

# Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment

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

## Personal Details

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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).**

N/A

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

# Section 1

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

I attended one, online focus group meeting to discuss the Draft Primary Curriculum. I was heartened to see children being placed at the centre of the effort to make education fit for purpose in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is obvious that considerable effort and thought has gone into making a curriculum that address the needs of the child as a whole person not simply as a receptacle for information.

The role of the teacher and principal is profoundly important. But the Irish constitution states that parents and families are the primary educators of children and as such all subjects taught in schools must be notified to parents.

I was relieved to see that there was no mention of the topic of gender identity as a subject in the draft curriculum. I am deeply concerned that while the NCCA does not list gender identity ideology as a topic on the current curriculum many schools are choosing to teach it. This is often because they have been targeted by organisations that espouse a religious belief that one's sex can be chosen. This is patently absurd and contradicts the most basic scientific principles. Sex is binary and immutable. Children are born male or female and grow to become men or women. Girls cannot become boys, boys cannot become girls. As humans we ought to be free to express ourselves in anyway that does not interfere with the safety or dignity of others. Gender ideology reduces the expression of the range of humanity to stereotypes and profoundly limits our ability to explore our sexuality and gender nonconformity.

I am particularly concerned about the [Belong To](#) programme and the INTO training video [Facilitating a social transition](#) that were used as sources to teach gender identity in my children's school. I have addressed this issue directly with the principal and the board of management and await a written response.

These resources ask children to suspend their grasp of reality and what is normal. Adults must have a clear understanding of what normal is. In a post-modern age the idea of 'normal' may seem anachronistic but if adults can't recognise normal behaviour they can't recognise abusive or manipulative behaviour. In a 'post truth' age it can be difficult to assert that there are indeed immutable facts that require defending. Sex is an immutable fact and this fact is worth defending.

Teaching gender identity ideology directly contradicts the S.P.H.E. primary curriculum *Safety and Protection Strand* unit that states throughout that children should be able to recognise unsafe situations, understand that other people can be a danger to them and that it is ok to say no and assert their agency. When children are taught that a person must be accepted as being who ever they claim to be that safety teaching is undermined. No child should be faced with a situation where they fear being called a bigot for stating someone is male or female when that is precisely what the child sees. To interfere with a child's perception of reality is negligent. It makes children vulnerable to manipulation and abuse.

I wish to commend the NCCA for not including gender identity in the draft curriculum and ask that any request for its inclusion in the curriculum should be the subject of a transparent public debate.

## 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.**

While I appreciate that teachers and principals require agency and flexibility to teach, the primary educators of children are their parents and families. The Education Act states that schools and parents should work together to promote the holistic development of children. The Department of Education also states that external resources used in schools to support teaching must conform to prescribed criteria to ensure quality. Resources that promote gender identity do not conform to those criteria. **I would like to see all external resources being used in school subject to independent vetting.** If gender identity is to be taught it should be included under the faith and religion section of the curriculum. It is an article of faith as to whether one possesses an 'inner gender identity' much like it is an article of faith as to whether one possess a soul.

### 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.

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- 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. N/A**

### **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.**

No comment to make.

## 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.**

No comment to make

## 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.

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- 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.**

Teachers play a profoundly important and trusted role in our children’s lives. With this trust comes great responsibility. Teachers and principals must not use their position to push an ideological agenda that does not accord with the curriculum or the ideological or religious beliefs of the child’s family. The use of proscribed pronouns, social transitioning in school and the promotion of gender identity ideology is political activism. Teachers should not engage in political activism in schools.

**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:*

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- 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.**

No comment

### **Covid-19**

**Since the publication of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, Covid-19 has presented a big challenge for schools. Please give your views on the implications of schools’ experience of the pandemic for the finalisation of the *Primary Curriculum Framework*.**

No comment

### **Data Protection**

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

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