





# **EDUCATION**

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*In this chapter you will find information on the Education system in the UK. If you are going to the UK with your children you will find this chapter useful as it has information on finding a school for your child as well as what you will need to do to enrol them in school.*

There is also information on Third level education in the UK which would be useful if you or your child is going to go to University/College.

### **How do I find out about schools for my children?**

In the UK all children have the right to a place in school between the ages of 5 and 16. When you are enrolling your child in school your first point of contact will be your Local Education Authority (LEA).

The LEA is legally obliged to offer your child a place in a school. You may ask them to place your child in a particular school but your child is not guaranteed a place at that school. There are a number of different ways of choosing a school for your child:

- You can research your choice by visiting the schools in the local area. This way you can see the school yourself and see for yourself where what the school is like
- Consider factors such as location, how easy it will be for your child to get to school, whether or not you feel the school has a good atmosphere, whether the staff are welcoming etc

- Each LEA publishes a guide to the schools in its area. This will give you details about local school such as the school size, the admissions procedures and an indication of how popular each school is. Each school also publishes a prospectus that goes into more detail about its admissions procedures and the school in general
- Every year performance tables are published giving the exam results achieved by each school. Although these tables provide no information on a school's other achievements and facilities, they will help you to see how various schools compare in terms of results. In addition to the performance tables, the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) carries out school inspections. There is a report available for every school in the country.

## How do I enrol my children in school?

If you are thinking of moving to the UK, once you have decided which school you would like your child to attend, you should start planning ahead. For popular schools applications may be received from 6 months to 1 year in advance.

If you are moving to the UK and you need to find a school for your child as soon as possible you should contact the LEA as the school you want your child to attend may be fully subscribed. Your LEA will be able to advise you in such circumstances.

## What types of schools are there in the UK?

Most schools in the UK do not charge fees. Over 90% of pupils go to state schools, which are funded by the government. There are however around 2,200 private fee paying schools which are independent and receive no money from the government.

Some schools are publicly funded. Some schools are privately funded and are partially or wholly selective (this means that prospective pupils must first pass an admission exam before being accepted by the school).

You should contact your UK Local Authority, Irish Organisation or your local Citizens Advice Bureau for more information on finding a school in your area (please see **Chapter 13 - Useful Contacts**).

## How does the education system work in the UK?

In the UK the National Curriculum is taught to all pupils and is made up of blocks of years, known as key stages:

- Year 1 and Year 2 of primary school are known as Key Stage 1
- Years 3 to 6 of primary school are known as Key Stage 2
- Years 7 to 9 is normally for children age 11 to 14 and is known as Key Stage 3
- Years 10 and 11 are usually between the ages of 14 and 16 years old. At the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils sit national examinations called GCSE's.

If your children have completed part or all of their secondary education in Ireland, below is a list of their Irish qualification and the UK equivalent.

**Irish Secondary School qualification**

Junior Certificate

Leaving Certificate

(Ordinary Level)

Leaving Certificate

(Higher Level Grades C-D)

Leaving Certificate

(Higher Level Grades A-C)

**UK Equivalent**

Below GCSE

GCSE

(Grades A-C)

Between GCSE

and A'Level

2/3 A' Levels

## What do I need to know about applying for university or college in the UK?

If you are applying for a full-time place at a university or college in the UK you will apply through UCAS (The University and College Admissions Service). If you are applying for other courses, including part-time courses you apply directly to your place of study.

### How to Apply to University or College

How you apply for a higher education course will depend on whether your course is full-time or part-time.

#### UCAS applications

There are six steps to follow when applying for a course online through UCAS. If you do not have access to the Internet, contact UCAS (please see **Chapter 13 - Useful Contacts**) for further information on how to apply.

- 1 Applying for a place:** You should apply in the academic year before you plan to go to college. The deadline for submitting your application is usually mid-January, but some courses and colleges are earlier or later than this. Check what the deadline is for the courses you are interested in.

- 2 **The interviews:** Your application gets passed to the college/ university you have chosen. Each university or college has its own application procedure. You may have to attend for an interview or you may be asked to sit a test. Some colleges offer you a place based on your application.
- 3 **Applying for financial help:** Once you apply to UCAS you can apply for financial help through your Local Authority.
- 4 **Getting an offer:** If you complete your application with UCAS by the mid-January deadline you will usually receive offers from your universities by the end of March although for some popular courses you may not hear until May.
- 5 **Accepting an offer:** The offer you receive can be conditional, which means you will get your place if you get certain grades on your current course, or you can receive an offer which means you are automatically given a place.
- 6 **Getting your results:** If you get the grades you need for a conditional offer your university or college will confirm your place. UCAS will send you a formal letter of confirmation. If you do not get the grades you need for a conditional offer the university or college does not confirm your offers you may still get a place through the Clearing system.

## Clearing

Clearing takes place after the A level results come out. Between August and mid-September Universities and Colleges will advertise outstanding course vacancies in the national press and on the UCAS website. UCAS will automatically let you know if you are eligible for Clearing.

For more detailed information on studying please refer to the website [www.direct.gov.uk](http://www.direct.gov.uk). You can also contact your nearest Irish Organisation or Citizens Advice Bureau for more detailed information on studying in the UK.

