

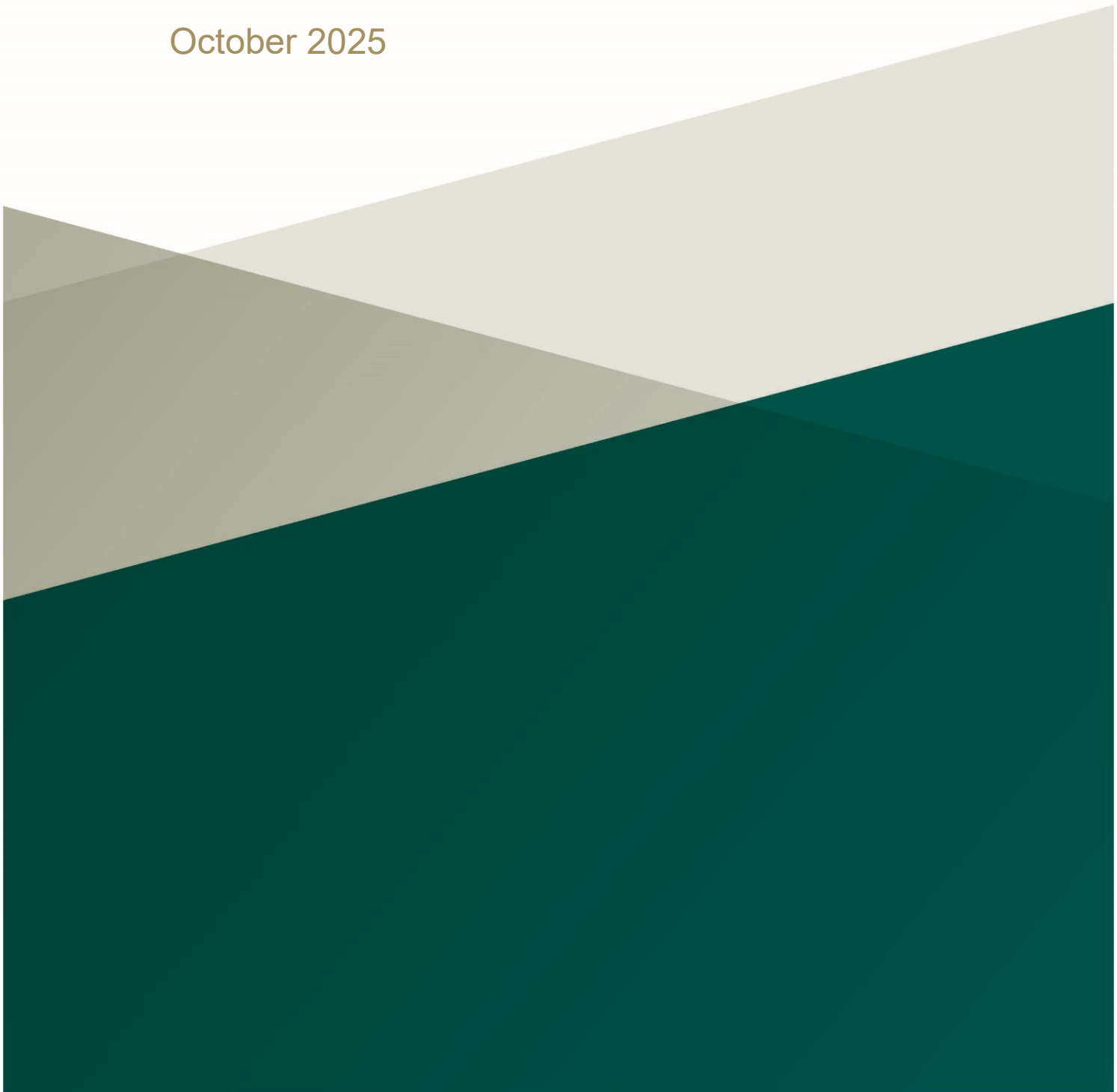


An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Main Features of Budget 2026

Department of Education and Youth

October 2025



Budget 2026 in numbers

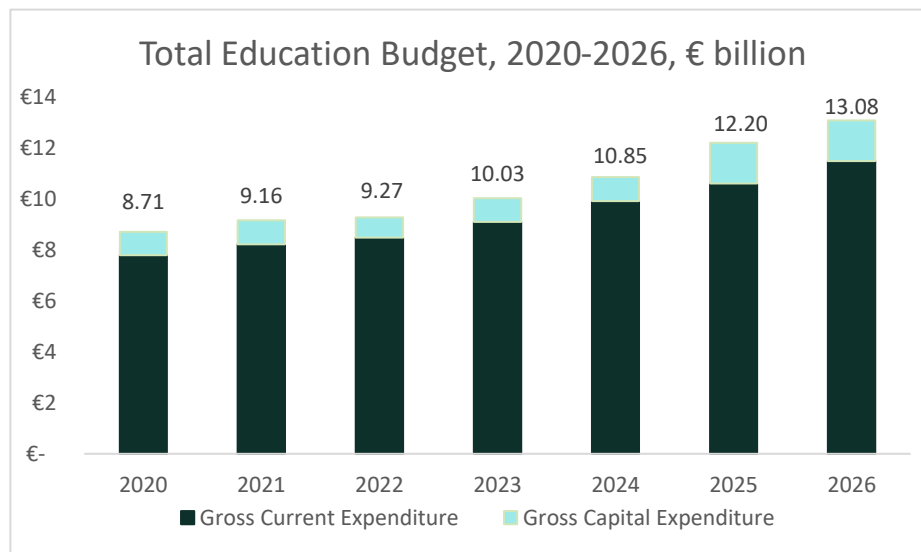
€13.1 billion	2026 Budget of the Department of Education and Youth – continuing investment in our education system and youth services
860 special education teachers	Additional special education teachers in the system supporting children with special educational needs
24,900 SNAs	Special needs assistants in the education system in 2026, an increase of 1,717 on 2024
School Therapies	The continuation of the roll-out of School Therapy within special schools and extending into mainstream schools, to ensure all children have access to essential therapies in a timely manner.
School building projects	80 will progress to construction across 2026 & 2027 as part of 2-year rolling programme and progression of 300 school building projects currently in construction.
Climate Action Summer Works	The rollout of the first tranche of projects under the Climate Action Summer Works Scheme which will help to reduce heating and electricity costs for schools and improve energy efficiency.
Capitation Increase	€39 million of permanent increases to capitation funding for Primary, Post Primary and special schools.
DEIS Plus	Provide additional resources to schools with pupils facing the highest levels of disadvantage and targeted supports for children and young people at risk of educational disadvantage

Budgetary overview

	Budget 2026	Allocation 2025
	€ million	€ million
Current – Core	11,475	10,489
Temporary	0	141
Total Current	11,475	10,630
Capital	1,600	1,602
Total Budget	13,075	12,232

Note: Some rounding in totals

The total budget for the Department of Education and Youth in 2026 will be €13.075 billion. Since 2020, funding for school-level education has increased by around €4.4 billion (50%). Budget 2026 provides an increase of €845 million in current funding, an increase of 7%, and builds on significant increases in recent budgets.



Schools Resources

Supporting School Costs

Additional funding will be provided to primary and post-primary schools in the Free Education Scheme to deal with challenges they face in day to day running costs.

A total of €39m in full year costs is being provided for a permanent increase in mainstream capitation grant funding for schools, bringing the mainstream rate of capitation to €274 per pupil in primary schools and to €406 per student in post-primary schools. Over the last three Budgets this has resulted in an increase in the level of mainstream capitation rates of almost 50% paid to primary schools and 29% paid to post-primary schools. This will also provide for some targeted increases to capitation funding available for DEIS Urban Band 1 schools and special schools.

Special Education

Increased staffing in Special Education

It has always been a priority for this Government to ensure that our schools have the necessary resources to support children with special educational needs in the setting that best meets their needs. Since 2020, over 1,900 new special classes have been provided so that there are now over 3,700 special classes available in our primary and post-primary schools. Over the same period, 16 new special schools have been opened.

In 2026, an additional 860 special education teachers and 1,717 special needs assistants (SNAs) will be funded to support children across mainstream, special classes and special schools. This brings the total number of SNAs to almost 24,900 by the end of 2026, which is the highest ever number of SNAs allocated to our education system. This is in recognition of the growing needs of children across all settings. In total, there will be over 46,500 dedicated staff to support children with special educational needs in our schools.

School Therapies

The Programme for Government 2025 commits to the introduction of an Education Therapy Service (ETS), with over €19 million allocated in 2026, starting with special schools and gradually extending support to special classes and mainstream classes, ensuring all children can access essential therapies in a timely manner.

This budget will facilitate the continued roll-out of the service in 2026 through the provision of additional occupational therapists in the field of speech and language along with additional resources and support. This will enable access to essential therapy services for special schools, special classes and mainstream schools. This measure which will provide therapeutic supports to children in schools will not only build the capacity of the school community to better support all children, but also provide individualised therapeutic interventions to those children who need it.

Special education support for schools

This Government recognises the challenges faced by schools in meeting the needs of children with special educational needs. Building on the resources provided last year for the growing number of children with special educational needs transitioning to post primary, this Budget is providing for an increase in the dedicated special needs co-ordination resource in post primary schools.

Social Inclusion

New DEIS Plus Scheme and enhancement of DEIS Plan

A significant investment of €48m of additional annual funding has been secured in Budget 2026 to fund the implementation of a new DEIS Plan. A key action in the plan will be the creation of a DEIS Plus scheme providing additional targeted resources to schools with students most at risk of educational disadvantage, fulfilling the Programme for Government Commitment.

A new DEIS Plan will be published in late 2025 which will focus on enhancing the existing DEIS programme and improving the opportunities and achievement levels for children at risk of educational disadvantage in all schools. This plan will provide the longer-term strategic vision and objectives for tackling educational disadvantage.

School Transport

Over €69 million of additional funding is being allocated to school transport services. This is to provide for the additional demand for pupils with special educational needs on school transport services and increased bus contractor running costs. It will also provide for additional funding on the School Transport Scheme fleet, and to implement improved

technology such as e-ticketing on school transport services. E-ticketing will enhance students' experiences on school transport and allow for greater visibility on seat usage. With better data, this will inform future route planning and maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

Curriculum Developments and Reforms

Some €19 million of additional funding is being provided for the continuation of important curricular development and related teacher education. This includes support for the ongoing delivery of Senior Cycle Redevelopment, including up to 800 additional posts of responsibility, along with a range of other planned enhancements in the teaching and learning experience in our schools.

School Leadership

As part of Budget 2026, funding of €3 million will be made available to provide for enhanced School Leadership with additional deputy principals in primary and post primary schools for the 2026/27 school year. This is a recognition that school leadership and management play a key role in improving educational outcomes by creating a positive school climate and environment as well as motivating and empowering educators and learners within their school communities.

Youth Services

In line with the Programme for Government that has a range of commitments relating to Youth services, this Budget is increasing the level of funding being made in this area by €8 million. This builds on the previous Budget and reflects the Government's continued commitment to strengthening the youth sector.

This allows for sustainability and expansion of existing youth services for young people and service providers. It will also support essential upgrades to youth facilities, equipment, and digital infrastructure. This investment recognises that sustainable, high-quality youth work also requires safe and fit-for-purpose spaces. This investment reinforces the long-term development of a resilient, inclusive youth sector that communities across Ireland can depend on year after year.

Convention on Education

The provision of funding in 2026 for the establishment of a Convention on Education delivers on a key commitment in the Programme for Government and will provide a once-in-a-generation opportunity for children, young people, parents, educators and wider society to help shape Ireland's education system for decades to come.

The Convention will focus mainly on primary and post-primary education but will include the transition experiences from early childhood education to primary and from post-primary to further and higher education. The insights gathered will inform the development of a new long-term strategy for education in Ireland. In addition, a national conversation will precede the Convention which will facilitate discussions on learners' experiences across the continuum of education.

Reasonable Accommodations at Certificate Examination (RACE)

Additional funding is being provided towards the Programme for Government commitment to "Develop an appropriate mechanism to allow additional time for students with specific needs and in certain circumstances and also ensure that those who use assistive technology can do so in State examinations". This investment will support any changes to the RACE Scheme in 2026 arising from the comprehensive review being conducted by the State Examinations Commission.

Capital Expenditure

Schools act as a key enabler for sustainable housing development and through access to facilities play a vital role in supporting the social fabric of new and growing communities beyond the provision of education. Capital planning and budgeting is undertaken on a multiannual basis. Under Project Ireland 2040, €7.55 billion will be invested in the education and youth sector over the period 2026-2030. This investment is enabling the addition of essential capacity to ensure that every child has a school place and supporting the overall operation of the school system which involves close to 4,000 schools throughout the country while also strengthening the youth sector with capital investment to deliver essential upgrades and resources. Supporting children with special educational needs is a particular priority for the National Development Plan.

The National Development Plan allocation of €1.6 billion for 2026 will support the continued progression of the c.300 building projects that are currently at construction to deliver additional capacity and modernisation of existing capacity to cater for over 30,000 pupils at primary, post-primary and special schools. The majority of these projects, which include over 38 new school buildings and over 260 school modernisation and extensions which are expected to be completed over the course of 2026 and 2027. It is also envisaged that circa 80 school building projects will progress to construction across 2026 & 2027 as part of 2-year rolling programme.

Funding in 2026 will have a strong special education dimension which will include facilitating the establishment of circa. 3,000 additional school places in special classes and special schools for the 2026/27 school year primarily through the repurposing of existing capacity. Building on significant progress made in recent years it is envisaged that some additional new special schools will also be established for the 2026/27 school year. Where possible, this will be done at or near existing primary or post-primary schools to maximise the opportunities for inclusion and integration. Expanding capacity at existing special schools will also be a key priority.

The capital allocation will also facilitate the rollout of the first tranche of projects under the Department's multi-annual Climate Action Summer Works Scheme, the completion of the rollout of the Solar PV programme and the EU Repower retrofit programmes will be important elements supporting the climate agenda and will help reduce heating and electricity costs for schools and improve energy efficiency.