

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

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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).

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is the national representative body for our member ETBs and comprises of the staff of ETBI, the ETBI Chief Executives, Directors of Further Education and Training, Directors of Schools, Directors of Organisation, Support and Development Forums and the respective networks and groups associated with these forums. Our mission is to lead and advance the continued development of education, training and youth work in Ireland and our vision is to harness our strength to influence and promote a strong education and training sector through collaboration and collective effort. ETBI is guided by the core values of excellence, care, equality, community and respect and our strategic goals focus on delivering under the themes of people, partnership and potential.

Education & Training Boards are Ireland's leading statutory providers of Education and Training and are unique in providing lifelong learning for all. Collectively, the sixteen Education and Training Boards have responsibility for Community National Schools and Community Colleges. ETBs are also the largest provider of multidenominational education in Ireland. ETB Community Colleges are the largest provider of education through the medium of Irish. ETBs deliver Further Education and Training to unique FET learners each year and play a central role in the delivery of apprenticeships and traineeships in partnership with employers. ETBs also support, monitor, and deliver youth services.

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*.

ETBI would like to acknowledge the significant work that has been carried out by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in the preparation of the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework. It would also like to commend the NCCA on the ongoing consultation processes with stakeholders at all levels of the Irish education system. ETBI welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework.

ETBI's overall response to the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework is a very positive one. ETBI acknowledges the significant changes that have been proposed to the existing curriculum. These proposed changes are based on both national and international research on curriculum development and feedback from various stakeholders on the opportunities and challenges presented by *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1999). In particular, ETBI welcomes the acknowledgement that although *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1999) has been very successful in many ways, one of the main issues it presented was 'curriculum overload'. The proposed Framework addresses this issue in its move to a far more integrated approach to curriculum areas, rather than 11 discrete subjects at all stages of the child's primary education experience. ETBI commends the gradual introduction of more discrete subject areas in Stages 3 and 4 in line with the developmental stage of the child and in preparation for their educational experiences in post-primary schools.

The overall tone and vision for the Primary School Curriculum is welcomed by ETBI. Its recognition of the cultural and societal changes that have taken place in Ireland since the previous curriculum is of particular significance. ETBI commends the centrality of this reality in the Curriculum Framework.

Part of the NCCA's proposed response to these changes is the introduction of 'values education' along social and personal education in the area of 'wellbeing'. ETBI fully endorses the need for values education as a vehicle through which children can come to learn about and from the wide range of values that inform individual and collective ways of living. However, from ETBI's perspective, it is important that the Patrons' Curriculum for Community National Schools 'Goodness Me, Goodness You!', which was developed by the NCCA is recognised as a 'multi-belief *and* values education' curriculum (NCCA, 2018, p. 4). The range of Patrons' Programmes outlined in the Draft Framework are described as 'religious/ethical/multi-belief education' programmes. The omission of the 'values education' component of the GMGY curriculum is significant. ETBI would encourage the NCCA to recognise GMGY as both a 'multi-belief' and 'values' education curriculum in

future publications in relation to the Primary Curriculum Framework. The place of values education will require significant teasing out in all school contexts but in particular in the CNS context that already has factored in this important aspect of a child's learning experience. ETBI welcomes further discussion on this as the consultation progresses.

ETBI welcomes the revision of "Religious Education" from *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1999) to "religious, ethical, multi-belief and values education patrons' programmes/curricula" within the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. This development recognises the emergence and development of new, multi-denominational/equality-based models of primary education in recent years, in particular the development of Community National Schools and their patrons' curriculum *Goodness Me, Goodness You!* Notably, the inclusion of "religious, ethical, multi-belief and values education patrons' programmes/curricula" as the 6th area in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* maintains implications regarding teacher preparedness and provision at Initial Teacher Education level which warrants significant consideration as part of the curriculum implementation process. With further regard to this area, ETBI commends the recommended reduction in time for patrons' programmes/curricula to 2 hrs per week. This is felt to be more closely aligned with existing practice in schools.

ETBI recognises the overall ambitious vision for this curriculum. To enable the enactment of such a vision, a system-wide culture change is required. ETBI welcomes that consultation events to date, in particular the 'Leading Out' series of events are actively addressing this requirement. It is imperative that following on from these events, an adequate infrastructure is provided that recognises the challenges this culture change will present, particularly at school level. Examples of the culture change required at school level are teachers recognising themselves as 'agentic' professionals and the move from learning objectives to learning outcomes in all curriculum areas. School leaders and teachers will be required to engage in ongoing and robust dialogue in order to make the significant transitions from working with *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1999) to the new Primary Curriculum Framework. As well as the proposed online toolkits that will give practical expression to learning outcomes, scaffolds will need to be provided to enable the professional conversations required at school level. These conversations will require a significant amount of time at school level that will need to be accommodated. Clarity in terms of where this time will come from would be appreciated. On a broader level, professional learning supports to facilitate this transition need to be carefully considered and communicated to schools in the context of curriculum implementation. ETBI would welcome the development of a professional learning pathway/implementation plan for schools which clearly communicates expectations and outlines professional learning opportunities which will be facilitated to support the roll out of the Framework. In addition,

the increased time being spent on areas such as wellbeing, digital competencies, modern foreign languages (mfl) and ERB&E will require a national campaign targeting parents that will highlight the rationale for this. This will reduce the possibilities of tensions between the expectations of parents and the inspectorate in terms of time allocation.

As previously stated, ETBI's overall reaction to the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* is very positive. The challenges outlined above are all surmountable. ETBI will be delighted to engage further with the NCCA to support the efforts at overcoming them.

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.

ETBI welcomes the recognition of the importance of both agency and flexibility evident throughout the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. The explicit recognition of school leaders and teachers as agentic professionals is of particular significance. The *Curriculum Framework* recognises the importance of trusting the professionalism of teachers to translate the curriculum in ways that meet the needs of the particular children and their classroom/school contexts. The culture change required in the system in relation to this is significant. Clarity in terms of the role of summative/standardised assessment in this context is required. In addition, the supportive and evaluative role of the inspectorate in a context of a curriculum where the agency of the teacher and school leaders is recognised will need further clarification.

The distinction between weekly allocations and monthly allocations of time for different curricular areas is welcomed. All options presented (pp. 15-18) recognise the importance of flexibility to accommodate the pedagogical approaches required to meaningfully achieve certain learning outcomes e.g. project work. ETBI views Option 2 as possibly the best way forward as it strikes the balance between providing teachers with clarity in terms of weekly time allocation for L1 and L2, however, it still provides for adequate flexible time in the areas of Science and Technology Education, Social and Environmental Education and Arts Education. The time allocation for 'flexible time' for use to address the particular needs of each classroom is also welcomed.

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.

ETBI welcomes the *Framework's* cognisance of the educational journey of children so far and the one that awaits them at post-primary level. A useful infrastructure has already been put in place support this with the use of Mo Scéal and Education Passports at either side of the child's primary education experience. However, similar to the need for time allocation for the culture change required to enact the new curriculum outlined in Section 1, time is also required for the various stakeholders to meaningfully engage with one another in relation to transitions. This is a significant consideration in the Irish context where a large percentage of primary schools are led by principals with full-time teaching commitments. To ensure congruence between policy and practice in this important aspect of the *Curriculum Framework*, clarity in relation to where this time will come from to ensure successful transitions is very important.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework also recognises the transitions the child goes through during their eight years within the primary school system. The emphasis in the Framework on the importance of professional dialogue between teachers to ensure successful transitions is also welcomed. This emphasis is particularly important in the context of learning outcomes-based curricula which require collaboration within and across stages to ensure progression and avoid repetition at a whole school level. The issue of the time needed to achieve this is not addressed in the Draft Curriculum Framework. Clarity on this is required in the near future to ensure that as the consultation process develops, there are assurances that what is being consulted on can be actualised on the ground.

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 MFLs, 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.

ETBI welcomes the embedded nature of the 7 key competencies underpinning the Draft Curriculum Framework. The competencies themselves are reflective of the many aspects of the child that is nurtured in the classroom/whole-school setting. The competencies also reflect the needs of children growing up in Ireland today in order to prepare them as much as possible for the variety of experiences that lie ahead in the future.

The competencies introduce a number of key concepts and frameworks that require further clarification. For example, under the competence of ‘being an active citizen’, the curriculum aims to enable children to live justly and sustainably with a consideration for the rights of others. It also empowers them to question and critique the realities of the world within human rights, equality and justice frameworks. The same competence speaks to the importance of democratic practices as being central to their learning experience. ETBI commends this view of active citizenship and its centrality to the core state curriculum, and supports an emphasis and encouragement of, a broad interpretation of what ‘being an active citizen’ means.

We recommend the inclusion of an agreed definition for ‘sustainability’, which is aligned to the Department of Education’s National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) 2020 – 2030 ¹, and highlights the embedded and cross curricular nature of Global Citizenship education. While the Céim standards for Initial Teacher Education (2021) ensure that Global Citizenship is a core element of Initial Teacher Education Programmes, these elements should also be included in ongoing professional learning opportunities for current primary educators. Aligned to this, ETBI would reference their *Take 1 Programme – Embedding Education for Sustainable Development in Teaching and Learning*, currently supported by the Department of Education at post-primary level. This Programme demonstrates the capacity of ESD, through the Sustainable Development Goals, to be aligned to the learning outcomes of all curriculum subjects and thereby supporting a ‘whole school’ approach, in formal, non-formal and informal learning spaces.

¹ Due for publication March 2021.

This cross curricular approach would also serve to attend to the central concerns of many of our young students, which relate to environmental issues and climate justice. While we acknowledge that elements of these issues will likely be explored specifically through the proposed curriculum areas of Social and Environmental & Social, Personal and Values Education, we would also advocate for an emphasis on their impact across the curriculum.

Furthermore, to ensure that the vision set out in the curriculum is achieved across the system, a clear glossary of terms is required. This will ensure that there is clarity amongst the various stakeholders on the aims and parameters of what is meant by these terms and concepts. For example, what is meant by 'democratic practices' in a primary school context may mean different things to different stakeholders. A glossary of terms that states 'In the context of the primary curriculum, democratic practices is understood as....' would be beneficial. In addition, the curriculum would benefit from the key theorists behind each of these terms being highlighted so that teachers/educational stakeholders grappling with these terms either through engaging in professional conversations or by carrying out research know where to go to find out more.

The recognition of the importance of MFLs, Technology, Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics, and Arts Education in preparing children for life today is broadly welcomed. However, there are three areas of concern in this regard:

1. The introduction of new areas into the curriculum where the overall aim is to avoid curriculum overload
2. The place of ERB and Ethics education in a multi-denominational school context
3. The competencies/expertise required of school staff (particularly in small school contexts) to deliver MFLs.
4. The implication of these new curriculum areas on ITE provision, particularly values education.

The move from 11 discreet subjects to 6 broad curriculum areas (including the patron's curriculum) and the move from several learning objectives in each curriculum area to a reduced number of learning outcomes will go a long way to address the concern over curriculum overload, however, caution is still required. As previously stated, parents who have experienced Curaclam na Bunscoile (1999) will continue to have the same expectations of the school as before unless there is a targeted communications campaign that outlines the changes and the rationale for them. The introduction of these additional areas, while welcomed, may cause additional stress in schools if parental expectations are not managed carefully. Similarly, in the context of curriculum overload, it is important to consider the rationale for ERB and Ethics education in school contexts that have patrons' programmes with similar learning outcomes.

Clarity in relation to whether it is envisaged that the teaching of MFLs is expected to be done within the existing teaching resources of the school or whether additional funding will be given to schools to source external providers is important.

ETBI looks forward to engaging with the NCCA further with a view to resolving these concerns.

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.
- 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.

As previously stated, ETBI welcomes the move from 11 discreet subjects to 5 broader curriculum areas, plus the Patron's Programme/Curriculum. This will allow for more meaningful integration to occur in line with the learning needs of children at various stages of development. ETBI commends the proposed changes to the physical presentation of the new curriculum. One document that shows the progression of learning outcomes between stages across all curriculum areas is a vast improvement on the tomes of documentation associated with *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1999).

That said, the transition in presentation and structure has significant implications for preparation for teaching and learning in schools. ETBI welcomes the recent publication of *Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning – Guidance for All Primary and Special Schools* (2020). This seminal document will aid schools in their transition from *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1999) to *the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Building on this existing support, ETBI would welcome further guidance pertaining to preparation for teaching and learning to support the implementation of each curriculum area in turn. Of particular significance will be support materials to aid teachers in working with learning outcomes at a class, stage and whole school level. Such support materials are required to enable teachers to meaningfully capitalise on their newly acquired flexibility and agency afforded through the *Framework*.

ETBI also welcomes the suggested reduction in time for Patrons' Programmes/Curricula from 2.5 hours to 2 hours. This is reflective of two realities:

1. That the key principles/messages/values of patrons' curricula are integrated across the school day in all curriculum areas/subjects.
2. The current practices in classrooms where teachers struggle to teach 2.5 hours of the Patrons' Curriculum.

The proposal for 2 hours continues to recognise the importance of the Patrons' Curriculum in achieving the requirements of the Education Act (1998) to "...promote the moral, spiritual, social and personal development of students and provide health education for them, in consultation with their parents, having regard to the characteristic spirit of the school."

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.

ETBI welcomes the emphasis on the importance of assessment to inform teachers' professional judgements. However, ETBI has a concern in relation to the introduction of a revised continuum of assessment i.e. intuitive assessment → planned interactions → assessment events. ETBI is of the view, based on feedback from CNS principals, that the continuum of assessment already in use in Irish primary schools is being used effectively. Whilst there is a need to introduce a range of new concepts to the new curriculum, any unnecessary changes should be avoided. If there is clear evidence from research on a broader level that this change is required, this should be clearly outlined as the work on the new *Curriculum Framework* progresses. School leaders and teachers will benefit from a clear rationale behind a change to the continuum of assessment.

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ETBI welcomes *the Framework's* recognition of the time required to enable teachers to take a collaborative approach to assessment in the context of working with learning outcomes. However, further discussions on where this time will come from will be required.

The focus on inclusive practices in the *Draft Framework* are very much in line with the ethos of Community National Schools and therefore is welcomed. We recognise the focus on a strengths-based approach taken in the *Framework* that aims to counter any potential for 'deficit thinking' that some school leaders or teachers may hold in relation to certain groups. ETBI also views this focus on inclusive practice as an opportunity to re-engage with/revise the *NCCA's Guidelines on Intercultural Education* (NCCA, 2005). Irish society has changed significantly since these guidelines were developed. In addition, our understanding of the best ways to cater for a more diverse society have developed since their publication as a result of an increased focus of research both nationally and internationally in this area. These changes should be reflected in the support materials developed for teachers to enable them to provide an inclusive education to all children across all curriculum areas.

ETBI acknowledges that the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework aims to encourage teachers to make meaningful connections with children's interests and experiences. The importance of engaging children in Outdoor Education is significant here. *Outdoor Education* is best described as an active and experiential approach to teaching and *learning* that is open to all, with presence *outdoors* a central part of that experience. Outdoor Educational activities can provide positive experiences, which promote responsibility, improved self-awareness and knowledge and increased social, and life skills. The 'Learning Outside the Classroom' Manifesto, published by the Department for Education and Skills, UK, claims strong evidence suggesting that 'good quality learning outside the classroom adds much value to classroom learning'. These experiences outside the classroom can

- Make learning more engaging and relevant
- Nurture creativity
- Reduce behaviour problems and improves attendance
- Stimulate, inspire and improve motivation
- Improve young people's attitudes to learning
- Improve academic achievement
- Provide a bridge to higher order learning

Learning outside the classroom provides an environment and activities that foster positive relationships, which are central to a young person's health and well-being. Research gathered by the English Outdoor Council provides substantial evidence to suggest that outdoor adventure programmes can impact positively on young people's attitudes, beliefs and self-perceptions. These can contribute to development in improved independence, confidence, self-esteem, improvements in managing oneself and developing coping strategies. In addition, meta skills are fostered through the development of interpersonal and social skills such as social effectiveness, communication skills, group cohesion and teamwork.

In Ireland, the first explicit mention of education outside the classroom comes in the 1971 Curriculum which states that “Outdoor activities of an adventurous nature such as camping, orienteering, and hill climbing instil in young people a love of nature and promote qualities of leadership, courage and self-reliance” (Department of Education, 1971, p. 293). Later when the New Primary School Curriculum was launched in 1999, a provision for Outdoor and Adventure Activities was included within the six strand Physical Education Curriculum for Primary Schools.

The Department of Education (DES) Strategy 2019 – 2021 has as its vision to “develop a progressive equitable education and training system that has the power to transform lives” (Department of Education and Skills, 2019, p. 3). The potential and power of outdoor educational experiences has been a key tenet of Outdoor Education since it began in Ireland (ETBI OEC Network Sectoral Review, 2019, pg23). In keeping with the vision as described in the Department’s Strategy, those working in outdoor education aim to “create high quality learning experiences that challenge each person to realise their potential” (Department of Education and Skills, 2019, p.3).

Learning outdoors has been part of Irish Education for many years. Indeed, the vital role played by outdoor learning is referred to in the Primary School Curriculum Introduction describes how “a rich experience of different aspects of the curriculum outside the classroom adds enormously to the relevance and effectiveness of children’s learning”. (Primary School Curriculum Introduction 1999, p.15).

However, the 2020 Draft Primary Curriculum includes only one reference to Outdoor Education. ETBI’s submission seeks to reinstate Outdoor Education as an important role within the proposed *Primary Framework*. The strategic framework for Outdoor Education (ETB Outdoor Education and Training Provision. A strategic framework for the sector 2021 – 2023), highlights the important ways in which Outdoor Education can integrate policy and education.

Outdoor Education Framework

The Outdoor Education Framework proposes the exciting and purposeful contribution that ETB Outdoor Education and Training Centres can play in contributing to education by providing more focussed provision to the primary and post-primary sector. Aligning with the Further Education and Training (FET) goals of inclusion, sustainability and building skills, Outdoor Education can enhance and support the school curriculum for young people.

Outdoor Education is an approach to learning which can provide a mechanism for addressing the policy areas of Education for Sustainability and of Wellbeing. Through Outdoor Educational experiences, learners develop a sense of place and belonging to their local, national and global community, with a deep connection to the natural world. The Outdoor Education strategy weaves together global citizenship, sustainable development education and outdoor learning to create coherent, rewarding and transformative learning experiences.

Outdoor education and training provision are particularly suited to playing a leading role in education for sustainability and examples from Scotland underline the success of this approach (Christie & Higgins, 2020)

The ETB Outdoor Education framework can also support and align to provision in the service of the state. Policy in the areas of Health & Wellbeing, Education, Sustainability, Youth and Sport has been identified and linked to research that outlines how carefully planned outdoor education and training experiences can address many of these policy goals. The policy framework Better Outcomes Brighter Futures takes a 'whole-of-Government' effort to improve outcomes for young people. Those working in outdoor education are well positioned to address its core aim of creating learning experiences that nurture each person to realise their full potential. Evidence suggests that outdoor education can "help learners to develop social and emotional competence, in order to build resilience, self-efficacy and empathy" (Richmond, *et al.*, 2018).

"There was clear evidence that participating in outdoor sports has distinct positive effects on general mental health, quality of life experiences, happiness and a sense of life satisfaction" The BOSS Project 2019

The ETBI Outdoor Education and Training Centre Network Sectoral Review (2019) highlights the key goal of the Department's strategy in shaping "a responsive education and training system that meets the needs and raises the aspirations of all learners" (2019, p. 12) provides a real opportunity for outdoor education to play an enhanced and significant role. There is compelling evidence in international research that children and young people develop character and resilience through learning and engaging outside the classroom although the notion of developing 'character' is a contested concept. Evidence suggests that outdoor education works most effectively when these experiences are frequent, continuous and progressive (Hattie, *et al.*, 1997, Richmond, *et al.*, 2018, Rickinson, *et al.*, 2004).

In addition to a clearer educational focus in its provision to the primary and post-primary sector, it is also proposed that Outdoor Education and Training Centres will change to provide a greater focus on provision in the following areas:

Education for Sustainability

The Sustainable Development Goals will be a key focus of The Outdoor Education and Training Centre. The Outdoor Education and Training Centre will provide CPD for teachers and trainers to help them to think about, plan for, and implement, Education for Sustainability in their own practice. Programmes for participants will inspire them to develop the confidence, skills, knowledge, values and attitudes to thrive and develop.

Teacher and Youth Leader Training

Training courses will be provided on an ETB regional basis for teachers and youth leaders who wish to develop outdoor instructional skills.

Wellbeing

The Outdoor Education and Training Centres will provide wellbeing programmes to support programme provision at all levels within FET in the area of wellbeing. The Outdoor Education and Training Centres provide an environment and activities that foster positive relationships that are central to health and well-being.

The strategic framework defines the role of Outdoor Education to provide high-quality, transformative outdoor education and training experiences that are inclusive, accessible, affordable and sustainable. Learning experiences in the outdoors can develop the personal and social skills necessary to be active citizens, effective employees and drivers of change for a better environment and a more sustainable future. These key components emphasise the role and importance of maintaining a strand of Outdoor Education in the proposed Primary Curriculum Framework.

Appendix A below indicates how the elements of Outdoor Education integrate with and support children's learning in a number of the key competencies of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*.

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.

As stated throughout this submission, ETBI commends how the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework builds on the strengths of the 1999 curriculum and aims to address the challenges it presented to teachers and school leaders.

The proposals outlined in the Framework to address the challenges of the 1999 curriculum by:

- Recognising the curriculum overload both in terms of subjects and learning objectives that was present in the 1999 curriculum;
- Conceptualising school leaders and teachers as agentic professionals;
- Increasing focus on wellbeing, languages, digital literacy and education about religions, beliefs and ethics;
- Committing to catering for the needs of a more diverse Irish society.

ETBI would again like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the significant work undertaken by the NCCA to getting the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* to this point, especially in the context of the current public health crisis.

ETBI looks forward to engaging further on the curriculum as it moves into the next stages of development and on addressing the potential issues highlighted throughout this submission

Covid-19

Since the publication of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, Covid-19 has presented a big challenge for schools. Please give your views on the implications of schools' experience of the pandemic for the finalisation of the *Primary Curriculum Framework*.

Schools' experience and response to the COVID-19 pandemic has significant implications for the development and implementation of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Firstly, the switch to remote teaching and learning emphasised some schools' capacity to utilise ICT to facilitate positive teaching and learning experiences for children. However, the challenges experienced by many schools in facilitating this transition also emphasised inconsistencies in terms of competence and confidence in this area, along with infrastructural issues for schools. With "Being a Digital Learner" one of 7 Key Competencies in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, significant consideration will need to be given to the supports offered to schools through professional learning opportunities and supplementary materials/advice to enable teachers to foster this competency across each curricular area in a meaningful, integrated manner along with funding to ensure schools have access to devices for staff and children, including Broadband. Of particular significance in this regard is the imminent publication of the new *Digital Strategy for Schools*. Given the extensive consultation process which has informed its development and the context in which submissions were received, there is a need to ensure that this guidance is considered through the development and implementation of each curriculum area.

The transition to remote teaching and learning during the pandemic also raised significant equity issues for schools. Many children's economic, social and cultural background as well as special educational need had a significant impact on their inclusion and progression in teaching and learning since March 2020. Undoubtedly, the increased gap in children's learning outcomes as a result will have a long-term impact on teaching and learning in schools. In this context, the flexibility and agency afforded by the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* is welcome even more so now than when the *Framework* was first published. Such flexibility and agency will enable schools to identify children's learning priorities to facilitate the next steps in their learning journey. That said, the extent of that flexibility and agency will need to be clarified and supported through professional learning opportunities and support materials for schools to ensure it is capitalised upon.

The pandemic had a significant impact on children's wellbeing. During this period, children lost the opportunity to engage in collaborative and interactive learning experiences. They missed the

opportunity to socialise and develop the skills to build and maintain friendships. Opportunities to engage in vital curriculum areas in the context of SPHE, including RSE, were also limited. Furthermore, many children may have had the experience of losing family members and experienced increased levels of anxiety. Notably, the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on children's wellbeing are not yet fully known. With "Fostering Wellbeing" one of 7 Key Competencies in the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, significant consideration will need to be given to the supports offered to schools through professional learning opportunities and supplementary materials/advice to enable teachers to foster this competency across each curriculum area and respond to the emerging social and emotional needs of children. The priority given to the area of Wellbeing, in terms of curriculum development and roll-out, including professional learning and support material, may also be important for the NCCA and other stakeholders to consider as the Framework is finalised.

The experience of school leaders is one which should be borne in mind during the implementation of the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*. Remote teaching and learning placed significant pressure on principals as both administrative and educational leaders in schools. Undoubtedly, the roll-out of the Curriculum Framework will have a significant impact of their workload. In light of this, and particularly in the context of small schools, ETBI would welcome clarification on the internal and external supports that will be provided to principals to support them as part of this process.

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Appendix A:

	Learning Outcomes	Fostering Wellbeing	Primary Level Key Competencies						
			Self-Awareness/ Learning to learn	Staying Well	Communicating/ using language	Being Creative	Being an Active citizen	Being a digital learner/ being mathematical	
Quality Elements of Outdoor Education	Offering opportunities to outdoor learners to...	ACTIVE RESPONSIBLE CONNECTED RESILIENT RESPECTFUL AWARE							
Enjoyment	Enjoy participating in a range of adventure related physical activities	     	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Confidence	Gain personal confidence and self-esteem through taking on challenge and achieving success	     	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Social Awareness	Develop self-awareness and social skills while developing an appreciation of the contribution and achievements of themselves and others	     	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Environmental Awareness	Experience and become alive in the natural environment and develop an awareness and understanding of the importance of conservation, climate action and sustainable development	     	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Activity Skills	Acquire and develop a range of skills in outdoor activities	     	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Life Skills	Gain and develop increased initiative, self-reliance, responsibility, perseverance and commitment	     	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Team skills	Develop and extend team skills of	     	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

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	communication, problem solving, teamwork and leadership								
Health and wellbeing	Learn to appreciate the benefits of being healthy, having a positive attitude while enjoying being physically active		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Engagement	Display an increased interest and engagement in learning which can continue on other aspects of education and training		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Broaden horizons	Broaden horizons and become open to a wider range of learning and employment opportunities and life chances		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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Thank you for your submission.

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