



An Chomhairle Náisiúnta Curaclaim agus Measúnachta
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Press Release

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NCCA publish Consultation Report on the curriculum for Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics

A Consultation Report on the proposals for a primary curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics was published today by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). The consultation received the highest response rate recorded by the NCCA and the report shows significant support for the types of teaching and learning outlined by the proposals. The report along with supporting documentation is available to download at www.ncca.ie/consultation/erbe.

Consultation Report

Many participants in the consultation welcomed the proposals as a positive step towards fostering greater understanding and respect in an increasingly diverse society. The proposals were also seen as contributing to the ethical development of children, supporting them to become good decision-makers with a greater understanding of rights, responsibilities and justice. Other feedback raised a concern that some aspects of ERB and Ethics could be challenging to the ethos of denominational schools. Furthermore, teachers cited curriculum overload as a significant barrier to additional content being introduced into the current primary school curriculum.

The Consultation Report describes a way forward for the integration of the types of teaching and learning relating to ERB and Ethics, into the primary school curriculum. The NCCA have recently published proposals on redeveloping the entire primary school curriculum, at www.ncca.ie/timeandstructure. This work will determine the stages the primary curriculum will be organised into; the form of curriculum that will apply at each stage and how time is used during the school day. This work, taking place from autumn 2016 to spring 2018, will allow NCCA to identify and specify how the types of teaching and learning that received support in the consultation will be incorporated into the curriculum.

In the coming weeks and months, NCCA will begin working with children, teachers and school communities to provide examples of shared practice related to ERB and Ethics that will support primary schools who wish to use them. The material gathered will be made available on an ongoing basis at www.ncca.ie.

For more information, please contact info@ncca.ie or Patrick Sullivan at 057 8682 470.

ENDS

Note for editors:

Background

The Report of the Advisory Group to the Forum on Patronage and Pluralism in the Primary Sector (2012) recommended that *the NCCA, with assistance from the partners and mindful of existing programmes, should develop curriculum and teacher guidelines for ERB and Ethics*. To this end NCCA conducted national and international research, discussion groups with experts, meetings with interest groups and work with partners in education and patrons of primary schools. NCCA published the proposals in November 2015 and engaged in an extensive consultation until March 2016.

The proposals for consultation outlined the following understanding of Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics:

ERB helps children to know about and understand the cultural heritage of the major forms of religion, belief traditions and worldviews which have been embraced by humankind. It does not nurture the belief or practice of any one religion; instead it focuses on fostering an informed awareness of the main theist, non-theist, and secular beliefs including key aspects of their cultural manifestations.

The teaching of ethics includes the formation and the promotion of a personal commitment to the dignity and freedom of all human beings, the importance of human rights and responsibilities, the place of justice within society, and the service of the common good. These are all essential to education for citizenship and the proper functioning of democracy. Learning about ethics is important for all but developing modes of ethical behaviour is of central importance to children's development.

The general aims of the proposed ERB and Ethics curriculum support those of the 1999 curriculum, *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (NCCA, 2009) and the *Intercultural Education in the Primary School Guidelines* (NCCA, 2004) and can be expressed as supporting teachers to enable children to-

- develop self-awareness, confidence, personal beliefs and positive social identities
- have knowledge and understanding of how religious and non-religious worldviews have contributed to the culture in which we live, and continue to have an impact on individuals and relationships between individuals and their communities
- express comfort, empathy and joy with human diversity, use accurate language for human differences, and form deep, caring human connections
- recognise unfairness, injustice and inequality and understand the relationship between rights and responsibilities
- appreciate the impact of prejudice and discriminatory actions on others.

You can view video clips on the consultation for ERB and Ethics at www.ncca.ie/consultation/erbe. Here you will also find the Consultation Paper, background research and further information on the consultation process.