

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	
Date	
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Organisation submission 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).

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

Scoil Ard Mhuire is a vertical primary school in the centre of Drogheda under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme and receives support from the School Completion Programme

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*.

Overall, we welcome attempts to update and modernise the curriculum. However we are concerned that in attempting to reduce curricular overload, there has been too much emphasis on flexibility.

This may lead to a lowering of standards.

There is a focus on digital literacy which is welcome but not at the expense of traditional literacy skills.

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.

Choice for children's learning is where there could be great disparity in teaching. We are placing a lot of trust and depending an awful lot on each teacher being able to fully identify where the child needs to go next in their learning. Yes, teachers do this anyway but within quite a structured framework of learning objectives. More broad ranging learning outcomes could create a situation where a child becomes "a jack of all trades and master of none" and teachers' ability to cater to each child effectively will be diminished as the range of "possibilities" of teaching ideas becomes so broad.

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.

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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.

There is most definitely a need to link the different areas of education. A huge issue in that not all early years' settings are equal as they are privately run so some are equipping children really well for the transition to primary school while others are not. Similarly, some second level schools engage greatly when children are transitioning to second level while others don't. Uniformity across the board would help greatly here.

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.

Again, we feel having specific subjects does help to focus the mind of the teacher. The idea of "integration" is always on a teacher's mind anyway, where they attempt to link subjects and make things more theme based. We would have a concern that making everything more broad ranging could end up in a "dumbing down" of some key areas of learning.

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

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- 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.

There is a huge jump here in grouping maths, science and technology together. This would now become an area of the curriculum that many teachers would need significant upskilling in to make it function. While technology education is obviously important in a modern world, we do worry about so much emphasis being placed on digital literacy going forward when children’s basic literacy skills appear to be diminishing year on year (due we feel in no small part to their constant use of screens and mobile devices) We would agree with creating a “Wellbeing” curriculum area as to me it would appear to be the most important thing children need right now in order to navigate their complicated world.

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.

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- 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.

We feel that the 1999 curriculum actually does this very well. And in DEIS schools in particular the role and influence of parents and families in children’s education is felt keenly, while relationships with same are fostered continuously. Teachers do genuinely seek out meaningful connections with their pupils in our experience, daily. I don’t feel a major curriculum change is needed to create this.

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.

Will it really address overload or just make it more unclear to teachers as to what they are actually supposed to teach? A more broadly-based curriculum is great in theory but it runs the risk of being highly unstructured and then adding to teachers’ workloads as they will be then forced to “put some structure” on it in order that it be practical.

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Thank you for your submission.

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