

Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment

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

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

Individual submission details

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Yes

No

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

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

In 1633 St Vincent de Paul and St Louise de Marillac founded the Company of the Daughters of Charity of St Vincent de Paul in France. Under their guidance, a group of young women began their mission of nursing the sick poor in their homes, in hospitals, in education, work for foundlings', galley convicts, wounded soldiers, refugees, the aged and others. The Vincentian charism and its spirituality, espouses a holistic approach, embracing the corporal and spiritual, bringing bread and education.

The Daughters of Charity work in close co-operation with the Catholic Church and are ever grateful for the support of the bishops and Archbishops, its Diocesan Offices, the Catholic Primary School Management Association and the Catholic Schools Partnership.

About Education in Drogheda, Ireland

In 1855 the Daughters of Charity were invited to Drogheda, Ireland, by the Archbishop of Armagh, Dr Joseph Dixon (1852-66). From the outset they undertook **the service of the most neglected responded to differing needs in flexible ways**. They opened a night school for girls working in factories (**the holistic approach** is described in the History of Drogheda by Anne Hughes, 1893). In 1870, the Sisters opened an Industrial School, intended for the **care and training of vagrant and abandoned children**. The Sisters opened St Vincent's NS and in 1894 a new National School for 300 boys. In 1931 the Sisters opened a small Domestic Economy school for girls working in factories. From 1939, boys attended the parish National School to help them **integrate** with other boys of their own age.

About Education at St Vincent's, North William Street, Dublin

In 1857, The Daughters of Charity arrived in dire poverty to St Vincent's, North William Street, Dublin. Sister Josephine Virieu and her companions searched for new ways to combat poverty and provided services in education and health care. They took a **Sunday school for adults** and as works gradually developed **education became a priority**.

A school already established was put in the sister's care. The building needed enlargement. In the years 1857-84, 3 schools were built at the expense of the sisters. In 1879, 3 big classrooms were built. Children who attended the school received **free** books, clothes and meals. **Assistance** was also given **to families**. A variety of subjects were taught. Catechism classes were organised for past pupils on Sunday. As well as a **holistic view of education**, including life skills, St Louise proposed

and implemented peer education. Children were instructed in needlework, flower making and household duties. Sisters also took care of an Infant school of girls and boys under 7 years with 100 children in attendance. On arrival in 1857, the Carmelite community managed the school under the National Board who paid and provided them with school requisites. The Archbishop requested that the sisters withdraw from the National Board, because the Board prohibited Religious Instruction. Then they had to relinquish the government grant. From 1858, the Daughters of Charity administered the school without any aid from the government. The Archbishop paid £25 for each school sister. The sisters were then able to develop **the characteristic spirit of the school** and include religious instruction. In time the sisters built 3 large schools accommodating 550 children. The school got no State support until 1897, when it again got grant aid.

In 1893, they established a boy's school catering for boys up to fourth class. The school was located inside the uncompleted walls of the new Church which subsequently opened as St Agatha's in 1908. The schools in North William Street are thriving today and are flexible in adapting to the required needs of the time.

About Education in Dunmanway, Co Cork

In 1887, the sisters took up residence in rented accommodation in Dunmanway, Co Cork. They were primarily engaged to teach in the primary school but keeping with the Vincentian tradition involved themselves in other works. They improved the lives of people in a **holistic** way. St Vincent de Paul's vision, "With constant concern for the protection of the whole person the Company does not separate corporal service from spiritual service nor the work of humanisation from evangelisation." (Constitutions of the Daughters of Charity, 14, p.36).

In 1889, Sisters moved to a new house. Help was provided by the local people which showed the strong value people had on education. In 1889, the Sisters built a new primary school building and assumed responsibility for it. Sister Blundell established St Vincent's High School, modelled on the Lanark school. The early pupils came from Scotland. With Sister Blundell came a teacher, a housekeeper and a gardener. The high standards reflected St Louise de Marillac's interest in education. In Dunmanway, education and the broader picture was true to the spirituality of St Vincent de Paul. He had a deep sense of the importance of looking after the physical **wellbeing of persons** before trying to reach them spiritually.

St Vincent de Paul recognised that love was infinitely inventive so the sisters always show strove to **be creative**. They created employment for people by starting a Blackberry industry and a Shamrock industry. They used the convent land for growing vegetables, fruit, a flower garden and vinery, which contributed to **outdoor learning**.

In 1899, they devised the creation of the school of Domestic Science. Sisters travelled to Belgium for training. St Mary's School of Domestic Science replaced St Vincent's High School in 1902. It was the first of its kind in Ireland. It equipped students with practical skills to improve the quality of their lives.

The numbers increased rapidly. Summer courses were organised for teachers. The school aimed to improve the quality of family lives and provide an essential standard of living in the home.

Dairy farming was considered important so the Department of Technical Instruction built a dairy in the school. With the farming community in mind, students trained in poultry rearing, butter-making, home-management, farmyard enterprises, cooking and baking, dress-making and crafts, book-keeping and typing. Emphasis was also placed on skills such as decision-making, taking responsibility and being accountable. This school flourished for 100 years.

Improving the importance of family life went hand in hand with forming good Christians.

Interactions between a teacher and pupils are deeper and more meaningful than passing on knowledge. The teacher is present to his/her pupils as a **professional person** and as a human being.

As a **professional teacher** he/she initiates things, guides and shapes the cause of discussion and leads it to a meaningful end. As a mature human person he/she brings to teaching their **values**, wisdom, moral principles, intellectual gifts and heart. In St Mary's, there was a link between learning **skills** and formation of good Christians.

In 1928, St Mary's became the Secondary Top, as secondary school education was the privilege of the few in Ireland. In 1936, it was recognised as a secondary school, known as Maria Immaculata Secondary school and it moved to a new location. In the 1940s the school was extended to provide for growing numbers and in the 1950s the school catered for boarders. In 1965, a new purpose built school opened, which in 1972 became co-educational. In the 1980s the secondary school merged with St Mary's. In 2002, Mary Immaculata amalgamated with Coláiste Chairbre and became Maria Immaculata Community College. The Daughters of Charity withdrew from the school.

Initially, the Daughters of Charity were joint trustees of this school with the Vocational Education Committee. In 2010, The Diocese of Cork and Ross replaced the Daughters of Charity as Trustees.

About Special Educational Needs

At the beginning of the twentieth century society's perception of children with special needs bore little resemblance to later times. The pioneering work of the Daughters of Charity in the field of children with intellectual disabilities made a major contribution to the change in perception. The educational aspect of the service of the Daughters of Charity is just an aspect of the picture of the Daughters of Charity service to persons with intellectual disabilities.

The sisters had **a vision** for what was needed and had the courage to negotiate with the relevant personnel in the Department of Education and St Patrick's College of Education. The sound judgement of the Daughters of Charity has been confirmed by Department of Education: legislation in the White Paper for Education *Charting our Future* (1995); The Education for Persons with Disabilities Bill (2002). Current legislation stipulates the approach the Daughters of Charity were taking since the 1960s for persons with special needs. They envisioned **better quality life for children** in their care and with the **help of the children's parents and friends**, they worked unceasingly **to open the doors to education for children with intellectual disabilities**.

In 1892, the Board of Governors asked the Daughters of Charity to take over the entire running of the Cabra Auxiliary which was built by the North Dublin Union in 1884, in the austere style of the workhouse for the children of the North Dublin Union. Six sisters began the work and in 1893, four more sisters joined them. The 1910 returns showed that there were 400 children in Cabra and the entire staff-teaching, caring, cooking and maintenance consisted of only fifteen sisters, one male teacher, a Protestant teacher, a few assistants and a man to keep guard at night. The sisters had entire charge of food, clothing, discipline and instruction. The workhouse authorities decided daily routines, so the **sisters' influence was curtailed**. The school was inspected by Inspectors on behalf of Commission of National Education Board. In the 1890s, the school got good reports and the work of the sisters was commended. In 1925 the Poor Law system was reorganised and it abolished the workhouse as an institution. The sisters made the necessary changes in what was the 'workhouse for children' and turned it into a care centre for children who would be sent to them by the commissioners. They called it St Vincent's, which was the only Catholic home for children with intellectual disabilities in Ireland at the time. Children from workhouses all over the country were sent there. By the end of 1926, 118 children were resident there. However, when the Cabra Auxiliary ceased to be a Poor Law school and became St Vincent's Centre, it lost its recognition as a school. The sisters advocated with the authorities for school recognition. Curriculum development was high on the agenda for the sisters and they worked hard to ensure that St Vincent's concentrated on the needs of the particular group of children in St Vincent's.

In 1940, St Vincent's was recognised by the Northern Ireland Department but not by Department of Education, Dublin. Eventually in 1947 through advocacy and ongoing hard work, recognition was granted. In addition to core subjects at the time, special teachers were employed for music, PE and paid from the private fund of the Daughters of Charity.

The service was expanded in 1995 with the opening of St Michael's School, Glenmaroon for children with mild intellectual disabilities. That meant that St Vincent's lost its status as a school as it was

caring for children with moderate and severe intellectual disabilities and at the time the Department of Education did not consider it its duty to provide education for these children. The Daughters of Charity negotiated with the Department to restore school status which was given in 1963 when St Vincent's was recognised as a school for children with moderate learning disabilities. With the report of the Commission on Mental Handicap in 1965, the need for special educational facilities was recognised for children with intellectual disabilities. St Vincent's Special School continues to thrive today in collaboration with other services.

Two other developments formed in the Daughters of Charity education services for people with intellectual disabilities in the 1950s. In 1951, Woodstown House, Lisnagry, Co Limerick opened a home for girls with intellectual disabilities. The Centre developed as a service for people with severe and moderate intellectual disabilities. It got recognition as a school in 1964. This school continues today.

In 1959, St Teresa's residential and day school developed along the lines of St Michael's, Glenmaroon. Both these schools played a significant role in the development of special education in Ireland. St Michael's School continues to serve as a Special School and St Teresa's amalgamated with St Augustine's run by the St John of God Brothers.

The Daughters of Charity were inspired to start a training course for teachers of children with intellectual disabilities. Some sisters went to England and Scotland to train and when it wasn't possible for everyone to go there, the Sisters in collaboration with the Department of Education began a one year training course in 1961. The venue was in Little Denmark Street, Dublin. One had to be a fully recognised teacher to do the course. The course later moved to premises with St Patrick's College of Education and it developed into a two year programme. The Daughters of Charity were major contributors. They visited the schools involved, assessed and evaluated the teaching and made their own school available as models for developing schools.

Today, the Sisters are no longer involved in the day to day running of the schools. Some sisters are still members of School Boards of Management. However, through their various ministries their interest and involvement in education stretches beyond the classroom. The International Company of the Daughters of Charity and the other branches of the Vincentian Family continue to foster and support education at many levels of society.

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

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Section 1

Please outline your overall response to the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework

My response is positive to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. With emphasis on the vision of each child as ‘unique, capable and caring’, the vision echoes the vision of the child according to the Catholic primary school’s ethos. The Catholic schools ‘concept of the human person is rooted in the teaching of Jesus Christ as embodied in the Catholic faith community.’ (CSP, *Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School*, 2019).

I welcome the State’s redevelopment of the curriculum through research, review, and evaluation for the following reasons

- The recognition of change in classrooms and society in the intervening years since the introduction of the 1999 curriculum. Change brings increasing expectations on schools.
- Research conducted on children’s learning and development in their early childhood and primary school years shows that society knows more about how children learn and what it is like for a child to grow up in Ireland.
- Time management is currently a major challenge. The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* recognises that teachers and stakeholders will require time to collaborate to develop shared understandings relating to learning expectations and assessment evidence gathered.”
- The State is seeking to provide for a greater school choice for parents and children. The Framework describes the Department’s Action Plan (2016-19) in partnership with the Patron Bodies with regard to the establishment of 400 multi-/non-denominational schools. From this, a question arose about the role of the State in ensuring that education related to the religious and ethical aspects of human development is provided for and that respect for all members of society is promoted and nurtured in the process. O’Donnell’s curriculum audit is referenced. I welcome further consultation on the Action Plan and its implications for the Catholic schools.

I welcome the priorities named in *The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*

- to ensure that the curriculum can continue to provide children with relevant and engaging experiences for the future
- the timeline for the next stage of work
- the action to draw on the work done for the New Language programme of which broad learning outcomes are a feature
- to respond to curriculum challenges and to address curriculum overload
- to take account of the new and emerging research findings
- to recognise the implications that schools and the curriculum are often viewed as a critical site for responding to national priorities or needs and addressing societal problems, evident for calls in increased time to be allocated to existing curriculum areas eg. SPHE, PE and demands to include new aspects of learning in the curriculum such as Coding and Computational Thinking, Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, Modern Foreign Languages, and to place a greater general emphasis on Wellbeing
- to recognise the relevance of Policy developments in other sectors in looking at the primary curriculum
- to see the redevelopment of the primary curriculum as providing an important opportunity to build on what children bring to primary school and to ensure connections

with their post-primary experience, while recognising the uniqueness and importance of a primary education in the learning journey

- to use a learning outcomes based curriculum grounded in contemporary research as in the current language and literacy curriculum, instead of the detailed content objectives based curriculum currently in all other subjects
- to further consider, in the context of what is set out for the redevelopment of the curriculum, how patrons' programmes can continue to contribute to the child's holistic development in primary school and whether or not there should be a more extended statement within the redeveloped curriculum about the religious, spiritual and ethical domain.
- to recognise that The Schools Forum, a network of 43 schools and preschools, has played a pivotal role in the development of this *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* by taking ideas from research and teasing these out from the perspective of their diverse school contexts and experiences and seeking conditions for the redeveloped curriculum.

I value points that are gleaned about the 1999 Curriculum

- Published 20 years ago
- It was a cutting edge curriculum informed by extensive research
- Since its development it has been the focus of research, review and evaluation
- Provided a strong foundation for teaching and learning
- Some successes and challenges are listed in this *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Pertinent ones are omitted.

Research and action shows the importance of children's experience at home and in preschool which will be monitored through connections and continuity in curricula along the educational continuum

- Universal preschool education (2010 and 2018)
- Introduction of the National Childcare Scheme (2019)
- The publication of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009) and the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)
- Assessment in the Primary School Curriculum: Guidelines for Schools (NCCA, 2007)
- I add to this list the publication of the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (2015) (CPPRECI), the norms and standards to which the *Grow in Love* Religious Education programme is written for Catholic primary schools.

I value these initiatives in the development the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*

- Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011-2020 (Department of Education and Skills)
- the redevelopment of the primary curriculum in the area of language (English and Irish) followed by mathematics
- the publication of the new Primary Language Curriculum/*Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* in September 2019

I welcome in practical terms that the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*

- recognises children's experiences in their formative years, reflecting seriously on how these experiences shape their lives as children and as adults into the future e.g. family life, different cultures, beliefs and viewpoints, abilities and needs

- identifies the advances in technology and outlines the importance of indoor and outdoor learning and prioritises being an active citizen by contributing “positively and compassionately towards the creation of a more sustainable and just world. Herein lies the ethical dimension, that is underpinned in the school’s characteristic spirit
- outlines challenges at global level such as climate change, sustainability, human migration and geopolitical shifts. These challenges illustrate the importance of dispositions and skills. The principle of becoming an active citizen is welcome in this regard as the named skills are fostered. Seeking justice for the world, having compassion for those who live in poverty and stewardship for creation are also essential outcomes. It is not just about making progress to enjoy their childhood and equipping themselves for the world; it is necessary children reach out to those on the margins of society.

Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship (2020)

Pope Francis spoke to people universally in 2020 of the importance of fraternity and social friendship. He advocates for the global and local hand in hand. He says, ‘an innate tension exists between localisation and globalisation... we need to pay attention to the global so as to avoid narrowness and banality... yet we need to look at the local to keep our feet on the ground... Together the two prevent us from falling into one of two extremes....’ (Encyclical Letter of the Holy Father Francis on Fraternity and Social Friendship, *Fratelli Tutti*, 2020, p. 57-8).

ABOUT INCLUSION AND MIGRANTS

Pope Francis states, ‘Complex challenges arise when our neighbour happens to be an immigrant. Our response to the arrival of the migrating persons can be summarised by four words: welcome, protect, promote and integrate.’ (*Fratelli Tutti*, p. 53). Values such as protection, welcome, promotion and integration promote the spirit of fraternity which is part of the lived ethos of a Catholic school’s characteristic spirit.

I take for reflection in the light of the Framework and the school’s characteristic spirit these two questions.

- What is the purpose of a primary education for tomorrow’s children?
- What priorities, structure and components within a curriculum can support this?

I welcome the plan of development in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework’s* process:

- Research
- Networks especially the Schools Forum
- Deliberations
- Consultation

I recommend further review and consultation on the following points in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*

- that Section 9(d) of the Education Act is kept in focus. The school is responsible in providing education which should be appropriate to the abilities and needs of its students and should promote the “moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school.”
- *The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* has omitted sections of the Primary School Curriculum (1999), and the Education Act, (1998), that have huge implications for the Patron’s Programme and its characteristic spirit in the primary school
- The role of the Board of Management is not included with regard to the curriculum

Section 2

Agency and flexibility in schools

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

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

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

I write to each bullet.

1. 'Be for every child'

- To 'Be for every child' is an authentic vision, though with limited resources, it is a big commitment to 'be for every child' recognising the multiplicity of needs, in terms of human and material resources.
- The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* is making greater provision to be for every child by allotting time to teachers to dialogue with one another, parents and other stakeholders about planning, assessment and enabling transitions from the various stages through *Mo Scéal* and *Education Passport*
- To be for every child is reflected in the recognition of the child's experiences from preschool, in the continuity and connections that are made from preschool to primary to post primary
- Labelling children as unique, capable and caring individuals can only be viewed in terms of a schools ethos and values, availability of resources and opportunity for CPD for teachers

The Catholic School' vision of 'be for every child' is distinguished by "its concept of the human person" being "rooted in the teaching of Jesus Christ as embodied in the Catholic faith community." The uniqueness of "Each person" defined as "a spiritual being who comes from

God and whose destiny is to be with God when this life is over.” (Catholic Schools Partnership (2019), *Understanding the Ethos of a Catholic School- A Process Centred on Conversations.*)

The Catholic ethos “is one whose characteristic spirit is rooted in its ‘Christian concept of life centred on Jesus Christ.’”

2. Recognise teachers’ and principals’ agency and professionalism to enact the curriculum in their individual school context.

- The curriculum recognises “teachers as committed, skilful and agentic professionals in a complex role that includes knowledge and awareness of the diversity of children’s learning journeys.” The term ‘pedagogy’ refers to this role and takes account of the scope of teachers’ practice where knowledge holds a central role. Various types of knowledge are described. Teachers’ and principals’ agency and professionalism need to reflect the school’s characteristic spirit.
- Interactions of teacher with pupils are significant. The curriculum outlines contact time, preparation, planning and preparation of the learning environment. Pedagogical strategies and approaches are described and the curriculum outlines which ones can be used to motivate children’s learning, thus holding up the unique place of each child (‘be for every child’) in the vision. Teachers are aware of what each pedagogical strategy does in supporting learning.
- Integration is outlined as a key feature of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Integration and inclusion are traditionally hallmarks of a Catholic school
- Using assessment in a meaningful way to inform teaching and learning recognises the teachers professionalism as well as reporting on children’s progress and achievement
- Research conducted on children’s lives helps teachers engage more effectively with children and hence build quality relationships around their learning and experience
- The Schools Forum offered teachers and principals an opportunity to tease out ideas from research bringing their particular school experiences to the discussions about a redeveloped curriculum. This approach sees teachers and schools as central to curriculum development and helps to ground the ideas for a redeveloped curriculum in the reality of primary education in Ireland, according to its characteristic spirit
- In the individual context, children are active in learning and they demonstrate agency as the capacity to act independently and make choices about their learning

- Children need to be able to navigate a wide variety of contexts and situations, to interact and engage with the natural world around them and come to an appreciation of its value and their responsibilities as custodians of it are deemed essential
- Curriculum areas support children’s learning and development in stages 3 and 4, therefore strong foundations need to be built at stages 1 and 2, thus depending on the professionalism of the teacher. Assessment traces connections and continuity through the transitions children make.
- Teachers recognise the inclusive and diverse nature of the curriculum as outlined
- They learn that inclusive learning environments make learning more meaningful and a number of key approaches are given to develop inclusive environments. The redeveloped primary curriculum supports schools in working towards creating an inclusive environment. The curriculum outlines how this will happen.

3. Give more flexibility to schools in terms of planning and timetabling to identify and respond to priorities and opportunities.

- The eight overarching principles of teaching and learning allow flexibility in timetabling and planning with a view to identifying and responding to priorities and opportunities
- In Stages 1 and 2 the curriculum areas are interrelated, with an integrated approach and recognise stages of development which offer the teacher greater flexibility in planning
- The three options give choice
- While flexibility is essential it is essential to work out a balance in the use of screen time and face to face teaching and learning and to give due time to indoor and outdoor learning, as outlined.

4. Connect with different school contexts in the education system

- An observation by NCCA is that the curriculum has been called to do more! Schools and the curriculum, together, are often viewed as a critical site for responding to national priorities or needs and addressing societal problems. This is evident in calls for increased time to be allocated to existing curriculum areas.
- Additionally, there are demands to include new aspects of learning in the curriculum such as Coding and Computational Thinking, Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, Modern Foreign Languages, and to place a greater general emphasis on Wellbeing. This will involve a variety of school contexts.
- Policy developments in other sectors are also relevant in looking again at the primary curriculum. The provision of two years of universal preschool education (2010 and 2018) and the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme (2019), the publication of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009) and the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) have led to changes in what children experience before beginning primary school

and in what and how they learn on leaving primary school, highlighting the importance of connections and continuity in curricula along the educational continuum.

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.

1. Provide a clear vision for children’s learning across the eight years of primary school

- A clear vision is expressed in terms of the uniqueness of each child and supporting them. There is value in building on their previous experiences in home and preschool to ensure connections and continuity in the progression of learning. The strategies will be for high quality teaching, (with pedagogy and integration as central tenets) learning and assessment in an inclusive environment. I advocate this happens in accordance with the characteristic spirit of the school. The mind-set changes from 8 years to four stages.
 - The 8 overarching principles convey what is valued in primary education and what lies at the heart of high quality teaching and learning in the primary curriculum
 - Continuity and connection through all stages of transition to future learning in post-primary schools and content are introduced in an age appropriate way, highlighting progression in learning
 - The Schools Forum shows how essential time is for teachers to collaborate and emphasises the importance of school based CPD
 - Key competencies enable children to be active in their learning and recognise teachers as committed, skilful and agentic professionals (needs to reflect the ethos of the school)
- The vision and principles guiding the redevelopment of the primary curriculum place high-quality teaching and learning at the heart of that curriculum.

2. Link with learning experiences provided through the themes of the Aistear: the Early Childhood: Curriculum Framework (2009) and the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)

- The themes of Aistear and the Early Childhood Framework (2009) are key because of the great emphasis that is based on children’s experiences before beginning primary school and in how and what they learn on leaving primary school highlighting the importance of connections and continuity in curricula along the educational continuum. Transitions are key to the progression of learning.

3. Curriculum Framework and connect with the subjects, key skills and statements of learning in the Framework for Junior Cycle.

- The importance of connections and continuity are outlined through the transitions from home to preschool to stage 1 and 2 and stage 3 and 4. Reviewing and redeveloping the primary curriculum provides an important opportunity to build on what children bring to primary school and to ensure connections with their post-primary experience while recognising the uniqueness and importance of a primary education in the learning journey.
- A similar framework to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* has been developed for the Junior Cycle and is underpinned by the concept of teachers and school leaders as ‘curriculum makers’. This role sees teachers and school leaders using broad learning outcomes in the various curriculum areas and subjects alongside the curriculum vision and principles to devise a curriculum that is tailored to, and appropriate for the children in their school community.
- The seven key competencies provide an important foundation for the Junior Cycle. The eight principles built on those in Aistear and connect with the Framework for the Junior Cycle

4. Support educational transitions by connecting with what and how children learn at home, in preschool and post-primary school.

- The redeveloped curriculum takes cognisance of the children coming to primary school with a varied set of experiences shaped by family and community and by time spent in preschool. With attitudes, concepts, dispositions, knowledge, skills and values acquired the curriculum recognises this learning and the importance of connections and continuity as they move through primary to post primary school.
- Key transition times from preschool to primary school are marked by a transfer of information through *Mo Scéal* which tells the story of a child’s learning and development in preschool and as such, can provide useful information to support teachers in preparing

for children’s learning in the early days of primary school. The *Education Passport* supports the sharing of information about children in sixth class with post-primary schools.

- Relationship building between schools is seen as highly significant in supporting children and their families. What they learn and how they learn in primary school provides a strong foundation for their junior cycle experience. Time is allotted for teachers to dialogue with their colleagues and with parents and other agencies.

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.

1. Embed seven key competencies across children’s learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class.

- The key competencies from Junior Infants to Sixth Class are well defined and provide a variety of experiences
- The skills outlined are essential clear and concise. Values are not outlined and are key to the characteristic spirit of the school
- The plan to return to “children’s early learning experiences” in home and preschool

to equip children with the essential knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes and values enable them to adapt and deal with a range of situations, challenges a contexts in **support** of broader learning goals.

- The competencies link with Aistear’s four themes and the eight Key skills in the Framework for the Junior Cycle in order to make connections with children’s prior learning in preschool and future learning in post-primary school : In extending beyond skills and knowledge the school’s characteristic spirit is considered as a priority
- (The following example is useful) For example, the emphasis is on locating, critiquing and using knowledge as well as appreciating knowledge for its own sake. In this way, the competencies enable and foster deep learning while also contributing to the holistic development of the child.

QUESTION

Page 10 Table 2: ...Are the attributes of the key competencies assessable?

2. 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.

- Table 2 provides a set of attributes for each key competency. These attributes describe the characteristic learning and development opportunities for children within each key competency which will be embedded through learning outcomes in the new specifications for the curriculum areas and subjects. We look forward to the work on these specifications.
- The key competencies are life skills and their attributes will help in the holistic and ethical development of the child. These are very much in parallel with the skills outlined in the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015)*. Many of these skills are not assessable e.g. Being spiritual, partly to do with the soul which is only known by God. The Gospel values are missing among these attributes. These non-assessable goals are called Faith Formation Goals in the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015, CPPRECI)*.

3. 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.

- Increased emphasis is to be commended on some subjects. However, Religious Education is best seen in Catholics schools as a core subject which is inclusive and integrated

discretely into every activity of the school day. Religious Education in a Catholic school is underpinned by a Catholic ethos which places Jesus Christ and his teaching at the centre of the school day. The *Grow in Love* Religious Education programme is an inclusive programme. The *Grow in Love* Religious Education programme is written in accordance with these strategies and characteristics; Integration, continuity, connectivity, assessment, interrelatedness and agency.

Changing how the curriculum is structured and presented

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

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

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

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

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

1. Be broad and balanced in purpose and content.

- The vision of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* is broad and balanced to encompass the Introduction, rationale, the process, the development of the framework and the timeline for the redevelopment of the curriculum
- To maintain balance in purpose and content the eight overarching principles, the key competencies, the curriculum subjects are woven together by allotting time to the various aspects and considerations of teaching and learning, to support the continuum of assessment, all depending on the vital support offered to families and stakeholders, and the continued necessity for CPD for teachers and principals.
- The balance is maintained through the continuity that is proposed from preschool through to primary school to post-primary school. Hence the importance of *Aistear* and *the Junior Cycle Framework*. This is supported at times of transition through *Mo Scéal* and *Education Passport*.

2. Be structured in five broad curriculum areas;

- The five proposed broad curriculum areas are defined in stages 1 and 2, followed by stages 3 and 4. This allows for continuity and connection
- The table on page 11 of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* shows six Curriculum areas and subjects. Yet the text speaks of five curriculum areas which needs further clarification.
- The example of broad learning outcomes and subject-specific learning outcomes are described for Arts Education through stages 1 and 2 and stages 3 and 4. Is this the model for other curriculum areas?
- To build on continuity and connection keeping in mind progression of learning at age appropriate stages, the curriculum areas become more differentiated by subjects as children move to stages 3 and 4
- With regard to Religious Education, the school patrons have a legal right to design their own programme. In relation to the Catholic school, this currently is the *Grow in Love* Religious Education programme written to the norms and levels of the CPPRECI. In the Religious Education Curriculum, “skills... are described in broad outcomes and ...allow for differentiation...can be used in assessment for learning... and can be considered in an interrelated way for purposes of planning and assessment.” (CPPRECI, p. 37).

3. 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).

- At Stage 1 and 2, subjects are included for two curriculum areas Language, and Mathematics, Science and Technology Education. They are not specifically defined in the curriculum areas of Well Being, Social and Environmental, Educational and Arts Education at stage 1 and 2. They are building on and extending their earlier learning experiences in preschool through Aistear. However, at this stage “learning outcomes will provide important foundations towards more subject-based learning.” Where does this leave Religious Education as a core subject and its time allotment?
- With strong foundations built at stages 1 and 2, the curriculum areas support older children’s learning and development in stages 3 and 4 (third to sixth class). At this stage curriculum areas become more differentiated into subjects. Opportunities are provided for teaching and learning in integrated and engaging ways. Connections across children’s learning are supported as is the acknowledgement of their capacity for more abstract thinking and learning. This happens in an age appropriate way within subject-based inquiry and investigation, coupled with the curriculum areas providing opportunities for playful and inquiry based teaching and learning. Assessment at various stages is key to keep the connections and continuity in focus.
- A brief outline of each proposed curriculum area is given and these have to be further teased out by the NCCA, followed by further consultation. (Does this explain the six curriculum areas on the table and the five curriculum areas listed in the text?)
- Priority from stages 1 and 2 through stages 3 and 4 are on creating links across subjects, minimising duplication, providing strategies to show progression in learning and help differentiation in learning experiences in multi grade classrooms.
- WELLBEING might be best taught in a Catholic school through Religious Education and according to its characteristic spirit, as outlined in the *CPPRECI*, the *Grow in Love* Religious Education programme and *the Agreed Schedule for a Catholic Primary School in Ireland*.
- How can children “develop their own ethical understanding of the world?” Life skills are not adequate for the care of the soul.

4. Use broad learning outcomes to describe the expected learning and development for children

Using broad learning outcomes will

- support connections across children’s learning
- describe what children are expected to know and understand

- assist in planning, differentiation, assessment for learning, integration and interrelatedness

5. Incorporate the new Primary Language Curriculum / *Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile*.

- *Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* is presented as a single document from stages 1-4
- As in *Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* in order to create stronger links, to show progression in learning and to help differentiate learning experiences for children, the learning outcomes will be presented side by side in a single document in the curricular areas. This should be helpful to teachers.

NOTES:

Features of the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015)*

offer major support to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* including:

- a Spirituality/Prayer perspective,
- Educational perspective,
- Early Childhood perspective,
- Justice perspective and
- Global perspective.
- Inter-Cultural perspective,
- Christian Moral perspective,
- Special Educational Needs perspective,,
- ICT perspective
- Ecological perspective.

To support the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015)* offers guidelines in the areas of:

- Moral education
- Music and song
- Inculturation
- Environment
- Catholic Religious Education develops ecumenical and inter-religious awareness and respect for cultures and religions of others.
- Appropriate processes for assessment and evaluation

Time allocation

It is essential that the time allocation is structured. Minimum Curriculum Time provides a weekly time allocation for Language, Mathematics and Wellbeing recognising the foundational nature of

these in children’s learning in the primary school years. Does that mean Religious Education will be a core subject taught as per the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (2015) for two and a half hours per week?

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

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

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

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

1.Promote high quality teaching, learning and assessment

This is possible through:

- Maintaining focus on the continuity of experience, connections and progression in learning is important throughout these eight years
- Building on the principles in Aistear and connecting with the eight principles of the Framework for Junior Cycle providing connection and continuity
- Teaching and learning to the practical nature of the seven competencies
- Broad outcomes across the five curriculum areas presented in five documents
- Shows where integration across strands, subjects and curriculum areas can support planning at the level of the curriculum area rather than subject

- Key transitions for children including, for most, the move from preschool to primary school, and the move from primary to post-primary school. This transfer of information is supported through *Mo Scéal: Preschool to Primary Reporting Templates* and through the *Education Passport*
- Transitions also happen year-by-year during primary school... teachers have opportunities for professional conversations about the child’s learning and about how they can be further supported in their learning... Moving from primary to post-primary school, children continue to build on prior experiences as their learning is supported through the Framework for Junior Cycle...
- TIME is allotted to enable these transitions to take place

2. Conceptualise assessment as an essential and critical part of teaching and learning

- School communities welcome the vision of assessment as a collaborative process and the key messages given on assessment. There are appropriate processes of assessment.
- Two ways to uphold the vision “be for every child” are firstly, in viewing the child as the central stakeholder that benefits from assessment information and secondly by stating, Assessment supports the development of each child.
- Gathering feedback on the range of supports with the launch of the *Primary Language Curriculum/ Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* (2019) including Examples of Children’s Learning and Support Materials for teachers will ensure consistency with the redeveloped curriculum, to inform teaching and learning.
- Assessment exists along a continuum
- Assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning
- Assessment provides information for various stakeholders... For the purposes of day-to-day learning in school, after children, the teacher is the primary stakeholder, who uses assessment to support progression in children’s learning. Figure 5 gives a helpful, comprehensive and visual image of stakeholders
- There is a recognition that everything isn’t assessable as the curriculum states “assessment goes far beyond activities that contribute to external accountability and national monitoring.”
- A welcome observation is that standardised testing is not necessarily more important than other types of assessment

Assessment must be relevant to the “legitimate expectations of students and parents/guardians and “in the case of Catholic schools accountable to Boards of Management and Church authorities.” (*The Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland, 2015*)

The RE Curriculum “values a counter cultural-cultural sense of time and aims to nurture waiting and receptivity, acknowledging that some of the most important outcomes of Religious Education are not immediately achieved and may not be directly observable.” (The Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015).

3. Highlight the importance of teachers’ professional judgement in supporting progression in children’s learning.

Teachers play a hugely important role in enabling and progressing children’s learning.

- The School Forum outlines the importance of high quality and school based CPD and other necessary “conditions” to enable and support teachers
- Teachers’ decisions about what to teach, when to teach it, how to sequence and pace learning, as well as decisions about the specific experiences to use are shaped by the strengths, needs, interests and individuality of the children with whom they work.
- The curriculum’s vision and principles recognise teachers as committed, skilful and agentic professionals in a complex role that includes knowledge and awareness of the diversity of children’s learning journeys
- Knowledge is central to the teacher’s role and her/his pedagogy: Subject knowledge; the teacher’s professional knowledge; Relational knowledge; Knowledge of the classroom and school context.
- Teachers will choose different pedagogical strategies and approaches to foster learning. They can be adapted to suit the child’s progression and will be informed by assessment

4. Encourage teachers to make meaningful connections with children’s interests and experiences.

- Teachers are encouraged to make meaningful connections by continually returning to the Vision and framework of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* in the context of the school’s characteristic spirit
- The pedagogical strategies and approaches outlined, guide teachers to choose, to support, engage, motivate and progress children’s learning in accordance with the school’s characteristic spirit.
- The 8 overarching principles continually convey what is valued in primary teaching and what lies at the heart of high quality teaching and learning in the primary curriculum. The section particularly on “Relationships” is underpinned by the characteristic spirit of the school.

- Meaningful connections with children’s interests and experiences are achieved by building on the key competencies which enable and foster deep learning. They can contribute to the holistic development of the child through living out the characteristic ethos of the Catholic school. The key competencies support the curriculum’s vision, in so far as they extend beyond skills and knowledge. The “being” aspect is the active learning of the *Let’s Live* section of each lesson of the “*Grow in Love*” Religious Education programme from Third Class to Sixth Class. This particular section is the AT HOME page of the Children’s *Grow in Love* book which is for use with parent/guardian. Fostering wellbeing is also part of the lived ethos of the Catholic school.
- Meaningful connections with children’s interests and experiences in religious education are achieved through engaging in prayer rituals, faith activities and through active participation in the four pillars of the Catechism of the Catholic Church: Christian Faith, Sacred Scripture, Liturgy and Prayer and Christian Morality. Being formed in faith through God’s revelation will enable the child’s growth in wellbeing. The *Grow in Love* Religious Education programme, written to the norms and standards of the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015)* teaches Religious Education through “Learning into religion”, “Learning about religion” and “Learning from religion” (Catholic Schools Partnership, Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland, Sharing Good Practice on Inclusion of all Pupils, 2015)
- In making meaningful connections with children’s interests and experiences, teachers’ time is allocated according to Minimum Curriculum Time and Flexible Time. Both are described in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. It is interesting to note that time was taken from all areas and aspects of the curriculum in order to arrive at a set of options for consideration and discussion.
- Teachers make meaningful connections with children’s experiences and interests as they transfer information through the *Mo Scéal* template and the *Education Passport*. This is especially positive in the light of the key competency “Learning to be a learner.”
- Teachers can make meaningful connections by returning to the School’s Forum and what the Forum has highlighted about, Time, CPD, Enabling and supporting teachers, Reviewing in named relevant areas, embedding the curriculum changes across the continuum of teacher education
- The curriculum encourages and supports integration in a number of ways and outlines them, so the curriculum will connect to the children’s lives in a meaningful way.

5. Recognise the significance of quality relationships and their impact on children’s learning.

Note: The following are best achieved in accordance with the school’s characteristic spirit.

- The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* states the challenge of change bringing uncertainty and disruption. The *Schools Forum* discussions named conditions to enable and support schools and hence help build quality relationships that will have a positive impact on children’s learning
- Interactions between teachers and pupils are an aspect of pedagogy deemed important contributing to the children’s learning environment and experiences. All interactions between teacher and pupil are significant. The quality of interactions impacts children’s learning, development and wellbeing
- Importance of contact time with children in progressing children’s learning and teacher preparation is critical and is definitively mapped out in the curriculum
- Allotting time to teachers to collaborate with their colleagues around teaching and learning and becoming familiar with new ideas in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* enhances quality relationships and their impact on children’s learning
- Identifying each child as ‘unique, capable and caring’ builds quality relationships throughout the school community. The school’s characteristic spirit underpins how this is achieved through faith formation, gospel values and a lived daily ethos
- Quality relationships are supported by high quality teaching, focused learning and teaching and good assessment procedures
- The 8 overarching principles strive to build quality relationships. Principles influence teachers to convey what is valued in primary education.
- The 7 competencies enable and foster deep learning and contribute to the holistic development of the child which in turn will ensure quality relationships. Children are active agents and take responsibility for their learning.
- Table 2 at a glance will direct the teacher’s immediate attention to key competency and attribute, thus no waste of time. Many of these skills and goals and attributes are echoed in the *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015)*. They are helpful in ethos development as part of the Conversations process where targets are worked on in partnership with members of the Board of Management and the Diocesan Education Office
- The interrelatedness, integration and stage of development structure of the curriculum areas at stage 1 and 2 provide teachers with a greater choice in planning for rich learning experiences through playful and engaging resources. This enhances quality relationships as working in such a way will promote “mutual fraternity and social friendships” (Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, 2020). Engaging approaches to learning are underpinned by the school’s characteristic spirit and fostering what it means to belong and participate in a family, school and parish community. This is key to Learning to be a learner.

6. Recognise the role and influence of parents and families in children’s education.

- The Irish Constitution and the Church both recognise the family as the primary educator of the child. Therefore parents and guardians are supported in this redeveloped primary curriculum. The Pre-school plays a key part in this *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* so dialogue with

parents/guardians and stakeholders is essential on the continuum, especially as the child's experience is most valued.

- Inclusive education and diversity are key components of this *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Parents are offered ongoing support in accompanying their children in the diverse world in which they are bringing up their children
- With regard to Inclusion and Diversity the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* can draw from the *Catholic Preschool and Catholic Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland (2015)*

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework states that the diversity is evident in the rich kaleidoscope of ages, competencies, cultures, ethnicities, family structures and backgrounds, home languages, religions, sexual identities, and worldviews that now characterise many primary classrooms.

The Catholic school welcomes diversity and strives for inclusivity. In spite of “the rich kaleidoscope” as outlined, “A Catholic school cannot relinquish its own freedom to proclaim the Gospel and to offer a formation based on the values to be found in a Christian education: this is its right and duty” (CPPRECI, 2015, p.8). It is a fact that “Catholic schools have adapted to demographic change ...many have led the way in integrating migrants into local communities. They have been leaders in areas such as social inclusion, special needs and Traveller education.” (CSP, Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland, 2015).

- The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* advocates a move away from thinking in terms of ability and disability to thinking about variability, competency and opportunity. An inclusive school environment creates a respectful school climate, and builds their curriculum and interactions to proactively promote inclusive principles in the school; it is a hallmark of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. The vision for the Catholic school among other factors emphasises the “creating of an inclusive community in service of the common good.” (CSP, *Catholic Primary Schools in a Changing Ireland*, 2015)

VALUES

The Catholic Schools Partnership's resource '*Understanding and living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School, A Process Centred on Conversations, 2019*' states that the vision of the Catholic school is that there is “no such thing as a value neutral- education.” The Catholic ethos has a particular vision of the human person. It buys into an ethos by making choices and actions and choosing particular priorities. The vision of the Catholic school upholds the dignity of each human person viewed as “a spiritual being who comes from God and whose destiny is to be with God when this life is over.”

The Catholic school centres on the teaching and mission of Jesus whose priority is to love God and love neighbour. This lifelong mission is continued by his disciples who live out the Gospel values.

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* throughout supports the language and ideas and vision of the Catholic school. Though what distinguishes ‘the Catholic School is that its concept of the human person is rooted in the teaching of Jesus Christ as embodied in the Catholic faith community.’ Hence Catholic schools have a “strong robust moral system” which expresses itself in love of God and neighbour.

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

The 1999 curriculum contributed to many successes including:

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

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

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

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

1.Addressing Curriculum overload at primary level

This is envisaged in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* through:

- The allocation of time
- Reducing subject areas providing a focus on active methodologies for teaching and learning

- Introducing 8 overarching principles of teaching and learning which convey what is valued in primary education and what lies at the heart of high quality teaching and learning in the primary curriculum. Principles, key competencies and curriculum areas should improve further attainment levels in all subjects
- Having broad principles enabling teachers to reflect varied school contexts, children's different circumstances, experiences and abilities
- Building on and further developing children's early learning experiences in the home and preschool identifying connection and continuity
- Embedding the seven competencies across all curriculum areas and subjects from Junior Infants to Sixth class through the learning outcomes
- Changing mind-set from 8 classes in primary school, to four stages.

2. Take stock of strategies, initiatives and programmes and clarify priorities for children's learning

Helpful strategies, initiatives and programmes clarify priorities for children's learning such as:

- Navigating a wide variety of contexts and situations in childhood, into adolescence and adulthood and engaging with the natural world and appreciating its value and their responsibilities as custodians of it
- Linking the seven key competencies relevant from junior Infants to Sixth Class link with Aistear's four themes and the eight Key Skills in the Framework for the Junior Cycle
- Seeing the competencies enable and foster deep learning while also contributing to the holistic development of the child
- The use of learning outcomes in the curriculum areas and subjects to contribute to the development of the key competencies, thus providing continuity and connectivity, priorities for children's learning
- Using key competencies to encourage active citizenship and an ethical way of life according to the school's characteristic spirit
- Using technology in balance with indoor and outdoor learning
- Learning to be a learner is an excellent competency and will help children to become agents of their own learning
- Interrelatedness, integration and stage of development at stage 1 and 2 with continuity and connections enabling children's ability for more abstract thinking and learning
- Playful and inquiry-based teaching and learning begun in stage 1 and 2 will continue in stage 3 and 4, will maintain enhanced enjoyment of learning for children

- Having a Toolkit as a key feature of support for teachers

3.Link with Aistear and the Framework for Junior Cycle

- Helps with continuity and connectivity in curriculum areas and subjects
- Keeps a focus on the unique experience of the child's life

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* builds on many of the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum and makes efforts to respond to challenges and changing priorities.

One area that is not given due consideration is the subject of Religious Education. This is a core subject and requires two and a half hours teaching each week. The *Catholic Preschool and Primary Religious Education Curriculum for Ireland* (2015) supports many of the priorities in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*.

Data Protection

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

Thank you for your submission.