



October 2024

Dear parent/guardian,

Moving to post-primary school is a big step for children and families. Around 70,000 children enrol in first year in post-primary school every year. The admissions process for the 2025/26 school year is starting this month.

The admissions process works smoothly for most schools. However, in some areas there can be a lot of demand for school places and it can take some time for all of the enrolments to happen.

This letter is to inform you about the steps being taken to help with first year student enrolments in post-primary schools for the 2025/26 school year.

What the Department of Education is doing

The Department of Education plans for school places using lots of different information. We look at enrolments in schools, information from the Census, information on families receiving Child Benefit, and information on where new houses are being built. We also work closely with the National Council for Special Education (NCSE) to plan for school places for children with special educational needs.

While parents/guardians may have a preferred school, the Department looks at the places available across all schools in an area to make sure that there is enough capacity.

Where we expect that there will be more school places needed, we build extensions for schools, or new schools. Over 950 extensions and new schools have been built by this department since 2020.

In areas where there is a lot of demand for school places, we work closely with schools to make sure that there are enough places available. Every year, in almost



all areas, there are enough places available across all of the schools for local children seeking to enrol in those areas. In some cases where there aren't enough school places, the Department will work with schools to add more places, ensuring that all children in the area can get a place.

To support the enrolment process, the Department has also improved the central Post-Primary On-line Database IT system that schools use to register student enrolments. This is an important improvement and assists schools to manage the enrolment process and provide real-time notification to schools where a new student has accepted a school place in more than one school. This will help identify duplicate enrolments at a very early stage.

How you can help the admission process

Please check the Admissions Policies and Notices of your local schools. It is particularly important to note the deadline for applications and to ensure that you submit your application(s) on time.

It is also important to know that, under legislation (*Education (Admission to Schools) Act 2018*), when accepting a place at a school, parents/guardians **must inform** that school if they have accepted a place at another school or are on the waiting list for another school. The improvements that the Department has made to the central Post-Primary On-line Database system that is used by schools will help schools to immediately identify cases where this has not been done.

There are other steps we are asking parents/guardians to consider taking that would help things run more smoothly:

1. If you are applying to a school that is very popular and there are other schools in your area, please also apply to those other schools. While the Department will work with schools to ensure that there are enough places overall in your area, you may not get a place in your first-choice school.



2. If you accept a place at your first-choice school but are still on waiting lists for other schools, please tell those schools to remove your application.
3. If you receive more than one school place offer, and you've already accepted one at your first-choice school, please do not accept further offers. This will free up spaces for other children who are still waiting for a place.

What supports are available for parents and guardians experiencing a difficulty in securing a school place for their child?

Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) is the agency which can help parents who have difficulty in getting a school place for their child. TESS can be contacted at 01-7718500 (tessinfo@tusla.ie) for assistance. More information is available on their website on the following link: <https://www.tusla.ie/tess/tess-ews/>.

Students with special educational needs

The Department's policy is that, wherever possible, children and young people with special educational needs should be in mainstream classes. However, we recognise that some young people need more specialised support and this can be provided in special classes or in special schools.

The number of special classes in post-primary schools has doubled over the last five years to 1,000 special classes. However, we know that more classes will be needed.

The National Council for Special Education (NCSE) and the Department of Education are working with schools to plan for more special classes for 2025/26 and beyond. As part of this, the Department has asked all post-primary schools to plan to provide special classes over the next few years.



The Government has given more funding to the NCSE and this has allowed it to recruit more special educational needs organisers (SENOs). The NCSE now has 120 SENOs nationwide, an increase from 65. This means there will be more help available for parents/guardians of children with special educational needs. If your child may need a special class or special school place, you should contact your local SENO as soon as possible. Further information on the role of a SENO and contact details of your local SENO is available on the NCSE website

<https://ncse.ie/special-educational-needs-organiser-seno>

The National Educational Psychological Service also provides advice to schools that will help your child with special educational needs with their move from primary into post-primary.

Thank you

Thank you for helping to ensure the enrolment process for first year places goes smoothly for 2025/26. Schools already do a very good job to support families through the enrolment process every year. However, by working together, schools, parents and the Department can help ensure that all children get a school place in a good timely manner.

Yours faithfully,

Hubert Loftus
Head of the Planning and Building Unit

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