

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	Valérie David-McGonnell AIPLF (Irish Association of French-Language Teachers) President
Date	05/02/2022
E-mail	

Organisation submission details

Name	
Position	
Organisation	
Date	
E-mail	

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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).

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*.

The integration of the **teaching of Modern Foreign Languages** at primary level from 3rd Class is a most welcome component of the new proposed curriculum.

As a native French teacher who took part in the Modern Languages Primary School Initiative in a number of primary schools in Cork from 1998 to 2002, I witnessed the positive cognitive impact that this programme had on children. Today, as a post-primary teacher of French, I see the advantages current local primary-level language teaching initiatives give students when they start secondary school. The fact that participation in such local initiatives is currently voluntary and involves only a limited number of primary schools is far from ideal as it creates inequality. The new national Primary Sampler Module proposed over six weeks this academic year is an excellent idea although it is a very short, voluntary programme.

Developing foreign language skills from 3rd class in all schools in Ireland will allow students to attain a higher proficiency level by the end of secondary school. This will offer an economic advantage in a country where many positions requiring foreign language skills are currently not filled and new commercial opportunities must be sought in this post-Brexit era. Furthermore, fostering intercultural competence at a young age promotes respect for diversity which is a vital component for the cohesion of our multicultural society where almost 12 % of the population was born outside of Ireland, according to the most recent census.

Learning foreign languages from an earlier age will help compensate for the reduction in many schools of the time allocated to MFLs resulting from the recent Junior Cycle reform. A survey of 118 post-primary MFL teachers in Ireland which I conducted in January 2018 revealed that 53 % of the respondents had seen a reduction of MFL class time for Junior Cycle students in their schools at the time. This was before the introduction of the 400 hours devoted to Wellbeing which resulted in the decision to further decrease the time devoted to MFLs at Junior Cycle level in numerous schools.

It will be important to ensure continuity from primary to secondary school in terms of language choice and programmes, and a clear, detailed set of learning outcomes relating to communicative competence for MFLs at primary level should be published in order to limit discrepancies from one school to another.

While the current *Languages Connect* strategy aims to diversify the languages on offer in secondary schools, it does not make the studying of more than one foreign language compulsory. I personally believe that we should aim to develop plurilingual individuals as opposed to simply creating a society which is only multilingual as a whole. In my Master thesis about the teaching of MFLs at post-primary level in the Republic of Ireland from independence to 2018 (University of Caen, France, 2018) I recommended putting in place a “2+2” language policy in Ireland which

would make the learning of two foreign languages compulsory, or at least possible, in addition to the two official languages (English and Irish), at both primary and post-primary level.

As stressed in the 2016 census, French is by far the most commonly non-official language spoken at home by those born in Ireland. As French is a significant heritage/home language in Ireland, I believe that it should be taught in primary schools as part of the new curriculum, together with one or several other foreign and heritage languages.

In terms of logistics, a number of bodies could be commissioned to provide modern foreign language CPD, including language specific CLIL training, to current and future primary school teachers. As far as French is concerned, the Irish Association of French-Language Teachers (AIPLF), which was launched in May 2021, organises CPD sessions and other events for teachers of French in Ireland. In the future, the AIPLF will offer French language workshops specifically designed for primary school teachers, in line with the new curriculum.

However, as pronunciation skills have a significant, often underestimated impact on communication, I strongly believe that foreign language teaching in primary schools should also involve visiting native speakers. Foreign language assistants, whose timetable could be changed in order to include the regular visits of several primary schools, teachers from international language institutes (such as Alliance Française, Goethe Institut, Instituto Cervantes), and native speakers in the school community could provide part of the teaching of MFLs to complement the work of primary school teachers.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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Thank you for your submission.

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie