



An Bille Oideachais (Leas) (Leasú), 2015
Education (Welfare) (Amendment) Bill 2015

Meabhrán Mínitheach
Explanatory Memorandum



**AN BILLE OIDEACHAIS (LEAS) (LEASÚ), 2015
EDUCATION (WELFARE) (AMENDMENT) BILL 2015**

**MEABHRÁN MÍNITHEACH
EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

Purpose of Bill

The purpose of the Bill is to increase the school leaving age to 17. This measure will have significant positive benefits for children who leave school without completing their secondary education, and will facilitate improved life chance outcomes for such children. A significant reduction in the number of unskilled jobs available in the European economy and likely to be available in the future and an increased emphasis on acquisition of skills to flourish in the workplace makes it important to review the legislation in this area. Requiring 16 year olds to attend school will bring them life-long benefits in the context of the modern economy and society.

Legislation has progressively increased the school leaving age over time. Under the School Attendance Act 1926 the school leaving age was set at 14, which had been previously the school leaving age under the Irish Education Act 1892. This was increased to 15 in 1972 and ultimately increased to 16 in 2000. This Bill is the logical next step in promoting the best possible start in life for children.

School leaving ages of 17 or 18 have been set in a number of countries in the developed world, for example the school leaving age is 18 in Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Israel, the Netherlands and a number of other jurisdictions, with some other countries setting the age at 17.

Provisions of Bill

Section 1 amends the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 to substitute a school leaving age of 17 for the age of 16 specified in that Act.

Section 2 provides a corresponding change to the definitions in the Protection of Young Persons (Employment) Act 1996 to interlock with the requirement for 16 year olds to attend school.

Section 3 allows a 16 year old child to fulfil the requirement to be in education by pursuing a vocational apprenticeship which is primarily educational.

Section 4 allows a one-year lead in period to enable schools and children prepare for the longer educational period specified in the Bill.

Section 5 is a standard provision.

Financial and regulatory implications.

Additional incidental costs will be incurred by the Child and Family Agency in terms of school attendance for 16 year olds, and by schools in terms of additional number of pupils. Such costs will be significantly outweighed by the economic benefits of promoting greater education and skills among the 16 year old population.

Senator Mary Moran

Meitheamh, 2015.

