Teacher, primary level

Job description

Primary school teachers, also known as national school teachers, are involved in the social, intellectual, physical and moral development of pupils in their class. A teacher works with one single class for an entire academic year and is responsible for teaching a wide range of subjects on the National Curriculum. Depending on school size, teachers may have responsibility for more than one curriculum class group and as such will have to divide their time, presenting different material on different subjects to students at different levels within a single classroom.

The teacher plans and delivers lessons, sets and marks assignments, works as a team-member within the wider school staff, and, as required, liaises with parents and other relevant individuals such as educational psychologists.

Working life

A typical working day for a primary school teacher lasts five and a half hours. As well as classroom time this may also include time spent in schoolyard supervision. Additional time outside of the standard working day is required for preparation of teaching materials and the marking of assignments submitted by pupils, as well as attendance at parent-teacher meetings, where teachers provide parents with feedback on their children’s progress.

While the classroom-based aspect of a primary teacher’s day may appear short, this work is extremely intensive requiring constant concentration as well as immense creativity and energy. Working with younger children can be challenging and yet extremely rewarding. Teachers will often become involved in extra-curricular activities such as school trips, various sporting activities, school concerts and musicals.

Newly qualified primary school teachers are given responsibility for delivering the curriculum material to their class; they also assume all the other duties of a teacher from the beginning of their appointment. The support of more experienced staff members will be available and it is often helpful to discuss issues of concern with other staff members, benefiting from their knowledge and experience.

Work activities

• Developing and fostering the appropriate skills and social abilities to enable the optimum development of children, according to age, ability and aptitude.
• Planning and delivering lessons, setting and marking assignments.
• Assessing and recording children’s progress.
• Working as a team member within the wider school staff and liaising with other relevant individuals such as educational psychologists.
• Liaising with parents and participating in meetings.
• Organising and participating in extra-curricular activities.

Work conditions

Travel: not a major feature of the job.

Working hours: varies depending on school and level of class taught class though typically involves class contact of five and a half hours a day.

Location: mostly in towns or cities throughout the country.

Opportunities for self-employment: unlikely though teachers can supplement income through writing textbooks.

Typical employers

Republic of Ireland: State national schools and non-state aided independent junior schools.

Northern Ireland: The education system consists of different types of schools under the control of management committees who are also the employers of teachers for more details. See Department of Education website for details: www.deni.gov.uk/index/85-schools/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg.htm
Teacher, primary level (continued)

Where can I study primary teaching in Ireland?

Republic of Ireland
In Ireland there are six Colleges of Education:
* St. Patrick’s College, Drumcondra
* Mary Immaculate College, Limerick
* Froebel College of Education, Blackrock, Co. Dublin
* Colaiste Mhuire, Marino Institute of Education, Dublin
* Hibernia College, Dublin
* Church of Ireland College of Education, Dublin

Northern Ireland
Initial Teacher Education in NI for primary level teaching is provided at:
• Stranmillis University College (a college of Queen's University Belfast)
• St. Mary's University College (a college of Queen's University Belfast)
• University of Ulster

Career development
Promotion to positions such as special duties teachers and assistant principals can be achieved at an early stage though a current moratorium on promotion exists.

Salaries
An incremental salary scale operates with additional allowances payable depending on qualifications and additional responsibilities.

Republic of Ireland: A primary level teacher with an honours degree can expect to earn around €39,000.
Northern Ireland: The starting salary for primary level teachers is in excess of £21,000.
Allowances for additional qualifications also apply.

Entry requirements and training
Republic of Ireland: To register as a primary level teacher a Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree recognised by the Teaching Council is required or a minimum of a level 8 degree plus a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary).
Applicants must satisfy the Irish Language requirement (Leaving Certificate Higher C3 minimum or equivalent such as NUI Maynooth’s Diploma sa Ghaeilge) and a high standard of fluency is required in the Oral Irish test which is part of the interview process.
Northern Ireland: In order to gain a permanent teaching post, a recognised teacher training qualification is required, ie a primary school Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). As in the rest of the UK, all candidates must, by law, satisfy 'fitness to teach' requirements and be checked by the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB).
Northern Ireland: To work as a primary teacher in Northern Ireland you must be approved by the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI).
For both routes, you must have achieved the prescribed results in Leaving Certificate or Northern Ireland GCSE/GCE A Level Examinations.
For Leaving Certificate these requirements are a grade C in Higher Level Irish and at least a grade D in Mathematics (Higher or Ordinary level) and at least a grade C (Ordinary Level) or grade D (Higher Level) in English.
For A Levels, the requirements are a grade C at GCE A Level Irish, a grade C at GCSE Level in both English and English Literature, or a Grade B at GCSE level in either; a grade D at GCSE level in Additional Mathematics or a Grade A at GCSE level in Mathematics.
The Teaching Council also considers evidence of character (including Garda vetting) and teaching experience.
If you have completed teacher training outside Ireland, the Teaching Council stipulates that you must apply to them for recognition. You must complete an aptitude test or adaptation period to satisfy them that you are competent to teach the Irish language. Recognition is granted on an individual basis. You are exempt from this test if you have the PGCE through Irish or the four-year honours Irish Academic course at St. Mary’s College, Belfast.
Further details are available on The Teaching Council website: www.teachingcouncil.ie

(continued overleaf)
Teacher, primary level (continued)

Specific degree subjects required
Republic of Ireland: There are no specific degree requirements laid down for entry to the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary).

Other relevant degree subjects
Any of the subjects taught on the primary school curriculum though having Irish is an advantage.

Postgraduate study
For those holding relevant BEd degrees no further postgraduate qualification is required. Those holding other qualifications will be required to complete a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Primary).

Specific entry requirements
As part of the process of registering teachers for the first time, the Teaching Council requires all applicants to undergo Garda Vetting. Before taking up a first teaching post, teachers will also be required to complete a pre-employment medical screening questionnaire which may require attending for a pre-employment assessment in person for those with underlying health problems. For more information visit Medmark4teachers.

Tips for applications
You will need to be determined and flexible when looking for your first teaching post. Permanent posts for newly qualified teachers are becoming increasingly difficult to find so most newly qualified teachers take up temporary posts, before securing a permanent one (which could take several years). Job applications need to be really well prepared and error free.

Experience of working with pre-teenagers and involvement in extracurricular activities are valued by employers.

Skills and qualities
• Highly conscientious and committed to the highest standards of professional service
• Excellent communication and organisational skills
• Patient, caring and motivated by the best interests of your students
• Enthusiasm for the subject material to foster a love of learning by students
• Willing to engage in ongoing professional development
• Can relate well to different groups of students of different ages and ability levels
• Creativity, self-belief and the ability to maintain discipline
• Team player who can collaborate with colleagues.

Training
Further training is provided through in-service courses. Specialised courses for experienced teachers are provided mainly by universities and colleges of education.

Don’t miss out!
How do you find out about job vacancies, careers fairs, employer events and how to get a graduate job? Graduate jobs are advertised on gradireland.com! Register on gradireland.com to receive free job alerts by email – go to gradireland.com/register and set up your profile today.

gradireland is a free service provided in partnership with your careers service.