

# ***Chapter 4***



***EDUCATION***



## ***INTRODUCTION***

Education in the Republic of 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. Compulsory school age in Northern Ireland means that a child should attend school if they have reached the age of 4 years but not yet reached the age of 16 years, subject to when the child's birthday falls within the school year.

Transfer to second level school in the Republic of Ireland is by parental choice provided there is a place for the child. If a school is over-subscribed it must give priority on the basis of the enrolment policy drawn up by its board of management. Traditionally, two thirds of children in Northern Ireland choose to sit the eleven plus transfer test in the last year of primary school. The results of this determine which second level school they go to. In 2004 the decision was taken to abolish this system with effect from the 2008/09 school year and in 2008 it was proposed that this selection process will be phased out across the three years of admissions to post primary schools in 2010, 2011 and 2012.

The second level education sector in the Republic of Ireland comprises secondary, vocational, community and comprehensive schools.

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While each category of school evolved from a distinctive historical context, they have a great deal in common. They are largely State funded and follow the same prescribed curriculum and take the same public examinations. In Northern Ireland the system of secondary schools is sub-divided into five main sectors: controlled schools, catholic and other maintained schools, voluntary grammar schools, grant maintained integrated schools and controlled integrated schools. A Revised Curriculum for schools in Northern Ireland is being phased in between 2007 and 2010. From age 14 onwards, the 'Entitlement Framework' will ensure that pupils have access to a wider range of courses including applied/vocational courses.

Second level education in the Republic of Ireland has two key public examinations. The Junior Certificate is taken at age 15/16 and the Leaving Certificate at age 17/18. These are external examinations set by the State Examinations Commission. Entry to third level education is closely linked to the results achieved by students in the Leaving Certification examination. The second level of education in Northern Ireland also has two key public examinations taken by students. General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE or equivalent) examinations are taken at age 15/16 and Advanced Level AS and A2 (or equivalent) level examinations at age 17/18.

Third level education in the Republic of 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 by the State. Higher education in Northern Ireland is delivered through two locally established universities: Queen's University, Belfast and the University of Ulster. This is complemented by two teacher training colleges, and the delivery of a number of higher education courses through a network of six Further Education Colleges.

Table 4.1 Schools, pupils and teachers

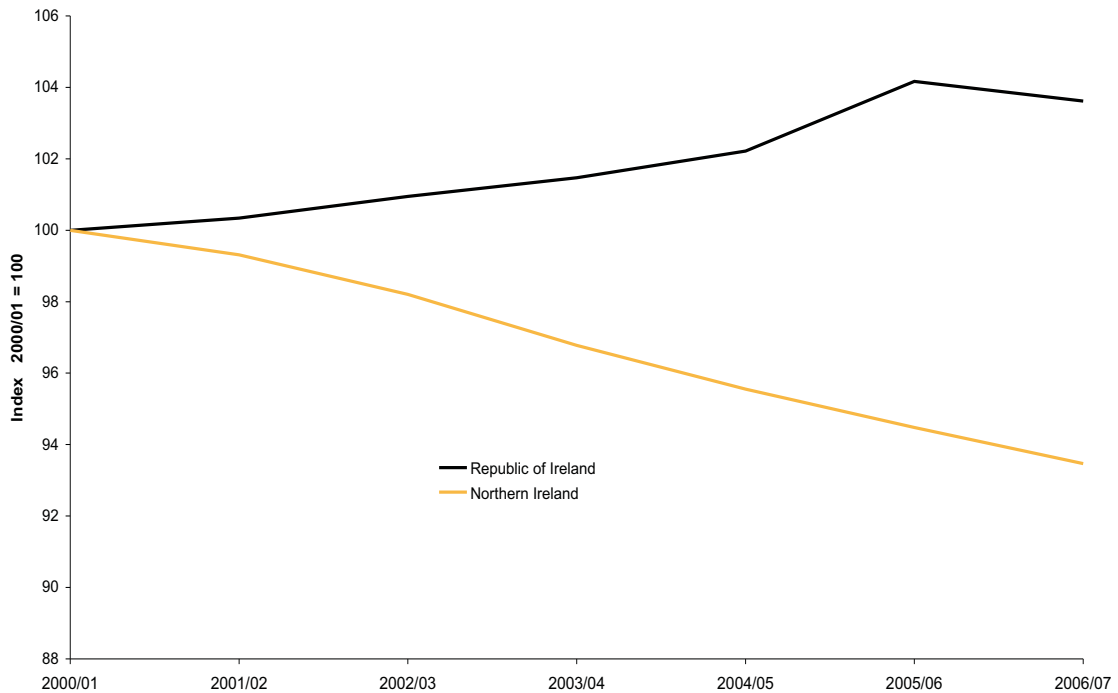
Description	<i>Numbers</i>						
	2000/01	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
<b>Republic of Ireland</b>							
<b>Schools</b>							
First level	3,286	3,282	3,283	3,278	3,284	3,284	3,284
Second level	751	750	746	743	742	735	732
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,037</b>	<b>4,032</b>	<b>4,029</b>	<b>4,021</b>	<b>4,026</b>	<b>4,019</b>	<b>4,016</b>
<b>Pupils</b>							
First level	439,560	441,065	443,720	446,029	449,298	457,889	455,455
Second level	345,384	340,078	339,231	337,851	335,162	332,407	333,718
<b>Total</b>	<b>784,944</b>	<b>781,143</b>	<b>782,951</b>	<b>783,880</b>	<b>784,460</b>	<b>790,296</b>	<b>789,173</b>
<b>Teachers</b>							
First level	22,850	23,935	24,700	26,039	26,282	27,515	28,735
Second level	24,611	25,187	25,692	24,811	24,990	25,387	26,317
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,461</b>	<b>49,122</b>	<b>50,392</b>	<b>50,850</b>	<b>51,272</b>	<b>52,902</b>	<b>55,052</b>
<b>Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup></b>							
<b>Schools</b>							
First level	1,019	1,016	1,017	1,011	1,011	1,003	995
Second level	289	283	282	280	277	275	273
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,308</b>	<b>1,299</b>	<b>1,299</b>	<b>1,291</b>	<b>1,288</b>	<b>1,278</b>	<b>1,268</b>
<b>Pupils</b>							
First level	186,412	185,132	183,071	180,405	178,119	176,121	174,237
Second level	160,227	160,213	160,626	160,228	158,118	156,439	154,322
<b>Total</b>	<b>346,639</b>	<b>345,345</b>	<b>343,697</b>	<b>340,633</b>	<b>336,237</b>	<b>332,560</b>	<b>328,559</b>
<b>Teachers<sup>2</sup></b>							
First level	9,101	9,135	9,112	8,833	8,695	8,404	8,191
Second level	11,541	11,612	11,659	11,503	11,503	11,299	11,089
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,642</b>	<b>20,747</b>	<b>20,772</b>	<b>20,335</b>	<b>20,198</b>	<b>19,703</b>	<b>19,279</b>

Sources Republic of Ireland: Department of Education and Science  
Northern Ireland: School Census, DE

<sup>1</sup>New (verified) basis for teacher numbers from 2003/04 onwards (see technical notes).

<sup>2</sup>NI data refer to full-time equivalent teaching posts.

**Figure 4.1 Indexed change in the number of first level pupils, 2000/01 to 2006/07 (2000/01 = 100)**



The total number of pupils in the Republic of Ireland has shown an upward trend in the period 2000/01 (784,944) to 2006/07 (789,173). This upward trend has been driven by the increasing numbers of first level pupils, which had increased by four per cent by 2005/06 (457,889), before falling back slightly in 2006/07 to 455,455.

In Northern Ireland, both the total number of first and second level pupils have fallen from their 2000/01 levels. This has resulted in the 2006/07 total (328,559) being five per cent lower than the 2000/01 figure (346,639).

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Table 4.2 Pupil:Teacher ratios

Description	<i>Ratios</i>					
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07
<b>Republic of Ireland</b>						
First level	18.4	18.0	17.1	17.1	16.6	16.4
Second level	13.5	13.2	13.6	13.4	13.1	13.1
<b>Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup></b>						
First level <sup>2</sup>	19.9	19.7	20.0	20.0	20.5	20.8
Second level <sup>3</sup>	14.4	14.4	14.6	14.3	14.4	14.5

Sources Republic of Ireland: Department of Education and Science  
Northern Ireland: Teachers' Payroll and Pensions Administration System, Voluntary Grammar Schools Annual Statistical Return, School Census, DE

<sup>1</sup>New (verified) basis for teacher numbers from 2003/04 onwards (see technical notes).

<sup>2</sup>NI data exclude nursery schools and preparatory departments of grammar schools.

<sup>3</sup>NI data exclude special schools.



**Table 4.3 Single sex and co-educational second level schools**

*Numbers and percentages*

Second level	2004/05		2005/06		2006/07	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Republic of Ireland</b>						
Male school	114	15	112	15	110	15
Female school	148	20	147	20	145	20
Co-educational school	480	65	476	65	477	65
<b>Total</b>	<b>742</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>735</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Northern Ireland<sup>1,2</sup></b>						
Male school	26	11	26	11	25	11
Female school	28	12	28	12	28	12
Co-educational school	178	77	176	77	175	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>100</b>

Sources Republic of Ireland: Department of Education and Science  
Northern Ireland: School Census, DE

<sup>1</sup>Figures for Northern Ireland are calculated based on gender of pupils in attendance, rather than by a school designation.

<sup>2</sup>Northern Ireland figures exclude special schools.

The majority of second-level schools in both areas are co-educational. However, the Republic of Ireland has a higher proportion of all male and all female schools than Northern Ireland.

Table 4.4 Examinations candidates

Examination	<i>Numbers</i>				
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
<b>Republic of Ireland</b>					
<b>Junior Certificate</b>					
Male	30,150	29,855	28,495	28,627	29,273
Female	30,002	29,485	28,369	28,013	28,511
<b>Total</b>	<b>60,152</b>	<b>59,340</b>	<b>56,864</b>	<b>56,640</b>	<b>57,784</b>
<b>Leaving Certificate</b>					
Male	27,716	28,532	28,059	27,189	25,832
Female	30,684	31,004	30,683	30,202	28,279
<b>Total</b>	<b>58,400</b>	<b>59,536</b>	<b>58,742</b>	<b>57,391</b>	<b>54,111</b>
<b>Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup></b>					
<b>GCSE<sup>2</sup></b>					
Male	13,258	13,145	13,296	12,941	12,478
Female	12,780	12,691	12,803	12,800	12,276
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,038</b>	<b>25,836</b>	<b>26,099</b>	<b>25,741</b>	<b>24,754</b>
<b>A-Level<sup>3</sup></b>					
Male	4,140	4,441	4,760	4,862	4,934
Female	6,043	6,153	6,638	6,824	6,824
<b>Total</b>	<b>10,183</b>	<b>10,594</b>	<b>11,398</b>	<b>11,686</b>	<b>11,758</b>

Sources Republic of Ireland: Department of Education and Science  
Northern Ireland: University of Bath dataset; DE

<sup>1</sup>Northern Ireland figures exclude special and independent schools and pupils with statements of educational needs.

<sup>2</sup>GCSE figures refer to the total number of GCSE candidates.

<sup>3</sup>A-level figures refer to the number of candidates sitting A-Levels in schools only. A-Levels undertaken in colleges are excluded.

Each year in the Republic of Ireland, the number of candidates sitting the Leaving Certificate is very similar to the numbers undertaking the Junior Certificate. In Northern Ireland, however, a much lower number of candidates go forward for the Advanced Level examinations in schools, compared to the numbers sitting GCSEs.

Many of those, in Northern Ireland, leaving school after GCSEs go on to undertake vocational training courses rather than the more academically focused A-Levels.

**Table 4.5 (a) Number of examination candidates for the top ten subjects in the Republic of Ireland**

		<i>Numbers</i>	
Subject	2001/02	Subject	2005/06
<b>Junior Certificate</b>			
English	59,590	English	57,126
Mathematics	59,295	Mathematics	56,966
Civil Social and Political Education (CSPE)	58,278	Civil Social and Political Education (CSPE)	56,171
Irish	55,433	Geography	52,256
Geography	54,446	History	51,310
History	53,796	Irish	50,871
Science	52,092	Science	50,072
French	40,523	French	35,701
Business Studies	38,041	Business Studies	33,821
Art, Craft and Design	21,536	Religious Education	23,997
<b>Leaving Certificate</b>			
Mathematics	53,658	Mathematics	49,235
English	52,997	English	48,406
Irish	49,085	Irish	43,928
French	32,116	French	27,809
Geography	28,430	Biology	24,887
Business Organisation	23,605	Geography	24,661
Biology	22,064	Business Studies	19,425
Home Economics (S&S)	18,347	Home Economics (S&S)	12,305
History	10,792	History	10,677
Art	9,224	Art	9,981

Source Republic of Ireland: Department of Education and Science

There was little change in the popularity of the top ten subjects for Junior Certificate examinations, in the Republic of Ireland, in 2005/06 when compared to 2001/02. In both 2001/02 and 2005/06, English, Mathematics and C.S.P.E had the highest number of examination candidates. The ranking of Leaving Certificate examination candidates also changed little in 2005/06 when compared to 2001/02. Mathematics, English and Irish held the top three rankings, as they did in 2001/02.

**Table 4.5 (b) Number of examination candidates for the top ten subjects in Northern Ireland**

		<i>Numbers</i>	
Subject	2001/02	Subject	2005/06
<b>GCSE</b>			
Mathematics	23,265	English	23,195
English	20,539	Mathematics	22,804
Religious Studies	13,492	Double Science Award	12,326
French	13,173	Religious Studies	12,119
Double Science Award	12,960	English Literature	11,091
English Literature	11,132	French	10,658
Geography	9,839	Science/Single Award	8,879
Science/Single Award	9,209	History	8,589
History	8,615	Geography	8,035
Business Studies	6,072	Information Technology	5,620
<b>A-Level</b>			
Biology	2,780	Biology	3,068
English Literature	2,414	English Literature	2,402
Mathematics	2,104	History	2,355
Geography	2,055	Mathematics	2,279
History	1,850	Geography	2,043
Chemistry	1,610	Religious Studies	1,956
Business Studies	1,476	Chemistry	1,745
Physics	1,362	Business Studies	1,349
Politics	1,029	Physics	1,209
French	959	Politics	1,092

Source Northern Ireland: University of Bath dataset; DE

<sup>1</sup>Figures exclude special and independent schools in Northern Ireland.

<sup>2</sup>GCSE figures refer to the total number of entries in each GCSE subject.

<sup>3</sup>A-level figures refer to the number of candidates sitting A-Levels in schools only. A-Levels undertaken in colleges are excluded.

In Northern Ireland, the same subjects are generally present in the top ten rankings. The top three GCSE subjects in 2001/02, were Mathematics, English and Religious Studies. In 2005/06, the most popular subject was English followed by Mathematics and then Double Science Award. The two most popular subjects in A-Level, in both 2001/02 and 2005/06, were Biology and English Literature. In 2001/02, the third most popular A-Level was Mathematics but in 2005/06, although a greater number of candidates were taking the subject than in 2001/02, it had dropped to fourth place behind History.

**Table 4.6 (a) Higher education enrolments in the Republic of Ireland**

Type of enrolment	Numbers				
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Full-time undergraduate	111,918	117,257	117,051	119,633	121,874
Part-time undergraduate	27,295	25,819	26,596	22,946	..
Full-time postgraduate	13,412	16,630	16,640	17,086	17,022
Part-time postgraduate	7,890	8,181	7,913	9,120	..

Source Republic of Ireland: Higher Education Authority

**Table 4.6 (b) Higher education enrolments in Northern Ireland<sup>1</sup>**

Type of enrolment	Numbers				
	2001/02	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Full-time undergraduate	31,195	32,885	33,990	34,785	35,680
Part-time undergraduate	20,090	19,240	19,915	20,060	19,970
Full-time postgraduate	4,190	4,195	4,075	4,165	3,990
Part-time postgraduate	7,250	7,500	7,690	7,560	7,795

Source Northern Ireland: Higher Education Statistics Agency

<sup>1</sup>Refers to students enrolled at Northern Ireland Higher Education institutions and on Higher Education courses at Northern Ireland Further Education colleges.

**Table 4.7 (a) First destinations of leavers from higher education in the Republic of Ireland***Numbers and percentages*

First destinations	Undergraduate				Postgraduate			
	2000/01	%	2005/06	%	2000/01	%	2005/06	%
Gained employment	10,852	46.8	8,836	51.3	3,855	79.4	4,979	79.6
Further study or training	10,817	46.6	6,973	40.4	588	12.1	770	12.3
Not available for employment, study or training	821	3.5	481	2.8	180	3.7	217	3.5
Seeking employment	711	3.1	950	5.5	230	4.7	290	4.6
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>23,201</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>17,240</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>4,853</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>6,256</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source Republic of Ireland: Higher Education Authority

**Table 4.7 (b) First destinations of leavers from higher education in Northern Ireland***Numbers and percentages*

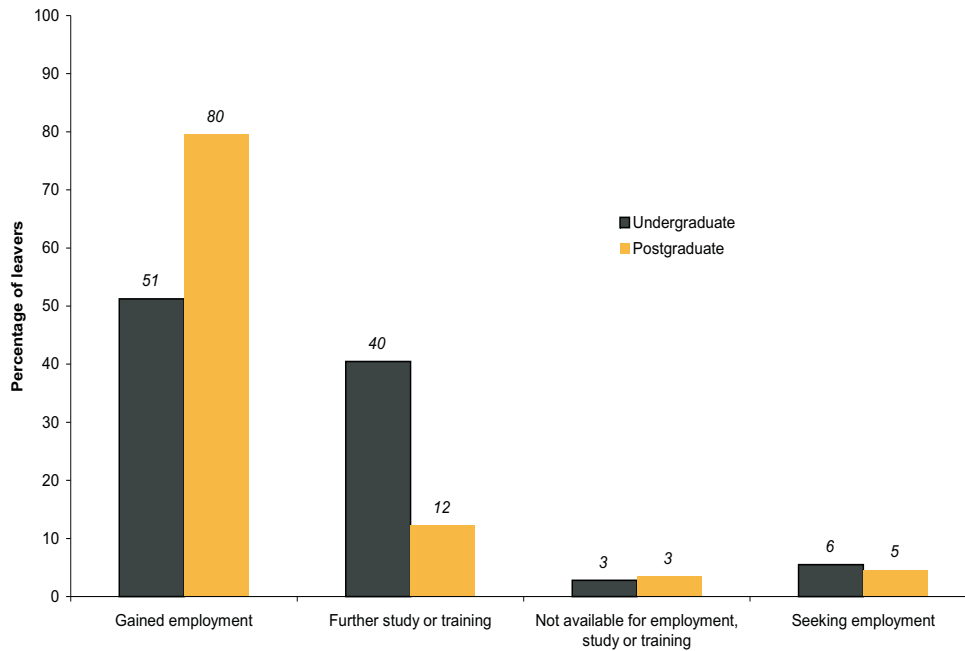
First destinations	Undergraduate				Postgraduate			
	2000/01	%	2005/06	%	2000/01	%	2005/06	%
Entered employment only	3,460	58.4	4,840	67.6	920	81.1	1,760	77.4
Undertaking work and study	..	..	620	8.7	..	..	185	8.1
Undertaking further study only	1,745	29.5	1,010	14.1	100	8.8	100	4.4
Not available for employment, study or training	250	4.2	220	3.1	45	4.0	55	2.4
Assumed to be unemployed	400	6.8	270	3.8	40	3.5	50	2.2
Other	65	1.1	60	0.8	30	2.6	15	0.1
Not known	..	..	150	2.1	..	..	115	5.1
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>5,925</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>7,165</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>1,135</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>2,275</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source Northern Ireland: Higher Education Statistics Agency

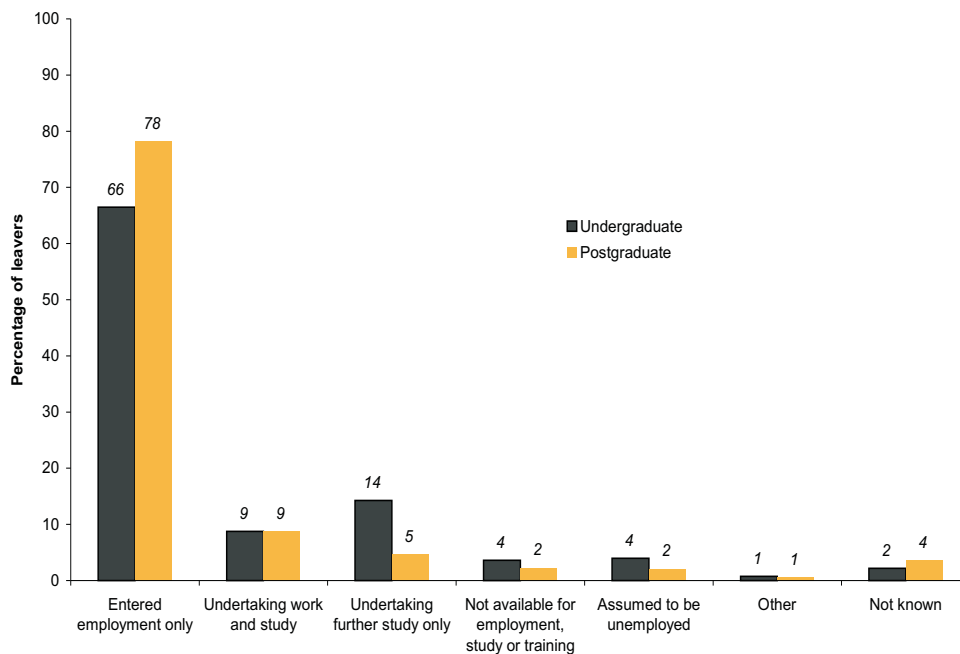
In 2005/06, a higher percentage (51 per cent) of Republic of Ireland undergraduates gained employment on leaving higher education than in 2000/01 (47 per cent). This was reflected somewhat, in the lower proportion of leavers going onto further study or training in 2005/06 (40 per cent) compared with 47 per cent in 2000/01.

Similarly, in Northern Ireland, a higher proportion of undergraduate leavers entered employment (68 per cent) in 2005/06 than in 2000/01 (58 per cent).

**Figure 4.2 (a) First destinations of leavers from higher education in the Republic of Ireland, 2005/06**



**Figure 4.2 (b) First destinations of leavers from higher education in Northern Ireland, 2005/06**



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Table 4.8 Students in tertiary education

Thousands

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
<b>EU 27</b>	<b>15,920.8</b>	<b>16,517.3</b>	<b>17,139.3</b>	<b>17,761.8</b>	<b>18,232.9</b>	<b>18,530.2</b>
Austria	261.2	264.7	223.7	229.8	238.5	244.4
Belgium	355.7	359.3	367.0	374.7	386.1	389.5
Bulgaria	261.3	247.0	228.4	230.5	228.5	237.9
Cyprus	10.4	11.9	13.9	18.3	20.8	20.1
Czech Republic	253.7	260.0	284.5	287.0	318.9	336.3
Denmark	189.2	190.8	195.3	201.7	217.1	232.3
Estonia	53.6	57.8	60.6	63.6	65.7	67.8
Finland	270.2	279.6	283.8	291.7	299.9	306.0
France	2,015.3	2,031.7	2,029.2	2,119.1	2,160.3	2,187.4
Germany	2,054.8	2,083.9	2,159.7	2,242.4	2,330.5	2,268.7
Greece	422.3	478.2	529.2	561.5	597.0	646.6
Hungary	307.1	330.5	354.4	390.5	422.2	436.0
Italy	1,770.0	1,812.3	1,854.2	1,913.4	1,986.5	2,015.0
<b>Republic of Ireland</b>	<b>160.6</b>	<b>166.6</b>	<b>176.3</b>	<b>181.6</b>	<b>188.3</b>	<b>186.6</b>
Latvia	91.2	102.8	110.5	118.9	127.7	130.7
Lithuania	121.9	135.9	148.8	167.6	182.7	195.4
Luxembourg	2.4	2.5	3.0	3.1	..	..
Malta	6.3	7.4	7.3	8.9	7.9	9.4
Netherlands	487.6	504.0	516.8	526.8	543.4	565.0
Poland	1,579.6	1,775.0	1,906.3	1,983.4	2,044.3	2,118.1
Portugal	373.7	387.7	396.6	400.8	395.1	380.9
Romania	452.6	533.2	582.2	643.9	685.7	738.8
Slovenia	83.8	91.5	99.2	101.5	104.4	112.2
Slovakia	135.9	143.9	152.2	158.1	164.7	181.4
Spain	1,829.0	1,833.5	1,832.8	1,840.6	1,839.9	1,809.4
Sweden	346.9	358.0	382.9	414.7	429.6	426.7
United Kingdom	2,024.1	2,067.3	2,240.7	2,287.8	2,247.4	2,287.5
<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>53.2</b>	<b>53.3</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>60.5</b>	<b>65.6</b>	<b>66.8</b>

Source Eurostat



## Technical Notes

### Tables 4.1 and 4.2

In the Republic of Ireland, first level data include national schools and special schools aided by the Department of Education and Science only. The national schools figure includes special classes which are provided in a number of these schools for pupils with special needs, for example, hearing and visually impaired, mild mental disability and traveller children. Second level includes secondary schools, vocational schools/community colleges, community schools and comprehensive schools aided by the Department of Education and Science only. Pupil numbers for the Republic of Ireland are taken from the annual school census and at second level from the post-primary October returns.

Republic of Ireland data for teachers are taken from returns made by schools to the Department of Education and Science. Teacher numbers are full-time equivalent.

Prior to 2003/04, NI figures for teachers in nursery, primary, secondary (non-grammar) and special schools were extracted from the computerised teachers' payroll system, whilst the figures for grammar schools were obtained from a statistical return completed by the schools. The voluntary grammar school figures continue to be obtained from a statistical return completed by the schools, but each nursery, primary, secondary (non-grammar), controlled grammar and special school is now sent a list of teachers from the computerised teachers' payroll system and asked to mark any amendments. This was introduced in 2003/04 for nursery, primary, secondary (non-grammar) and special schools, and in 2005/06 for controlled grammar schools. The net effect of this change in 2003/04 was that the number of teachers as verified by schools was some 400 lower than the number of teachers extracted from the computerised teachers' payroll system, e.g. because substitute teachers had been incorrectly recorded.

In Northern Ireland, first level includes nursery and primary grant aided schools and grammar preparatory departments. Second level includes secondary, grammar and special schools. NI pupil numbers are taken from the school census, which covers all schools in Northern Ireland and collects a wide range of data relating to pupils.

### Table 4.5 (a)

Republic of Ireland figures are a combination of Foundation Level, where applicable, Ordinary Level and Higher Level subjects taken. English, Irish and Mathematics are tested at three levels namely Foundation, Ordinary and Higher Level for the Junior Certificate. For the Leaving Certificate, Mathematics is tested at Alternative, Ordinary and Higher Level while Irish is tested at Foundation, Ordinary and Higher Level. Figures do not include candidates sitting for Applied Mathematics.

### Tables 4.6 (a) and 4.6 (b)

Republic of Ireland data for third level students refer to the Higher Education Authority sector (the seven universities, two teacher training colleges and the National College of Art and Design), the Technological sector (i.e. Institutes of Technology) and other designated affiliates.

### Tables 4.7 (a) and 4.7 (b)

Republic of Ireland data include graduates of full-time third level courses from the universities, teacher training colleges, Institutes of Technology, other state-aided institutions and some of the larger private colleges.

