

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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Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

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Yes ✓

No

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

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.

Section 1

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

We found the DPCF to be comprehensive and extensive in highlighting realistic teaching/learning methodologies. It provides foundations for children to reach their full potential through engagements and partnerships. We believe there's connectivity between the vision and key principles outlined. Curriculum plays a powerful role in shaping individuals' understanding, attitudes and behaviours. This framework embodies a set of interrelated principles governing the selection and organisation of content and the methods for transmission and assessment; similar to how curriculum ideologies express the relationship between education and society at particular moments. The relationship between curriculum and society is reciprocal: each serves to reproduce and transform the other (Carr 1998).

The layout's concise and easy to navigate/understand. It supports teaching/learning in a diverse/inclusive manner, that supports the needs of every child across all areas of their learning and development. We perceive the DPCF to recognise teachers as committed, skillful and agentic professionals.

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We perceive the key principles to be aspirational and achievable, rather than too ambitious. 'Transitions and continuity' is key in helping children build foundations for their learning. Although there's mentions of skills, we would welcome increased mentions of skill development, as skills cater for all types of intelligences, not just those who are academic. This links with a modern-vocationalist ideology that seeks a curriculum which transmits instrumental knowledge and practical skills that are relevant for working life (Carr 1998).

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.

The DPCF outlines procedures towards helping children develop their agency. This associates with the curriculum's aim to "provide a strong foundation for every child to thrive and flourish, supporting them in realising their full potential as individuals and as members of communities and society during childhood and into the future." It recommends that children construct their own learning and are given increased opportunities for choice/flexibility to become independent learners.

We think by giving schools/teachers flexibility in relation to planning/timetabling, teachers can help students develop holistically. The teacher can enact the curriculum, adapt to the needs of their class, recognise their agency as a teacher and the children’s agency.

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 curriculum areas in primary school and preschool are interrelated. Stages one and two are an extension of knowledge previously gained through Aistear (NCCA 2009) in preschool. “Curriculum areas become more differentiated into subjects to reflect children’s growing awareness of subjects as a way of organising the world” (DCRF 2020).

We think as children develop from preschool they should be exposed to STEM subjects. These create critical and innovative thinkers, foster ingenuity and creativity and build resilience and problem-solving skills. Learning these skills when young, will help children make connections across all aspects of their education and life.

A key principle is ‘transitions and continuity’ this provides the foundations for the Junior Cert framework principle -‘continuity and development.’ Transitions and continuity of experience provides progression in learning as children develop through school years.

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.

The seven key competencies outlined are an important aspect of learning. They pave the way for child-centered and deeper learning that contributes to children’s holistic development. New technologies/Coronavirus pandemic have led to new ways of teaching and learning in the classroom. It’s now important for children to be digital learners (STEM), to be able to communicate and use language (literacy & modern languages) and to be creative (arts education). We think it’s important that children learn how to be learners. To do this we need to foster children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes.

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.

The DPCF rationale outlines how one challenge associated with the 1999 primary curriculum was that there was a ‘curriculum overload—too much to do and too little time to do it all’ (DPCF 2020). Their aim is to avoid this in the 2020 primary curriculum, so that teachers are ‘engaging and supporting every child as a learner, and the challenge of using assessment in a meaningful way to inform teaching and learning as well as to report on children’s progress and achievement’ (DPCF 2020). Time will be allowed for this in the new curriculum.

We welcome that the new Primary Language curriculum is slimmer and has less pages than the old one. It’s concise and easily accessible, with sufficient content to achieve optimum teaching/learning. The DPCF outlines a clear vision and set of principles so teachers know exactly what’s important and what’s prioritised when teaching and why.

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.
- Conceptual 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.

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- 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.

We think assessment is an integral part to teaching and learning, whether planned/unplanned. The DPCF supports this as teachers can assess students intuitively through questions and planned interactions e.g concept maps and teacher designed tests.

Assessment exists along a continuum and is a collaborative process. Dialogue, higher order questions and feedback are necessary in terms of reflecting on teaching/learning and supporting children’s agency. Elements of dialogue, used to further children’s learning, can be seen in the new Primary Language Curriculum where teachers ‘conference’ with children to support progression in their learning. “Providing children with regular time to talk about their work and to identify and reflect on their next steps contributes to their self-identity as learners, while peer assessment and other collaborative learning enables children to support and extend each other’s learning.” (DPCF 2020). We believe assessment is the bridge between what's in a lesson plan and how it’s received by the children i.e. intended curriculum vs received curriculum, therefore formative assessment is integral.

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 agree with DPCF’s response to the challenge of inclusion and how it’s articulated. It entails an inclusive/diverse curriculum wide approach that enables all to reach their full potential. We welcomed the DPCF’s mentioning that “in the context of a universally designed curriculum, inclusive education and diversity encourages a move away from thinking in terms of ability and disability to thinking about variability, competency and opportunity. It is concerned with the best interest of every child considering that each child varies in their competency, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender and sexual identity.” (DPCF 2020). SEN also needs to be catered for. Societies are experiencing a surge of diversity due to the movement of the people. Incorporating inclusion will teach children to be tolerant in a pluralist society with respect for diversity.

It’s essential technology is introduced into classrooms, to provide foundation’s so children will be prepared for the real world and be able to adapt to the environment around them. We noted that although technology was mentioned in the 1999 curriculum, it’s to a different extent nowadays. The key competencies recognise the need for children to be digital learners and we would like to see this rolled out, as children are the coding and technology innovators of the future.

Data Protection

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Thank you for your submission.

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