

Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment

Written submission template for organisations, groups and individuals responding to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*

This template is intended to support you (and your colleagues/organisation) in developing a written submission in response to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Please e-mail your completed submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Individual submission details

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Date	28/12/2020
E-mail	

Organisation submission details

Name	
Position	
Organisation	
Date	
E-mail	

The NCCA will publish written submissions received during the consultation. The submissions will include the author's/contributor's name/organisation. Do you consent to this submission being posted online?

Yes

No

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Please provide some brief background information on your organisation (if applicable).

Taught Irish Sign Language as an elective to primary/Post primary students (Deaf, Hard of hearing and hearings) from NFQ beginner to advanced levels in accordance with the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages). Under the Post Primary Language Initiative (PPLI) I provided programmes to help Deaf/HoH and Hearing children and those with learning Intelligence disabilities towards completion of their Junior Cert curriculum. Supported communication function for children who are non-verbal and/or have severe disabilities and provided guidance to teachers/carers on how to interact and overcome this communication barrier.

I am also member of The Council of Irish Sign Language Teachers was set up in 2018 by Irish Sign Language Teachers and consists of members who are mostly graduates from the Trinity College Dublin Centre for Deaf Studies and who possess a Diploma/Honours Degree in ISL Teaching, or equivalent certification. CISLT focus is to promote professional teaching standards and to offer support to our members.

The remainder of the template includes two sections. Section 1 invites your overall comments and observations on the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Section 2 is structured to align with the six key messages related to the framework. Each message is summarised as a support for you in working on the submission.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

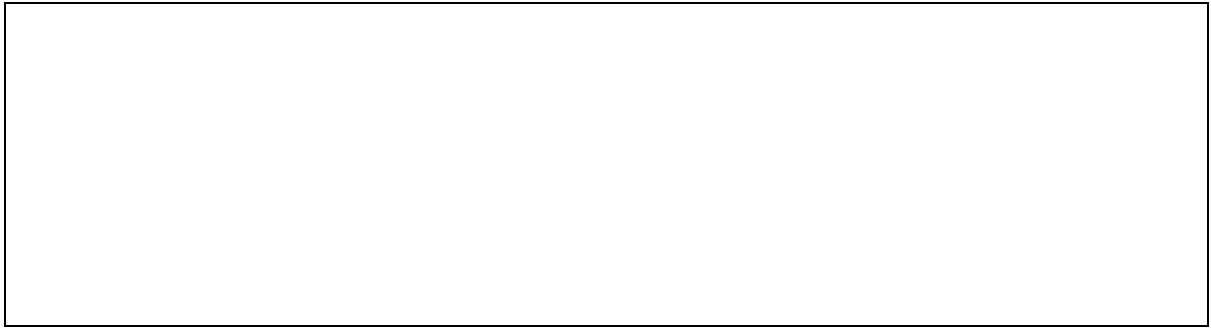
Section 1

Please outline your overall response to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*.

There are crucial principles of teaching and learning within the vision of the school curriculum vision, especially with respect to Irish Sign Language, which value high-quality teaching and learning in the primary curriculum. This will convey a learning environment that is respectful of children's different circumstances, experiences, and abilities.

The course needs to be recognised and seen as a tool to hone the self-esteem of deaf and hard of hearing students, as well as aid in their educational growth and progress. The curriculum embraces and includes all children while establishing ISL as a new curriculum topic focused on the natural ordinary routine of everyday situations, empowering students, and incorporating ISL in the lives of all students. Furthermore, teaching the children inclusive practice is very important in today's society where minority groups are often excluded more and more under polarized political climates.

ISL needs to be looked at with an open mind and introduced gradually to the classroom in an inclusive and fun way. The use of games, nursery rhymes, counting, months of the year etc will make the language accessible to all children and promote inclusion in the classroom. That being said, conditions must be suitable for the cultural and linguistic needs of the pupils.



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Section 2

Agency and flexibility in schools

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Be for every child.
- Recognise teachers' and principals' agency and professionalism to enact the curriculum in their individual school context.
- Give more flexibility to schools in terms of planning and timetabling to identify and respond to priorities and opportunities.
- Connect with different school contexts in the education system.
- Give greater opportunities for flexibility and choice for children's learning.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework outlines important messages in relation to agency and flexibility in schools. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Since 1990, there was a shift in thinking towards mainstream education for children who are deaf. Instead of deaf children being segregated, it was thought that they needed to be integrated with mainstream classes as much as possible. Integrating deaf children into mainstream schools presents challenges, as it has been claimed "teaching and learning of deaf children as if they were hearing does not work in practice because both have different ways of learning and comprehending." Therefore, it is vital that deaf children's needs are catered for by the provision of appropriate resources such as a teacher who is trained in ISL and also has a bilingual approach in the school and classroom. ISL unites the deaf community and it is the school and teacher's job to provide inclusive environments where ISL is used regularly and children have opportunities to practice and use their native language.

Using an informal setting and including deaf and hearing children in a group setting where the children play games and sing songs will promote a very inclusive environment where sign language is used by everyone in school on a regular basis. This type of activity will help both hearing and non-hearing children to practice their signs, as well as make it a normal activity where everyone is involved. Activities like these will also give deaf children the chance to help their non-hearing peers with learning the language and also give them a sense of pride about their native language.

Teaching the alphabet and numbers will help children put together and use ISL to communicate personal information. Children will be able to spell their name, date of birth, and home address.

Bearing in mind the difficulties that deaf children face in a hearing world, especially in school, it is vital for the teacher to integrate ISL as much as possible even through the basics of teaching the alphabet, numbers, months etc. Through everyday informal usage of ISL, the language will become a part of the school's daily routine. By doing this, it will ensure children with a hearing difficulty will feel a sense of belonging as well as having equal opportunity in school.

ISL as an effective method of communication for not only the deaf pupils attending school but also the wider school community. It creates a positive atmosphere within the school for all students and staff and promotes a culture of diversity and inclusion. This culture of diversity and inclusion is often seen in relation to other areas in the school e.g. culture week, Seachtain na Gaeilge etc. however, ISL is often a language which is not celebrated in the school context. Teachers are tasked with ensuring that each child in the school community has a voice, and more importantly, has their voice heard. As a results, provisions must be put in place to cater for children of all backgrounds, needs, and abilities.

Curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Provide a clear vision for children's learning across the eight years of primary school.
- Link with learning experiences provided through the themes of the *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and connect with the subjects, key skills and statements of learning in the *Framework for Junior Cycle*.
- Support educational transitions by connecting with what and how children learn at home, in preschool and post-primary school.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework outlines important messages in relation to curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

The use of ISL in primary schools can only reap a plethora of benefits, and not just for deaf children. It could help teachers working with non-verbal autistic students, who's channels of communication would be shut down if not for ISL. This child in particular can become frustrated easily if s/he cannot communicate their needs or wants effectively and they enjoy using ISL with their teacher, SNA, and peers.

Aside from this, ISL can be used in any aspect of school life. Children integrate with some of the mainstream classes in the school. By using ISL in the classroom, this allows the channels of communication between students to be opened further. Aside from the school environment, learning a new language, in this case ISL, is a skill which the children can use in an everyday context to connect and communicate with those in the deaf community, outside of school as well (e.g. a family member, friend, neighbour, etc). They also may take this skill and language with them when they leave school to any field of work they may choose.

Since the 2017 ISL Act there has been a responsibility to recognise and use ISL in classrooms. The Act instils a need to incorporate ISL into the daily activities of school life offering another effective

visual means of communication to all staff and students. It is important to be aware of the challenges schools face when educating deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) children in mainstream schools, and, where possible, use ISL teachers' expertise to support this work. ISL teachers can provide an introduction to basic ISL and can help address key issues and challenges in deaf education. The forums highlighted many of these challenges, indeed inspiring in terms of responses to these challenges. However, some creative solutions were proposed to enhance the learning and inclusion of DHH child.

The proposed curriculum will inspire many to consider new and creative ways to support teachers of DHH children in mainstream schools. A new area for development may include the creation of ISL resources, which (as staff who teach in the sector know) are very limited. Such resources would need to have a curricular focus and be tailored for pupils in early intervention, primary, and post primary. Well-being is another critical area which should be targeted for resources because statistics suggest higher than average mental health challenges for the DHH community.

There are many benefits for learning the language for each individual and each class group. These benefits would be recognised as children grow and are exposed to people with different languages throughout their lives. Learning ISL would provide hearing children with unique benefits. Sadly, people with a communication disability are disadvantaged and they have unmet assistance, so if all children were taught the language it would contribute to the well-being of those who are deaf or partially deaf.

There is an amazing curriculum on the presence of Auslan (the national sign language of Australia) in the national curriculum (please see link below for more details), which could provide valuable insights for planning the inclusion of ISL in the Irish school curriculum. Such a move would be a large steppingstone towards achieving proper integration and recognition of the ISL Act passed by the Dail Eireann in Dec 2017, effectively recognizing ISL as an official language of the State along with Irish and English.

This proposal would, for the first time, give DHH children access to a formal first language learner pathway for acquiring ISL, acknowledge their status and strengths as visual learners, and offer a 'Deaf gain' perspective to their lives. In turn, the second language learner pathway provides unparalleled opportunities for hearing children to access and use ISL in their schools and in society, reducing barriers for participation and increasing equality in the wider community. Children learning ISL in schools have the potential to fundamentally change the social fabric of Ireland. Furthermore, this can lead to hearing children who are exempt from learning Irish or would learn ISL to do so via the Junior and Leaving certificates.

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/languages/auslan/introduction/>

<https://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/f-10-curriculum/languages/auslan/?strand=Communicating&strand=Understanding&capability=ignore&priority=ignore&pathway=First+Language+Learner+Pathway&sequence=Years+F%e2%80%9310+Sequence&year=13302&elaborations=true&searchNodeId=13302&searchTerm=deaf#dimension-content>

It is the responsibility of the department of education to provide funding for the introduction of ISL (Ireland's newly recognized, third official language) to all primary schools and then a follow- on

programme as children progress to 2nd and 3rd level education. The most effective way to ensure that ISL is used every day is to include it in the school curriculum.

Emerging priorities for children's learning

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Embed seven key competencies across children's learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class.
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes. The Learning Outcomes and the Key Competencies are broad in nature to describe this wider understanding of learning.
- Have increased emphasis on some existing areas such as PE and SPHE (Wellbeing) and digital learning, and have new aspects such as Modern Foreign Languages, Technology, Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, and a broader Arts Education.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to emerging priorities for children's learning. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

- There is a need for the awareness of the nature and impact of deafness on individuals, children would gain an understanding of the language and be able to communicate with both hearing and deaf people through sign language.
- The programme should concentrate on strategies that would impact learning and promote the benefits for partially deaf or deaf people.
- This language could be integrated into other subjects for example Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE), learning how the ear and sounds works, and the causes of deafness.
- Teachers should be trained to promote and support the external teacher in the initial stages. This would also enable most teachers to be prepared and trained to support and teach in special schools and resource teaching where there are children with hearing problems. ISL could also help children who have communication issues. Facial and hand gestures can be a great support to children with special needs.

- Respecting the deaf community is key when learning ISL. Many problems that they face stems from their first introduction to the language because there is a lack of ISL teachers. The department of education would have to promote Deaf study courses in order to meet the demands for its introduction into all primary schools.
- There are many great benefits to teaching ISL in schools. Firstly, knowing an additional language, even just the basics, has been known to boost confidence and self-esteem in young people. It also gives children an awareness of people and the opportunity to communicate with them.

Changing how the curriculum is structured and presented

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Be broad and balanced in purpose and content.
- Be structured in five broad curriculum areas;
 - Language
 - Mathematics, Science and Technology Education
 - Wellbeing
 - Social and Environmental Education
 - Arts Education.

(In addition to the five areas above, the Patron's Programme is developed by a school's patron with the aim of contributing to the child's holistic development particularly from the religious and/or ethical perspective and in the process, underpins and supports the characteristic spirit of the school. These areas connect to the themes of *Aistear* and to the subject-based work in Junior Cycle.)

- Provide for an integrated learning experience, with curriculum areas in Stages 1 and 2 (junior Infants – second Class) and more subject-based learning in Stages 3 and 4 (third class – sixth class).
- Use broad learning outcomes to describe the expected learning and development for children.
- Incorporate the new *Primary Language Curriculum / Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile*.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to changing how the curriculum is structured and presented. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

Deaf/Hard of Hearing children will have access to a formal first language learner pathway for acquiring ISL which will acknowledge their status and strengths as visual learners and offer a ‘Deaf gain’ perspective to their lives.

Furthermore the second language learner pathway will provide unparalleled opportunities for hearing children to access and use ISL in their schools and in society. This will ultimately reduce barriers for participation and increase equality in the wider community. Children who will learn ISL in schools have the potential to fundamentally change society across Ireland.

An excerpt from the Auslan Curriculum:

- *The diversity of students’ capacity to engage with the curriculum may be influenced by one or more of the following:*
- *social, emotional and physical development*
- *level of health and wellbeing*
- *age*
- *level of need*
- *appropriate supports and adjustments*
- *previous schooling and/or absenteeism*
- *learning environment*
- *collaboration among the student, family and school*
- *differences between home and school priorities and practices.*

- *All students have unique talents, abilities and capacity to learn. Schools cater for the diversity of students in different ways. The three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum support teachers as they plan educational programs, with advice on meeting the needs of all learners.*
- *These pages include specific advice and resources based on the three dimensions of the curriculum including:*
- *a series of steps to show how using the Australian Curriculum content and standards can meet the learning needs, interests, and abilities of all students, the CASE steps (Content, Abilities, Standards and Evaluation) and*
- *illustrations of professional practice.*

When planning student-centred learning, teachers may focus on one or more of the three dimensions of the Australian Curriculum. However, it is expected that learning area content will be the starting point for planning”

Supporting a variety of pedagogical approaches and strategies with assessment central to teaching and learning

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Promote high quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Conceptualise assessment as an essential and critical part of teaching and learning.
- Highlight the importance of teachers’ professional judgement in supporting progression in children’s learning.
- Encourage teachers to make meaningful connections with children’s interests and experiences.
- Recognise the significance of quality relationships and their impact on children’s learning.
- Recognise the role and influence of parents and families in children’s education.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to supporting a variety of pedagogical approaches and strategies with assessment central to teaching and learning. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

It is essential that the Curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students by delivering a relevant, contemporary, and engaging curriculum that builds on the educational goals of all children, especially toward ISL. However, there is a need to identify three key areas that need to be addressed for the benefit of individuals and Ireland as a whole. This incorporation of the priority will encourage conversations between students, teachers, and the wider community.

Building on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum while recognising and responding to the challenges and changing needs and priorities.

The 1999 curriculum contributed to many successes including:

- Enhanced enjoyment of learning for children.
- Increased use of active methodologies for teaching and learning.
- Improved attainment levels in reading, mathematics and science as evidenced in national and international assessments.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:

- Address curriculum overload at primary level.
- Take stock of strategies, initiatives and programmes and clarify priorities for children's learning.
- Link with *Aistear* and *the Framework for Junior Cycle*.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* outlines important messages in relation to building on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum while recognising and responding to challenges and changing needs and priorities. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.

We, the Council of Irish Sign Language teachers, have vast expertise and experience working with large groups of kids in primary and Post primary schools. We therefore have the background necessary to teach ISL to larger numbers of children via a video platform.

Data Protection

The NCCA fully respects your right to privacy. Any personal information which you volunteer to the NCCA will be treated with the highest standards of security and confidentiality, strictly in accordance with the Data Protection Acts. If you require further information related to data protection please visit www.ncca.ie/en/privacy-statement or you can contact the NCCA's Data Protection Officer at dpo@ncca.ie.

Thank you for your submission.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie