

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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Date	
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Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

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

Leave No Trace Ireland is the only outdoor ethics programme in Ireland promoting responsible outdoor recreation through education, research and partnerships. The 'Leave No Trace' programme raises awareness of responsible outdoor recreation and it tackles issues impacting the environment upon which we all depend, as well as actions we can take to improve and sustain it. Leave No Trace has many benefits for youth, educators, schools, and communities.

The 'Leave No Trace' programme empowers people, strengthens communities and considers much broader and far-reaching environmental concerns. It helps to demonstrate the interconnections between nature, the human environment and our impacts including implications on climate change. It demonstrates how each person can make a positive difference.

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.

Section 1

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

Leave No Trace Ireland welcomes the proposed new primary curriculum framework and in particular the emphasis on doubling the amount of time school children will spend on PE and social and health education.

Leave No Trace Ireland believe the opportunity to bring children into the outdoors as an extension of the classroom has many benefits and is something that the organisation would like to see encouraged across Ireland. Practical hands-on experiences in the outdoors that are part of the Leave No Trace programme which offer multiple benefits to participants. The benefits include increased knowledge which leads to responsible action being taken to better the outdoor environment, empowerment of individuals, strengthening of communities, increased tolerance and understanding, practical application of learning, enhanced creativity, critical and creative thinking skills, improved well-being from being outdoors, national learning standards are met for multiple subjects and healthy lifestyles are encouraged.

Education is highly important and valuable aspect of society. For education and training services to meet the need and raise the aspirations of all learners these services need to be delivered in a flexible, adaptive and innovative way. Leave No Trace Ireland calls on the Department of Education and Skills to incorporate Leave No Trace workshops as part of the core 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.

Leave No Trace welcomes the principles outlined above and this framework provides opportunities for schools and teachers to make decisions based on best practice and new research and share this knowledge across the school system.

Outdoor learning, that is part of the Leave No Trace programme, can significantly advance the progress of learners at risk of educational disadvantage and learners with special educational needs supporting them to achieve their potential.

Outdoor learning has the power to

- Improve academic achievement.
- Provide a bridge to higher order learning.
- Make learning more engaging and relevant.
- Nurture creativity
- Reduce behaviour problems and improve attendance.
- Stimulate, inspire, and improve motivation.
- Improve young people's attitudes to learning.

Leave No Trace Ireland would propose that outdoor learning and the Leave No Trace programme be a core element of the primary school curriculum. This would allow all children across Ireland access to outdoor learning opportunities which can cross over into other areas of learning not only physical activity.

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.

Leave No Trace Ireland is fully supportive of the new curriculum framework where connections are made between the different stages of school. Continuity of learning and interconnection of subjects is highly important. The new curriculum with the inclusion of outdoor learning through Leave No Trace Ireland workshops as a core element will contribute greatly to this. The Leave No Trace programme is well placed to bridge learning between classes, home and school.

Leave No Trace Ireland is also the only countryside code for Ireland that has been adopted by key state and national organisations including government departments, state agencies, national governing bodies of sport, education and training organisations and a range of tourism businesses. It is also the only outdoor recreation programme endorsed by Comhairle na Tuaithe, the National Countryside and Recreation Strategy, and the Northern Ireland Outdoor Recreation Plan. It is this broad adoption and promotion that gives the message its strength, together with the fact that the principles are all positive in nature and based on sound science.

As such Leave No Trace Ireland calls on the Department of Education and Skills to give serious consideration to the inclusion of the Leave No Trace programme and its outdoor learning to the new curriculum.

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.

Leave No Trace welcome the seven key competencies across children’s learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class. The Leave No Trace ethos and skills are ideally placed to develop and encourage these competencies linked to all other subjects. Children learning to love the environment at a young age and learning how they can respect and care for it will grow into caring responsible adults.

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.

Leave No Trace Ireland welcomes the proposed changes to the curriculum outlined above.

Again, the organisation calls on the Department of Education and Skills to include outdoor learning as a core element of the new curriculum. It is well placed to deliver in the areas of social and environmental education as well as wellbeing. Spending time in the outdoors provides not only the benefits previously outlined but is integral to good mental and physical health and wellbeing. With Covid-19 seriously impacting everyone's lives there has been a dramatic increase in families heading outdoors highlighting the vital role that the outdoors plays in our lives.

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The Leave No Trace Ireland programme is connected to the following aspects of the current school curriculum and thus well placed to deliver outdoor learning to all schools across Ireland

- SESE Geography Strand: Environmental Awareness and Care, Strand Unit: Caring for my Locality
- SESE Science Strand: Living Things, Strand Unit: Plants and Animals
- SESE Science Strand: Environmental Awareness and Care, Strand Unit: Science and the Environment
- SESE Geography Strand: Natural Environments, Strand Unit: The Local Natural Environment
- SESE Geography Strand: Natural Environments, Strand Unit: Rocks and Soils
- SESE Science and Geography Strand: Environmental Awareness and Care, Strand Unit: Environmental Awareness.

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.

Leave No Trace welcomes the plan to:

- 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.

Through the provision of a variety of pedagogical approaches, it enhances the learning experience for students and the teaching experience for teachers.

The Leave No Trace framework can be adapted to any outdoor situation from urban to rural areas and to a range of different activity types. Furthermore, the organisation has a wealth of educational resources that teachers can make use of using their own pedagogical approach or indeed a variety of approaches to the subject matter. As the only programme promoting responsible outdoor recreation and with a robust school programme in place, Leave No Trace Ireland ask that the Department of Education and Skills include the programme in the core school curriculum.

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.

Leave No Trace Ireland is supportive of the proposal to respond to challenges and the changing needs and priorities of the curriculum. One of the key priorities is outdoor learning which can incorporate a wide range of subjects as well as directly contribute to wellbeing and environmental education.

In today's ever-changing world, sustainability is a key message that comes across. Through outdoor learning children learn about a variety of interconnections which forms an integral part of their development.

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Thank you for your submission.