



EDUCATION

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

NURSERY EDUCATION

Children can enter pre-school education when they are 2 years and 8 months old.

In Northern Ireland it is not compulsory for a child to attend pre-school education.

You can choose from the following:

- **Play groups**

(Which provide part-time nursery places)

or

- **Nurseries**

(Which provide full and/or part time places)

Information about places is available from:
nursery schools/Education and Library Boards
Voluntary/private organizations

HOW TO ENROLL

It is not automatic to get a place in a nursery or play group for your child.

You need to apply by filling in **an application form**.

The closing date for all applications is January and children can start nursery from September the same year.

Make your application for a nursery place well in advance to avoid difficulties with finding a place for your child. It is also important to state more than 1 preference for a nursery place on the application form as some places may be oversubscribed.

Application forms, further information is available from schools, nurseries, or playgroups. An application form is also available to download from www.seelb.org.uk www.belb.org.uk, www.neelb.org.uk, www.selb.org, www.welbni.org

Every year there is also a 'Booklet for parents, pre-school enrolment' being published by the Education and Library Board, where you can find detailed information on enrolment and a list of all pre-school centres. You can ask for the booklet at any school, nursery or in your local Education and Library Board.

RECEPTION CLASS

Some primary schools provide reception classes. These nursery classes are only for children who have reached their 4th birthday but are not yet at the age of primary school (5 years old).

More information on how to apply is contained in the Primary School Admissions Information Booklets available from primary schools or from Open Enrolment Branch, of your local Education and Library Board.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Primary schools provide education for children aged 4 to 11.

Education of children from 4 to 16 is compulsory in the UK. You may be prosecuted if you have a child of that age and s/he is not attending school.

Most of the schools are state schools and thus free, you do not pay for schoolbooks either.

CHOOSING A SCHOOL

You need to make at least three choices for schools of your preference on the application form.

In Northern Ireland schools are divided to Catholic and Protestant schools but there is also a significant number of integrated schools. However religion is taught at every school but if you wish you can take your child out of the religion classes.

If you want to get advice on what school to choose for your child you can contact the principal at the school of your interest.

HOW TO ENROLL

You need to fill an **application form** for your child to be able to enter primary school.

The application form is available from any local primary school or the Open Enrolment Section of your local Education and Library Board. It can also be downloaded from website www.seelb.org.uk and other Boards as listed above.

The application form must be sent by January to the first preference school.

More information about enrolling your child and list of schools is available from 'Booklet for parents, enrolment for primary schools' being published by the Education and Library Board.

You can ask for the booklet from any school or your local Education and Library Board.

In the booklet you will also find **admission criteria** for each school.

These are specific criteria your child has to meet before entering school. Admission criteria differ from school to school.

Therefore it is important that you read them carefully and make sure your child meets the criteria before making an application form to any school.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Children in primary and secondary school in Northern Ireland wear uniforms.

Legally this is not compulsory in primary schools but your child may feel excluded without the uniform as everybody in school wears it.

In secondary schools uniforms are mandatory.

You will need to buy the uniform. School uniforms are available at different prices so shop around before you buy one.

Some schools may have sales of uniforms (often in August) where you could buy second hand, cheaper uniforms.

You may be eligible to get a grant to pay for a uniform. For more information see below section Financial Help.

To get more information on uniforms contact the school of your interest

Some primary schools but not every school may also provide free after school care. Check with the schools of your preference if they have such service.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Secondary schools in Northern Ireland are for children aged between 11 and 16.

Exam 11+(Transfer Procedure Test)

At the age of 11 children in NI can undertake the Exam 11+.

It is a compulsory test for children to enter grammar schools. The test results help grammar schools make a decision on which pupils to admit.

However if you decide for your child to enter a non-grammar school then s/he does not need to do the test.

If your child is not fluent in English and you want him/her to do the test ask in the school for alternative arrangements.

GCSE exam

At the age of 16 children take an exam containing from 7-9 subjects called GCSE exam.

A-Level

Children wishing to continue education study for A-level which they normally sit at age 18 years. These exams are considered as entry exams for Universities.

NOT SPEAKING ENGLISH?

If you think your child requires additional support with English at school talk to the principal at school, s/he will be able to arrange the support for your child.

If you cannot speak English yourself and want to use any state educational services it is your right to ask for an interpreter and they have an obligation to organize one for you. Translation of application forms can be arranged as well.

The service is free and confidential.

If you are refused an interpreter contact Equality Commission or Law Centre(NI).

FINANCIAL HELP

The Education and Library Board may provide financial help to assist your child while in education.

It can take the form of:

Maintenance Allowances

It is money to help to meet the cost of keeping a child in full-time education until her/his is 16 years. Eligibility depends on parental income.

Free school mid-day meals

Children between the ages of 4-18 in full-time education whose parents receive income support (which is a social security benefit) may be eligible for one mid-day meal per day.

Transport

If the distance from the nearest suitable school from the home of a child is more than 3 miles in Secondary schools s/he may be entitled to free transport. This applies only to secondary schools.

School uniforms

Children may get help with the costs of the uniform if their parents receive Income Support or Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance (these are social security benefits).

Contact your local Education and Library Board or Citizens Advice bureau to check if you qualify for some of the above listed financial help. Find your nearest offices in Yellow Pages.



EDUCATION OF ADULTS

If you need to have your qualification recognized see Employment leaflet for more information.

UNIVERSITIES

In the Northern Ireland there are two main Universities.

Ulster University has campuses in Belfast, Londonderry, Jordanstown, Coleraine. Check www.ulst.ac.uk.

Queens University is in Belfast. Check www.qub.ac.uk.

There is also a third University providing distance-learning possibilities. The University is called **The Open University** and it is based in Belfast. For most of the courses they don't require any previous qualification. Check www.open.ac.uk

Complete list of addresses for Universities can be found in Yellow Pages.

Universities provide full-time as well as part-time courses.

University will give you detailed information regarding the course you are interested in.

Before entering University you may be asked to undergo an English language test to prove your English skills. You need to pay the exam fee yourself.

In Northern Ireland you would also need to pay for your University studies. Check with the University of your interest for exact fees.

You are eligible to be assessed for a grant to pay your University studies, Higher and National Diplomas, first degrees.

For more information on your chances and how to apply contact college or University of your interest.

FURTHER EDUCATION

In Northern Ireland you will find various choice of courses and training available. Many of them are provided through different **Institutes and Colleges**.

Full list of contacts for Institutes and Colleges is in Yellow Pages, under Further Education.

Check with Institute or College of your interest for further information on current courses available. The prices for courses differ so check more Institutes/ Colleges in the area you live before you decide.

Some of the courses may be also free of charge.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSES.

Some **Institutes and Colleges** may also provide English language courses.

For example: Belfast Institute of Further Education (in Belfast), Castlereagh College of Further Education (in Belfast), Causeway Institute of Further Education (at Coleraine), East Down Institute of Further Education (at Downpatrick) and many others.

English classes are often provided by some **community organizations**. They would generally charge less for courses than Institutes/Colleges.

Examples: Multicultural Resource Centre (in Belfast), STEP (in Dungannon).

EGSA (Educational Guidance Service For Adults) can provide you with information, advice and guidance on the range of learning opportunities available through local providers and on the courses to suit your individual circumstances.

EGSA has offices based in Belfast, Causeway, Craigavon, Dunnganon, East Antrim, L/Derry, Magarafelt, Newry and Omagh.

LIBRARIES

In every bigger city or town in Northern Ireland you will find a public library. To find your nearest branch check www.ni-libraries.net or see Yellow Pages.

Most of libraries can offer:

- ***Selection of books***, small number of books in other languages (such as Russian, Estonian, Polish) as well. You can also access books on tape although most of them are only in English.
- ***DVDs and videos for hire*** (often for a small fee). Some of them have subtitles in various languages, you can also find Czech or Polish.
- ***Fax facilities***. You can send or receive a fax for a small fee.
- ***Free use of computers and free Internet***. To use a computer (including Internet use), especially in busy times you may need to book a computer in advance. Staff in a Library will explain this further.
- ***Some Libraries also organize different events/facilities for children and mothers.***

Ask staff in a Library for more information. They can also provide advice to you on local information within the area.

To be able to access the most of Library's services in Northern Ireland you need to become a member of a Library. Membership is free and the card you receive can be used within all public Libraries in Northern Ireland.

Notice that you need to prove that you have an address in Northern Ireland to be able to become a member of any library in Northern Ireland.

You will be asked for a letter or card that confirms your name and current address in Northern Ireland and your ID. If you do not have any of those the staff in the library will give you a postcard, which you should complete with your name, and address and they will post it to you. After you have received the card, you bring it to a library to get registered.

The card they will issue to you can be used in any public library in Northern Ireland.

Contact your nearest Library for more information.

USEFUL CONTACTS

Belfast Education and Library Board:

40 Academy Street, Belfast, tel: (028) 90 564000 (Belfast area),web: www.belb.org.uk

North Eastern Education and Library Board

County Hall,182 Galgorm Road,Ballymena, tel:(028) 2565 3333, web:www.neelb.org.uk (County Antrim and the eastern part of County Londonderry)

South Eastern Education and Library Board:

Grahamsbridge Road, Dundonald, Belfast, tel: (028) 9056 6200, www.seelb.org.uk (County Down Area)

Southern Education and Library Board

3 Charlemont Place,The Mall, Armagh tel.: (028) 90 566200, web:www.selb.org (County Armagh, County Tyrone, Co.Fermanagh Area)

Western Education and Library Board

1 Hospital Road, Omagh, County Tyrone, tel.: (028) 8241 1411, web:www.welbni.org (Co. L'Derry area)

EGSA

4th floor, 40 Linenhall Street, Belfast, tel.(028) 90244274, Ballymoney (028)27669500, Craigavon (028) 38351493, L'Derry (028) 71271899, Dungannon (028) 87750226, Larne (028) 28276719, Magharafelt (028) 79301388, Newry (028) 30256255, Omagh (028) 82252669

Equality Commission for Northern Ireland

Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DP tel: (028) 90 500600 Textphone: (028) 90 500589, web: www.equalityni.org e-mail:information@equalityni.org

Law Centre (NI)

Belfast:

124 Donegall Street Belfast, BT1 2GY Tel.: (028) 9024 4401

Londonderry:

9 Clarendon Street Londonderry BT48 7EP Tel.: (028) 7126 2433

South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (STEP)

Unit 7 Dungannon Enterprise Cent, 2 Coalisland Road, Dungannon, BT71 6JT, tel.(028) 87729002, web:www.stepni.org, e-mail: info@stepni.org

Portadown Migrant Worker Centre:

Transport and General Workers Union, Rainbow Corner, William Street Portadown, Tel: (028) 3839 9595

Cookstown Migrant Worker Project

Gortalowry House, Cookstown tel:(028) 86763322

Multi-cultural Resource Centre (NI)

9 Lower Crescent, Belfast tel:(028)90244639,web:www.mcrc-ni.org