

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

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Yes

No

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

N/A

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.

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Section 1

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

We believe this new framework has the potential to educate the children of Ireland to a very high standard. We like how there is an emphasis on a wide range of curriculum areas, for example, Language and Social and Environmental Education in this framework. We think it is brilliant to see more time allocated to subjects such as Wellbeing, as well as introducing modern foreign languages to pupils, as this would benefit them as they transition into secondary school, where learning a third language is encouraged in many schools. This framework supports teachers in their teaching, by setting out eight principles as well as providing many opportunities for integration amongst subjects. It is positive to see the framework developing a partnership between students, teachers, principals and parents. The framework promotes good relationships amongst the school community, which is ideal for the smooth running of an educational institution. We are looking forward to implementing this framework when we are qualified teachers.

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.

We think these messages provide many opportunities for improvement in terms of teachers' and principals' flexibility, time management and planning. This idea of agency and professionalism enables the teacher to make decisions in regards to their teaching and classroom management style. The teacher has more flexibility when planning lessons and when considering what methodologies they will use in their classes. They will be able to plan lessons to suit students' needs and to include ways of differentiation for some students. Teachers will decide what subjects need more emphasis on in their classroom.

They need to integrate subjects together and communicate with students. This allows the teacher to provide the children with more choice in their learning. This key message provides the school with the opportunity to respond to priorities which are local,

national or global. Overall, this key message encourages everyone in the school community to be more engaged in their teaching and learning.

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.

We think this framework connects the learning experiences gained in primary school really well with the learning gained from preschool, where the children engage with the Aistear programme, and in secondary school, where the students engage with the Junior Cycle framework. From our own experiences, the transition into secondary school was quite tough. It is great to see this programme work towards making this transition easier for students. It is important to remember that education is a learning journey. We believe it is a good idea that the eight principles, such as ‘relationships’ and ‘engagement’, (NCCA 2020, p.6) are included in these programmes, as the children will refer to them throughout their schooling.

When children enter primary, it is important to note that they come with a ‘rich and

varied set of experiences', (NCCA 2020, p.19). This framework values children's prior learning, and aims to expand these learning experiences. By linking these three frameworks together, the children will be more engaged with and better prepared to learn.

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.

This framework discusses the emerging priorities for children's learning in great detail. Our world is constantly evolving, and we need to equip students with the necessary skills that are required for this change. It is great to see that the NCCA is adapting to these changes too.

We believe the seven key competencies have a positive impact on students' learning, as they contribute to the 'holistic development of the child', (NCCA 2020, p.7). However, when focusing on the competency 'Being a Digital Learner', it is important to take DEIS schools into consideration, as they may not have the funding to engage with this part of the curriculum.

It is great to see that there is more emphasis on subjects such as SPHE and Ethics in the classroom. It is vital that teachers create a safe classroom environment that welcomes all students from all backgrounds into our classroom.

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.

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- 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.

We believe the framework presents itself in an organised and approachable way. We think the new layout will help teachers when planning their lessons as the subjects will be divided into 'five broad curriculum areas', (NCCA 2020, p.11). These curriculum areas will overlap with one another, which will in turn create broader learning outcomes and will allow for differentiation.

This framework plans to reduce duplication of information by 'creating stronger links across subjects', (NCCA 2020, p.13). It is promising that this framework considers teachers working in multi-grade classes, as the learning outcomes for each stage will be laid out beside each other 'to show progression and to help differentiate learning experiences for children', (NCCA 2020, p.13). It is important that children are able to make connections with their prior learning. Teachers need to create rich learning experiences that involve integration with other curriculum areas.

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.

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- 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.

We believe this message aims to recognise the diversity amongst students in their learning. It is great to see that the NCCA still considers experience-based and relationship-based learning as vital pedagogies to be used in teaching. This framework enables the teacher to have the freedom and choice to try out ‘a broad range of pedagogical approaches’, (NCCA 2020, p.21) which will then result in differentiated learning outcomes. We think there needs to be more assessment for learning in the classroom as this provides children with ownership of their learning and will result in them becoming more involved and engaged in their work. It is vital that assessment is a ‘collaborative process’, (NCCA 2020, p.23) between students and teachers. It is great to see assessment considered as part of a continuum with different forms of assessment i.e. ‘intuitive assessment’, ‘planned interaction’ and ‘assessment events’, (NCCA 2020 p.23) and not a complete focus on one type of assessment.

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.

We believe this framework builds on the successes of the 1999 curriculum in many ways. Firstly, the 1999 curriculum focused a lot on Literacy and Numeracy. This framework builds on these subjects as well as emphasising other subjects, such as Arts Education and Wellbeing, which are very important topics in today's society. The 1999 curriculum states that 'technological skills are increasingly important for advancement in education, work and leisure' (NCCA 1999, p.29). The use of ICT is further emphasised in this framework,

with the mission of providing children with the opportunity to use technology in the classroom. While the 1999 curriculum worked on supporting children with different learning needs, we hope this framework goes to extra lengths to ensure that every child's needs are met in the classroom. Despite some challenges, the 1999 curriculum has opened up many opportunities to provide a high standard of education for the children of Ireland.

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Thank you for your submission.

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