

# 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](mailto:PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie)

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Yes  No

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

The Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), through the Irish Aid programme, is committed to ongoing support for Development Education (also known as Global Citizenship Education)(DE/GCE) targeting learners of all ages in Ireland. Ireland's policy for international development *A Better World* states that fostering global citizenship will be a core component of implementing the policy and commits to dedicating more resources to implementing development education programmes. DE/GCE contributes to the realisation of Irish Aid's vision for a sustainable and just world, by providing an opportunity for people in Ireland to reflect on their roles and responsibilities as global citizens and by encouraging people to take action for a fairer and more sustainable future for all (ibid.p.8).

Irish Aid's Development Education Strategy 2017-2023 supports education programmes in both the formal and non-formal sectors. In the primary sector the policy commits to furthering the integration and mainstreaming of quality development education in primary school curricula, programmes and structures.

DFA/Irish Aid currently supports a number of DE/GCE projects in the primary school sector covering direct delivery in schools, CPD and ITE as well as resource development. This support includes a Strategic Partnership with the DICE (Development and Intercultural Education) project at Initial Teacher Education level which is a partnership between St. Patricks College, Froebel College, Mary Immaculate College and Marino Institution of Education.

DFA/Irish Aid also funds a number of international NGOs DE/GCE programmes for schools, including Trócaire, Concern and GOAL, as well as the An Taisce Green Schools Global Citizenship programme and a number of smaller NGOs working specifically on development education projects in primary schools such as the Galway One World Centre.

Additionally, the Our World Irish Aid Awards is an annual awards programme for primary school pupils from third to sixth class in which they explore the work of Irish Aid and how this contributes to the Sustainable Development Goals. The Irish Aid Centre in Dublin city centre also provides workshops on the work of Irish Aid targeting both primary and post-primary students.

We estimate that through our various partners, there are Irish Aid supported projects and programmes in 29% of primary schools.

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*.**

DFA/Irish Aid welcomes the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework and the significant potential to focus on global citizenship with the proposed principles, key competencies and curriculum areas.

DFA/Irish Aid believes that DE/GCE is an important vehicle through which we can better understand the world we live in and take action to change it as informed global citizens. It equips both educators and learners with the knowledge, skills and values to act ethically and sustainably in a world that is both complex and highly interconnected. It is an approach to education that encompasses knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and action. It is also characterised by participative and learner-centred methodologies, which value the acquisition of skills and knowledge above getting the 'right' answer.

In this it has much in common with Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) with both focusing on supporting active global citizenship. The National Strategy for Education for Sustainable Development 2014-2020 shows the links between DE/GCE and ESD in its key principles that include linking local issues to global issues, promoting active and participatory methodologies and emphasising social justice and equity.

Part of the vision of the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework is, '...to provide a strong foundation for every child to thrive and flourish, supporting them in realising their full potential as individuals and as members of communities and society during childhood and into the future' (NCCA, 2020, p. 5). DFA/Irish Aid believes that DE/GCE can contribute to supporting children's full potential as members of society and prepare them for the changing and interconnected world that they live in now as children and in their future as adults.

DFA/Irish Aid notes that DE/GCE opportunities are already included in the 1999 primary school curriculum in SPHE, Geography and Science in particular and in the teaching methodologies of the new Primary Language Curriculum too. DFA/Irish Aid is encouraged to see this appears to be further strengthened in the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework, as recommended in the NCCA study

*Education for Sustainable Development: A study of opportunities and linkages in the primary and post-primary curriculum.*

Opportunities for the inclusion of DE/GCE in primary schools is evident in both the proposed principles and the key competencies. Principles that could align with DE/GCE include Partnerships, Engagement, Learning environments, Pedagogy and Inclusive education and diversity. Key competencies that may align with DE/GCE include Being an active citizen, Learning to be a learner and Communicating and using language. The proposed curriculum areas all have scope for the inclusion of DE/GCE related learning outcomes, in Language, Wellbeing and Social and Environmental Education in particular.

In explaining the rationale for a new primary curriculum, NCCA states, “....challenges such as climate change, sustainability, human migration, and geopolitical shifts illustrates the importance of dispositions and skills, such as resilience, creativity, innovation and critical thinking in the young and future generations” (NCCA, 2020, p.3). It describes the demand for schools and teachers to respond to this as a ‘growing challenge’ and necessary in order for children to ‘enjoy their childhoods’ and ‘become equipped’ for the world they will live in as adults (NCCA, 2020, p.3). Clearly, DE/GCE can play a role in this process of curriculum reform.

Another challenge that teachers face is an overloaded curriculum. DFA/Irish Aid welcomes the focus on integration and on flexibility of time allocations for schools and hopes that this and the inclusion of key competencies throughout the primary school years will enable teachers to find space and time to include DE/GCE in their teaching. DFA/Irish Aid acknowledges that as well as time to teach DE/GCE, teachers may also need professional development support to do this. Teaching DE/GCE requires knowledge and awareness of global issues, confidence to teach these issues and sensitivity to the learners in the classroom and also to the countries, communities and people who are the subjects of the lessons and who may indeed be in the classroom. DE/GCE is now a core element of Initial Teacher Education programmes in the Teaching Council document *Céim: Standards for Initial Teacher Education* but educators will need to be supported with professional development and high quality learning materials throughout their career. NCCA states that access to high quality professional development for teachers and toolkits for curriculum areas are an important part of enabling schools to adapt to the Draft Framework. DFA/Irish Aid believes that it can contribute to this through its Development Education Unit and

its partner organisations, and looks forward to continuing to work in partnership with NCCA and DES on this.

In summary, in order to fulfil the vision and aims of the Draft primary curriculum framework, DFA/Irish Aid recommends the following:

- DFA/Irish Aid welcomes the inclusion of components of DE/GCE across principles and key competencies of the proposed framework and also recommends the naming of DE/GCE in learning outcomes for relevant subject areas.
- The draft framework envisions that through the key competency ‘Being an active citizen’ learners will, ‘...question, critique, and understand what is happening in the world within a framework of human rights, equality and social justice.’ (p. 8). Therefore, voices of the developing world are likely to feature in lessons in primary school classrooms. As acknowledged by the NCCA in the draft framework, Ireland is a diverse society and in these lessons, children may see images and hear stories of countries that their own families are from. It is important that the Intercultural Guidelines are used when designing materials and CPD for teachers in this regard to ensure that cultures and identities are represented fairly, respectfully and in an empowering way and that negative stereotypes are not unintentionally reinforced. This is important for all schools, whether they have a culturally diverse population or not. DFA/Irish Aid welcomes the opportunity to work with NCCA and DES on this through their Development Education Unit.
- Teachers will need the confidence and competence to teach DE/GCE in their classrooms. DFA/Irish Aid welcomes that DE/GCE is included as one of seven “core elements” in the Teaching Council document *Céim*: Standards for Initial Teacher Education and recommends that, building on this, DE/GCE also be a part of the professional development required for teachers to work with this framework.
- The framework aims to provide for an integrated learning experience. DFA/Irish Aid recommends that DE/GCE be a part of the toolkits for curriculum areas proposed in this framework and also suggest exemplars to be provided to show how DE/GCE can be integrated across a number of subject areas as a cross-cutting theme to support teachers to take an integrated approach to planning and teaching.

## 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.**

DFA/Irish Aid welcomes the increased opportunities for agency and flexibility in schools. This can allow educators an opportunity to design a curriculum that is relevant to their school context and to the interests, backgrounds and needs of their classes. It is a means to address the challenge of an overloaded curriculum and give educators more scope to include DE/GCE in their practice, as they teach with the key competency of Being an active citizen in mind.

The redeveloped curriculum will 'Be for every child'. This is an important aspect of DE/GCE, and can build on the work of the Intercultural Education Guidelines already published for schools by NCCA. Every child should see themselves and their home lives reflected in the curriculum in a respectful and meaningful way and learn about the lives of others too so that they can understand the interconnectedness of the world around them. The draft framework highlights that learning about others enables children to develop empathy. Educators will need support to have the capacity to do this effectively.

## 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.**

DE/GCE features in the Aistear framework, particularly in the Theme of Identity and Belonging. This shows that young children are able to learn about global issues and their identity and the identity of others in an age-appropriate way. The Junior Cycle includes a focus on wellbeing, equality and sustainability and DE/GCE is evident in the Statements of Learning. Even though DE/GCE is not mentioned specifically in the 1999 Primary School Curriculum, there is scope for it to be taught and it is taught in many schools. DFA/Irish Aid would welcome it’s explicit inclusion in this framework to enable children to build on what they have learned in pre-school settings and to prepare them for what they will learn in post-primary school.

## **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.**

Children are interested in learning about the world around them and have an innate sense of justice and fairness. The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework cites ‘real-world problems’ as a starting point for integrated teaching and learning. DFA/Irish Aid believes that children of all ages can engage in age-appropriate learning about global issues, climate action and values education and that all of this is a part of DE/GCE. However, time to cover this as well as all other areas of the curriculum has been a challenge that teachers and school leaders have spoken of and could still continue to be a challenge in this new curriculum. Therefore, tools for meaningful integration of DE/GCE in curriculum areas will be very important. This has already been provided to post-primary schools in the [Doing Development Education](#) series published by the DFA/Irish Aid schools

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programme World Wise Global Schools. DFA recommends a similar suite of resources for primary schools to show that DE/GCE can be integrated into subject areas and supporting teachers to do this. Support for teachers to use global citizenship as part of a cross-cutting theme across subject areas is also recommended to establish the global aspect of active citizenship.

### **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.)

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- 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.**

DFA/Irish Aid believes that all curriculum areas could provide for the integration of DE/GCE, in particular the areas of Language, Wellbeing and Social and Environmental Education. The Framework states that ‘Language learning enables children to understand the world around them and to communicate effectively with others’ (NCCA, 2020, p.13). Communication skills are an important teaching methodology in DE/GCE. Questioning, listening to others, critical thinking, justifying opinions, etc. all play a part in becoming an informed and active global citizen who strives for a just and fair world. These skills need to be taught to learners and DFA/Irish Aid welcomes the inclusion of them in the Primary Language Curriculum and hopes that teachers are given the time and support to develop the competence and confidence to teach them.

In the draft framework, Wellbeing ‘...enables children to develop self-awareness and knowledge, build life skills and develop a strong sense of connectedness to their school and to their community and wider society. To develop these skills and dispositions, it is important for children to develop their own ethical understanding of the world, and in doing so learn to make good decisions. Children are encouraged to value what it means to be an active citizen, with rights and responsibilities in local and wider contexts’ (NCCA, 2020, p.13). DFA/Irish Aid welcomes the strong active citizenship aspect to this new subject area and hopes that the ‘wider society’ and ‘wider contexts’ that are referred to include a global aspect at all stages of the primary school years.

DFA/Irish Aid welcomes the use of the term ‘interconnectedness’ in the Social and Environmental Education outline. The interconnectedness of the world we live in and the problems it can face and solve together has been highlighted in the COVID-19 pandemic. The impacts of our actions on the

climate can be seen most adversely in the developing world. DFA/Irish Aid believes that primary school pupils can and should learn about this in an active citizenship context so that they can learn how to live sustainable lives now and in the future, thus contributing to the realisation of this framework's vision of realising pupils '...potential as individuals and members of communities and society during childhood and into the future' (NCCA, 2020, p.19).

### **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.**

DE/GCE can enable educators to choose pedagogical approaches that make meaningful connections with children's interests and experiences. Children are aware of global issues in the world now. They see and hear about them at home, in the media, from their peers, etc. Issues of inequality and injustice that children are exposed to in this way are of interest to many children but can also cause a sense of anxiety and helplessness in learners. The action-based approach of DE/GCE can help to

alleviate anxiety and helplessness that learners may feel as they see that they can do something to help.

Additionally, Ireland is a diverse society and some children in our schools, or their families, may have been directly impacted by these issues before they lived in Ireland. When these issues are talked about at a global level, their cultures and ethnicities may be represented in images and stories. DFA/Irish Aid welcomes that the draft framework aims to play a key role in supporting schools to respond to diversity and to enable children to ‘...feel respected, valued and engaged in learning through appropriately tailored experiences and through positive interactions within the school community’ (NCCA, 2020, p. 3). The Dóchas Code of Conduct that DFA/Irish Aid funded DE/GCE learning materials must adhere to can ensure that images and messages have respect for the dignity of people concerned.

The flexibility and integrated nature of the draft primary curriculum framework will be important to allow educators the time to take action on local and global issues with their learners. Providing quality support for teachers in terms of CPD and learning materials will also be importance to give teachers the confidence to teach these issues and to take informed action.

**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.

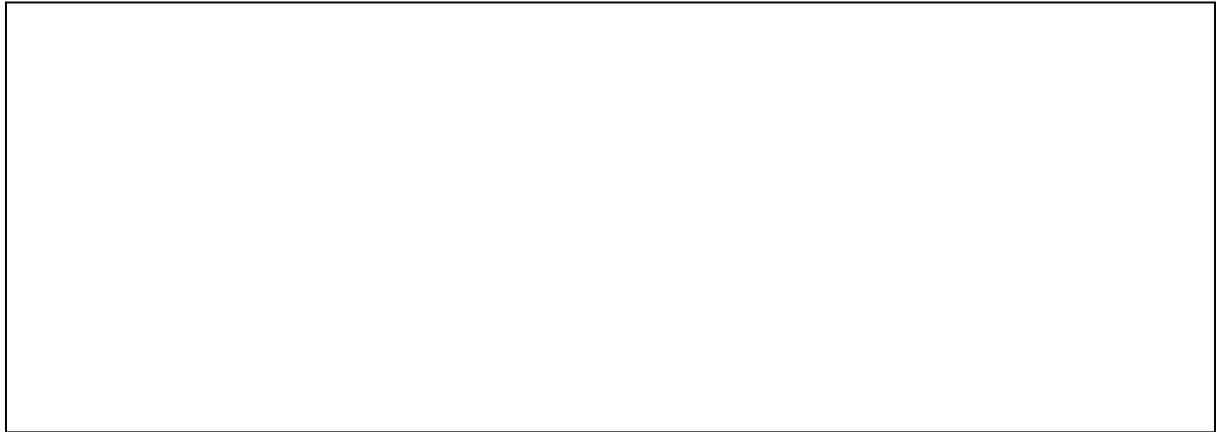
*The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes that the redeveloped curriculum will:*

- 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.**

DFA/Irish Aid recognises that the 1999 curriculum did have some space for DE/GCE to be taught in classrooms and that great work in DE/GCE is already going on in many schools. The increased use of active methodologies following from the 1999 curriculum integrates well with DE/GCE too.

The inclusion of DE/GCE in the framework will be important as teachers may only have time to teach what is specifically referred to in this document. Therefore, DFA/Irish Aid suggests that DE/GCE be included in the components of curriculum specifications in the appropriate curriculum areas and subjects. DFA/Irish Aid sees scope for DE/GCE in all proposed areas and subjects, in particular in Language, Wellbeing and Social and Environmental Education.



### **Data Protection**

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**Thank you for your submission.**

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