

### The present situation

#### *On Educational Disadvantage*

- The achievement of pupils in schools with concentrations of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds is still well below that of other schools despite steady improvements since 2007.
- Family poverty remains one of the largest determinants of educational outcomes.
- The children of parents with low levels of education have significantly lower proficiency than those whose parents have higher levels of education.

#### *On Early Childhood Education*

- The most striking feature of investment in education in Ireland relative to other OECD countries is its under-investment in early childhood education.
- Consecutive studies show Ireland has spent just 0.1 per cent of GDP on pre-primary education compared to an OECD average which has increased from 0.5 to 0.8 per cent.
- Early childhood education and care has a profound and long-lasting impact on individual lives and on societies.

#### *On Higher Education*

- Having a 3<sup>rd</sup> level qualification is closely linked with higher employment rates and income levels throughout life. Adults with a tertiary degree in Ireland earn on average 81 per cent more than adults with upper secondary education.
- The employment rate is 11 percentage points higher for degree holders than for those with an upper secondary or post-secondary non-tertiary education<sup>1</sup>.

The benefits of investing in education, to the individual, to the economy and to society, far outweigh any initial outlay of resources.

- Education funding per undergraduate student (full-time, part-time, remote and FETAC) enrolled in 2019 was 50 per cent lower than in 2008<sup>2</sup>.

#### *On Adult Literacy*

A very significant proportion of Ireland's adult population possesses only very basic literacy, numeracy and information-processing skills. The most recent OECD PIAAC Survey of Adult Skills found that<sup>3</sup>:

- 18 per cent of Irish adults have a literacy level at or below Level 1.
- 26 per cent of Irish adults have a numeracy level at or below Level 1.
- 42 per cent of Irish adults scored at or below Level 1 for problem solving in technology-rich environments.

#### *On Lifelong Learning and Digital Skills*

- Lifelong learning is essential to ensure Ireland can meet the challenges that automation and adaptation pose to the future of work.
- Ireland's lifelong learning participation rate is slowly improving – 13 per cent in 2019.
- Those engaged in lifelong learning are more likely to be professionals rather than those with lower skills.
- Less than half of the adult population has at least basic digital skills and only 28 per cent of people have digital skills above a basic level.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019\\_CN\\_IRL.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/EAG2019_CN_IRL.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> <https://data.oireachtas.ie/ie/oireachtas/parliamentaryBu>

[dgetOffice/2019/2019-11-25\\_an-overview-of-tertiary-education-funding-in-ireland\\_en.pdf](https://www.dgetOffice/2019/2019-11-25_an-overview-of-tertiary-education-funding-in-ireland_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/skills/piaac/>

## What type of education system does Ireland need?

**An education system that provides relevant education for all people throughout their lives, so that they can participate fully and meaningfully in developing themselves, their community and the wider society**



## Things a new Government can do to develop a system that provides relevant education for all people throughout their lives

- Deliver a long-term sustainable, appropriately funded, education strategy that takes a whole-person, life-cycle approach to learning with due consideration to education as a part of the commons.
- Make the improvement of educational outcomes for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and disadvantaged communities a policy priority.
- Make addressing our high pupil teacher ratios and class sizes a priority.
- Commit to increasing investment in Early Childhood Care and Education by 0.1 per cent of GDP annually to meet the OECD average by 2025.
- Implement a well-resourced and integrated Early Learning policy to ensure: (i) all children are provided with rich outdoor learning opportunities which are so vital to development; (ii) that all families and children are fully represented; (iii) that ongoing training and professional development is provided for staff, and (iv) that working conditions for staff in the sector are improved.
- Develop a framework to deliver sustainable funding revenues for higher education over the next five years with a roadmap to 2028.
- Make better access to higher education for students from areas of socio-economic disadvantage, more diverse access routes for underrepresented groups and improving lifelong and flexible learning policy priority.
- Set ambitious targets for levels of literacy, numeracy and digital skills among adults and fully resource an adult skills strategy.
- Set a more ambitious lifelong target to reach 20 per cent by 2026, ensuring sufficient resources are made available.
- Develop an integrated lifelong learning, skills development, digital transition, vocational training, apprenticeship and reskilling strategy.