

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	
E-mail	

Organisation submission details

Name	Sinéad Crowley
Position	Member
Organisation	Irish Doctors for the Environment https://www.ide.ie/
Date	29/01/2021
E-mail	

Please email your submission to PCRRsubmissions@ncca.ie

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).

Irish Doctors for the Environment is a group of doctors in Ireland who aim to create awareness, interest and implement action around environmental health and the impact it has on our patients' health.

We work alongside various NGOs, environmentalists, the government, scientists and other organisations both nationally and internationally to ensure full co-operation and education regarding the global issues of climate change which affect local, national and international health.

We strive to support initiatives from local community level to policy change and implementation at a national and international level.

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*.

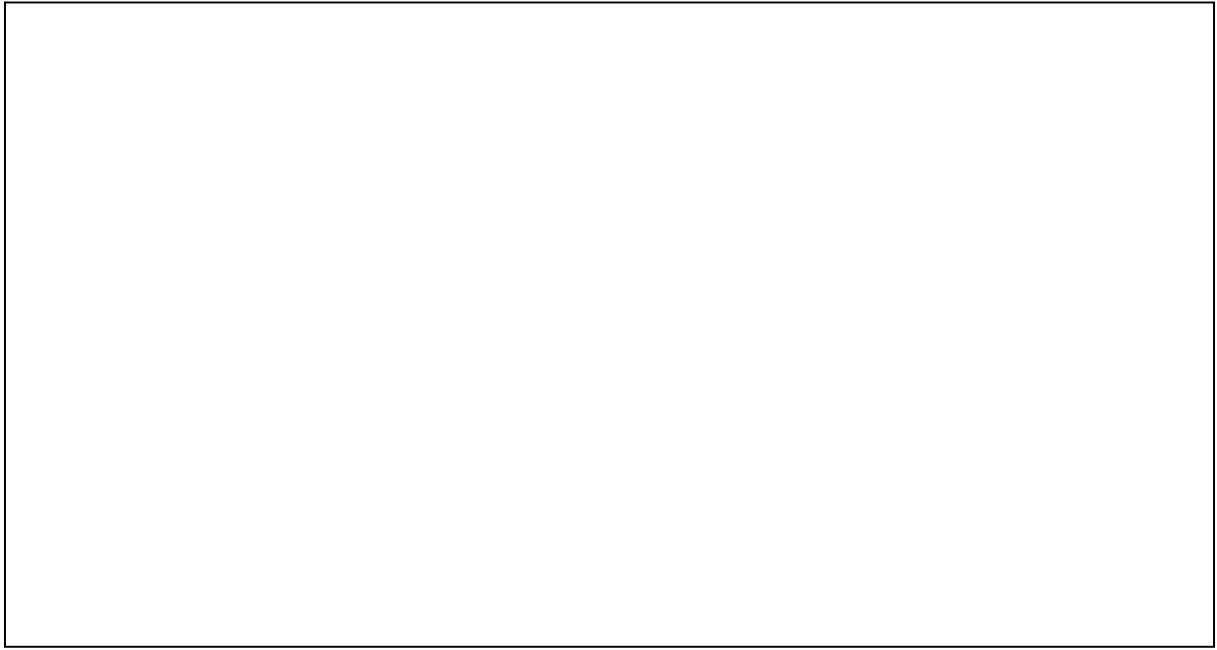
Climate change poses a major threat to human health and it will disproportionately affect younger generations. Primary School students have an important voice in the movement for change. Their concern for the planet is emerging in groups such as Schools Climate Action

<https://www.schoolsclimateaction.ie/>

The new primary curriculum needs to recognise this and to empower students. The curriculum should teach the effects of human activity on the planet and the changes that are needed to ensure a sustainable future. These students are the future leaders and will be dealing with the consequences of the actions of previous generations.

Climate change is and will continue to be a defining issue globally and, to ensure that this curriculum framework is future-proof, it is essential that the environment is a central theme throughout the framework. Sustainability is mentioned a number of times in the draft; however it is 'siloes' in the key competency of "Being an Active Citizen." The link between human health and the environment should be mentioned in the framework.

Planetary Health is defined by Richard Horton and Selina Lo in the Lancet as *the health of human civilisation and the state of the natural systems on which it depends*. Air pollution leads to increases in many conditions such as childhood asthma, heart disease and dementia. Climate change will impact human health through various methods including by decreasing crop yields, forced migration, extreme weather events and the spread of zoonotic diseases. The curriculum should recognise the importance of Planetary Health and encourage children to protect the environment and their own health.



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Section 2

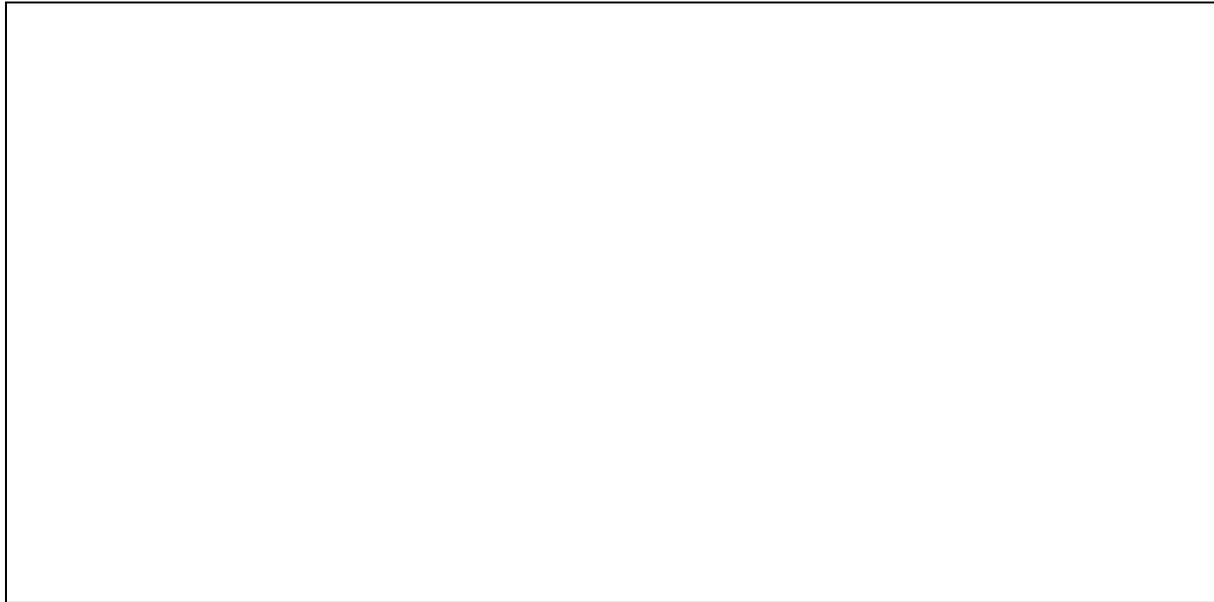
Agency and flexibility in schools

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.

As teachers and schools use this framework to plan for each child's learning, climate change should be recognised as a priority. There are currently 6-9 hours allocated monthly for social and environmental learning, but the environment should be a key theme in other areas of the curriculum such as science and technology and wellbeing.

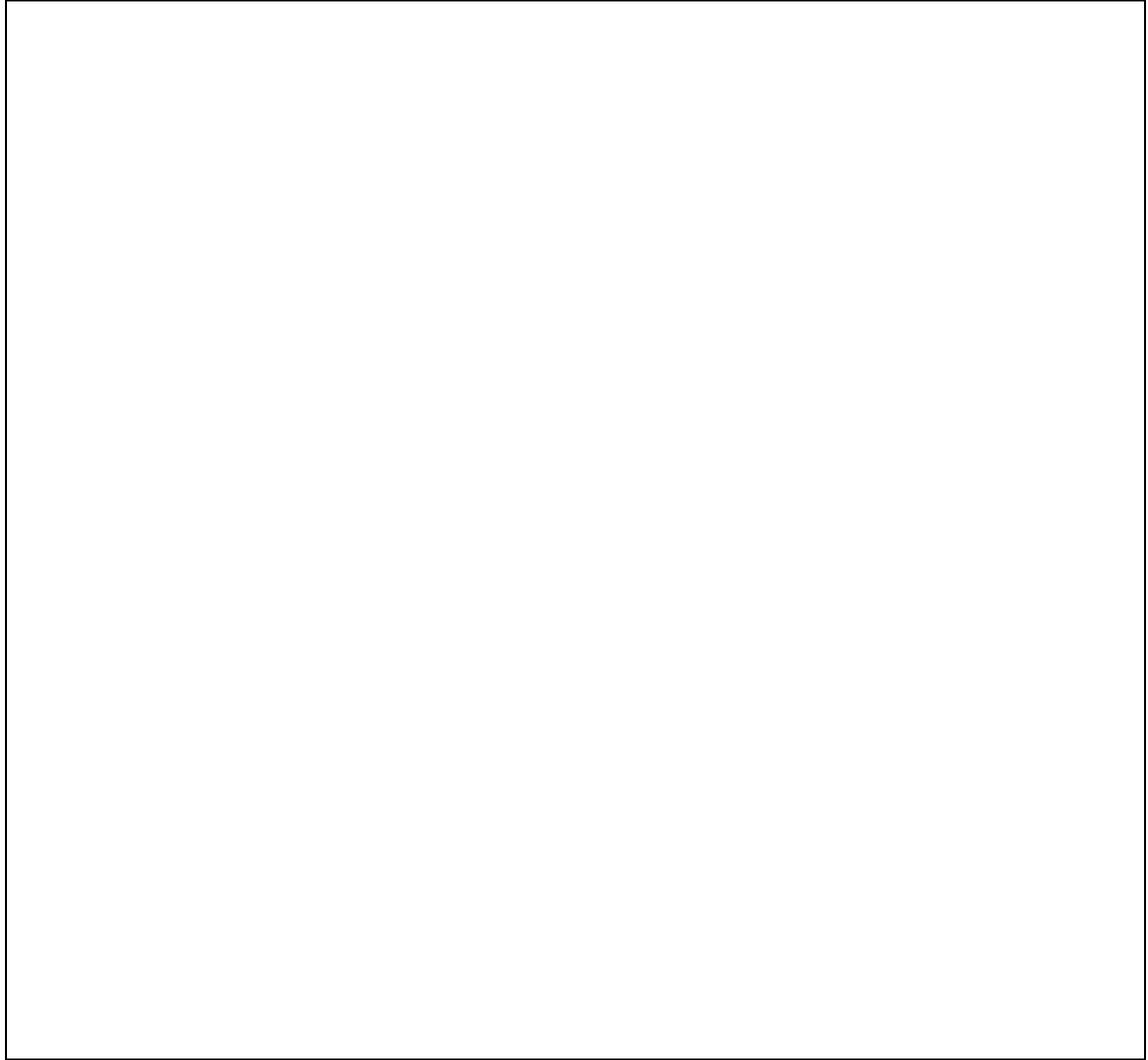


Curriculum connections between preschool, primary and post-primary schools

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.



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.

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- 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.

Climate change is an emergency and will be a defining issue for the lives of these students. Therefore there must be increased emphasis on the science of climate change, on its potential effects on human health and on the solutions.

The seven key competencies include being an active citizen and it is encouraging to read that this includes “Developing capacity to make choices in favour of a sustainable future”. It should also be recognised and highlighted that climate change is a matter of injustice and inequality. Those who have contributed the least are the people who are most disproportionately affected. The environment should be emphasised when discussing rights and responsibilities.

The link between the health of our planet and our own personal health is clear. The key competency of fostering wellbeing mentions “Acting responsibly and showing care towards self and others”. There is no mention about showing care towards our environment. Many activities that are important for human health are also beneficial for the environment and this should be emphasised. For example, active travel not only increases physical activity but it can also decrease air pollution and a sustainable diet is also healthier for us and the environment. This can be emphasised in the Physical Education (PE) curriculum.

Young people, including primary level students, are becoming vocal about their need for immediate action to combat climate change, and a sustainable future. This issue can lead to climate anxiety among young people and should be recognised in the curriculum.



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.)

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- 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.

The issue of climate change should extend and be integrated across the curriculum areas including in Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, Wellbeing, Physical Education and Social and Environmental Education. It should be a central theme in each of these areas of the curriculum when specifications are developed.

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.

Building on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum while recognising and responding to the challenges and changing needs and priorities.

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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.



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Thank you for your submission.

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