

Consultation with children in Irish primary schools 2023

Children's experiences of History and Geography in Primary School

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) working with Hub na nÓg and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) asked children about their views and experiences of Geography and History in primary school. The information is used to help make decisions about what children will learn in the redeveloped curriculum for Social and Environmental Education (SEE).

We spoke to children aged between 8-13 years in 3 different primary schools.

Q1. What do you learn about in Geography/History?

Physical Geography (e.g. rivers, mountains, lakes)

The Natural World (e.g. animals, flora and fauna)

Physical Sciences (e.g. solar panels, energy, pollution)

Political Geography (e.g. counties, countries, flags, maps, cultures)

“ We learned about bogs. ”

Different cultures and peoples (e.g. Celtic, Stone Age, Romans, Aztecs)

People's lives (e.g. Rosa Parks, Daniel O'Connell, Tom Crean)

Irish History (e.g. Legends, The Great Famine, The War of Independence)

Broader History (e.g. The Industrial Age, Inventions, World War 2)

“ Things that happened in Ireland in past times ”

This is what they said



Q2. What do you like about Geography/History?

Learning about Ireland

Learning about other countries and cultures

Learning about the wonders of the world

Discussion topics

Working with friends

Reading books

Watching videos

“ I like learning about different countries ”

Learning about the past

Learning about myths, legends, and empires

Learning about famous people

Art History

Looking at pictures and reading different things

Schools in the past

Inventions

“ World War 1 because I find it interesting. ”

Q3. What do you not like about Geography/History?

Textbook exercises

Writing

Learning about old politics

Learning about things you already know

When things are boring

“ Rocks are boring ”



“ The way a lot of people died ”



Q4. Your best Geography/History lessons involved:

Learning about volcanoes
Presenting reports
Using videos

Using books
Researching using Chromebooks
Going on trips

The Stone Age
The Great Famine
Michael Collins
World War 2

Going on trips
Researching with Chromebooks

Q5. Your wishes for Geography/History?

Do more projects
Play games
Do less writing
Watch videos

Look up facts
Go on trips
More visual learning
Learn new languages

“ More interactive stuff ”



“ See what you are learning about in real life. ”

Here is some of what NCCA is doing with the children's feedback:

The children said

'To do more trips and visual learning instead of mostly sticking to the book'

'See what you are learning about in real life'

'Geography games'

'Watch videos or go to the places and search up some facts'

'Go to the National Library'

'More interactive stuff'

'Níos mó tuisceneamh (tionscamh) a dhéanamh'

'Play history games'

'Learning new languages like Viking scripts and Norman symbols and numerals'

'I wish I could learn how my family was here before me'

We did

Fieldwork and field trips in Ireland are suggested in the draft SEE curriculum.

There are lots of opportunities in the draft SEE curriculum for children to learn in different ways to bring History and Geography to life.

We have given teachers examples and ideas of how they can make children's learning in History and Geography more playful.

We have included space for choice and learning about local areas in the draft SEE curriculum.

NCCA were not able to include all of the children's feedback in the planning of the redeveloped SEE curriculum. Some of the views shared involve travelling abroad, but decisions like this are not part of curriculum planning.

- 'chun dul go dtí alán countries'
- 'go to countries to learn the history of that country'
- 'go to another country for a week'

We shared the report on everything the children said with all the people who make decisions about what children learn in primary school.

We are now asking more people, like other teachers and parents, for their thoughts on what we've written. We will think about everyone's thoughts before we finalise the redeveloped SEE curriculum.

