

HOW THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM WORKS



**A GUIDE FOR
THE ROMA COMMUNITY
IN COUNTY DONEGAL**

ABOUT US

DTP EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Donegal Travellers Project Education Development Programme works to support Traveller and Roma children and young people in the Irish school system. It aims to improve the health and wellbeing of young Travellers and Roma within the education system and support parents to positively engage in their child/children's education. The programme is underpinned by principles of community development and takes a human rights approach

to education. The education worker acts as a link between schools and families, supports young people and parents to address underlying issues which may negatively affect their child/children to achieve their full potential in school and engages in early intervention and preventative work in terms of Traveller and Roma attendance in schools and educational institutions.

ABOUT US



JOLEEN KUYPER

Joleen Kuyper is the Roma Community Development and Advocacy Worker with Donegal Travellers Project (DTP). She supports Roma families and individuals in all parts of County Donegal in accessing services including PPS numbers, social welfare, healthcare, employment, education and language and literacy programmes. As well as this, she works to challenge racism and discrimination against Roma at all levels in Irish society and to create the conditions for equality and human rights. She is based at the DTP Child and Family Hub, 18 Celtic Apartments, Pearse Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal.

CONTACT:
086 7880553



BARRY MOONEY

Barry Mooney is the Education Development Worker with Donegal Travellers Project. His main role is acting as the link between schools, parents and education support staff. He also provides support around accessing school transport, school enrolment, homework clubs and all concerns in relation to education. All enquiries are welcome for Pre-School, Primary, Post Primary and Third Level. He is based at the DTP Child and Family Hub, 18 Celtic Apartments, Pearse Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal.

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*Assistant Manager,
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INTRODUCTION

**Donegal Travellers Project
Child and Family Hub
18 Celtic Apartments
Pearse Road
Letterkenny
Co Donegal**

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We at Donegal Travellers Project Roma Community Project have designed this booklet to help explain how the Irish education system works, particularly in County Donegal. The aim of this booklet is to support Roma families to understand the education system here, so that this increased understanding can help lead to improved outcomes for Roma children and young people at all levels of education across the county.

The booklet provides an overview of the different levels and types of education. It also details the supports (including financial supports) that are available to access and fully participate in education. It explains the right of the child to education, and the responsibilities of parents and guardians to ensure that children attend compulsory education between the ages of 6-16.

Donegal Travellers Project can support you to ensure that your children and young people are able to access the opportunities for education in Donegal. As a community development organisation, we see education as a means for transformation, to challenge oppression and to bring about greater social equality and social justice.

Joleen Kuyper, Community Development and Advocacy Worker
with the Roma Community, Donegal Travellers Project Child and Family Hub,
18 Celtic Apartments, Pearse Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal

Siobhan McLaughlin, Manager,
Donegal Travellers Project, Port House, Port Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal



**Donegal
Travellers Project
Main Office**



**Donegal Travellers
Project Child And
Family Hub**

**For more information click here:
[Donegal Travellers Project](#)**



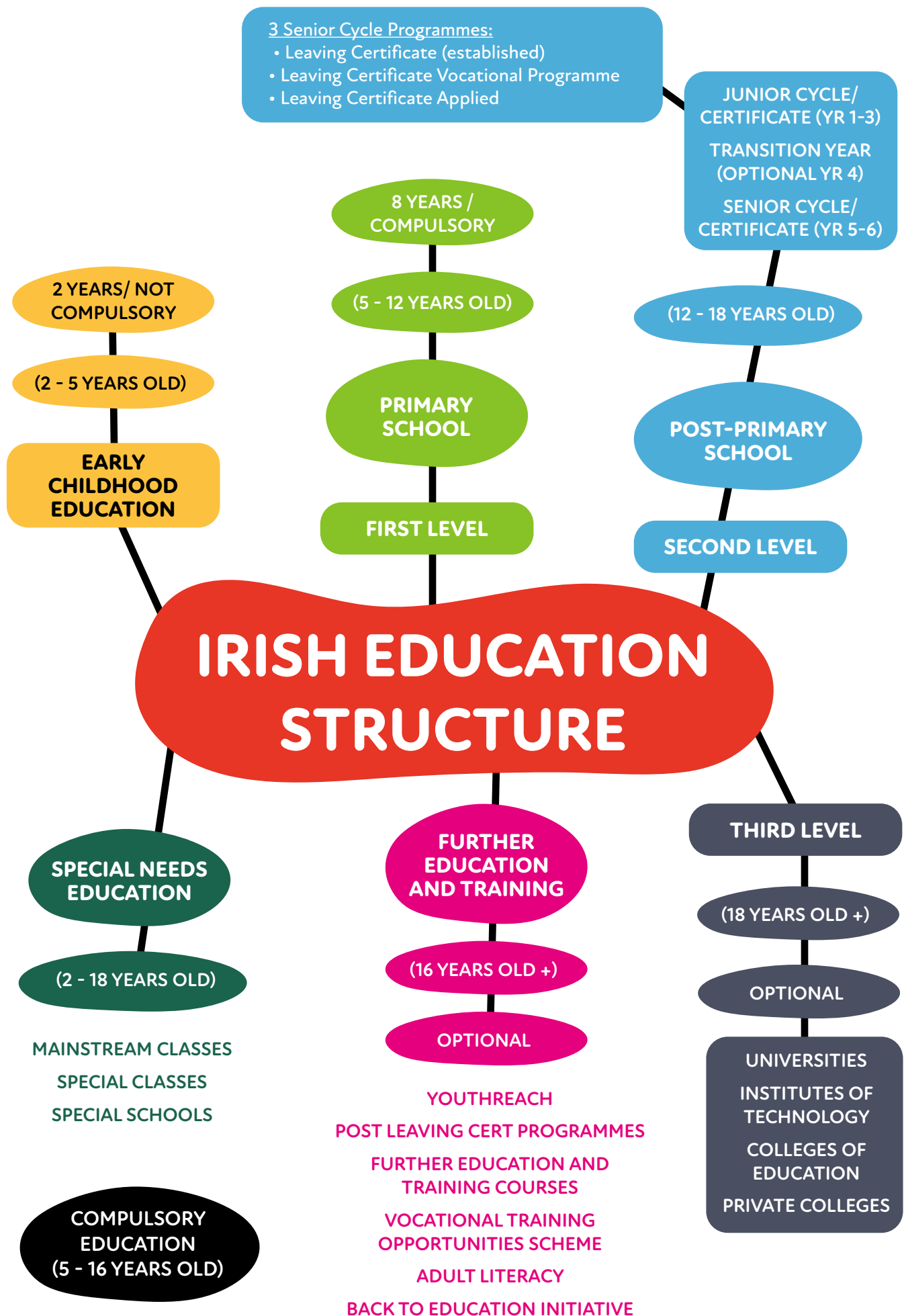
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OVERVIEW OF THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM





OVERVIEW OF THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

The Irish education system is made up of early childhood (pre-school), primary, post-primary (secondary), further education and training and third/higher level. **Education is free at all levels.** Parents are usually expected to pay for uniforms, school books and some activities. Education is also available for children with additional (special) educational needs.

COMPULSORY EDUCATION

The Irish Constitution recognises the family as the primary educator of the child. Parents must ensure that their child receives education. **Education is compulsory for all children in Ireland from the ages of 6 to 16 or until students have completed 3 years of post-primary/secondary education.** Parents must ensure that their children attend a recognised school from the age of 6 to the age of 16 or that they receive a certain minimum education.

CHILD BENEFIT AND EDUCATION

Child Benefit payment stops when a child reaches the age of 16 but is not in full-time education. When a child is 16 and 17, the parents/guardians will continue to receive Child Benefit for them as long as they are still in full-time education, Youthreach training or if they have a disability. The Child Benefit office will send a form which must be signed and stamped by the school to say the child is still enrolled and still attending school for the Child Benefit to continue to be paid. When a child is younger, the Child Benefit office will periodically send a review form seeking information about which school a child attends. This form needs to be signed and returned.

SCHOOLS

Schools in Ireland include religious schools, multi-denominational schools, non-denominational schools and schools which teach the curriculum through the Irish language. Almost all primary and post-primary schools are state-funded. The majority of these schools are owned and managed by religious bodies.

EQUALITY OF ACCESS

Children who are new to Ireland have the same right to access pre-school, primary and post-primary (secondary) education, irrespective of nationality, special educational needs, disability, language/accent, Traveller status, asylum-seeker/refugee status, religious/political beliefs and values, family, social or economic circumstances.

DISCRIMINATION

It is unlawful for education establishments to discriminate on the basis of religion, race and membership of the Traveller and Roma communities. Discrimination on any grounds, especially on the grounds of the colour, gender, religion, nationality, ethnicity, social or financial status of the child or parents is against Irish law.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND CONSCIENCE

Parents have the right to decide their children's religious education and upbringing. This right is protected by the Irish Constitution and the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). Most schools in County Donegal have a religious ethos which is either Roman Catholic, Church of Ireland or Presbyterian. However, pupils of every background are equally respected and valued. Parents have the right to opt their child out of religious instruction which does not fit with the beliefs of their family.



OVERVIEW OF THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM



PLACEMENT

Children starting school for the first time (at age 4 or 5) will be placed in Junior Infants. If your child has attended school in another country, or is older than this but has never attended school before, the principal will consider the child's age and previous education, and discuss with the parents to decide which class is best suited to the child.

ENGLISH SUPPORT

Young children learn English very quickly. Even if a child has very little English, they will normally be placed in a class with children the same age. At both primary and post-primary levels, additional language support is provided for students who do not speak English as their first language.

LANGUAGE OF EDUCATION

The main language of instruction in schools in Ireland is English. Irish language (Gaeilge) classes are a compulsory part of the curriculum. Pupils may not be required to learn Irish if they do not speak English or if they have received most or all of their primary school education outside of Ireland. Children with certain disabilities may also be exempt from learning Irish. Some schools teach every subject through the Irish language. These are called Gaelscoil/Gaelscoileanna.

ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Most schools cater for children with additional/special educational needs. At the time of enrolment, the school may ask for copies of medical and/or other professional reports so that additional resources can be provided. Extra supports may be available if a child is diagnosed with additional/special needs, such as Autism (see page 12 and pages 23 and 24). For more information click here: [National Council for Special Education \(NCSE\)](#)

REPEATING

A child can repeat a year for educational reasons and in special situations when the principal will decide with the parents, class teacher and resource teacher if a pupil would benefit from repeating.

PSYCHOLOGICAL SUPPORT

School psychologists are available at primary and post-primary level to work with teachers, parents and children in identifying educational needs. The psychologist will help the school to plan how to support the child.

DEIS SCHOOLS

A small number of primary and post-primary schools in County Donegal have been designated as DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools. The DEIS programme is aimed at providing additional supports for children and young people from disadvantaged communities. For more information click here:



MANAGEMENT

Schools are managed by Boards of Management which are answerable to the Minister for Education. Each school has a principal who is responsible for the day to day running of the school.

TEACHERS

Children are taught by teachers. At primary level, each class has a class teacher who teaches all the subjects. At post-primary level, pupils have different teachers for different subjects. Sometimes there is a classroom assistant. A class may also have a resource teacher to support children who need additional support in a particular subject area.

PUPILS

Classes in most primary and many post-primary schools in Ireland are mixed with boys and girls. Some post-primary schools are for boys only or for girls only.



DISCIPLINE

Every school has a code of behaviour which parents are asked to accept when their child joins the school. Corporal (physical) punishment in schools is against the law in Ireland. Disciplinary measures can include detention (the child remaining in school after hours) suspension (the child being temporarily removed from school) and expulsion (the child being permanently removed from school). A parent can appeal a suspension or expulsion to the Board of Management.



ABSENCE FROM SCHOOL

Parents and guardians are responsible for making sure their children attend school. It is important for children to attend school regularly to get the full benefit of education. If children miss too much school they may fall behind. Schools must keep attendance records for all students. Most schools require parents to provide a written note to the class teacher when a child is absent and give the reason for the absence. It is important for a parent to let the school know if the child is unwell or if they will be absent for a period of time. This can be done by telephone, note or through an online app such as Aladdin.

If a child is absent for more than 20 days in a school year, the school principal must inform the local educational welfare officer (EWO) with the Child and Family Agency, Tusla.

The EWO will contact the family to assess the reason for absences, and remind parents that children must attend school. If the parent fails to comply with a warning, they may be prosecuted in court. For more information click here: [Child and Family Agency, Tusla](#).

SUPPORT

If you are struggling to send your child to school, you can contact Donegal Travellers Project (DTP) to find out what additional supports are available to you.

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

OVERVIEW OF THE IRISH EDUCATION SYSTEM

SCHOOL YEAR AND HOLIDAYS

The school year runs from September to June (primary) and September to May (post-primary). It is made up of three terms. The first term starts at the beginning of September and continues until December (Christmas). Schools close for Christmas holidays on or around 21 December and reopen on or around 6 January.

The second term runs from early January to March or April (Easter). Schools close for Easter holidays on or around the Friday before Easter week for approximately two weeks.

The final term runs from after Easter until the end of May (post-primary) or June (primary).

In the middle of each term there may be a short holiday called half-term or mid-term. These occur at the end of October and in mid-February. At the start of the school year, the school will give parents a list of the days that it will be closed during the year.

SCHOOL UNIFORMS

Most primary schools and almost all post-primary schools have a uniform which must be worn. These must be provided by the parents. Some schools, particularly post-primary/secondary schools, also expect parents/guardians to purchase a school jacket as part of the uniform.

Physical education (PE) classes require a change of clothes, such as a tracksuit or clothes suitable for sports and exercise. Some schools have a uniform tracksuit.



TEXTBOOKS

Most classes will require a separate textbook, exercise books, pens and pencils. Some schools offer a textbook rental scheme. In this scheme, the school provides the books each year for a reduced cost and at the end of the school year they are returned to the school in good condition. Other equipment may also be necessary. This has to be provided by the parents. Schools expect pupils to be equipped with a schoolbag, copy/exercise books and some pens and pencils on the first day.

SCHOOL LUNCHES

Typically pupils bring their own lunches to school. It is important to give your child healthy food and drink for morning and lunch breaks. Many schools ask parents not to give children sweets, chocolate, crisps or fizzy drinks for lunch. Some schools operate school lunch programmes, such as Carambola, in which a healthy lunch is provided for the child daily. Parents who need support to access the school lunch programme website to change this order to better suit their child, can ask for support from the school or contact the DTP.



SUPPORT

For support sourcing school lunches, uniforms, text books etc. contact the Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

HOMWORK

Most schools give daily homework to children which is recorded in a homework diary. A parent or guardian is usually expected to sign the homework when it is completed. When homework is not done the teacher makes contact with the parent or guardian. Some schools operate a homework club outside of the school day.

EVALUATION OF STUDENTS

In primary school, children are assessed on an ongoing basis. In post-primary/secondary school students sit two State examinations. At the end of the 3 years junior cycle programme, students receive a Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. At the end of the final two years of the senior cycle, students sit one of three state examinations; the Leaving Certificate, The Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and are awarded a Leaving Certificate.

COMMUNICATING WITH PARENTS



Schools typically communicate with parents by sending notes home with the child. These notes can be written in the child's homework diary or printed on a separate sheet. You should check your child's school bag each day for notes. Many schools now use an app called Aladdin Schools Connect to communicate with parents. This app can be installed on a smart phone, laptop computer or iPad. Parents with limited or no English could also install a Google Translate app to translate these messages from the school into their own language. For more information click here: [Aladdin](#) and here: [Google Translate App](#)

PARENT TEACHER MEETINGS

In most schools, teachers meet with parents once every school year. The school will let you know the date and the time. This is an important meeting and you should try your best to attend. These meetings are a very helpful way of finding out the areas in which your child is doing well and where they may need additional support.



SCHOOL TRANSPORT

Children who do not live close to their nearest school can avail of the School Transport Scheme. The scheme is operated by Bus Éireann. It is free to children who hold a valid medical card. Applications for primary and post-primary school transport must be made online via the Bus Éireann website. The closing date for school transport applications is the last Friday in April before the next school year. For more information click here: [Bus Éireann School Transport Scheme](#)

HOMESCHOOLING

If a parent decides not to send their child to school – or to withdraw them from a school they are already attending – they will need to register their intention to do so with the Education Welfare Service of Tusla. Once registered, they will be visited by someone who will discuss their reasons for home-schooling. Every child in Ireland has the right to access education and to be educated. For more information click here: [Tusla Education Welfare Service \(EWS\)](#)

SUPPORT

If you wish to meet with the teacher to discuss your child's education but you are concerned that you are not sufficiently fluent in English, contact the DTP Roma Project and we will do our best to support you either with an interpreter or with written translations to ensure best outcomes for children. Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

FINANCIAL SUPPORTS

Different schemes can help with the costs of going to school. Most schemes are for students whose families are dependent on social welfare or similar payments.

Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance

The Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance (BTSCFA) is an allowance to help parents meet the cost of uniforms and footwear for children going to school. To qualify for this allowance, the parent or guardian must be receiving certain social welfare benefits or payments for training, employment schemes or adult education and the total household income must be below a certain amount. The BTSCFA is administered by the Department of Social Protection. Where people qualify automatically for the allowance, it is generally paid in the first weeks of July. This payment will be made through the bank or post office. Where a parent does

not automatically qualify, it is necessary to apply for the allowance online through the mywelfare.ie website. The payment may not come through until September, after schools have re-opened. To make this application it is necessary to have a verified MyGovID identification. For more information click here: [Back To School Clothing and Footwear Allowance \(BTSCFA\)](#) and here: [MyGovID application](#)



Back to School Clothing & Footwear Allowance

Apply now

Exemption from examination fees

Students whose parent or guardian holds a current medical card are not eligible for examination fees for Junior or Leaving Certificate.

SUPPORTS FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

These are some of the supports that may be available if your child is diagnosed with additional/special needs, such as Autism.

Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA)

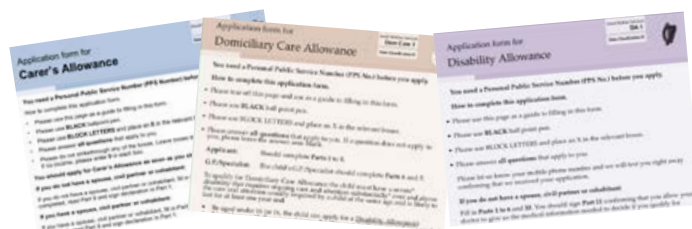
The Domiciliary Care Allowance (DCA) is a monthly payment for a child aged under 16 with a severe disability, who requires ongoing care and attention, substantially over and above the care and attention usually required by a child of the same age. It is not means tested. To qualify the child must be under the age of 16 and live at home with the person claiming the allowance. It is administered by the Department of Social Protection. For more information click here: [Domiciliary Care Allowance form \(pdf\)](#).

Carer's Allowance

Carer's Allowance is a payment to people on low incomes who are looking after a person who needs support because of age, disability or illness (including mental illness). If you qualify for Carer's Allowance you may also qualify for free household benefits (if you are living with the person you are caring for) and a Free Travel Pass. Carer's Allowance is not taken into account in the assessment for a medical card.

Disability Allowance

Disability Allowance is a weekly allowance paid to people with a disability. You can get Disability Allowance from 16 years of age. If you are in education when you turn 16, you can continue to attend school. If you qualify for Disability Allowance you may also get extra social welfare benefits.



SUPPORT:

For information on how to access school transport in County Donegal, how to acquire a MyGovID identification or on how to avail of any of the special financial supports contact the Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

CHILD CARE

Before a child reaches pre-school age there are many private options for full and part-time child care in a range of settings, including Day Nursery, Creche, Montessori, Playgroup and Naíonraí (through the Irish language). In most cases, parents are expected to pay for this service. There are supports available for parents who need childcare in order to work, through the National Childcare Scheme. For more information click here: [National Childcare Scheme](#).

ABOUT PRE-SCHOOL

Pre-school is optional in Ireland.

Every child can avail of up to 2 years free pre-school care and education before they start primary school. This programme is called **Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE)**. An ECCE Preschool can provide a space for children to develop skills through play-based learning as a preparation for attending primary school. For more information click here: [Early Childhood Care and Education Programme \(ECCE\)](#)

ELIGIBILITY

The ECCE pre-school programme is available to all children from the September after the child has turned 2 years and 8 months. The child can be no older than 5 years and 6 months on or before 30 June of the programme year.



EXCEPTIONS

If your child has special educational needs you can apply for what is known as an 'over age exemption' to the ECCE scheme. This means that in individual cases some children may be allowed to stay on the ECCE scheme past 5 years and 6 months. **Your child is still legally required to attend primary school once they have reached the age of 6 years old.**

HOURS

The ECCE programme runs from September to June each year. Typically it offers 3 hours per day, 5 days per week over 38 weeks per year. These can take place in the morning or in the afternoon.

SUPPORT

To find out more about all your Child Care options, St Gabriel's and all the pre-schools that provide the free ECCE pre-school programme in County Donegal, contact the Donegal County Childcare Committee or the Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403



EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

FINDING A PRE-SCHOOL

The ECCE programme is provided in a large number of early years settings including pre-schools, crèches, Montessori groups and playgroups. To find the complete list of Donegal pre-schools that provide the ECCE programme contact the **Donegal County Childcare Committee**. Most pre-schools host open days in the Spring where parents are invited to visit and meet with the staff. Enrolment (registration) of new pupils usually takes place at this time to ensure there will be a place for the child at the start of the next school year. For more information click here: [Childcare Committee County Donegal](#) and here: [National Childcare Scheme](#)

REGISTRATION FOR PRE-SCHOOL

To secure a place for your child in an ECCE pre-school, apply to a participating pre-school. **You will need a copy of your child's birth certificate or passport and PPS number.** You must register each year if you wish your child to attend pre-school for two years. If your child does not have a PPS number, contact Joleen or Barry at DTP for support.

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

If your child needs additional support, your pre-school provider can apply, in partnership with you, for supports under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM). For more information click here: [Access and Inclusion Model \(AIM\)](#)

ST GABRIEL'S PRE-SCHOOL

St Gabriel's intercultural Pre-School in Letterkenny is managed by the Donegal Travellers Project. It offers the ECCE programme in morning and afternoon sessions which take place in a beautiful outdoor setting. St Gabriel's welcomes children from the age of 2 years and 6 months up to 5 years old.



St. Gabriel's
Preschool



PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION



STARTING PRIMARY SCHOOL

Children can start primary school from the age of 4 and a half. Most children start primary school in the September before they turn six years old.

Children must have started primary school by the age of 6 years.

CHOOSING A SCHOOL

Most primary schools are state-funded. They include religious schools, non-denominational schools, multi-denominational schools and Gaelscoileanna (schools that teach through the Irish language).

There are over 170 primary schools in County Donegal. Most primary schools have an Irish name (for example: Scoil Mhuire). Most schools have a website which will give more information about the school. For more information click here: [Find A School Map](#)

ABOUT PRIMARY SCHOOL

Primary school is also known as National School. It is the start of compulsory education in Ireland. Children attend primary school between the ages of 4 and 12. Primary school lasts for eight years. It starts with a two year infant cycle followed by six years from first to sixth class. Children move to the next class at the end of each school year.

THE SCHOOL DAY

Primary schools open from Monday to Friday. Classes start between 9am and 9.30am. There is normally a morning break at around 11am and a lunch break at 12.30pm or 1pm. The school day ends at 1.40pm-2pm for children in the two year infant cycle and at 2.40-3pm for older classes.

CURRICULUM

The curriculum taught in primary schools aims to give a child a love of learning that will last a lifetime. School is meant to be a pleasant and fun experience. It is centred on the child.



SUPPORT

For support choosing a school and enrolling your child in school contact the Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

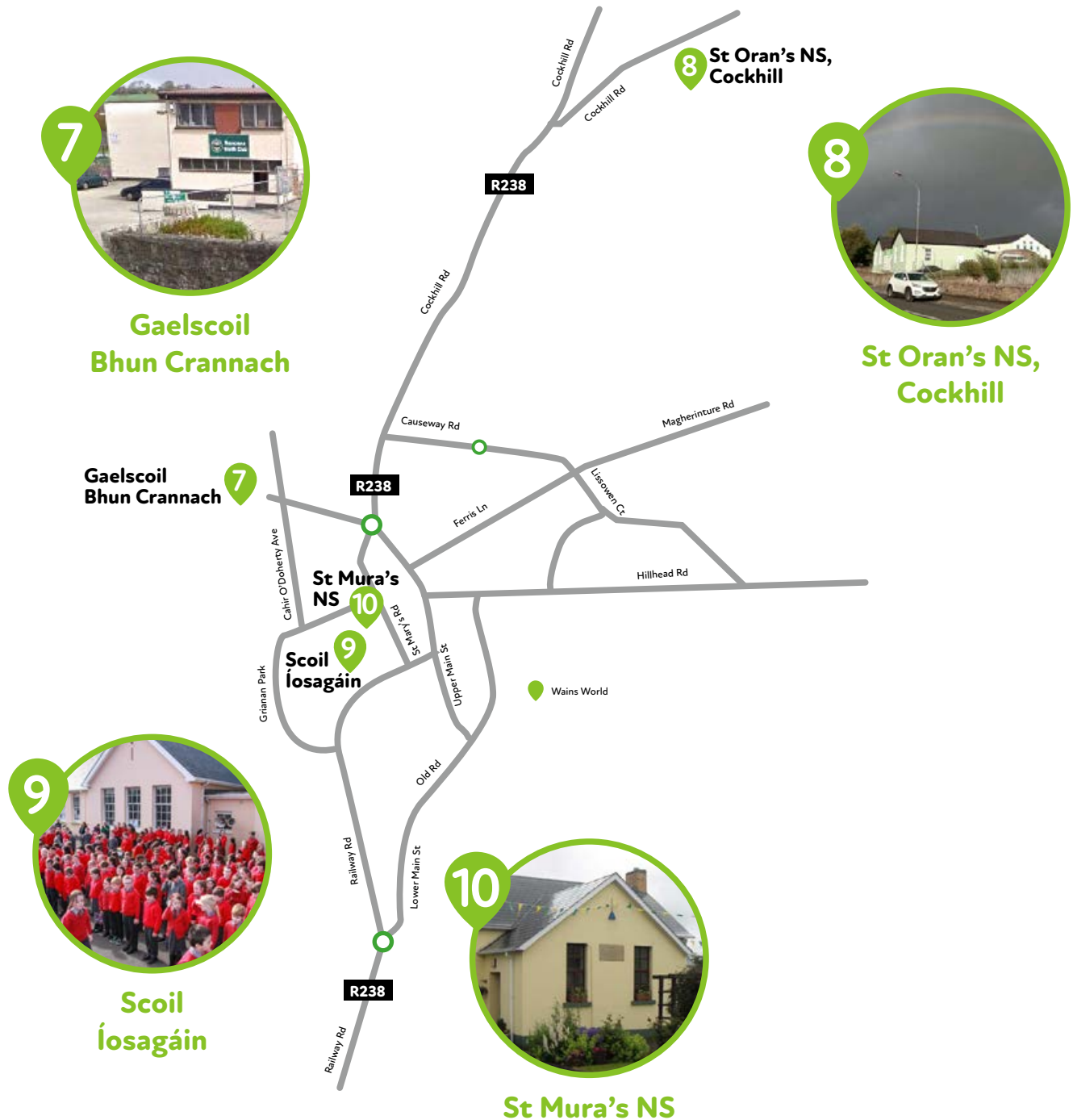
Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

MAP OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LETTERKENNY



MAP OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BUNCRANA



PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

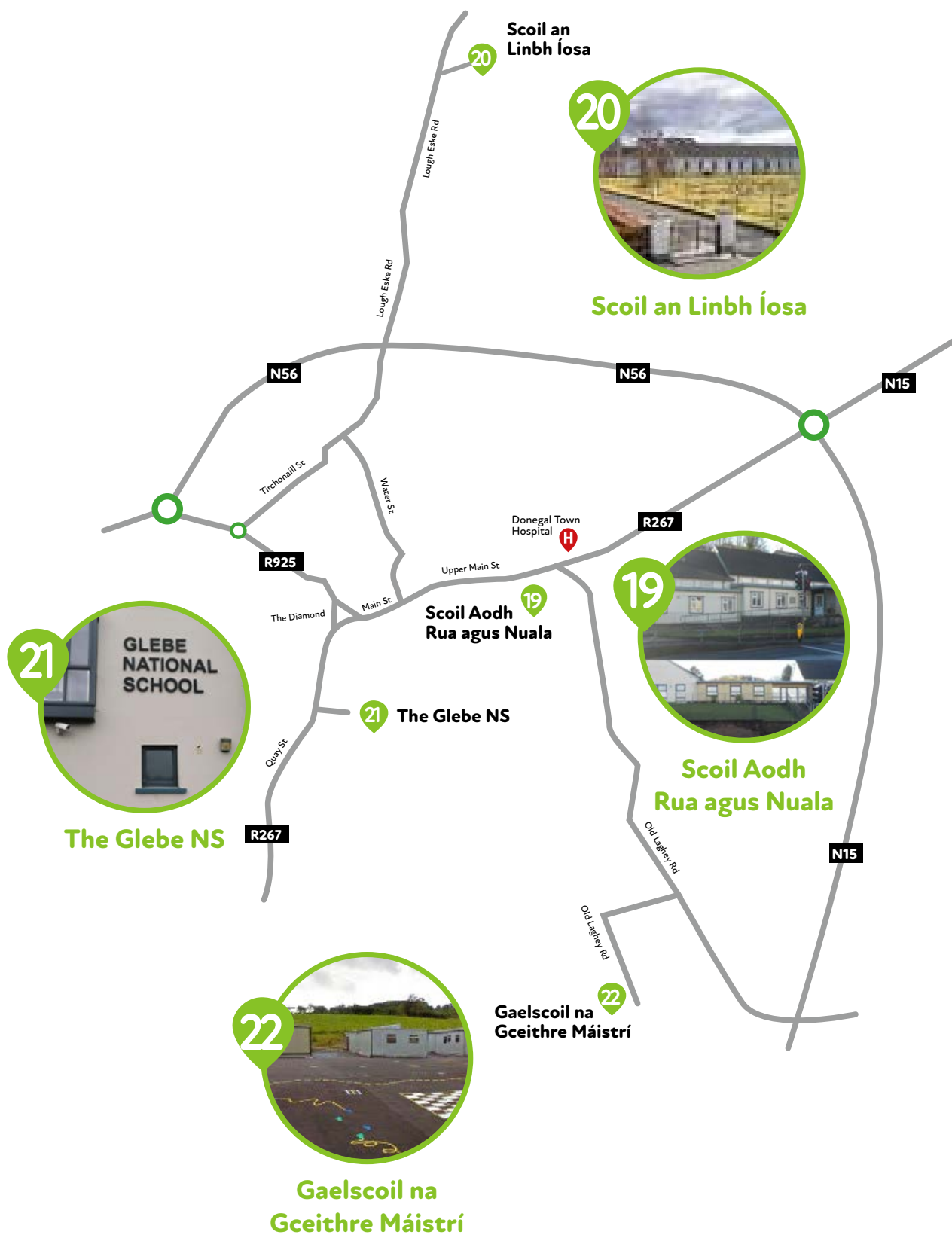
MAP OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BALLYBOFEY/ STRANORLAR



MAP OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BALLYSHANNON



MAP OF PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN DONEGAL TOWN



PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

ENROLLING YOUR CHILD

Most schools have an enrolment application form that you should complete to apply for a place for the following September. Schools usually have information on their social media pages, for example Facebook, or on a sign outside the school building, about the closing date to apply for a place. Schools consider late applications if there are places available. If you apply to a school mid-year or after the admissions period has passed, the school must accept the child if there is a place available.

ENROLMENT FOR OLDER CHILDREN

Most schools also have an application form for older children, or children starting in the middle of the school year rather than in September, if your family have just arrived in Ireland, or moved to Donegal from somewhere else in Ireland. If the school you choose does not have a place, your child may be placed on a waiting list.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMES AND HOMEWORK CLUBS

Donegal Travellers Project (DTP) runs an afterschool programme for primary school students. For more information about the DTP afterschool programme and school homework clubs contact the DTP.

SUPPORT

If you cannot find a school place for your child so they can access their right to education, contact the local Education Welfare officer (EWO) or Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403



POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

ABOUT POST-PRIMARY EDUCATION

Post-primary schools are sometimes called secondary schools. **All children are entitled to free post-primary education.** Most post-primary schools are funded by the Irish State. Post-primary education in Ireland lasts five or six years. Typically, students begin post-primary education after they have completed primary school at 12 or 13 years old. Post -primary education comprises of a three year Junior Cycle programme followed by a two or three year Senior Cycle programme. **Post-primary education is compulsory until the student has completed the first 3 years of post-primary education or has reached the age of 16.**

POST PRIMARY CURRICULUM

Students study a wide range of subjects with different teachers. The choice of subjects can vary in different schools. In most schools, students are streamed into different classes based on the school's assessment of their ability. Post-primary schools offer a range of facilities which might vary from school to school such as particular sports, library, language laboratory and access to computers. Many schools also offer extra-curricular activities outside of school hours such as sports, music and debating.

THE SCHOOL DAY

Post-primary schools are open from Monday to Friday. Classes start at around 9am. There is normally a morning break at around 11am and a lunch break of up to an hour long at 12.30pm or 1pm. The school day ends between 4pm and 4.30pm.

LOWER LEVEL/JUNIOR CYCLE

All students do the first three years or Junior Cycle. The Junior Cycle offers a choice from a wide range of subjects and short courses. Students follow the three-year programme which leads to the award of Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA) award or Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) awards for students with special educational needs. These are a combination of school and state assessment.

TRANSITION YEAR (OPTIONAL)

An optional one-year programme called the Transition Year follows the Junior Cycle in most post-primary schools. The Transition Year (TY) Programme is a unique programme to each school. It prepares students for independent learning and life. Students who do not want to take part in this programme move into the two-year Senior Cycle programme.

SENIOR CYCLE The two-year senior cycle programme offers a wide range of subjects which are available at two levels; ordinary level and higher level. Two subjects, Irish and Mathematics, can also be studied at Foundation Level. It ends with students sitting the Leaving Certificate examination. **The Leaving Certificate examination is required to continue education at universities and other institutes of higher education. A student can chose to study one of three Leaving Certificate programmes.**

1. LEAVING CERTIFICATE

The Leaving Certificate (Leaving Cert) programme aims to provide learners with a broad, balanced education while also offering them a chance to specialise towards particular higher education and career options. This examination takes place every June.

2. LEAVING CERTIFICATE VOCATIONAL PROGRAMME(LCVP)

The LCVP programme has a special focus on enterprise and preparation for working life. The programme combines Leaving Certificate subjects with three compulsory link modules on enterprise education, preparation for work and work experience. For more information click here: [Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme \(LCVP\)](#)

3. LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED

The Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme is available to students who wish to follow a programme with a strong practical and vocational emphasis. It is aimed at preparing students for adult and working life. Assessment is continuous and there is a final examination in June. For more information click here: [Leaving Certificate Applied \(LCA\)](#)

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION



If you apply to a school mid-year or after the admissions period has passed, the school must accept your child if they have a place available.

Schools may request additional documents such as a birth certificate or school reports, or an educational assessment.

The school must reply to you within 21 days in writing to let you know whether your child has been accepted or if they have been placed on a waiting list. If a school refuses to enrol your child you can appeal the decision.

CHOOSING A SCHOOL

Schools differ in religious ethos, language of instruction, gender (all girls, all boys or mixed). Schools can also vary in the subjects they provide. The availability of senior cycle programmes can also differ between schools. All schools must teach to the Leaving Certificate. They may or may not offer:

1. Transition Year
2. Leaving Certificate Applied
3. Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP)

Most schools have a website with information about their ethos, policies, curriculum and extra-curricular activities on offer. If the information is not available online, you can contact the school directly and ask for the information you need.

Most schools will arrange for you and your child to visit the school you have selected to make sure that you like it. These visits often happen at primary school level. For more information click here: [Post primary schools in Co Donegal](#)

When you find a school, contact it directly to find if there are places available.

APPLICATION

Every school sets the dates during which you can make an application, but they can accept students who apply later if there are places available. If the school does not have enough places, it will give priority according to its admissions policy. You should apply in writing to the school for a school place. If the school has an application form you should apply using this form.



SUPPORT

If you are having difficulty finding a school place for your child, you can contact the Education Welfare Service of the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) or Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403



MAP OF POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN LETTERKENNY



1

Errigal College



3

Coláiste Ailigh



2

St Eunan's College



4

Loreto Secondary School

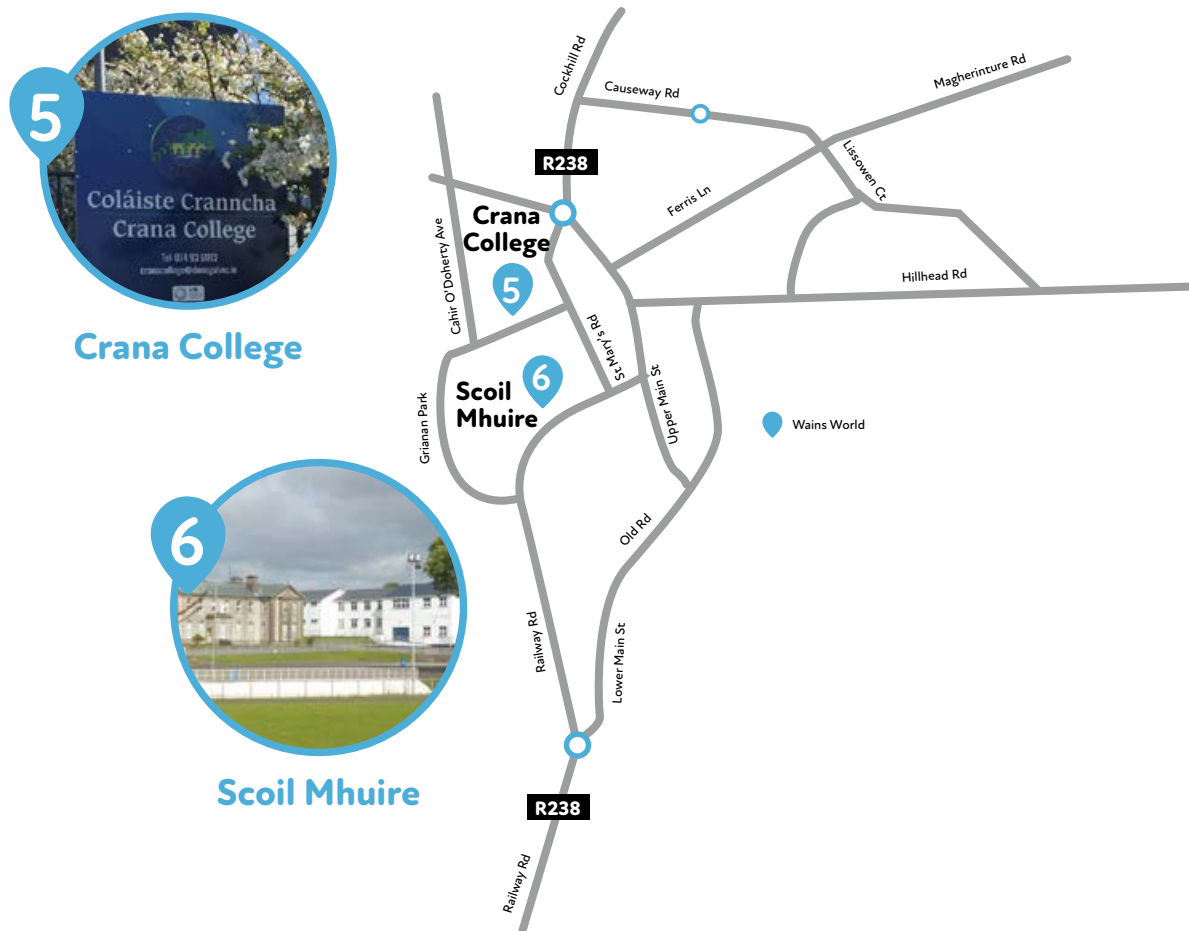


AFTER SCHOOL

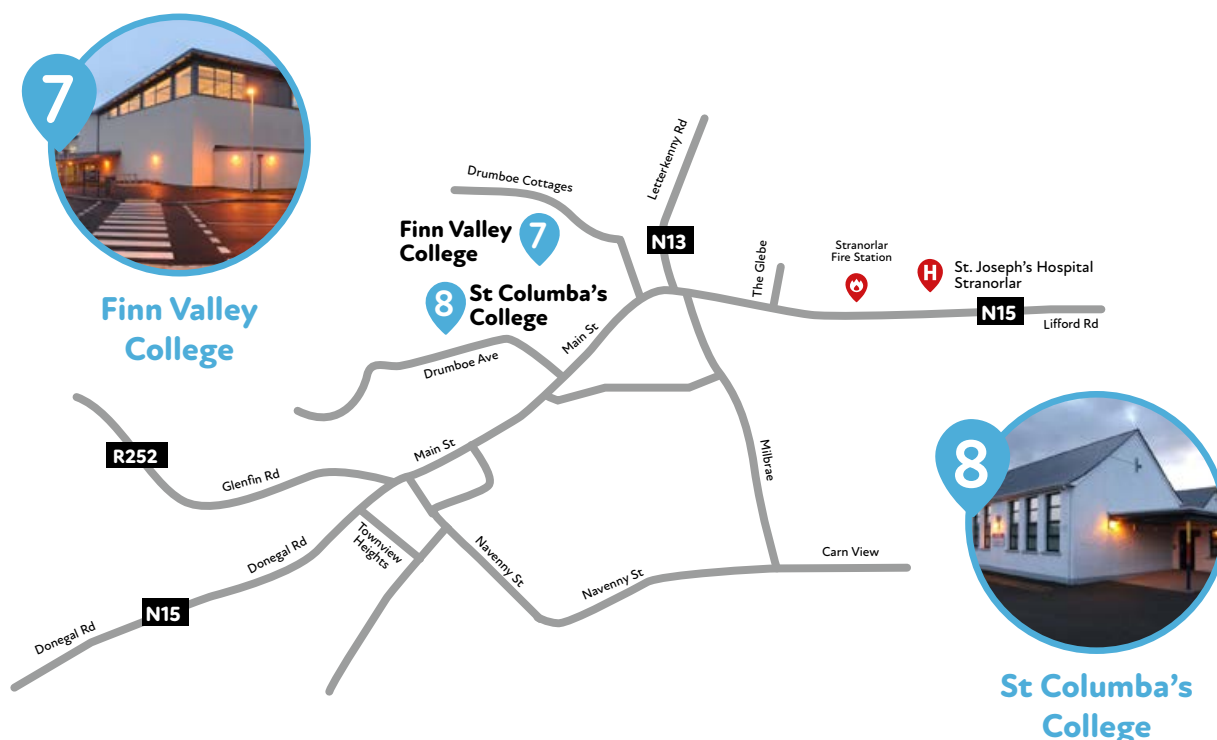
The DTP/Involve Letterkenny Youth Project is a collaboration between DTP and Involve, the national Traveller youth organisation. It offers Traveller and Roma teens a range of interesting activities and outings. To find out more contact the DTP/Involve Youth Worker at Donegal Travellers Project.

POST-PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

MAP OF POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BUNCRANA



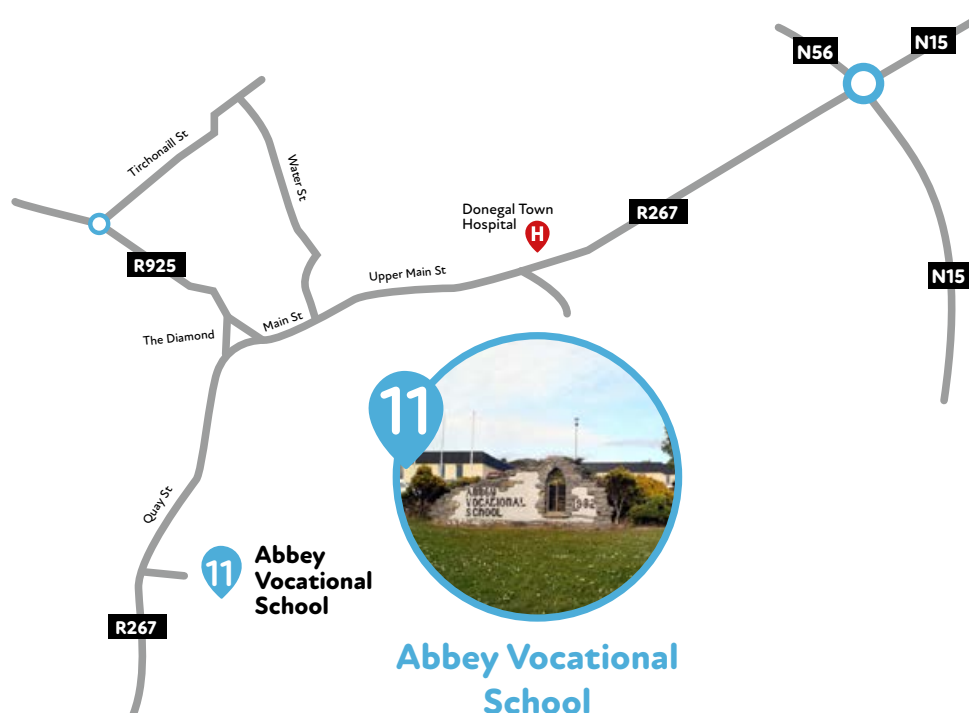
MAP OF POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BALLYBOFEY / STRANORLAR



MAP OF POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN BALLYSHANNON / BUNDORAN



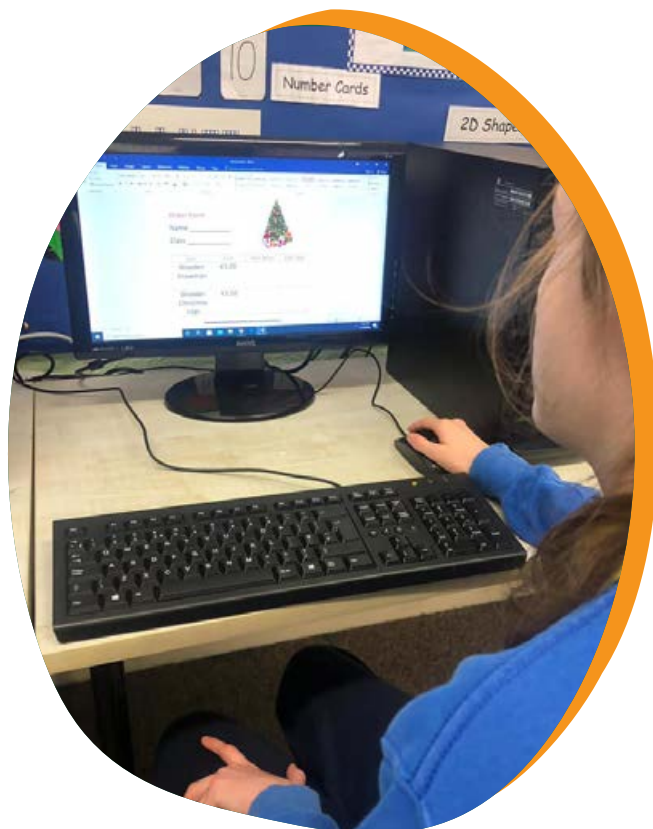
MAP OF POST-PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN DONEGAL TOWN



SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

All children can have additional needs at some time in their lives. Special educational needs is the term used when a child has a learning difficulty or disability that makes it more challenging to learn compared to the majority of children of the same age.



ABOUT SPECIAL NEEDS EDUCATION

All children – including children with disabilities and children with special needs – have a legal right to free primary education. Special needs education means the special educational arrangements which are in place for children with disabilities and additional needs. Education for children with special needs may be provided in three settings:

1. Mainstream classes in mainstream schools
2. Special classes in mainstream schools
3. Special schools

MAINSTREAM CLASSES

Many children with disabilities or additional/special needs are taught in mainstream classes in mainstream schools. Children with additional/special needs may get additional help from learning support and resource teachers and from special needs assistants (SNAs). If your child has special educational needs you should talk to the school principal.

SPECIAL CLASSES IN MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

Some children attend special classes in mainstream schools. These classes generally are smaller. Many primary and post-primary schools in County Donegal have special classes to cater for children with additional needs such as autism. For more information click here: [Primary schools with special classes](#) and here: [National Council for Special Education \(NCSE\)](#)



SUPPORT

To see a list of all the schools which have special classes visit the National Council for Special Education website (www.ncse.ie) or contact The Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

ST BERNADETTE'S SPECIAL SCHOOL, LETTERKENNY

St. Bernadette's Special School in Letterkenny, caters for children aged from 4 –18 years of age with mild to moderate learning disabilities. The school follows the national primary curriculum ensuring the students get an excellent primary school education experience catered towards their individual needs. It also provides a **Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement** equivalent called L2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs) which is designed for students with mild to moderate learning difficulties. Senior students complete a **School Leavers' Programme**, meaning students graduate with a recognised certificate of education. For more information click here: [St Bernadette's Special School](#)

BELOW MAP SHOWS THE LOCATION OF
ST BERNADETTE'S SPECIAL SCHOOL AND
LS SPECIAL SCHOOL
NNY

LITTLE ANGELS SPECIAL SCHOOL, LETTERKENNY

Little Angels Special School in Letterkenny is a multi-denominational school which caters for students with moderate, severe and profound learning disabilities and students with autism. Pupils range in age from 3-18 years. There are sixteen classes. **Little Angels School also has two pre-school classes for pupils with Autism.** For more information click here: [Little Angels School](#)

SUPPORT

A school transport scheme is available for children with special needs. For support applying for this transport scheme contact the school principal or the Donegal Travellers Project Roma or Education worker. For support applying for a school place contact Donegal Travellers Project

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

For more information click here: [School Transport for children with special educational needs](#)



FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

In Ireland, Further Education and Training is provided to learners who have completed their initial schooling and are not participating in higher education. Provision includes adult literacy and basic education, programmes for early school leavers and the unemployed, vocational training, and national apprenticeship programmes. Awards are made at Levels 1 to 6 of the National Qualifications Framework.

YOUTHREACH

The Youthreach programme provides early school leavers with the core skills needed for further learning and prepares them to progress to further education, training or employment. The programme is open to young people between the ages of 16 and 20 who have left school without any formal qualification. Subjects include art and craft, catering, computers, childcare, hairdressing, health and fitness, literacy, numeracy, office skills, outdoor pursuits, personal development, woodcraft and many more. Work experience is also an important part of the Youthreach programme. Participants are paid weekly training and meal allowances and may be eligible for travel and accommodation allowances. There are six Youthreach centres in County Donegal; Letterkenny, Lifford, Buncrana, Glengad, Gortahork and Ballyshannon. For more information click here: [Donegal Education and Training Board \(ETB\)](#)

BACK TO EDUCATION INITIATIVE

The Back To Education Initiative (BTEI) offers part-time further education courses for adults and young people over 16 who have left school with few or no formal qualifications or low literacy levels. You can take part in BTEI if you are working and on a low income. In County Donegal all BTEI courses are offered through the Education and Training Board FET centres in Letterkenny, Ballyshannon, Donegal Town, Stranorlar, Ballybofey, Gortahork, Gweedore, Milford, Buncrana, Glengad, Lifford and Killybegs. For more information click here: [Donegal Education and Training Board \(ETB\)](#)

VOCATIONAL TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES SCHEME (VTOS)

The Vocational Training and Opportunities Scheme is aimed in particular at unemployed people who are early school leavers. This scheme provides a range of courses to meet the education and training needs of participants. It gives participants opportunities to improve their general level of education, gain certification, develop their skills and prepare for employment, self-employment and further education and training. Many VTOS courses lead to qualifications from Leaving Certificate to awards at level 3-6 on the NFQ. VTOS courses in Donegal take place in Letterkenny, Milford, Gortahork, Donegal Town, Ballyshannon and Buncrana. For more information click here: [Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme \(VTOS\) Donegal](#)

YOUTHSCAPE

Youthscape is a cross-border programme that supports 14-24 year olds from all backgrounds to build self-confidence, promote employability and develop cross-community engagement. The Youthscape programme runs in Ballybofey and Letterkenny. Participants gain OCN (Open College Network Northern Ireland) Level 1 qualification which is recognised in the Republic of Ireland. **To find out more contact the Donegal Youth Service Office: 074 9129630.** For more information click here: [Donegal Youth Service](#)

SUPPORT

To find out more about any these programmes visit Donegal Education and Training Board, www.donegaletb.ie or contact Donegal ETB (www.donegaletb.ie) or Donegal Travellers Project

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403





OPEN COLLEGE NETWORK (NORTHERN IRELAND)

National Framework of Qualifications

Irish Register of Qualifications

CLASSES OF AWARD

- Major Awards:** named in the outer rings, are the principal class of awards made at a level
- Minor Awards:** are for partial completion of the outcomes for a Major Award
- Supplemental Awards:** are for learning that is additional to a Major Award
- Special Purpose Awards:** are for relatively narrow or purpose-specific achievement
- Professional Awards:** these are for occupation-orientated qualifications including apprenticeships

IRISH REGISTER OF QUALIFICATIONS

For more information on:

- Qualifications
- Providers
- Courses

visit www.iriq.ie

A GUIDE FOR THE ROMA COMMUNITY IN COUNTY DONEGAL 29

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING COURSES

Further Education and Training (FET) offers a wide variety of lifelong education options to anyone over the age of 16. FET includes apprenticeships, traineeships, Post Leaving Cert (PLC) courses, community and adult education as well as core literacy and numeracy services. FET courses and programmes are provided through the Education and Training Board (ETB) network throughout the country, through other local providers and online through SOLAS eCollege (www.solas.ie). Awards for FET courses range from NFQ levels 1 to 6.

You are eligible to take part in an FET course if you are unemployed, redundant or no longer in full-time education. Donegal ETB is the largest FET service provider in the county. There are FET centres in Letterkenny, Ballyshannon, Donegal Town, Stranorlar, Ballybofey, Gortahork, Gweedore, Milford, Buncrana, Glengad, Lifford and Killybegs.

If you get a place on an FET training course you may be paid an allowance for the duration of your course. For more information click here: [Further Education and Training \(FET\)](#)

POST LEAVING CERT PROGRAMME (PLC)

The PLC programme is a full time programme for young people who have completed their Leaving Certificate and for adults returning to education. Most PLC programmes in Co Donegal are delivered by Donegal ETB. PLC courses can be in areas such as Childcare, Business, Nursing, Sport and Recreation. PLC courses are currently taking place at Errigal College, Letterkenny, Finn Valley College, Stranorlar and St Catherine's Vocational School Killybegs. All the courses are offered at NFQ level 5 and include an element of work experience. For more information click here: [Post Leaving Cert Programme \(PLC\)](#)



ADULT LITERACY

Free literacy and numeracy classes are provided nationwide by the ETB (Education and Training Board) adult literacy service. The ETB adult literacy service involves literacy tutors providing tuition to adult students and focuses on the needs of the individual learner. Classes are open to all. Contact your nearest FET centre to find the class nearest you. FET centres are located in Letterkenny, Ballyshannon, Donegal Town, Stranorlar, Ballybofey, Gortahork, Gweedore, Milford, Buncrana, Glengad, Lifford and Killybegs. For more information click here: [ETB Adult Literacy Service](#)



SUPPORT

For information about all FET courses in County Donegal, including eligibility conditions and allowances, contact Donegal ETB (www.donegaletb.ie) or Donegal Travellers Project;

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

A wide range of institutions provide third level education. The university sector, the technological sector and the colleges of education are all funded by the state. Third-level education is free except for a registration fee. There are also charges for examinations and student services.

UNIVERSITIES

There are eight universities in Ireland. They are University College Dublin (UCD), National University of Ireland, Galway (NUI Galway), University College Cork (UCC), National University of Ireland, Maynooth (NUI Maynooth), Trinity College, Dublin (TCD), the University of Limerick (UL) and Dublin City University (DCU). These universities offer a broad choice of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. A number of Colleges of Education provide specialised training for primary school teachers. Students apply for the college/university place of their choice through the Central Applications Office (CAO) during their final year in post-primary school. The CAO issues offers of places based on Leaving Certificate results. Institutes of Technologies and Universities award their own degrees and other awards. These are validated by QQI ranging from Level 5 upwards (see page 26).

TECHNOLOGY SECTOR

The technology sector includes technological universities (TUs) and Institutes of Technology (ITs). They provide programmes of education and training at certificate, diploma and degree levels and higher in areas including business, engineering, science, linguistics, nursing and music.

LETTERKENNY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

Letterkenny Institute of Technology (LYIT) is one of 11 institutes of Technology located around the country. LYIT offers full-time undergraduate and post graduate courses across a broad range of subjects including science, design, engineering, health, law, computer science, food and sports. LYIT also offers part-time and on-line courses. For more information click here: [Letterkenny Institute of Technology \(LYIT\)](#)



ACCESS AND LEARNING SUPPORTS (LYIT)

The Learning Support Unit at Letterkenny Institute of Technology offers Access programmes for adult learners who have little or no formal education qualifications eg Junior or Leaving Certificate and who would like to continue to third level education. These courses are designed to help students develop a sound educational foundation and to give them a taste of all the courses available to them on completion of their access year. Access programmes provide academic supports in subject areas like Maths, Learning Skills and Information, Communications Technology (ICT). Students are also offered financial help and mentoring to help them stay on track and to ensure they succeed in their studies. The Access Officer at LYIT is Brian McGonagle. For more information click here: [The Curve Learning and Support Unit, LYIT](#)

ACCESS OFFICE AND LEARNING SUPPORTS (SLIGO IT)

The Access Office at Institute of Technology Sligo also co-ordinates a range of learning supports, financial supports and programmes which are targeted at students with disabilities and school leavers from disadvantaged backgrounds. David Friel, a Donegal Traveller and the first Irish Traveller in the north west to achieve a formal Masters qualification, is an academic tutor in the Access Office at Sligo IT which supports Travellers and Roma accessing third level education. For more information click here: [Access Office, Institute of Technology Sligo](#)



THIRD LEVEL EDUCATION

A number of initiatives are available to provide financial assistance to students at third level education.

SPRINGBOARD+

Springboard+ offers a wide range of free higher education courses across over 30 universities, technological universities and colleges, including LYIT and Sligo IT. They are targeted at people who are unemployed or self-employed and those looking to return to the workforce. You can also apply for a Springboard course if you are working but you must pay a 10 per cent contribution towards the course fee.

Springboard+ courses are offered across a range of areas where there are employment opportunities. For more information click here: [Springboard Courses](#)

TUITION FEES

Most undergraduate students attending publicly funded third-level courses do not have to pay tuition fees. To qualify for free fees, you must meet certain criteria with regard to residency, nationality and immigration status and course requirements. If you do not qualify for free fees you may still be eligible for *EU* fee rates. EU fee rates are set by each individual third-level educational institution.

MAINTENANCE GRANT

The SUSI ((Student Universal Support Ireland) provides financial support for day to day living costs of students. It is payable directly to students monthly, throughout the college year. The SUSI grant is means tested. It is also available for mature students. For more information click here: [Student Universal Support Ireland \(SUSI\)](#)

STUDENT ASSISTANCE FUND

The Student Assistance Fund is for students who may be unable to continue their studies due to financial hardship. Applications for funding should be made by the individual student to the access/disability officer in their college. For more information click here: [Student Assistance Fund](#)



BACK TO EDUCATION ALLOWANCE

If you are over 23 and wish to return to education, places are reserved for mature students in Irish third level colleges. Depending on your circumstances you may be eligible for free fees. If you are planning to study full-time you may be eligible for a student grant. If you are receiving an unemployment, one-parent family or disability payment, the Back to Education Allowance (BTEA) allows you to study at second and third level without losing your benefits. For more information click here: [Back to Education Allowance \(BTEA\)](#)

STUDENT LOAN

For all information about student finance visit the Higher Education Authority (HEA) website. For more information click here: [Higher Education Authority \(HEA\)](#)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For information about these supports and how to access them contact the Donegal Travellers Project: Roma Worker,

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

Most colleges and universities offer scholarships and bursaries to students who are economically disadvantaged and to students with disabilities.

1916 BURSARY FUND

The 1916 Bursary Fund provides a payment to support participation and successful outcomes in third level education for economically disadvantaged students. Roma and Travellers can apply for this grant. For more information about this grant, contact the Access Office at LYIT, Sligo IT or in any of the Higher Education Institutions. For more information click here: [1916 Bursary Fund](#)

REACH

REACH is a Bursary Scheme offered by LYIT which aims to support and facilitate students wishing to complete an undergraduate programme. The REACH scheme is targeting students who might not progress to third level due to having a disability or lacking the financial supports to participate. For more information click here: [REACH](#)

SOCIETY OF ST VINCENT de PAUL EDUCATION AND TRAINING BURSARY FUND

This fund supports students of all ages who may financially struggle to access or stay in third level education and training programmes. For more information click here: [Society of St Vincent de Paul \(Education Grants section\)](#)

COTHRAM NA FÉINNE SCHOLARSHIP (UCD)

University College Dublin (UCD) offers a scholarship to support students from Roma, Traveller, Asylum Seeker and Refugee groups to attend the college. The scholarship provides financial support to cover living expenses and accommodation for the duration of the student's undergraduate course. Successful applicants will also be eligible for free fees. For more information about this scholarship and to register your interest, visit www.ucd.ie Financial Support section. For more information click here: [University College Dublin \(UCD\) \(Financial Support section\)](#)



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

If you have a disability, you may be entitled to some financial support. The National University of Ireland (NUI) Grant Scheme for Students with Disabilities provides financial support for undergraduate students who have serious physical and/or sensory disabilities and who are in the first year/stage of a primary degree programme in the constituent universities and recognised colleges of the NUI. The National Council for the Blind Ireland (NCBI) Gerard Byrne Bursary provides assistance for students with a vision impairment in full time third level education. Many individual colleges also offer scholarships for students with disabilities. For more information click here: [The National University of Ireland \(NUI\) Grant Scheme for Students with Disabilities](#) and here: [National Council for the Blind Ireland \(NCBI\) Gerard Byrne Bursary](#)

SUPPORT

For support accessing maintenance grants, scholarships or student loans contact the Donegal Travellers Project:

Roma Worker, Joleen Kuyper,
tel. 086 7880553

Education Worker, Barry Mooney,
tel. 083 0125403

COMMONLY USED TERMS



BTEA	Back to Education Allowance
BTEI	Back to Education Initiative
BTSCFA	Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance
CAO	Central Applications Office
DCA	Domiciliary Care Allowance
DEIS	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DPS	Department of Social Protection
DTP	Donegal Travellers Project
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education programme
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ETB	Education and Training Board
EWO	Education Welfare Officer
FET	Further Education and Training
HEA	Higher Education Authority
IT	Institute of Technology
JCPA	Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement
L2LPs	Level 2 Learning Programmes
LC	Leaving Certificate
LCA	Leaving Certificate Applied
LCVP	Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme
LYIT	Letterkenny Institute of Technology
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
NUI	National University of Ireland
NS	National School
PLC	Post Leaving Cert programmes
PPS	Personal Public Service Number
QQI	Quality and Qualifications Ireland
SAF	Student Assistance Fund
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
Sligo IT	Sligo Institute of Technology
SUSI	Student Universal Support Ireland
TU	Technology University
TUSLA	The Child and Family Agency
TY	Transition Year
VTOS	Vocational Training Opportunities Scheme

DONEGAL TRAVELLERS PROJECT BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

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