

# Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment

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

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

### *Individual submission details*

<b>Name</b>	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>E-mail</b>	

### *Organisation submission details*

<b>Name</b>	PPLI
<b>Position</b>	
<b>Organisation</b>	Post-Primary Languages Ireland
<b>Date</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021
<b>E-mail</b>	

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

Yes  Yes

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

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

Post-Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI) is responsible for implementing key actions in Languages Connect - Irelands Foreign Languages in Education Strategy. PPLI supports foreign languages education at post-primary level in Ireland, awareness raising across all sectors in relation to the importance of teaching and learning foreign languages, employer engagement, and conducts applied research that informs and supports policy.

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

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# Section 1

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

The Draft Primary Curriculum set outs clearly the vision and principles for teaching and learning in Irish primary schools and it is a very welcome development. The Draft Curriculum Framework aims to look at today's learners in the context of rapidly changing environments as well as looking forward into the society of future decades.

The principles convey what is valued in primary education placing the pupil at the centre and supporting the pupil with high quality pedagogy.

The key competencies respond to the needs of pupils as they move through primary school and on into post-primary education. Nonetheless we believe that there is scope for including additional attributes to these key competencies. These are:

Communicating and using language:

Developing an understanding of how language works (language awareness) This would link with the proposed introduction of foreign languages as a curricular area in school as described in the framework.

Fostering well-being:

Developing a sense of identity is an important part of wellbeing, in particular for those children with diverse heritages in the context of supporting existing languages capacity.

Learning to be a learner:

The addition of being able to set goals would strengthen the ability to reflect on learning. Learning *about* others may contribute to an unhelpful focus on differences and to stereotyping. It would be more inclusive to say learning *about and from others*.

The curriculum areas provide space to develop the pupil's key competencies. In particular, we welcome the inclusion of foreign languages in the curriculum. It is important to consider what foreign languages will be included and how schools will decide which language to include. These should go beyond the traditional languages taught to mirror the efforts made at post-primary level in relation to diversifying language education. This would also enable primary school classrooms to reflect upon the needs of the communities which they serve.

There is no reference in the Draft Framework to the inclusion of immigrant or heritage languages as part of the integrated approach to teaching English and Irish. In *Languages Connect – Ireland's Foreign Languages in Education Strategy* Action 2.E.1 states that the presence of other heritage languages in our primary schools will be explicitly acknowledged in the implementation of the new Primary Language Curriculum for early childhood and primary education so it would be important to include this. Similarly, there is no mention of the word 'intercultural' in the draft framework, although the foreign languages strategy also makes explicit mention of an intercultural/multilingual dimension across the curriculum at primary level and it is widely acknowledged that Irish society is a multicultural and multilingual one.

Within the approach of the integrated primary languages curriculum, it is possible to provide for the full inclusion of pupils from immigrant families by encouraging them to make active use of their home languages in the classroom and this is demonstrated in *Language and Languages in the Primary School: Some guidelines for Teachers* by David Little and Déirdre Kirwan (please refer to [Post-Primary Languages Ireland | Supporting Multilingual Classrooms Archives - Post-Primary Languages Ireland \(ppli.ie\)](#)).

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## Section 2

### **Agency and flexibility in schools**

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

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

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

- This key message is very welcome as it will allow schools to plan for the priorities and opportunities for the community which they serve and see that community reflected in the school's life.
- This flexibility should be extended to planning for curricular areas and the introduction of CLIL (Content Integrated Language Learning). CLIL methodologies would support both language development as well as content knowledge and address the challenge of a crowded curriculum by offering the opportunity to study a foreign language while acquiring content in another curricular area.
- Cross-curricular learning should also be encouraged. We believe that all curricular areas are connected in important ways and that teaching and learning are strengthened when teachers and pupils are encouraged to make these connections.
- This flexibility and choice should be extended to the choice of MFL to be introduced in the school.

## **Curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools**

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

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

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

- Children learn their first language at home and this first language is central to the pupils' identity and how they mediate learning. To adequately link previous learning experiences and support education transitions, the curriculum needs to recognise the vital role that a pupil's first language plays in their learning and development. In parallel, as *Languages Connect* (p 30) argues, pupils' proficiency in their home language will contribute to the development of their proficiency in English. Therefore, an integrated approach to language education which capitalises on pupil's previous learning should be included. The new curriculum should ensure that home languages have some place in the daily experience of school life for our pupils. This will not only benefit immigrant children but the whole class. The proposal for a language awareness approach for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> classes in the background paper for integrating modern foreign languages in the redeveloped primary curriculum is a welcome development but it needs to be introduced earlier. Language awareness should be developed for all students as soon as they enter primary school education. This should be done as part of an integrated languages curriculum.

- Recognition and support for home languages is also important in the context of social cohesion as inclusion of home languages is a precondition for this and will avoid potential future problems that have resulted in other jurisdictions as a result of failure to affirm home languages.
- These languages also provide Ireland with a rich and diverse source of new languages (Languages Connect p.14).
- A mechanism for supporting educational transitions and linking learning experiences, building an integrated approach to languages could be facilitated with the introduction of a Language Portfolio as recommended in the NCCA publication by O’Duibhir and Cummins (2012).

Languages Connect: Ireland’s strategy for foreign languages in education 2017-2026 retrieved from [fls\\_languages\\_connect\\_strategy.pdf \(education.ie\)](#) (25/1/2021)

O’Duibhir, P. and Cummins, J. (2012). Towards an integrated language curriculum in early childhood and primary education (3–12 years). Research Report No. 16. Dublin: NCCA.

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

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

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

**The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework outlines important messages in relation to**

**emerging priorities for children’s learning. Please give your overall feedback in relation to this key message.**

The focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes is welcome as well as the new emphasis on some existing areas. In particular we welcome the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages in the primary school curriculum. This will bring Ireland closer to our European counterparts in terms of language education. The Modern Languages in Primary Schools Initiative (MLPSI) was in place between 1998 and 2012 and as stated in the Background paper published by the NCCA:

*The MLPSI also left a curriculum and resource legacy for modern language teaching at primary level in Ireland. A draft curriculum and associated teacher guidelines were developed by the NCCA for use within MLPSI schools. The MLPSI team also developed an accredited European Language Portfolio, My ELP, which was based on the draft modern language curriculum and aligned to the CEFR layout and requirements for a European Language Portfolio. Its running as a pilot project and initiative from 1998 to 2012 also provided a basis for much research on modern language teaching in Irish schools.*

Keogh, K. (2019) Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment Background paper: Integrating modern foreign languages in a redeveloped primary curriculum. NCCA. Retrieved from <https://ncca.ie/media/4446/background-paper-integrating-modern-for...> · PDF file (25/01/2021)

### **Changing how the curriculum is structured and presented**

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

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

(In addition to the five areas above, the Patron’s Programme is developed by a school’s patron with the aim of contributing to the child’s holistic development particularly from the religious and/or

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ethical perspective and in the process, underpins and supports the characteristic spirit of the school. These areas connect to the themes of *Aistear* and to the subject-based work in Junior Cycle.)

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

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

The changes in how the curriculum is presented are welcome since they delineate 5 broad areas. However, there is a danger that by looking at areas in isolation teachers may neglect to make cross-curricular links or include CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning) where possible or desirable. The new curriculum framework should make more explicit reference to how all areas of teaching and learning are connected and ensure that these connections are made by the pupils.

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

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

- Promote high quality teaching, learning and assessment.
- Conceptualise assessment as an essential and critical part of teaching and learning.
- Highlight the importance of teachers' professional judgement in supporting progression in children's learning.
- Encourage teachers to make meaningful connections with children's interests and experiences.

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- Recognise the significance of quality relationships and their impact on children’s learning.
- Recognise the role and influence of parents and families in children’s education.

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

In order to recognise the role of parents and families properly, we must recognise first that many of these families come from diverse backgrounds, including cultural and linguistic ones. This diversity in society should be recognised and embraced in our primary schools. The primary school curriculum should strive to develop knowledge of other cultural groups and the way different cultures interact. This would contribute to the development of attitudes such as curiosity, openness, respect for others and empathy for all pupils.

In terms of promoting high quality teaching, learning and assessment the final curriculum should incorporate the recommendation to use culturally responsive pedagogy to ensure all pupils have access to positive and high-quality learning experiences which give them recognition as individuals. As pupils see the curriculum reflecting their own learning experiences, they become more engaged in their learning, and the quality of the relationships is improved. This is particularly the case with children who are at risk of exclusion because of their language competence. Linguistic and cultural background and socio- economic background.

Cummins, J. (1986). “Empowering Minority Students: A Framework for Intervention.” *Harvard Educational Review* 56, 1: 18–36.

[Capacity Building Series - Culturally Responsive Pedagogy \(gov.on.ca\)](#) retrieved 26/01/2021

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

*The 1999 curriculum contributed to many successes including:*

- Enhanced enjoyment of learning for children.

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

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

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

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

The principles of the new framework include some of the important rationale for including the home languages of children that were in the previous 1999 curriculum, albeit using different language.

- Transitions and Continuity allow for recognition of a pupil’s prior learning experiences, their self-worth, and identity, which allow for value to be placed in the context of their home languages.
- Relationships allow for inclusion of care in the context of recognition of identity and language.
- Pedagogy explicitly mentions connecting with children’s life experiences and their interests.
- Partnerships acknowledges the enrichment provided through collaboration with families and communities and supporting their lives in and out of school is an opportunity to acknowledge and respond to home languages.
- Learning environments acknowledges that a child’s home language stimulates and support their learning across the curriculum.

- Inclusive Education and Diversity explicitly acknowledges and celebrates diversity and responds to the uniqueness of every child.
- Engagement provides for each child to be involved in decision-making, creativity and collaboration.
- Assessment and Progression: If assessment is formative and integral to teaching and learning, also involving parents, this would also allow for inclusion of home languages.

### **Data Protection**

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

**Thank you for your submission.**

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