NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

Guidelines: supporting teaching and learning in care and detention schools

February 2023

Contents

Introduction

In 2007, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published the Draft Curriculum Framework and Guidelines for Children in Detention and Care (CiDC). Since then, the primary and post-primary educational landscape has changed significantly.

- A revised Primary Language Curriculum (2019) was introduced.

- The process of Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment is due to be completed in 2024.

- The Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) saw the introduction of a wider range of curriculum components and assessments; a renewed focus on student wellbeing; and improved provision for children with special educational needs (SEN).

- The Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report (2022) offers opportunities to reflect on the evolving curriculum and assessment elements at senior cycle.

In addition, the systems for children in high support and care settings and children in detention in Ireland have undergone significant change.

- In 2016, Ireland's three juvenile detention centres were amalgamated into one. The Children's Detention Centre caters for children aged 12 to 18 and a half years who are sentenced to detention by the courts.

- Children can now be placed in one of the four High Support and Special Care settings in Ireland from the age of 11.

It was timely therefore, that in September 2019, NCCA commenced planning for the development of new guidelines for curriculum and assessment provision for children in residential care[1] and children in detention schools. As they redeveloped these guidelines, NCCA considered experience in other jurisdictions, and worked closely with teachers, children/students and parents in Irish settings to build greater knowledge and a deeper understanding about children in care settings and detention schools.

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[1] The term care will be used to represent residential care schools.

Aim of the guidelines

These guidelines acknowledge the challenge and complexities involved in responding to the educational needs of students in care and in detention. Their purpose is to:

- assist staff in care and detention schools to develop flexible pathways, using the appropriate primary, junior cycle, or senior cycle curriculum framework, that support learning, teaching, assessment and reporting in the context of each individual school's setting

- support students' meaningful access and engagement with the appropriate curriculum framework through the development of high-quality educational programmes that value and celebrate every student's individuality in a positive, inclusive and caring environment

- facilitate the establishment of transition pathways for students to return to their previous school or to a new school; to progress to other education and training opportunities; to enter employment; and to prepare them for lifelong learning.

Using the guidelines

The guidelines are not an alternative curriculum for students in care or detention schools. They complement the Primary School Curriculum, Framework for Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle curriculum by outlining considerations and approaches for planning, learning, teaching and assessment that ensure:

- students are not educationally disadvantaged by their particular setting.

- high expectations are set for each student, according to their learning strengths, their learning needs and their expectations and aspirations.

- these students continue to have access to the same educational opportunities as their respective peer group.

It is envisioned that the guidelines will predominantly support teachers, educators and management in the areas of learning, teaching, assessment, and planning for the students in their care. Whilst residential care staff, social workers and other agency staff will have standards and guidelines developed by their organisations to support their work, it is anticipated that these guidelines will also support them when collaborating with school staff in the best interests of the child. With this in mind, it is proposed that readers will interact with this guidelines according to their needs.

The document is written so that it can be used in a number of ways. Some people will read the it from the beginning and work through it to the end. Others will find it useful to focus initially on the specific chapter that addresses a need that is pressing for them and then expand their reading to include other chapters. In order to facilitate these ways of using the guidelines, key ideas are occasionally repeated at intervals throughout the document. For example, a teacher might first look at all learning and teaching approaches or a particular learning and teaching approach. In contrast, a principal or a residential care staff member might initially look to the whole-school

planning or transitions and inter-agency guidelines when a child arrives at the setting.

Chapter one sets out a number of guiding statements that contextualise the principles of primary, junior cycle and senior cycle curricula for these settings. The curriculum principles and the guiding statements convey what is valued in education and lay the foundation for planning, learning, teaching, assessment and reporting in schools and educational settings.

Chapter two looks at planning through the lens of communication and collaboration, whole- school planning, and classroom planning.

Chapter three gives an overview of wellbeing, in terms of learning, teaching and care for the students in care and detention schools.

Chapter four outlines Universal Design for Learning (UDL), trauma-informed practices, restorative practices and cultural responses. Examples of these in practice (in terms of planning, learning, teaching, assessment and reporting) will follow.

Chapter five outlines what assessment looks like at primary, junior cycle and senior cycle; the importance of formative assessment; and the considerations when planning for formative assessment, feedback and reporting.

Chapter six outlines what is required for students' successful transitions from their placement in care or detention to navigating their daily routines.

1. Introduction to the guiding statements

In this chapter you will find information on

- overarching principles of teaching and learning that schools need to consider in pursuing the curriculum vision at primary, junior cycle and senior cycle

- the eight guiding statements that contextualise the principles of primary, junior cycle and senior cycle curricula for detention and care home settings.

1.1 The principles

Policy makers, school leaders and teachers have a responsibility to ensure that every student in Ireland is provided with meaningful access to, and participation in, the curriculum in a manner that will benefit them throughout their lives. Each of the curriculum frameworks at primary, junior cycle and senior cycle set out eight principles to assist and enable schools and other educational settings to deliver on this responsibility. The principles, which are broad in nature to reflect the variety of school contexts in Ireland and the diverse circumstances, experiences and capabilities of the students attending these schools, provide guidance for curriculum planning, learning, teaching, assessment and reporting. Teachers will be familiar with the descriptors for each principle for the curriculum they are teaching.

- The eight principles for the primary curriculum can be found on page 8 of the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework.

- The eight principles for the junior cycle curriculum can be found on page 11 of the Framework for Junior Cycle.

- The eight principles for the senior cycle curriculum can be found on page 24 of the Senior Cycle Review: Advisory Report.

1.2 Guiding Statements

The reference to every student in 1.1 above, includes those in detention and care. To facilitate the realisation of the principles in these settings eight guiding statements informed by principles of the primary , junior cycle and senior cycle curriculum frameworks have been identified. The guiding statements describe practices and approaches that you would expect to see in every residential care and detention school and classroom. They may not be continuously in evidence, but reflect how the curriculum is realised in these schools and settings. The guiding statements are not stand-alone statements and should be read in conjunction with the relevant curriculum principles. They are neither exhaustive or exclusive. While they allow for flexibility in the design and enactment of learning programmes, they also ensure a certain degree of unity across them.

Learning is personalised to the variability of the learner

Personalised learning involves providing high-quality learning, teaching and assessment that supports students in

- developing agency and progressing in their learning.

- developing their capacity to meet the challenges of life beyond school, in further and continuing education, and in their working life.

Personalised learning plans and programmes require a focus on transitions. Learning and teaching in care and detention schools is planned with a view to easing transitions that students in these settings face. A programme of learning facilitates the continuity of the learning experience for the student as they transition between educational settings and this helps them to:

- develop their desire and capacity for learning.

- see a pathway of learning which enables the fostering of the idea of lifelong learning.

Engagement through choice

For teachers working with students in care and detention schools subject planning involves designing relevant and meaningful learning and teaching activities that are both motivating and engaging. Students in care and detention schools are involved in the planning process so that choice is embedded into learning and teaching. How students engage with and participate in learning activities and experiences will be influenced by their sense of ownership of the process. In turn, this will affect how well they communicate and demonstrate their learning.

Every student experiences high-quality learning

Every student in care or detention schools experience high-quality learning, which enables understanding; nurtures critical and creative talents; and creates opportunities to develop interpersonal and life skills.

High quality learning environments are characterised by the pursuit of excellence. This means

- high expectations of every student

- constant and continuous support for every student to be their full and best self.

Every student has the opportunity to engage with the curriculum in creative and innovative ways

Teachers working with students in care and detention schools use appropriate and evidence-based pedagogical approaches to foster student agency and engagement in their learning; to build choice and flexibility into learning; and to provide appropriate supports and challenges for every student. Students in care and detention schools should have the opportunity to engage in the curriculum in creative and innovative ways so that they can explore and develop their creative talents, while developing their knowledge, understanding and skills in subject areas.

Communication, collaboration, and partnership enables the student to stay connected

Developing partnerships within the learning environment encourages students' participation and generates engagement and motivation in their learning. For children in care and detention schools it is important to remain connected to the world outside of the immediate learning environment. Communication, collaboration, and partnership with families, previous educational settings, local educational settings where possible, and residential staff, acknowledges the student's life in and out of their school or setting. Developing these relationships generates engagement and motivation in their 'here and now' learning, and lays a foundation for their future learning whether formal, informal or work-related.

Continuity of learning experiences support and develop students' capacity for learning

A personalised programme of learning that builds on prior learning, and supports students in making links within and across learning areas, provides for continuity and opens pathways for further learning. When planning activities (educational or otherwise) for students in care and detention schools flexible pathways are identified, nurtured and developed as the student transitions into the campus or care setting. Any planned learning experiences connect the student's Education Plan to their full development within the care setting and beyond. A focus on planning for continuity can encourage and support students to look to the future and prepare for life after leaving school, care or detention. For some students this will mean planning for learning at the next level of the National Framework of Qualification. For other students, this will be taking up employment or it may be building their resilience for a period of job seeking.

Every student is valued as a contributing member of their learning community

Diverse, equitable, and inclusive education centres on the values and practices that enable every student to feel respected and valued as a contributing member of a learning community giving the student a sense of belonging and ownership. Inclusive learning environments work to remove barriers to learning and facilitate meaningful engagement with learning that is relevant, responsive, supportive and challenging. Inclusive learning environments in care and detention schools support every student to reach their potential and be their full and confident selves.

Developing caring and respectful relationships enhances students' wellbeing

Relationships and partnerships within the learning environment are vital to the wellbeing and education of every student. For children in care and detention schools cultivating caring and respectful relationships with teachers, peers, parents/guardians, and other significant adults within

their school, residential centre and the wider community can enhance and support students' wellbeing and impact positively on their engagement, motivation and learning. Adverse childhood experiences[2] (ACEs) influence a child's sense of identity and wellbeing. More targeted and individualised approaches will be required to support students in a care or detention school who may have experienced ACEs.

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[2] Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic experiences that a child might face or witness while growing up. Supporting children who have experienced trauma is addressed in the learning and teaching chapter

2. Planning for the education of children in care and detention

In this chapter you will find information on:

- the duty in relation to care and placement plans for children

- approaches to planning

- planning at different levels

- further supports for planning.

2.1 Introduction

All children in residential care must have a Care Plan and all children in detention must have a Placement Plan. The Education Plan[3] is an integral part of the Care Plan. The Care Plan, Placement Plan and Education Plan are an evolving record of what needs to happen in order for children in care and detention schools to make progress and fulfil their potential. This section of the guidelines focuses on the Education Plan.

The Education Plan should reflect the importance of a personalised approach to learning. It should be used by the school and other professionals to develop the student's strengths and talents; meet identified areas for educational support; raise aspirations; and prepare students for their transition to their community, schools and adult life. The Education Plan will need to take account of the individual circumstances of the child and how these impact their learning. Information gathered is used to plan, manage and provide child-centred, safe and effective care and education.

The Education Plan facilitates this by:

- documenting continuous, formative and summative assessment outcomes, including junior cycle Classroom-Based Assessments, progress or achievement

- documenting over time and in one place, the information gathered, plans and interventions, consultations and reviews, progress and identified areas for support (including preparation and guidelines for leaving the setting)

- enabling the student, school management, their teachers, their parents/guardians, and care staff to track the student's educational pathway and transitions, starting from previous education settings through their journey in their current setting and onwards to their next stage of education or other setting

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[3] The Education Plan forms part of the Care Plan developed when children are placed in residential or detention settings. Each setting will have their own templates and language for personalised learning planning.

- ensuring continuity, consolidation and progression of learning and of educational support and challenge for the student.

Education Plan for students with special educational needs

The Education Plan for students with special educational needs will include an additional section. This Individual Education Plan (IEP)[4] or Student Support File (SSF)[5] will identify specific special educational needs; the teaching and/or assistive technology resources required to support the student; and strategies that support the student. The short-term and long-term goals that form part of the IEP or SSF will be included in the goals set out in the overall Education Plan. The NEPS SSF is a live workable document that can be used for all students in care and detention settings to facilitate tracking and transfer.

Further information on special educational needs and planning is available from National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS). Training and support for planning and supporting students with special educational needs is available from the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

2.2 Fit-for-purpose approaches to planning

Students entering special care or detention schools will be at different stages of their education and will have different priorities and goals. Students' health and wellbeing, special education needs if any, durations of stay and external factors[6] will impact these priorities and goals. Individual planning for each student will need to take into account such circumstances.

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[4] Individual Education Plans (IEP) are documents that identify children's special educational needs and set goals to meet those needs.

[5] A Student Support File has been developed to enable schools to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to students, in line with their level of need.

[6] For example, where a child is engaged in court proceedings or a child in a detention setting is on remand as opposed to serving a custodial sentence.

The Education Plan for each student should:

- reflect what is available to their peers in the mainstream school or educational setting that they have transferred from – to ensure that, as far as possible, students are not disadvantaged when/if they return to that setting

- plan for exam preparation, completing assessments and travel of assessment outcomes with students, particularly where students are mid-assessment or mid-year

- include a range of learning experiences suitable for short-, medium- and long-term placements in a care or detention school

- be mindful of the impact on learning and teaching time for children on remand who may have to attend court proceedings and other related events and to plan accordingly.

2.3 Communication, collaboration and partnership

The Education Plan requires planning, communication and collaboration at three levels. Communication should be multi-directional in order for all partners to have the most up-to-date information when developing plans to support the child. All of those involved in the Care Plan, Placement Plan and Education Plan at all levels and stages should recognise the child and their parents/guardians as significant partners and supportively and meaningfully include them in the decision making.

Student voice

When teachers and other relevant adults listen to and include students in decisions that affect them, they are showing the students that they value and respect their thoughts about and vision for their education. Each student is entitled to exercise choice, have access to an advocacy service and be enabled to participate in making informed decisions about their care, education and wellbeing. It is important that schools, teachers and other adults in the student's life do not assume to know what young people need.

Students should have opportunities to express their needs so that the schools respond to students' real and expressed needs rather than adult assumptions about what they need. When students are involved in shaping their education, care and future this involvement is more likely to provide the kind of learning and experiences that they need in order to grow and develop into young adults. By engaging in conversations with students, the school can gain students' insights into their own learning, wellbeing and health needs and design with the students to address these needs accordingly.

Our Voices Our Schools is a resource developed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to support schools and teachers to give students a say in their education and school life. It provides a checklist for participation in student voice (see Figure 1) as part of its Planning a Voice Initiative template. Additional practical supports to assist schools in listening to their students can be found on the Our Voices Our Schools website.

Space

Provide a safe and inclusive space for young people to form and express their views

- Are the young people affected by this issue involved?
- Are steps taken to ensure that the process is inclusive?
- Do the young people feel safe to express themselves freely in the space?
- Are the young people who are interested in the issue involved?
- Are the young people involved from the start?

Voice

Provide appropriate information and facilitate the young people to form and express their views

- Do the young people have the information they need to form a view?
- Are the young people given a range of options on how to express themselves?
- Do the young people know to whom their views will be communicated?
- Does the process include opportunities for young people to identify issues that they want to discuss?
- Do the young people know they have a choice about their participation?

Influence

Ensure that young people's views are taken seriously and acted upon, where appropriate

- Are the young people clear about the scope of their influence, (opportunities and limitations)?
- Will young people be given feedback explaining the reasons for decisions taken?
- Will the young people be given an easily accessible summary of their views?
- Do the young people know who the key decision-makers involved are?

Audience

Ensure that young people's views are communicated to someone with the responsibility to listen

- Are the right decision-makers involved, i.e. those responsible for decision making on this issue?
- Have these decision-makers committed to taking the young people's feedback seriously?
- Is there a process in place to ensure that the young people's voices are given due weight and consideration?
- Are there plans to have the young people involved in presenting their views

Figure 1 Checklist for student participation

Partnership with parents/guardians

Supporting parents/guardians to be involved in decisions about their child's education is important. Planning for the Education Plan should include opportunities for relevant staff to consult with parents/guardians regularly and in a meaningful way. Working in partnership with parents/ guardians involves making them feel welcome. It also involves staff being accessible, approachable and non-judgemental when hearing their views; regularly communicating their child's progress to them; and being available to talk them through any queries or concerns they have.

Due to the unique context of these schools or family circumstances, regular face-to-face communication with parents/guardians will not always be possible. Therefore, the support of the social worker, key worker or link person will be crucial in keeping parents/guardians connected with the school and their child's education. A variety of methods should be used to communicate with parents/guardians and to provide them with clear information about their child's wellbeing, learning and progress. Contacting parents/guardians by phone before sending a letter or email can reduce misunderstandings or confusion. Letters or emails should be written in a way that is easy for parents/guardians to understand. Such supports better equip parents/guardians to support their child's learning. Such contacts and communication links are also of enormous importance to students and serve to complete the 'partnership circle' for them.

2.4 Planning levels

Planning works best when it is student-centred. Regardless of the planning level, discussions and decisions should start with the student and work outwards. It is important to support informed student and parents'/guardians' involvement at each level. This involvement begins at the initial planning stage and continues throughout the process of review and updating the Education Plan.

Inter-agency

Continuous and consistent inter-agency collaboration is integral to planning, monitoring and reviewing a student's Education Plan. The quality of the Care Plan or Placement Plan and Education Plan is the joint responsibility of the agencies involved in the child's care, the child's residential setting, the school, and the child's previous educational setting. Social workers or key workers, Juvenile Liaison Officers, carers, designated teachers and staff of previous and current educational settings, and other relevant professionals, will need to work closely together.

The information necessary to support the provision of student-centred, holistic, safe and effective care, education and wellbeing for each child needs to be shared in a timely manner. This information will be reviewed and updated at inter-agency meetings. **It is crucial that the student's records of assessment transfer immediately with them**, particularly where they are in the process of completing any of the following:

- Classroom-Based Assessments for their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement

- portfolio of evidence for their Level 2 Learning Programmes

- assessment components for their Leaving Certificate Established, Leaving Certificate Applied or Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

The timely transfer of diagnostic and educational assessments will ensure students are not being over-assessed in this area. Transfer of details of educational programme progression are important to onward education placements; they serve to ensure smooth transition and also to emphasise the importance of education in the child's journey.

Whole-school

The student's right to access, participate and benefit from the appropriate national curriculum must be at the forefront when planning at whole-school level. The fluidity of students in and out of these schools will be a key consideration when planning for learning, teaching, assessment and reporting. This is particularly important for students who are in the process of completing assessment components for certification.

A whole-school approach to curriculum planning ensures that all staff have a shared vision, language, and understanding of the school's curriculum planning, monitoring, evaluation, and review processes. Whole-school agreed learning, teaching and assessment strategies promote students' responsibility and ownership of their learning and support the development of independent and collaborative learners. These strategies also provide suitable learning opportunities for students across and beyond the curriculum.

Due to the unique context of these schools, this planning will require input from the student's residential setting and other agencies. Additionally, consideration needs to be given to the student's education beyond the national curriculum and outside of the school day. Schools should be consulted on additional programmes that support students. Additional programmes, such as vocational courses, life skills and transitioning to the community, are essential to the holistic education and wellbeing of the student and should be detailed in the education plan.

However, there needs to be a balance between additional programmes and the national curriculum. As far as possible, additional programmes should take place outside of the school day. Additional programmes should be used to engage students further and complement the national curriculum, and vice versa. These programmes should be planned for and delivered in a way that does not disadvantage the student in terms of their right to access, participate in and benefit from the national curriculum.

Whole-school planning should link closely with national educational policy initiatives such as:

- Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice

- Literacy and Numeracy Strategy

- Digital Learning Framework for Primary and Post-Primary

- Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027

Additionally, whole-school planning will need to have policies or plans in place for:

- career planning and guidelines

- developing life skills

- multi-directional communication and collaboration

- transitions

- special educational needs.

The school self-evaluation process provides schools with an opportunity to incorporate the development of policies and strategies into their school planning. Through a series of reflective questions and stages, this six-step process empowers the school community to identify and affirm good practice, and to identify and take action on areas that merit improvement. The school Self-Evaluation Guidelines for primary schools can be found here and for post-primary schools here.

The processes associated with school self-evaluation assign significant value to responding to the perspectives of the school's students through the student voice. There are opportunities throughout the school day to listen to and involve students in decision making about issues that affect them in school. Their voices can also contribute to reviewing school policies through the lens of the student. As noted on page 3, opportunities and resources to get students involved at whole-school level can be found at Our Voices Our Schools.

Classroom

Teachers should actively use the student's Education Plan as a resource for planning, delivering, monitoring and improving education while the student is attending their school. A Universal Design for Learning (UDL) approach to learning, teaching and assessment planning will support teachers to plan and design with the variability of the students engaging in the lesson in mind. When planning for personalised learning, it is good practice to:

- clarify the goal of the learning outcome and learning intentions of each lesson to ensure actions or tasks do not create barriers for the students

- clarify what is to be achieved, when and how

- consider the prior learning and knowledge, circumstances, identity, and duration of placement/ enrolment when planning long-term and short-term goals for each student

- ensure every student has a voice in the classroom

- include choice and flexibility through the provision of a variety of learning and assessment options and experiences

- match the classroom strategies, assessment and choices to the learning outcome

- regularly monitor, review and update individual learning and teaching targets and strategies

- use each student's Education Plan as the primary guide for their learning.

One consideration in this context is planning for cross-curricular or thematic approaches to learning and teaching, which could also form aspects of formative assessment. This cross-curricular approach is already evident in the requirement for successful learning and development of key skills across the curriculum. This approach fosters students' ability to make natural connections, apply knowledge and skills in multiple areas, and reflect and transfer their learning to life beyond school.

2.5 Planning for education transitions

The transient living and education patterns of many children in care or detention means they may have transferred between home and/or educational settings several times. It is important that the child is not disadvantaged by these transitions. Considerable planning, communication and collaboration are critical to effective, caring transitions for each child.

The overall Care Plan ensures that key information is available to new settings when a child moves. The Education Welfare Act (2000), section 20(5) legislates for the timely transfer of student information between schools. On enrolment in a school, the principal should contact the student's previous school for information relating to the student's educational progress and attendance.

Schools must ensure that the Education Plan is up to date and transferred to the child's new education setting in a timely manner. While there are no standard transfer templates after the primary to post-primary transition, the primary Education Passport template can offer some guidelines regarding information to be shared. Additionally, the National Educational Psychological Services (NEPS) has a Transfer Review template for students with special educational needs that could be beneficial. Where possible, once a new placement is secured, there should be a period of transition between the two settings prior to the student moving. This is to ensure the new setting is prepared to support the student and the student is comfortable and prepared for the change.

Transitions will not always be to another school. Students may be transferring to further or higher education, apprenticeships, employment or after-care services. The same planning, communication and collaboration will be required for all these transitions. See chapter 6 for further information on transitions.

In this section, you will find information on:

- the principle of wellbeing

- planning for wellbeing.

Wellbeing is a key aspect of primary[7], junior cycle[8] and senior cycle education[9]. It is comprised of many inter-related aspects, including being:

- active

- appreciated

- aware

- connected

- respected

- responsible

- resilient.

Student wellbeing is about enabling students to realise their strengths and talents, take care of their physical health, cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community. It also provides opportunities for students to learn how to make responsible choices that promote and protect their wellbeing, and the wellbeing of others.

3.1 Consideration of adverse childhood experiences within wellbeing

For children in care or detention, the additional dimension of ACEs; the child's removal from their family and immediate community; being placed in care or detention; and the restrictions of their freedom, will be a significant consideration in developing programmes to support their wellbeing. When planning for wellbeing, consideration of what restricted freedom and autonomy means for these students, and the effects that separation, loss and trauma will have on them, is vital. Children in these care or detention schools will require targeted support to self-regulate; develop their physical, personal and psychological wellbeing; form positive relationships; and build hope for their future.

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[7] Wellbeing at primary is currently covered in SPHE and RSE. The online toolkit for SPHE/RSE is available at NCCA Curriculum Online SPHE/RSE Toolkit

[8] Key documents for Wellbeing at junior cycle are available at Wellbeing | NCCA.

[9] Senior cycle SPHE aims to support learners in making informed choices for health and wellbeing now and in the future. The senior cycle SPHE framework is available at SPHE_Framework | NCCA

Additionally, aspects of the Wellbeing programme such as Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) will require extra care and sensitivity because of the prior experiences the student may be bringing to a subject topic. Taking a student- centred approach, and employing the teaching and learning approaches outlined in the next chapter, will support school and classroom planning regarding such sensitive issues.

Information and guidelines on SPHE and RSE for primary, junior cycle, and senior cycle is available here. Additionally, TUSLA's Healthy Relationship Development: Education and Support Needs of Children and Young People in Care Toolkit provides guidelines, materials and practical resources for parents/guardians, teachers and other adults who are caring for children in care. In some instances, it may be more appropriate to address particular topics with a student outside of a group setting or note that the student is receiving support to cope with certain topics with another adult or expert. This will require communication and collaboration between the teacher and other adult as appropriate, and without breaking the confidence of the student.

3.2 Learning and teaching, and wellbeing

Students spend the majority of their day in the school environment. Therefore, the day-to-day experience of learning and teaching within the classroom probably provides the greatest opportunity to contribute to student wellbeing. Wellbeing is supported through learning and teaching that helps students feel confident, connected and actively engaged in their learning. It is further enhanced when students experience meaningful engagement, progress and mastery in the different subjects and courses they are studying.

The key skills and competencies across primary[10], junior cycle[11] and senior cycle[12] provide an important basis for developing students' skills in areas that are critically important for wellbeing. Taking a skills approach to learning and teaching promotes:

- improved student motivation and engagement in learning

- more effective learning

- more student-centred lessons

- more positive classroom relationships and pro-social behaviour.

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[10] The seven key competencies for the primary curriculum can be found on page 7 of the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework at NCCA Primary Curriculum Framework 2020.pdf

[11] The eight key skills for the junior cycle curriculum can be found on page 13 of The Framework for Junior Cycle and at Framework for Junior Cycle | NCCA

[12] The skills for the senior cycle curriculum can be found on pages 19-22 of Towards Learning at towards_learning_an_overview.pdf (ncca.ie)

It is the responsibility of all staff to contribute to learning and development in wellbeing and it is expected that all teachers will be proactive in:

- promoting a climate in which children and young people feel safe and secure, and which respects and develops children's rights and wellbeing

- establishing open, positive, supportive relationships across the school community, where young people know that they are listened to, and where they feel secure in their ability to discuss sensitive aspects of their lives

- modelling behaviour which promotes wellbeing for all

- using learning and teaching methods that promote engaged and successful learning[13].

3.3 Planning for the learning and teaching of Wellbeing

Planning for Wellbeing involves consideration of four aspects: culture, relationships, policy and planning, and the curriculum (Figure 2) and occurs at whole-school and classroom level. A culture of trust and communication, meaningful interactions, and activities that support and enable social development, are essential.
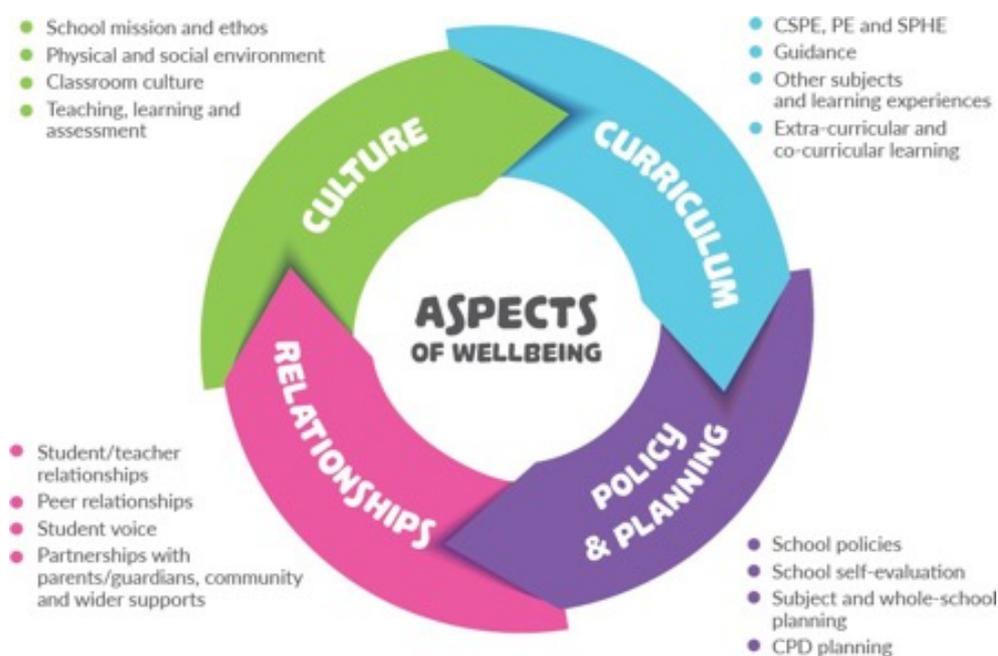
Figure 2 The four aspects of wellbeing (NCCA, 2021)

These four aspects align with the four key areas of Wellbeing, indictors for success, and statements for effective practice as set out in the Department of Education's Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice (see Table 1). These form the basis of the school's self- evaluation of its Wellbeing Promotion Process. This Wellbeing Promotion Process should be enacted and monitored based on practice that is:

- child-centred

- collaborative/in partnership

- equitable, fair and inclusive

- evidence-informed

- outcomes-focused.

Table 1 Wellbeing Framework for Practice Indicators of Success (DES, 2019)

KEY AREAS	INDICATORS OF SUCCESS
Culture & Environment	- Children, young people and staff experience a sense of belonging and feel safe, connected and supported. - Systems are in place so that the voice of the child/young person, teacher and parent are heard and lead to improvements in school culture and ethos.
Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)	- Children and young people experience positive, high-quality teaching, learning and assessment, which provides opportunities for success for all. - Children and young people access curricular activities to promote their physical, social and emotional competence to enhance their overall wellbeing.
Policy & Planning	- Schools and centres for education use a Self-Evaluation Wellbeing Promotion Process to develop, implement and review wellbeing promotion. - Schools and centres for education incorporate wellbeing promotion into whole school policies and practices.
Relationships & Partnerships	- Children and young people, their parents and other external partners are actively involved in wellbeing promotion within the school community. - All adults in schools and centres for education have an increased awareness of the importance of wellbeing promotion, including listening to children and young people, and signposting them to internal or external pathways for support when needed.

4. Teaching and Learning

In this chapter you will find information on:

- personalised learning
- universal design for learning (UDL)
- trauma-informed practices
- restorative practices
- culturally responsive practices.

Schools for children in care and children in detention not only support their students' learning but also play a large part in each student's personal development process. The diversity of ages and stages of students' learning, and the context of these settings, requires teachers to work closely with each other and with care staff to design programmes that are suited to the individual student within a classroom, the school context and the wider home or care setting.

By their nature, education programmes in these schools are student-centred, inclusive and flexible. These schools will have the flexibility and discretion to create a programme that provides balance between the knowledge and skills development required to support their students to re- integrate into mainstream schools, other educational settings, employment and society. Therefore, these programmes will be designed in consideration of the appropriate national curriculum along with other learning that the student may require in order to reach their potential and prepare them for their future.

Consideration when planning must be given to a student's prior knowledge and skills, strengths, challenges, experiences, and future plans when they are engaging with learning, teaching, assessment and reporting.

Inclusive education and diversity

The universal design of the Irish curriculum ensures that curriculum, at primary and post-primary, is a curriculum for every student. Diverse, equitable and inclusive education centres on the values and practices that enable every student to belong and to feel respected and valued as a contributing member of a learning community. In this context, it means 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 student, considering that each student differs in their competencies, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender and sexual identity.

Inclusive learning environments , and flexible learning spaces, work to remove barriers to learning, and to facilitate meaningful engagement with learning that is relevant, responsive, supportive

and challenging. In doing so, inclusive learning environments[14] support every student to reach their potential and be their full selves. Student learning generates challenge, engagement and enthusiasm as students participate in the schools, communities, cultural life and society that support students' development and progression to adult life. There are several key approaches that schools and teachers should take to develop inclusive learning environments. These include:

- personalised learning

- universal design for learning (UDL)

- trauma-informed practices

- restorative practices

- culturally responsive practices.

4.1   Personalised learning

Personalised learning involves designing learning experiences to suit each student's strengths, interests and areas for support. A programme of learning that is personalised, holistic, sets high expectations, and facilitates meaningful learning experiences best support the diverse range of students in any learning environment or educational setting. Personalised learning involves providing high-quality learning, teaching and assessment that support students in developing agency in their own learning and in their capacity to meet the challenges of life beyond school, in further and continuing education, and in working life. Choice and flexibility are integral to how our students will engage with their learning; perceive the content and tasks of their lessons; and communicate and demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Students have 'voice and choice', in collaboration with their teachers, in deciding what, how, when and where the learning occurs.

Personalised learning is an iterative process that responds to feedback from monitoring the student's progress and changes in circumstances. Assessment, when a student is enrolled in the school and throughout their time there, will be a key component of this process. Recognising student variability and competencies, prior knowledge and experiences, and strengths and areas for support are integral to supporting student development and progression. For students attending a care or detention school, it is essential that their Education Plan is informed by, and contributes to, their overall Care Plan.

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[14] Learning environments in this document refer to the holistic learning of the student; the culture, experiences, interactions etc that form part of learning

While each setting will have their own templates and language for personalised learning planning, NEPS provides guidelines for Student Support Files (SSF) for students with special educational needs. This should be considered and used in the specialised setting of the care/detention school as it facilitates continuity of learning for the student. Critical to the programmes of learning designed as part of this planning are:

- students know what they are learning and why

- students have some opportunities to work at their own pace and explore their own interests

- students have a high degree of student engagement, challenge, enthusiasm, joy and fun

- students are doing the majority of the work and the talking

- students are provided with access to and engagement with the appropriate national curriculum

- the voice of the student is sought and valued as an integral part of the planning process, particularly in aspects of their learning that relate to their lives, previous experiences and future aspirations

- students experience multiple forms of assessment, feedback and demonstrations of learning. (feedback should come from teachers and peers)

- learning and teaching, culture, and the environment reflect and include student and staff diversities

- planning occurs at whole-school and individual-teacher level

- there is multi-directional communication and collaboration (the school and teachers must work in partnership with parents/guardians, the residential care staff, previous school settings, identified future school settings and other appropriate professionals in order to ensure the best care and education for the student).

4.2 Universal Design for Learning

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is about adjusting how schools and teachers think about designing learning experiences. The principles of UDL focus teachers on intentional design, instruction and assessment that are based on the variability of learners, rather than on individual ability or disability or type of learner. In doing so, UDL assists teachers in planning how to reduce barriers to learning by planning for this variability. It evaluates the environment, classroom, culture and context rather than the student, and aims to remove barriers to learning rather than working around them. Personalised learning and intentional flexibility and choice are key features of UDL. Universal Design for Learning recognises the multi-directional connection between the student, teacher, context, curriculum, emotion, cognition and learning.

The three principles of UDL support schools and teachers to clarify the goals of specific learning experiences and create multiple ways for students to engage with the learning and communicate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Furthermore, these principles enable teachers to empower students to make positive choices about their own learning while putting in the

appropriate supports and challenges for every student. The principles of UDL are:

- multiple means of engagement

- multiple means of representation

- multiple means of action and expression.

These principles represent the range and sources of individuals' variance in learning. Each principle is comprised of three guidelines. The UDL Guidelines address the essential components to supporting variance in how we learn. Finally, each guideline has several checkpoints which address the specific practices that reduce barriers to learning in each of the principles.

Multiple means of engagement

Multiple means of engagement are the 'Why' of learning and are a critical element of learning. Students vary considerably in how they can be motivated to engage in their learning. Some students will be motivated or engaged by the topic itself and others may feel it has no relevance to their lives. Some students may be comfortable with approaching new learning, others may find starting something new or different stressful and others may feel they will not be able to accomplish this learning. Some students might like to work with others while some might prefer to work independently. Because there is no one means of engagement that will be optimal for every student in every context, it is crucial that teachers provide multiple options for engagement. The principle of engagement and its guidelines and checkpoints can be explored further here.

Multiple means of representation

Multiple means of representation are concerned with the 'What' of learning and the translation of information, content and tasks into something that can meaningfully build comprehension of a topic. Students vary in the ways they perceive and comprehend the information presented to them; in how they access the information; and at what entry point they access it. Some students will be comfortable with information presented in printed text. Other students may comprehend information more quickly or effectively through visual or auditory means. Some students may not have sufficient time to process the information while others will complete the task ahead of time and require an additional challenge. Some students will know what they have to do and follow instructions, or work independently, while others will not know all the steps or will need additional instructions or support. There is no one means of representation that will be optimal for every student in every context. Learning, and transfer of learning, occurs when multiple representations are used, because they allow students to make connections within, as well as between, concepts. The principle of representation and its guidelines and checkpoints can be explored further here.

Multiple means of action and expression

Multiple means of expression are the 'How' of learning and is concerned with facilitating students to communicate what they have learned in a manner that will show their true competence. Students vary in the ways they can navigate their learning environments and communicate what they know. Some students will be able to express themselves clearly while others may not know how to plan for, or start, the task of communicating their learning. Some students may be able to express themselves well in written text but not speech, or vice versa, and some may express themselves best through visual mediums.

There is no one means of action and expression that will be optimal for every student in every context. When teachers provide students with flexibility and options, they can choose the option that will best support them to communicate their knowledge, understanding and skills in relation to a specific learning exercise or goal. The principle of action and expression and its guidelines and checkpoints can be explored further here.

4.3 Trauma-informed practices

Children deal with trauma in their own ways, according to their stage of development. Their responses may not always be what is expected, may be expressed through their behaviour, and may not show up for some time. Children in care and children in detention may have had adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) prior to their arrival at the care or detention centre and are likely to be displaying behaviours of withdrawal, anxiety or aggression. Traumatised children may find the constant interaction with others at school a source of ongoing stress. Using trauma-informed practices in planning and teaching will support traumatised students to cope with their adverse experiences, develop resilience, build relationships, and engage with their learning.

The principles of trauma-informed practice are used to increase the student's sense of belonging, connectedness and engagement in their learning. There are a number of trauma-informed models. NEPS use Hobfoll's principles: safety, connection, calm, efficacy and hope as its trauma model.

Safety

Safety is about creating conditions that promote a sense of safety for the student and ensuring they feel that their needs (and the needs of those they care about) are being met now and in the future. The objective is to create a sense of physical and psychological safety. Creating routines and consistency in school is important because change can lead to anxiety for students who are experiencing trauma. Ways of creating this sense of safety and consistency include:

- establishing a welcoming atmosphere
- emphasising what is staying the same in their daily routines compared to their last school setting
- showing and describing what is different in their new school and daily routines (and explaining why)
- using visual schedules and verbal reminders
- guiding and prompting students during transitions
- allowing repetitive activities and self-regulation through movement
- modelling, practices and behaviour-specific praise around routines.

Connection

Enabling students to nurture their relationships with others (their family, teachers and peers) is essential so students can build connections to the key social groups in their lives. This sense of connectedness is crucial as it forms the basis for students' readiness to learn. Ways of creating and maintaining this sense of connection includes:

Family belonging, engagement and attachment

- communication and collaboration between school, family, residential care staff and other key professionals help to increase consistency and establish routines across settings
- improving the student's sense of safety and security
- limiting triggers associated with a stress response through phone calls to the residential care setting/family/postcards/letters of achievement etc.

School belonging, engagement and attachment

- specific praise (including using the child's name)
- praising good behaviour/work/etc.

- building respectful relationships through consistency and empathy across the school in order
- to improve the student's sense of safety and security.

Calm

Creating a sense of calm is about helping the student stay relaxed and grounded. It is about teaching self-regulation and how to manage emotions. Promoting a calming and regulating environment will be essential for those students who are:

- coming to terms with their separation from their family, friends and community
- adjusting to their loss of autonomy and freedoms
- feeling nervous or frustrated about new rules.

Effective ways of reducing stress triggers in the learning environment and creating a sense of calm include:

- developing student capacity to identify and regulate their own emotions
- helping students to see the impact of their emotions and behaviours on others
- guiding students towards specific strategies to help regulate their emotions
- promoting and teaching calming strategies.

Efficacy

Children who have experienced trauma are more likely to have diminished self-esteem and efficacy, along with negative perceptions of themselves and the safety of the world and those around them. Communication, collaboration and choice gives children opportunities to have some control of their environment and to develop their identity and sense of achievement. Ways of improving efficacy include:

- developing well defined and achievable short-term and long-term goals that the student can approach incrementally
- encouraging students to develop self-esteem through referring to previous success
- facilitating and listening to the student voice and student choices where safe and appropriate.

Hope

Children placed in care or detention schools may feel incapable of overcoming the adversity in their lives. Hope is about encouraging a positive outlook and actively cultivating expectations that things will work out. To help students feel hopeful about the future, teachers need to recognise and celebrate the smallest moments of success and positivity and show students their progress in line with their peer group. Schools can:

- provide opportunities for students to feel safe, secure, and hopeful about their present and future

- share positive stories

- support students to build coping skills

- support students to take part in the development and review of their Education Plan and especially in charting their progress

- talk about creative solutions to overcome challenges.

In 2018 Tusla adopted a model of care based on the 'Well Tree' principles. This model promotes and provides highly effective responses to meet the needs and address the risks that may be presented by traumatised young people. The Well Tree Model of Care involves the creation of a wellbeing outcomes framework and respects each individual's gender, culture and beliefs. The model focuses on the development of healthy relationships which challenge and support young people without judging them. The goal of this model is to promote recovery, wellbeing and responsible citizenship. Personal accountability is accomplished through the provision of unconditional positive regard, honesty and empathy.

The underlying principles are that:

- Young people can and do change

- Young people deserve compassion regardless of their behaviour

- Society should never give up on its young people

- Safety is a priority for young people, professionals who work with them and the communities they live in

- Interventions with young people should be evidence-based

- Interventions should be regularly assessed for effectiveness and be responsive to the child's needs

- Better outcomes result from the participation of young persons, their families, professionals who work with them and the wider community

- Professionals should work collaboratively in the best interests of the young person

- Residential services should provide a positive environment where young people can have their needs met, and reduce their risks

- Residential services should provide an environment that facilitates opportunities for positive change and supports young people in developing their potential

- Relationships characterised by integrity, honesty, transparency, and accountability are the hallmarks of effective work with young people and those who serve them.

4.4 Restorative practices

Restorative practice or restorative justice is a values-based approach with a set of practices that helps systems move away from zero tolerance policies to a place of recognising when an expectation has been broken. It seeks a path to help individuals reflect on their decisions and their impact on others. Restorative practice fosters agency, responsibility and accountability rather than conformity. It develops students' capacity to regulate, recognise and communicate emotions as well as being about connection. Used effectively, restorative practice builds relationships and prevents conflict while also dealing with conflict in a healthy manner when it occurs. It recognises the premise that "nobody is perfect" and that we all make mistakes. It is important for our children in care and in detention to hear and experience this. There are several explicit observable approaches that can be used to build restorative practices.

Introducing class-wide circles on a regular basis

Circles can be used to build listening and speaking skills, share knowledge, practise for tests, or problem solve for issues affecting the whole class. These can either be content specific or general community building circles.

Respond to conflict with a conversation

Treat conflict as natural, necessary and educational. Assure students that conflict will happen, and when it does, you will support them to deal with it. Emphasise that conflict is something that everyone can learn from. Ask a student to recount what happened, and then discuss their emotions and rationale, with the aim of agreeing on a plan of action for making the situation right again.

Incorporate entire class when determining potential consequences and next steps for adverse behaviour

Bringing student voices into the decision-making process may result in a greater understanding of how actions affect the classroom as a whole. Keep in mind that facilitation of these circles needs to be handled carefully and always with respect. Avoid shaming or singling out just one student and aim to give everyone in a class the opportunity to consider what they can improve on individually.

Teach and model communication skills, as well as compassion and empathy, so that students can both share and listen to diverse opinions

Embrace dissenting ideas as part of the learning process. Bringing student voices into the decision-making process may result in a greater understanding of how actions affect the classroom as a whole. Modelling listening and respecting other opinions and feelings in everyday interactions and learning will support the use of these behaviours in times of conflict.

Restorative practice requires a trained facilitator to support and enable this practice to be successfully undertaken in schools and settings. In the first instance, a Restorative Practice facilitator or mentor will meet with all parties separately to hear their experience and support them to structure their response to questions that will be asked at the Restorative Practice

conference. This is followed by all parties coming together with the mentor, who puts the same series of questions to them again as a way for the students to find a workable solution to resolve the conflict and make amends. The questions use explicit and observable language to help students think about their relationships, behaviour and how they can resolve conflict.
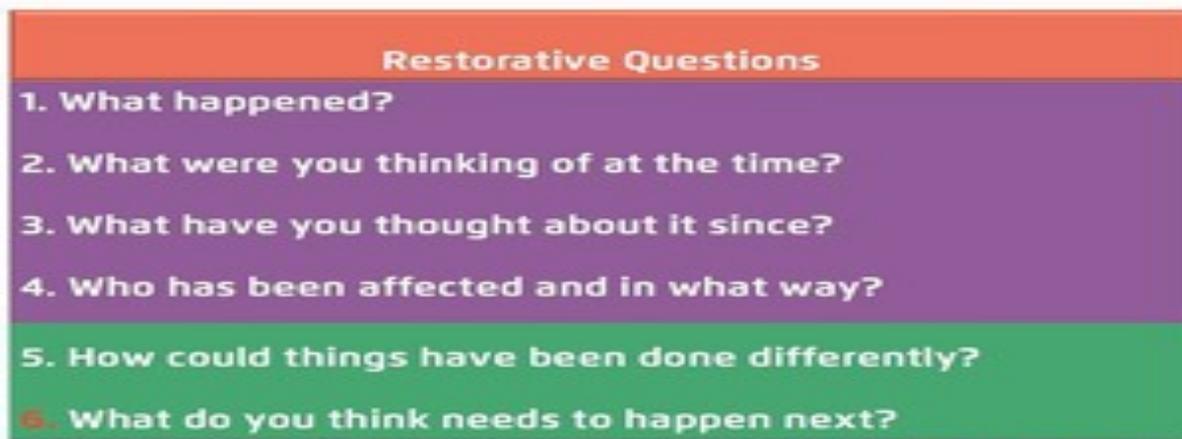

Figure 4 Questions for Restorative Practice (Connect RP, n.d.)

Restorative Practice is most effective when it is part of a whole-school approach to relationship building and developing positive behaviours. Support in Restorative Practice is provided by PDST.

4.5 Culturally responsive practices

When teachers use culturally responsive practices, they are recognising and honouring the importance of including students' cultural identity and references in all aspects of learning and teaching. When embedded into learning and teaching practice, culturally responsive strategies can have important benefits such as:

● strengthening students' sense of identity

● promoting equity and inclusivity in the classroom

● engaging students in the course material

● supporting critical thinking.

● Schools and teachers can take several steps to create culturally responsive learning environments.

The NCCA has developed intercultural guidelines for primary schools and post-primary schools, which offer guidelines on school planning, classroom planning, approaches and strategies, language, and assessment for intercultural education and diversity. Some examples of culturally responsive practices are outlined below.

Activate student's prior knowledge and cultural references

Students enter the classroom with diverse experiences. Teachers should identify and understand students' cultural identities in order to build a positive classroom culture and create relevant

learning experiences. This will encourage and support students to draw on their prior knowledge and cultural references in order to contribute to group discussions, which provides meaningful engagement in their learning.

Reconsider your classroom environment

The design of your learning environment will determine how welcome students feel. In the physical environment, examine whether every student can find relatable visuals and props from a diverse range of fields and backgrounds. Audit the books, posters and materials in the learning environment for diversity. Is a variety of ethnicity, language, ability, gender identity, and socioeconomic experiences represented? Are there materials that perpetuate stereotypes or provide depictions of diverse communities that members could find offensive?

Building a welcoming and co-operative learning environment

Create opportunities for students to work in diverse groups where collaborative activities can promote equality among peers, encourage students to participate, and open up opportunities for learning.

5. Assessment and reporting

In this chapter you will find information on:

- Assessment at primary, junior cycle and senior cycle

- Providing formative feedback

- Reporting achievement.

Assessment, like learning and teaching, supports the progression of each student towards their learning goals. It is an integral part of high-quality learning and teaching. Assessment is a collaborative process between the teacher and student. It should provide an effective basis for communication with parents/guardians, and the other partners, in a way that helps them to support learning. Assessment that is equitable will provide students with flexible and intentionally designed options to communicate and demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Assessment for any purpose should:

- support learning

- actively inform and involve students

- be flexible

- be decided on the basis of the purpose for which the assessment is being undertaken (e.g., formative, summative, diagnostic, certification)

- be effective, ongoing and focused on learner progress

- measure both process and product

- be on target and fit-for-purpose to assess the intended goal.

A range of purposeful assessment approaches will be necessary to reflect the personalised nature of learning, teaching, assessment and planning for students in these settings educational settings. The approaches outlined in the learning and teaching chapter also inform how assessment is designed and carried out.

5.1 What will assessment look like

Assessment will look different depending on the educational stage and purpose of the assessment. As a shared endeavour, formative and summative assessment are key features across primary, junior and senior curricula. Standardised testing is a requirement at certain points in the education system to assess student progress in literacy and numeracy.

Diagnostic testing is used to identify evidence of the particular aspects of learning where a student is having difficulty. When planning for diagnostic testing, it is important to consider the child's

exposure to previous testing and the relevance of diagnostic tests that may be part of standard entrance protocol. It may be the case that the information in previous tests is sufficient.

The common thread across primary, junior cycle and senior cycle is the growing importance of student-centred formative assessment and feedback. An overview of assessment across the three curricula is provided in Appendix 3. State-certified examinations and summative assessments have a different place and purpose in each sector. Formative assessments enable schools and stakeholders to recognise and value student variability and the different types of learning and teaching that occur naturally and contextually in learning environments.

Formative assessment is not a particular type of measurement tool. Rather, it provides opportunities to use a variety of assessment methods that are relevant to the goal of the assessment, focuses on feedback back to the learner and helping to shape the next steps in their learning, and in the teaching required to support that learning.

When planning assessments it is important to be mindful of the learning and teaching approaches outlined in the learning and teaching chapter.

At whole-school level:

- establish a policy for a whole-school consistent approach to assessment

- develop appropriate assessment procedures for every student on entry, to facilitate the development of a suitable education plan

- collaboratively devise a broad range of assessment practices that will enable students to demonstrate the diversity of their knowledge, understanding and skills

- ensure that there is a balance between summative and formative assessment, with a policy of ongoing assessment for students which facilitates the early identification of where supports are needed in their learning

- work closely with parents/guardians, agencies and residential staff to enhance each student's potential for learning.

At classroom level:

- consider the students' previous experience of testing (identifying barriers that are preventing them from being able to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills) and how this affects the validity of the assessment and its outcomes

- co-design, where appropriate[15], with students to facilitate them in demonstrating their knowledge, understanding and skills

- ensure students are clear about the goal

- provide feedback as part of the assessment process to help students become self-directed learners

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[15] Co-design should be possible in the majority of school-based assessment. Exceptions will be where the purpose of the assessment is very specific, for example 'to be able to give a written response' in preparation of written state examinations.

- reflect the choice and flexibility offered to students in the learning and teaching process and in the assessment design

- ensure the information gained about student knowledge, understanding, skills and progress obtained through the assessment is interpreted and acted upon in order to inform decisions about the next steps in learning and teaching that are likely to be adapted, improved upon, or better informed, than the decisions that would have been taken without the information gathered in the assessment

- show place and progression in terms of curricular content.

These approaches are contextual. Strategies and choices will differ according to the stage, learning goals and content, and school communities. The constant is that choice is offered. The following sections provide a brief overview of assessment in primary, junior cycle and senior cycle, with relevant links for further information.

5.2 Assessment, feedback and reporting

Assessment provides important information for teachers and students to progress their teaching and learning. Additionally, it keeps parents/guardians and other key stakeholders up to date with their child's progress. Moving forward, this information is used to make decisions with students about their learning. Teachers can use a variety of ways to document assessment information gathered, provide students with feedback and report this information.

Formative feedback

Assessment to support sustained engagement and progress in learning is most effective when students receive continuous feedback about their learning. Feedback that focuses on the learning, goal, or task in action, supports students to recognise and celebrate their progress and achievements; identify challenges they are experiencing; and decide what their next steps should be. This level of involvement in designing their own learning can heighten students' awareness of themselves as learners and encourage them to take more personal responsibility for, and pride in, their learning.

The Focus on Learning: Formative Feedback Booklet looks at how to provide students with meaningful and effective feedback that can help them take the next steps in their learning. Although this booklet is part of a series of resources for junior cycle, the concepts and strategies are applicable across primary, junior cycle and senior cycle.

Teacher feedback

Providing students with supportive and constructive feedback gives them a sense of ownership of their learning, how they are progressing, and how they can progress further. It also gives students a sense that their teachers care about their learning and believe in their capabilities.

The conversation around the learning puts the student-teacher relationship at the centre of the feedback loop, making assessment something that is designed and carried out with the student rather than something that is done to them. Teacher feedback is most productive when it is relevant, helpful, accessible, clear and timely and gives direction. In line with UDL learning and teaching approaches[16], teachers should provide students with feedback that:

- encourages perseverance, focuses on development of efficacy and self-awareness, and encourages the use of specific supports and strategies in the face of challenge

- emphasises effort, improvement, and achieving a standard rather than relative performance

- is frequent, timely, and specific

- is personalised, substantive, and informative rather than comparative or competitive.

Additionally, the type of feedback is critical in supporting students to sustain their motivation, effort and engagement. It also includes reminding students of what they were aiming to achieve (the learning intentions) and is always given against explicit and agreed criteria for success. Feedback types include:

- telling students what they have done well and what they need to do to improve

- asking questions to guide students' self-reflection or identify the type of feedback or advice they need in order to progress in the learning task

- offering templates that guide self-reflection on progress and quality of work (against clear success criteria)

- using assessment checklists, scoring rubrics, and multiple examples of annotated student work/performance examples.

Peer-assessment, self-assessment, and feedback

With support, students can develop the skills to actively engage with the assessment and feedback process. Peer-assessment, self-assessment and feedback are very powerful methods of assessment and reporting which activate students as learning resources for themselves and each other.

Developing students' capacity to engage with peer feedback provides opportunities for collaborative learning while also building the skills that students need in order to be able to assess their own work. To be successful, peer feedback requires:

- clarity regarding the success criteria for the piece of work under discussion

- practice (led by the teacher through coaching, modelling and formative feedback)

- some guidelines on how to give constructive feedback to peers.

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[16] UDL 'Engagement' principle, Checkpoint 'Increase mastery-orientated feedback'

Approaches outlined in the Learning and Teaching chapter can be used to achieve successful peer feedback. Encouraging students to be co-designers in the assessment and feedback process requires giving them a voice and choice. This can be done through:

- inviting student input into what will be assessed and how

- involving students in designing assessment tasks

- inviting students to co-create success criteria and discussing with them what a really good piece of work might look like

- discussing with students how they would like to show evidence of their learning – written, oral, visual or multi-modal

- building students' skills in peer-assessment and self-assessment

- agreeing with your students how feedback will be given and how it will be used to plan next steps

- asking them about what forms of teaching, learning and assessment best support their learning.

Formal reporting

School policies will highlight local arrangements such as parent/ guardian-teacher meetings, termly written reports and formative feedback to students. Communication and collaboration with students, parents/guardians and other stakeholders is addressed in the planning chapter of this guidelines. At national level, the following formal procedures exist:

- Primary reporting templates

- Primary 6th class education passport

- Junior Cycle JCPA which includes information on formative and state-certified examinations

- Leaving Certificate Established and Leaving Certificate Applied state-certified examination results.

Further reporting information and advice from NCCA is available for [primary](#) and [junior cycle](#).

6. Transitions

In this chapter you will find information on:

- the duty to promote the educational achievement of students leaving or entering care or detention settings.

- pathway planning

- supporting transitions.

6.1 Introduction

Education Plans[17] for children in care or detention will require a focus on transitions. For example, for children in detention, these include the transitions in and out of remand and detention; back to their previous education setting or to a new one; and re-integrating into their community and society.

Learning and teaching is planned with a view to easing transitions that students in care or detention might face. A programme of learning must facilitate the continuity of the learning experience for students as they transition between educational settings and help them develop their desire and capacity for learning. Here, transitions are considered under the headings of placement in care, daily transitions, educational transitions and after-care transitions.

6.2 Placement in care

Developing the student's Education Plan will form part of the planning process for the Care Plan or Placement Plan when a child is placed in care or detention. Schools may get short notice that a student is joining them and may be dependent on information previously gathered to inform their learning and teaching until they get to know the student. Inter-agency communication and collaboration are crucial to ensure that all partners working with the student have all of the information they need to do their jobs effectively. For example, children are asked about their education as part of TUSLA's Me and My Care Plan Review Form and this might provide a place for schools to start the conversation when they first meet a new student. The student's key teacher or principal can build on this introductory information to start a conversation with the student to build a relationship and start the planning process with the student. Schools should also communicate with, and seek information from, the student's previous setting to ensure continuity of learning, supports and approaches.

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[17] Schools will have their own language and templates for Education Plans. This chapter offers guidelines and links to materials that may support schools' own processes.

6.3 Educational transitions

There are key stages of transition in a student's education. For children in care or detention of post-primary age, they may not have accessed education since primary school or may be in out-of-school educational settings. Regardless, it is important to build on the information gathered as part of the student's placement in care or detention schools to build a holistic picture of them; ensure continuity and progression of learning; and ensure their education is not disadvantaged because of their setting.

Although the Education Passport is designed for transition from primary to post-primary, it offers a template for gathering information from the student, parents/guardians and school.

Additionally, the National Behaviour Support Services (NBSS) section of the NCSE has developed the Belonging Plus transition programme for schools or teachers to use with their students. This programme offers transition supports, lessons and materials designed for whole-class, small-group and individual work and covers topics in the following areas:

- new school and organisational skills

- new year, friends and teachers

- behaviour for learning

- thinking skills

- transition passport.

As part of the transition into school, the timely transfer of diagnostic and educational assessments will ensure students are not being over-tested in this area. Additionally, it is crucial that the student's records of assessment, ongoing tasks and projects, and signposting for upcoming assessment, tasks, and projects transfer immediately with the student, particularly where they are in the process of completing any of the following:

- Classroom-Based Assessments for their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement

- portfolio of evidence for their Level 2 Learning Programmes

- assessment components for their Leaving Certificate Established, Leaving Certificate Applied and/or Leaving Certificate.

Open communication with previous educational settings, the student and parents/guardians or social worker will be essential here.

6.4 Daily transitions

The unique and challenging circumstances facing children in care or detention mean that the daily transitions taken for granted in a child's life may require attention and strategies to help

them to manage their day. Readiness to learn in any given day, or lesson, will be dependent on what a student has experienced prior to it. Communication between residential and school staff, as students move between residence and school, is essential. Knowing how the student was the night before can guide teachers in their approaches to learning and teaching, and in how much support or challenge the student will need in any given day. Likewise, residential staff will be better prepared to support the child after the school day. This communication can be given orally or through a communication log.

Using the trauma-informed approaches outlined in the Learning and Teaching chapter can provide students with a sense of safety, routine and control over their day. This will be of particular importance for supporting students who may be coming to class from a therapeutic intervention, Care Plan or Placement Plan review, legal appointment or court hearing.

Check and Connect[18] systems between the student and a link teacher will provide a sense of belonging; alert teachers to challenges a student may be experiencing; prepare a student for unexpected changes to their schedule; and encourage engagement in learning. Breaks between lessons give students an opportunity to rest or re-regulate before engaging in their next lesson.

6.5 After care

The After Care Plan aims to prepare children for leaving care or detention. Education, training and employment; living skills, and wellbeing and health are three aspects of the After Care Plan. This plan should clearly outline the supports required for the child in their transitions, whether these are out of care or detention, back to their previous education setting or to a new one, re- integrating into their community and society, or moving into adult life. An after care support worker oversees this piece of work. The level of school involvement will be dependent on each student's plan. Communication between the school and the after care support worker is essential to establish their role and how they can best support their students.

For students continuing their junior or senior cycle education in their previous or other education setting, it is crucial that all assessment records, ongoing tasks and projects travel with them.

For students moving to third-level education and apprenticeships, advance communication with their new setting will support their transition.[19] As part of their planning, students will have had opportunities to explore different learning options according to their interests and future plans. In some instances, students may be offered the opportunity to complete a bridging course as part of their Education Plan, to meet requirements for a course they want to do after placement.

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[18] NCSE have developed a Check and Connect Programme as part of their NBSS section. Check and Connect is intended to complement existing support structure in the school. More information can be found here.

[19] Schools will have connections and processes in place that are contextual to their location and student cohort.

For students seeking employment, important learning areas prior to leaving will be writing a CV, completing application forms, and presentation and interview skills. Preparing students for a period of unemployment and accessing social welfare will also be important.

In all instances, the education section of the After Care Plan is developed in collaboration with the student, parents/guardians and other key adults and agencies involved the student's life.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: List of acronyms

ACEs	Adverse Childhood Experiences
CBAs	Classroom-Based Assessments
DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Since 2020 , the Department is now known as Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)
NBSS	National Behaviour Support Services
JCPA	Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NEPS	National Educational Psychological Services
NFQ	National Framework of Qualifications
RSE	Relationships and Sexuality Education
SPHE	Social Personal and Health Education
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

Appendix 2: Glossary of terms

Adverse Childhood Experiences	Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic experiences that a child might face, or witness, while they are growing up.
Aftercare plan	The dynamic process of preparation and support for leaving care and moving to independent living for all eligible children who are in the care of the State. It is the provision of advice, guidelines and assistance with regard to social and emotional support, accommodation, education and vocational support and is a through-care process, in consultation with the child and includes comprehensive assessments of need, care plans and reviews.
Care Plan	A care plan is a written document prepared by the allocated social worker that contains the important information about a child, such as their family's details, who they live with, where they go to school, arrangements for family contact and how their health, wellbeing and education are to be promoted. This plan is agreed with everybody involved in the care of the child and is generated by the allocated social worker from an assessment of the child, setting out their goals and needs and details matters concerning the care of the child, as detailed in the regulations. The care plan is written by the allocated social worker following a child-in-care review where the child, their parents, residential staff, social worker and other professionals involved in the child's life or care agree on key goals to meet the needs of the child. In the context of children's residential centres the care plan informs the placement plan.
Children in Care	In the context of this guidelines, 'children in care' represents those students who are attending high support and care schools in Ireland. Many of these students will be in residential care on campus but some may come from the community. There are currently four high support and care schools in Ireland.
Children in Detention	Children in detention are those children placed on remand, or given a custodial sentence by the courts. There is one children's detention campus in Ireland.
Classroom- Based Assessments	Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) in subjects and short courses provide students with opportunities to demonstrate their understanding and skills in ways that are not possible in a formal examination. CBAs, facilitated by the classroom teacher, are undertaken by students in a defined time period, within class contact time and to a national timetable.
Cultural Responsiveness	Cultural responsiveness ensures that every student sees themselves represented in their learning environment. It makes meaningful connections between what students learn in school and their cultures, languages and life experiences.

Education Plan	The Education Plans forms part of the child's overall Care Plan or Placement Plan.
Individual Education Plan	The Individualised Education Plan (IEP) is a useful tool in administering and implementing an inclusive policy. Its main functions are providing information and developing an awareness of a student's strengths, needs, and goals at a level which is useful to, and useable by, all school and care staff.
Placement Plan	Children in detention: For children entering remand or custodial sentences, a Placement Plan is put in place. This Placement Plan is informed by its model of care. This model of care has five pillars: care, education, health, offending, and preparation for release. Children in care: a document that refers to the direct care provided to a child in the children's residential centre. It is used by management in the centre to outline the needs and the goals of the placement for the individual child for the duration of their placement and is informed by the care plan.
Restorative Practices	Restorative practice is based on the idea that the best way to help someone who has done wrong is to give them the opportunity to put things right.
Student Support File	A Student Support File (SSF) has been developed to enable schools to plan interventions and to track a student's pathway through the Continuum of Support. It facilitates teachers in documenting progress over time and assists them in providing an appropriate level of support to students, in line with their level of need. Following a period of intervention and review of progress, a decision is made on the appropriate level of support required by the student. This may result in a decision to discontinue support, to continue the same level of support, or to move to a higher or lower level of support.
Trauma-informed Approaches	Trauma-informed approaches in education are made up of two parts: understanding trauma and its effects, and knowing what to do about them.
Universal Design for Learning	Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps to give all students an equal opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in the ways students access material, engage with it, and show what they know.

Appendix 3: Overview of assessment at primary, junior cycle and senior cycle

Primary

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2020) adopts the view that curriculum supports a continuum of assessment where *intuitive assessment*, *planned interactions and assessment events* (see figure 3) complement each other and are necessary to gain a complete representation of a student's progress and achievement.

Intuitive assessment is continuous and naturally occurs in learning and teaching. Teachers use their professional judgement, their knowledge of the student and the curriculum, to support and challenge each student based on this assessment. Planned interactions are more explicit and usually take place in relation to a particular set of learning outcomes. They can also relate to observation for specific purposes.

Planned interactions provide feedback that can be used to adjust learning and teaching approaches and activities to support and challenge students.

Assessment events are distinct events where students are aware that they are being assessed and that the outcome of the assessment is recorded and reported. Used correctly, assessment events can be used to inform and enhance learning and teaching. Standardised tests fall into the category of assessment events. Primary schools are required to administer standardised testing for all students in 2nd, 4th and 6th classes in in May/June of the school year in accordance with circulars 0056/2011 and 0018/2012.
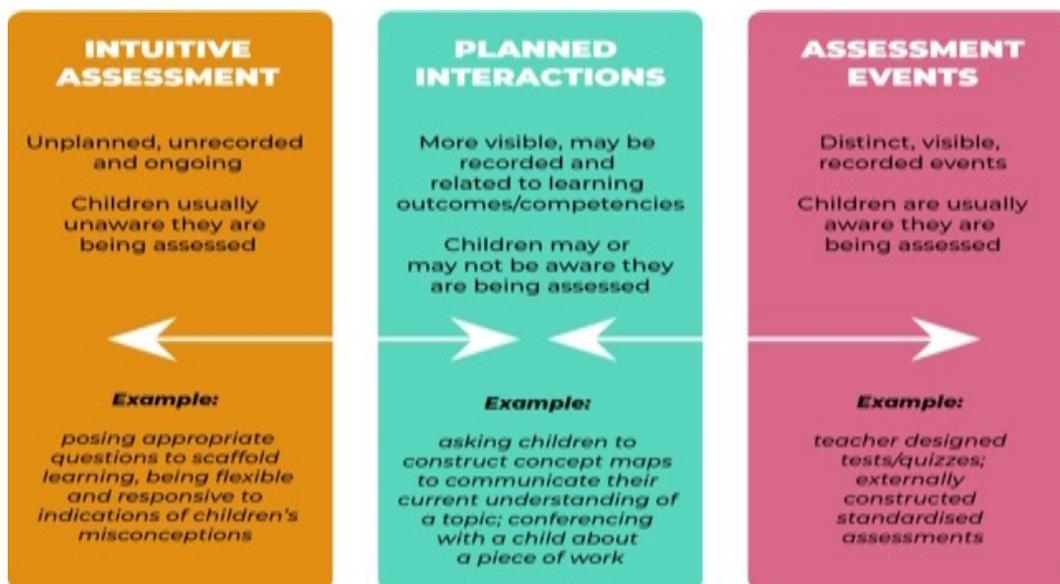

Figure 5 Continuum of assessment (NCCA, 2020)

[Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum – Guidelines for schools (2007)](#) offers examples for teachers on gathering information through a variety of assessment methods. This information on students' learning and progress is used to inform learning, teaching and reporting.

Junior cycle

The different types of learning that takes place in schools is recognised and valued in the dual approach to assessment taken at junior cycle. Throughout the three years of the junior cycle, ongoing and classroom based assessment as well as the external state-certified examinations facilitates the key role which formative and summative assessment plays in junior cycle.

Ongoing assessment that is part of classroom practice will use a range of assessment approaches to form an overall picture of the student and to inform learning and teaching. Ongoing assessment can be formative or summative in nature. Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) for subjects and short courses, portfolios of evidence for L2LPs, and wellbeing assessment activities are all part of formative assessment at junior cycle.
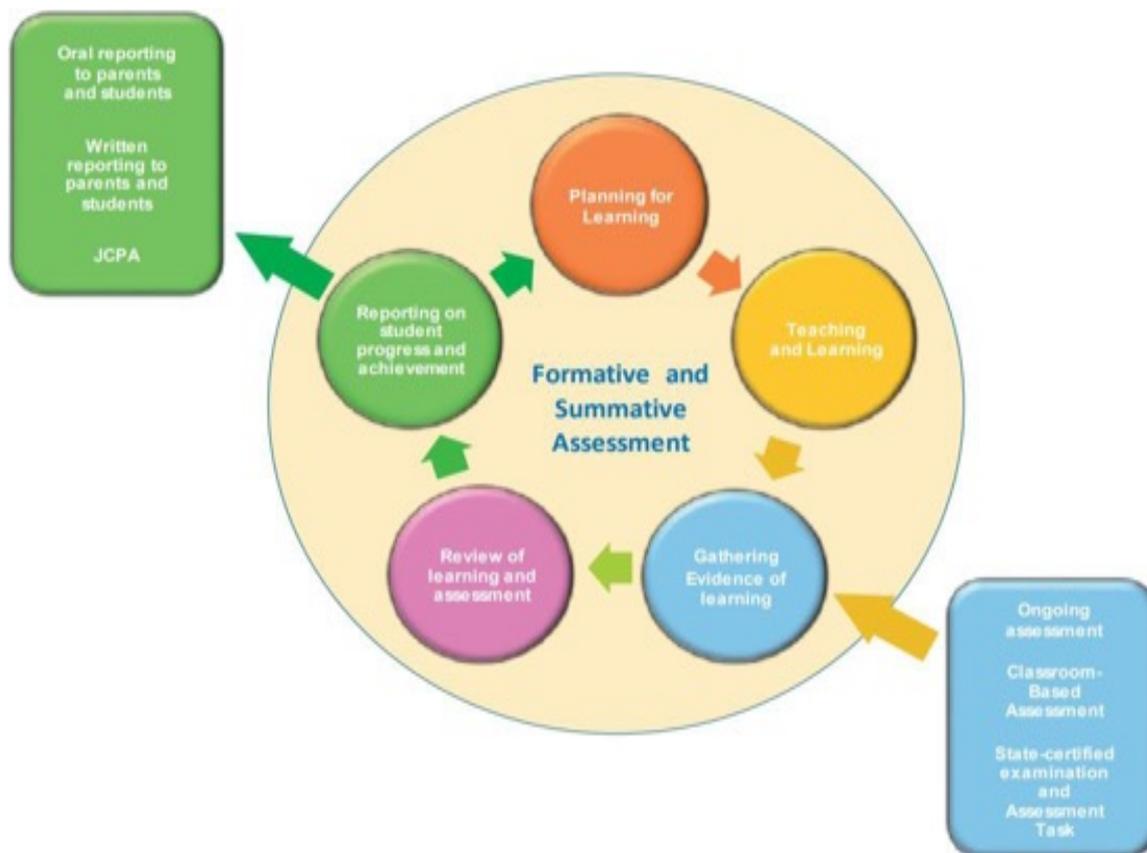
The [Focus on Learning](#) series provides guidelines on assessment. The series of workshops is designed to be used in a flexible manner around five topics:

- 'Learning intentions and success criteria' focuses on helping students take more responsibility for their learning.

- 'Effective questioning' looks at how to establish a classroom culture that promotes effective questioning and examines the purpose of, and strategies for, effective classroom questioning.

- 'Formative feedback' looks at how to provide students with meaningful and effective feedback

that can help them take the next steps in their learning.

- 'Students reflecting on their learning' explores how developing student reflection can allow students to take more responsibility for their own learning and progress.

- 'Learning outcomes' focuses on how to plan using learning outcomes.

The Interim Review of the National Strategy on Literacy and Numeracy (2011-2020) deferred the introduction of mandatory standardised testing for 2nd years. However, standardised tests may be used as part of entrance examinations for students entering first year.

Further information on assessment and reporting at junior cycle can be found here.

Senior cycle

The outcome of senior cycle programmes is based on summative assessment through external state-certified examination. These examinations take the form of written exams, oral interviews,and completed tasks and projects. Formative assessment is integral in the process to achieve in these final exams. Ongoing review and feedback of students' work and progress will facilitate them to adapt their approaches to learning, and to designing tasks and projects.

The Senior Cycle Review Advisory Report (2022) outlines a number of considerations in relation to assessment, reporting and transitions at senior cycle. While senior cycle is currently in the early stages of redevelopment, it is recognised that approaches to assessment, reporting and transitions should support students' holistic development, enable students to display a broader range of learning, and enable students to access diverse futures and pathways.