	*24,855*	*Q1 2021*
Total number in full-time education, excl. pre-school	*n/a*	*n/a*	1,149,228	1,160,553	*Q1 2021*

Reason for inclusion: Enrolments are a headline measure of the size of the education system.

Source: Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) enrolments are provided by POBAL. Primary and post-primary pupil numbers are extracted from the Department's Primary Online Database (POD) and Post-primary Online Database (P-POD). Enrolments in Further Education and Training are extracted from the SOLAS Programme Learner Support Service (PLSS). Note: as this database is relatively new, data for 2015 and 2016 is not available. Enrolments in third level are provided by the Higher Education Authority (HEA).

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis i.e. 2019 means enrolments in September 2019.

Data covers full-time students only, apart from ECCE.

Enrolments are in state-funded institutions only and exclude enrolments in private colleges (Dorset College, NCI, etc.).

FET enrolments cover students participating in full-time courses only. PLC students are included in the FET totals. As the PLSS database was only rolled out in 2017 data for years prior to that is not available on a comparable basis. This data has been updated since the 2019 report and covers full-time enrolments in all NFQ levels 1 to 8.

Part-time enrolments can be found in the section on Access on page 26, while participation in work-based education and training and registrations on apprenticeships are covered in the section on Skills on page 30.

Data on enrolments in higher education for the academic year 2019/2020 are still being finalised and will be included once they become available. This affects indicators across several areas.

2. Education providers and additional capacity

After falling for several years there were two additional primary schools in 2019.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of ECCE providers	4,415	4,454	4,468	4,231	4,260
Number of primary schools	3,277	3,250	3,246	3,240	3,242
Additional permanent places provided in primary schools	12,652	15,232	13,638	7,432	6,718
Number of post-primary schools	709	711	715	722	723
Additional permanent places provided in post-primary schools	6,219	7,056	4,215	4,698	4,287
Number of QQI registered active providers (FET providers)	425	407	396	364	320
Third level Institutions and colleges funded by HEA	20	18	18	18	15
Third level universities funded by HEA	7	7	7	7	8

Reason for inclusion: The number of schools, Institutes of Technology (IoT), Universities and FET providers are headline measures of the size of the education system. Strengthening the scale and capacity in the higher education sector through collaboration and consolidation, including the creation of Technological Universities, are central policies of the Higher Education Strategy 2030.

Source: The number of ECCE providers is supplied by POBAL, primary and post-primary schools are extracted from the Department's Unified Data Model (UDM) database, FET providers are extracted from QQI (Quality and Qualifications Ireland) data and third level providers are reported on by the HEA.

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis, i.e., 2019 means September 2019.

QQI registered active providers include all active providers, both state-aided and private colleges, while the figures for third level cover HEA funded institutions only.

The Technological University of Dublin came into being on the 1st of January 2019 as a result of the amalgamation of the Institute of Technology, Blanchardstown, Dublin Institute of Technology and the Institute of Technology, Tallaght.

Additional capacity in the school system is measured as the number of new schools plus the number of additional permanent places provided each year.

Early Years, Primary and Post-primary Education

3. Teachers

While the overall number of teachers in the primary system has risen substantially in recent years, the number of teaching teachers has shown a more steady increase. This has resulted in a lower overall Pupil Teacher Ratio (PTR), while average class size has remained more constant.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of primary teachers	34,576	35,669	36,773	37,341	37,839
of which mainstream teaching teachers	*21,724*	*22,152*	*22,430*	*22,747*	*22,970*
of which other teachers	*12,852*	*13,517*	*14,343*	*14,594*	*14,869*
Number of post-primary teachers	25,123	26,273	27,919	28,474	29,093
Total number of teachers	59,699	61,942	64,692	65,815	66,932
PTR: Average students per teacher in primary schools	16.0	15.7	15.3	15.2	15.0
Average class sizes in primary schools	24.9	24.7	24.5	24.3	24.1
PTR: Average students per teacher in post-primary schools	13.8	13.4	12.8	12.7	12.8

Reason for inclusion: The numbers of teachers, pupil to teacher ratio and class size are headline measures in the education system.

Source: Teacher Allocation section in the Department.

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis, i.e., 2019 means September 2019.

Teacher numbers are based on allocations of teachers (whole time equivalents) each year and not actual persons (to avoid complications arising from job-sharing, leave cover and other factors). PLC teachers are not included in the number for teachers.

Mainstream teaching teachers include teaching principals who teach a class in addition to their administrative duties.

Other teachers include special education teachers, English language support teachers, administrative principals, and Home School Community Liaison (HCSL) teachers, as well as any other full-time teaching staff.

4. Quality Assurance

Data on inspections is reported on a calendar year basis. The Inspectorate ceased its involvement with probationary teachers at the end of the 2019/20 school year.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of inspections of ECCE centres	22	491	708	691	670
Number of inspections in primary schools, incl. probation	2,803	4,001	4,171	3,566	1,968
Inspections in post-primary schools	589	752	659	608	702
Other inspections incl. SSE evaluations	966	405	596	1,473	1,369
Total inspections	4,380	5,649	6,134	6,338	4,709

Reason for inclusion: Inspections provide an assurance of the quality of teaching and learning across different education settings. The resulting reports, which are published on the Department's website, are a way of sharing best practice and improving performance, which in turn impacts on learners' outcomes.

Source: Inspectorate

NOTE: The Inspectorate conduct inspections in schools, early-years settings and centres for education, through development of new and improved models of inspection, and through the contribution to Department policy across a range of areas.

Data on inspections is reported on a calendar year basis. The Inspectorate ceased its involvement with probationary teachers at the end of the 2019/20 school year. Newly qualified primary school teachers now undergo the Teaching Council's Droichead process.

5. Continuous Professional Development of Teachers

The indicators below focus on the School Support aspect of CPD provided by PDST only. The decline in primary School Supports in 2019-20 is a result of a shift to seminars relating to the Primary Language Curriculum rollout which are not captured in the primary school support measure. The number of primary schools receiving ICT support has increased.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of primary schools receiving school support	1,420	1,288	1,574	1,931	1,469
Number of hours provided to primary schools receiving school support	11,884	12,395	14,849	23,686	13,812
Number of primary schools receiving ICT school support	56	71	110	182	373
Number of ICT hours provided to primary schools receiving school support	353	566	1,505	1,537	2,555
Number of post-primary schools receiving school support	345	288	307	416	463

Reason for inclusion: CPD of teachers is essential to ensure all teachers are equipped with the knowledge and skills for an evolving teaching and learning environment. In particular, CPD among teachers is required to support major areas of curricular development and reform, such as the Framework for Junior Cycle, the new Primary Language Curriculum (Irish and English), new subjects, revised specifications at Senior Cycle (e.g., Politics & Society, Computer Science and examinable P.E.), the STEM Education Policy, and to improve school leadership.

Source: The services responsible for the professional development of teachers, namely Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) and the National Induction Programme for Teachers (NIPT).

NOTE: CPD is provided to teachers and schools through three core services: PDST, JCT, and NIPT. PDST is the largest and most established of the services providing individual school supports, workshops, leadership programmes and individual online courses across primary and post-primary schools since 2010.

The indicators above focus on the School Support aspect of CPD provided by PDST only. Specifically, these indicators do not include individual teacher engagements with seminars, workshops or online courses provided by PDST. Nor do they, as yet, cover teacher training provided through the other services. As such these indicators should be considered as being under development with the intention to expand the indicator set to ultimately reflect the full extent of participation in teacher training across all services.

6. National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS)

The 2019 data on Casework covers the school year 2019/2020; the fall in Casework and consequential increase in Support and Development work often delivered remotely reflects the impact of Covid-19 on the ability to provide such direct services to the pupils as a result of temporary school closures.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
No. of pupils with direct involvement from NEPS psychologist (casework)	8,671	7,509	8,497	8,561	7,392
No. of pupils receiving assessment services under SCPA	1,778	2,683	1,627	1,946	966
No. of days NEPS psychologists dedicated to support and development activities in schools	6,281	5,209	5,537	5,285	6,260

Reason for inclusion: NEPS provides an educational psychological service to support the wellbeing, academic, social and emotional development of all learners. NEPS prioritises support for the wellbeing and inclusion of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and those with special educational needs. NEPS engages in the development and implementation of policy across a range of areas within the Department and leads on the implementation of the Department's Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice 2018-2023.

Source: National Educational Psychological Service.

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis, i.e., 2019 means September 2019.

NEPS casework includes assessment, formulation, intervention, planning and review. The Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments (SCPA) is a panel of private practitioners maintained by NEPS providing assessment services to schools when a NEPS psychologist is unavailable.

Support and Development work includes:

- The provision of advice, support and consultation to teachers and parents.
- The delivery of training for teachers in the provision of universal and targeted evidence-informed approaches and early intervention.
- Working with school communities to develop support structures and processes to maximise their capacity to respond particular needs of all learners.

7. School type

While the percentage of pupils enrolled in Catholic schools is falling this ethos continues to dominate the school system in Ireland, although noticeably less so at post-primary level. Attendance at primary and post-primary level Irish-medium schools has remained steady. Small schools (4 teachers or fewer) accounted for 43.7 per cent of all primary schools and 14.3 per cent of pupils in 2019.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% Primary pupils in Catholic ethos schools	91.3%	91.0%	90.6%	90.3%	90.0%
% Primary pupils in Irish-medium schools	7.9%	8.0%	8.0%	8.1%	8.1%
% Post-primary pupils in Catholic ethos schools	52.9%	52.1%	51.8%	51.2%	50.5%
% Post-primary pupils in Irish-medium schools	3.5%	3.5%	3.6%	3.6%	3.6%
Small primary schools (4 or fewer teachers) as % of total	45.9%	45.1%	44.5%	44.1%	43.7%
Primary pupils in small schools as % of total	16.0%	15.4%	14.8%	14.5%	14.3%
Number of multi/inter-denominational primary schools[1]	120	126	132	136	153
Number of Irish-medium primary schools	248	248	248	247	250
Number of multi/inter-denominational post-primary schools[1]	333	339	343	349	352
Number of Irish-medium post-primary schools	48	48	48	49	49

Reason for inclusion: The Programme for Government (2016) contains a commitment to increase the number of non-denominational and multi-denominational schools with a view to reaching 400 by 2030. The report on the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (2012) contains a number of recommendations for increasing diversity of school types. The 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030 (2010) aims to continue to support Gaelscoileanna and develop an all-Irish provision at post-primary level to meet follow-on demand.

Source: Enrolments by ethos and language medium are extracted from POD and P-POD database systems.

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[1] The non-denominational school is reported with multi/inter-denominational schools ethos.

8. Leaving Certificate pathways

The total number of pupils taking the Leaving Certificate programme (across both 5th and 6th year) has increased from just under 79,000 in 2015 to over 86,000 in 2019. The number of pupils doing Transition Year has risen from 68 per cent of pupils in 2015 to 74 per cent in 2019.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of students taking Leaving Certificate established programme	78,745	79,785	80,701	83,909	86,347
% of students taking Leaving Certificate established programme	66.9%	67.8%	68.3%	69.2%	70.0%
Number of students taking Leaving Certificate Vocational	33,262	32,067	31,661	31,426	30,820
% students taking Leaving Certificate Vocational	28.2%	27.3%	26.8%	25.9%	25.00%
Number of students taking Leaving Certificate Applied	5,754	5,811	5,820	5,939	6,244
% students taking Leaving Certificate Applied	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%	4.9%	5.1%
Number of students doing Transition Year	40,452	42,891	44,950	45,916	48,268
Students doing Transition Year as % of previous 3rd Year	67.5%	70.4%	71.9%	72.3%	74.0%
Number of students taking Repeat Leaving Certificate	1,658	1,360	1,077	811	655

Reason for inclusion: Providing alternatives to the established Leaving Certificate allows our education system to cater for the diverse needs and aspirations of our learners. Access to learning in applied and vocational skills are key factors in improving retention and strengthening pathways for learners through the education system and into the world of work.

Source: The Department's P-POD.

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis, i.e., 2019 means September 2019.

Enrolments for Leaving Certificate programmes are the sum of both 5th and 6th year pupils while percentages are calculated as the percent of both 5th and 6th year enrolments (excluding Repeat Leaving Certificate students).Transition year as a % of previous 3rd year may include new arrivals into the system and so be slightly higher than the direct transfer rate in other reports such as projections.

9. STEM

Strong differences can be seen in the percentages of girls and boys when it comes to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics), particularly when biology is excluded.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% 6th year boys taking 1 or more STEM subj. (excl. maths)	90.7%	89.7%	89.5%	90.7%	90.2%
% 6th year girls taking 1 or more STEM subj. (excl. maths)	85.5%	86.2%	85.4%	85.8%	85.7%
% 6th year boys taking 1 or more STEM subj. (excl. maths and biology)	72.4%	71.3%	70.7%	72.1%	72.5%
% 6th year girls taking 1 or more STEM subj. (excl. maths and biology)	37.2%	38.9%	38.7%	39.5%	41.6%
% 6th year boys taking 2 or more STEM subj. (excl. maths)	60.0%	58.6%	58.7%	59.5%	59.0%
% 6th year girls taking 2 or more STEM subj. (excl. maths)	30.1%	31.3%	31.0%	31.7%	33.4%
% 6th yr. boys taking 2 or more STEM subj. (excl. maths and biology)	41.4%	39.1%	39.0%	40.1%	40.1%
% 6th yr. girls taking 2 or more STEM subj. (excl. maths and biology)	7.8%	7.7%	8.0%	8.0%	8.9%
% LC students attaining grade H4 or above in HL maths sits	60.1%	55.6%	59.1%	56.8%	*Q1 2021*
% LC students attaining grade O4 or above in OL maths sits	58.5%	58.8%	57.2%	56.1%	*Q1 2021*
% boys' schools offering physics, chemistry and biology (LC)	90.1%	90.0%	91.0%	92.0%	89.1%
% girls' schools offering physics, chemistry and biology (LC)	76.6%	78.2%	78.8%	77.3%	77.1%
% mixed schools offering physics, chemistry and biology (LC)	60.5%	59.4%	60.9%	61.6%	61.9%
% boys' schools offering a STEM subject other than maths or science (LC)	93.1%	93.0%	97.0%	96.0%	95.0%
% girls' schools offering a STEM subject other than maths or a science (LC)	54.0%	57.9%	58.3%	56.1%	55.7%

% mixed schools offering a STEM subject other than maths or a science (LC)	91.9%	91.4%	92.8%	93.1%	91.6%
% 3rd year boys taking at least one STEM subject (other than science or maths)	75.6%	73.9%	73.8%	72.7%	73.3%
% 3rd year girls taking at least one STEM subject (other than science or maths)	21.5%	19.6%	21.3%	22.7%	23.9%

Reason for inclusion: The STEM Education Policy Statement (2017-2026) sets out a vision of providing a high-quality STEM education experience. A key pillar of the STEM policy is to nurture learner engagement and participation; it also includes a commitment to monitor uptake by all students, and to increase female participation in STEM.

Source: P-POD captures school returns for pupil enrolments by grade, programme and subject. The above data for LC does not include pupils taking the LCA (Leaving Certificate Applied).

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis, i.e., 2019 means September 2019, other than attainment data which is for the end of the academic year, i.e., 2018 means June 2019. Attainment data is not currently available for 2019 due to the 2020 Leaving Certificate having not yet been completed.

STEM subjects at Leaving Certificate for the purposes of the STEM Education Policy Statement are agricultural science, mathematics, applied mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, physics and chemistry, engineering, construction studies, design and communication graphics and technology; for Junior Certificate this covers woodwork, technology, technical graphics, metalwork, mathematics and science.

Maths attainment figures prior to 2016 reflect those receiving a C2 or above (for consistency with the new grading system).

Schools offering all three science subjects (physics, chemistry, biology) is based on pupils taking these subjects on P-POD, i.e., a school may offer physics but have no pupils taking the subject.

10. Foreign languages

The percentage of schools offering at least two foreign languages is increasing, as is the percentage taking a foreign language other than French in the Leaving Certificate.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% 6th year boys doing at least one foreign language	72.2%	72.3%	72.3%	69.0%	67.0%
% 6th year girls doing at least one foreign language	87.1%	87.7%	87.2%	86.5%	84.6%
LC % doing a foreign language other than French (of all foreign language exam sits)	37.5%	39.0%	41.4%	42.8%	45.5%
% JC students doing a foreign language other than French (of all foreign language exam sits)	40.3%	41.8%	43.0%	44.2%	43.8%
% LC students attaining grade H4 or above in any foreign language	30.0%	31.9%	31.5%	31.5%	*Q1 2021*
% post-primary schools offering at least two foreign languages	71.4%	71.4%	72.3%	74.1%	74.4%
% schools offering two or more foreign languages as part of Transition year	56.6%	56.7%	55.2%	53.3%	58.0%

Reason for inclusion: *Languages Connect - Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026* aims to enable learners communicate effectively and improve their standards of competence in languages. The strategy aims to increase the uptake of key foreign languages generally and in particular the number of schools offering two or more foreign languages along with the number of students sitting two languages for state examinations.

Source: P-POD and the State Exam results.

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis, i.e., 2019 means September 2019, other than attainments data, which is for the end of the academic year, i.e., 2018 means June 2019. Attainment data is not currently available for 2019 due to the 2020 Leaving Certificate having not yet been completed.

At Junior Cycle level, a foreign language other than French refers to German, Spanish and Italian.

At Leaving Certificate level a language other than French refers to German, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Japanese and Arabic. In the indicator on LC exam sits a pupil may be double counted if they sit more than one foreign language other than French (the numbers are thought to be small). The indicator on students attaining a H4 or above may also contain duplicates in cases where a pupil achieves this in more than one foreign language (both French and German for example) but the numbers are thought to be small.

11. Social Inclusion

The gap in retention to Leaving Certificate between DEIS and non-DEIS school has increased in recent years and while enrolments overall have risen, the absolute number of early school leavers remains fairly steady.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Retention rate in DEIS post-primary schools (%) LC completion	82.7%	84.4%	85.0%	84.7%	83.8%
Gap in retention rates - DEIS vs non-DEIS post-primary schools	9.3%	8.5%	8.5%	8.7%	9.3%
Number of Early school leavers - started 5th year but did not sit LC in 6th year	2,974	2,417	2,486	2,639	2,823
% Early school leavers - started 5th year but did not sit LC in 6th year	5.4%	4.3%	4.4%	4.8%	4.9%

Reason for inclusion: One of the Department's strategic goals is to advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage. The revised DEIS Plan (2017) sets out the Department's vision for education to become a proven pathway to better opportunities for those in disadvantaged communities and was designed to give tailored support to schools with high concentrations of disadvantage. The aim is to close the gap between DEIS and non-DEIS schools in key areas such as retention and educational standards.

Source: Retention rates and the number of early school leavers are taken from the annual Retention Report.

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis, i.e., 2019 means September 2019.

Retention rate in 2019 is measured as the percentage of pupils who sit LC from the 2013 entry cohort.

Early school leavers are those who entered 5th year but did not sit the LC at the end of 6th year, or the year after (allows for 1 year of repeat).

12. Special Educational Needs

The number of special needs pupils in post-primary schools has risen substantially in recent years, as has the number of Special Needs Assistants (SNAs) at this level.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of special schools (NCSE supported only)	115	114	114	114	114
Pupils in special schools	7,473	7,567	7,662	7,728	8,035
Teachers in special schools	1,323	1,365	1,387	1,400	1,435
Pupils in special classes in mainstream primary schools	4,355	4,836	5,572	6,229	6,822
Pupils in special classes in post-primary schools	1,295	1,560	1,814	2,136	2,406
Special education teachers in primary and post-primary schools (mainstream classes) (WTE)	11,836	12,501	13,395	13,412	13,530
Total SNAs	11,759	12,634	13,862	14,877	15,799
Of which in special schools	*2,282*	*2,371*	*2,460*	*2,521*	*2,560*
in primary schools	*7,112*	*7,709*	*8,581*	*9,309*	*9,948*
in post primary schools	*2,365*	*2,554*	*2,821*	*3,047*	*3,291*

Reason for inclusion: It is a key strategic goal of the Department to advance the progress of learners with special educational needs and to support them to achieve their full potential. The School Inclusion Model, a new model of support for students with special educational and additional care needs, reflects the work of the education partners to ensure that any pupil or student who might struggle in education gets the best possible support.

Source: SNA data and enrolments of post-primary pupils is provided by the National Council of Special Education (NCSE). Teacher data is provided by Special Education section. Enrolments in special schools and classes at primary level is taken from POD.

NOTE: Data is reported on an academic year basis, i.e., 2019 means September 2019.

The figures for special schools are for NCSE supported schools only. The data on SNAs is for whole time equivalents (WTE).

Pupils in mainstream classes with special needs are not reported in these indicators.

The indicator on teachers in special schools has been updated and now only covers teachers in NCSE special schools; this is to ensure enrolments and teaching posts are fully comparable. Specifically, the teachers count now excludes teaching posts in hospital and high support special schools. For 2017 this has resulted in a downward revision from 1,498 to 1,387 with comparable revisions in other years.

13. Transport

Both the number of school transport routes and the number of pupils being carried continues to rise, with 1 in 8 pupils availing of school transport in 2019.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
School transport routes	5,459	5,633	6,032	6,856	7,374
Pupils on school transport	113,892	116,075	116,774	117,455	120,848
% of pupils provided with school transport	12.7%	12.7%	12.7%	12.6%	12.9%
Mainstream primary pupils using school transport	39,952	39,630	38,729	39,205	38,271
Mainstream post-primary pupils using school transport	64,118	64,795	65,545	65,499	68,248
SEN pupils using school transport	9,822	11,650	12,500	12,751	14,329

Reason for inclusion: The Department is committed to providing safe, efficient and cost-effective transport to eligible children.

Source: School Transport Section

14. Transitions and progressions

Retention to Leaving Certificate continues to improve while transition to higher education is relatively steady. The number of entry routes to higher education remains high.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% students who sit LC - Retention	90.2%	91.2%	91.6%	91.5%	91.2%
Number of higher education entry routes	1,310	1,292	1,261	1,262	*Q1 2021*
of which in Universities	*499*	*492*	*448*	*417*	*Q1 2021*
of which in IoTs	*789*	*773*	*790*	*818*	*Q1 2021*
of which in Colleges	*22*	*27*	*23*	*27*	*Q1 2021*
of which at NFQ level 6	*116*	*103*	*97*	*96*	*Q1 2021*
of which at NFQ level 7	*299*	*294*	*289*	*300*	*Q1 2021*
of which at NFQ level 8	*895*	*895*	*875*	*866*	*Q1 2021*
Transition rates from post-primary to higher education	64.0%	64.4%	63.6%	63.4%	*Q1 2021*
of which DEIS schools	*42.1%*	*42.1%*	*41.8%*	*40.5%*	*Q1 2021*
of which non-DEIS schools	*70.0%*	*70.4%*	*69.1%*	*69.4%*	*Q1 2021*
Transition rates from post-primary to FET	26.3%	27.3%	26.3%	25.9%	*24.2%*
of which DEIS schools	*37.3%*	*38.9%*	*36.9%*	*35.4%*	*33.4%*
of which non-DEIS schools	*23.5%*	*24.4%*	*23.7%*	*23.4%*	*21.8%*

Reason for inclusion: Commitments to improve the transitions for students between the different stages of education are contained in Action Plan 2019. There is also a commitment to broaden undergraduate entry in order to reduce the complexity of choice for second-level students and lower the level of competitiveness driving the system.

Source: Retention rates to LC are published annually on the Department's web site. Transitions from post-primary to higher education are compiled as input to higher education projections which are published on the web site. The number of course choices for students entering higher education are taken from the HEA student records system.

NOTE: Retention 2019 is a measure of the percentage of pupils who sit LC from the 2013 entry cohort.

The higher education entry routes are derived from the Central Applications Office (CAO) codes on the Student Record System (SRS), by institute type and NFQ level. Entry routes that are not assigned to any CAO code are excluded from the figures shown above.

The transition rate from post-primary to higher education in a given year is a measure of the percentage of pupils from the previous five years academic years who ultimately entered HE in that year.

The transition rate from post-primary to FET in a given year is a measure of the percentage of pupils from the previous five years academic years who ultimately entered FET in that year.

15. Access

The number of students studying on a flexible basis (part-time and remote) continues to rise steadily. The percentage of mature students is falling as can be expected with a rising jobs market.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of part-time HE students	37,249	37,633	40,101	43,029	*Q1 2021*
Part-time students in university	15,574	16,509	16,649	17,139	*Q1 2021*
Part-time students in IoT and other	21,675	21,124	23,452	25,890	*Q1 2021*
Remote HE enrolments - not included above	6,015	7,385	7,967	9,207	*Q1 2021*
Total HE students studying on a flexible basis (part-time and remote)	43,264	45,018	48,068	52,236	*Q1 2021*
% Mature entrants of total entrants in HE (full time undergraduates)	10.4%	9.2%	8.4%	7.7%	*Q1 2021*
% of new HE entrants with a disability (eligible FSD students)	7.8%	10.3%	10.6%	10.0%	*Q1 2021*
Number of (self-declared) Irish Travellers in HE	n/a	41	61	*67**	*Q1 2021*
Number of students receiving supports in the form of grants	80,622	78,904	77,430	74,557	71,347
of which undergraduates	*69,294*	*67,748*	*66,782*	*64,580*	*61,870*
of which post-graduates	*2,324*	*2,141*	*2,186*	*2,194*	*2,075*
of which PLC students	*9,049*	*9,015*	*8,462*	*7,783*	*7,402*
Census		*Census 2006*	*Census 2011*	*Census 2016*	*Census 2021*
% 20 year olds in Disadvantaged Areas who are students, census 2002/2006/2011/2016		27.4%	44.1%	47.4%	*Q1 2023*

Reason for inclusion: The National Access Plan contains targets for specific categories of students that are under-represented, including students from lower socioeconomic groups, people with special educational needs, mature students, and members of the Travelling community.

Source: The Higher Education Authority (HEA) provides data on mature, disabled, Traveller and socially disadvantaged students. The Census provides data on the percentage of all 20 year olds who are students by area type at each census (2002, 2006, 2011 and 2016).

NOTE: Data for 2019 will be published as soon as it becomes available.

Mature students are those who were 23 years of age on the 1st of January in the year they entered a higher education institution.

Irish Traveller data includes re-enrolments and transfers.

*The 2018 figure for the number of Irish Travellers in higher education is provisional.

16. International Students

The percentage of full-time HE students in Ireland who are classified as international has increased from 11.5 per cent of all students in 2015 to 13.2 per cent in 2018.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
International students in Ireland and abroad (public and private Third Level)	34,372	35,571	38,445	41,420	*Q1 2021*
International HE full-time students in Ireland	20,597	20,972	22,929	24,574	*Q1 2021*
of which Non-EU undergraduates	*12,106*	*11,986*	*12,591*	*12,785*	*Q1 2021*
of which EU undergraduates	*2,831*	*2,534*	*2,702*	*3,004*	*Q1 2021*
of which Non-EU post-graduates	*4,044*	*4,808*	*5,864*	*6,855*	*Q1 2021*
of which EU post-graduates	*1,616*	*1,644*	*1,772*	*1,930*	*Q1 2021*
International students as % of full-time HE students	11.5%	11.6%	12.5%	13.2%	*Q1 2021*
Students participating in Erasmus/Lifelong Learning Programme	4,950	5,077	5,015	4,902	4,905
Number of English language students	106,019	119,120	127,640	121,462	*Q3 2020*

Reason for inclusion: The International Education Strategy aims to build relationships between Irish educational institutions and their global partners in order to enhance the quality and relevance of our education system, and to support the development of Ireland's students to become global citizens.

SOURCE: The data on student numbers was obtained through an independent review of the international education strategy which involved consultation with all stakeholders. The SRS in the HEA provides data on the nationality of students attending HEA funded institutions in Ireland.

NOTE: The data for all international students (38,445 in 2017) includes full-time students reported by the HEA (22,929), students on overseas campus (2,626), other exchange students (1,459), students on the European mobility scheme/Erasmus+ (5,015), and students in private colleges (6,416).

17. Research

The number of post-graduate researchers rose to over 10,000 in 2018, of which the majority were full-time PhD students.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Total number of Post-graduate researchers	9,773	9,802	10,015	10,065	*Q1 2021*
Full-time PhD	6,928	6,806	6,888	7,066	*Q1 2021*
of which males	*3,440*	*3,350*	*3,298*	*3,369*	*Q1 2021*
of which females	*3,488*	*3,456*	*3,590*	*3,697*	*Q1 2021*
Full-time Research Masters	1,115	1,156	1,150	1,105	*Q1 2021*
of which males	*579*	*646*	*644*	*556*	*Q1 2021*
of which females	*536*	*510*	*506*	*549*	*Q1 2021*
Part-time PhD	1,440	1,551	1,625	1,577	*Q1 2021*
Part-time Research Masters	290	289	352	317	*Q1 2021*

Reason for inclusion: Innovation 2020, Ireland's strategy for research and development, science and technology, contains commitments to support the career development of the next generation of researchers, to expand Ireland's research capacity and to work with employers to increase the number of researchers to address economic and societal demand.

Source: The HEA SRS.

18. Further Education and Training (FET), and skills initiatives

The number of persons registered on apprenticeships has shown a strong increase in recent years with an increase of over 100% between 2015 and 2019. The number of FET enrolments has also increased in 2018.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Number of Springboard enrolments	7,767	5,102	6,564	8,088	9,266
Total persons registered on apprenticeships	8,317	10,445	12,851	15,373	17,829
of which Craft Apprenticeships	*8,317*	*10,366*	*12,458*	*14,469*	*16,142*
Number of Skillnet learner	48,923	50,373	49,194	56,182	63,000
of which Up-skilling the Unemployed	*6,695*	*5,915*	*3,705*	*1,980*	*1,871*
Enrolments in FET at NFQ levels 1-4	*n/a*	55,886	80,503	85,828	*Q1 2021*
Enrolments in FET at NFQ levels 5	*n/a*	43,868	39,609	41,432	*Q1 2021*
Enrolments in FET at NFQ level 6	*n/a*	9,745	8,355	9,486	*Q1 2021*

Reason for inclusion: The development of the new National Skills Council and Regional Skills Fora provides a focus, both nationally and regionally, for the delivery of skills. Action Plan 2019 contains commitments to addressing areas of strategic skills shortages and providing attractive alternatives to higher education progression routes. The aim of Springboard is to provide upskilling and reskilling courses to develop the talent base in key growth sectors of the economy.

Source: Enrolments in Springboard are provided by the HEA. The Skillnet annual reports publish data on participation for both the employed and unemployed. The SOLAS Programme Learners Support System (PLSS) database provides data on enrolments in Educational Training Board (ETB) courses. Note: as this database is relatively new data for 2015 is unavailable. Apprenticeships data is provided by SOLAS.

NOTE: Apprenticeship data is for the calendar year and covers all person who were registered on an apprenticeship on 31st December in that year.

All PLSS database entrants with a blank NFQ have been included in the group NFQ 1-4 for the purposes of the table above. Future iterations of this report will disaggregate this data further.

The PLSS database was rolled out in 2017 so when examining change over time users should be aware there is a break in the series between 2016 and 2017. Data for 2019 is provisional.

 The data on FET enrolments covers publicly-funded provision only, mainly delivered or contracted by Education and Training Boards.

FET covers a mix of full time academic year courses, courses that start at various points of the year, shorter duration, part time and online courses. For the purposes of this report the data above has been estimated on an academic year basis - persons who were enrolled at any time between the 1st of September 2016 and the 31st of August 2017 were included in the 2016 figure. Persons who enrolled on two or more courses in the year were only counted once, at the higher NFQ level.

FET courses vary greatly in length from several years to just a few weeks. They are certified at levels 1-6 on the National Framework of Qualifications, ranging from basic skills such as literacy and numeracy programmes, to higher level skills in a wide range of vocational areas. As the SOLAS PLSS database has only been in place since 2017 some gaps in the data remain so the figures should generally be regarded as provisional.

Outputs and Outcomes

19. Awards by NFQ level

There were 211,274 people who achieved an award in 2018, in addition to Junior or Leaving Certificate sits. Of these 69,726 persons achieved an Honours Degree or higher (level 8 or above).

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Junior Certificate sits	60,248	61,654	62,562	64,331	*Q1 2021*
Leaving Certificate sits	55,707	55,770	54,440	56,071	*Q1 2021*
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 1	325	358	345	297	364
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 2	993	914	1,008	950	998
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 3	1,936	1,503	1,625	1,337	1,250
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 4	2,226	1,953	2,017	1,680	1,690
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 5	21,534	22,143	22,667	21,162	*Q1 2021*
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 6	6,612	6,273	6,121	6,223	*Q1 2021*
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 7	8,222	10,817	10,723	12,633	*Q1 2021*
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 8	42,967	44,172	44,435	46,447	*Q1 2021*
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 9	17,433	19,581	21,242	21,861	*Q1 2021*
Graduates with Major NFQ award level 10	1,429	1,568	1,445	1,418	*Q1 2021*
Graduates with Minor or Supplemental awards (all NFQ levels)	110,894	120,310	98,558	81,157	76,753
Graduates with Special Purpose awards (all NFQ levels)	15,628	15,564	17,302	16,109	16,775
Total graduates Major, Minor and Special Purpose	230,199	245,156	227,488	211,274	*Q1 2021*

Reason for inclusion: Graduates are a headline measure of the outputs of the education system.

SOURCE: Graduates from HEA funded institutions were extracted from the HEA Student Record System; QQI provides data on all other Major, Minor and Special Purpose awards.

NOTE: Awards or qualifications are made at different classes and levels depending on the learning outcomes.

Major awards are the principal class of award and are deemed to represent a significant volume of learning outcomes; they usually comprise of eight minor awards or modules.

Minor awards are made in their own right in recognition of a range of learning outcomes, but not the specific combination of learning outcomes required for a major award.

Special-purpose award-types are made for specific, relatively narrow, purposes (and may also form part of major awards). Supplemental awards are for learning which is additional to previous award. They could, for example, relate to updating and refreshing knowledge or skills, or to continuing professional development.

The data is a count of persons, not awards made. A person who has achieved one or more Minor awards but has not yet achieved a Major award will appear in the Minor awards count; those who progress to a Major award will appear in the respective Major award count (and be removed from the Minor award count), i.e., persons who graduated from two or more courses in the year were only counted once, at the higher NFQ level and award type. Special purpose awards can be made at various NFQ levels.

Major awards are typically achieved at the end of the academic year, whereas Minor, Supplemental and Special Purpose awards can be made throughout the year.

Awards data was extracted from the QQI database and includes awards made to learners in private providers, but excludes awards by awarding bodies other than QQI (such as City and Guilds or Microsoft). Enrolments data on the other hand was extracted from the HEA (SRS) and SOLAS (PLSS) databases and covers publicly-funded education and training only (excludes enrolments in private colleges). This results in a misalignment between these two independent but linked (enrolments / awards) measures of the higher and further education systems. This will be corrected over time as the indicators are developed further.

The fall in graduates at NFQ 8 in 2015 was off-set by an increase in NFQ 9 as a result of the phasing out of the Diploma in Education (level 8) in favour of the professional Masters in Education (level 9).

20. Attainment

The overall level of education of the population has been rising steadily over time, while unemployment rates are consistently lower for those with a higher level of education.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
% 30-34 year olds with third level education or above	53%	54%	55%	57%	55%
% 25-34 year olds with post-secondary education or above	66%	69%	70%	70%	70%
% 25-34 year old **males** with post-secondary education or above	62%	64%	64%	65%	66%
% 25-34 year old **females** with post-secondary education or above	69%	71%	73%	75%	74%
Unemployment rate for persons whose highest level of education is upper secondary	13.0%	11.3%	9.4%	7.8%	7.7%
Unemployment rate for persons whose highest level of education is post-secondary	12.7%	9.8%	8.1%	6.8%	5.9%
Unemployment rate for persons whose highest level of education is third level	5.2%	5.2%	3.4%	3.8%	2.8%

Reason for inclusion: The Irish education system aims to provide all persons with a level and quality of education and training that equips them with the knowledge and skills that they need to achieve their potential and to participate fully in society and the economy.

Source: Central Statistics Office (CSO) Labour Force Survey and Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS).

NOTE: The unemployment rate is the number of unemployed expressed as a percentage of the total labour force.

The data presented is for Quarter 2 of each year only (i.e., April-June of each year).

Third level is an amalgamation of the categories Higher Certificate or equivalent, Ordinary Degree or equivalent, Honours Bachelor Degree or equivalent and Postgraduate Qualification.

21. NFQ Awards by Age

The number of older adults achieving awards has fallen in recent years, which can be expected as employment increases.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Persons age 25 to 34 who achieved an award on the NFQ – any level	56,884	59,301	57,034	52,646	*Q1 2021*
Persons age 35 to 44 who achieved an award on the NFQ – any level	45,321	48,960	45,691	41,092	*Q1 2021*
Persons age 45 to 54 who achieved an award on the NFQ – any level	33,905	37,875	32,804	28,792	*Q1 2021*
Persons age 55 to 64 who achieved an award on the NFQ – any level	18,075	21,143	16,751	14,786	*Q1 2021*
Persons age 65+ who achieved an award on the NFQ – any level	3,689	5,275	2,982	2,952	*Q1 2021*

Reason of inclusion: Increasing the participation of adults in lifelong education and training is a core objective of the National Skills Strategy 2025.

Source: The number of awards made to adults by various age groups is extracted from the QQI and HEA databases.

NOTE: QQI awards cover awards at all levels, from NFQ 1 up to NFQ 9, while the HEA provides data on awards at NFQ 7, 8 and above.

22. Lifelong learning

The percentage of persons participating in Lifelong learning rose strongly in 2018, with a more modest increase in 2019.

INDICATOR	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
EU - % Irish adults age 25-64 who participated in formal and/or non-formal learning activities	6.5%	6.5%	9.0%	12.5%	12.6%

Reasons for inclusion: Increasing the participation of adults in lifelong education and training is a core objective of the National Skills Strategy 2025.

Source: The EU measure of Lifelong Learning Participation among adults is derived from the Quarterly National Household Survey and is an annual average.

NOTE: This index refers to the share of adults who participated in formal and/or non-formal learning activities; in this context formal means education and training in schools, universities and other formal education institutions, while non-formal means education and training that does not correspond to the definition of formal education, e.g., adult literacy, life skills, work skills and general culture.

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Appendix

Topic	Source
A Programme for a Partnership Government 2016	https://assets.gov.ie/3221/231118100655-5c803e6351b84155a21ca9fe4e64ce5a.pdf
Retention rates	https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/retention/retention-rates-of-pupils-in-second-level-schools-2012-entry-cohort.pdf
Progression to Third-level	https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Statistics/projections/
Enrolments in Third-level	http://hea.ie/statistics-archive/
National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020	https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/pub_ed_interim_review_literacy_numeracy_2011_2020.PDF
Further Education and Training Strategy 2014 – 2019	https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/?pageNumber=2
National Access Plan	https://hea.ie/policy/access-policy/national-access-plan-2015-2019/
20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030	https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/?pageNumber=1
Languages Connect : Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026	https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Curriculum-and-Syllabus/Foreign-Languages-Strategy/Foreign-Languages-Strategy.html
DES Inspectorate	http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Corporate-Reports/Annual-Report/
Lifelong Learning Participation (Eurostat database)	https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database

Acronyms

CAO	Central Applications Office
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DPER	Department of Public Expenditure and Reform
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ETB	Education and Training Board
FET	Further Education and Training
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IoT	Institutes of Technology
JCT	Junior Cycle for Teachers
LC	Leaving Certificate
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
NCI	National College of Ireland
NCSE	National Council for Special Education
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Service
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NIPT	National Induction Programme for Teachers
PDST	Professional Development Service for Teachers
PLC	Post Leaving Certificate
PLSS	Programme Learner Support System
POD	Primary Online Database
P-POD	Post-primary Online Database
PTR	Pupil Teacher Ratio
QNHS	Quarterly National Household Survey
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
REV	Revised Estimate Volume
SCPA	Scheme for the Commissioning of Psychological Assessments
SEN	Special Educational Needs
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
SRS	Student Record System
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
UDM	Unified Data Model
WTE	Whole Time Equivalent