



# 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](mailto:PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie)

## *Individual submission details*

Name	Sr. Edel Murphy OP, Primary Teacher
Date	18/12/2020
E-mail	

## *Organisation submission details*

Name	
Position	
Organisation	
Date	
E-mail	

Please email your submission to [PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie](mailto:PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie)

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

As a member of a Congregation, Dominican Sisters, that has been involved in primary education in Ireland since the 1820s the element of recognition of the dignity of the whole child and involvement in setting up schools in which children of all ability were included. The beauty of each person, made in the image of God, and encouraging each one to reach his/her potential is important. The vision for Dominican education is that of regard for the person made in the image of God, and for all God's creation.

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.

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# Section 1

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

In general, I affirm the work as presented in the draft, I welcome the acknowledgement of inclusivity and diversity. As Irish society is more pluralist Catholic schools have nothing to fear in such an evolution provided the mission of the Catholic Church is not undermined or excluded from the role of education in the Ireland of today.

However, the spiritual aspect of the child is absent, while referred to at times it is then absent when coming to detail in areas, as that of Wellbeing, a spirituality that points to the existence of a Being greater than myself. When reference is made to 'Wellbeing' as a subject it does not include the aspect of the spiritual life. All children are spiritually curious. The nourishment of this aspect of their lives integrates the whole curriculum as it seeks our truths, truths in maths, science, through beauty of art, music, respect of our physical bodies through PE and social personal education.

The NCCA's proposal to shorten the teaching of RE to 2 hours but I welcome that this area is still included. My question needing clarification is, is RE regarded as a core subject as it was and how this is emphasised to ensure that it is understood. I also appreciate that other area subjects times were cut so as to facilitate what is new and needs including.

The Board of Management has a central role in curriculum provision in primary schools and I would request that the NCCA acknowledge this as it appears absent in this document.

# 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.**

I welcome the understanding that schools are being given flexibility and for the increased autonomy of schools and also that it is for every child.

However, again the role of the Board of Management in provision of the curriculum is missing as is the emphasis of taking account of the ethos of the school in this section. The ethos of the school is the lens through which schools engage with current curriculum.

The times for teaching, learning and assessment are all vital elements in education and the concept of minimum and flexible. I welcome that the flexible time allows for a particular aspect of the Patron's programme. Again in relation to RE - Core subject or not- the inclusion of Wellbeing as weekly minimum. Options seem overwhelming and for school timetable to operate on the principle of integrated learning seeing connections between the spiritual, moral and religious education of all curriculum areas may collapse - trying to juggle the multiplicity of options may lead to confusion.

### **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.

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- 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.**

It is always relevant to make connections with preschool (home) primary and post-primary.

The role of the Home school teacher is vital in this particularly but not every school has one? And not every school of special education needs is even considered to be allocated a position to ensure this connection for our most vulnerable students.

The role of a home school liaison teacher for all primary schools would add to ensuring the children being in a greater position of reaching his/her potential and would support this framework in relation to curriculum connections, it is a more consistent approach to education. Otherwise this important collaboration between all who support the educational needs of the child could fall through or lack consistency.

### **Emerging priorities for children's learning**

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

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- 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.**

I would see the need for a clear statement in any redevelopment of primary curriculum framework to uphold the status of the patron’s programme in the “religious, spiritual and ethical domain. I consider this to be vital to the holistic development of any child in a school with a Catholic ethos.

## 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.**

I note on page 11, in the subject area of Wellbeing- the spiritual aspect is not included, then values are also referred, whose?

Is Religious education a core subject? If so this gives an integrated approach which would allow the diversity, inclusivity to continue as it is in our Catholic schools. If not this will undermine a value and ethos.

The five broad curriculum areas listed above causes confusion and omits Religious Education.

In relation to wellbeing -It is important that in the education of our young that we avoid superficial knowledge, the kind that just puffs up as oppose to building up. It needs a foundation that will build on the character of the child. For example, the mission of our Catholic schools is to build on love, the model we have for that are the teachings and values of Jesus. Wellbeing has always been an aspect which included going for nature walks, promoting music, art, poetry and pausing for moment for prayer and assemblies. It is to avoid being narcissistic, that while we value the child the child needs to also be taught that he/she lives in communion with others. That it not become an exercise of ME looking in the mirror and thinking everything revolves around ME, yes the child is only about me but education also assists in drawing them into the wider circle of life, the social teachings of our programme. The NCCA has not recognised the great role that RE has played in the education of our children as it appears to have replaced it with wellbeing? RE has been a core subject in our Catholic schools. And our programme does include other faiths and REs, Catholic schools are known to be places of educating together, and would highlight engagement rather than simply tolerance. Regarding the inclusion of ERB and Ethics as an emerging priority for schools these are being provided for in the Patron's programme.

All subjects have always been integrated, giving a whole approach. Learning about does not ensure an integration-when we teach science we encourage to think and act as a scientist, as the curriculum states, or art, to be an artist, our music, a musician and so forth. Religious Education is engagement with the spiritual, it's not proselytising. Educating children at this age is providing opportunities for engagement. This section seems to unintentionally disregard what has been, as if none of it existed before. Teaching about religion - is one area that comes across as lacking engagement- I am all for tolerance but unless we engage how can we grow together for a brighter future. Learning about my neighbour doesn't build a community, dialogue and engagement is needed.

## **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.**

NCCA should also recognise the role of parent and BOM of schools (as it states parent's, families- there are others who also play strong role in children's education.

While all stated is not new and is being reaffirmed, the overload and greater emphasis on assessment must be safeguarded so as not to dilute what our role as educators is. We are there for the child not the paper work!! Be careful of overload- NCCA need to help put in place what can assist the role of educators.

**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.

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*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 not only build on the 1999 curriculum but I do welcome that we need to keep up to date with the changes eg coding and area of technology and assessment that can help focus a child's learning and teacher to assist.

## **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](http://www.ncca.ie/en/privacy-statement) or you can contact the NCCA's Data Protection Officer at [dpo@ncca.ie](mailto:dpo@ncca.ie).

**Thank you for your submission.**

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