

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

Name	
Date	
E-mail	

Organisation submission details

Name	Darina Burke
Position	Principal
Organisation	St. Brigid's GNS
Date	26/11/2020
E-mail	

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

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

Yes

No

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

We are an urban all -girls primary school with a school population of 460. Since 2016 we are a Values School.

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*.

I think there are many positive aspects to the draft curriculum. The re-organisation of 11 subjects in stages 1 and 2 (junior infants to second class) to five broad curriculum areas is a very welcome move and will help to address the issue of curriculum overload at the junior end of the school. I think it may have been useful to also extend the five broad curriculum areas to the junior end of the school.

The explicit focus on wellbeing, digital learning and religions, beliefs and ethics are more reflective of the type of society we live in today. A more enhanced focus on arts education is also welcomed. The new curriculum recognises that academic development is only one aspect of what education should be about and this is to be welcomed.

From our school's perspective we are particularly interested in the competency of fostering well being. As a values school we feel that exposing pupils to an Education in Human values-led programme from Junior Infants will lay the foundations for future personal growth and development in our pupils and capture much of what is talked about in the competency of *fostering well being*. We feel that this is a key competency and should be incorporated at Stage 1, not just at the Stage 2 phase. Wellbeing is not something that can be explicitly 'taught' - it is concerned with cultivating 'a way of being' from the early years.

We all have within us the innate capacity to live out good values irrespective of religion, race or creed. The younger we start the process of inculcating these values in our pupils the greater the benefit will be. This exposure to values in the formative years means that the language and behaviours associated with values education are embedded and become the norm. Through the 5 Education in Human Values teaching methodologies of story-telling, quotes, singing, activities and meditation the pupils become exposed explicitly and discreetly to the 5 overarching values of Love, Peace, Truth, Right-Action and Non-Violence (and the many associated sub values). The beauty of the values programme is that it can be tailor-made to fit any school context e.g. for Catholic Schools it dovetails with Catholic faith formation, for Community National schools it enhances the Goodness Me, Goodness You teachings etc.

We have chosen to focus on 1 overarching value per month and one sub-value every week e.g. we might focus on the overarching value of Peace in September and pick the 4 sub-values of patience, positivity, concentration and gratitude for each of the 4 week in September. We hold a values assembly each month for the whole school and teacher will incorporate values education into teaching and learning explicitly (e.g. via the use of the values copies) or discreetly by integrating values education with other subjects e.g. creating a gratitude tree in Art to link in with the sub-value of gratitude.

Having worked with this programme for the last number of years I have no doubt that it works - it changes behaviours in powerful ways and encourages the pupils to stand up and take their rightful place in society. This programme is transformative and should be part of any well-being programmes in a new and forward-thinking 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 am very pleased that the draft primary curriculum recognises the diversity in school contexts all over the country. Allowing schools to enact the curriculum in a way that suits the context and needs of the school is reassuring. Priorities differ across schools and across pupils so allowing schools to exercise more flexibility in relation to planning and timetabling is very welcome. In the future this can potentially fit with targets and actions identified in School Self Evaluation Reports and corresponding School Improvement Plans. For e.g we have prioritised using the environment in teaching and learning as part of our SSE process. The increased flexibility will allow us to focus more on the actions identified to progress that target.

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*.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

- 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.

If formal education is viewed as a continuum from pre-school to primary school and right through to post-primary school then it makes complete sense to link the three phases of the continuum. This had already started with Aistear in the early childhood setting but it is promising to see that the link will now exist with the transition to post-primary education and particularly with the link to the framework for the Junior Cycle. The consistency of language across the 3 phases will help this connection.

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.

I think working towards seven competencies allows for a progressive development of the skills and knowledge across a broad-ranging area. The link between the competencies at pre-school, primary and post-primary level will mean that the pupils will build upon their learning at each

stage. We, at St. Brigid's are particularly interested in the competency of fostering well-being as it explicitly links in with the our Education in Human Values Programme. We feel strongly that children should be introduced to values education at stage 1 - junior infants to second class. The foundations for solid values education need to be laid as early as possible to enable children to negotiate the world in which they live. In our school junior infant pupils can talk about values and see them embedded into school life and practice daily. Values education shouldn't be something that is introduced at the senior end of the school. It should be interwoven to teaching and learning from the pupils entry to primary if not pre-school. We feel that the NCCA are potentially missing out on a valuable teaching opportunity by excluding values education at the junior end of the school.

Changing how the curriculum is structured and presented

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

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

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

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

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

I like the idea of broad curriculum areas at the junior end and I feel that these (with some modifications) could have also worked with the senior end. A broad focus (as distinct from a narrow subject specific curriculum) allows for a more diverse and integrated curriculum. The learning outcomes are sufficiently broad which allows teachers to interpret them in line with their planning, teaching and assessment. Teachers will be very pleased that the Primary Language Curriculum will be subsumed into this document and the fact that teachers are already familiar with the layout and language for the primary curriculum will make it easier for them to mediate the draft curriculum.

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.

Whilst AoL has always been part and parcel of the 1999 curriculum Afl has progressed considerably in recent years particularly with the growth in online assessment tools etc. so it will be beneficial to teaching and learning that assessment is critical to the new curriculum. We don't teach

homogeneous classes where all learners start from the same place. The new curriculum recognises this and allows us as teachers to meet the class where they are at.

I am also pleased that recognition is given to teacher's professional judgement as an extremely important assessment tool.

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.

The educational landscape has changed dramatically since the introduction of the 1999 curriculum and it is encouraging to see this reflected in the new curriculum. Teachers are coming under more and more pressure to ensure that all curriculum priorities are covered which is an impossible task. The new curriculum acknowledges this by allowing schools to plan curriculum delivery according to their current and future educational priorities. Cognisance will now be

give to the myriad of initiatives and programmes schools are under pressure to deliver e.g school improvement targets, guided reading stations, primary language curriculum, active schools, green schools etc

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.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie