

Addressing Ireland's Lifelong Educational Challenges

Five Ministers driving Education across the Lifespan



Norma Foley

Minister for Early Childhood Education

Norma Foley was appointed Minister for Education in June 2020. She is passionate about ensuring that the student voice is at the heart of education, delivering excellence and equity in education and in promoting STEAM. She has greatly expanded the DEIS programme, aimed at tackling educational disadvantage, and has announced the free books scheme for students and significant reforms to Ireland's Senior Cycle and terminal second-level exams.

Minister Foley was elected to represent the Kerry constituency in the 2020 general election. A graduate of University College Cork and a teacher by profession, she was a member of Kerry County Council until her election to Dáil Éireann and has served as mayor of both Tralee and Kerry.



Helen McEntee

Minister for Primary and Second Level

Helen McEntee is Minister for Education and Youth, and Fine Gael TD for Meath East. She was first elected to Dáil Éireann in a by-election in 2013 and was re-elected in the 2016 general election. She was appointed Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People in 2016, Minister of State for EU Affairs in 2017, and Minister for Justice in 2020. She served a term as vice president of the European People's Party, elected in 2019.

Helen graduated from Dublin City University with a bachelor's degree in Law, Politics, and Economics, and holds a master's degree in Communications and Journalism. Before becoming a public representative she worked in the Department of Agriculture and previously for Citibank.

Junior minister with responsibility for Special Education

Michael Moynihan was first elected to Dáil Éireann in the constituency of Cork North West in 1997 and has been re-elected on each occasion since then. In the current Dáil he has been appointed Minister of State at the Department of Education and Youth with special responsibility for Special Education and Inclusion.

Michael was chair of the Oireachtas Disability Matters Committee in the 33rd Dáil, and he has previously been chair of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Education and the Committee on Economic Regulatory Affairs. He has also served on other Oireachtas committees, such as Agriculture and Food, and Heritage and the Irish Language. Michael comes from Kiskeam in Co. Cork, where he lives with his wife and their two children.



Michael Moynihan

Minister for the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS)

James Lawless was elected to Dáil Éireann to represent Kildare North in 2016, 2020, and 2024. Before that, he was a councillor on Kildare County Council. In 2024 he was promoted to Minister of State at the Department of Transport, and the Department of the Environment, Climate and Communications. James was honoured to be appointed Minister for Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science in January 2025.

As a former Mayor of Naas, James is passionate about urban regeneration. He studied maths and computer science at Trinity College and law at King's Inns, where he qualified as a barrister. James lives in Sallins with his wife, Ailish, a primary school teacher, and their two daughters. In his downtime he enjoys local park runs, gardening, and sports.



James Lawless

Junior minister with responsibility for Further Education, Apprenticeship, Construction and Climate Skills

Marian Harkin was elected to Dáil Éireann as an Independent TD for Sligo-Leitrim in 2002, 2020, and 2024. Pending new legislation, she will be a junior minister in the Department of Higher Education with responsibility for further education, apprenticeships, construction, and climate skills.

Marian was born in County Sligo, she studied Chemistry and Mathematics at University College Dublin, and she was a secondary school maths teacher in Mercy College, Sligo, for 23 years. She was a Member of the European Parliament from 2004 to 2019 and was deputy leader of the European Democratic Party. Marian has a deep interest in balanced regional development across all sectors, from infrastructure to health to education. In 2011 and 2012 she was awarded MEP of the Year for her work in the European Parliament.



Marian Harkin