



# RETENTION RATES OF PUPILS IN SECOND LEVEL SCHOOLS

## 2007 ENTRY COHORT

**January 2014**

This report and others in the series may be accessed at:  
[www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and go to [Statistics/Retention Rates of Pupils in Second Level Schools](#)

Detailed time series tables containing all of the data presented in this report will also shortly be available on the Department of Education and Skills' [education statistics database](#).

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## Executive Summary

This is the seventh published report, by the Department of Education and Skills, on school retention in Ireland. It is based on a detailed analysis of the records held in the Department's Post-Primary Pupils Database (PPPDB) for the cohort of entrants to the first year of the junior cycle in 2007. This cohort sat the Leaving Certificate Examination in either 2012 or 2013.

### Main Results

- In 2007, there were 56,004 first time enrolments to the first year of the junior cycle programme in second level schools. Of this cohort, 439 pupils emigrated or were deceased in the period under consideration. A further 342 pupils were found to be still in the second level school system in 2013 (these were mainly students who had completed Transition Year and also repeated a year). These groups were removed to give an initial adjusted cohort of **55,223** students.
- Of the 2007 entry cohort, **96.93%** sat the Junior Certificate Exams in 2010 or 2011 and **90.13%** sat the Leaving Certificate Exams in 2012 or 2013.
- A gender gap remains in the retention rates at national level between male and female for the 2007 cohort. This gender gap has increased slightly from 3.15% for the 2006 cohort to 3.59% for the 2007 cohort.
- On average voluntary secondary schools continue to have the highest retention rates at both the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate stage; however the gap between the different types of schools is closing.
- The average retention rate for DEIS second level schools continues to increase and is at a rate of 80.4% for the 2007 cohort, this is up from 68.2% for the 2001 cohort.

It should be noted that this report deals with retention within the State-aided schooling system only. It does not take account of important educational pathways outside this system such as Youthreach and apprenticeship training. In effect, pupils leaving school to undertake these programmes are treated as early school leavers for the purposes of this analysis. It seems reasonable to assume that the 'true' retention rate, comparable to completion of upper second-level education (equivalent to NFQ levels 4,5 and 6 Advanced), is higher than that shown in

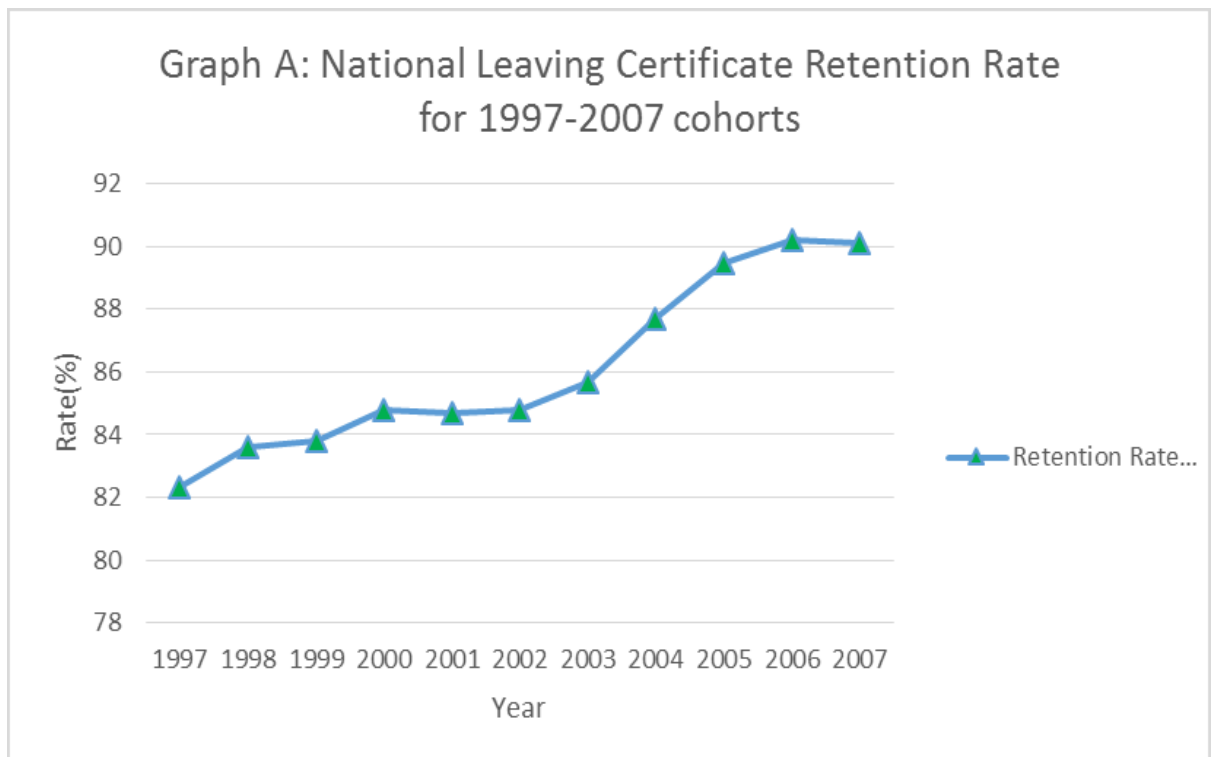
Table 1.1 when participation in apprenticeship, out-of-school programmes and other training within the first year of leaving school is considered.

It is also important to note that while the analysis allows for movement of pupils between schools it does not enable the tracking of those who leave State-aided schools including publicly funded fee-paying schools and move to non-aided second-level education providers. However, due to the fact that these students sit the State exams as external candidates, it is possible to include these pupils in the final Leaving Certificate retention rate by matching State Examinations Commission (SEC) external candidate data against the initial cohort data (see Appendix A for more details).

## General Trends in Retention Rates

Table 1.1 and Graph A show the national retention rates for the 2007 cohort compared to the rates for all previous cohorts since 1997.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Retention Rate (%)</b>
1997	82.3
1998	83.6
1999	83.8
2000	84.8
2001	84.7
2002	84.8
2003	85.7
2004	87.7
2005*	89.5
2006*	90.2
2007*	90.1



*\*Break in series from 2005 onwards due to revised methodology, see Appendix for more details.*

Over the 11 years from 1997 to 2007, there has been a gradual improvement in the Leaving Certificate retention rate, with an increase of almost 8% over the period. The rate remained flat at around 85% for the 2001 and 2002 entry cohorts, before beginning to rise again for the 2003 cohort. For the 2006 cohort the rate rose above 90% for the first time since the analysis began, and remains in excess of 90% for 2007 also.

Table 2.1 shows the retention rates for each milestone and by gender for the cohort of students that entered the Junior Cycle in 2007.

<b>Table 2.1: Initial cohort and percentages retained at each milestone, 2007</b>			
	<b>2007 entry cohort</b>		
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Junior Certificate, Year 1 (No.)</b>	<b>28,147</b>	<b>27,076</b>	<b>55,223</b>
<b>Junior Certificate, Year 2 (%)</b>	98.89	98.98	98.93
<b>Junior Certificate, Year 3 (%)</b>	97.88	98.16	98.02
<b>Junior Certificate Retention Rate</b>	96.58	97.30	96.93
<b>Senior Cycle, Year 1 (%)</b>	94.01	95.28	94.63
<b>Senior Cycle, Year 2 (%)</b>	89.94	92.04	90.97
<b>Leaving Certificate Retention Rate</b>	<b>88.36</b>	<b>91.94</b>	<b>90.12</b>

As can be seen from the table, the majority of dropout occurs at second level between senior cycle year 1 and senior cycle year 2, where around 4% of the original cohort is lost. A gender gap remains between the retention rates to the Leaving Certificate at national level between male and female cohorts, of 3.6%. However while the gender gap remains, and has increased slightly since the previous analysis, overall it has narrowed substantially in recent years. The 2007 difference of 3.6% compares to a gender difference of 11.3% for the 1995 entry cohort, and 8.9% for the 2001 entry cohort.

<b>Table 2.2: Retention Rates by School Type and Milestone, 2007 cohort</b>				
	<b>2007 entry cohort</b>			
<b>Milestone</b>	<b>Secondary</b>	<b>Vocational</b>	<b>C&amp;C</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Junior Cycle, Year 1 (no.)</b>	31,957	13,798	9,468	<b>55,223</b>
<b>Junior Cycle, Year 2 (%)</b>	99.03	98.76	98.88	<b>98.93</b>
<b>Junior Cycle, Year 3 (%)</b>	98.31	97.32	98.04	<b>98.02</b>
<b>Junior Certificate Retention Rate</b>	97.35	95.95	96.94	<b>96.93</b>
<b>Senior Cycle, Year 1 (%)</b>	95.18	92.96	95.23	<b>94.63</b>
<b>Senior Cycle, Year 2 (%)</b>	92.07	87.96	91.62	<b>90.97</b>
<b>Leaving Certificate Retention Rate</b>	<b>91.85</b>	<b>86.24</b>	<b>89.94</b>	<b>90.12</b>

Average retention rates to Leaving Certificate in the voluntary secondary school sector have continually been the highest since analysis began in 1991, with a rate of approximately 92% for the last three entry cohorts.

The retention rate in community and comprehensive schools has increased significantly in recent years. The gap in retention rates to the Leaving Certificate between the secondary sector and the community and comprehensive sector continues to reduce, for the 1996 Cohort the gap between secondary schools (82.4%) and community and comprehensive schools (76.1%) was 6.3%, this gap is now less than 2%.

The average Leaving Certificate retention rate for vocational schools, while lagging behind the rates for the voluntary secondary and community and comprehensive schools, has shown very significant improvement. There has been an increase of almost 25% between the 1991 cohort, with a retention rate of 61.5% and the 2007 cohort at 86.2%. More recently we can see an increase of over 11% between the 2001 cohort (with a retention rate of 74.5%) and the 2007 cohort.



**SECTION  
3**

**Retention Rates by Administrative County**

This section describes the trends in school retention in each administrative county (local authority) area for the 2007 entry cohort. Note that data were analysed by address of schools rather than address of pupils.

**Table 3.1: Retention Rates to the Junior and Leaving Certificate by Administrative County, 2007 cohort**

County	Cohort Size	Junior Cert Retention (%)	Leaving Cert Retention (%)
Carlow	790	94.94	84.94
Cavan	813	96.06	88.81
Clare	1357	96.76	89.90
Cork County	4437	97.81	91.68
Cork City	1776	97.58	88.96
Donegal	2158	97.03	90.64
Dublin City	5399	96.65	87.20
Dublin Fingal	2858	97.52	91.64
Dublin South	3296	96.57	88.87
Dun Laoghaire/Rathdown	2275	95.96	90.95
Galway County	2143	96.17	90.34
Galway City	898	95.10	87.64
Kerry	1836	97.06	91.83
Kildare	2609	97.47	90.76
Kilkenny	1145	98.08	91.27
Laois	813	96.68	89.67
Leitrim	431	97.22	90.95
Limerick County	1390	97.41	92.30
Limerick City	1162	95.35	87.52
Longford	596	95.97	88.93
Louth	1780	96.69	89.38
Mayo	1654	97.76	92.93
Meath	1983	97.78	92.94
Monaghan	842	97.39	89.55
Offaly	1022	96.48	88.65
Roscommon	590	95.42	90.85
Sligo	783	98.60	92.34
Tipperary (NR)	1102	97.55	91.83
Tipperary (SR)	1070	97.29	90.47
Waterford County	657	98.63	92.09
Waterford City	729	95.75	88.07
Westmeath	1320	95.98	90.00
Wexford	1929	97.05	91.65
Wicklow	1580	96.58	87.15

In 2007 the highest Leaving Certificate retention rate was in Meath, with a rate of 92.94%, followed by Mayo with a rate of 92.93%. Carlow and Wicklow had the lowest retention rates, with 84.89% and 87.15% respectively. The city areas, with the exception of Cork City were again amongst those with the lowest Leaving Certificate retention rates in the 2007 entry cohort.

Graph B below shows the Junior and Leaving Certificate retention rates for each county, ranked in ascending order of Leaving Certificate retention rates, for the 2007 cohort.

It should be noted that relatively minor changes in pupil numbers or a very small number of pupils choosing a different pathway in counties with smaller entry cohorts can cause large changes in the percentages retained year-on-year for those counties. Therefore any year on year changes in Junior or Leaving Certificate retention rates in the less populous counties should be read in this context.

Graph B: Junior and Leaving Certificate Retention Rates by County, 2007 entry cohort





The Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative is an action plan for educational inclusion. DEIS focuses on addressing the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities throughout their school careers. The plan provides an integrated School Support Programme (SSP) which brings together, and builds upon a range of interventions for schools and school clusters/communities with concentrated levels of educational disadvantage. Table 5a shows the retention rates for the 2007 cohort of entrants to the Junior Cycle in designated DEIS second level schools compared to schools that are not under the DEIS programme.

<b>Milestone</b>	<b>2007 entry cohort</b>		
	<b>DEIS</b>	<b>Non-DEIS</b>	<b>All Schools</b>
Junior Certificate, Year 1(No.)	11,077	44,146	55,223
Junior Certificate, Year 2 (%)	98.17	99.13	98.93
Junior Certificate, Year 3 (%)	96.27	98.46	98.02
Junior Certificate Retention Rate	94.25	97.60	96.93
Senior Cycle, Year 1	90.65	95.63	94.63
Senior Cycle, Year 2	84.39	92.62	90.97
Leaving Certificate Retention Rate	80.39	92.55	90.12

In 2007, there is approximately a 3.5% difference in the Junior Certificate rate between DEIS and non-DEIS schools. The Leaving Certificate retention rate for the 2007 cohort in DEIS schools is just over 80%, which is around 10% lower than the national average rate, however the improvement in DEIS schools' retention rates in recent years has been significantly higher than the overall improvement nationally. The majority of the loss of the cohort in DEIS schools occurs after Senior Cycle Year 1.

Table 5b shows a comparison of the Junior and Leaving Certificate retention rates from the 2001 to 2007 cohorts

<b>Table 4.2: Leaving Certificate retention rates by DEIS designation, 2001-2007 cohorts</b>						
	<b>Junior Certificate Rate (%)</b>			<b>Leaving Certificate Rate (%)</b>		
<b>Year</b>	<b>DEIS</b>	<b>Non-DEIS</b>	<b>All schools</b>	<b>DEIS</b>	<b>Non-DEIS</b>	<b>All schools</b>
<b>2001</b>	92.6	97.1	96.1	68.2	85.0	81.3
<b>2002</b>	91.6	96.8	95.7	68.6	84.7	81.3
<b>2003</b>	91.2	96.1	95.1	69.9	85.5	82.2
<b>2004</b>	89.6	95.8	94.5	73.2	87.4	84.5
<b>2005*</b>	92.3	96.6	95.9	78.4	91.7	89.2
<b>2006*</b>	93.8	97.0	96.4	80.1	92.7	90.2
<b>2007*</b>	94.1	97.6	96.9	80.4	92.6	90.1

**SECTION  
5**

**Data on the Educational Attainment of young people in  
Ireland and the EU**

The Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) conducted by the Central Statistics Office collects information on the educational attainment of the population, which is supplied to Eurostat and used for the compilation of European comparative statistics on early school leavers. Early school leavers are defined as persons aged 18 to 24 whose highest level of education or training is the Junior Certificate or equivalent, and who had not received any education or training in the four weeks preceding the survey. The information collected relates to all education or training received including initial education, further education, continuing or further training, training within a company, apprenticeship, on-the-job training, seminars, distance learning, evening classes, self-learning etc. As part of the EU2020 agenda on education and training, Ireland has adopted a target of further reducing early school leaving to no more than 8% by the year 2020.

Graph C shows the proportion of persons aged 20-24 years who had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent (QNHS data). Over eighty-seven per cent of persons aged 20-24, in 2012, had attained at least a Leaving Certificate or equivalent, an increase from 82.6% in 2000. There has been a growth in the proportion of young people with at least the Leaving Certificate or equivalent in recent years, possibly due to the increasing numbers of students now participating in second chance Further Education and Training programmes.

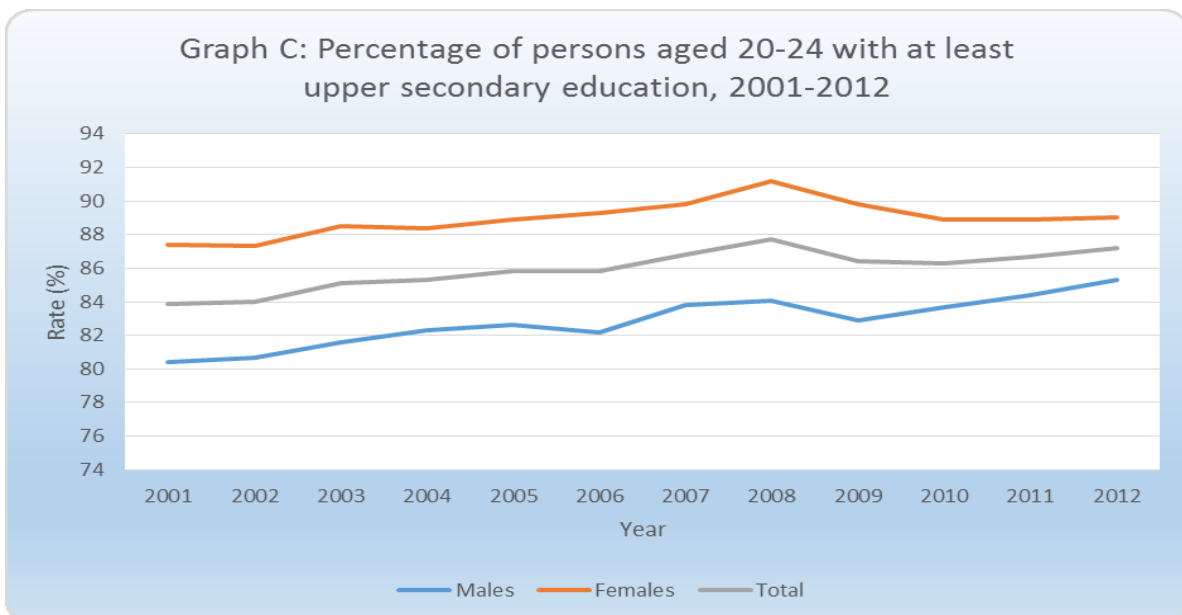


Table 5.1 shows the same information at EU level, which ranks Ireland 8<sup>th</sup> among the EU28 member states.

<b>Table 5.1: Percentage of persons aged 20 to 24 with at least a higher secondary education, in EU member states, classified by sex, 2012</b>			
	% of persons		
	Males	Females	Total
<b>EU-28</b>	<b>77.6</b>	<b>83.0</b>	<b>80.3</b>
<b>Austria</b>	85.9	87.3	86.6
<b>Belgium</b>	79.9	85.8	82.8
<b>Bulgaria</b>	86.0	85.5	85.8
<b>Croatia</b>	94.4	95.2	94.8
<b>Cyprus</b>	84.0	91.3	87.8
<b>Czech Republic</b>	90.2	91.7	90.9
<b>Denmark</b>	66.5	77.7	72.0
<b>Estonia</b>	75.9	86.7	81.3
<b>Finland</b>	85.5	87.1	86.3
<b>France</b>	82.1	86.7	84.4
<b>Germany</b>	73.7	77.6	75.6
<b>Greece</b>	82.2	88.6	85.4
<b>Hungary</b>	82.1	85.1	83.5
<b>Ireland<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>85.3</b>	<b>89.0</b>	<b>87.2</b>
<b>Italy</b>	73.7	81.6	77.6
<b>Latvia</b>	78.6	89.8	84.1
<b>Lithuania</b>	86.8	91.9	89.3
<b>Luxembourg</b>	66.3	76.8	71.5
<b>Malta</b>	68.3	79.2	73.6
<b>Netherlands</b>	75.9	82.1	79.0
<b>Poland</b>	86.6	93.2	89.8
<b>Portugal</b>	59.6	75.6	67.5
<b>Romania</b>	78.4	80.8	79.6
<b>Slovakia</b>	91.8	93.6	92.7
<b>Slovenia</b>	88.1	92.5	90.1
<b>Spain</b>	56.7	69.1	62.8
<b>Sweden</b>	84.4	88.4	86.4
<b>United Kingdom</b>	80.2	81.8	81.8



Table 5.2 presents data on early school leavers from 2005 to 2012. It shows a decrease in the proportion of early school leavers from 12.5% in 2005 to 9.7% in 2012 (however, some of this decrease may be due to changes in methodology). The proportion of female early school leavers decreased from 9.5% to 8.2% over the same period and the proportion of males decreased from 15.4% to 11.2%.

<b>% of persons</b>								
	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Males</b>	15.4	15.2	14.6	14.5	14.7	13.4	12.8	11.2
<b>Females</b>	9.5	9.0	8.4	8.0	8.6	9.6	8.8	8.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>12.5</b>	<b>12.1</b>	<b>11.6</b>	<b>11.3</b>	<b>11.7</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>10.8</b>	<b>9.7</b>

Table 5.3 overleaf presents the latest available figures for all EU27 member states which are for 2012. These show that the proportion of early school leavers in Ireland in 2011 (11.2%) compares favourably to the EU-27 and EU-15 averages of 14% and 15% respectively and ranks Ireland as joint twelfth in the list of EU member states.

**Table 5.3: Early school leavers<sup>1</sup> in EU member states classified by sex, 2012**

	% of persons		
	Males	Females	Total
<b>EU-28</b>	<b>14.4</b>	<b>10.9</b>	<b>12.7</b>
<b>Austria</b>	7.9	7.3	7.6
<b>Belgium</b>	14.4	9.5	12.0
<b>Bulgaria</b>	12.1	13.0	12.5
<b>Croatia</b>	4.6	3.6	4.2
<b>Cyprus</b>	16.5	7.0	11.4
<b>Czech Republic</b>	6.1	4.9	5.5
<b>Denmark</b>	10.8	7.4	9.1
<b>Estonia</b>	14.0	7.1	10.5
<b>Finland</b>	9.8	8.1	8.9
<b>France</b>	13.4	9.8	11.6
<b>Germany</b>	11.3	9.9	10.6
<b>Greece</b>	13.7	9.1	11.4
<b>Hungary</b>	12.2	10.7	11.5
<b>Ireland<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>11.2</b>	<b>8.2</b>	<b>9.7</b>
<b>Italy</b>	20.5	14.5	17.6
<b>Latvia</b>	14.7	6.3	10.6
<b>Lithuania</b>	8.1	4.6	6.5
<b>Luxembourg</b>	10.7	5.5	8.1
<b>Malta</b>	27.5	17.6	22.6
<b>Netherlands</b>	10.2	7.3	8.8
<b>Poland</b>	7.8	3.5	5.7
<b>Portugal</b>	27.1	14.3	20.8
<b>Romania</b>	18.0	16.7	17.4
<b>Slovakia</b>	5.4	4.6	5.3
<b>Slovenia</b>	6.0	3.2	4.4
<b>Spain</b>	28.8	20.8	24.9
<b>Sweden</b>	8.5	6.3	7.5
<b>United Kingdom</b>	14.7	12.4	13.6

Source: Eurostat. ([epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu))

<sup>1</sup>Early school leavers are defined as persons aged 18 to 24 whose highest level of education attained is lower secondary or below and have not received education (either formal or non formal) in the four weeks prior to the survey.

<sup>2</sup>The Eurostat figures for Ireland (and other countries) are based on an annual average for 2011 and are rounded to the nearest whole number

The Post Primary Pupil's Database gives the Department the capacity to track pupils at various stages through the second-level system. Together with State exams data, it provides a comprehensive picture of a pupil's movement through second-level education.

Individual pupil data are supplied by schools, using a unique pupil identifier. More recently, with the co-operation of the schools, the Department has been in a position to use the Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) as the means to identify and track the vast majority of second level pupils.

The methodology employed takes the cohorts of entrants to the first year of the junior cycle in each year and tracks these cohorts through each subsequent year of their participation in State-aided second-level schools.

Approximately half of each entry cohort progress from Junior Certificate Year 3 straight to Senior Cycle Year 1, while the other half progress from Junior Certificate Year 3 to Transition Year. Table A shows the typical pathways taken by the 2007 cohort (a small number will take a different path if a year is repeated etc)

**Table A: Entry Cohorts classified by the academic year they were enrolled in each programme and by the year they sat the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate examinations**

Entry Cohort	Junior Certificate, Year 1	Junior Certificate, Year 2	Junior Certificate, Year 3	Junior Certificate 'sits'	Transition Year	Senior Cycle, Year 1	Senior Cycle, Year 2	Leaving Certificate 'sits'
2007	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013	2013
				2011		2010/2011	2011/2012	2012

## **Technical points**

The following technical points should be noted:

- For the purposes of the retentions process, pupils are assigned to the school they first entered even though they may have subsequently changed school.
- Should two schools have amalgamated during the time under consideration, their pupils are assigned to the newly created school. If a school closes and is amalgamated with another school, pupils are assigned to the new school.
- When a school closes and there is no associated amalgamation, the school and pupils in the school are excluded from the retentions process.
- A small cohort of 342 students that were first time entrants in 2007 were still in the school system at the end of the retentions analysis period. These typically were students who had completed transition year and also repeated a year, or in some cases the student had repeated more than one year of school, meaning that they had not completed their second level education by the end of the 2012/2013 academic year. These students were excluded from the analysis.
- A further adjustment is made to the initial cohort to take into account those from the cohort who may have emigrated or deceased in the period under consideration. The early leaver's information on the post primary pupil's database is used for this purpose.