



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment



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	Caitríona Cunningham
Date	28/2/2022
E-mail	

Organisation submission details

Name	Caitríona Cunningham
Position	Environmental Education Officer (Qualified Primary school teacher with environmental science degree and masters)
Organisation	Green-Schools
Date	28/2/2022
E-mail	

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 email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

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

Green-Schools is Ireland's leading environmental management and award programme, working with over 90% of primary and secondary schools across the country.

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 am a qualified primary school teacher with an environmental science degree and masters, and I've worked as an environmental education officer on the Green-Schools programme for twelve years. I completed an environmental education thesis as part of my environmental science degree. I have a few recommendations for the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework to ensure the development of children's environmental skills, knowledge, dispositions, values, and attitudes.

1. I would like to see a greater emphasis placed on **environmental education** and **climate literacy** in the new Primary Curriculum Framework. We are experiencing a **biodiversity and climate crisis** and I think it's very important to teach students the **skills, knowledge, dispositions, values, and attitudes** to improve biodiversity nationally and internationally, and to tackle climate change. This is an incredible opportunity for Ireland to lead the way in world-class environmental education, creating active global citizens that are connected and empowered for decades to come.

2. I would strongly recommend that the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework **include environmental education in the science subject** along with the geography subject as is done in the Primary School Curriculum (1999) where environmental education is taught in the science and geography subjects (SESE). Ideally environmental education should be integrated throughout all subjects. Most environmental education topics are found in the science subject such as habitats and communities, pollution, conservation of natural resources and energy. If environmental education is taken out of the science subject there will be less environmental education taught. I would recommend that the curriculum include the Green-Schools themes of litter and waste, sustainable energy, water conservation & prevention of water pollution, sustainable travel and biodiversity in a local and global context.

3. I would recommend that **Climate change education** needs to be included in the science and geography subjects. UNESCO has stated that by 2025, climate change education should be a core curriculum component in every country in the world. Action 36 in Ireland's [Climate Action Plan](#) states that the National Dialogue for Climate Action will "build climate literacy into the national education system at **primary** and secondary levels, and in adult education programmes with our partners in the Department of Education and Skills, Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)." If this is to be achieved, the NCCA needs to be a key stakeholder and climate needs to feature prominently in the new primary curriculum.

4. The competencies are positive and holistic however I believe that **one of the competencies should be related to nature/ environment** to assist children to deal with the climate and biodiversity crisis e.g. Being environmentally sustainable. As Geogre Monbiot says "If children lose contact with nature they won't fight for it".



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Section 2

Agency and flexibility in schools

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

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

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

I would be in favour of promoting a thematic, integrative approach to learning and exploration, rather than subject driven time with the exception of literacy and mathematics which should be allocated certain time. I think Ethics and Beliefs should replace patron's time.

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.

I applaud the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework's important messages in relation to curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools.

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 that the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework needs to include **a competency related to nature/environment** in the seven competencies, to assist children to deal with the climate and biodiversity crisis e.g. Being environmentally sustainable. As Geogre Monbiot says “If children lose contact with nature they won’t fight for it”.

I agree with the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework’s focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes.

I would recommend that the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework **increase emphasis on environmental education and climate change education** because we are experiencing a biodiversity and climate change crisis.

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 would strongly recommend that the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework **include environmental education in the science subject** along with the geography subject as is done in the Primary School Curriculum (1999) where environmental education is taught in the science and geography subjects (SESE). Ideally environmental education should be integrated throughout all subjects. Most environmental education topics are found in the science subject such as habitats and communities, pollution, conservation of natural resources and energy. If environmental education is taken out of the science subject there will be less environmental education taught.

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.

I agree with the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework’s messages in relation to supporting a variety of pedagogical approaches and strategies with assessment central to teaching and learning.

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.

I would like to see a greater emphasis placed on **environmental education** and **climate literacy** in the new Primary Curriculum Framework. We are experiencing a **biodiversity and climate crisis** and I think it's very important to teach students the **skills, knowledge, dispositions, values, and attitudes** to improve biodiversity nationally and internationally, and to tackle climate change.

I would strongly recommend that the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework **include environmental education in the science subject** along with the geography subject as is done in the Primary School Curriculum (1999) where environmental education is taught in the science and geography subjects (SESE). Ideally environmental education should be integrated throughout all subjects. Most environmental education topics are found in the science subject such as habitats and communities, pollution, conservation of natural resources and energy. If environmental education is taken out of the science subject there will be less environmental education taught. I would recommend that the curriculum include the Green-Schools themes of litter and waste, sustainable energy, water conservation & prevention of water pollution, sustainable travel and biodiversity in a local and global context.

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*.

I think there's a great opportunity to promote outdoor learning which will connect children with nature, and it will reduce the risks of spreading Covid-19.

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