



NCCA

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

Written Submissions

To accompany the report on the consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

December 2024

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Introduction

The *Primary Curriculum Framework* (Department of Education, 2023) was published in March 2023. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) then worked with representatives of the education stakeholders, teachers, school leaders and other education specialists to develop draft curriculum specifications for the following curriculum areas:

- Arts Education;
- Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the Primary Language Curriculum;
- Social and Environmental Education (SEE);
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE);
- Wellbeing.

The draft curriculum specifications were published for consultation in March 2024, and the consultation continued until the end of June 2024.

Written submissions

Written submissions were gathered through two instruments – an online Microsoft Form and open email submission to NCCA. The online Microsoft form gathered responses on (1) the alignment of the draft curriculum specifications with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, (2) responses on the individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications and (3) additional comments on potential supports for implementing the curriculum in schools. The open email submission did not require any particular feedback format.

A total of 1102 submissions were received across both formats. This was reduced to 989 submissions when blank submissions were removed. Approximately 16% of organisations / groups and 60% of individuals who made submissions did not give permission to publish their submission. All submissions received were analysed and informed the development of the consultation report. The original written submissions received with consent for publication have been included below in this document to underpin the presentation of the written submission data in the main consultation report

Section 1: Organisations

Participants who identified themselves as an 'organisation' represented educational organisations, colleges of education, religious organisations, charities, organisations with a remit within the specific curriculum areas and subjects under consultation, special interest groups in the curriculum areas and subjects under consultation and suppliers of goods and services in the curriculum areas under consultation. The following submissions from organisations were received via online Microsoft form and open email submissions:

Airfield estate

Airfield Estate Submission on the Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Specification for Primary and Special Schools.

Submission Participant details

1. I am responding on behalf of an organisation or body
2. Organisation or body name: Airfield Estate
3. Are you willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation? Yes
4. Are you willing to have your submission published? Yes

Section 1: Alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework

Response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, referring to the STE specification.

Airfield welcomes the specifications aim to retain the positive aspects of the previous Primary School Curriculum while adapting to more contemporary educational needs. The STE curriculum helps this by incorporating modern educational practices and aims to integrate current best practices in STE education, ensuring that students are equipped with relevant and up-to-date knowledge and skills and through emphasizing inquiry-based learning which builds on traditional strengths in fostering curiosity and critical thinking while responding to the need for more hands-on, experiential learning. This is especially important as the proposed curriculum is placed to link the experiential, play based learning of Aistear and the thematic learning of the Junior Cycle specifications.

However, it is disappointing that there is a lack of thematic learning, and rather a repeated focus on the “traditional” aspects of STE. Food, for example, despite linking across all STE strands is only mentioned 4 times and only in relation to food as a fuel for our bodies and the effects of heating and cooling it. Food and agriculture (which is not mentioned at all) are intrinsically linked to ecosystems and biodiversity as well as our health and wellbeing, so it is frustrating to see that they have been excluded from any LO and not used as a demonstration of cause and effect across an entire food system.

Airfield also welcomes that the draft STE curriculum supports schools in customising their educational approaches and encourages teachers to apply scientific inquiry and design thinking. However, it is disappointing that physical or first-person interactions between scientists, engineers and technologists are not explicitly called out and neither are visits to STE locations where students can experience STE in action. It is recognised that there is capacity in

this curriculum for this to happen, however the option to involve this type of learning is placed onto the school and teacher to design and implement STE programs that reflect their unique contexts and the interests of their students. This flexibility encourages innovation and responsiveness to local needs. However, without explicit guidance and integration into LO's this may not happen due to lack of school or teacher confidence in STE subjects.

The draft STE curriculum could also build further on the foundational experiences provided by Aistear, especially in the areas of learning and developing through interactions and play and this will ensure a smooth transition from early childhood education to primary schooling. Similarly, it needs to align with the Junior Cycle Framework, preparing students for the next phase of their education, and its basis in investigative learning, cross-curricular learning and thematic specifications.

With an objective of the draft STE curriculum being to develop not only cognitive skills but also social, emotional, and practical skills, aligning with the key competencies, there is huge opportunity for the student to be immersed in local issues that have a global impact. However, as the draft curriculum is not thematically laid out, the piece-meal way in which this “real-world” learning could be applied will not be conducive to the student seeing issues and LO's as being connected.

The draft STE curriculum also currently tries to focus on critical thinking, problem-solving, and technical skills essential for the 21st century, with an emphasis placed on cultivating positive dispositions towards learning, including curiosity, perseverance, and ethical considerations in scientific and technological contexts. Airfield welcomes these sentiments, especially in the context of fostering inclusivity for all children. However, we believe that teaching STE through themes and topics rather than traditional subject divisions like Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Technology, and Engineering offers several advantages that will encourage inclusivity.

A thematic approach fosters interdisciplinary learning, making it easier for young students to see the connections between different scientific concepts and real-world applications. By integrating STE into engaging, relatable themes, students are more likely to develop a genuine interest and curiosity in these fields. This method also supports a more holistic understanding, as children explore how various scientific principles interact and apply to everyday life. Thematic teaching also aligns with the cognitive development of primary school students, who benefit from contextual and experiential learning, enhancing their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Placing STE into the context of sustainable food systems would be a perfect example of how this could be achieved. Students understand basic concepts of food already but then get to place it into the contexts of technology and engineering as well as a source of fuel for their body and can link it to ecosystems, food chains and biodiversity. Overall, this approach could create a more inclusive and stimulating learning environment, laying a solid foundation for future scientific inquiry and innovation.

The current draft Primary STE specification addresses the key messages outlined in the Primary Curriculum Framework. It has the potential to build on the strengths of previous

curricula, respond to new educational priorities, and provide a flexible, integrated, and inclusive approach to primary education. Nevertheless, by ignoring the opportunity to embrace the thematic, interactive, and investigative nature of Aistear and Junior Cycle Science specifications there is a missed opportunity of making this curriculum applicable and accessible to all students. The omission of food and agriculture as intrinsic aspects and parts of the STE strands is also regrettable and should be amended.

Section 2: Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

Our response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification.

Airfield Estate recognises that the objective of this STE curriculum is to prepare students with the necessary skills and knowledge to thrive in an increasingly complex world. However, we believe that central to this draft should be a thematic learning approach, which emphasises the integration of concepts across various scientific disciplines, such as sustainable food production, into cohesive, engaging themes. The notable gap in the draft is the absence of food and agricultural topics and references, which we understand to be crucial for providing a well-rounded education, active citizens and students that can understand that local issues have an effect globally.

Thematic learning involves structuring educational content around themes, such as food and farming, that connect different scientific concepts, making learning more relevant and engaging for students. The curriculum already alludes to several themes such as sustainability, environmental awareness, and everyday science but these could be further enhanced by explicitly calling out topics like sustainable food systems. These themes would create a more interconnected understanding of STE, moving away from traditional subject silos.

Airfield is disappointed by the significant omission in the draft curriculum of food and farming themes. Food and farming are integral to understanding many scientific principles, from biology (plant and animal life cycles) to technology and engineering (agricultural innovations) providing a comprehensive and exciting learning experience. The large bias in the technology strand towards digital awareness and learning precludes the exploration and examination of technology use in practical environments such as farming where students could see it in everyday use.

Including the above themes would offer numerous educational benefits, such as fostering an understanding of sustainability and the importance of local food systems and their impact on a global scale. Additionally, practical activities related to food and farming can enhance hands-on learning and student engagement. This gap is particularly notable when compared to other educational systems in Europe and our own Aistear, Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate subjects where Climate Change and Sustainability is now a new subject, and that they all include references and links to sustainable food systems in some capacity.

Introducing themes such as "From Soil to Table," "Sustainable Food Systems," and "Innovations in Farming" would enrich the thematic learning approach. These themes could involve activities like school gardens, farm visits, and projects on local food production and these practical experiences not only make learning more engaging but also help students develop a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of scientific concepts. Internationally, schools and curricula that have integrated these themes report positive outcomes, such as increased student engagement, improved understanding of sustainability, and enhanced critical thinking skills.

By incorporating sustainable food and farming themes, it can be ensured that the curriculum covers a comprehensive range of STE LO's whilst reinforcing the interconnectedness of all STE strands. Aligning these themes with the existing LO's will create a more holistic and engaging learning framework.

The draft STE Education Curriculum could effectively employ a thematic learning approach and involve the critical areas of sustainable food and farming. Integrating these themes would provide students with a more well-rounded and practical education especially in the areas of engineering and technology. By addressing this gap, the curriculum could better prepare students for future scientific inquiry and innovation. The inclusion of food and farming themes would not only enhance student engagement but also promote a deeper understanding of sustainability and local food systems, ensuring that Irish students receive a comprehensive and relevant STE education.

Airfield Estate recommends that:

- 1. A thematic approach to STE is applied in this curriculum.*
- 2. Specific learning outcomes related to sustainable food and farming and incorporating hands-on, experiential learning activities should be included.*
- 3. Technology and Engineering Strands should be less digitally based and should focus more on current and future technologies in a relevant and tangible setting such as sustainable food systems.*
- 4. In person and/or first-person interactions between students and scientists, engineers and technology workers should be compulsory as a LO, as should visits to working STE environments.*

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

Our view on curriculum supports which teachers require in implementing the STE specification.

Airfield Estate would be happy to help in the development of case studies, resources and examples of how a sustainable food system can be used across and within each strand allowing for the student to revisit the same topic multiple times and from multiple LO's which will encourage and deepen their understanding of food production systems. From exploring the importance of soil, growing food, and farming regeneratively and organically, to supplying our farmers market and restaurant, as well as integrating new and emerging farming technologies with traditional methods, Airfield Estate offers the opportunity to explore all aspects of the sustainable food system whilst also placing it within the context of a local and global environment. By creating our own programmes and resources for school children across the education system, we have a unique insight into how effectual the use of real-world, real-time examples of classroom learning can be, and are happy to share our experiences. Each summer we run Dept of Education approved primary teacher training around using Sustainable food systems as a conduit for STEM learning, and we would also welcome the opportunity to share these resources, insights and learnings with you.

Final general comments.

Airfield Estate is Dublin's sustainable food hub with an ambition to make Dublin a leading sustainable food city (under SDG 11). As an educational charity we aim to inspire and enable people to make informed food choices. This is physically achieved on our 38-acre working farm and gardens in the Dundrum suburbs, which is open daily to the general public and schools and we welcome some 230,000 people each year. We focus on utilising the Discovery teaching methodology when working with visiting groups and have invested in hands-on activities to engage all ages in the food production system from soil all the way to consuming the produce within the restaurant and farmers markets.

As a fully self-funded organisation Airfield is committed to working with the consumer (of all ages) to create a life-long understanding of how they can impact positive change in their diets, the climate and the country's economy with no bias's and based fully on the latest scientific data. Our own in-house research is currently focused on linking biodiversity and the consumer and we are the dissemination partner on several agricultural and soil related EU projects. Our business is cognisant of all aspects of sustainability from food production to sustainable and ethical use and investment of funds to reduction of our carbon footprint. We believe that only when the entire food production system is considered can real innovation and creative change happen. Our Youth Board is engaged to keep Airfield focused on the current issues effecting young people in Ireland around food and are living examples of how Airfield can support and develop young people and their attitudes towards understanding and developing sustainable food systems and their impact on human health, climate change and sustainable development in the future.

Airfield Estate believes that this new STE specification could offer students the opportunity to become well-informed and active global citizens and that embedding the model of sustainable

food systems throughout the specification will give them a real-world understanding of how they can affect their food, environment, health and futures as well as appreciating how all STE strands can be viewed and understood together.

As an accredited research institute focused on linking the consumer to behaviour change for sustainability, Airfield Estate is happy to meet and discuss the potential for including sustainable food systems in this new curriculum and discuss how simple changes would enable this important theme to be incorporated.

Arts Council

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications

A note about the Arts Council and why we are making this submission

The Arts Council is the Irish government agency for developing the arts. We work in partnership with artists, arts organisations, public policy makers and others to build a central place for the arts in Irish life. Our vision is for an Ireland where children and young people's right to take part in the arts is respected and realised where they are living, growing, and learning, and where the arts have a meaningful and transformative impact on their lives. Our recently published [policy for children and young people's arts](#) (December 2023) sets out how we can deliver on this vision.

Alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework

The Arts Council welcomes the opportunity to respond to the current draft specifications as part of the new primary curriculum. This submission focuses on the draft specification for arts education. While we have not carried out a comprehensive review of the other draft specifications on which views are currently being sought, we note and welcome that the primary curriculum encourages the integration of different areas of learning in a manner that can support children's experience of learning throughout their primary and special education. We know from our experience with Creative Schools and with a wide range of arts-in-education initiatives at primary level over many decades, that in addition to ensuring that arts education is available to every child in Ireland, the arts are very well placed to enhance learning across a range of other areas.

The inclusion of Arts Education as one of the five curriculum areas in primary education is very much welcomed within the framework, alongside the foregrounding of core competencies of being creative, being well, being an active citizen, being an active learner, being a communicator, and others, all of which are developed through meaningful engagement and learning in the arts. The Arts Education curriculum area provides an excellent opportunity for children to enjoy the arts, and to develop their learning and skills in particular areas of the arts, and in so doing to develop competencies that will support their learning in other areas.

We note that the primary curriculum framework begins with the rights-based rationale for highquality learning for all children. The Arts Council similarly takes a rights-based to children and young people’s arts, and the manner in which this interconnects with all children’s rights, including the right to an education that enables them to reach their full potential.

We believe that this rights-based approach could be more clearly articulated in the rationale within the arts education specification.

The affirmation of the place of the arts in primary education in the curriculum framework is to be commended. The recognition that the arts “engage, inspire and enrich all children, exciting the imagination and encouraging them to reach their creative and expressive potential” is welcome.

With regard to promoting an integrated approach to learning, we believe there is more scope to highlight the potential for cross-curricular connections. For example, we note that the draft specification for wellbeing mentions arts education but not vice versa.

Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The draft Arts Education curriculum specification reasserts the essential role of the arts in a fully rounded education. There are many elements with the draft specification which we welcome warmly including:

An acknowledgement of multiple stages that are part of arts education ie creating, presenting and responding.

The inclusion of the additional support pathways is very welcome and affirms that arts education should be available to all.

A recognition that disciplines within Arts Education may have common creative process and share transferable skills, but each has its own knowledge, concepts, skills and intrinsic value. □ A focus on formative assessment which resonates with arts practice.

However, The Arts Council is recommending that the specification requires significant further development across a number of areas.

Concepts that are shared across the arts.

Please see the Arts Council policy and plan for how we describe quality in children and young people's arts (p.10). The NCCA contributed to the development of this policy and it should be possible to more clearly articulate the concepts that are aligned.

For example, it is important to highlight children's right to participate in the arts and to express themselves in the medium of their choice. Concepts that are essential to quality learning and engagement and that form part of the overarching goals of the primary curriculum should be highlighted. For example, creating a safe and inclusive space is essential for effective learning in the arts, and for rich engagement in the arts. In addition concepts such as originality, enjoyment, ambition, connection, voice and agency could be included here. All of the specific concepts tables that follow for each art form should be in the context of these shared concepts.

Art Forms

The specification while seeking to deliver a broad Arts Education has limited itself to just three areas of arts practice 'Art, Drama and Music' with brief reference to 'dance and media arts'. By centring the specification on the three current arts subjects, there is extremely limited space for any other art forms to be explored.

A re-framing here could more accurately reflect the nature of the arts. For example, the rationale section might state: *Arts Education supports children's learning and development in the arts with a focus on Art, Drama and Music. The curriculum encourages an expansive interpretation of these forms and the exploration of others, such as dance, architecture, film, circus, poetry, creative writing or spoken word, some of which intersect with other areas of the curriculum. Children should engage in three arts areas while in addition, flexibly exploring other art forms as part of their arts education at primary level.*

The Arts Act 2003 defines the Arts as “any creative or interpretative expression (whether traditional or contemporary) in whatever form, and includes, in particular, visual arts, theatre, literature, music, dance, opera, film, circus and architecture, and includes any medium when used for those purposes”. The exclusion of these other arts form must be revisited. Of course, it will not be possible for every artform/discipline to form part of every stage of primary education, but their omission means that the draft specification will not deliver a broad arts education for children in Ireland and a more imaginative solution is required.

There are other impacts of this narrow expression of art form evident in the specification that we would like to draw attention to.

Arts education that is evident in other subjects eg Creative Writing in English or storytelling in Gaeilge is not adequately referenced. (Arts Education through the

Irish Language is not mentioned at all) ○ Cross artform and multidisciplinary arts practice is not referenced adequately.

Dance is mentioned but in a manner that implies a lesser sense of importance than other art forms, and without any focus on the concepts that are specific to dance.

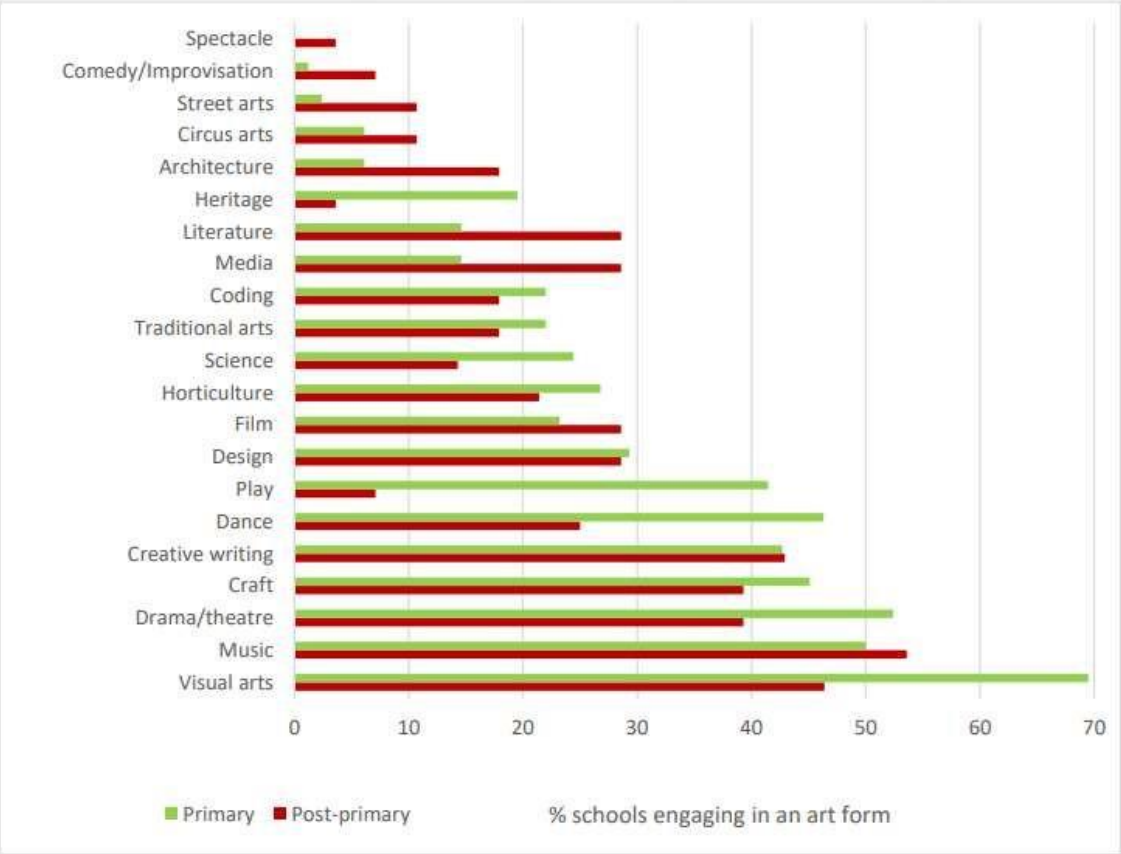
There is mention of media and digital arts but they are not clearly expressed or defined in the document. ○ The curriculum framework mentioned film specifically, but this is absent in the Arts Education specification.

The rationale for the framework makes clear that the key creative qualities – such as imagination, empathy, criticality, exploration, experimentation etc – can be developed and utilised across all arts disciplines and curricular areas. However, the limited exploration of art forms risks diminishing the impact that high quality arts education can have. Arts Education at primary level must introduce students to a more expansive understanding of the arts (which would reflect developments in early childhood education and in post-primary) and to reflect contemporary experience where cross-art form work is prevalent and important.

A wider exploration of the arts may be possible to achieve by introducing an element of art form choice across primary education. For example, not all art forms would need to be explored concurrently in every year, but explored over the course of the child’s school experience. In order to facilitate genuine choice and flexibility, the draft specification will need to be expanded to include details of other art forms. The toolkit further offers a valuable opportunity to inform and support teachers in making these choices. In addition, there is a need to refine the details supporting the art forms currently included to better reflect the practice of the arts.

It is important to note that as the Arts Council we see significant appetite from schools to engage in a wide variety of arts practice. An analysis included in the evaluation of Creative Schools from 2018/2022 showed that schools engaged in a vast range of arts practice when the opportunity was made available. While the art forms that feature in the current curriculum are very evident of course, there is appetite not only to explore other art forms but to explore the creativity inherent in other disciplines.

Figure 10.17 Art forms engaged in as part of Creative Schools, primary and post-primary levels.



Source ; Murphy, R. & Eivers, E. (2023). Final Report on the Evaluation of Creative Schools/Scoileanna Ildánacha. Dublin: Dublin City University.

3. Art Form Disciplines

Within the draft specification, where discipline specific skills are included, they require further development and updating to reflect current practice and thinking specific to those art forms. The current version is limited and would benefit from a fresh approach. The Arts Council would strongly advocate that any further development of art form discipline elements is done in collaboration with professional artists and practitioners. We note that the development group did not include this representation to date, and we would ask that this is re-examined for further development of the specification.

If new art forms are included in an updated draft as set out above, the Arts Council can assist in providing information about organisations and individuals who may be able to support the related development of discipline analysis. For example, Galway Community Circus has been working internationally with colleagues with University of Galway to develop a pedagogy for youth and social

circus which could usefully inform discipline specific elements for circus

[Tampereenyliopisto_sirkus1.pdf](http://tampereenyliopisto_sirkus1.pdf) (galwaycommunitycircus.com).

Potential concepts to include in the area of dance education might for example include:

Exploring Movement Qualities: Understanding movement qualities (e.g., flow, weight, dynamics) and how they influence dance expression.

Dynamic Use of Space: Practicing movement in different spatial levels (high, medium, low) and directions (forward, backward, sideways) to enhance movement range.

Tempo and Timing: Exploring tempo and timing using music to create dance phrases to convey different moods, rhythms and dance styles.

Shape and Gesture: Developing movements that create various shapes and gestures, using concepts of shape (e.g., curved, angular) and gesture (e.g., direct, indirect).

Body Connectivity and Flow: Integrating movements fluidly across different body parts and exploring connectivity through transitions and continuity in dance sequences.

Partnering and Interaction: Learning collaborative skills through partnering exercises, focusing on weight sharing, counterbalance, and mutual responsiveness.

Improvisation: Using improvisation as a tool to explore movement invention and composition principles, including motif development, variation, and structure.

Performance and Reflection: Practicing performance skills and reflecting on personal and group choreographic processes, emphasising creativity, interpretation, and audience engagement.

4. Arts and Education Partnerships

The curriculum framework includes partnerships as a way to “enrich and extend children's learning.” It is positive to see examples of partnerships within the Arts and creative sectors included within the document, but it would benefit from further elaboration and exploration. The arts and cultural sector work extensively with schools currently and the specification should recognise and expand on this current practice in some way.

The eco-system of arts in education provision has changed substantially since the 1999 curriculum. Notable developments include an enhanced role for local authority arts officers and the growth in arts centres and other building-based provision; the roll out of Creative Youth initiatives including of course Creative Schools; the development of the arts in education portal as a resource; the bolstering of artists in education schemes including heritage in schools, writers in schools and architects in schools.

The draft specification rightly affirms the central role of the teachers in establishing and delivering partnerships. This principle is at the heart of arts in education provision also. The toolkit to accompany the specification may offer a place to share examples and resources related to partnership. However, it is also important that the draft specification includes greater details about the potential of partnerships to enhance a broad and engaging arts education.

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Teachers and school leaders will need support as part of their initial education and continuing professional development to develop their confidence and competence to teach each area of the arts effectively, to respond to children's interests, and explore a range of art forms. There are excellent examples where artists and arts organisations have partnered with teachers to develop engaging and relevant training for other teachers and school leaders. However, in the first instance, it will be important to engage artists and arts organisations in finalising and improving the arts education specification to more fully reflect the world of the arts in children's lives.

Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Concluding Remarks

The Arts Council warmly welcomes this opportunity to respond to the draft specification and in particular to draw attention to some key areas which require some further consideration.

As well as offering this feedback the Arts Council would like to offer any further assistance needed to NCCA to further refine the draft specification and is open to exploring what form that could take with the NCCA in the future.

We have gathered some detailed notes from the art form teams within the Arts Council and will be happy to share these with you separately to support the further development of the specification.

Relevant Links

The Arts Council policy and plan for children and young people's arts:

<https://www.artscouncil.ie/Arts-in-Ireland/Young-people--children-and-education/Policy/>

Murphy, R. & Eivers, E. (2023). Final Report on the Evaluation of Creative Schools/Scoileanna Ildánacha. Dublin: Dublin City University. <https://doras.dcu.ie/29450/>



June 2024

AsI Am Submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on their Public Consultations on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications in Arts Education; Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the Primary Language Curriculum; Social and Environmental Education (SEE); Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE); and Wellbeing

AsI Am, Ireland's Autism Charity, welcomes the opportunity to engage with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on their Public Consultations on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications in Arts Education; Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the Primary Language Curriculum; Social and Environmental Education (SEE); Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE); and Wellbeing. This consultation process is timely given the ongoing review of the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs Act, 2004 and the imminent publication of the Autism Innovation Strategy. Through our Community Support department, we are cognisant of the barriers and challenges our community members experience in accessing their education and in turn the curriculum. Our dedicated Autism Information Line engages with many families daily, with over 20% of our queries education focused. Our Training Department often works with schools across Ireland, delivering programmes such as the Autism-Friendly Schools initiative, which seeks to address cultural and accessibility barriers Autistic pupils experience, promote their wellbeing and support school communities to give Autistic pupils the same chance to belong and be accepted at school. Many of the issues/barriers our Autistic children experience include:

- access to supports and accommodations, such as Special Needs Assistants (SNA) or Special Education Teacher (SET) hours;

- access to suitable school placements;
- lack of understanding of Autistic experience and the necessary reasonable accommodations to support Autistic students from teachers/schools;
- the use of seclusion and restraint;
- Inaccessible curriculums;
- Inappropriate use of reduced timetables.

Access to resources such as an SNA/SET hours are critical in determining if an Autistic child can access the curriculum via appropriate supports. Our ongoing engagement with families culminated in our recent [Same Chance Report](#), which received over 1,700 responses from Autistic people and family members. The Report identifies several issues with respect to accessing supports and services for Autistic people, which we believe the NCCA should consider when developing this new Framework¹. One key finding from this report highlighted that 56% of respondents did not believe that our education system was inclusive or accessible for Autistic people.

Considering our obligations under Article 42 of the Constitution, and our international obligations under Articles 28 & 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and General Comment 4 therein, these consultations are very timely and provide a welcome opportunity to ensure that much-needed reforms planned to the primary curriculum address these issues and our communities' concerns around Autistic children's experiences at school.

AsIAM highlighted in our submission to the Department of Education on their Review of the Education of Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act, that we support a “twin-track” approach to transitioning towards a more inclusive education

system. To achieve this, this means that the Department must ensure that every Autistic child has a school place with supports which meet their needs presently, whilst also building towards longer term reforms which support all students, regardless of support needs, to go to their local school with their peers. This includes making necessary changes to the Primary Curriculum to support these objectives and make subjects, environments and class materials more accessible and intuitive to Autistic Students in accordance with Universal Design for Learning.

¹ AsIAM, 'Same Chance Report 2024', [660d65fe848715c1e0bd5cfc_AsIAM2024-SameChanceReport.pdf \(website-files.com\)](#) (accessed 30 May 2024).

Our ambition for these reforms is that the Primary School Framework for these subjects include universal design practices along with more accessible course materials thus working towards proactively and inclusively addressing Autistic students' educational barriers while meeting their support needs. Issues that need addressing include, heightened stress and anxiety around being at school, not being able to effectively learn the more difficult subjects, including the subjects presently under review, and needing extra time or smaller classrooms to process and fully engage with the class materials.

Presently under the Primary Curriculum, there are several issues which have a disproportionate impact on our community's learning experiences. This submission will set out below what issues are impacting Autistic pupils' participation in these subjects presently, and what changes the NCCA can implement to ensure that Autistic people have the same chance to participate in these subjects to create a more accessible curriculum in line with our international obligations that supports every child.

Our observations will speak to all aspects of the proposed NCCA Primary Framework under review:

Our Team's Perspectives on the Curriculum Framework

The AsIAM Policy team conducted extensive research on this issue, and we included internal engagements from professionals who work across our organisation on the Training and Community Support Departments, who have expertise in Education Advocacy, Speech and Language Therapy, Occupational Therapy and Social Care. Based on our professional expertise and experience across AsIAM, we have identified several areas which we believe that this Framework should address, and set out below:

Arts Education

- On the Arts Education curriculum, it was highlighted that when the Junior Cycle was rolled out, Autistic people experienced several issues with both engaging with the curriculum and with how they were examined. For example, Autistic students who had performative art as part of their assessment, such as music, reported feelings of being upset or distressed with having to perform and with being asked follow-up questions without any supports or accommodations for their access needs. This speaks to the need for reasonable accommodations to be clearly set out for teachers to support Autistic students studying these subjects with any performance element, such as extra time to process expectations, and to have the opportunity to

use recorded performance or to create pieces themselves at school with the support of their teacher or SNAs if they feel more comfortable.

- The Arts, Drama and Music curriculum links participation (i.e. having to be in a classroom to listen to recorded pieces, or practicing for recitals, or needing to be present in class to engage with these works) to measure their engagement with these subjects. However, this poses barriers to Autistic students who are in autism classes and special schools from actively participating in these subjects, as means of engagement expected of students may not always be intuitive or accessible to people with additional support needs. This can include Autistic students whose sensory sensitivities or differences in cognitive or fine motor skills may mean that they need different ways to engage with these subjects. This may include needing to be in smaller classes or wishing to use tactile ways of engaging with these subjects, using similar methodologies to Music therapy. The NCCA need to support Autistic pupils in special schools and autism classes to engage with course work and materials, by considering their proficiency levels, identities, interests and learning preferences. To facilitate such engagement Universal Design principles should be incorporated thus making these subjects more accessible to Autistic students, by:
 - Working with Autistic students to identify what best works for them to support their engagement and participation such as using visual and tactile supports, and multimodal ways of learning.
 - Providing students with more control over how the class materials are presented, sequenced and paced to meet a greater diversity of learning needs and processing styles.
 - Providing more ways for students to interact with the class materials. ○ Facilitating accommodations which proactively support Autistic Students, and which empower them to collaborate with their peers and foster greater belonging and acceptance at school.
- One area highlighted by our team is the need for all teachers and support staff, as part of required Continuous Professional Development, to receive training across all areas of Autism and Neurodiversity. This training must focus on fully developing teachers and school staff's understanding of practices that are both child-centred

and neuro affirmative, such practices would support Autistic pupils in line with General Comment 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

- Many Autistic students are disproportionately impacted by Codes of Behaviour which fail to adequately address the use of seclusion and restraint along with suspensions and expulsions, we believe that changes to the curriculum frameworks should be supported by fostering wider school cultural change that ensures teachers support all students in the classroom, and that teaching methodologies do not further marginalise Autistic students. This was also a key recommendation of the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Autism Final Report and a key ask in our submission on the Autism Innovation Strategy.
- Some subjects like drama can be unpredictable and supports for some Autistic students with cooccurring or multiple disabilities, may need to be geared towards making practical elements of these subjects more predictable to support their participation. For example, an Autistic person with a cooccurring intellectual disability may experience barriers with performing an extract from a play or reciting a poem, as this may ask them to imagine the piece from the character or author's perspective and ask the student seeing themselves in the character's situation. We must however stress that teachers and examiners should presume that Autistic people have the capacity to imagine and to participate in performances, but that reasonable accommodations should be put in place to support an Autistic child to be included and to take part, regardless of access needs. This includes supporting Autistic people to consent to participate, providing accessible information, having explicit directions of what is expected of them during their performance, and adjustments which meet their sensory needs.

Primary Language and Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the Primary Language Curriculum

- The present Framework around Modern Foreign Languages focuses heavily around encouraging children to express themselves using written and verbal forms of communication, or which may not necessarily encourage an Autistic person use

their interests to explore these languages. However, this expectation does not consider that Autistic people communicate differently to non-Autistic students or that typical forms of communication may not always be intuitive to Autistic pupils. This speaks to the need for the languages to take a design thinking approach and to be designed around the principles of Universal Design for Learning and blended learning. Making these design choices will both consider people's preferences around interpreting and communicating language, and make the framework more adaptable, intuitive and flexible to meet their interests and access needs. This can include

offering different ways for students to show their learning such as creating digital portfolios, recordings, or engaging in project-based learning. This can also include opportunities for students who prefer to use non-verbal or alternative forms of communication to explore these languages, including visual schedules, gesture-based interfaces, or augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) tools.

- This framework also should recognise that some students need exemptions around learning languages. For example, we know that some Autistic students experience difficulties in learning Irish, which is a protected language under the primary curriculum. The differences and complexities in grammar, spelling and pronunciation rules between Irish and other languages in the Curriculum, since Irish is an older language, can cause a lot of distress for Autistic students particularly since it is a language they must learn at school if in mainstream school. For these reasons, AsIAM supports that exemptions be available for students who need these supports. However, we also support Autistic people who are interested in learning languages to have the opportunity to do so. Having an expectation that Autistic people would automatically receive an exemption on the grounds of their difference or disability would presume that a child lacks capacity to learn another language, which would not necessarily be the case if learning the language was made more intuitive and accessible to their learning style and support needs.
- The curriculum design and teaching practices should take a holistic approach which support a child's intrinsic motivation to learn languages beyond an academic context. Examples of these practices include learning about other cultures,

promoting greater accessibility within curriculum design and language pedagogies and in the design itself. One example in which Autistic people can be supported to learn languages is through the inclusion of topics of special interest, and that should be reflected in the curriculum as ways of making it more accessible.

Social and Environmental Education (SEE)

- Some students can find the assessments for some subjects to be very intense, where there may be a lot of writing or rote learning, or where they may be asked to write about topics from their point-of-view. Subjects should support students to meaningfully engage with a topic, and give realistic and achievable learning goals for students regardless of support needs;
- Students should learn about disability rights, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and there should be opportunities to learn about Neurodiversity and disability across different subjects. This includes having disabled people from history represented across the history curriculum, having disability representation across a range of subjects and by integrating issues affecting the disabled community into what pupils learn at school. Weaving disability rights and the experiences of Disabled people across a range of different subject areas is a crucial step in promoting greater awareness, understanding, and acceptance of disability within the school community and across many aspects of Irish society. Some ways in which the Primary School Curriculum can learn about disability and neurodiversity can include:
 - Dedicating class time for students to learn about Disability Rights, Neurodiversity Awareness and Advocacy.
 - Ensuring students learn about landmark disability rights legislation and international treaties, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

- Providing opportunities for students to explore the history of the disability rights movement and the past and present work of disability advocates in Ireland and around the world.
 - Encouraging students to develop advocacy skills and engage in projects that support the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities.
 - Weave Neurodiversity across the curriculum, highlighting that these disabilities are natural differences in thinking and understanding the world and the strengths of different neurotypes, and tackling misconceptions which impact Neurodivergent people.
 - Feature the stories, perspectives, and contributions of neurodivergent individuals, both historically and in the present day.
 - Ensure disabled individuals are included and accurately represented across the history, literature, arts, and sciences curricula.
 - Incorporate narratives, biographies, and diverse perspectives that highlight the lived experiences of people with a range of disabilities.
 - Explore how disability has intersected with other facets of identity and social movements throughout history.
 - By weaving these topics throughout the curriculum, schools can create an environment that genuinely values diversity, fosters empathy and understanding, and empowers all students to recognise their own unique strengths and contribution by taking a holistic approach which reduces barriers and promotes equitable learning opportunities.
- Peer pressure, an expectation to conform to class or school norms, and teachers not taking a receptive and affirming attitude towards Autistic ways of being and communication styles have been identified as key barriers that Autistic children experience at school and will be covered in more detail later in this submission. For example, pupils can be reprimanded by teachers for showing strong opinions on topics or subjects that they may feel passionately about and get distressed, but without knowing why their opinion may cause others to feel upset. This stresses the

need for teachers to receive training on best practices on understanding autism and taking strengths-based approaches to supporting Autistic people.

- Universal design should be key to designing this subject and should take a strengths-based approach which is guided by building an Autistic person's strengths, developing their confidence, and making sure that tasks and activities are predictable so that a person knows what to expect.

Wellbeing

- In our [Same Chance Report for 2024](#), we also ran a poll which surveyed 1,000 members of the Irish public, where we found that younger people were more likely to hold more positive perceptions of autism, particularly if they know or support an Autistic person, which facilitates a greater understanding of autism as they leave school.²
- As we highlighted earlier about increasing students' understanding and awareness on disability and neurodiversity, one programme the NCCA could develop which would support Autistic people would be to build an approach similar to [Learning About Neurodiversity at School \(LEANS\) Programme](#). This programme developed by researchers at the University of Edinburgh introduces primary-school-aged children to Neurodiversity. The Programme captures how Neurodivergent students' living experiences shape their time at school and encourages all students to take steps to include Autistic and Neurodivergent classmates and to develop more inclusive mindsets and beliefs about autism and Neurodiversity.³
- Studies have shown that Autistic students are at heightened risk of being bullied,⁴ Autistic people who have experienced bullying referenced the wider impact this experience had on their school engagement, which stresses the need for students to learn more about understanding Autism and

² AslAm, 'Same Chance Report 2024', [660d65fe848715c1e0bd5cfc_AslAm2024-SameChanceReport.pdf \(website-files.com\)](#) (accessed 16 May 2024).

³ University of Edinburgh, 'Learning About Neurodiversity at School' [Learning About Neurodiversity at School \(LEANS\) | Salvesen Mindroom Research Centre \(ed.ac.uk\)](#) (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

⁴ National Autistic Society, 'Dealing with bullying', [Dealing with bullying \(autism.org.uk\)](#) (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

Neurodiversity and how to support and include Autistic students at school. For many students, these incidents were not only upsetting and traumatic and negatively affected their self-esteem, but also impacted their ability to participate in school and feel accepted and included as themselves.⁵ This was reflected in our Report with Atlantic Technological University Sligo on *'Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People'*⁶, where we found that Autistic students had a range of different experiences with bullying, ranging from schools who proactively addressed the issue to parents who expressed disappointment with how schools handled incidents. This highlights the need for students to learn more about disability and neurodiversity, taking a holistic approach which supports and encourages all students and staff to include and accept Autistic children and young people.

- We found that the use of social media has had a significant impact on members of our community, as many Autistic children use these platforms to socialise, make friends and foster a sense of belonging. However, whilst many Autistic students see these online spaces as a sanctuary from difficulties they experience at school or in their lives, where they may feel like they do not belong, spending extended periods of time on these platforms may expose Autistic children to cyber-bullying and to harmful content outside of school, which adversely impacts their emotional wellbeing. This is reflected in research published by Cybersafekids, which reported that a quarter of all children have seen or experienced harmful content online in the last year that bothered them, with almost one third of those children having kept it to themselves rather than report it to their parents or someone else.⁷
- Given that many children within our community spend significant portions of their lives online and on digital platforms, although the development of Online Safety

⁵ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., 'Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People', https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

⁶ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., 'Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People', https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

⁷ CyberSafeKids, 'Keeping Kids Safer Online: Trends and Usage Report 2022-3' CSK Data-Trends-Report-2023 https://www.cybersafekids.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CSK_Data-Trends-Report-2023-V2-Web-Version.pdf (accessed 17 Jun 2024).

Code by Coimisiún na Meán is welcome, the Primary Curriculum should also reflect these developments when addressing the issue of cyberbullying and harassment. We support Cybersafekids' recommendation that children receive accessible information at school around online safety and digital literacy, and that families are supported to protect their child from online harms.⁸ This information must be accessible and understandable for our community members. Online platforms should be accountable and responsible for ensuring that children are safe and for limiting exposure to, minimising and removing harmful content and addressing online harassment and bullying online.

- In March preliminary research was undertaken by AsIAm and We-Consent (a project of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre) following requests received by both organisations from Autistic people and their families highlighting the complete lack of accessible consent information for Autistic people.

A key theme emerging from this focus group was the inaccessibility of education on sex and consent in schools, for Autistic children. The research also found enormous isolation, fear, vulnerability and stress amongst parents as they supported their Autistic child to navigate social environments and educate them about relationships, sex and consent. This is not only a matter of their children's wellbeing, but also crucial in supporting their children's safety and protection from sexual harm.

Current international research highlights the heightened vulnerability of autistic people, particularly those with higher support needs, to sexual victimisation (Barnett & Matlick-Tyndale, 2015; Dike et al., 2022;). Autistic young people and children face a three to four times higher risk of sexual victimisation compared to their non-autistic counterparts. Additionally, 40-50% of autistic adults report childhood experiences of sexual abuse (Gibbs et al., 2021) Autistic children receiving education on sex and consent in schools have a right to know about bodily integrity, autonomy and consent in a manner that is accessible and user friendly, which will enable the Autistic person to make an informed

⁸ CyberSafeKids, 'Keeping Kids Safer Online: Trends and Usage Report 2022-3' [CSK Data-Trends-Report-2023](https://www.cybersafekids.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CSK_Data-Trends-Report-2023-V2-Web-Version.pdfV2-Web-Version.pdf)https://www.cybersafekids.ie/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/CSK_Data-Trends-Report-2023-V2-Web-Version.pdfV2-Web-Version.pdf (cybersafekids.ie) (accessed 17 Jun 2024).

decision. For Autistic children with communication differences, information on sex and consent provided by schools must be adapted to be accessible and actionable. Failure to have this information presented in an accessible manner can have significant traumatic, not to mention, legal consequences for an Autistic person.

Physical Education

- As a subject, AsIAm believes that Physical Education should focus on developing a child's life skills along with offering guidance and support around how children can participate in physical activities which align with their individual capacity and support needs, and their interests. This should include giving children individualised support around what they need to do, to perform each activity, how to use equipment needed for each activity, any rules or instructions they need to learn, along with providing a wide range of ways for Autistic student to successfully participate and express themselves. Importantly this should include providing choice and control around how they wish to engage in these activities. This was highlighted in our recent Report referenced above *'Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People'*. One of the consistent themes that captured through these interviews with students was that often, schools lacked awareness around the barriers Autistic students must overcome to fully participate in Physical Education. This reflects extensive research that many Autistic students have significant differences in fine motor coordination, proprioception, interoception, and balance, all which affects their ability to participate in physical activity or play to the same extent as their non-Autistic peers. These barriers can include sensory issues around different aspects of participating in sports, particularly where the sport involves physical contact or a team sport, where having to navigate changing to different uniforms, sharing environments, how their teammates or the opposing team behaves, or around predictability or meeting expectations, can affect how an Autistic student can play or participate. These barriers can be more pronounced conditions include Dyspraxia, which affects co-ordination and balance, making participating in physical activities, such as team

sports, more arduous or anxiety-inducing. Students believed that these barriers can be addressed by increasing teachers understanding of Autism and how each student experiences participating in physical activities, to be cognisant that Autistic students are more likely to present with other neurodivergent conditions and working with students to build their confidence and self-esteem around participating in these activities without any pressure or expectations.

- In our *‘Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People’* Report, we found that some Autistic students believed that the “*focus on sport in school*” was exclusionary, and that schools did not appreciate that some Autistic students may be averse to the competitive aspects of playing sports, or that this isolated students who wanted to use school to explore

other hobbies or interests. One student said that “*a lot of Autistic people have motor skill and fine motor skills issues, and sport doesn’t really cater for that.*”⁹ The emphasis on sport, while being a significant part of some non-Autistic students’ lives, was described as having a significant exclusionary impact on many Autistic students. For example, they saw teams representing their school travelling on training trips and away-matches, often supported by the school, but that these public displays of support come at the expense of some Autistic students’ enjoyment or achievements in other activities. As a result, when their school did not give non-sporting activities or achievements the same kind of recognition or support, this caused Autistic students to internalise their feelings of ‘otherness’, to have lower confidence and self-esteem, and to have doubts about how their school valued them and their interests.¹⁰ To address this, “*participants suggested that schools establish clubs that reflect the diversity of student interests. Some suggestions forwarded included music, drama, research [doing research projects on areas of interest], politics, literature, reading and gaming*”. Further suggestions include “*in the same way that schools fund sports away-days, they should fund*

⁹ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., ‘Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People’, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

¹⁰ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., ‘Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People’, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

away-days for clubs, for example a drama club's trip to the theatre".¹¹ Through recognising the diversity of their students' needs and interests' schools would become more welcoming places for their Autistic and Neurodivergent students, particularly if these are activities that promoted collaboration and building relationships through shared goals, interests and mutual respect, rather than prioritising competition, or individual ability or achievement. Rather than having negative ideas such as those expressed by one Autistic student in our report who felt they were viewed as worthless, having no purpose in the school and nothing to offer. As one participant put it, "for the Autistic person in school" they're seeing us as "Ohh, that's the student that needs extra support ... our achievements are not always seen ... I think awards should be given to Autistic people ... to help them to see that yes, they are wanted and yes, they have a purpose in school, and they are making a difference in the school community".¹² To support this, schools need to promote a wider range of activities which support all students' strengths and interests and allow more students to actively engage in their school community as themselves without a need to change who they are to fit into rigid norms or expectations.

- There should be a focus on developing the physical and occupational health needs of Autistic students, with PE teachers engaging with families, and professionals who support them, for example Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists or Play Therapists. This would provide wrap-around support for the child thus support them to develop meaningful personal goals that would support their physical development through activities they enjoy. Consistency and continuity of supports is crucial to reaching these goals, and teachers who support Autistic students with these access needs should access information to support them, whilst keeping consistency with best practices such as GDPR, data protection and child welfare and protection.

¹¹ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., 'Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People', https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

¹² Byrne, D., Delimata, N., 'Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People', https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

- The PE module's design should also be designed to meet differences in capacity, communication and sensory processing, and should support teachers to continually engage with students around their preferences and what supports they wish to use to participate. For Autistic students who wish to have predictability and control around how they wish to engage in these activities, this may mean using video or photo cues or instructions in advance of a new activity so that Autistic students can learn at their own pace and giving opportunities for students to repeat or learn the different functions of these activities. This can also include information, such as visual guides, on what physical activity the class will focus on, so that children can know what to expect and prepare in advance of the class. On sensory processing, teachers should be encouraged to seek continuous feedback from students regarding their sensory experiences in engaging in these activities. This can include using sensory tools or scales which measure how comfortable an Autistic person feels around participating in these activities, and their comfort levels related to noise, light, smells or tactile sensory stimuli which may affect their ability to feel comfortable to take part. The use of these tools should presume competence, prioritise an Autistic person's comfort levels, agency and capacity, and should provide opportunities for them to withdraw if they feel uncomfortable.
- To support non-speaking Autistic students' participation, teachers and support staff such as Special Needs Assistants should receive neuro-affirmative training around how they can interpret and support Autistic students, thus providing them with the tools to pick up non-verbal cues such as body language, mood and emotions, which can inform how they wish to participate and engage in these activities. Another support which would empower nonspeaking Autistic students to participate both in PE and at school is by introducing Peer Supports which can foster an inclusive environment of mutual learning.

The Primary School Curriculum's current format poses barriers for Autistic students

A key issue with the Primary School curriculum is that parts of its current format, and the expectations that it places on students, poses barriers to Autistic students from thriving and achieving their potential. These barriers look different for different cohorts of our diverse Autistic community – for example, Autistic students in mainstream classrooms experienced issues with engaging with subjects, particularly where practical parts of their subject, such as performing a recital or reading a poem, may involve having to use soft skills which may come into conflict with their sensory or access needs. Our engagement with the community brings issues with accessing individualised support outside the ‘special education’ system – these barriers reflect that the primary school system can still emphasise rote learning more so than experiential learning, and this does not adequately meet students’ diversity of learning styles, academic strengths and needs. This speaks to some of the barriers highlighted earlier in our last section.

We also see that several aspects of the Primary Curriculum have a significant impact on Autistic students’ health and wellbeing, and this was the case for Autistic students in mainstream schools. Through our engagement with the community, we find that many Autistic students feel distress or anxiety around different aspects of their school experience, including academic workload at school, homework, tests or assignments, and with social aspects of school life such as friendships, play and unforeseen or sudden disruptions to their school routine. Many Autistic students past and present tell us of the physical, emotional and psychological toll on not being free to be their Autistic selves at school and having to ‘mask’ or ‘camouflage’ their Autistic traits to fit in with their peers.¹³ We have also heard testimonies from Autistic students who spoke about not having opportunities to emotionally regulate themselves, and that sudden changes to their routine meant that they did not have the consistent and predictable routines and schedules needed to flourish at school.¹⁴ We also know that these mental health barriers are particularly pronounced among Autistic girls, including those who may self-identify as Autistic or who have Autistic traits, but may be misdiagnosed or not have these traits recognised due to the differences in diagnostic criteria and profiles between boys and girls.¹⁴ This speaks to the need for all school staff who work with students, including teachers, support staff, administration, catering, caretakers and bus drivers, to receive training on Autism and rights-based, Neurodiversity-affirmative approaches to supporting and including Autistic students at school.¹⁶ This training should be informed by Autistic

¹³ National Autistic Society, ‘Autistic People and Masking’ [Autistic people and masking \(autism.org.uk\)](https://www.autism.org.uk) ¹⁴ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., ‘Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People’, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

¹⁴ Autistic Girls Network, ‘Autism and Girls’ [Autism and Girls | Autistic Girls Network](https://www.autisticgirls.org.uk) (accessed 18 Jun 2024) ¹⁶ Hartman, D., O’Donnell-Killen, T., Doyle, J. K., Day, A., Kavanagh, M., Azevedo, J. ‘What does it mean to be neurodiversity affirmative?’, British Psychological Society, January 2024, [What does it mean to be neurodiversity affirmative? | BPS](https://www.bps.org.uk/news/press-releases/2024/01/what-does-it-mean-to-be-neurodiversity-affirmative) (accessed 16 May 2024)

people or conducted by Autistic-led organisations and include modules which aim to increasing understanding and acceptance on Autism in girls as part of that training, and other differences which form part of Neurodiversity.

What does the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and General Comment 4 outline the right to education for Autistic children and children with disabilities in Ireland?

Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities states that people with disabilities have the same right to inclusive education as their non-disabled peers, to develop their human potential, dignity, personality, respect for human rights and diversity, fully develop their talents, personality and abilities and fully participate in a free society.¹⁵ For primary school students, this obliges States to:

- ensure that students are not excluded from their local school on disability grounds,
- have equal access to the same inclusive primary education in their local community,
- access reasonable accommodations for their support needs,
- receive effective and person-centred support and the need for not just developing an inclusive education system, but also ensuring that the design of curricula can be accessed by everyone, including Autistic students across the breadth of support needs.

General Comment 4 on Inclusive Education provides guidance on how the Department of Education and the NCCA can make the Primary Curriculum more inclusive for Autistic students. It highlights the need for all teachers and support staff to receive training to support Autistic people to be inclusively educated in their local school, where possible, and to support Autistic students, particularly Autistic students who are in mainstream schools, according to their level of support needs.¹⁶ Such training should: “address a basic understanding of human diversity, growth and development, the human rights model of disability, and inclusive pedagogy including how to identify students’ functional abilities, strengths, and learning styles to ensure their participation in inclusive educational environments.”¹⁷ It also states that teachers should receive additional training

¹⁵ Article 24, United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. <https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24><https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html>[education.html](https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities/article-24-education.html), accessed 04 Jun 2024

¹⁶ United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment 4 on Inclusive Education, p.22 <https://www.refworld.org/docid/57c977e34.html>

¹⁷ United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment 4 on Inclusive Education p. 23.

about the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including large print, accessible multimedia, Easy-to-Read, and plain language, education techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.¹⁸ It also states that teachers need practical guidance and support in providing an education tailored to meet the learning styles and abilities of every student, including Autistic students.¹⁹

What is AsIAM's position on Inclusive Education and where does the draft Framework sit in with wider Education reforms?

AsIAM believes that the draft Primary Curriculum is a step in the right direction towards realising a more inclusive education system which meets every student's needs, including Autistic students. Over the past few years, we have identified that the gradual transition towards an inclusive education system where every child can be included in their local community and be educated alongside their peers. This is a crucial step in building a more accepting society for our community, and towards supporting Autistic people to participate and be included across all strands of Irish life. AsIAM believes that curriculum design is central to realising this goal where every Autistic child can go to their local school and be included in their classroom and community, and we support the NCCA's work around incorporating Universal Design for Learning and blended learning methodologies into the Primary Curriculum so that educational barriers are removed. This reflects wider analysis that we conducted in 2021 around the EPSEN Act where we published a Green Paper setting out its legal and academic context, and where the Act sits in the context of international law with respect to primary education.²⁰ In this Paper, Shivaun Quinlivan of the University of Galway highlighted that putting Article 24 of the UNCRPD into practice means that the Department of Education cannot have a default position Quinlivan also highlights that *"The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CCRC) states that the child's right to education is not only a matter of access (art. 28) but also of content." To achieve this aim, the CCRC refers to the necessity to tailor both the curriculum and teaching methods to the different needs of different children*". With this in mind, she also states that advancing inclusive education in an Irish context means that all primary teachers are trained and supported to include more students with educational support

¹⁸ United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment 4 on Inclusive Education., p. 23.

¹⁹ United Nations Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment 4 on Inclusive Education., p.23.

²⁰ AsIAM, 'AsIAM Submission to the Department of Education on Proposed Reforms on the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004' https://assets-global.website-files.com/6537ebf5bd64fee2cfd5af24/65e7332acda93bda76f23607_AsiAm-submission-on-the-EPSEN-Act-Reforms.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

needs in the classroom, that the curriculum is accessible to each child, and that individual learning needs are supported and accommodated.²¹

AsIAM are encouraged that the new Curriculum Framework seeks to better reflect their strengths and in aligning what they learn to personal development skills, but a key issue is that this Curriculum Framework is at odds with both existing student engagement in Autism classes and special schools and lacks the flexibility to support more students to intuitively engage in these subjects. This was identified by the NCSE in its recent Policy advice on “*An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society*”. In this Report, the NCSE found that Autistic students who are presently in special schools or Autism classes do not have the same level of access to the Primary Curriculum as students in mainstream schools, and having fewer opportunities to learn or pursue their interests this impacts their opportunities when they leave school.²² This speaks to an underlying assumption that needing to access individualised support would mean that an Autistic student lacks capacity to fully participate in primary school, whereas the issue at hand is that the curriculum is not sufficiently adaptable or flexible to support students to fully engage in these subjects. In this Advice, the NCSE recommended that an inclusive assessment framework be developed to meet the diverse needs of students across the range of educational support needs, and for the Primary Curriculum to be underpinned by a Universal Design for Learning approach in design and content to support all students’ learning needs.²³ This needs to address perspectives that many mainstream schools have attitudes to enrolling and educating students with additional educational support needs, believing that only special schools and classes can “*can be equipped to meet the very complex needs of some students*”, fears that their school does not have the capacity to educate students who need more support to meet their learning needs.²⁶

Recommendations

²¹ AsIAM, 'AsIAM Submission to the Department of Education on Proposed Reforms on the Education of Persons with Special Education Needs (EPSEN) Act 2004' https://assets-global.website-files.com/6537ebf5bd64fee2cfd5af24/65e7332acda93bda76f23607_AslAm-submission-on-the-EPSEN-Act-Reforms.pdf https://assets-global.website-files.com/6537ebf5bd64fee2cfd5af24/65e7332acda93bda76f23607_AslAm-submission-on-the-EPSEN-Act https://assets-global.website-files.com/6537ebf5bd64fee2cfd5af24/65e7332acda93bda76f23607_AslAm-submission-on-the-EPSEN-Act-Reforms.pdf (accessed 14 Jun 2024).

²² National Council for Special Education, 'An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society', [An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society – Policy Advice Paper on Special Schools and Classes \(ncse.ie\)](#) (accessed 14 Jun 2024).

²³ National Council for Special Education, 'An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society', [An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society – Policy Advice Paper on Special Schools and Classes \(ncse.ie\)](#) (accessed 14 Jun 2024). ²⁶ National Council for Special Education, 'An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society', [An Inclusive Education for an Inclusive Society – Policy Advice Paper on Special Schools and Classes \(ncse.ie\)](#) (accessed 08 Jun 2024).

In addition to what we highlighted in this submission, AsIAM has several recommendations for the NCCA to ensure that its new Curriculum promotes the rights of Autistic people and promotes neuro-affirmative ways of learning and supports all Autistic students to thrive in their local school. These recommendations reflect that reforms should offer students a wide degree of choice and flexibility, provide for increased opportunities for students to align learning with their interests and be fully accessible and inclusive to all students, in line with Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). It should also align with the Principles of Universal Design for Learning by introducing more flexible means of teaching, assessment and support which meet the diversity of students, and their constituent strengths and support needs.²⁴ It should also support every child to learn about the value that accepting differences and promoting neurodiversity can bring to making our society and our communities more inclusive. These recommendations include the following:

From Autistic Young People (based on our ‘Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People’ Report)

- The Primary Curriculum Framework should pave the way for primary schools to take a holistic, whole-of-school approach towards accepting and including Autistic students throughout the school year. Accordingly school policies and practices, such as diversity or behavioural policies, should demonstrate a proactive, ongoing commitment to supporting and including our community.²⁸
- Schools should support Autistic students to access reasonable accommodations at school. Where possible, Autistic students should also receive supports, such as Visual Guides and in-person supports, to provide them with greater predictability, consistency and continuity of supports, so they know what to expect and have the structure and information they need to fully participate at school, in line with their preferences.²⁵

²⁴ AHEAD, ‘Universal Design for Learning’ <https://www.ahead.ie/udl>, accessed 05 Jun 2024. ²⁸ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., ‘Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People’, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 17 Jun 2024).

²⁵ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., ‘Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People’, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

- Young people also made a series of recommendations around how they would like their classes to be structured so that Autistic students know what to expect: visual guides or class plans or schedules, schools offer more subjects that reflect an Autistic person's interests, that teachers show more understanding if a task or homework is not completed or completed differently to what they expect.²⁶
- Young people also suggested that teaching methodologies should also be more accessible to meet Autistic students' learning needs, including using multiple ways of communicating and delivering course materials.
- Consistent use of visuals and notes or handouts which summarised what students need to know and of expected learning outcomes.²⁷

From AsIAM

- **Support Staff to Engage in Training and Continuous Professional Development:** Ensure that teachers, Special Needs Assistants, and school staff receive access to training based on neuro-affirmative approaches to supporting Autistic people. Training supporting the new Curriculum should focus on childcentred, neuro-affirmative approaches to supporting Autistic pupils and pupils at school, in line with General Comment 4 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This training should be informed by Autistic people or conducted by Autistic-led organisations and include modules which aim to increasing understanding and acceptance on Autism in girls, and other differences which form part of Neurodiversity.
- **Training should promote an Autistic person's capacity and autonomy:** Training and pedagogies should promote methodologies that presumes an Autistic person's competence, prioritise an Autistic person's comfort levels, agency and capacity, and should reflect differences in support needs related to noise, light, smells

²⁶ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., 'Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People', https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

²⁷ Byrne, D., Delimata, N., 'Exploring the School Experiences of Autistic Children and Young People', https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/6537ebfefba7b3c24a18e646/65f2010fd0976138b20006b4_Exploring-the-school-experiences-of-Autistic-Children-and-Young-People.pdf (accessed 18 Jun 2024).

or tactile sensory stimuli which may affect their ability to feel comfortable to fully participate or be themselves at school.

- **Provide Training to teachers and staff on accessing reasonable accommodations that support Autistic students:** Teachers should be informed and receive training on reasonable accommodations that support Autistic students at school, including studying these subjects with any performance or practical component. Accommodations includes providing students extra time to process expectations, and to have the opportunity to use recorded performance or to create pieces themselves at school with the support of their teacher or Special Needs Assistant. Teachers should receive additional training about the use of appropriate augmentative and alternative modes, means and formats of communication, including large print, accessible multimedia, Easyto-Read, and plain language, education techniques and materials to support persons with disabilities.⁵
- **To support non-speaking Autistic students' engagement and participation, teachers and support staff such as Special Needs Assistants should receive neuro-affirmative training around how they can support Autistic students.** Training directed at supporting providing them with the tools to pick up non-verbal cues such as body language, mood and emotions, which can inform how wish to participate and engage in these activities.
- **The NCCA should implement reforms to increase Accessibility of Subjects Across the Primary Curriculum:** Across the Primary Curriculum, implement reforms that support making subjects, environments and class materials more accessible and intuitive to Autistic Students in accordance with Universal Design for Learning and inclusive pedagogies and Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. These reforms should also support building an Autistic person's strengths, developing their confidence, and making sure that tasks and activities are predictable so that they know what to expect.
- **The NCCA should progress its work around implementing reforms to incorporate Universal Design for Learning and blended learning methodologies into the Primary Curriculum.** These methodologies and design practices will help address educational barriers Autistic children experience, and the

curriculum is adaptable and flexible to both meet their access needs, which supports and encourages students to pursue their academic interests. The NCCA can support incorporating Universal Design principles across the Primary Curriculum to make it more accessible to Autistic students, by:

- Working with Autistic students to identify what best works for them to support their engagement and participation such as using visual and tactile supports, and multimodal ways of learning.
 - Providing students with more control over how the class materials are presented, sequenced and paced to meet a greater diversity of learning needs and processing styles.
 - Providing more ways for students to interact with the class materials.
 - Facilitating accommodations which proactively support Autistic Students, and which empower them to collaborate with their peers and foster greater belonging and acceptance at school.
- **Increase Representation of Autistic People in Decision-Making Processes and Ensure Frameworks Promote their Rights:** In line with the UNCRPD, ensure Autistic people are represented in all consultative forums and processes conducted by which affect them, and increase representation accordingly. Involve Autistic people, and representative groups and organisations, opportunities to codesign policies, including frameworks and pedagogies, so that their perspectives are prioritised and clinical supports are directed at vindicating their rights as citizens.
 - **Ensure that Autistic students are actively involved in co-designing Individualised Education Plans related to their support needs.** This will help ensure that accommodations schools provide help to vindicate an Autistic person's right to fully access an inclusive education, that they know what accommodations they can use at school, and they have more predictability and control around accessing and using reasonable accommodations to support their learning.
 - **Accessible information on Online Safety and Digital Literacy:** Students should receive accessible information at school around online safety, consent and digital literacy, and that families are supported to protect their child from online harms. This

information must be accessible and understandable for our community members.

Online platforms should be accountable and responsible for ensuring that children are safe and for limiting exposure to, minimising and removing harmful content and addressing online harassment and bullying online.

- **Autistic people who are interested should have the opportunity to learn languages through an accessible curriculum with adaptable and supportive accommodations that both meet their access needs and empower students to intuitively learn at their own pace and meet their interests.** AsIAM supports that Language Exemptions for Irish and Modern Foreign Languages be available and accessible to students who need these supports. However, such exemptions should not be an automatic given as this presumes that a child lacks the capacity to learn. Autistic students should, with the right supports in place be given the opportunity to learn other languages, this can be successful if the process around learning languages is more intuitive and accessible to a range of different learning styles.
- **Include disability rights and Neurodiversity across relevant subjects the Primary Curriculum:** Integrate disability rights and the experiences of Disabled people across a range of different subject areas, with the goal of promoting greater awareness, understanding, and acceptance of disability and Neurodiversity within the school community and across many aspects of Irish society. Highlight that these disabilities are natural differences in thinking and understanding the world while highlighting the strengths of different neurotypes and tackling misconceptions and negative attitudes about Autistic and Neurodivergent people.
- **Encourage Physical Education teachers to engage with families, and clinical professionals, (i.e. Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists or Play Therapists) to support the development of Autistic students' physical and occupational health needs.** This would provide wrap-around support for the child thus support them to develop meaningful personal goals that would support their physical development through activities they enjoy.
- **Develop and whole-of-education programme to support Autistic people at school:** Develop a programme similar to the Cineáltas initiative to tackling bullying in

schools which would take a whole-of-education approach to supporting Autistic people in primary schools, equivalent to the [Learning About Neurodiversity at School \(LEANS\) Programme](#). The Programme should reflect how Neurodivergent students' living experiences at school and encourages all students to take child-centred, rights-based and neuro-affirmative steps to include Autistic and Neurodivergent classmates and to develop more inclusive mindsets and tackle negative perceptions about autism and Neurodiversity.

- Curriculum Design and teaching methodologies used to support some Autistic students with cooccurring or multiple disabilities to participate in subjects like Art, Music or Drama, should **make practical elements of these subjects more predictable to support their participation, including explicit directions of what is expected** of them during their performance, and adjustments which meet their sensory needs. It should also promote artistic, musical and literary works which are created by Autistic, Neurodivergent and Disabled people.
- **Ensure that Sex Education and Information Promoting Consent is Accessible to Autistic Students:** Autistic children receiving education on sex and consent in schools have a right to know about bodily integrity, autonomy and consent in a manner that is accessible and user friendly, which will enable the Autistic person to make an informed decision. For Autistic children with communication differences, information on sex and consent provided by schools must be adapted to be accessible and actionable

Association for Drama Education in Ireland

Response to the Draft Curriculum Arts Specification: The Association for Drama in Education in Ireland (ADEI)

Introduction

This is the response from the Association of Drama in Education in Ireland (ADEI), a voluntary professional organization founded in 1999. We aim to promote Drama in the classroom as an art form and as a creative, interactive way of teaching across the curriculum. Our diverse experience as teacher educators, early years educators, researchers, practitioners, and teachers uniquely positions us to provide informed feedback and recommendations on the draft primary curriculum framework in Arts education (drama). The arts education curriculum specification document is accessible in nature and can be easily navigated. The potential for outreach opportunities through collaboration with family/community, artists, and organisations can enhance children's broad experiences of the arts.

In terms of the arts education curriculum specification, we welcome the broad aims of Arts Education identified with recognition of 'Creativity, expressiveness, artistic engagement, conceptual understanding, multi-sensory engagement, aesthetic appreciation, and cultural and contextual awareness.' In addition, we welcome the reference to creativity in the context of arts education, where children are recognized as art makers,

'By supporting and promoting artistic and creative development, the curriculum enables children to be creative, to express themselves, to explore their feelings and ideas and the perspectives and worldviews of others (pg. 1)

We also commend the coherent strands across the three art areas and the explicit recognition of performance and movement/dance.

However, we also have several key concerns that we will now outline.

Definition of Drama

Drama is a unique art form that integrates cognitive, emotional, and kinesthetic modes of engagement. It significantly emphasizes embodied communication and language (text and dialogue). Communication in drama relates to communicating feelings, thoughts, and ideas and developing critical thinking, collaborative, and reflective capacities. We have some concerns regarding how drama is defined in the current document. On page 5, Drama is defined in the following way: "In Drama, children learn to explore and communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas through embodied storytelling in dramatic form" and Page 15 "Enact simple dramatic stories... enhances their dramatic storytelling". While story and drama are related, we advocate that a distinction be made between story and drama in this document so as to ensure that teachers do not perceive drama as simply 'acting out a story' and negate the

richness of exploring/ critiquing/ interrogating ideas within stories. We recommend the reintroducing of the word pre- text to replace 'story' in the document. This would also represent the different entry points into drama which is being advocated. In addition, we feel that using the word plot as a concept is problematic as, similar to the earlier point, it suggests that drama is about performing a sequence of events in a story.

Safety as a Principle

As the Arts entail personal expression and vulnerability, it is of the utmost importance that children feel physically, emotionally, and socially safe. Thus, a safe environment free from harm is essential for children to engage in the arts. This is particularly crucial in drama, as highlighted by Donelon (2000 p.26), who argues for a safe space to explore 'fictional and other social worlds.' This underscores the importance of emotional safety so children can explore complex feelings and experiences, enabling them to delve into challenging themes or confront difficult emotions to gain new perspectives and insights. This was addressed in the 1999 curriculum, where a fictional lens was identified as a drama prerequisite so themes and issues could be explored in a 'safe context' (1999, p. 3). Safety enables difficult emotions to be explored in a safe environment.

While safety is referenced in pg. 5 of the arts specification, 'by engaging with a variety of drama forms, strategies, and resources in a safe, playful, and scaffolded environment, children take on roles and characters, develop narratives, and engage with various themes and multiple points of view,' given its importance, we are arguing that safety needs to be foregrounded as an essential principle of arts education.

Strands: Creating, Performing and Presenting, and Responding and Connecting

As an association, we have concerns about the naming and content of the strand 'creating' due to its apparent overlap with the strand 'Performing and Presenting. Therefore, we would welcome a change in the use of the word creating in the strand language to include exploring and creating. We feel that including the term 'exploring and creating' would explicitly recognize the importance of process as a vital part of children's engagement with drama and, indeed, all the arts. Including exploring in the strand creating would also support the broad definition of creativity identified in the draft specification, where exploration is explicitly referenced.,

'Children explore, generate ideas, take creative risks, and experiment with and apply materials, skills, and concepts to create, revise, and refine personal and collaborative artwork. They engage creatively and imaginatively to improvise, create, design and make in Art, Drama, and Music, and can apply their skills in dance and other integrated art forms' (pg 8)

Concepts and Elements

Among all the Arts disciplines, Drama has experienced the most significant alterations to its elements (now concepts), and the reasoning behind these changes is unclear. The current redevelopment explicitly aims to "build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities" (p. 8). Our comments are offered with this objective in mind. We discuss below the usefulness of developing a diagram to represent the relationship between the concepts and then we call for the re-instatement of three elements namely belief, action and significance (Theme)*.

A diagram to represent the concepts

We think that a visual demonstration of how these elements/concepts interact with one another would be most useful. The 1999 curriculum usefully included a diagram which showed the basic elements of role and character (who), action (what), time (when), place (where) surrounding the central element of belief (discussed below). Those "w" words – who, what, when and where are very useful to those who are new to the idea of drama and it might be therefore useful to use these words in a diagram. The 1999 curriculum did not include these 'w' words, meaning another level of deciphering was required. Significance* (discussed below) relates to *why* and this too represents a concerning omission in the new list of concepts. The newer elements, sound and movement could be included in such a diagram as part of/ in addition to action. The word "How" could be added. Were 'how' added, it might mean that this diagram could represent not only the content of the curriculum but also point towards how it might be enacted.

Belief to be re-introduced as a concept

'Belief' is central to all forms of drama-making across the continuum from make-believe play to theatrical performance. It represented *the* central element of the drama 'elements' grid within the 1999 curriculum (NCCA, 1999, p36). Recognizing the importance of belief, children are facilitated to engage meaningfully with the contexts and attitudes of characters. It is our view that teachers need to be specifically guided to give attention to the building of belief in their planning and in their teaching in order to appropriately engage children in the drama process. Such a requirement is evident across a range of literature on the teaching of drama at primary level, and its absence would represent a significant omission from the NCCA specifications in our view.

Significance* to be re-introduced as a concept but renamed

We suggest that 'significance' from the drama elements outlined in the 1999 curriculum be re-introduced as a concept in the new curriculum. . For children and teachers, including the element of 'significance' answered the question, "What is this all about?" or indeed, "Why are we doing this?". This applies to both process drama and to theatre. In any drama or theatre experience, some aspects of the human condition is being explored. Thematic focus is a

suggested term that might be helpful and is immediately comprehensible. (The language used in the New Zealand curriculum, where Drama is well-established, is “focus”)

Action to be re-introduced as a concept

We note the introduction of two new concepts, namely movement and sound. These are welcome additions and allow for the development of the embodied focus that is referenced in the new curriculum. Action (the what of the drama) has been removed and it seems peculiar. In the 1999 curriculum action is described as “not just a physical movement but a fundamental aspect of creating meaning and understanding in drama education”. This understanding of action, when considered alongside significance/ focus below, highlights the importance of the art form of drama for meaning-making and supports the rationale offered on p.4 of the new draft specification.

Stages and Progression

The visibility of transitions and continuity in the child’s learning journey are to be commended. Arts Education is an integrated curriculum area for Stages 1 and 2, emphasizing subject-based learning in Drama, Visual Arts, and Music in Stages 3 and 4. However, It is imperative that further consideration be given to the content of the transition from Stage 2 to 3, with due consideration to the need to revisit the key learnings about drama concepts gleaned through pretend play. Without a transitional phase leading from Stage 2 to 3, there is a danger that the significant aims and content of Stage 3 will not be achievable. This may result in the unintended consequence of impacting the progress that Stage 4 outlines, thus rendering the final stages of the curriculum effectively unrealizable. For example, the introduction of tension as a key component of any drama may require more specific input further to an assumption that children are conversant in its development entering Stage 3. This increases the need for assessment of prior learning, both within stages and at their initiation, where children move to a new class teacher. Further examples of how such assessment information might be recorded in the guise of the ‘planned interactions and ‘assessment events’ (p32) would be welcome in the arts education curriculum specification.

Integration and the Arts

In the context of arts Integration identified in stages one and two, we are concerned about how the integrity of the subject will be maintained in these stages. Will the teacher be guided around how to plan for integration in a meaningful way that recognizes the intrinsic nature of each art form? Furthermore, whilst the inter-arts integration is foregrounded in the document, we are concerned that the role of arts areas to meaningfully integrate with other subjects in the wider curriculum is not recognized. Drama draws content from various curricular areas, such as literacy, history, Global Citizenship Education, and SPHE. Recognizing how drama can

effectively integrate with other curriculum areas provides meaningful learning experiences that foster creativity, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary connections.

Pretend Play

Regarding stage one, we are concerned that there is an insufficient emphasis on play as a foundational influence on the teaching of drama in the primary school. The term ‘pretend play’ introduced through the Aistear Curriculum Framework in 2009, encompassed socio-dramatic play as part of this grouping. However, there is a lack of clarity in this draft curriculum regarding the role of Aistear in informing the conceptualisation of pretend play and its component parts, especially self-directed or child-led free play. With regard to child-led play, the PSC outlined clearly the role of teacher as facilitator and guide, with the child responsible for leading the exploration:

‘These skills are as natural to the younger child as playing and need only careful support and nurturing to extend them into continuing to serve children’s education. It requires primarily that the teacher adopts the role of facilitator and acts like a good guide in the forest, pointing out the possibilities of certain directions and delights, but leaving much of the responsibility for the exploration, and its enjoyment, to the child’ (PSC, 1999:6).

Opportunities for children to make sense of their worlds through creative engagement with play, and ‘make the outer inner and inner outer’, as Froebel advocated (1826), enables choice and control of play matter to deeply explore properties from mathematical to artistic origin. Increased opportunities for ‘free play’, as that which can offer greater support for children’s agency, can be demonstrated through choice and control of play through their determination of pretend play themes and resources (Stokes, 2016). Thus, there is a need for further emphasis on free play in the PCF and a clarification regarding the transition of the child with play skills as part of Stages 1 and 2 of the arts education curriculum specification. In particular, there is a need to map the learning emerging from play more specifically to ‘the variety of dramatic forms that use movement, sound, space, objects and tension’ (p13), with due regard for the role of the teacher in this application.

The impulse for make-believe play was a key feature of the 1999 curriculum. Furthermore, it was held as an objective of ‘Exploring and making Drama’ that the child be enabled to develop the instinct for make-believe play into drama. Critical to this was the recognition that socio-dramatic play and drama have a shared process:

“[Socio-dramatic play]is fuelled by inquisitiveness and a desire to think about possibilities and concepts through the medium of action. The process by which this is done is the same process as that by which drama is made for all levels and ages” PSC, 1999:5).

The strengths of language learning potential shared by pretend play and drama need further emphasis in the arts education curriculum, with a recommendation that the words ‘text’ and ‘dialogue’ be included under the concept of sound. Meta-linguistic awareness associated with the mastery of written language can be developed through engagement in ‘role speech’, through the use of vocabulary, sentence structure, and intonation to suit a specific role (Bordrova & Leong, 2015). Language is practised in meaningful ways in pretend play and drama, enabling its construction and consolidation through role-playing. Metaxis, or cognisance of the simultaneous existence of parallel real and imaginary worlds, renders language possibilities great richness in both pretend play and drama (Toye & Prendiville, 2007). Pretend play and drama offer pupils narrative development opportunities and the improvisation of play scripts, with strong connections to emergent literacy (Tovey, 2013). The role of language across drama in the arts education curriculum specification thus needs to be strengthened.

Recognition of disciplinary knowledge in Stages One and Two

We welcome curriculum progression as represented in the stages, the aim being to incrementally build upon knowledge and skills in drama. However, we have concerns about the content of some of the stages. Stages one and two do not recognize role and character, yet character is introduced in stage three. There should be some reference to role and character in stages one and two, as role/character is the foundation of any drama encounter. In addition, as tension is a foundational element in drama, this element should also be recognized in stages one and two. Drama relies on tension to enhance engagement, emotional impact, character development, and thematic depth.

Recognition of the Role of the Teacher

We welcome the reference to the role of the teacher as active in constructing knowledge with the children, as indicated on pg.—20- 25, ‘The central, reciprocal and responsive relationship between child and teacher is seen as foundational to realizing the vision of the curriculum’ (pg. 20). However, in stage one, the role of the teacher seems to be confined to just supporting the children in the making of drama in a minimal way, ‘the teacher supports the creation of ‘simple stories and characters through a variety of dramatic forms that use movement, sound, space, objects, and tension’ (p. 13). We recommend that the teacher be explicitly referenced as active in knowledge construction in all stages. For example, through the teacher role, children engage in dialogue with the teacher as a character in a role where the children ask questions, solve problems, and make decisions within the drama. This is significant as these decisions influence the drama's direction and drive the action.

In resonance with the importance of teacher agency promoted by the PCF, this aspect merits increased visibility. For example, the role of the teacher as co-creator in drama merits

consideration in honoring the creative and imaginative contribution the teacher can make as a participant in being a drama-maker. This is founded on the premise of drama as a means of democratic engagement in the classroom based on the non-hierarchical relationship that can be cultivated between teacher and students as part of process drama (O'Toole, 1992; Boal, 1995; Neelands & Goode, 1998). Therefore, the inclusion of some acknowledgment of the school and teacher's powerful role in children's experience of arts would be a welcome inclusion on p.1 of the curriculum.

Dance

As stated previously, the recognition of dance in the draft curriculum framework is broadly welcomed by the ADEI. However, the absence of dance content and concepts in the arts draft curriculum is concerning, as it demonstrates a lack of guidance for teachers on how to incorporate dance in an integrated manner. It is suggested that concepts and content for dance within the arts be incorporated into the curriculum document.

Toolkit

Concerning creating a Toolkit to support the implementation of the arts education curriculum, ADEI would welcome the opportunity to support its development. The ADEI comprises professionals working in primary, secondary, and tertiary education including classroom teachers, freelance practitioners and lecturers in drama education. All have a wide range of expertise and experience of facilitating drama and the arts in the primary school curriculum and would be well positioned to support the creation of this resource.

Conclusion

Many leading figures in Irish society have articulated the fundamental importance of the arts in education. President Michael D Higgins, in his response to 40 years since the Benson report (2021) said: The arts in all their forms are a social good, a medium for the articulation and vindication of rights, a channel for everyone to participate fully in society, and a critical instrument for citizen participation. When asked about her reasons for entering the theatre world, the Ethiopian-Irish actor Ruth Negga said, "I went into acting to hide" (Irish Times, 2017). This points to how, through drama and theatre, participants paradoxically learn more about themselves through becoming others. By so doing, drama offers a unique space for reality and imagination to intersect. It is imperative, therefore, that children experience the full range of the continuum from play to drama and theatre to enable meaning-making to occur.

Therefore, the publication of a curriculum for arts in education is of paramount importance. Our *raison d'être* as an organisation is to support teachers in providing quality drama experiences to children in schools, cognisant of the harsh reality that many children on the

periphery may only access the arts through school. Therefore, the curriculum needs to advocate strongly for teaching all arts areas as a matter of social justice.

The opportunity to review and consult on this curriculum specification is welcomed. It is timely to review the 1999 curriculum, and the PCF publication (NCCA, 2023) follows a worthy process of extensive research and collaboration. By integrating the strengths of past approaches with emerging best practices, a curriculum that effectively supports teachers in developing children's physical, emotional, aesthetic, intellectual, moral, and social development (O'Neill, 1995) requires careful consideration. Given this significant moment in Irish education, we hope our recommendations will be considered.

Atheist Ireland

Atheist Ireland

Submission to NCCA Consultation on the
Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications ²⁸

June 2024



Introduction

This submission focuses on two areas of the draft specifications:

Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History) ²⁹

Wellbeing (Physical Education and Social, Personal and Health Education) ³⁰

Both of these areas include items relevant to education about religion, beliefs, and ethics. It is those items that we are focusing on.

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²⁸ <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/primary-curriculum-review-and-redevelopment/consultation-2024/>

²⁹ https://ncca.ie/media/4bmj12tk/draft_see_specification_0324.pdf

³⁰ https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf

1. Recommendations

In all our years dealing with the NCCA we have consistently raised the fact that non-religious parents and their children have exactly the same rights as religious parents, and the issue of human rights principles. Our concerns have fallen on deaf ears as the NCCA has consistently failed to recognise that they have a duty to protect our constitutional and human rights.

Our current recommendations reflect this.

The NCCA should recognise and vindicate the constitutional rights of parents and their children as outlined in this submission, in particular the right of parents to determine what is suitable religious teaching for their children in accordance with their own conscience and not the ideological position of the NCCA or Department of Education. The NCCA should respect the right of children to not attend any teaching about religion under Article 44.2.4.

The NCCA endorses the incorporation of human rights principles that it refers to in several places. There are established human rights principles in relation to the teaching about religion and beliefs in schools. These include conveying knowledge in an objective, critical, and pluralistic manner, and not in accordance with the religious ethos of the school or the ideological position of the NCCA or Department of Education.

Instead of using the single word 'religion', the NCCA should consistently use the collective phrase 'religions or beliefs'. This is used to refer collectively to both religions and coherent nonreligious philosophical convictions that are worthy of respect in a democratic society.

Any course should be taught to respect the right of other people to hold different beliefs, without being taught to respect the content of specific beliefs, and without celebrating the content of those beliefs.

All of the above should be reflected in the glossary, particularly in the definition of the word belief. In the context of the curriculum, the definition should refer both to the philosophical definition of something you accept as true, and also the human rights law definition of a coherent philosophical conviction that equates to a worldview worthy of respect in a democratic society.

2. Constitutional rights of parents and their children

The state cannot decide for parents what is or is not suitable religious and moral education for their children. The Department of Education or the NCCA simply has not got the legal power to decide on what is or is not against the conscience of parents. The courts have made this perfectly clear.

One of the key constitutional and legal principles in Article 44.2.4 and Section 30 of the Education Act 1998 is that the right to not attend religious instruction is based on the conscience of parents.

The right is written into the text and structure of the Constitution and reflected in Section 30 of the Education Act 1998.

We know this because:

When Section 30 was being debated in the Dáil in 1999, the then Minister for Education, Micheál Martin said that the purpose of Section 30-2(e) of the Education Act 1998 is to reflect Article 44.2.4 of the Constitution. He stated that this is supported by Article 42 and also other statutory provisions such as S.7 Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act 1878.

Justice Barrington in the Supreme Court in the Campaign case in 1998 said that Article 42 of the Constitution must be read in the context of Article 44.2.4. Under Article 42 parents have inalienable rights in relation to the religious education of their children.

Justice O'Donnell in the Burke case said that; "It is, in any event, part of the right and duty of parents to provide (and therefore the right of their children to receive) education under Article 42.1, which right the State has guaranteed to respect. The Irish text of Article 42.1 provides an important flavour in this regard: "... ráthaíonn [An Stát] gan cur isteach ar cheart doshannta ná ar dhualgas doshannta tuistí chun oideachas ... a chur ar fáil dá gclainn" which conveys the sense that the State cannot interfere with (cur isteach ar) the right of parents subject to the Constitution to provide education under Article 42.1, a right which Article 42.2 contemplates may take place at home."

The Department of Education or the NCCA simply cannot decide for parents that curriculum courses about religions and beliefs are suitable for all children.

In the High Court in 1996 Justice Costello said that parents had more rights under the Irish Constitution than they had under human rights law. He said that the Irish Constitution has developed the significance of parental rights and in addition has imposed obligations on the State in relation to them (Campaign to Separate Church and State v Minister for Education 1996, page

37).

Regardless of whether or not the State or the NCCA claim that any proposed area of the curriculum about religions or beliefs is suitable for children from all backgrounds this cannot override the Constitutional rights of parents to decide themselves what is or is not suitable religious and moral education of their children. Also, parental rights in relation to religious education do not end at Article 42. The Supreme Court has said that Article 42 must be read in the context of Article 44.2.4.

The NCCA have not got a good record in recognising the fact that under the Constitution nonreligious parents and their children have exactly the same rights as religious parents. There is no hierarchy of rights in the Constitution. Despite this as second level that NCCA claims that developing values in students to enable them to see the relevance of religion to their lives and relationships is suitable religious education for students from atheist and secular backgrounds. The NCCA have shown that they have no respect for the rights of non-religious parents and have consistently over the years undermined parental rights.

In addition to the above, the NCCA are well aware that any curriculum course can be delivered through the ethos of the school (Section 15 Education Act 1998).

If the curriculum is taught through the religious ethos of schools and parents are not informed that this is happening, it will further undermine the rights of parents under the Constitution.

We appreciate that the NCCA have no legal control over 'ethos'. However, the NCCA are obliged

to:

41-(3) – In carrying out its functions the Council shall:

“have regard to the desirability of achieving equality of access to, participation in and benefit from education (Section 41-3(c) Education Act 1998) and

“have regard to the practicalities of implementation of any advice which it proposes to give to the Minister. (Section 41-3(d).)”

Section 6 (a) of the Education Act 1998 obliges every person concerned in the implementation of this Act to have regard to:

“give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children....”

(l) – to enhance the accountability of the education system, and”

“(m) – to enhance transparency in the making of decisions in the education system both locally and nationally.”

Notwithstanding the fact that the NCCA have no control over 'ethos' (Section 15-2 (b) Education Act 1998), it cannot just ignore that it will have an impact on the draft curriculum and this will have consequences for the constitutional rights of parents and their children.

Enhancing accountability, enhancing transparency in the making of decision and giving practical effect to the constitutional rights of children puts the NCCA in the position that it cannot continue to ignore its legal responsibilities.

In addition the NCCA is a public body under the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission Act

2014. Under Section 42 the NCCA is obliged to:

*“(1) A public body shall, in the performance of its functions, have regard to the need to—
eliminate discrimination
promote equality of opportunity and treatment of its staff and the persons to whom it provides services, and
protect the human rights of its members, staff and the persons to whom it provides services.”*

3. Freedom of conscience in the Irish Constitution

Under the Irish Constitution atheists and secularists as well as the non-religious in general have the same right to freedom of conscience and freedom from discrimination as religious people have. As parents we have the exact same Constitutional rights in relation to the education of our children as religious parents have. The state has a duty under Article 42 to respect our inalienable rights in relation to the education of our children and not to interfere in them.

This fact has never mattered to the NCCA. It has always promoted the evangelisation of children into a religious understanding of the world.

Under Section 6 of the Education Act 1998 it states that:

“Every person concerned in the implementation of this Act shall have regard to the following objects in pursuance of which the Oireachtas has enacted this Act:

(a) To give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children, including children who have a disability or who have other special educational needs, as they relate to education.

The NCCA has never taken on board its duty to give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children from non-religious backgrounds. On the one hand the NCCA claims that it respects the rights of non-religious families while on the other hand supporting and promoting the evangelisation of their children into a religious understanding of the world. The NCCA has a history of disrespecting the philosophical convictions of non-religious parents and their children.

On page 65 of the 1999 Primary School curriculum the NCCA addresses the issues of equity and human rights, and speaks of fostering in the child the realisation that rights have associated responsibilities.

The NCCA also has a duty to take account of the practical impact of the words it uses in the development of the curriculum. The 1999 curriculum was introduced after the Education Act 1998 was enacted.

The 1999 curriculum promotes the spiritual dimension of life through religion. It also equates moral values with religion. During the debate on the Education Act 1998 and in particular Section 9 of the Act, it was stated by the then Minister for Education that atheists could be spiritual. It is clear from this debate that this does not mean that the state sees atheists as searching for a transcendent element within human experience. The 1999 curriculum equates spirituality and morals with religion. This fails to take into account the purpose behind Section 9 of the Education Act 1998 as set out in the debate in the Dáil.

The 1999 Curriculum states that:

“The Spiritual Dimension

The curriculum takes cognisance of the affective, aesthetic, spiritual, moral and religious dimensions of the child’s experience and development. For most people in Ireland, the totality of the human condition cannot be understood or explained merely in terms of physical and social experience.

This conviction comes from a shared perception that intimates a more profound explanation of being, from an awareness of the finiteness of life and from the sublime fulfilment that human existence sometimes affords.

The spiritual dimension of life expresses itself in a search for truth and in the quest for a transcendent element within human experience.

The importance that the curriculum attributes to the child’s spiritual development is expressed through the breadth of learning experiences the curriculum offers, through the inclusion of religious education as one of the areas of the curriculum, and through the child’s engagement with the aesthetic and affective domains of learning.”

We have seen Patron bodies, schools and teachers claim that under Section 9 of the Education Act 1998 they are legally obliged to promote the spiritual development of all students. They all see spirituality being developed through religion and in the quest for a transcendent element within human experience because that is written into the 1999 curriculum.

Under ‘Religious Education’ in the 1999 curriculum it sees moral values promoted through religious education only.

It states that:

Religious education

In seeking to develop the full potential of the individual, the curriculum takes into account the child’s affective, aesthetic, spiritual, moral and religious needs. The spiritual dimension is a fundamental aspect of individual experience, and its religious and cultural expression is an inextricable part of Irish culture and history. Religious

education specifically enables the child to develop spiritual and moral values and to come to a knowledge of God.

In 2003 the NCCA developed a Religious Education course for second level. This course highlights the disrespect that the NCCA holds for non-religious families. One of the main aims of this course was to develop moral and spiritual values through religious education. The NCCA claimed this course was suitable for the non-religious notwithstanding the fact that the course sought to develop the moral and spiritual lives of non-religious students through religious education.

The NCCA were also aware at the time that the Catholic Church had developed the Guidelines for the Faith Formation and Development of Catholic students and they intended to integrate this into the state religious education curriculum without informing parents. This is an attack on parental rights and the NCCA just let it happen despite their obligation under Section 6 of the Education Act 1998. Atheist Ireland brought this issue to the attention of the NCCA and we were told to take it up with the Catholic bishops. This is the kind of behaviour non-religious families have come to expect from the NCCA.

The second level religious education course was updated in 2019. There was no representation of the non-religious on the NCCA Reference Group and not even anyone representing a human rights perspective. Again the main aim of this course is to develop values to enable children to see the relevance of religion to their lives and relationships.

In 2018 the Department of Education issued a circular letter obliging ETBs to offer students another subject if they exercised their right to not attend religious instruction. The NCCA actively campaigned to get this reversed and along with the Catholic Bishops and the ETBI, they succeeded. This was the NCCA interfering in our constitutional rights under Article 42.

The NCCA has a history of interfering in the rights of non-religious parents. It has sought to evangelise our children into a religious understanding of the world. The NCCA has simply adopted the ideological position of the Catholic Church. They both claim to respect the rights of nonreligious families while evangelising their children into a religious understanding of the world.

Neither the NCCA nor the state has any right to interfere in the rights of parents in relation to the religious and moral education of their children. The NCCA cannot decide for parents that a particular curriculum area is suitable for their children. We have no confidence that the NCCA will respect our Constitutional and human rights and seek a guarantee as per Article 44.2.4 that our children can exercise their right to not attend any curriculum area about religions and beliefs that the NCCA develops.

4. Relevant Case Law

The following is the relevant case law in relation to the rights of the non-religious to freedom of conscience, parental rights and the right to be free from discrimination.

Article 44.2.1 states that:

“Freedom of conscience and the free profession and practice of religion are, subject to public order and morality, guaranteed to every citizen.”

The courts have recognised that Article 44.2.1 protects parents with philosophical convictions.

In the High Court in 2011, Justice Hogan stated that:

“35. There is thus no doubt at all but that parents have the constitutional right to raise their children by reference to their own religious and philosophical views.”

“27. Along with the guarantee of free speech in Article 40.6.i, Article 44.2.1 guarantees freedom of conscience and the free practice of religion. Taken together, these constitutional provisions ensure that, subject to limited exceptions, all citizens have complete freedom of philosophical and religious thought, along with the freedom to speak their mind and to say what they please in all such matters....”

(AB v Children’s Hospital Temple Street & CD & EF –January 2011

In McGee v Attorney General, Justice Walsh stated that:

“The whole context in which the question of conscience appears in Article 44 is one dealing with the exercise of religion and the free profession and practice of religion. Within that context, the meaning of Article 44.2.1^o is that no person shall directly or indirectly be coerced or compelled to act contrary to his conscience in so far as the practice of religion is concerned and, subject to public order and morality, is free to profess and practise the religion of his choice in accordance with his conscience. Correlatively, he is free to have no religious beliefs or to abstain from the practice or profession of any religion.”

Justice Barrington stated in the Supreme Court in Corway v Independent Newspapers that:
“The Constitution also introduced (in Article 40.1) a specific guarantee of equality before the law to all citizens as human persons. The effect of these various guarantees is that the State acknowledges that the homage of public worship is due to Almighty God. It promises to hold his name in reverence and to respect and honour religion.

At the same time it guarantees freedom of conscience, the free profession and practice of religion and equality before the law to all citizens, be they Roman Catholics, Protestants, Jews, Muslims, agnostics or atheists. But Article 44 goes further and places the duty on the State to respect and honour religion as such. At the same time the State is not placed in the position of an arbiter of religious truth. Its only function is to protect public order and morality.”

In *Mulloy v Minister for Justice*, Justice Walsh stated in the Supreme Court that:

“In my view, the State is not permitted by the Constitution to do this. The reference to religious status, in both the Irish text and the English text of the Constitution, relates clearly to the position or rank of a person in terms of religion in relation to others either of the same religion or of another religion or to those of no religion at all.

Thus it ensures that, no matter what is one’s religious profession or belief or status, the State shall not impose any disabilities upon or make any discrimination between persons because one happens to be a clergyman or a nun or a brother or a person holding rank or position in some religion which distinguishes him from other persons whether or not they hold corresponding ranks in other religions or whether or not they profess any religion or have any religious belief, save where it is necessary to do so to implement the guarantee of freedom of religion and conscience already mentioned.”

Justice Barrington in the *Campaign* case in 1999 stated that:

“...Article 42 of the Constitution acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of the parents to provide for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children. Article 42 S.2 prescribes that the parents shall be free to provide “this education” (i.e religious moral intellectual physical and social education) in their homes or in private schools or “in schools recognised or established by the State”. In other words the Constitution contemplates children receiving religious education in schools recognised or established by the State but in accordance with the wishes of the parents.

It is in this context that one must read Article 44 S.2 s.s.4 which prescribes that:

Legislation providing State aid for schools shall not discriminate between schools under the management of different religious denominations nor be such as to affect prejudicially the right of any child to attend a school receiving public money without attending religious instruction at that school”.

In 2023 Justice O’Donnell in the Supreme Court case *Burke v Minister for Education* said that:

“It is, in any event, part of the right and duty of parents to provide (and therefore the right of their children to receive) education under Article 42.1, which right the State has guaranteed to respect. The Irish text of Article 42.1 provides an important flavour in this regard: “... ráthaíonn [An Stát] gan cur isteach ar cheart doshannta ná ar dhualgas doshannta tuistí chun oideachas ... a chur ar fáil dá gclainn” which conveys the sense that the State cannot interfere with (cur isteach ar) the right of parents subject to the Constitution to provide education under Article 42.1, a right which Article 42.2 contemplates may take place at home.”

5. Human Rights Principles

With regard to the established human rights principles, as far as we are aware, all the cases at the European Court in relation to the teaching of religion and beliefs in schools have been in relation to these types of courses.

For example in *Folgero v Norway* 2007 the course that was developed for students from all backgrounds went beyond the transmission of knowledge and was not conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner, pursued an aim of indoctrination by not respecting parents' religious and philosophical convictions and thereby had transgressed the limit implied by Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 of the European Convention.³¹

The term indoctrination is repeatedly used by the European Court. It simply means not respecting parents' religious or philosophical convictions. In Ireland the term indoctrination has a different meaning. It tends to be used in the context of forcing students into religion classes or forcing them to recite prayers etc.

The European Court has defined 'respect' as not delivering the curriculum in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. Not delivering the curriculum in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner is seen by the court as pursuing an aim of indoctrination by not respecting parents' convictions.

The General Principle of the European Court is that:

"h) The second sentence of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 implies on the other hand that the State, in fulfilling the functions assumed by it in regard to education and teaching, must take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner.

The State is forbidden to pursue an aim of indoctrination that might be considered as not respecting parents' religious and philosophical convictions. That is the limit that must not be exceeded"

In the Court of Appeal in 2023 in the case of the Board of Management of Wilson's Hospital School and Enoch Burke, Justice Whelan stated that:

"38. The European Convention on Human Rights Act 2003 provides:

"2. (1) In interpreting and applying any statutory provision or rule of law, a court shall, in so far as possible, subject to the rules of law relating to such interpretation and application, do so in a manner compatible with the State's obligations under the Convention provisions." Thus in interpreting the obligations of the Board pursuant to the Education Act of 1998 (as amended) regard must be had to the terms of the Convention."

³¹ [https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#{%22fulltext%22:\[%22folgero%22\],%22documentcollectionid%22:\[%22GRANDCHAMBER%22,%22CHAMBER%22\],%22itemid%22:\[%22001-81356%22\]}](https://hudoc.echr.coe.int/fre#{%22fulltext%22:[%22folgero%22],%22documentcollectionid%22:[%22GRANDCHAMBER%22,%22CHAMBER%22],%22itemid%22:[%22001-81356%22]})

The Board of Management of schools must have regard to the terms of the European Convention. Any curriculum area in relation to religions and beliefs must therefore be delivered in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner.

At present there is no law or policy in place that would oblige schools to comply with this General Principle of the European Court. Nor are there any plans to protect the rights of parents in relation to the religious and moral education of their children in publicly funded schools.

From our perspective any new religions and beliefs curriculum area will fail to respect our philosophical convictions because the State has failed to put in place laws, policy, statutory guidelines to oblige Boards of Managements to give practical application to the rights of parents and their children.

6. Objective, critical, and pluralistic

The draft SEE curriculum specifications states:

6b. Teaching in Social and Environmental Education

'How' children learn is just as important as the 'what' of their learning...

The draft Wellbeing curriculum specifications states:

6b. Teaching in the Wellbeing Curriculum

'How' children learn is as important as 'what' children learn.

You endorse the incorporation of human rights standards, and you refer to this in several places. There is an established human rights approach to teaching about religions and beliefs. You should make explicit that these areas must be taught in an objective, critical, and pluralistic way, and not taught through the ethos of the school.

This is in line with Article 11 of the Social Charter, human rights law, and the rights of parents under the Constitution.

Article 42.1 of the Constitution obliges the state to respect the rights of parents in relation to the religious, moral and social education of their children.

Article 42.4 of the Constitution obliges the state to have due regard to the rights of parents in relation to religious and moral formation of their children.

If the curriculum area is taught through the religious ethos of schools, it will undermine the rights of parents with philosophical convictions, as it will not be taught in an objective, critical, and pluralistic manner. The NCCA are well aware that the Catholic church objects to teaching children objectively about religion as they believe this will undermine the faith of Catholic children. The Catholic Church has rejected the Toledo Guiding Principles on

the teaching of religion and beliefs in schools. The NCCA has given no consideration as to how that fact will impact on the

Constitutional and human rights of families, given the control that Section 15 of the Education Act gives to the Patron body in relation to the Characteristic Spirit of the school.

In the *Burke v Minister for Education* case at the Supreme Court the court upheld the rights of parents in relation to the religious and moral formation of their children. The court found that parental authority was a foundational pillar of the constitution and that an overall saver in the constitutional text was that the state must have 'due regard' for the rights of parents in relation to the religious and moral formation of their children.

The Supreme Court went on to say that this provision reflects a concern for upholding parental authority; a foundational pillar of the Constitution that accords with Article 41 recognising the family as "the natural primary and fundamental unit group of" Irish society. This is a condition of the state funding of schools.

If the course is not taught objectively but through the religious ethos of schools and parents are not informed that this is happening, it will undermine the rights of parents under the Constitution.

We appreciate that the NCCA have no legal control over 'ethos'. However, the NCCA are obliged

to:

41-(3) – In carrying out its functions the Council shall:

"have regard to the desirability of achieving equality of access to, participation in and benefit from education (Section 41-3(c) Education Act 1998) and

"have regard to the practicalities of implementation of any advice which it proposes to give to the Minister. (Section 41-3(d).)"

Section 6 (a) of the Education Act 1998 obliges every person concerned in the implementation of this Act to have regard to:

"give practical effect to the constitutional rights of children...."

(l) – to enhance the accountability of the education system, and"

"(m) – to enhance transparency in the making of decisions in the education system both locally and nationally."

Notwithstanding the fact that the NCCA have no control over 'ethos' (Section 15-2 (b) Education Act 1998), it cannot just ignore that it will have an impact on the updated course and this consequently will have consequences for the constitutional rights of parents and their children. Enhancing accountability, enhancing transparency in the making of decision

and giving practical effect to the constitutional rights of children puts the NCCA in the position that it cannot continue to ignore its legal responsibilities.

7. The concept of 'religion or belief' in human rights terms

In 2019 the International Commission of Jurists, composed of 60 judges and lawyers from all regions of the world, published a Primer on International Human Rights Law and Standards on the

Right to Freedom of Thought, Conscience, Religion or Belief. Its opening paragraph unambiguously states that this is a wide-ranging right:

“encompassing the right to freedom of thought and personal convictions in all matters, and protecting the profession and practice of different kinds of beliefs, whether theistic, nontheistic or atheistic, and the freedom not to disclose one’s religion or belief. International law also guarantees and protects the right not to have a religious confession.”

The United Nations Human Rights Committee (UNHRC) General Comment Number 22 interprets Article 18 of the Treaty. It includes:

“1. The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (which includes the freedom to hold beliefs) is far-reaching and profound; it encompasses freedom of thoughts on all matters, personal conviction and the commitment to religion or belief... The freedom of thought and the freedom of conscience are protected equally with the freedom of religion and belief... this provision cannot be derogated from, even in time of public emergency.

2. Article 18 protects theistic, non-theistic and atheistic beliefs, as well as the right not to profess any religion or belief. The terms belief and religion are to be broadly construed... The Committee therefore views with concern any tendency to discriminate against any religion or belief for any reasons...”

In *Leirvåg and others v Norway* in 2004, the United Nations Human Rights Committee considered a complaint under the ICCPR from parents with a non-religious humanist life stance. The Human

Rights Committee concluded:

“The scope of article 18 covers not only protection of traditional religions, but also philosophies of life, such as those held by the authors.”

The European Court of Human Rights enforces the European Convention on Human Rights. Its

Guide on Article 9 includes the following:

“25. Article 9.1 of the Convention contains two strands, one on the right to hold a belief and the other on the right to manifest that belief: the right to deeply hold any belief (whether religious or not) and to change one’s religion or beliefs. This right is absolute and unconditional; the State cannot interfere with it, for instance by dictating what a person believes or taking coercive steps to make him change his beliefs (Ivanova v. Bulgaria, § 79; Mockutė v. Lithuania, § 119).”

The Venice Commission is a body within the Council of Europe. Its full title is the European Commission for Democracy through Law. Together with the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, it has published Guidelines for Review on Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief. This includes:

“A3. Religion or belief. International standards do not speak of religion in an isolated sense, but of “religion or belief.” The “belief” aspect typically pertains to deeply held conscientious beliefs that are fundamental about the human condition and the world. Thus, atheism and agnosticism, for example, are generally held to be entitled to the same protection as religious beliefs. It is very common for legislation not to protect adequately (or to not refer at all to) rights of non-believers. Although not all beliefs are entitled to equal protection, legislation should be reviewed for discrimination against non-believers.”

8. What qualifies as a philosophical conviction?

What test should be used to determine what does or does not qualify as a philosophical conviction under this term? The Venice Commission and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe published guidelines in 2004 for Review on Legislation Pertaining to Religion or Belief. This includes:

“A3. Religion or belief. International standards do not speak of religion in an isolated sense, but of “religion or belief.” The “belief” aspect typically pertains to deeply held conscientious beliefs that are fundamental about the human condition and the world. Thus, atheism and agnosticism, for example, are generally held to be entitled to the same protection as religious beliefs. It is very common for legislation not to protect adequately (or to not refer at all to) rights of non-believers. Although not all beliefs are entitled to equal protection, legislation should be reviewed for discrimination against non-believers.”

The Council of Europe published in 2012 a human rights handbook on protecting the right of thought, conscience and religion under the European Convention on Human Rights. Page 16 includes the following tests, with links to relevant court cases.

“What is meant by “thought, conscience and religion”? Use of the terms “thought, conscience and religion” (and “religion or beliefs” in paragraph 2) suggests a potentially

wide scope for Article 9, but the case-law indicates a somewhat narrower approach is adopted in practice. For example, a “consciousness” of belonging to a minority group (and in consequence, the aim of seeking to protect a group’s cultural identity) does not give rise to an Article 9 issue.

Nor is “belief” the same as “opinion”, for to fall within the scope of Article 9, personal beliefs must satisfy two tests: first, the belief must “attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance”; and secondly, the belief itself must be one which may be considered as compatible with respect for human dignity. In other words, the belief must relate to a “weighty and substantial aspect of human life and behaviour” and also be such as to be deemed worthy of protection in European democratic society.

Beliefs in assisted suicide or language preferences or disposal of human remains after death do not involve “beliefs” within the meaning of the provision. On the other hand, pacifism, atheism and veganism are value-systems clearly encompassed by Article 9. A political ideology such as communism will also qualify. However, it is important to note that interferences with the voicing of thoughts or the expression of conscience will often be treated as giving rise to issues arising within the scope of Article 10’s guarantee of freedom of expression or the right of association under Article 11.”

The European Court of Human Rights has published a guide, last updated in 2022, on Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights. This includes:

“14. On the one hand, the scope of Article 9 is very wide, as it protects both religious and non-religious opinions and convictions. On the other hand, not all opinions or convictions necessarily fall within the scope of the provision, and the term “practice” as employed in Article 9 § 1 does not cover each act which is motivated or influenced by a religion or belief (Pretty v. the United Kingdom, 2002, § 82).

If a personal or collective conviction is to benefit from the right to “freedom of thought, conscience and religion” it must attain a certain level of cogency, seriousness, cohesion and importance. Provided this condition is satisfied, the State’s duty of neutrality and impartiality is incompatible with any power on the State’s part to assess the legitimacy of religious beliefs or the ways in which those beliefs are expressed (Eweida and Others v. the United Kingdom, 2013, § 81).

The organs of the Convention have explicitly or implicitly acknowledged that the safeguards of Article 9 apply to: (a) the “major” or “ancient” world religions which have existed for millennia or for several centuries; (b) new or relatively new religions or spiritual practices; (c) various coherent and sincerely-held philosophical convictions, such as:

pacifism (Arrowsmith v. the United Kingdom, Commission report of 12 Oct 1978, § 69)

principled opposition to military service (Bayatyan v. Armenia [GC], 2011)

veganism and opposition to the manipulation of products of animal origin or tested on animals (W. v. the United Kingdom, Commission decision of 10 February 1993)

opposition to abortion (Knudsen v. Norway, Commission decision of 8 March 1985; Van Schijndel and Others v. the Netherlands, Commission decision of 10 September 1997)

a doctor's opinions on alternative medicine, constituting a form of manifestation of medical philosophy (Nyyssönen v. Finland, Commission decision of 15 January 1998)

the conviction that marriage is a lifelong union between a man and a woman and rejection of homosexual unions (Eweida and Others v. the United Kingdom, 2013)

attachment to secularism (Lautsi and Others v. Italy [GC], 2011, § 58; Hamidović v. Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2017, § 35).

20/21. *With regard to Scientology and Neo-Paganism, the Court has deferred to the judgment of the authorities in the respondent State... 22. Conversely, the Court refused to extend the applicability of Article 9 to "Pastafarianism"... 23. Whether an activity which is wholly or partly based on a belief or a philosophy but which is entirely profit-making is eligible for protection under Article 9 is not yet completely clear..."*

25. *As regards atheism, the Commission considered complaints lodged by atheists under Article 9 (Angeleni v. Sweden, Commission decision of 3 December 1986). In a slightly different context it stated that this current of thought only expressed a certain metaphysical conception of man which conditioned his perception of the world and justified his action and therefore could not be validly distinguished from a religious denomination in the traditional sense; therefore, the State was not justified in assigning it a legal status radically different from that of other religious denominations (Union des Athées v. France, Commission's report of 6 July 1994, § 79). Moreover, the Court has made it clear that freedom of thought, conscience and religion is "a precious asset for atheists, agnostics, sceptics and the unconcerned" (Kokkinakis v. Greece, 1993, § 31)."*

9. Appendix — relevant extracts from draft specifications

As well as general revisions, please revise these specific extracts, taking into account the recommendations above.

9 (a) Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History) ³² INTRODUCTION

[Page 3] Social and Environmental Education involves the study of social, environmental, cultural, **religious**, economic, and political contexts.

RATIONALE

³² https://ncca.ie/media/4bmj12tk/draft_see_specification_0324.pdf

[Page 5] promoting an understanding of the diverse experiences, cultures, traditions, values, **religions, beliefs, worldviews**, and environments across different times and places.

It deepens children's understanding and awareness of human culture and identity through learning about other people and their **beliefs, worldviews**, cultures, systems, identities, and traditions in different times, places, and circumstances. AIMS

[Page 7] To foster global and cultural awareness.: Encourage children to explore diverse societies, cultures, and **worldviews** across different historical periods, cultivating an appreciation of the intricacies of human history.

To learn about, explore and appreciate children's own and others' lived experiences. Develop an understanding of different traditions, cultures, **religions, beliefs, worldviews**, and

heritage in different times, places, and circumstances.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

[Page 12] Key Competencies: Being an Active Learner: Demonstrating an awareness of different cultures, **beliefs**, traditions, and **worldviews** both past and present, promoting inclusivity and respect in interactions with others.

[Page 14] Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences, children should be able to: [under People, Place and space]

Stage 1: Become familiar with aspects of their local heritage, and the cultural practices, customs, traditions, **religions, beliefs** and **worldviews** and celebrations /events in their immediate locality. (AL, AC)

Stage 2: Reflect on and examine aspects of their local heritage and how they preserve connections to the past, exploring customs, traditions, **religions, beliefs**, and **worldviews** in their locality. (AL, AC)

[Page 16] Stage 3: Integrated: Develop an awareness and foster an appreciation of the richness of cultural, ethnic, and **religious** expressions and traditions, becoming familiar with a diverse array of festivals, ceremonies, and celebrations. (AC, CL, W)

Stage 4: Integrated: Examine different cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions and develop an understanding of how diverse **religions, beliefs** and **worldviews** have contributed to and influenced communities, culture, and heritage over time. (AC, CL, W) THE SEE

CURRICULUM IN PRACTICE

[Page 21]: 6b. Teaching in Social and Environmental Education

'How' children learn is just as important as the 'what' of their learning...

[Page 18] Children’s learning in Social and Environmental Education is underpinned by the concepts of ‘Working as a Historian’ and ‘Working as a Geographer’ which permeate throughout all Learning Outcomes...

When ‘Working as a historian,’ children engage in historical thinking, pose questions about historical concepts, and encounter a range of sources, analysing and interpreting **historical evidence** from multiple perspectives...

When ‘Working as a Geographer,’ children actively explore their diverse environments, pose questions, interpret, and analyse **a wide range of evidence** in various formats and engage in investigations of their local area and the wider world.

THE SEE CURRICULUM IN ACTION

[Page 22] **Human Rights:** Learning in Social and Environmental Education supports the development of intercultural understanding as children explore the diversity of the world’s places and peoples, cultural traditions, **beliefs**, and **worldviews**.

[Page 23] Inquiry: using artefacts (e.g. objects, photos, statues, important/ **sacred/ holy** texts etc.) to explore and understand **beliefs**, rituals, guiding principles, rites of passage, and practices

[Page 24] Story: Teachers can help promote the use of story by: introducing more complex myths and legends from different cultural, ethnic, and **religious** backgrounds (in Ireland and other countries) in an age-appropriate way encouraging creativity while ensuring that children’s reconstructed narratives are **grounded in historical evidence**

[Page 27] Dialogical pedagogy: Dialogical pedagogy supports children’s learning about **religions, beliefs**, and **world views** in Social and Environmental Education.... The connections between History, Geography, and learning about **religions, beliefs** and **worldviews** are intricate and significant....

Working as a geographer, through the development of the essential geographical skills, knowledge, dispositions, and values, provides opportunities for children to consider and learn from the lives of others, their differing **religions, beliefs**, and **worldviews**, whether in their own community or more distant places. Likewise, working as a historian provides children with the historical context through which the development, evolution and influence of **religions, beliefs** and **worldviews** can be explored.

Teachers can help promote dialogical pedagogy by:

providing opportunities for children to conduct research on their own **beliefs/religions** *
integrating reflective journalling or personal narrative assignments where children can explore

their own **beliefs**, values and **worldviews**

exploring artefacts from the **major world religions**, encouraging children to question and analyse sources critically, considering different interpretations and perspectives *
organising fieldtrips to local sites and structures of **religious** and **cultural** significance, places of

worship etc. and/or organising virtual tours to museums and other places of importance.

GLOSSARY

[Page 33-34] **Beliefs**: Ideas and convictions that people hold to be true.

Empathy: Understanding the motivations, actions, values, and **beliefs** of human beings.

Human rights: Basic entitlements that protect the dignity, equality, and freedoms of every person, regardless of cultural, social, or political differences.

Rituals: The traditions, habits and actions that are repeated in a family, community, or society.

Worldview: A person's fundamental **belief** and perspective that shapes their understanding of the world.

CONCEPTS AND SKILLS

[Page 36] Empathy: This concept involves children developing an awareness and understanding of experiences, decisions, perspectives, and actions of people from various places, cultures, traditions, **religions** and **worldviews**, both past and present.

Multi-perspectivity: This concept refers to the consideration of different viewpoints, opinions, or perspectives when analysing or discussing specific events and topics. People's perspectives are shaped by their values, **religions**, **beliefs**, **worldviews**, culture, location, and experiences, influencing their points of view on events, developments, and issues

Sense of Space: Sense of Place is an understanding of the unique features and characteristics of a place and how it was, is and could be influenced and shaped by people and natural processes. It involves developing an appreciation of the impact of individuals' motivations, **beliefs**, values, and attitudes to allow children to recognise and understand the distinct identity of different locations.

[Page 39] Using historical evidence: Children, as historians, question, analyse and interpret a range of historical evidence (e.g. visual evidence, documentary evidence, oral evidence, and physical evidence) to construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct historical perspectives about the past. They identify the origin and content of sources and examine the reliability of the information as evidence. Children compare perspectives in sources and explain how these are influenced by significant events, **beliefs**, and values.

9 (b) Wellbeing (Physical Education and Social, Personal and Health Education) ³³

INTRODUCTION

[Page 1] These subjects [PE and SPHE] focus on learning and teaching about different dimensions of our wellbeing, including our physical, social, emotional, and **spiritual** development.

[Page 2] Principles of learning, teaching, and assessment: Inclusive education and diversity and Examples within Wellbeing:

Inclusive education and diversity

Fostering a culture based on **human rights**, democracy, equity, **equality**, and social justice • Challenging **stereotypes** and **misconceptions**, and promoting **empathy**, **respect**, and **multi-perspectivity**

Recognising and celebrating the **diversity** present within the classroom and in wider society

[Page 3] Within school communities, the curriculum plays a central role in supporting children's learning 'about' and 'for' wellbeing, fostering inclusive learning environments based on **human rights**, **equality** and **anti-discrimination** principles. *6

*6 In alignment with Ireland's equality legislation, individuals are safeguarded against discrimination based on various grounds: gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, **religion**, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

AIMS

[Page 7] The Wellbeing Curriculum aims to: Foster **respect** for **diversity**, championing active citizenship, **human rights**, fairness, and social responsibility to create inclusive and compassionate learning environments, communities and societies.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

[Page 28] Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences, children should be able to: [under Rights and Fairness]

Stage 3: Describe the importance of **rights**, **fairness**, equity, and **equality**. (W, AC, CL); Recognise examples of **inequality** and **discrimination** and explore appropriate **responses** and **actions** to stand up for oneself and others. (W, AC, CL)

Stage 4: Appreciate the importance of **rights**, **fairness**, **justice**, equity, and **equality**, and discuss the nine grounds under which discrimination is prohibited in Ireland. (W, AC, CL); Examine instances of **inequality** and **discrimination**, explore people or organisations who

³³ https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf

promote **human rights**, and propose appropriate responses and actions to challenge **discrimination** and promote social justice. (W, AC, CL) THE WELLBEING CURRICULUM IN PRACTICE

[Page 33] 6b. Teaching in the Wellbeing Curriculum: 'How' children learn is as important as 'what' children learn... these pedagogical practices allow teachers to provide learning opportunities that take account of children's individual needs, interests and funds of knowledge...

[Page 35] Teachers can use direct teaching by: Providing age and developmentally appropriate and **evidence informed** information about human development

GLOSSARY

[Page 48] **Discrimination** Includes policies, practices or behaviours that lead to unfair treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of their identity or perceived identity. It can be intentional or unintentional and may be direct or indirect.

[Page 50] **Spiritual wellbeing** is concerned with love for life, others, and a sense of connection with oneself, others, nature, the world and, for some, a larger purpose or higher power. It involves **personal beliefs** and **practices** that may or **may not** be linked to organised **religion**.

Stereotypes: Presenting an image of a person, a group or a culture based on an assumed range of characteristics, behaviours or activities.

Belong to



Belong To LGBTQ+
Youth Ireland

**Belong To Submission to the National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on the draft Primary
Wellbeing Curriculum Specification 7th
June 2024**

Contact: Neasa Candon (neasa@belongto.org), Moninne Griffith
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Introduction

Belong To - LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland is a national organisation supporting lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) young people. Since 2003, Belong To has worked with LGBTQ+ youth to create a world where they are equal, safe and thriving in the diversity of their identities and experiences.

The organisation advocates and campaigns with and on behalf of LGBTQ+ young people. Belong To runs specialised LGBTQ+ youth services in Dublin, offers crisis counselling for young people experiencing self-harm and suicide ideation in

partnership with Pieta, and supports a National Network of youth workers which collectively runs over 70 LGBTQ+ youth groups across Ireland.

Since 2022, Belong To has run the highly successful LGBTQ+ Quality Mark initiative, an 18-month accreditation initiative for post-primary schools to develop LGBTQ+ safe and supportive schools. Belong To's annual Stand Up Awareness Week, supported by the Department of Education is a time for post-primary schools, youth services and Youthreach centres in Ireland to join us and take a stand against homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

We strongly welcome the redevelopment of the primary curriculum, and the opportunity to feed in on the draft Wellbeing specification. Belong To commends the NCCA on the truly transformational work which has been done with regard to this curriculum, and curriculum reform for post-primary schools, specifically with regard to Junior and Senior Cycle SPHE. It is highly significant that the new primary curriculum centres on the empowerment of pupils, and development of life skills throughout this cycle of education.

Belong To looks forward to continued engagement with the NCCA and offers support on the development of toolkit resources for this curriculum and training for primary staff.

Summary of Recommendations

The following sections of this submissions set out the research context for recommendations on the draft specification, and a detailed rationale for each recommendation.

For ease of reference, a summary of recommendations are included below:

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying should be specifically named with reference the *Wellbeing Curriculum's* relationship with wider policy, and as part of Learning Outcomes that relate to bullying.

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying should be specifically and individually named and defined within the Glossary.

Comprehensive supports relating to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying should be provided via the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

The wellbeing rationale should specifically name LGBTQ+ identities and experiences within the scope of "self-awareness, personal safety, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, movement, decision-making, and healthy relationship-building".

The wellbeing rationale should name an awareness of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences within the scope of “cultivating a strong sense of connection among children to their school, community, and wider society.

The SPHE/RSE rationale should specify that Learning Outcomes under this strand should be taught in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner.

The SPHE/RSE rationale should clearly name existing requirements under

Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, for primary schools to implement education and prevention measures to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying.

LGBTQ+ identities and experiences should be integrated, in an age-appropriate manner, across stages 1 through 4 of the Identity strand of the *Wellbeing Curriculum*.

Staff materials and resources accompanying the *Wellbeing Curriculum*, such as those on the Wellbeing Online Toolkit, should include practical support materials and best practice guidelines on supporting a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+; the process of engaging with the pupil and their parent, guardian or caregiver; and proactive measures a school can put in place to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all LGBTQ+ pupils, whether they are out or not.

Learning Outcomes under strands 3 and 4 of the Emotional Awareness and Expression Unit should specifically name LGBTQ+ identities as part of selfidentity formation within the context of influences on emotions and feelings.

All primary staff, both teaching and non-teaching, should be provided with training, resources and guidance on the topic of supporting LGBTQ+ young people’s mental health.

Belong To’s e-learning module, ‘Educators and Youth Workers Supporting

LGBTQ+ Young People’,³⁴ and the e-learning module produced by Belong To and

Jigsaw, ‘Supporting the Mental Health of LGBTI+ Young People’,² should be included in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying should be specifically and individually named within the Learning Outcomes of the Relationships strand.

LGBTQ+ inclusion and visibility should be named across the school environment as a key aim of primary staff within the Relationships strand.

³⁴ <https://www.belongto.org/support-for-someone-else/at-school/post-primary/training-for-educators/> ² <https://www.belongto.org/training/>

Specific forms of diversity, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community, should be clearly named within Learning Outcomes under the Sense of Belonging strand.

LGBTQ+ identities and experiences should be included across a range of strands, through specific naming and reference in Learning Outcomes and/or inclusion in resource, training and support materials, to further support the intended outcome of the Sense of Belonging strand

Representation of same-sex parented families should be retained in the *Wellbeing Curriculum*, and this inclusion should be supported with resources in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

The NCCA should engage with the Department of Education on developing clear procedural templates and guidelines on supporting LGBTQ+ pupils who come out in school.

The Wellbeing Online Toolkit should include practical support materials and guidelines on supporting a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+; the process of

engaging with the pupil and their parent, guardian or caregiver; and proactive measures a school can put in place to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all LGBTQ+ pupils, whether they are out or not.

Supports, resources and materials provided in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit should represent LGBTQ+ identities and experiences.

The NCCA should engage with relevant stakeholders to produce a range of CPD programmes on areas relating to LGBTQ+ identities, experiences and inclusion.

Strengthen the definitions of equality, inequality and discrimination with specific reference to personal characteristics protected under the Equal Status Acts, namely gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

The terms ‘human rights’, ‘equality’, ‘misconceptions’, ‘respect’ and ‘relationships’ (in a context other than ‘in movement’) – should be added to the Glossary and be clearly defined for teaching staff.

In the Glossary, the terms equity, stereotypes and diversity should be clearly defined and name the nine protected characteristics under Irish equality law, namely gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

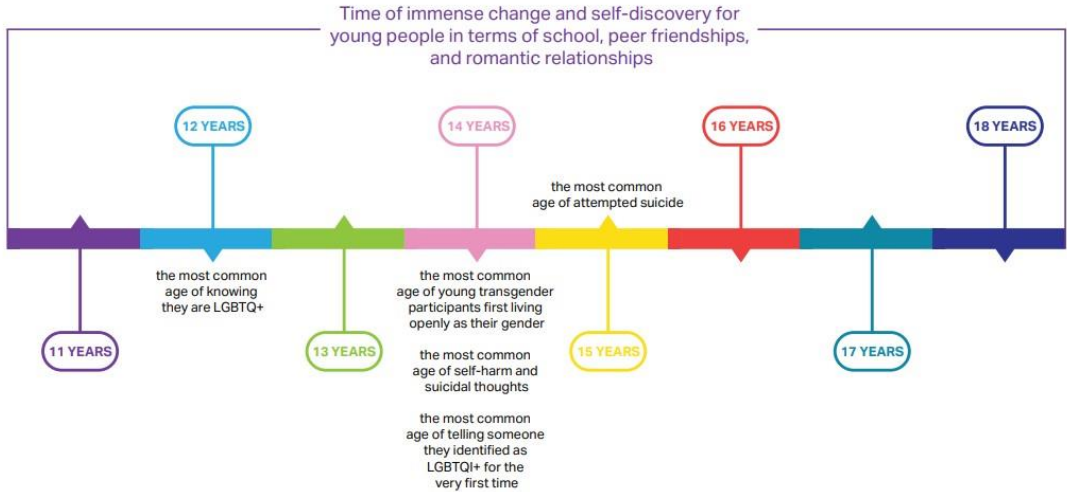
Research Background: LGBTQ+ Youth in Ireland Today

Being LGBTQ+ in Ireland is a research project conducted by Trinity College Dublin and published in partnership with Belong To – LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland that examines the mental health and wellbeing of Ireland’s LGBTQ+ population and investigated public attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people.³⁵ The research sample includes over 2,800 LGBTQ+ people aged 14-84 living in the Republic of Ireland. This is the second iteration of the *LGBTIreland* report,³⁶ published by Trinity College Dublin, GLEN and Belong To in 2016.

This research provides important context to the need for LGBTQ+ inclusivity to be embedded across education levels, for the safeguarding of the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ young people, as well as for fostering acceptance and positive attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community within society.

Coming Out as LGBTQ+ and Mental Health

As demonstrated in the table below, the experience of LGBTQ+ 14-25 year olds understanding their LGBTQ+ identity, sharing this with people in their life, and the likelihood that they will first experience suicidal thoughts or self-harm is closely tied to the final years of primary school and early years of post-primary education.



³⁵ Higgins A; Downes C; O’Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQ+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQ+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here.](#)

³⁶ Higgins A. et al. (2016) *The LGBTIreland Report: national study of the mental health and wellbeing of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people in Ireland*. Dublin: GLEN and Belong To. [Available here.](#)

Among this cohort, age 12 is the most common age at which a person knows they are LGBTQI+. The most common age to live as one’s gender identity and/or to tell someone about their LGBTQI+ identity for the first time is age 14. Among 14-25 year old LGBTQI+ people, age 14 was also the most common age at which a person experienced self-harm or suicidal thoughts. The most common age of attempting suicide for this cohort was age 15.

Other Factors Impacting Mental Health

Many people experience challenges to their mental health and wellbeing during adolescence. However, the report findings show that, compared to the general youth population in Ireland, LGBTQI+ young people aged 14-18 experience three times the level of severe or extremely severe depression and anxiety, three times the rate of self-harm, twice the rate of suicidal thoughts, and five times the rate of suicide attempts.

This research found that a number of internal and external factors influenced LGBTQI+ people’s experience of self-harm, suicide ideation and suicide attempts.

These factors are outlined in the tables below:

Internal factors	External factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Self-hatred and inability to accept self — Confusion regarding one’s identity — Ashamed to be LGBTQI+ due to negative reactions — Fear of being outed — Shame — Gender dysphoria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Family rejection — Negative media — Bullying and discrimination — Societal rejection — Negative attitudes from family/friends and wider society

The study found a correlation between those who had experienced bullying and those with poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes. LGBTQI+ people who had been bullied had significantly higher symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress; higher rates of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and eating disorders; and lower scores for happiness, self-esteem and resilience than those who had not been bullied.

The research also examined factors that had positively impacted upon participants’ mental health. At least 83% of participants felt that legal changes such as the introduction of marriage equality, LGBTQI+ representation in the media, coming out as LGBTQI+ and making new LGBTQI+ friends, and joining or visiting LGBTQI+ groups or centres had positively impacted their mental health. While 87% of LGBTQI+ people consider coming

out to friends as a positive experience, coming out to family was ranked as positive for only 66% of participants.

A key recommendation from Trinity College Dublin as part of this research project was the implementation of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* (Department of Education, 2022) to ensure the inclusion and safety of LGBTQI+ young people in school.

LGBTQI+ People in Irish Society

On a positive note, research participants named the importance of supportive family and friends, a supportive workplace and support from the local community for LGBTQI+ people as important safeguards for mental health and wellbeing. Members of the LGBTQI+ community felt strongly that being able to come out and be accepted not only positively impacted their mental health and wellbeing but also fostered a greater sense of belonging and resilience.

However, members of Ireland's LGBTQI+ community continue to navigate their lives within a climate of fear – despite being almost a decade on from the marriage equality referendum of 2015. *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* finds that 53% of LGBTQI+ people in Ireland feel unsafe holding hands with a same-sex partner in public, and over half of trans and non-binary people feel unsafe expressing their gender identity in public. The research further found that one in four members of Ireland's LGBTQI+ community have been punched, hit or physically attacked due to being LGBTQI+, and 72% experienced verbal abuse due to being LGBTQI+.

Within the context of education, these figures point to the need awareness of LGBTQI+ identities and experiences to be fostered at all levels of education, in an age and stage appropriate manner, so as to ensure the safety and equality of Ireland's LGBTQI+ population generally.

Recommendations

The *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research made a number of recommendations relevant to this submission, including:

The Department of Education should continue to prioritise the timely implementation of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying Implementation Plan 2023-2027*, with a focus on initial teacher education and continuous professional development for new and existing post-primary school staff.

The survey of attitudes of the general public showed that the knowledge base of the general public around LGBTQI+ identities include many uncertainties. As a result, the

population is vulnerable to misinformation aimed at discrediting the LGBTQI+ community, in particular transgender, intersex and non-binary groups. While progress has been made since 2014 in terms of inclusivity and reduction in prejudice, in order to sustain this progress targeted educational initiatives rooted in evidence-based research are needed. Therefore, through a community partnership approach the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth should implement specific actionable, achievable, concrete, measurable and time-bound interventions to increase the knowledge and understanding of LGBTQI+ lives among the general public with targeted consideration regarding transgender, non-binary, intersex and bisexual experiences and needs.

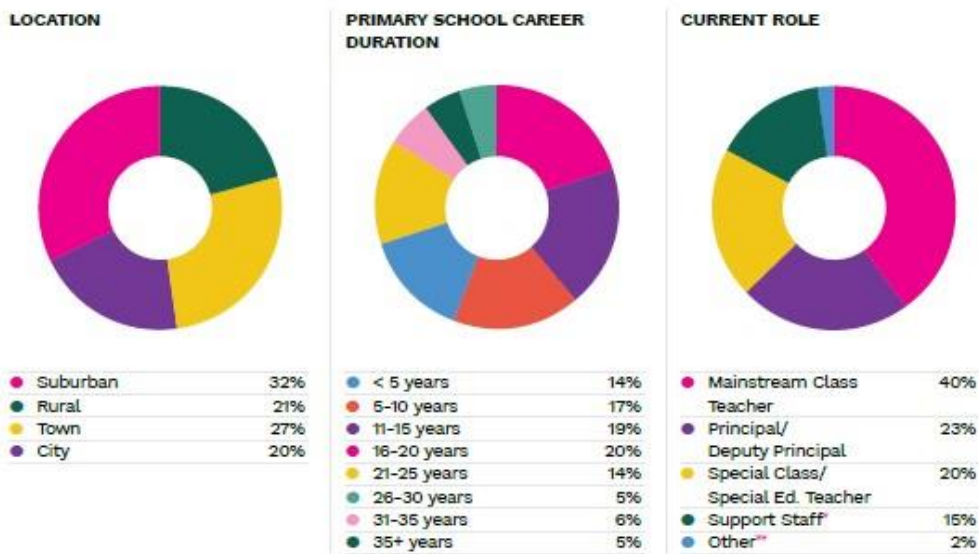
Research Background: Primary School Staff and LGBTQ+ Inclusivity

The *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools* research was conducted by the University of Limerick in partnership with Belong To – LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland, funded by an Irish Research Council ‘New Foundations: Engaging Civil Society’ grant, and published in June 2024.³⁷

The *Belong To Primary* research surveyed staff employed in primary schools across Ireland about their experience, attitudes, knowledge levels, practices and professional needs regarding LGBTQ+ inclusivity. The survey was conducted online from March to May 2023. To obtain a representative sample of primary school staff nationally, the survey was distributed via the Department of Education database of contact point email addresses to all 3,231 primary schools in Ireland.

The final sample consists of 1,031 primary school staff. This comfortably exceeded the minimum acceptable sample size of 382 required relative to the number of staff currently employed in primary schools in Ireland. Almost one quarter (23%) of those who responded to the survey indicated that they held the role of primary school principal or deputy principal, and 50% of participants had been working in primary schools for 16 or more years. A demographic breakdown of primary staff who took part in the research is included below:

³⁷ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).



This groundbreaking research demonstrates a strong willingness among primary school staff in Ireland to be LGBTQ+ inclusive in their practice, and a desire for support, training and guidance in this area. However, there is a clear gap between this willingness and primary school staff’s confidence and knowledge levels with regard to LGBTQ+ inclusivity, creating a sizable gap in LGBTQ+ inclusive practice.

Views on LGBTQ+ Inclusion at Primary Level

There is strong support for LGBTQ+ inclusive practice in primary schools. Among primary school staff who participated in this research:

90% believe it is important for primary staff, including principals, deputy principals, class teachers, special needs assistants and support staff, to know about LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

86% feel primary lessons should include same-gender parented families in the same way as different-gender parented families.

85% staff think that LGBTQ+ characters should be included in primary lessons in the same way as heterosexual characters.

Within open-ended sections for this question, participants shared:

“Representation is very important - inclusion in stories, pictures; seeing people in LGBTQ+ communities in their lives in junior years.

Introduction of more targeted support and role models for the children to speak to in middle and later years.”

“I feel that until LGBTQ+ issues and topics are outlined in the curriculum, we can’t teach them safely yet. Teachers won’t teach something that’s not on the curriculum. Principals won’t put themselves out there unless they have to.”

Confidence in LGBTQ+ Inclusive Teaching

Despite this high level of support, a significant proportion of primary staff do not feel confident in teaching in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner. Among primary school staff who participated in this research:

1 in 4 do not feel confident in knowing how to plan LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons.

1 in 4 do not feel confident teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.

17% do not feel confident in using LGBTQ+ inclusive language.

Within open-ended sections for this question, participants shared:

“The lack of resources and books and RSE/SPHE materials is a really massive issue. The lack of visibility of different relationships and family types makes it seem like they don’t exist.”

LGBTQ+ Inclusive Teaching in Practice

This lack of confidence may shed light on the gap between how important primary staff feel knowledge and representation of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences are, and how this is reflected in their teaching. Among primary school staff who participated in this research:

68% never organised LGBTQ+ inclusive activities such as an LGBT campaign, guest speakers or engaging expertise on sexual orientation and gender.

1 in 4 teaching staff never teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.

1 in 3 teaching staff never use books and resources with LGBTQ+ people represented.

Despite the above, it is positive to see that four in five teaching staff include LGBTQ+ parented families when talking about families.

Relationship Between Confidence and Practice

Through cross-analysis, this research showed a clear relationship between confidence in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, and likelihood of teaching lessons that include and represent LGBTQ+ figures.

Among primary teaching staff who felt very confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, they reported high rates of LGBTQ+ inclusive practice:

93% include same-gender parented families in lessons.

88% use LGBTQ+ inclusive books and resources.

86% include LGBTQ+ historical or public figures in lessons.

Among primary teaching staff who reported that they did not feel at all confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, they reported significantly lower rates of LGBTQ+ inclusive practice:

44% include same-gender parented families in lessons.

23% use LGBTQ+ inclusive books and resources.

25% include LGBTQ+ historical or public figures in lessons.

With regard to teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner, 93% of primary teaching staff who were very confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons do, in their classes, teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ way. This is compared to primary teaching staff who did not feel at all confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons, 44% of whom teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.

Within open-ended sections for this question, participants highlighted the curriculum and a lack of training as key barriers to teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner:

“I think we are all a little unsure around the SPHE/RSE side of things when it comes to LGBTQ+. I think the curriculum is outdated, and does not address many of the questions and issues that arise during these lessons.”

Supporting an LGBTQ+ Pupil Coming Out

The *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research detailed in the previous section demonstrates the significance of an LGBTQI+ person’s experience of coming out to their mental health and wellbeing, in the short and long term.³⁸ Among LGBTQI+ young people aged 14-25 and living in Ireland, 14 was the most common age to first tell someone about their LGBTQI+ identity and/or begin to live as their gender identity. For this cohort, age 14 was also the most common age at which a person experienced self-harm or suicidal thoughts.

³⁸ Higgins A; Downes C; O’Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here](#).

The *Belong To Primary* research shows that primary staff have high comfort levels with a pupil coming out to them as LGBTQ+, but again we see a gap in openness and knowledge levels in what to do in this circumstance. Among primary school staff who participated in this research:

79% feel comfortable with a pupil coming out to them as LGBTQ+.

84% feel comfortable with a pupil coming out as lesbian, gay or bisexual.

75% feel comfortable with a pupil coming out as trans or non-binary.

Only 3 in 10 feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil comes out as LGBTQ+.

37% feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil came out about their sexual orientation.

24% feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil came out as trans or non-binary.

1 in 4 feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil wants to socially transition at school.

Similar to the area of LGBTQ+ inclusive teaching, the findings suggest some relationship between formal training and support and school staff's confidence in supporting an LGBTQ+ pupil coming out.

Among primary school staff who participated in the research:

56% either have no formal school supports for a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+ or are unsure of whether such supports are in place.

57% have never taken part in LGBTQ+ specific professional development.

Only 1 in 3 feel very confident in their knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities.

1 in 4 do not feel confident in their knowledge of gender identity.

Within open-ended sections for questions relating to a pupil coming out as LGBTQ+ in school, many primary staff clearly highlight the lack of supports and training available to them, meaning they feel less prepared to support the pupil in the way that they would like to:

"There is no support structure in place. It would be down to the teacher involved."

"Very little supports. Not really prepared for what is an inevitability." "The reason why I would feel somewhat comfortable and not fully comfortable is because I know our school is not set up to support a child effectively in this situation. I would be very

concerned for the child's welfare and their needs going forward as there is no structure in place for this... We do not have initiatives in place or training."

"I wrote somewhat comfortable in relation to pupils as I am personally comfortable and supportive of my pupils, but I would be unsure in how I would support them and what kind of support would be tolerated in a

Catholic ethos school."

"I wouldn't be uncomfortable about the information, I would be uncomfortable about how to support the person/ what to say next/ the best steps forward for them. I would be worried that through ignorance/lack of training/information that I would inadvertently end up saying or doing the wrong thing."

"This is a situation we have not had the opportunity to openly deal with. We know that a proportion of our pupils identify as LGBTQ+ but they don't publicly and openly come out when they are in primary school. There are a myriad of reasons for this. The only supports that we have to offer is the openness of staff, but our ethos prevents us from providing information or indeed talking to pupils during RSE regarding gender identity."

Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools

Since 2013 the Department of Education's Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools, Circular 45/2013, has required all primary schools to explicitly name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, along with education and prevention strategies to tackle these. However, over a decade on, a significant proportion of primary staff are not aware of whether their school fulfils this requirement. Within the *Belong To Primary* research, among primary staff:

1 in 3 either did not know whether their school's anti-bullying policy mentioned homophobic and transphobic bullying or reported that this was not included in the policy.

3 in 10 reported that their school's anti-bullying policy mentioned transphobic bullying.

Half reported that their school's anti-bullying policy included information on education and/or prevention strategies relating to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

This is in spite of primary staff who responded to the *Belong To Primary* research reporting relatively high rates of casual homophobia, and a strong desire to include teaching on anti-LGBTQ+ bullying in their practice. Among primary staff who took the survey:

44% heard pupils make subtle derogatory jokes or comments about LGBTQ+ people.

3 in 10 only sometimes intervene when overhearing subtle, derogatory jokes or comments about LGBTQ+ people.

55% reported hearing pupils in their school make statements such as “that’s so gay”.

9 in 10 say that primary pupils should learn about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying.

57% feel confident in teaching about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying.

Recommendations

The *Belong To Primary* research made a number of recommendations to policymakers relevant to the review of the draft specification, including:

Implement Action 2.11 of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* by reviewing and updating the SPHE/RSE curriculum across primary schools to ensure that it includes, in an age-appropriate manner, LGBTQ+ identities.

Engage with primary schools and the Inspectorate to ensure that, as per the existing *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* (Circular 45/2013), all primary schools explicitly name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, along with education and prevention strategies to tackle the same, and that all school staff are aware of these inclusions.

The research also made a number of recommendations to policymakers relevant to the roll-out of the *Wellbeing Curriculum* across several areas, including:

Teacher education

Integrate LGBTQ+ awareness and inclusivity in undergraduate and postgraduate teacher-education programmes.

Provide comprehensive Continued Professional Development (CPD) on LGBTQ+ awareness and identities to all primary staff, both teaching and nonteaching.

Invest in the development of tailored professional development courses on specific areas of LGBTQ+ inclusivity as related to named policies and procedures, including on the areas of anti-bullying, coming out and social transition at school.

Encourage school leadership, including principals, deputy principals and Board of Management members, to take part in LGBTQ+ inclusivity training.

Fostering LGBTQ+ safe and supportive primary schools

Fund initiatives, similar to *Belong To’s LGBTQ+ Quality Mark* for post-primary schools, which take a holistic approach to whole-school community LGBTQ+ inclusivity at primary level.

Engage parents in LGBTQ+ inclusive work at primary level, including the provision of evidence-based information on the importance and impact of fostering an open and inclusive environment.

Resource primary staff to foster sustainable LGBTQ+ inclusive practice through ongoing training, policy development and local information-sharing networks.

Policy review

Retain the specific naming of homophobic and transphobic bullying upon updating Circular 45/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and PostPrimary Schools*, as per Action 3.3 of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.

Prioritise the implementation of Action 3.6 of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* by developing and publishing an updated version of the *Being LGBT in School* resource, with consideration of the provision of best-practice guidelines for primary schools.

Develop clear guidelines for primary schools, grounded in Irish equality law and taking a rights-based approach on LGBTQ+ inclusivity and its interaction with school ethos.

Include outstanding actions under Objective 1 of the *LGBTI+ National Youth Strategy 2018-2020* in the new national LGBTQ+ inclusion strategy.

Feedback on Draft Curriculum Specification

Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The principles of learning, teaching and assessment are broad-based, and welcome in the context of the draft specification. However, as outlined previously, the *Belong To Primary* research found that while a large majority of primary staff feel it is important for themselves and their colleagues to know about LGBTQ+ identities, and represent LGBTQ+ identities in their teaching, a lack of training and the absence of LGBTQ+ inclusion in current curricula acted as a barrier to being LGBTQ+ inclusive in their practice.³⁹ This was particularly pronounced for the area of SPHE/RSE. The research found that 93% of primary teaching staff who were very confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons do, in their classes, teach LGBTQ+/RSE in an LGBTQ+ way. This compared to primary teaching staff who did not feel at all confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons, 44% of whom teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.

³⁹ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

It is therefore important for all principles of learning, teaching and assessment, particularly ‘Inclusive education and diversity’ and ‘Relationships’ to be taught in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner.

For this to be achieved, terms that are not included in the Glossary – including ‘human rights’, ‘equality’, ‘misconceptions’, ‘respect’ and ‘relationships’ (in a context other than ‘in movement’) – should be added to the Glossary and be clearly defined for teaching staff.

Terms that are currently in the Glossary, relevant to this section, do not clearly explain which groups of people or characteristics are included when defined under key terms including equity, stereotypes and diversity. Definition of these terms in the

Glossary should make clear reference to the nine protected characteristics under Irish equality law, namely gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

Recommendations:

The terms ‘human rights’, ‘equality’, ‘misconceptions’, ‘respect’ and ‘relationships’ (in a context other than ‘in movement’) – should be added to the Glossary and be clearly defined for teaching staff.

In the Glossary, the terms equity, stereotypes and diversity should be clearly defined and name the nine protected characteristics under Irish equality law, namely gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

Rationale

Wellbeing

This section describes the Wellbeing Curriculum as “a catalyst for lifelong wellbeing by integrating vital life skills such as: self-awareness, personal safety, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, movement, decision-making, and healthy relationship-building” and as being instrumental in “cultivating a strong sense of connection among children to their school, community, and wider society”.

As detailed previously, the *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research found that, among 14–25-year-old LGBTQI+ people in Ireland, age 12 is the most common age at which a person

knows they are LGBTQI+.⁴⁰ The most common age to live as one’s gender identity and/or to tell someone about their LGBTQI+ identity for the first time is age 14, and age 14 was also the most common age at which a person experienced self-harm or suicidal thoughts. The most common age of attempting suicide for this cohort was age 15. A number of internal and external factors influenced LGBTQI+ people’s experience of self-harm, suicide ideation and suicide attempts, as detailed in the table below:

Internal factors	External factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Self-hatred and inability to accept self — Confusion regarding one’s identity — Ashamed to be LGBTQI+ due to negative reactions — Fear of being outed — Shame — Gender dysphoria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Family rejection — Negative media — Bullying and discrimination — Societal rejection — Negative attitudes from family/friends and wider society

Within this context, primary school emerges as a key age at which an LGBTQI+ young person begins to explore and eventually knows their own LGBTQI+ identity, placing a strong onus on primary schools and the *Wellbeing Curriculum* to ensure that primary school does, for these young people, act as a “catalyst for lifelong wellbeing” in a positive way. Where LGBTQI+ topics are not explored, represented or included at primary level, there is a risk that a lack of self-acceptance of one’s LGBTQI+ identity, feelings of shame, and bullying may develop, with detrimental long-term consequences. LGBTQ+ inclusion and awareness can also act as a means of preventing anti-LGBTQ+ bullying. Indeed, since 2013 Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* has required primary schools to implement education and prevention strategies to tackle homophobic and biphobic bullying. Tackling this form of bullying and creating the conditions within which it is less likely to develop, are highly significant in safeguarding the long-term mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ people. The *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research found a correlation between those who had experienced bullying, and poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes.⁴¹ LGBTQI+ people who had been bullied had statistically significantly higher symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress; higher rates of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and eating disorders; and lower scores for happiness, self-esteem and resilience.

⁴⁰ Higgins A; Downes C; O’Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here.](#)

⁴¹ Higgins A; Downes C; O’Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here.](#)

Recommendations:

The wellbeing rationale should specifically name LGBTQ+ identities and experiences within the scope of “self-awareness, personal safety, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, movement, decision-making, and healthy relationship-building”.

The wellbeing rationale should name an awareness of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences within the scope of “cultivating a strong sense of connection among children to their school, community, and wider society.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

It is welcome to see a range of topics, including diversity of families and identities, boundaries, consent, and emotional management included under this rationale.

However, it is concerning to see that LGBTQ+ identities, or reference to sexual orientation and gender identity broadly, are absent from the rationale of SPHE.

The *Belong To Primary* research identified a lack of specificity in the curriculum as a key barrier to being LGBTQ+ inclusive in teaching.⁴² This draft specification has unfortunately not done enough to overcome this existing barrier, as LGBTQ+ identities are not specifically named within this rationale or within most learning outcomes. While the rationale does describe SPHE as covering a “rich tapestry of... identities... and families” and as recognising how pupils are “unique individuals”, there is a concern that this is not a sufficiently strong basis upon which a primary teacher or school leadership can inform, or defend, teaching LGBTQ+ topics in the classroom in an age-appropriate manner.

As detailed previously, one in four primary teaching staff never teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.⁴³ 93% of primary teaching staff who were very confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons do, in their classes, teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ way. This is compared to primary teaching staff who did not feel at all confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons, 44% of whom teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way. Within open-ended sections for this question, participants highlighted the curriculum and a lack of training in key barriers to teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner:

⁴² Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

⁴³ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

“I think we are all a little unsure around the SPHE/ RSE side of things when it comes to LGBTQ+. I think the curriculum is outdated, and does not address many of the questions and issues that arise during these lessons.”

While Learning Outcomes and the Glossary do include same-sex parented families within the definition of diverse family structures, this is not considered sufficiently progressive for LGBTQ+ inclusion at primary level, as the research shows that four in five primary teaching staff already do include LGBTQ+ parented families when talking about families. This form of representation, while positive, does not directly translate to real-world capabilities as, while the level of representation for LGBTQ+ families is high, only three in 10 primary staff feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil comes out as LGBTQ+.

Additionally, it is very concerning to see that there is effectively no guidance given within the draft specification as to how LGBTQ+ identities will be included in “acquir[ing] accurate and developmentally appropriate information about human development and sexuality that is evidence informed”. There is a significant risk that, without this level of detail, the primary *Wellbeing Curriculum* will facilitate the same lack of certainty, knowledge and skills as currently exists with regard to LGBTQ+ inclusion at primary level – particularly in relation to SPHE/RSE – and, as such, many LGBTQ+ primary school pupils will continue to go without this form of education which is vital to their long-term wellbeing and sense of self.

Recommendation:

- The SPHE/RSE rationale should specify that Learning Outcomes under this strand should be taught in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner.

It is also vital that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying be explicitly mentioned within this rationale, and throughout the *Wellbeing Curriculum* broadly. The *Belong To Primary* research found that only 57% of primary staff feel confident in teaching about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, and yet 9 in 10 feel that primary pupils should learn about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying.⁴⁴ 44% of primary staff heard pupils make subtle derogatory jokes or comments about LGBTQ+ people, while 3 in 10 only sometimes intervene when hearing such jokes or comments.

The SPHE rationale states that, within the context of child protection, the curriculum “supports children to recognise healthy, unhealthy, and harmful behaviours within relationships... By fostering this understanding, children are empowered to recognise, respond and report instances of bullying and abuse, contributing to their overall wellbeing

⁴⁴ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

and safety and that of others.” If almost half of primary staff lack confidence in teaching about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are not mentioned anywhere in the draft specification, it is wholly unclear how LGBTQ+ pupils will be supported in recognising such harmful behaviours and be empowered to recognise, respond to and report such instances of bullying.

The inclusion of teaching on homophobic and transphobic bullying would not be a new development for primary schools. Since 2013, they have been required to explicitly name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, and detail education and prevention measures to tackle the same, as per the Department of Education’s Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and PostPrimary Schools*. However, despite this requirement being in place for over a decade, the *Belong To Primary* research found that among primary staff in Ireland:⁴⁵

1 in 3 either did not know whether their school’s anti-bullying policy mentioned homophobic and transphobic bullying, or reported that this was not included in the policy.

3 in 10 reported that their school’s anti-bullying policy mentioned transphobic bullying.

Only half reported that their school’s anti-bullying policy included information on education and/or prevention strategies relating to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

Finally, as noted previously, the *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research found a correlation between those LGBTQI+ people who had experienced bullying, and poorer mental health and wellbeing outcomes, as compared to LGBTQI+ people who had not been bullied.⁴⁶ LGBTQI+ people who had been bullied had statistically significantly higher symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress; higher rates of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and eating disorders; and lower scores for happiness, self-esteem and resilience.

Recommendation:

- **The SPHE/RSE rationale should clearly name existing requirements under Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, for primary schools to implement education and prevention measures to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying.**

Emotional and Relational Education

⁴⁵ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here.](#)

⁴⁶ Higgins A; Downes C; O’Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here.](#)

Identity

Some of the key elements within the Learning Outcomes under the Identity strand of the draft specification include:

develop a growing sense of self-identity and self-worth, exploring their unique qualities, abilities, talents, and interests, recognising similarities and uniqueness in others;

demonstrate increasing self-awareness and self-confidence, recognising and accepting their unique qualities, while also demonstrating acceptance and respect for uniqueness in others;

demonstrate awareness of the factors that can contribute to their self-image, self-worth, and an evolving sense of identity and identify ways to nurture a positive sense of self-worth; and recognise, value, and respect their unique qualities, cultivating a confident, positive sense of self, and demonstrate acceptance, respect and compassion towards diversity in others, fostering inclusion.

For many LGBTQ+ people, a number of the above-named elements play a central role in their understanding of their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. A wealth of Irish and international research draws a clear correlation between the circumstances of a person beginning to recognise and understand their LGBTQ+ identity, and their mental health and wellbeing in both the short and long-term. One such example is the recently published *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* report, a national study of the mental health and wellbeing of Ireland's LGBTQI+ community.⁴⁷

This research found that, among LGBTQI+ people aged 14-25 living in Ireland, 12 is the most common age at which a person knows they are LGBTQI+. The most common age to live as one's gender identity and/or to tell someone about their LGBTQI+ identity for the first time is age 14. For this cohort, age 14 was also the most common age at which a person experienced self-harm or suicidal thoughts, and the most common age of attempting suicide was 15.

This research found that a number of internal and external factors influence

LGBTQI+ people's experience of self-harm, suicide ideation and suicide attempts.

These factors include "self-hatred and inability to accept self", "confusion regarding one's identity", "ashamed to be LGBTQI+ due to negative reactions", "shame",

"bullying and discrimination", and "negative reactions from family/friends and wider society". Additionally, compared to the general Irish youth population, LGBTQI+ young

⁴⁷ Higgins A; Downes C; O'Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here](#).

people aged 14-18 experience three times the level of severe or extremely severe depression and anxiety, three times the rate of self-harm, twice the rate of suicidal thoughts, and five times the rate of suicide attempts.

Recommendation:

- **LGBTQ+ identities and experiences should be integrated, in an ageappropriate manner, across stages 1 through 4 of the Identity strand of the *Wellbeing Curriculum*.**

To facilitate this integration it is also strongly recommended that staff materials and resources accompanying the *Wellbeing Curriculum*, such as those on the Wellbeing Online Toolkit, include practical support materials and best practice guidelines on supporting a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+; the process of engaging with the pupil and their parent, guardian or caregiver; and proactive measures a school can put in place to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all LGBTQ+ pupils, whether they are out or not. This should be supported by clear procedural templates and guidelines published by the Department of Education. Together, these measures will help to safeguard the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ pupils who begin to understand and/or come out while in primary school.

This recommendation emerges from findings published as part of the *Belong To Primary* research which found that although 79% of primary staff feel comfortable with a pupil coming out as LGBTQ+, only three in 10 feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil comes out at as LGBTQ+ at school, and only one in four feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil wants to socially transition at school.⁴⁸ 56% of primary staff report that their school either has no formal supports for a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+, or that they are unsure of whether such supports are in place.

Commenting on this topic, research participants said:

“We listen and accept what [pupils] say and, in our classes we do our best to help them feel included and to ensure they are looked after.

However officially there is no support.”

“There is no support structure in place. It would be down to the teacher involved.”

“I know our school is not set up to support a child effectively in this situation [of coming out]. I would be very concerned for the child’s welfare and their needs going forward as there is no structure in place for this.... We do not have initiatives in place or training.”

⁴⁸ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

“I wouldn’t be uncomfortable about the information [of a pupil coming out as LGBTQ+], I would be uncomfortable about how to support the person/ what to say next/ the best steps forward for them. I would be worried that through ignorance/lack of training/information that I would inadvertently end up saying or doing the wrong thing.”

Recommendation:

- Staff materials and resources accompanying the *Wellbeing Curriculum*, such as those on the Wellbeing Online Toolkit, should include practical support materials and best practice guidelines on supporting a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+; the process of engaging with the pupil and their parent, guardian or caregiver; and proactive measures a school can put in place to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all LGBTQ+ pupils, whether they are out or not.

Emotional Awareness and Expression

As detailed under the previous Identity section, among LGBTQI+ people aged 14-25 living in Ireland, 12 is the most common age at which a person knows they are LGBTQI+; 14 is the most common age at which a person experienced self-harm or suicidal thoughts, and the most common age of attempting suicide was 15.⁴⁹ Internal and external factors, related to emotional awareness and expression, which influence LGBTQI+ people’s experience of self-harm, suicide ideation and suicide attempts include “self-hatred and inability to accept self”, “confusion regarding one’s identity” and “shame”.⁵⁰

The recently published *Belong To Primary* research found that only one in three primary staff feel very confident in their knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities and more than half of primary staff (57%) have never taken part in LGBTQ+ specific professional development.⁵¹

It is therefore recommended that Learning Outcomes under strands 3 and 4 of the Emotional Awareness and Expression Unit make explicit reference to LGBTQ+ identities as part of self-identity formation within the context of influences on emotions and feelings. It is also recommended that all primary staff be provided with training, resources and guidance on the topic of supporting LGBTQ+ young people’s mental health. Finally, it is recommended that *Belong To*’s e-learning module, ‘Educators and Youth Workers Supporting LGBTQ+ Young People’,⁵² and the elearning module produced by *Belong To* and

⁴⁹ Higgins A; Downes C; O’Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: *Belong To*. [Available here](#).

⁵⁰ Higgins A; Downes C; O’Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: *Belong To*. [Available here](#).

⁵¹ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: *Belong To* and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

⁵² <https://www.belongto.org/support-for-someone-else/at-school/post-primary/training-for-educators/>

Jigsaw, 'Supporting the Mental Health of LGBTI+ Young People',⁵³ both of which are self-directed and free to use, be included in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

Recommendations:

Learning Outcomes under strands 3 and 4 of the Emotional Awareness and Expression Unit should specifically name LGBTQ+ identities as part of self-identity formation within the context of influences on emotions and feelings.

All primary staff, both teaching and non-teaching, should be provided with training, resources and guidance on the topic of supporting

LGBTQ+ young people's mental health.

Belong To's e-learning module, 'Educators and Youth Workers Supporting LGBTQ+ Young People',⁵⁴ and the e-learning module produced by Belong To and Jigsaw, 'Supporting the Mental Health of

LGBTI+ Young People',²³ should be included in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

Relationships

Research demonstrates that LGBTQ+ young people are at high risk of experiencing bullying, friendship challenges, harassment and assault during their adolescence and school years. Published in 2022, findings from the *School Climate Survey* demonstrate the reality of school life for many LGBTQ+ post-primary students in Ireland.⁵⁵

The report states that, compared to Ireland's general youth population, LGBTQ+ post-primary students are:

Nine times more likely to report being deliberately excluded by peers;

Nine times more likely to report being the focus of rumours or lies;

Four times more likely to report being verbally harassed, including namecalling and being threatened;

Five times more likely to suffer physical harassment, including being shoved or pushed;

Four times as likely to feel lonely at school;

Three times as likely to feel like an outsider at school;

⁵³ <https://www.belongto.org/training/>

⁵⁴ <https://www.belongto.org/support-for-someone-else/at-school/post-primary/training-for-educators/> ²³ <https://www.belongto.org/training/>

⁵⁵ Pizmony-Levy, O. (2022) *The 2022 Irish School Climate Survey*. Research Report. Global Observatory of LGBTQ+ Education and Advocacy. Dublin and New York: Belong To and Teachers College, Columbia University. [Available here](#).

Twice as likely to face difficulties making friends in school; and

Three times as likely to feel disliked by other students.

Additionally, in the year prior to the research being carried out:

12% of LGBTQ+ students were physically assaulted, including being punched, kicked, or injured with a weapon;

46% of LGBTQ+ students were sexually harassed, including unwanted touching or sexual remarks; and

41% of LGBTQ+ students were cyberbullied over social media, phone, or email.

These experiences have long-term consequences. The *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research, with a sample of over 2,800 participants aged 14-84, demonstrates the long-term impact of anti-LGBTQI+ bullying.⁵⁶ Within the cohort of LGBTQI+ participants, LGBTQI+ people who had been bullied had statistically significantly higher symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress; higher rates of self-harm, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and eating disorders; and lower scores for happiness, self-esteem and resilience.

LGBTQ+ young people who contributed to Belong To's focus group in advance of this submission named how negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people, and a pattern of being isolated or targeted on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity, often began in primary school. The group felt that, as LGBTQ+ topics were not spoken about during their time in primary school and anti-LGBTQ+ comments were not challenged by school staff, casual homophobia, transphobia and biphobia went unchecked, facilitating a culture of exclusion and anti-LGBTQ+ bullying.

Key elements within the Learning Outcomes under Relationships that directly affect LGBTQ+ youth include friendships, respectful interactions, bullying and abuse. For this strand to be taught in a way that encompasses the challenges and experiences of LGBTQ+ pupils, and aligns with the requirement to prevent and tackle homophobic bullying and transphobic bullying in accordance with Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, the *Wellbeing Curriculum* should explicitly name and define homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and name these experiences within the Learning Outcomes of this strand. Additionally, so as to foster an inclusive environment within which healthy relationships between classmates can be fostered and interactions are respectful, LGBTQ+ inclusion and visibility across the school environment should be a key aim of primary staff.

⁵⁶ Higgins A; Downes C; O'Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here](#).

Recommendations:

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying should be specifically named within the Learning Outcomes of the Relationships strand.

LGBTQ+ inclusion and visibility should be named across the school environment as a key aim of primary staff within the Relationships strand.

Community and Belonging

Sense of Belonging

While relating to post-primary students, the findings of the *School Climate Survey* demonstrate how, for LGBTQ+ young people, a sense of belonging includes and extends beyond what is taught in the curriculum.⁵⁷ The research finds that:

including positive things about LGBTQ+ related topics in the curriculum means LGBTQ+ students are 11% more likely to feel accepted by the student body and 22% more likely to feel they belong in their school;

in schools with higher levels of staff support for LGBTQ+ youth, LGBTQ+ students were 33% more likely to feel they belong in their school and 35% more likely to feel accepted by the student body; and

when staff members intervened in homophobic remarks, LGBTQ+ students were 13% more likely to feel accepted by the student body and 14% more likely to feel they belong in their school.

In light of the above, it is recommended that specific forms of diversity, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community, are clearly named within Learning Outcomes under the Sense of Belonging strand. Following the holistic and integrated approach taken by the draft specification, it is also recommended LGBTQ+ identities and experiences be included across a range of strands, through clear and named reference in Learning Outcomes and/or inclusion in resource, training and support materials, to further support the intended outcome of this strand.

Recommendations:

Specific forms of diversity, such as sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion and membership of the Traveller community, should be clearly named within Learning Outcomes under the Sense of Belonging strand.

⁵⁷ Pizmony-Levy, O. (2022) *The 2022 Irish School Climate Survey*. Research Report. Global Observatory of LGBTQ+ Education and Advocacy. Dublin and New York: Belong To and Teachers College, Columbia University. [Available here](#).

LGBTQ+ identities and experiences should be included across a range of strands, through specific naming and reference in Learning Outcomes and/or inclusion in resource, training and support materials, to further support the intended outcome of the Sense of Belonging strand

Family

It is welcome that the Learning Outcomes under the Family strand name the inclusion of same-sex families within the definition of family structures, and we strongly encourage its retention.

The representation of same-gender parented families in the same way as different gender families in primary lessons is supported by 86% of primary staff, with four in five primary teaching staff already mentioning same-gendered parented families when talking about families generally.

Recommendation:

- **Representation of same-sex parented families should be retained in the *Wellbeing Curriculum*, and this inclusion should be supported with resources in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.**

Rights and Fairness

It is recommended that equality, inequality and discrimination be more clearly defined within the Learning Outcomes under the Rights and Fairness strand. These Learning Outcomes would be strengthened with specific reference to personal characteristics protected under the Equal Status Acts, namely gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

Sadly, members of Ireland's LGBTQ+ community continue to live in a climate of fear, despite significant progress on LGBTQ+ rights in recent years. *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* finds that 53% of LGBTQI+ people in Ireland feel unsafe holding hands with a same-sex partner in public, and over half of trans and non-binary people feel unsafe expressing their gender identity in public.⁵⁸ Primary educators have a key role to play in shaping a safer, more equal society for everyone, including the LGBTQ+ community. An age and stage appropriate understanding of inequality and discrimination as relate to members of the LGBTQ+ community is integral to achieving this.

⁵⁸ Higgins A; Downes C; O'Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here](#).

This is important not only to ensure that pupils fully benefit from the scope of Rights and Fairness strand, but also as a means of supporting the implementation of education and prevention strategies to deal with homophobic and transphobic bullying, as per Circular 0045/2013. The recently published *Belong To Primary* research reveals that the proportion of primary staff who feel confident in teaching about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying is relatively low, at 57%.⁵⁹ However, almost half of primary staff (44%) hear pupils make subtle derogatory jokes or comments about LGBTQ+ people in school. In order to foster a school environment where homophobic and transphobic bullying is not only addressed, but prevented, it is vital that pupils learn about equality, inequality and discrimination in clearly defined terms.

Recommendation:

- Strengthen the definitions of equality, inequality and discrimination with specific reference to personal characteristics protected under the Equal Status Acts, namely gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

Practical Considerations

The Wellbeing Curriculum and Wider Policy

It is welcome that the draft specification names its position in the context of wider policies and circulars relating to child protection and bullying. One such policy is Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* which has required all primary schools to name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, and explicitly detail education and prevention strategies to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying since 2013. The draft specification states that: “When preparing and planning for learning, teaching, and assessment related to the Wellbeing Curriculum, it is essential to consider wider policy and circulars which set out the mandated programmes within SPHE... the AntiBullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools sets out the requirements on schools in relation to preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour.”

The recently published *Belong To Primary* findings reveal a concerning lack of awareness among primary staff as to whether their school is following the requirements of Circular 0045/2013.²⁹ One in three primary staff either do not know whether their school’s anti-bullying policy mentions homophobic and biphobic bullying, or reported that this was not included. Only three in 10 primary staff reported that their school’s anti-bullying policy mentioned transphobic bullying and just half of primary staff were aware of information on

⁵⁹ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

education and/or prevention strategies relating to homophobic and transphobic bullying in their school's antibullying policy.

Cinéaltas, the national action plan on bullying, commits to updating the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* to, among other things, take account of gender identity bullying and provide guidance as to when an incident of bullying becomes a Child Protection Concern.

Within the context of the above research findings, it is strongly recommended that the Wellbeing Curriculum specifically names homophobic and transphobic bullying within this section, as part of Learning Outcomes that relate to bullying and in the Glossary, along with the provision of comprehensive supports relating to homophobic and transphobic bullying via the Wellbeing Online Toolkit. **Recommendations:**

Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying should be specifically named with reference the *Wellbeing Curriculum's* relationship with wider policy, and as part of Learning Outcomes that relate to bullying.

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Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying should be specifically and individually named within the Glossary.

Comprehensive supports relating to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying should be provided via the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

The Role of External Facilitators and Programmes

The draft specification states that “as a result of their established relationship with the children, their pedagogical and curriculum knowledge, the classroom teacher is uniquely and best positioned to effectively implement the *Wellbeing Curriculum*. Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum...

Consideration should also be given to the progression of children's learning and whether an external facilitator will complement this. Furthermore, alignment between the external facilitator and the *Wellbeing Curriculum* in terms of content, pedagogical approaches and the children's needs, age, and maturity should be considered.”

Belong To fully supports this approach and agrees that the classroom teacher is best placed to implement the Learning Outcomes under the Wellbeing Curriculum. Belong

To's post-primary school programmes, the LGBTQ+ Quality Mark and Stand Up Awareness Week, are designed to build the capacity of classroom teachers and school staff to lead on

the integration of LGBTQ+ inclusion to the school culture, environment and curriculum in a way that engages the whole school community and is sustained over time.

Within the context of the draft specification, the absence of significant representation of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences, beyond the inclusion of same-sex parents, risks limiting the extent to which these topics are taught in primary schools.

The *Belong To Primary* research shows that nine in 10 primary staff believe it is important for those working in primary schools to know about LGBTQ+ inclusivity, yet only one in three primary staff feel very confident in their knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities and more than half of primary staff (57%) have never taken part in LGBTQ+ specific professional development.⁶⁰ The findings show that where primary staff feel very confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, as compared to those who are not at all confident in planning such lessons, they are:

More likely – by a margin of 49% - to include same-gender parented families in lessons (93% v 44%).

More likely – by a margin of 65% - to use LGBTQ+ inclusive books and resources (88% v 23%).

More likely – by a margin of 61% - to include LGBTQ+ historical or public figures in lessons (86% v 25%).

Similarly, primary staff who feel very confident in teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ way are, by a margin of 65%, more likely to teach LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons as compared to primary staff who consider themselves not at all confident in teaching LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE (91% vs 26%).

The above figures show a clear gap between primary staff members' ambition to be LGBTQ+ inclusive in their practice, and their capacity to do so, owing to low levels of knowledge and confidence.

Clear, named inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics across the draft specification, including Learning Outcomes, is recommended to provide the basis for primary staff training on LGBTQ+ inclusion, and the role of external facilitators where a specific need for support regarding LGBTQ+ topics is identified.

Wellbeing Online Toolkit

⁶⁰ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

We welcome the inclusion of a Wellbeing Online Toolkit to support the successful implementation of the Wellbeing specification.

The recently published *Belong To Primary* research, a study involving 1,031 primary school staff's experience, attitudes, knowledge levels, practices and professional needs regarding LGBTQ+ inclusivity, provides useful insight as to their support needs in the context of this curriculum.³¹

Coming Out Supports

79% of primary staff feel comfortable with a pupil coming out as LGBTQ+. However, only three in 10 feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil comes out at as LGBTQ+ at school, and only one in four feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil wants to socially transition at school.³² Over half of primary staff (56%) either have no formal school supports for a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+, or are unsure of whether such supports are in place.

Commenting on this topic, one research participant said:

“This is a situation we have not had the opportunity to openly deal with. We know that a proportion of our pupils identify as LGBTQ+ but they don't publicly and openly come out when they are in primary school. There are a myriad of reasons for this. The only supports that we have to offer is the openness of staff, but our ethos prevents us from providing information or indeed talking to pupils during RSE regarding gender identity.”

To address this identified gap, the Wellbeing Online Toolkit should include practical support materials and best practice guidelines on supporting a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+; the process of engaging with the pupil and their parent, guardian or caregiver; and proactive measures a school can put in place to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all LGBTQ+ pupils, whether they are out or not. This should be supported by clear procedural templates and guidelines published by the Department of Education.

Recommendations:

The NCCA should engage with the Department of Education on developing clear procedural templates and guidelines on supporting LGBTQ+ pupils who come out in school.

The Wellbeing Online Toolkit should include practical support materials and guidelines on supporting a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+; the process of engaging with the pupil and their parent, guardian or

caregiver; and proactive measures a school can put in place to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all LGBTQ+ pupils, whether they are out or not.

LGBTQ+ Inclusive Materials

An overwhelming majority of primary staff (85%) think that LGBTQ+ characters should be included in primary lessons in the same way as heterosexual characters.³³ However, one in three primary teaching staff never use books and resources with LGBTQ+ people represented. Similarly, one in four primary staff do not feel confident teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way, and one in four primary teaching staff never teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.

Speaking to the importance of accessing LGBTQ+ inclusive materials, research participants said:

“The lack of resources and books and RSE /SPHE materials is a really massive issue. The lack of visibility of different relationships and family types make it seem like they don’t exist.”

“Representation is very important - inclusion in stories, pictures seeing people in LGBTQ+ communities in their lives in junior years.

Introduction of more targeted support and role models for the children to speak to in middle and later years.”

It is vital that supports, materials and resources provided in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit reflect the diversity of Irish society today, including representation of LGBTQ+ people and experiences. As mentioned above by research participants, it is important that LGBTQ+ identities are not isolated solely to resources dedicated to teaching about LGBTQ+ specific themes. Visibility across a variety of materials is required to ensure that pupils can develop a holistic understanding of difference and diversity.

Recommendations:

- Supports, resources and materials provided in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit should represent LGBTQ+ identities and experiences.

Primary Staff Training and Capacity Building

Nine in 10 primary staff believe it is important for those working in primary schools to know about LGBTQ+ inclusivity, yet only one in three primary staff feel very confident in their knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities and over half of primary staff (57%) have never taken part

in LGBTQ+ specific professional development.⁶¹ The *Belong To Primary* findings show a consistent desire among primary staff to equip themselves with the confidence, skills and knowledge to be more LGBTQ+ inclusive in their practice, by means of training.

Indeed, the research findings show that where primary staff feel very confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, as compared to those who are not at all confident in planning such lessons, they are:

More likely – by a margin of 49% - to include same-gender parented families in lessons (93% v 44%).

More likely – by a margin of 65% - to use LGBTQ+ inclusive books and resources (88% v 23%).

More likely – by a margin of 61% - to include LGBTQ+ historical or public figures in lessons (86% v 25%).

Similarly, primary staff who feel very confident in teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ way are, by a margin of 65%, more likely to teach LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons as compared to primary staff who consider themselves not at all confident in teaching LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE (91% vs 26%). **Recommendations:**

- **The NCCA should engage with relevant stakeholders to produce a range of CPD programmes on areas relating to LGBTQ+ identities, experiences and inclusion.**

Glossary

Family Structures Definition

It is welcome that the Glossary clearly states that same-sex families should be included within the definition of family structures, and we strongly encourage its retention. The representation of same-gender parented families in the same way as different-gender families in primary lessons is supported by 86% of primary staff, with four in five primary teaching staff already mentioning same-gendered parented families when talking about families generally.

Bullying Definition

The definition of bullying is broad, and makes reference to five forms of bullying, namely identity bullying, cyber bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment. These forms of bullying are not currently defined within the Glossary, and their individual

⁶¹ *Belong To Primary*:

. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick

inclusion as defined terms is vital so as to ensure that they are fully and consistently understood among primary staff.

Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying

It is vital that homophobic and transphobic bullying be individually listed and defined within the Wellbeing specification's Glossary.

Since 2013 the Department of Education and Skills' Circular 0045/2013, *AntiBullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* has required all primary schools to name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, and explicitly detail education and prevention strategies to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying. The new Wellbeing specification must be aligned with, and support the continued implementation of, existing Department of Education procedures.

The recently published *Belong To Primary* findings reveal a concerning lack of awareness among primary staff as to whether their school is following the requirements of Circular 0045/2013.⁶² One in three primary staff either do not know whether their school's anti-bullying policy mentions homophobic and biphobic bullying, or reported that this was not included. Only three in 10 primary staff reported that their school's anti-bullying policy mentioned transphobic bullying and just half of primary staff were aware of information on education and/or prevention strategies relating to homophobic and transphobic bullying in their school's antibullying policy.

The proportion of primary staff who feel confident in teaching about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying is relatively low at 57%.⁶³ However, almost half of primary staff (44%) hear pupils make subtle derogatory jokes or comments about LGBTQ+ people in school. A lack of confidence in teaching about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, teamed with the prevalence of casual LGBTQ+phobia in primary schools, creates a protection gap for pupils at risk of experiencing homophobic and transphobic bullying.

The *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research demonstrates the long-term impact of homophobic and transphobic bullying on LGBTQI+ people. Within the cohort of LGBTQI+ participants, LGBTQI+ people who had been bullied had statistically significantly higher symptoms of depression, anxiety and stress; higher rates of selfharm, suicidal thoughts, suicide attempts and eating disorders; and lower scores for happiness, self-esteem and resilience.⁶⁴

⁶² Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here.](#)

⁶³ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here.](#)

⁶⁴ Higgins A; Downes C; O'Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Belong To. [Available here.](#)

As such, the Wellbeing specification must, at a minimum, name and define homophobic and transphobic bullying.

LGBTQ+ Terminology

Only one in three primary staff feel very confident in their knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities, and one in four primary staff do not feel confident in their knowledge of

gender identity.⁶⁵ As such, the Glossary should detail specific terminology relating to LGBTQ+ identities and experiences, including terms relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, pronoun use and coming out.

Consultation with LGBTQ+ Young People

Introduction

In advance of Belong To's submission to the NCCA on the draft Wellbeing Specification for primary level, a consultation was held with Belong To's Youth Advisory Panel. The Youth Advisory Panel is a group of 30 LGBTQ+ young people aged 14-23 who support and advise Belong To's work across policy, research, advocacy and campaigns. This consultation took the form of a workshop, and was held in April 2024 during a focused youth engagement day. The workshop was supported by youth workers and facilitated by Belong To's Policy and Participation Coordinator.

To facilitate an open and non-guided discussion, young people worked in groups across each of the four thematic areas below:

- What should primary pupils learn in relation to LGBTQ+ topics?
- What do LGBTQ+ or questioning primary pupils need?
- What do teachers need around LGBTQ+ inclusion at primary level?
- What do parents need around LGBTQ+ inclusion at primary level?

When all groups had discussed and given feedback on each of the below questions, all participants collectively discussed the key recommendations arising from the workshop. Young people's feedback and recommendations are detailed below, arranged in accordance with each of the four thematic questions. This feedback has guided Belong To's submission and recommendations in relation to the draft Wellbeing specification.

⁶⁵ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#).

What should primary pupils learn in relation to LGBTQ+ topics?

LGBTQ+ Representation and Awareness

Young people engaged in the workshop felt that it was important for LGBTQ+ people to be represented across the primary school curriculum. The group were keen to stress the need for this to 'build as pupils grow up', giving the example of reading a book that includes two mothers for younger age groups and building to learning about LGBTQ+ identities in later primary years. In particular, young people who took part in the workshop highlighted the need to cover the 'basics' of LGBTQ+ identities among older primary pupils by providing a definition of LGBTQ+ and explaining what pronouns are and why they are important.

Young people felt that LGBTQ+ representation is important for all primary pupils, as it reflects the reality of the world around them. The group also felt that this kind of representation could support teachers in informal conversations about the family dynamics of pupils within the class, for example a pupil with same-gender parents or with an LGBTQ+ sibling. The group strongly felt that this should be supported by access to age-appropriate books and media that reflect the diversity of Irish society, including gender, sexual orientation, disability, race and family origin. Even though young people felt it is very positive to have LGBTQ+ representation in SPHE or during Pride celebrations, it was expressed that only featuring LGBTQ+ people in these specific areas risked separating out a person's LGBTQ+ identity from their day to day life.

In particular, LGBTQ+ young people felt that it was very important for older primary pupils to learn about LGBTQ+ history and in particular why Pride celebrations are important. The group felt that this would foster a sense of belonging among LGBTQ+ pupils, and open positive conversations about LGBTQ+ topics among pupils who are not LGBTQ+.

Empathy and Acceptance

Young people felt that it was important for representation of LGBTQ+ people and identities to be integrated to broader SPHE and Wellbeing topics related to empathy, friendships and community. The group felt that, when it came to post-primary school, one of the main issues that leads to the bullying and social exclusion of LGBTQ+ students is a lack of empathy and understanding in relation to their identity. In response, young people felt that primary school was a crucial time to include LGBTQ+ people within broader conversations around difference, each person being unique, and acceptance of yourself and others. For older primary cohorts, the group recommended including allyship in broader teaching about rights and equality in society. The group also felt that the classroom and school

environment more broadly should be a safe space for pupils to think about and question their identity.

Curriculum Topics

Regarding specific curriculum topics, young people felt it was vitally important for all primary pupils to learn about consent in an age- and stage-appropriate manner. The group felt that programmes such as Stay Safe were very important for primary pupils, and noted how the theme of consent could be integrated across a variety of topics and lessons, along with general interaction among pupils, so that awareness of consent is embedded in all interactions that pupils have in and outside of school.

In addition, young people felt that understanding and challenging gender stereotypes is important for primary pupils as they understand themselves, others and the world around them. An awareness of trans and intersex identities, taught in an informed and respectful way, was also noted as something that is important for the SPHE strand of Wellbeing.

What do LGBTQ+ or questioning primary pupils need?

School Culture

The most prominent feedback from LGBTQ+ young people regarding what LGBTQ+ or questioning pupils need related to the broad school culture and environment. The group felt that the school should be an accepting and supportive environment, inside and outside the classroom. This includes ensuring that there is no shaming, othering or embarrassment of LGBTQ+ or questioning pupils by fellow pupils or school staff. LGBTQ+ young people felt that putting up posters with information about LGBTQ+ youth and family support services, and general LGBTQ+ inclusive posters indicating that people of all identities are welcome in the school, were important for this. Additionally, the group felt that it was important for LGBTQ+ or questioning pupils to know that they have a place of safety in their school. This could be an LGBTQ+ or diversity group or club that any pupil can attend, or identifying dedicated staff in the school who have been trained in supporting LGBTQ+ pupils.

Teaching and Resources

Within the classroom, LGBTQ+ young people felt that it was vital for teaching staff to be knowledgeable of LGBTQ+ identities, supportive of LGBTQ+ or questioning pupils, and willing and able to answer appropriate questions about LGBTQ+ identities and

experiences. This includes having the stories and experiences of LGBTQ+ people included in stories and teaching resources in the classroom and library. Additionally, the group felt it is important for all primary pupils to be taught relationship and sexuality education that represents LGBTQ+ identities in an ageappropriate manner. The group also felt that education on misinformation was vital for primary pupils, as many have access to online information and need support in knowing how to identify reliable and unreliable information.

Facilities and Procedures

Regarding school facilities, LGBTQ+ highlighted the importance of having access to gender-neutral bathrooms along with a variety of uniform options. The group felt that a variety of uniform options was important for all primary pupils as a means of challenging gender stereotypes, and shouldn't only be reserved for trans or nonbinary pupils. For example, cisgender girls should have the option of wearing trousers to school if they would prefer. In relation to school procedures, LGBTQ+ young people stressed the need for there to be clear protections against homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and for the school's anti-bullying policy and related procedures to be clearly communicated to pupils, staff, parents and caregivers. Additionally, the group felt it would be helpful for primary schools to have an anonymous reporting procedure for pupils to draw attention to anti-LGBTQ+ behaviour within the school, for the benefit of questioning pupils or LGBTQ+ pupils who are not out.

What do teachers need around LGBTQ+ inclusion at primary level?

Training

The main point of discussion among LGBTQ+ young people in relation to what primary teachers need around LGBTQ+ inclusion was training. The group felt that this training should span several areas, including how to respond to anti-LGBTQ+ bullying, how to teach an LGBTQ+ inclusive curriculum, and general information about LGBTQ+ terms and experiences. Young people felt it was vital for this to be supported by the availability of LGBTQ+ teaching and support materials and resources for primary staff. The group felt that LGBTQ+ inclusion training should be certified and evidence-based, and that education around LGBTQ+ identities and supporting LGBTQ+ or questioning pupils should be integrated to formalised initial teacher education courses. Vivaly, LGBTQ+ young people felt that the Department of Education and school leadership should foster a willingness to learn about LGBTQ+ topics among primary staff, by highlighting the importance of this for LGBTQ+ or questioning pupils and their families.

Questions on LGBTQ+ Topics

Additionally, the group stressed the need for primary staff to be supported around questions in the classroom. This included having the knowledge and confidence to respond to genuine and appropriate questions asked about LGBTQ+ topics by pupils, and in turn creating space in the classroom for pupils to have the ability to ask genuine and appropriate questions about these topics. LGBTQ+ young people also felt it was important for primary staff to feel confident in setting boundaries within the classroom around what kinds of questions are appropriate relating to LGBTQ+ topics, and what kinds of questions are not appropriate to ask people who are LGBTQ+.

Respect and Visibility

Finally, LGBTQ+ pupils felt that primary staff needed to be educated on understanding the importance of LGBTQ+ visibility and respect for LGBTQ+ identities in primary schools. This should include training on their school's policies, including anti-bullying and inclusion policies, and how they relate to LGBTQ+ pupils, and education around internalised personal bias. The group felt it was important for primary staff to be encouraged to be open-minded, and to create space among the staff to have constructive conversations, ask questions and identify knowledge gaps in relation to LGBTQ+ identities.

What do parents need around LGBTQ+ inclusion at primary level?

Information

Above all else, LGBTQ+ young people felt that parents needed information, about LGBTQ+ identities, how these identities and topics would be taught in school, and why LGBTQ+ inclusion is important at primary level. The group felt that having this information would support parents if their child came out to them as LGBTQ+ during primary school or in later years, as it would reduce fear and concern around their child's wellbeing. LGBTQ+ young people thought it would be a good idea for parents to be provided with leaflets and resources detailing how Wellbeing and particularly the SPHE strand would be taught, including a note highlighting how all elements of SPHE, including LGBTQ+ identities, are taught in an age-appropriate manner. Additionally, the group felt it would benefit parents to have support and information around the early signs of mental health challenges in children and young people, so that support can be given as soon as possible.

Communication & Support

The group felt it was important for pupils to be encouraged to communicate with their parents and caregivers around a range of topics, including mental health, bullying, and if they are exploring their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. LGBTQ+ young people felt that parent support groups and information nights, hosted by schools or in the community, would be a good space for parents to learn from each other. In particular, the group felt it would be helpful for parents and caregivers who had gone through the process of supporting their child coming out to speak to parents and caregivers who are earlier in that process, to share their learning and experiences. At a broader level, LGBTQ+ young people felt that it would be helpful for there to be a designated person within the school whose role is support parents and families connect with the school. Some young people in the group noted how some schools have a dedicated Home School Community Liaison, and the group felt that it would be beneficial for all schools to have this designated role.

British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums

Submission on behalf of the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA)
Conservation Education Committee Irish Region.

Members include: Dublin Zoo, Galway Atlantaquaria, Emerald Park, Fota Wildlife Park, Secret Valley, Ardmore Open Farm.

With feedback on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications in the following areas:

- Social and Environmental Education (SEE)
- Science, Technology and Engineering (STE)

BIAZA's purpose is to bring together the best zoos and aquariums in Britain and Ireland to create a better future for the planet and its inhabitants. For more information see <https://biaza.org.uk/>

Social and Environmental Education (SEE)

- Given the climate crisis we are now facing, we welcome the prominence given to the topic of the environment and sustainable living by its inclusion as one of the three categories of learning in Social and Environmental Education.
- While there is a welcome reference to active citizenship via the key competencies outlined in the Primary Curriculum Framework, this is not necessarily reflected in the learning outcomes. Under the 'Environment and Sustainable Living' Strand, there is an opportunity to place a focus on students at Stage 3 and 4 planning and designing an action to address a societal/environmental problem they have identified. This would allow students to become more aware of what they can do as individuals, in their school, in their community and beyond, as a counter to feelings of powerlessness and eco-anxiety.
- We welcome the reference to a pedagogy that provides opportunities for children to engage in rich learning experiences outdoors, given the known benefits for wellbeing and nature connection that comes from outdoor learning. However, in terms of learning outcomes, while there is a focus on nature connection at Stage 1, this does not appear again in later stages. We would argue that connection to nature should be a focus at all stages, given its associations with wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviour.

Science, Technology and Engineering (STE)

- We welcome the learning outcome in Stage 4 that focuses on how science can serve to understand and solve biodiversity-related problems. However, the phrase ‘biodiversity-related problems’ is vague. We suggest this be reflected in different terminology as one of: ‘biodiversity crisis’, ‘problems related to biodiversity loss’ or ‘the decline in biodiversity levels at a local and global level’.
- We welcome the focus on reducing energy consumption and promoting clean energy as a means of protecting the natural world. There is an opportunity missed to also explore the sustainable/unsustainable production and use of materials under the ‘Materials’ strand, particularly with an emphasis on the circular economy and its benefits for the planet.

Catholic Education Partnership

Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications Consultation

Name:	Alan Hynes
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Does your organisation wish to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website?	Yes
Does your organisation wish to have this written submission published on the NCCA website?	Yes

Introduction

We welcome the publication of these draft curriculum specifications and the consultation process in which the NCCA is currently engaged. We recognise the partnership approach of the NCCA with stakeholders in the education system and engage with this consultation in that spirit. Of necessity, our submission mainly addresses where we believe improvements can be made, but this is in a context of our welcome for much of the developments it proposes.

Catholics value education as a holistic endeavour, with the full totality of the person, physical, moral, intellectual, emotional and social, being brought to flourish. We believe that humans are made in the image and likeness of God, and, as such, regardless of ethnicity, identity, culture or creed, have an inherent dignity and nobility. This belief in the inherent dignity of the human person is what underpins, and is the inspiration for, the development and grounding of human rights over many centuries. A holistic education seeks the revelation of the full dignity of human life with all its complexities and diversity.

Coupled with the value Catholics place on education as a holistic endeavour is a vision for how education may serve the common good, local and global. These were both given a restatement and refocus in Pope Francis's initiative of the [Global Compact on Education](#). The Compact invites all involved in education to take up the following seven commitments:

1. **To make human persons the centre of every educational programme**, in order to foster their distinctiveness and their capacity for relationship with others against the spread of the throwaway culture.

2. **To listen to the voices of children and young people** in order to build together a future of justice, peace and a dignified life for every person.
3. **To advance women** through encouraging the full participation of girls and young women in education.
4. **To empower the family** by considering the family as the first and essential place of education.
5. **To welcome** by educating and being educated on the need for acceptance and, in particular, openness to the most vulnerable and marginalized.
6. **To be committed to finding new ways of understanding the economy, politics, growth, and progress** that can truly stand at the service of the human person and the entire human family, within the context of an integral ecology.
7. **To safeguard and cultivate our common home**, protecting it from the exploitation of its resources and to adopt a more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment.

Many of these will resonate with many features of the draft curriculum, reinforcing and giving life to the values mentioned throughout the curriculum.

The State too values education as a holistic endeavour, recognising in Article 41(1) of Bunreacht na hÉireann the "right and duty of parents to provide ... for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical, and social education of their children." The State gives practical expression to this in the Education Act, 1998¹. Section 9(d) in mandating schools 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".

The nurturing of a sense of meaning and purpose is also essential to anything pertaining to a person's capacity to lead a fulfilling and healthy life (for example, see the wealth of research being published from [Columbia University from its Spirituality and Science Institute](#)- particularly in relation to neurological development and resilience). The spiritual aspect to the human person is, among other aspects of a holistic education, essential to developing that capacity. It can also be understood as an evidenced based, i.e. 'real', human phenomenon.

Schools exist within a pluralist society and within themselves contain a plurality of worldviews. The curriculum, while situated within the ethos of the school, should and does encourage dialogue as a method of encounter with others amidst said plurality. This is pluralism understood along epistemological lines (see Prof Jan De Groof, Dr Terrence Merrigan), that seeks engagement with

¹ Hereafter referred to as the 'Act of 1998'.

difference, rather than seeking to ignore it, or to pretend that a neutral ethical position, 'a view from nowhere', can exist. This point is emphasised by many of the foremost philosophers of the 20th Century to present; thinkers whose ideas have heavily influenced philosophies of education: Husserl, Heidegger, Hans-George Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, Levinas, Taylor, Paulo Freire, Gert Biesta to name but a few (and note that none of these thinkers is operating from religious perspectives).

For schools with a Catholic ethos, this means that the curriculum will be taught within the context of the Church's teaching and with Gospel values. This is not to be understood as exclusionary. Within a school having a Catholic ethos, the Church's teaching will be presented with confidence in accordance with the requirements of the Act of 1998 (Sections 9 & 15) and in line with the moral duty owed to parents/guardians and in a spirit of respectful encounter and dialogue with other philosophies of life, inside and outside the school. The Roman poet Terence's famous line, *Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto* ("I am human, I consider nothing human alien to me"), applies also to Church teaching, grounded as it is in the full humanity of Jesus Christ.

General Observations

Role of Characteristic Spirit/Ethos

It is notable that the specifications (and the primary framework itself) contain no discernible overarching ethical perspective, even while making several references to 'values' (and attitudes and dispositions). The source of these values etc. is never identified. The specifications themselves contains no *telos*², no end or purpose to the activities it discusses. There is no underlying coherent anthropology, no explicit vision of the good life that a child might aspire to.

A notable absence from the specifications is any mention of the characteristic spirit or ethos³ of the school, or the Patron's Programme. Together, these propose a particular ethical view, grounded in a definite anthropology and vision of the good life.

This absence of mention of the ethos of the school and the Patron's Programme, and cross-curricular links being made with both, is, in our view, the key notable feature lacking in the draft specifications. This applies to all schools of varying patronage, denominational and multid denominational. All patron bodies have developed a Patron's Programme and seek to actively support their schools' ethos. All types of ethos promote a particular ethical view and ground their school's approach to education in that. The

² From Aristotelian philosophy: the explanation of something (in this case, human action) as a function of its purpose or goal.

³ Hereafter any mention of ethos should be understood to encompass 'characteristic spirit' as understood in the Education Act, 1998, as the "cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct of the school" - Sec 15(2)(b).

ethos of the schools should be recognised throughout the curriculum as the source informing the values referred to throughout.

Further, the Patrons Programme should be named explicitly as a curricular area: i.e. 6 curricular areas; the Patrons Programme being the 6th. This would be consistent with the 1999 Curriculum where the 'Religious or ethical education is the responsibility of the different school patron bodies' was clearly identified as one of the seven areas of the curriculum.

Role of Parents/Guardians⁴

With respect to the role of parents, the absence of recognition for a school's ethos and its Patron's Programme fails to honour the constitutional and legal framework of education in Ireland. Parents are entitled to have clarity on what informs the "religious and moral, intellectual, physical, and social education of their children⁵". The ethos of the school, which is clearly identified in the Admission Policies⁶ of all schools, provides for that clarity and informs the parental school choice. The draft specifications ought to clearly acknowledge this. In leaving it vague through the absence of clear links, it creates an uncertainty which undermines the role of parents as the primary educators of their children.

The specifications need to provide for the role of parents, as the primary educators of their children, to be respected in a practical way. This is something called for in the 4th commitment of the *Global Compact on Education*. This is also a fundamental legal and moral right, protected by the State through Article 42(1) of *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, confirmed also in [Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights](#):

"... In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."

Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 applies to all subjects, not only the Religious/Ethical/Multi-belief and Values Education (the Patron's Programme). Any aspect of the curriculum addressing ethical concerns (including 'values') thus falls within the scope of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1, as confirmed by *Jimenez Alonso and Jimenez Merino v. Spain*; *Dojan and Others v. Germany*; and *Appel-Irrgang and Others v. Germany*.

⁴ Hereafter 'Parent' shall be understood to refer to a parent, guardian or carer.

⁵ *Bunreacht na hÉireann*, Article 41(1)

⁶ It is noteworthy that the obligation to clearly identify the ethos of a school in its Admissions Policy arises from the recent Education (Admission to Schools) Act, 2018.

The neglect of ethos risks cutting across the principle of subsidiarity, inherent in *Bunreacht na hEireann* and the Act of 1998. Subsidiarity is the principle that seeks for issues to be addressed at the lowest institutional level that is competent to resolve them and that higher levels of organisations should never take over other functions that can be handled more competently by lower levels. While a central principle of the European Union, and embedded in various international human rights conventions, it is a principle which is not found in the centralising tendencies of the Irish State. By unmooring the 'values' of a schools from its ethos, the curriculum risks an impoverished anthropology, informing a bland, uniform vision of ethical life, contrary to the essence of a truly pluralist state, undermining the "cultural, educational, moral, religious, social, linguistic and spiritual values and traditions which inform and are characteristic of the objectives and conduct"⁷ of particular schools. Instead, the draft curriculum risks imposing a 'view from above' on all schools.

The ethos of Catholic schools, at their best and when in accordance with Catholic thinking on education, does not have a uniform ethos. Rather, there is room made for the particular charism, or character, of the school to inform its ethos. This charism is informed by the founding religious order or parish of the school, the character of the diocese and parish it is located in, and the story of the school itself. The ethos is rooted in the local while being informed by the global Catholic faith.

Aside from the vagueness with respect to just what ethics will inform the 'values' referred to throughout the specifications, the composition of the specifications themselves fails to respect the central role of parents as their children's primary educators, in that they do not provide clarity on just what will be taught. The vagueness as to education outcomes renders the specifications somewhat opaque. The specifications ought to be composed in a manner that provides accessibility and clarity for parents, balancing that with the due respect owed to teacher agency. This agency is grounded in the professionalism of teachers and the trust of parents. This would be better facilitated by making what informs the values permeating the curriculum clearer, rather than being left unidentified.

Active Citizenship

We welcome the inclusion of 'Active Citizenship' and see it as an element consistent with the *Global Compact on Education*, in particular to the 6th and 7th commitments. The Catholic understanding of active citizenship is given eloquent and powerful expression in the *Instrumentum Laboris* issued on the Compact, and is worth quoting at length:

Today, this invitation is addressed to all those who have political, administrative, religious and educational responsibilities: it is time to listen to the cry that rises from the depths of the hearts

⁷ Sec 15(2)(b) of the Act of 1998.

of our young people. It is a cry for peace, a cry for justice, a cry for brotherhood and sisterhood, a cry for outrage, a cry for responsibility and a commitment to change regarding all the wicked fruits generated by the current throwaway culture. And it is exactly in the power of this cry coming from young people - which finds ever more space in the many manifestations to which they give life - that everyone, especially those engaged in education, must find the strength to nourish that revolution of tenderness which will save our world with its too many wounds. Therefore, the need to stimulate the attractiveness of healthy risk-taking, and awaken our restlessness about reality, emerges with all its strength. To dare being restless means to risk exiting from ourselves, which entails "running the risk - as we read in [Evangelii Gaudium](#) - of a face-to-face encounter with others, with their physical presence which challenges us, with their pain and their pleas, with their joy which infects us in our close and continuous interaction" (n. 88).

Only in this way will passion recover its momentum and become the protagonist of our existence, educating us to conscious and responsible lifestyles. It is precisely by using our own space of freedom well, in fact, that we contribute to personal and community growth: "We must not think that these efforts are not going to change the world. They benefit society, often unbeknown to us, for they call forth a goodness which, albeit unseen, inevitably tends to spread" ([Laudato SI](#), n. 212).⁸

Active Citizenship, in a Catholic context, is understood as faith in action, love of neighbour made manifest in the world, as we serve the common good, local and global. Active Citizenship must be nurtured in a manner that is age and stage appropriate. Of necessity, it must be informed by an ethic. However, recognition of this need for an underlying ethic is given no recognition throughout all of the specifications addressed below. As already discussed, the ethos of the schools should be recognised throughout the curriculum as the source informing the values referred to throughout. This should be true for all schools under all forms of patronage.

Sensitivity needs to be demonstrated in the specifications that 'Active Citizenship' not be understood as engaging children in a particular political view or into particular forms of activism. Politics, understood as the public contestation of power and values, has traditionally been understood as an arena into which we mature and graduate into as we move from childhood to adulthood. Parents have an important and primary role in guiding their children into that arena. As such, caution should be demonstrated lest 'Active Citizenship' in the specifications be seen to supplant that parental role. It

⁸ [Global Compact on Education – Vademecum](#), p.32-33

should be clear that the State, through the curriculum, is not attempting to create activists dedicated to a particular political point of view.

Related to active citizenship throughout the curriculum is the addressing of cultural differences, within the context of the school community, the diversity of Irish society, and the greater global diversity of peoples and cultures. We welcome this as being consistent with the value Catholic education places on respectful dialogue and encounter with those of other faiths, beliefs, and cultures. When we engage in respectful dialogue and encounter "we learn to accept others and their different ways of living, thinking and speaking. We can then join one another in taking up the duty of serving justice and peace, which should become a basic principle of all our exchanges. A dialogue which seeks social peace and justice is in itself, beyond all merely practical considerations, an ethical commitment which brings about a new social situation"⁹

Essential to the capacity to engage in this respectful dialogue and encounter is a confident sense of one's own identity, and build from that to a confident understanding of one's community, country, and the world. This progression from the individual to the global level is a process of education, literally educere, to lead or draw out. The specifications would benefit from the explicit mention of the need to build respect for others through graduations of levels, from the individual to the global. Only with a confident and secure sense of our own identity can we have "a love capable of welcoming differences, and the priority of the dignity of every human being over his or her ideas, opinions, and practices."¹⁰ These observations will be particularly relevant to the SEE curriculum specification, but have general application throughout the curriculum.

Ireland has experienced a significant increase in the diversity of our society over the last two decades. To date, insufficient concern has been shown by policy makers in education and other areas, on the question of the making and remaking of the demos, a sense of a people in a particular political policy holding a sufficient degree of values and culture in common as to make for a cohesive society and with sufficient levels of solidarity as to maintain a democracy. The active citizenship and inter-cultural elements of the curriculum will play an important part in the making and remaking of demos in Ireland in building a sense of common identity. This should not have as its goal that of assimilation - this has not been effective in France - but rather as a sense of identity that is diverse, but has enough in common that provides for a harmony of diversity on an underlying theme of Ireland's history, culture, and traditions, understood in a European and global context.

⁹ Pope Francis, *[Evangelii Gaudium](#)*, The Holy See, 24 Nov 2013, n. 250

¹⁰ Pope Francis, *[Fratelli tutti](#)*, The Holy See, 3 Oct 2020, n. 191)

The European Dimension

Neglected throughout most of the specifications is any mention of the European (EU) dimension to citizenship. All Irish citizens, and all citizens of other EU member states resident in Ireland, share a common EU citizenship. This is shared with the citizens of all EU member states, resident within the EU or elsewhere. In the context of 'active citizenship' it also appears a loss that the European dimension is ignored given the common legal status of Irish citizenship with that of citizenship of the EU.

One weakness of the European project, particularly in terms of its democratic legitimacy, has been the failure, thus far, to construct a EU wide sense of demos. The common good of Ireland and the EU requires that this be addressed. Further, as mentioned *above*, in building a sense of respect for diversity at a global level, it is necessary to work from the individual to the global. Skipping, as the curriculum does, from Ireland to the global, missing out on the European dimension, fails to draw out by graduation that secure sense of identity.

Dr Joachim Fischer, [in a paper reflecting on the European Dimension in Irish Education](#) on the 50th Anniversary of Ireland joining the EEC/EU, identifies a risk inherent in moving from the national to the global, ignoring the European:

That this is likely to continue is evident in the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework, the blueprint for the coming decades, which is otherwise full of exciting new educational departures. The framework claims to prepare children for 'tomorrow's world' but takes no account of European integration; in fact, the words Europe and European are conspicuous by their absence in the whole text. The competency of 'being an active citizen' - a hugely significant and welcome new area that the framework introduces - 'develops children's capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national and global levels, and fosters their ability to contribute positively and compassionately towards the creation of a more sustainable and just world' (NCCA, 2020, *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*, p.8).

These are worthwhile overall aims, but it is striking that the world outside Ireland appears to be treated equally as elements of the 'global level'; there is no level between the national and the global. This does nothing to enable children, even at this young age, to grasp the basics of European citizenship, of which they can see evidence with their own eyes on the cover of the maroon passports. Nor is any distinction made between EU languages and other languages.

Alone among the specifications, the SEE specification addresses the European dimension with respect to the geography and history aspects of the curriculum. This is welcome, but the contrast with the treatment of the European dimension elsewhere in the curriculum is stark.

The neglect of the European dimension across the curriculum should be addressed.

Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification

We welcome this specification and the evident fruits of consultation on this curriculum area. We further welcome the evident respect for the professionalism of teachers and teacher agency in responding to the specification and in the other specifications mentioned below.

Rightful recognition is given to integration through the arts which involves connecting ideas across curricular areas (p.28). However, we suggest that there are two significant omissions: a) with the STE curriculum - this is discussed in the STE specification feedback below; b) with the Patron's Programme. The latter, in both denominational and multid denominational schools, contain many obvious cross-curricular links with the Arts curriculum. Catholic schools have a wealth of artistic heritage to draw on; Irish, European, and global.

The specification, like the primary framework itself, as with the other specifications, makes no mention of the spiritual dimension as an inspiration for art (despite the vast amount of art and music across history that is inspired or informed by spirituality). The specification, in neglecting this fundamental aspect of the human person, presents an impoverished understanding of much of the artistic, musical, and cultural heritage of Ireland, Europe and the world. Further, it also ignores the legal mandate presented in Section 9 of the Act of 1998, in not providing for the spiritual development of the person.

Similar to the MFL specification below, the Arts specification ignores the European dimension. Given the obvious connections between Irish and other European peoples' and countries' art, music, and heritage, it seems a loss that these connections and shared heritage should not have some recognition in the specification.

Primary Language Curriculum – Including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

The inclusion of an aspiration to introduce **MFLs** to the primary curriculum is welcome. The specification contains a high degree of ambition with respect to what may be achieved with the inclusion of MFLs. We welcome mention of engagement with a plurality of languages and cultures as a way to engage with, understand, and then appreciate other cultures.

The specification alone among the other specifications addressed in this submission gives an account of identity (in this case the child's identity in so far as it relates to their home and other acquired languages) emerging first from language acquisition in their home, and then with others as their social engagement broadens. This is a tangible recognition of how identity is formed: starting from a secure sense of oneself, the person is then ready and inclined to engage respectfully with others. Other specifications could usefully employ this approach.

¹¹ Other than passing mentions in the draft Wellbeing specification.

The explicit mention of partnerships with parents is welcome, as is the respect for the home language of the child, and that this should be supported and maintained. This resonates with the concerns embedded in the 4th commitment of the *Global Compact on Education*, in so far as it helps to empower families as the first place of education, but also to the 5th commitment in assisting in providing welcome and acceptance to immigrant families and communities in Ireland. The practical aspect of how this partnership is to be achieved will require further resources and supports being provided to schools. We welcome that the specification, in seeking to support the home languages of children, respects that the linguistic characteristic of school communities¹², in line with the requirements of the Act of 1998.

Our main concern lies not so much with the specification itself, but with the resourcing and supporting of this initiative, particularly with respect to the professional development of teachers. The supports required will be significant if the aspiration and ambition of the MFL specification is to be realised. A secondary concern, as with Arts above, relates to the jump from the local or Irish context to the global. The specification correctly does not seek to have any hierarchy of languages but seeks to explore them on equal terms so as to awaken the child's imagination and curiosity and to build language skills.

As mentioned in the introduction, the making, remaking, and maintenance of a *demos* is essential to the common good. This is true at a national level, but also at the European level, particularly given the legal reality of Irish citizens being simultaneously citizens of the EU. The specification makes no reference at all to Europe or European. Some mention of the European dimension would seem prudent in terms of fulfilling the aspiration towards 'active citizenship' woven through the primary curriculum subject specifications.

Draft Social and Environmental Education (SEE) Curriculum Specification

As with the other specifications being responded to in this submission, SEE makes ample reference to 'values' (and dispositions and attitudes) in the sense of values that will underpin the curriculum without identifying the source of those values. The specification actively ignores the role of both the school's ethos and its Patron's Programme in informing the values, dispositions and attitudes that imbue a particular school's approach. As with the other specifications and the curriculum in general, this absence should be addressed with explicit links being made to both.

¹² Sec 15(2)(b) of the Education Act, 1998 includes the linguistic characteristic of the schools as one of the factors informing a school's characteristic spirit/ethos.

The other aspect of values addressed in the specification concerns encounter with the values of others. This encounter also includes other beliefs, worldviews and culture. This is welcome. The observations contained in the '*General Observations - Active Citizenship*' section above are particularly relevant here. The specification should caution that the treatment of other beliefs, worldviews and culture be not carried out in a relativistic manner. Children should be encouraged and supported in engaging in a respectful dialogue and encounter with others, from a secure sense of themselves and their own communities.

The religious education programme in Catholic schools already addresses interfaith dialogue and we welcome the potential this specification has to permit an expansion of that aspect of the curriculum through facilitating its placement within SEE. However, the treatment of world religions and beliefs in this specification still has something of the ghost of the now dispensed with ERB & Ethics curriculum. The specification treats religious belief not from the interior experience of the people holding those beliefs (i.e. understanding the beliefs in their own terms), but rather understanding them primarily as social phenomena. This approach does not facilitate the respectful dialogue and encounter so central to Catholic thought on dialogue with people of other faiths and worldviews, which requires a respect for the 'view from within'. This is essential to identifying common ground and for reflecting on difference as a source of insight.

We welcome the inclusion of the environmental dimension as being in keeping with Catholic concerns with respect to care for our common home. This is much in keeping with the teaching of Pope Francis, given fullest expression in his encyclical *Laudato Si'* and relates to the 6th and 7th commitments of the *Global Compact on Education*, which challenges us to "to safeguard and cultivate our common home, protecting it from the exploitation of its resources and adopting a more sober lifestyle marked by the use of renewable energy sources and respect for the natural and human environment." 'Stewardship' is mentioned on page 6, and we believe that the specification could be strengthened with a fuller treatment of this concept.

The environmental aspect engages in a substantial manner with the 'active citizenship'. This is welcome and appropriate, and in keeping with the value the Catholic ethos places on concerns for the common good, and for our common home. Some cautions and sensitivities apply with respect to any understanding that may emerge with respect to children being engaged in the political arena, and the role of parents in guiding and developing that. This is addressed in the '*General Observations - Active Citizenship*' section above.

History

History, alongside other subjections, such as religious education, art, languages. etc. concern what it is to be human. As with elsewhere in the curriculum, this specification demonstrates an arguable weaker anthropology in not having a rich, holistic understanding of what it is to be human, resulting in a weakened understanding of history. It is also a rather surprisingly old-fashioned, technocratic and instrumental understanding of history.

What's mooted in the specification is excessively linear. It makes repeated mention of 'time' or 'time and chronology' in an almost arithmetical way. This contains a high degree of moral hazard as it plugs into very old-fashioned and borderline dangerous narratives of 'progress' or of 'rise and fall', a peculiarly

Whiggish¹³ view of history that Thomas Babington Macaulay may have convincingly carried off in the 19th century, but should not have survived contact with the brutal realities of the 20th.

The relationship between 'local and 'global' is ill-defined. The specification starts with an insistence on local history and environment but then 'Ireland', 'Irish history', and 'Europe' all suddenly arrive on p. 17. This raises a large number of issues, not least that children, and this is often true of even very young ones, are often interested in the 'deep' past or remote civilizations and cultures. This should be encouraged – especially when the populations in primary schools are growing more and more diverse – as it satisfies the natural curiosity and wonder (see STE below), excites the imagination for history, and provides, as it were, a suitable arena for a diverse society to explore certain aspects of what it is to be human. The end of the document returns to localism so no progression is evident in the specification.

Empathy receives scant attention throughout the specification, which is essential if the humanity is to be retained in history. To that end, affective readings of historical documents are important and lead to mature and considered responses. The kind of history advocated in the specification tends to the technocratic, and is devoid – except in passing mentions– of the fullness of the human experience. Religion apart, whole swathes of life are barely namechecked. Politics receives several mentions, but the cross curricular links with other subject areas, art, music, language are barely represented. There is an insufficient lack of emphasis on understanding people in the context of their own times and beliefs. There is a risk that the vision of history laid out here is a vision of history with the humanity removed.

The MFL and SEE (history) curricula should both clearly signal cross curricular opportunities for learning. Language is an essential feature of human existence. Reading, speaking and understanding language is at the heart of all historical inquiry. Not only a plurality of languages but also an appreciation of the mutability of even one's mother tongue through time ought to be appreciated.

The specification treats 'beliefs, worldviews, cultures, systems, identities' (p. 5) as if these were all entirely *extraneous* to the child. Lively questioning is, of course to be encouraged, but part of the purpose of history, particularly in the context of a holistic education, is to be able to understand the historical underpinnings of our own culture and beliefs (including religious beliefs) in order to be able to appreciate others, thereby enabling a respectful dialogue and encounter. History at this level should be supportive of existing beliefs not just because that's the right thing to do but because treating belief and ritual as serious things in themselves make for better students and better historians.

¹³ Whig view of history: Term coined by the historian Herbert Butterfield as the title of his book *The Whig Interpretation of History* (1931). The error is that of reading history as a progress, starting in some benighted time and somehow directed upon, or inevitably culminating in, the glorious present. More generally it may include the error of reading present beliefs and attitudes back into the past. Blackburn, S. (2008) *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* (2 ed.), OUP

The image of history as a discipline presented in the specification is systems driven. Historical persons are de-centred and elided over. While not arguing for the Great Man/Great Woman theory of history, this de-centring and eliding presents a problem both from a teaching point of view and also from a philosophical one. The tendency here is to make the child an observer of historical processes, which may well lead to alienation and disengagement. To borrow a phrase from the Japanese-American writer Ruth Ozeki, human beings are 'time beings'. Children need to know that they too live in time and history and are not simply consuming the past as product. Being able to see how certain individuals acted in history, and to understand their context, their beliefs and motivations, is critical to retaining the human element of one of the most human of all disciplines.

One significant absence from the specification is the lack of recognition for women's history, the struggle for full equal civil and political rights. Children should have an appreciation that the emergence of full and equal civil and political rights were neither a historical accident nor a function of the necessary working out of 'systems' or material progress. They should understand the agency by which many individual women (and men) campaigned, fought, and in some cases died, to secure those rights.

Draft Science, Technological and Engineering (STE) Education Curriculum Specification

The specification is welcome in its evident underpinning aim of opening up the imagination of children to science and of seeking to develop their dispositions and skills to engage with science. The document makes a welcome mention of 'wonder' but only once and then only late, on page 29. This is a specific quality often found in the commencement of searches for wisdom and knowledge. As Aristotle observed:

Through wonder humans began to philosophise, both now and in the beginning.

Metaphysics, Book 1, 982b

Reflecting on this, it might be prudent to specify inspiring wonder as a goal earlier in the specification. While the document mentions links between STE and Mathematics, this may serve to have a limiting effect in presenting an integrated curriculum. Equal value should be given to cross-curricular links with other aspects of the curriculum, particular in seeking to awake wonder, curiosity, and inquiry. Obvious links in that regard can be made with the Art and Language curricula, and with the Patron's Programme. It is interesting to note that high level language skills are now being actively sought in the development and utilisation of Artificial Intelligence tools. Art, Languages, and Religious Education are important areas for awaking wonder, imagination, curiosity, and conceptualisation skills.

The relation of STE to the SEE specification is obvious, as is the influence of STE on history. The specification would benefit from these cross curricular links being given explicit mention. The relationship between science and religion is an important area to explore, with links to SEE and the Patron's Programme. All too often this relationship is solely understood as lying in the main between Christianity and science, but contrasts with the [relationship of other faiths to science](#) would be an interesting area to explore.

STEM too often suffers from being presented as a subject area discrete from all others. This may serve to alienate some learners. Catholic thinking on education seeks the holistic development of the human person, an important means of which is through an education that respects the holistic relationship of all subjects. Non-Catholic thinkers have also emphasised this (for example, the influential philosopher Mary Midgley).

Similarly, consistently with the other specifications, the draft makes mention of 'values' as one of the key competences of the specification without any mention of just what values are being referred to. Again, the obvious source of these in any school is that school's ethos, whether denominational or multi-denominational. The history of science contains itself many evils that have arisen from certain moral limits being crossed, for example in terms of experiments on humans or animals, or in the application of technology (e.g. the use of Atomic/Nuclear weapons, environmental degradation, etc.). Values, therefore, are rightfully included in the specification, but curiously not any particular values. The specification, in common with other specifications, suffers from a lack of explicit linking of it to the ethos of the school and its Patron's Programme and this should be addressed.

Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification

There is a difficulty in conceptualising Wellbeing as a distinct curricular area, rather than as something that encompasses all aspects of school culture. Wellbeing in school is better conceived primarily as how the school is; and only secondary as something the schools does. If, as per the 1st commitment of the *Global Compact on Education*, the human person is to be made the centre of every educational programme, then wellbeing must be understood as an essential element in the ethos of the school, its culture, values, attitudes and dispositions.

As expressed in [a submission on the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework](#), "internationally, wellbeing is understood as encompassing *all* dimensions of the person; it can be nurtured across *all* aspects of the curriculum (both formal and informal). This understanding is in keeping with the literature in the field¹⁴." (p.8)

The draft specification confines wellbeing to two subject areas, SPHE and PE. In contrast, Wellbeing in the Junior Cycle is understood as a metanarrative underpinning all that goes on in the Junior Cycle

¹⁴ For instance:

- Meehan, Amalee. 2019. Wellbeing in the Irish Junior Cycle: the potential of Religious Education. Irish Educational Studies, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2019.1656100>
- National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). 2017a. Guidelines for Wellbeing in Junior Cycle. Dublin: NCCA
- O'Brien, Maeve and Andrew O'Shea. 2017. *A Human Development (PSP) Framework: For Orienting Education and Schools in the Space of Wellbeing*. Dublin: NCCA <https://www.ncca.ie/media/2488/a-human-development-framework-psp.pdf>

programme – it rightly recognises that every subject/activity/school event has the potential to contribute to wellbeing, making explicit links with PE and SPHE, but recognising also, very clearly, the links to all aspects of the curriculum.

This more confined approach at primary level denies the proven role of subjects like music, art and religious education as deep and profound sources of wellbeing. Beyond those, there is a lack of recognition of potential in other curricular areas, such as, for example, in the draft MFLs specification. There, wellbeing is served through the recognition, support and maintenance offered to the child's home language, which promotes the child's inclusion. Yet, neither the Wellbeing nor MFL specification make this explicit. It is notable while some contributors to wellbeing (belonging, participation, etc.) are present throughout the other draft specifications addressed in this document, none of them contain the word wellbeing (other than a mention of 'long-term economic wellbeing' in the definition of Sustainability on p. 34 of the SEE draft specification). By confining wellbeing so narrowly, the specification risks separating wellbeing from the general activity of schools.

On the SPHE elements of the specification, other than what has been identified above, we welcome the consistency with the present curriculum. It is critical that recognition is given to the professional judgment of the teacher, in consultation where necessary with the child's parents/guardians, to determine the age and stage appropriateness of its provision. Again, lacking from the specification is any recognition of the role of a school's ethos in informing SPHE, or a sufficiently clear recognition of the need to consult parents (other than when it comes to the use of external providers), despite the clear mandates of the Act of 1998 (Sections 9&15). Supports and guidance will be required to make the curriculum accessible to children with special education needs, or to those with barriers to learning. This is also especially relevant to the 5th commitment of the *Global Compact on Education*. The need for specialised training and support for teachers engaging with SPHE remains a factor.

The specification demonstrates no awareness of the substantial body of international literature that shows religious practice, especially participation in religious communities, is a positive indicator of wellbeing¹⁵. The definition of wellbeing used here (and in the Junior Cycle guidelines) recognises

¹⁵ For instance:

- Meehan, A. (2020). Religion as a Source of Well-Being: Implications for Second-Level School Programs in Ireland and Beyond, *Religious Education*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00344087.2020.1789416>
- PEW Research Center. (2019). Religion's Relationship to Happiness, Civic Engagement and Health Around the World. <http://www.pewforum.org/wpcontent/uploads/sites/7/2019/01/Wellbeing-report-1-25-19-FULL-REPORT-FOR-WEB.pdf>
- Spencer, Nick, Gillian Madden, Clare Purtill, and Joseph Ewing. 2016. *Religion and Well-Being: Assessing the Evidence*. London: Theos.
- Ying, C. & VanderWeele, T.J. (2018). 'Associations of Religious Upbringing With Subsequent Health and Well-Being, From Adolescence to Young Adulthood: An Outcome-Wide Analysis' in *American Journal of Epidemiology*, Vol 187, No 11, pp.2355-2364. See: <https://academic.oup.com/aje/article/187/11/2355/5094534>

the importance of belonging and community, yet the phenomena of religious communities are ignored. This seems a significant absence, especially in a country where the vast majority of people (85%) identify as members of a religion or engaging in some form of spiritual practice ([Census 2022](#)).

The approach adopted in the specification ignores the spiritual, a fundamental aspect of human identity, development, and wellbeing. The word spiritual is mentioned just once (on page 1) in the document. 'Spiritual wellbeing' is defined in the appendix as being *'concerned with love for life, others, and a sense of connection with oneself, others, nature, the world and, for some, a larger purpose or higher power. It involves personal beliefs and practices that may or may not be linked to organised religion.'* However, this receives no recognition in any other part of the document. The specification fails to engage seriously with the spiritual development of the child, and in doing so demonstrates a limited and incomplete anthropology, when compared to the 1999 Curriculum.

Where in the draft specification is there room for the 'some' mentioned in the definition of 'spiritual wellbeing' quoted above? It is interesting to note the use of 'some', as, both locally and globally, the more accurate word would be 'most', as religious believers constitute over 80% of the world population. Future projections by [the Pew Research Center](#) finds that by 2060, "the religiously unaffiliated population is projected to shrink as a percentage of the global population", finding that "religious "nones" are projected to decline from 16% of the total population in 2015 to 13% in 2060".

For believers, the relationship with God is the ultimate relationship, yet there is no allowance for that in the understanding of relationships throughout the document, or any sense of relationship or belonging to a religious community. Other than by passing, perfunctory reference, the specification makes no room for the faith life of the child/possibility of the transcendent as a source of wellbeing for the child. Members of faith traditions especially, whether Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, Ukrainian Orthodox, etc. are not at all well served by this approach.

Wellbeing requires a whole of schools approach, one that is already being addressed by many schools through Schools Self Evaluation, and working in collaboration with their Patrons, management bodies, Oide, staff, and parents. It is currently being addressed through the lens of a school's ethos. This whole-of-school, ethos embodied approach is presently a key strength in schools and should be encouraged and maintained. Any narrowing of wellbeing to a specific curricular area risks undermining much that is to be valued and should be avoided.

• Ying, C., Koh, H., Kawachi, I., Botticelli, M. and VanderWeele, T. (2020) 'Religious service attendance and deaths related to drugs, alcohol, and suicide among US health care professionals', *Jama Psychiatry* July 77(7) 737-744 available: [10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.0175](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2020.0175)

The Wellbeing specification places an emphasis on the developing of 'resilience'. The STE specification also places some emphasis on this. A common criticism of resilience based approaches lies in the emphasis being placed on the individual's response to trauma or injustice. This is worthwhile, but misses the broader challenge of addressing the source of the trauma or injustice. The first philosophical movement to have a clearly identifiable resilience based approach in European thought arose first in the post-Hellenic schools of Cynic and Stoic philosophy. These placed resilience within a broader ethical frame, placing a strong emphasis on improving the world for others, and on justice. Similarly too, schools with a Catholic ethos would be expected to address issues of justice that may arise when discussing this area. This broader ethical framework should be explicitly linked in the specification, and its grounding in the school's ethos clearly identified.

Key Recommendations

With grateful appreciation for the work of the NCCA to date on the primary curriculum, we recommend that:

- a) the spiritual aspect of the education and development be given explicit recognition through the curriculum;
- b) the 'values' throughout the curriculum be explicitly linked to the particular ethos of the school, and the relevance of the Patron's Programme in that regard;
- c) explicit recognition be given to the 'Patron's Programme' of schools of all patronages
- d) Wellbeing be treated as an aspect of school culture (i.e. of its ethos) rather than as an activity confined to a particular subject area and that the contribution of religious belief to wellbeing is recognised;
- e) World Religions and Beliefs be understood to be addressed on their own terms and in the spirit of respectful dialogue and encounter, beginning from the child's secure sense of their own identity;
- f) the European dimension to Ireland's history, culture, traditions, politics, languages and beliefs be recognised across the curriculum; and that,
- g) the full potential for cross-curricular learning across all six curriculum areas and subjects be identified and encouraged.

On behalf of the board of the *Catholic Education* Partnership:

Alan Hynes



Chief Executive
Catholic Education Partnership

Submission: Consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

CPSMA welcomes the publication of these draft curriculum specifications and the consultation process that the NCCA is presently engaged in. We recognise the partnership approach of the NCCA with stakeholders in the education system. We welcome the opportunity to provide this submission on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications. While CPSMA acknowledges the many positive aspects of the new specifications, due to constraints, focus in this submission must be placed on areas which CPSMA have identified for improvement.

Overview

Catholic Primary School Management Association (CPSMA), is the representative management body for Catholic primary schools in Ireland and this submission seeks to represent the perspective of those tasked with the governance of Catholic primary and special schools. We also have a number of associate members, comprised of other school patronages. As a management body which provides training, support and advice on a wide range of areas to over 2,800 schools, we are in a unique position of being able to understand and react to the needs of a large number of primary and special schools.

General observations

While the draft specifications make numerous references to values, the omission of an overarching ethical perspective from which these values are developed is conspicuous in its absence. This has resulted in the ethos of education from which these draft specifications are written being obscured. All forms of education are underpinned by a particular ethos. It is rooted in a philosophy of education which forms and informs the education provided, based on the purpose for education. The ethos of education is dependent upon the priorities, choices and actions of the organisation providing the education. It underpins the education provided and the expected outcome of the education.⁶⁶ Therefore, the ethos of education has a profound effect on the outcome for students involved.

If the ethos from which these specifications are derived come from a view of gearing education towards social policy, we must be careful as a throw-away-pedagogy is being developed where the values change based on the social policy of the time.⁶⁷ If the ethos from which these draft specifications are written is imperceptible, then the ethos of the particular schools, regardless of religious or ethical worldview, becomes vital in giving an ethical foundation from which values can be developed. Therefore, the omission of the mention of ethos or characteristic spirit from these draft specifications impoverishes the documents.

Additionally, throughout the specifications, the learning outcomes contained within appear to be quite vague which presents a level of opacity for parents/guardians who attempt to understand how the curriculum will be practically implemented within the classroom.

⁶⁶ Catholic Schools Partnership, "Understanding and Living the Ethos in a Catholic Primary School *A Process Centred on Conversations*," (Maynooth: Catholic Schools Partnership, 2019), 7.

⁶⁷ Frank Furedi, *Wasted: Why Education isn't Educating* (London: Continuum, 2009), 21-23, 38-42.

Equally, teachers will struggle to assess the progress of children against vague learning outcomes, for example, from the draft primary arts education specification: “interpret and respond to a variety of arts works in a range of ways (e.g. improvised movement, discussion, brainstorming). AL, C, CL”

These specifications and learning outcomes contained within call for new models of assessment to be embedded into the system and it is imperative that continual professional development on assessment is provided with the initial rollout of this curriculum, with sustained support following.

The curriculum specifications should be written in clear language so that they are accessible to all. Educational jargon should be avoided where possible to ensure this level of accessibility, particularly for those who may not have English as their first language.

Careful consideration needs to be given in regard to the timeline for implementation of the new curriculum. A balanced and staged approach would be advisable for its’ introduction, to avoid an excessive curriculum workload on schools and their staff. Schools will need time to familiarise themselves with the many aspects of the new curriculum.

The availability of supports from Oide, including both the provision of online resources, and facilitator visits to schools to assist in the implementation and embedding of the new curriculum would be very welcome. A combination of whole school supports, supports for school leaders and management teams, and the provision of supports for individual teachers would be a holistic way of manging supports. Providing information to boards of management, on all aspects of the new curriculums roll-out and implementation would be essential. Boards of management plan a central role in the development and oversight of the school plan. The positivity from schools regarding the sustained support model, which was part of the Primary Language Curriculum, it something that should be considered again for this context. A number of school visits by facilitators, over a time period, to address specific questions or concerns which schools may have would be of great assistance.

Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification

While the acknowledgement of “integrated learning experiences”⁶⁸ through cross curricular learning is welcome, further emphasis of this integration throughout the curriculum would further enhance the message. In particular, links to the the Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum are absent in the proposed integration. As we now live in a digital age, many new art forms are being created using digital technology, for example and

⁶⁸ NCCA *Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification For all primary and special schools*, 22, 28.

equally, there is much more of a focus on aesthetically pleasing and artistic expression within engineering which could be referenced within the specification.

More alarmingly, wellbeing is conspicuous in its absence throughout this specification. While “being well” is mentioned in passing⁶⁹ no recognition or acknowledgement of the key role that the arts have on wellbeing are contained within the specification.⁷⁰ While the Draft Wellbeing Specifications will be responded to below, it is important to highlight this omission here. If a key competency of the Primary Curriculum Framework is “being well” then more recognition of the importance of the arts needs to be contained within this document, rather than a mere passing reference to expressing ourselves and participation in collaborative artistic projects.⁷¹

Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

The aspirational inclusion of, and rationale behind the inclusion of an attempt to introduce modern foreign languages is acknowledged by CPSMA. The concerns that CPSMA have with the draft specification is not with the inclusion of modern foreign languages, but the practical implementation. A substantial amount of resourcing and support will be required if this initiative is to be implemented, particularly as we currently have a workforce of teachers whereby the majority will not have the necessary ability in a foreign language in order to teach it.

CPSMA recognises fundamental barriers to the successful implementation of this initiative which solutions must be found for, before Modern Foreign Languages are introduced into the primary system. The system has already seen the success of the “Say Yes to Languages” initiative, whereby funding is provided to schools to employ appropriately qualified individuals with fluency in foreign languages to come in and teach children for a number of weeks. This format is currently working, and consideration should be given to the expansion of this model, rather than expecting our current workforce of teachers to teach a language they do not have sufficient proficiency in. Within the specification, it clearly states that the Modern Foreign Language should be used throughout the school day, outside of the language lesson⁷², in a similar manner to Gaeilge neamhfhoirmiúil. It is clear then that more than a basic proficiency in the third language will be required of teachers.

Similarly, a logistical issue could arise from the inclusion of schools choosing one Modern Foreign Language that must be taught in both 5th and 6th class.⁷³ At management level, the

⁶⁹ Ibid, 10.

⁷⁰ Fancourt, Daisy & Finn, Saoirse. (2019). *What is the evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and well-being? A scoping review.*

⁷¹ NCCA Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification For all primary and special schools, 10

⁷² NCCA Primary Language Curriculum– including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)For all primary and special schools, 8, 51.

⁷³ NCCA Primary Language Curriculum– including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)For all primary and special schools, 7, 52.

allocation of staff members will become more constrained as staff members may have differing levels of proficiency in the chosen language, or may have no knowledge of the language chosen. Similarly, it could impact school decisions on employing staff members from redeployment panels as a teacher on a panel may not have a proficiency in the same language that the school has chosen.

Additionally, consideration needs to be given to our unique circumstance in offering exemptions from the Irish language and whether this practice will now extend to learning a Modern Foreign Language. Currently children who receive exemptions from Irish, do so because of their learning needs being so great that they need to focus on developing proficiency in one language. Therefore, it would follow that children who have such needs would be exempted from the study of all other languages.

Finally, CPSMA also has concerns in relation to proposed timing allocations for the Primary Language Curriculum specification. The significant reduction in time allocations for teaching English and Irish is alarming. A reduction of 75 minutes for the language medium of the school is not workable, when considering schools already feel under pressure to cover the curriculum. Additionally, the time suggestion of an hour per week from 3rd to 6th on a modern foreign language is excessive and will not be received well, particularly as the time is directly being taken from English and Irish.

Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification

The inclusion of studying religious contexts⁷⁴ and the rationale of learning about different religions as a means of developing appreciation of children's own and other's lived experiences⁷⁵ through a dialogical pedagogy⁷⁶ offers a fundamental flawed approach to the process of teaching about religions, lacking in any critical reflection. Without critical reflection, the pupils become passive consumers of information and education. This correlates with Freire's (1972) "banking model of schooling"⁷⁷ in which the student is expected to absorb uncontested knowledge of "the dominant culture".⁷⁸

This proposed inclusion within the Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification appears to treat religion and faith belief as a social phenomenon⁷⁹ and proposes to explore religions as a part of cultural heritage.⁸⁰ This "neutral" teaching of

⁷⁴ NCCA *Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification For all primary and special schools*, 3.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁷⁷ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972).

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 39; Peter McLaren and Peter Leonard, *Paulo Freire: A Critical Encounter* (London: Routledge, 1993).

⁷⁹ ⁷⁹ NCCA *Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification For all primary and special schools*, 27.

⁸⁰ David Albert Jones and Stephen Barrie, *Thinking Christian Ethos: the Meaning of Catholic Education* (London: Catholic Truth Society, 2015), 86-87.

religions will result in an “indifferentism” towards all religions. This is a distinctly secularist approach to RE, which could be argued is intolerant to religious difference, as it may result in “syncretism”.⁸¹ The proposals in this programme impose a particular understanding of religion on all pupils in all schools. The ontological view of the ERBE programme is in direct contrast to that of a Catholic RE programme. The inclusion of learning about other religions within this subject specification also ignores that learning about other religions already exists within the Patron’s Programme for Catholic primary schools.

Draft Science, Technological and Engineering Education Curriculum Specification

Over the last number of years, Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education in schools has supported children's capacity to understand and engage fully with the world around them. Mathematics provides the foundation for science, technology, and engineering and is the study of the relationships, connections, and patterns that surround us. Schools have fully embraced STEM, and the draft science, technology and engineering education curriculum seeks to build on, and to further develop these skills. In order to fully implement this particular curricular area, the provision of the appropriate and necessary resources to schools is essential. The availability of additional funding to schools, enabling them to purchase information technology resources to fully implement the curriculum would be vital. Information technology resources need to be updated and regularly maintained. Financial supports for schools would form a key part in embedding this curricular area, and supporting good practice in the classroom.

An observation would be that some of the learning outcomes may be interpreted as slightly vague in their presentation. This may lead to challenges for teachers in assessing the desired learning outcome. Assessment is a vital component of any curriculum. The provision of professional development training for teachers in the range of assessment methodologies for the technology and engineering education aspect of the curriculum, may be advisable.

Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification

Due to the siloing approach of subject areas these specifications result in a confining wellbeing to two subjects, which detracts from the key competency of “being well” throughout the other specifications. Indeed, it seems to offer a view of wellbeing which is removed from the idea of holistic wellbeing. This issue is further emphasised due to cross curricular linkage not being emphasised enough. Similarly, the specification makes no reference to a spiritual dimension of wellbeing. As such, the specification fails to address the development of the spiritual dimension of wellbeing. In this instance the Wellbeing

⁸¹ Ibid, 87.

specification could make explicit reference to the Patron's programme which will facilitate the holistic development of the child's wellbeing through spiritual development.

Other than the above, CPSMA welcomes the consistency of the specification with the present curriculum. Particularly, recognition is given to teacher agency and professional judgement, in consultation with parents/guardians where necessary. However, the specification fails to acknowledge the role of the particular ethos of the school in informing SPHE. Specific reference should be made to this within the specifications.

Central Model Infants' School

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Agree

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

p. 6 grey on red is not accessible to all for reading, p. 7 Overview image is a confusing layout- should flow better, maybe vertically. p.8 'additionally' depreciates the value of the sentence and suggests it is less important. p. 8 movement - could it be reworded to 'fundamental movement skills' to align. again on p. 9 'necessary skills' - change to fundamental movement skills. P. 9 could classroom climate be called 'school climate' to encompass whole environment. P. 9 'Children learn to appreciate...' very long- should be revised to shorter sentences. P. 9 remove recognizing an to read instead 'nurture their wellbeing, increasing sense of personal responsibility...' . p. 10 Paragraph 'As an integrated aspect of SPHE...' is a great paragraph. (be mindful of the use of US english throughout the document as there are a number of errors as seen here with 'behaviors!') p. 11 Holisitive Wellbeing- consider changing to 'a healthy, balanced, fulfilled way' - removes unrealistic pressures. P. 11 physical literacy- instead of movement competence, change to

'fundamental movement skills'. P. 11 safety and decision making- the point is lost here... what is the responsibility?. P. 11 Inclusivity, Citizenship etc- consider changing to 'Foster awareness....'. Other points on this page we feel as well presented. P. 12 create a new bullet for 'foster a comprehensive understanding...'. P.12 reconsider the use of the term 'well-rounded individual'- how is this defined? We think this is unrealistic and unmeasurable and should be removed. P. 13 Strand and Elements- this section is confusing we feel - differs from the PE and SPHE page 1? Is movement education PE? Why is that cog more dominant? Bigger shape suggests it has more importance. .p. 13 this Table title should be on the next page. P. 14 Table - could this mirror the way the PLC is organised: Strand- Element- Learning Outcomes. P. 14 Elements- are these strand units? Confused by this. P. 16 error for link at top. Movement education- is this a strand? Strand units- should these be elements? Movement skills - again consider rewording to Fundamental Movement Skills. Under Movement strategies- problem solving through discovery- give examples here. Will these be broken down further into progression steps? We found this Movement section in general is not as clearly explained as the ones that follow. More detail needed in the table rather than lots of links to the glossary. P. 17 Emotional and Relational education - we think this is a brilliant section. P. 19 Health Education - again a very clear and well laid out section. Under human development we think it is NB that the body parts are clearly named to ensure consistency of language. P. 21 Community and Belonging is a great section. P. 27 Option A. Consider rearranging by priority: 1. Lifelong physical activities, 2. Individual/ Dual activities, 3. Team activities, 4. Artistic and performance activities, 5. Alternative activity Examples. Consider renaming Artistic and Aesthetic Activities to 'Artistic and Performance Activities'. Can skipping be added somewhere? We heavily encourage these skills in our small inner city school yard for agility and fitness, where other activities suggested are not feasible. We would vote for Option C with the addition of 'Alternative Activities' - novel activities with idea examples for schools to decide what's appropriate and achievable for their specific cohort. The 1999 PE Overview of strands and strand units should be retained as it is very clear at a glance and we feel it shouldn't be omitted. P. 35 Glossary - consider arranging alphabetically to ease of searching. P. 35 Body Awareness section - remove all the question marks. P. 36 We are delighted with the clear consent definition. Equity- compare to Equality. We hope sufficient time is given to sexual orientation, gender and family to encompass today's inclusive society and not instigate shame among our young people. Overall we are impressed with this draft.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Videos explaining new documents and how to use, where to go to access supports online.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

online planning tools are helpful and easy to use glance sheets (as per PLC)

Section 1

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

My overall response to the new Draft Curriculum is positive. I am particularly pleased to see the reintroduction of modern foreign languages in the curriculum and the fostering of active citizenship as well as Social and Environmental Education given prominence. Not being involved in primary education myself (except in smaller collaborative projects as part of a Jean Monnet Module) I do not feel qualified to comment on the details of the curriculum. I will limit myself to one general comment on the missing European dimension in the draft curriculum framework.

The Framework claims to prepare children for “tomorrow’s world” (2) and to take account of the many changes in all our lives since the last curriculum was written in 1999. However, one particular change which has happened more recently appears to be ignored completely, this is the departure of the United Kingdom from the European Union, commonly referred to as Brexit. Although the State, both economically and politically, is continuously expanding its direct links both with the European Union and other EU member states since 2016, and the EU is expanding substantially the opportunities for direct links in the area of education via a multiplicity of ERASMUS+ programmes which also include primary schools (now considerably expanded in the area of Teacher Education; see *ERASMUS Programme Guide 2022*, pp. 99-112, 265-273), the draft curriculum takes no account of these obvious trends towards greater integration. In fact the word Europe/European is conspicuous by its absence in the whole text. The competency of “Being an active citizen”, the text states, “develops children’s capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national and global levels, and fosters their ability to contribute positively and compassionately towards the creation of a more sustainable and just world.” (p. 8) There is of course nothing wrong with these worthwhile overall aims, but it is striking that the world outside Ireland appears to be treated equally as elements of the “global level”, as if another EU member state, such as France or Germany, had the same relationship with Ireland as China or Singapore. This does nothing to enable children, even at this young age, to grasp the basics of European citizenship which they themselves can see evidence of with their own eyes on the cover of the maroon passports they hold in their hands when going on holidays (which we all hope we will be able to do again soon). No distinction is made between EU languages and other languages. Neither do I see in the draft curriculum any reference to programmes such as *Blue Star* or the *Big Friendly Guide to the EU* (UCC). It has always been problematic that the European dimension in Irish education is left to EU bodies or the European Movement rather than being consciously and deliberately embedded in the State’s curricula. It seems that this trend is set to continue for the next decades if the curriculum framework in its present form should determine Irish primary education.

That Ireland’s membership and increasing integration in the European Union should not count among the priorities for ‘tomorrow’s children’ in the very year the country is marking its 50 years of EU membership, is surprising and, were it deliberate, to me not only as an educator committed to European Studies but also as a fellow EU citizen somewhat disconcerting. The European Union as the most successful peace project in the history of the continent will only survive if citizens want it. Nobody wishes to indoctrinate children but they should at the very least be given the opportunity, from the earliest possibility onwards, to consider why Ireland has been a committed member of the EU for half a century. I hope the omission is just an oversight.

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.

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.
- 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.

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.

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.

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.

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*.

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Children's Books Ireland would like to commend the work of the NCCA on the new Specifications, and to acknowledge the deeply collaborative nature of the consultations that were undertaken to achieve a cohesive and holistic Framework. Irish society has seen an extraordinary amount of change since the previous Curriculum was published in 1999, and Irish classrooms are now more culturally and socially diverse. The new specifications clearly seek to reflect this rich diversity, and to ensure that every child and young person in a primary school classroom can experience a sense of belonging, which can only support them to find agency and joy in their learning. The clear connection to the principles of imagination, creativity, and exploration that underpin the Aistear curriculum are wholeheartedly welcomed by this organisation, especially in the Arts Education specification. We would like to see those principles further celebrated, not only in the new curriculum but in all Irish schools. The focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, ability to think critically, to form opinions, to thrive in a personal capacity, and to be a positive presence in all of their communities is also welcome, particularly in the Wellbeing specification, and we would like to see the connection between reading for joy and access to excellent, representative, and inclusive books made explicit throughout the curriculum. We would like to see learners and teachers alike empowered to access the endless benefits of books and reading. BOP Consultancy produced an overview of the impact of reading for joy for the UK's Reading Agency in 2015 entitled, *Literature Review: The Impact of Reading for Pleasure and Empowerment*, which found that reading for joy was linked to better emotional intelligence, social skills and empathy, for both children and adults. The recent Creative Youth report noted

the lack of literature-focused activity in schools: “Reading activities as a form of cultural and creative practice were also minimally evident in the data. Previous research in Ireland suggests that participation in structured cultural activities impacted positively on children’s literacy and maths skills reporting that reading for pleasure improved vocabulary levels and academic performance over time” (p. 87).

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The emphasis on creativity and performance as in the specification is most welcome. We would strongly advocate for literature and literary experiences to be recognised within that holistic education, including reading for joy and the types of playful engagement with books and reading which we promote through our resources, as well as creative writing, and writing and performing poetry. The section on pedagogy (pg. 2) and the inclusion of empathy as a focus is excellent, and we would posit that narrative, specifically narrative texts, hold significant capacity to build empathy by allowing children and young people to explore and experience a multiplicity of childhoods, in an imaginative and emotional sense. Eminent scholars of children’s literature and culture, such as Kerry Mallan in her “Empathy: Narrative Empathy and Children’s Literature” (2013) have long recognised the capacity for children’s literature to build empathy. This often occurs through focalisation and character identification, especially in fiction, which has a capacity to broaden our perceptions of normality and provoke imaginative responses (“The Association Between Reading Literature and Empathetic Behaviour: A Review of the Literature,” NUIG, 2021). In terms of the possible partnerships (pg.2) that schools might enter into in order to offer their pupils opportunities to engage in the arts in their locality, we strongly recommend that local authors and illustrators be mentioned here, to recognise the value of literature for children and young people as an artform, as well as the significant potential resource of public libraries (where it is feasible for classes to visit them). “Arts Education allows for connectivity between multiple art forms” (pg. 4), and we agree wholeheartedly with this – but not with the omission of literature. In relation to the Rationale section (pg. 4), we would again strongly recommend that literature be referenced here, and acknowledged as both an artform and an artistic, creative experience for children – and one which should be readily accessible for all children. The Aims listed on pg. 6 are comprehensive and celebratory, but we ask that Storytelling/Imaginative Engagement be incorporated here. In a similar vein, we would ask that “narrative” be added to the Create strand (pg. 7). The

Learning Outcomes (pg. 9) reference a “playful and engaging” approach to learning and teaching, and we affirm that the skill of world-making, so fundamental to storytelling and narrative construction, would sit well within the outcomes. On pg. 10, within “being an active learner” we believe that that addition of “playwright, storyteller, poet” would strengthen the description considerably. Similarly, within “being a communicator” we would suggest an acknowledgement that narrative is fundamental to how we communicate and create the stories of our own identities. We would also recommend an acknowledgement of the overlap and connection between the drama concepts listed (pg. 12) and literature, and that the language of both provides significant opportunity for creative exploration. On pg. 21, we believe that being a story-maker/story-teller is a fundamental aspect of being an Arts-Maker, and that this inclusion would strengthen the description, especially if storytelling is added to the Learning Outcomes. We wholeheartedly endorse the section on Creative Approaches (pg. 25) and the concept of promoting children’s creative potential in the context of their motivation and self-esteem. Teachers are recognised for and encouraged to use a broad range of arts-based methodologies to facilitate the flow and exchange of ideas across media and arts discipline. We would ask that story-telling, especially dedicated reading and story-telling time in the classroom, should be an aspect of these approaches. Indeed, reference is made on pg. 28 to “multi-modal forms of expression”, of which story-telling, poetry, and creative writing are surely examples.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The Primary Language Curriculum with the inclusion of the Modern Foreign Languages specification is an important and ambitious document, dealing as it does with the language acquisition and development of young children throughout their primary school careers. The NCCA has produced a comprehensive overview and revision of the existing Primary Languages Curriculum, and Children’s Books Ireland is very much in agreement with the new focus on cultural inclusivity and the promotion of social cohesion through shared language experiences. However, we would strongly advocate that a more explicit connection be made throughout the Curriculum between the benefits of reading for joy, fun, enjoyment, and educational attainment, not least in multiple areas of literacy. Reading is mentioned 55 times in the document, but only once in the context of enjoyment (this comes on pg. 31). This represents a missed opportunity to create a curriculum that empowers teachers to support their pupils to develop a love of reading, and to experience the subsequent benefits. On pg. 13, it is stated that a “positive disposition towards reading (i.e., that ‘will to read’) is included in the Learning Outcomes, together with the concepts and skills involved in learning to read. We cannot state strongly enough that ‘a will to read’ is not a sufficient aspiration for children in our education system. We are keen to partner with school communities to ensure that ‘a love of reading’ is the intended goal, and a reading life for every child in the country’s schools. The section on Playful Approaches, beginning on pg. 59, is beautifully conceived, and Children’s Books Ireland commends the NCCA for its continued inclusion in the curriculum. We are particularly supportive of the definition of play that includes moments where “children practise real-world reading and writing ... where positive dispositions towards literacy can be nourished”. We are keen to support teachers to facilitate those playful experiences through books, both through resources and through the provision of diverse and inclusive books.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

We would again strongly recommend the use of narrative and imaginative play to support children and young people to explore these concepts.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Children's Books Ireland would like to congratulate the NCCA again for producing a specification that is not only ambitious in its scope but also intuitive, warm, and clearly child-centred in its approach. It is an extremely kind and open document, and it should be celebrated. While there is mention of the use of narrative and stories under the Playful Learning section and what teachers can do/use to support such, reading and imagination are not referred to at all throughout the draft. This feels like a missed opportunity, especially in relation to fostering a sense of belonging and inclusivity, as well as developing selfhood/compassion/empathy, as reading has long been proven to aid and support all of these, mostly by offering children a chance to experience a multiplicity of childhoods. Survey responses from nearly 60,000 children and young people for 2020's Seeing Yourself in What You Read report from the National Literacy Trust indicated that a third of children in the UK did not see themselves in the books they read, and that this lack of representation presented a significant barrier to engaging in reading for joy. Overall, the way in which playfulness has been infused across the Wellbeing curriculum is commendable. Some exemplars of how playfulness can be promoted in the teaching of SPHE would be a welcome inclusion in the Wellbeing Toolkit. Children's Books Ireland would be keen to contribute to the creation of the Toolkit in any way we can, either through specific resources or through consultation on appropriate books (our Mind Yourself and Free To Be Me reading guides focus specifically on feelings and emotions, and inclusivity and belonging, respectively, and both come with resources which have previously been promoted by the Department of Children).

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

In terms of Children's Books Ireland's specific remit, we could be keen to see, and would be equally keen to collaborate on, extended supports for teachers in relation to using inclusive and diverse narrative texts in the classroom, particularly in relation to the Arts Education, Primary Language and Wellbeing curricula. These could involve recommended reading lists; specific CPD sessions, including workshops and webinars; and ongoing opportunities to engage with new and innovative developments in literacy pedagogy,

especially in relation to supporting pupils to use narrative to explore complex concepts and build empathy skills.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Children's Books Ireland's vision is every child a reader. Reading for joy, fun, and enjoyment is proven to have a positive effect on individual wellbeing, on communication and self-expression, on empathy capacity, and on learning achievement. We would like to see teachers being supported to integrate diverse and inclusive texts into these new curriculum strands, with a particular focus on Irish-authored and Irish-illustrated texts where applicable. As an organisation, we are keen to support the implementation of the curriculum in schools, and will work with school communities to ensure that the capacity for reading for joy to augment and enrich the new curriculum is realised.

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

We are concerned that learning outcomes in Irish schools, both primary and secondary, should include teaching about marriage showing its importance for family life. We ask for this for the following reasons: Because evidence demonstrates that children raised by their married parents achieve better educational results, tend to have a healthier lifestyle and to live lives that are economically productive. Because, in teaching children about the “diversity of family structures” (page 19), it is essential that traditional views on man-woman marriage not be side-lined or undermined. We say this because official statistics reveal that only about 3% of marriages conducted in Ireland during 2023 were same-sex couples. The teaching, therefore, should reflect the majority of family relationship structures. Because it is clear that marriage is still held in high esteem by the Irish public as was evident in March 2024 when nearly 70% of voters rejected the proposed constitutional amendment that suggested the downgrading of marriage to share an equal status

with “durable relationships”. Therefore, we ask for that democratic decision about the unique constitutional status of marriage to be reflected in what is taught in Irish schools.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

It is our view that schools should properly research the needs of pupils and parents and have freedom to adapt the recommended resources to meet those needs while also upholding the ethos of the school. Where parents hold different views to that of the school, schools may need support and training in how to teach about these issues in a respectful and balanced way. As schools have a legal duty to consult with parents on SPHE, they would benefit from guidance on how best to make this effective.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

We wish to make the following comments: Parents must be able to preview all the curriculum materials including text, graphics and lesson plans to be used by the school in delivering Wellbeing courses. The same applies to presentations by any proposed third party facilitators. This preview should be available well in advance of the actual lessons. Schools should inform parents of their right to withdraw their children from teaching that runs contrary to their conscientious beliefs. This is especially true when sensitive topics are being taught.

Conradh na Gaeilge



Aighneacht ó

Chonradh na Gaeilge maidir

leis an

Churaclam Bunscoile

CÚLRA

Is é Conradh na Gaeilge fóram daonlathach phobal na Gaeilge agus saothraíonn an eagraíocht ar son na teanga ar fud na hÉireann uile agus timpeall na cruinne. Is í príomhaidhm na heagraíochta an Ghaeilge a athréimniú mar ghnáth-theanga na hÉireann. Ó bunaíodh é ar 31 Iúil 1893 tá baill an Chonartha gníomhach ag cur chun cinn na Gaeilge i ngach gné de shaol na tíre, ó chúrsaí dlí agus oideachais go forbairt meán cumarsáide agus seirbhísí Gaeilge.

Tá Conradh na Gaeilge roghnaithe ag Foras na Gaeilge, an foras uile oileánda atá ag feidhmiú ar son an dá Rialtas thuaidh agus theas leis an nGaeilge a chur chun cinn, mar cheann de na sé cheanneagraíocht atá maoinithe acu leis an nGaeilge a fhorbairt ar oileán na hÉireann. Go príomha, tá Conradh na Gaeilge roghnaithe le tabhairt faoi chosaint teanga, ionadaíocht agus ardú feasachta ar an Ghaeilge. Tá 180 craobh agus iomaí ball aonair ag Conradh na Gaeilge, agus bíonn baill uile an Chonartha ag saothrú go dian díograiseach chun úsáid na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn ina gceantair féin.

Tá breis eolais faoi obair an Chonartha le fáil ag www.cnag.ie.

CUID 1: AILÍNÍÚ LE CREATCHURACLAM NA BUNSCOILE

- Caithfear cur chuige iomlánaíoch a fhorbairt i leith curaclaim agus measúnaithe mar chuid de pholasaí comhtháite agus comhleanúnach don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais ón oideachas luath-óige go dtí an tríú leibhéal mar a gealladh sa Chlár Rialtais. Ba chóir go mbeidh aon athruithe nó forbairtí a dhéanfar maidir le curaclam agus measúnú na Gaeilge ailínithe go comhleanúnach leis an mórfhís fhadtéarmach, seachas forbairtí a dhéanamh ceann ar cheann, neamhspleách ar a chéile. Tagann seo leis an Pholasaí don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais ón oideachas luath-óige go dtí an tríú leibhéal atá molta ag Conradh na Gaeilge agus 15 grúpa eile.
- Cé go bhfáiltíonn muid roimh na féidearthachtaí a bhainfeadh leis an tríú teanga a theagasc ag leibhéal na bunscoile dar linne tá sé róluath an chéim seo a ghlacadh. Molann muid an cinneadh a chur siar go dtí go rachfaí i ngleic le cuid de na dúshláin aitheanta a bhaineann le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2 mar chéad chéim. Tá neart tacaíochtaí ag teastáil ó mhúinteoirí le Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile a chur i bhfeidhm mar atá seachas céim sa bhreis a ghlacadh gan plean fadthréimhseach céimniúil maidir le háiseanna tacaíochta agus oideachas múinteoirí.
- Molann muid an cinneadh a chur siar go dtí go rachfaí i ngleic le cuid de na dúshláin aitheanta a bhaineann le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2 mar chéad chéim. Tá múinteoirí ag trácht ar scileanna teanga laghdaithe na ndaltaí ar feadh na mblianta agus iad ag aistriú ón bhunscoil go dtí an mheánscoil ach tá an scéal ag éirí níos measa anois go bhfuil níos lú teagmhála ag na daltaí leis an teanga. Tá laghdú 37% tagtha ar an méid ama a chaitheann daltaí bunscoile ag foghlaim na Gaeilge le

thart ar 20 bliain anuas, agus in athhreithniú luath ar chur i bhfeidhm na Sonraíochtaí Gaeilge T1 agus T2 don tSraith Shóisearach a rinne SEALBHÚ i 2023, 'níor cheap na múinteoirí go raibh na sonraíochtaí in oiriúint do chaighdeán Gaeilge na ndaltaí agus iad ag teacht isteach san iar-bhunscoil. Bhí caighdeán na ndaltaí, dar leo, ró-íseal do spriocanna na sonraíochtaí agus bhain na dúshláin ba mhó le cúrsaí litríochta. D'aontaigh na daltaí leis an tuairim seo agus níor bhraith siad réidh d'ábhar na ranganna' (SEALBHÚ, 65).

- Moltar tosaíocht a dhéanamh as teagasc agus foghlaim ionchuimsitheach teanga thar an gcontanam d'oideachas múinteoirí. Molann muid go mbeadh an deis ag daltaí i ranganna agus scoileanna speisialta tabhairt faoi fhoghlaim na Gaeilge, an teanga náisiúnta, roimh thabhairt faoi fhoghlaim teanga Eorpach.
- Molann Conradh na Gaeilge gur cheart go dtarraingeoidh aon churaclam teanga agus Gaeilge nua ar an CTET (An Comhchreat Tagartha Eorpach do Theangacha) ag gach leibhéal oideachais do gach teanga. Molann muid na torthaí foghlama teanga a nascadh leis an CTET ag gach leibhéal scoile do gach teanga. Cinnteoidh seo leanúnachas agus dul chun cinn céimnithe agus cur chuige ilteangach san oideachas teanga in Éirinn.
- Cuidíonn cur chuige an CTET le gach dalta cuir lena gcuid scileanna teanga, ach go háirithe daltaí a bhfuil RSO acu nó a thosaigh a gcuid scolaíocht in Éirinn agus iad níos sine. Is croíphrionsabal de chur chuige an CTET maidir le foghlaim agus measúnú teanga aitheantas a thabhairt do pháirtchumais agus do phróifíil inniúlachta míchothroma na bhfoghlaiméoirí sna scileanna teanga. In Éirinn, ar cheann de na cásanna is mó idirdhealaithe ar bhonn teanga ná córas na ndíolúintí Gaeilge. De réir na bhfigiúirí is deireanaí ón Roinn Oideachais, bhí 'beagnach 50,000 dalta iarbhunscoile sa stát anuraidh a raibh díolúine ó staidéar na Gaeilge acu, breis is 12% de líon iomlán na daltaí iarbhunscoile nó duine as gach ochtar.' Níl aon fhianaise nó bunús ann sa taighde náisiúnta nó idirnáisiúnta a thacódh le díolúine ó staidéar ar an nGaeilge. Seachas freastal ar riachtanais speisialta oideachais (RSO) na ndaltaí, tugtar díolúine ó staidéar na Gaeilge dóibh – a fhágann nach bhfaigheann na daltaí seo aon teagmháil fóna leis an teanga ar scoil, agus go ndúnfar amach as deiseanna saoil agus deiseanna oibre níos déanaí iad, ceal aon oideachas sa Ghaeilge. Is gá an Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais a athrú ó bhonn le cinntiú go bhfuil sí inrochtana do gach uile dalta scoile sa tír. ● Tá deis anseo na hábhair éagsúla anseo a dhéanamh mar chuid den scéim Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga. (Is mór an easnamh é nach raibh an FCÁT Gaeilge luaite mar sprioc do gach bunscoil sa Chreat curaclam bunscoile nua trí chéile ach is féidir seo a leigheas anois tríd an moladh seo). Chuirfeadh an páirt-tumoideachais trí Ghaeilge go mór le forbairt na ndaltaí in ar a laghad trí phríomhinniúlacht luaite sna cháipéis seo faoi na Torthaí Foghlama, ina measc a bheith i do shaoránach ghníomhach, a bheith i do chumarsáidí agus teanga a úsáid, agus a bheith cruthaitheach.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfear riachtanais na ngaelscoileanna agus scoileanna Gaeltachta san áireamh fosta.

- Ba chóir go gcuirfear na háiseanna tacaíochta ar fáil i nGaeilge ag an am chéanna agus ar chomhchaighdeán leis na háiseanna i mBéarla.
- Is gá an Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais a athrú ó bhonn le cinntiú go bhfuil sí inrochtana do gach uile dalta scoile sa tír, mar a mholtar sa Pholasaí don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais ón oideachas luath-óige go dtí an tríú leibhéal, le tacaíocht ó Chonradh na Gaeilge agus 15 grúpa eile.

CUID 2A: OIDEACHAS EALAÍON

- Tá deis anseo an oideachas ealaíon a dhéanamh mar chuid den scéim Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga. (Is mór an easnamh é nach raibh an FCÁT Gaeilge luaite mar sprioc do gach bunscoil sa Chreat curaclam bunscoile nua trí chéile ach is féidir seo a leigheas anois tríd an moladh seo). Chuirfeadh an páirt-tumoideachais oideachas ealaíon trí Ghaeilge go mór le forbairt na ndaltaí in ar a laghad dhá phríomhinniúlacht luaite sa cháipéis seo faoi na Torthaí Foghlama, ina measc a bheith i do shaoránach ghníomhach, a bheith i do chumarsáidí agus teanga a úsáid, agus a bheith cruthaitheach (10,11)
- Ba chóir go gcuirfear riachtanais na ngaelscoileanna agus scoileanna Gaeltachta san áireamh fosta.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfear na háiseanna tacaíochta ar fáil i nGaeilge ag an am chéanna agus ar chomhchaighdeán leis na háiseanna i mBéarla.

CUID 2B: CURACLAM TEANGA NA BUNSCOILE LENA N-ÁIRÍTEAR NA NUATHEANGACHA IASACHTA (NTI)

- Ní thiocfaidh tionchair agus torthaí foghlama an dréachtchuraclam seo leis an bhéim a leagtar ar an fheasacht teangacha agus an t-ilteangachas sna torthaí foghlama: ‘Ag cur leis an bhfeasacht ar theangacha agus ar chultúir’ (20).
- Molann muid an Ghaeilge mar mheán chun an t-ilteangachas agus an t-idirchultúrachas a spreagadh, agus molann muid na buntáistí a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge le cur chuige ilteangach agus idirchultúrtha a chur chun cinn a láidriú sa churaclam.
- Molann muid an cinneadh a chur siar go dtí go rachfaí i ngleic le cuid de na dúshláin aitheanta a bhaineann le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2 mar chéad chéim. Tá múinteoirí ag trácht ar scileanna teanga laghdaithe na ndaltaí ar feadh na mblianta agus iad ag aistriú ón bhunscoil go dtí an mheánscoil ach tá an scéal ag éirí níos measa anois go bhfuil níos lú teagmhála ag na daltaí leis an teanga. Tá laghdú 37% tagtha ar an méid ama a chaitheann daltaí bunscoile ag foghlaim na Gaeilge le thart ar 20 bliain anuas, agus in athhreithniú luath ar chur i bhfeidhm na Sonraíochtaí Gaeilge T1 agus T2 don tSraith Shóisearach a rinne SEALBHÚ i 2023, 'níor cheap na múinteoirí go raibh na sonraíochtaí in oiriúint do chaighdeán Gaeilge na ndaltaí agus iad ag teacht isteach san iar-bhunscoil. Bhí caighdeán na ndaltaí, dar leo, ró-íseal do spriocanna na

sonraíochtaí agus bhain na dúshláin ba mhó le cúrsaí litríochta. D'aontaigh na daltaí leis an tuairim seo agus níor bhraith siad réidh d'ábhar na ranganna' (SEALBHÚ, 65).

- Caithfear cur chuige iomlánaíoch a fhorbairt i leith curaclaim agus measúnaithe mar chuid de pholasaí comhtháite agus comhleanúnach don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais ón oideachas luath-óige go dtí an tríú leibhéal mar a gealladh sa Chlár Rialtais. Ba chóir go mbeidh aon athruithe nó forbairtí a dhéanfar maidir le curaclam agus measúnú na Gaeilge ailínithe go comhleanúnach leis an mórfhís fhadtéarmach, seachas forbairtí a dhéanamh ceann ar cheann, neamhspleách ar a chéile.
- Molann Conradh na Gaeilge gur cheart go dtarraingeoidh aon churaclam teanga agus Gaeilge nua ar an CTET ag gach leibhéal oideachais do gach teanga. Molann muid na torthaí foghlama teanga a nascadh leis an CTET ag gach leibhéal scoile do gach teanga. Cinnteoidh seo leanúnachas agus dul chun cinn céimnithe agus cur chuige ilteangach san oideachas teanga in Éirinn.
- Cuidíonn cur chuige an CTET le gach dalta cuir lena gcuid scileanna teanga, ach go háirithe daltaí a bhfuil RSO acu nó a thosaigh a gcuid scolaíocht in Éirinn agus iad níos sine. Is croíphrionsabal de chur chuige an CTET maidir le foghlaim agus measúnú teanga aitheantas a thabhairt do pháirtchumais agus do phróifílí inniúlachta míchothroma na bhfoghlaiméoirí sna scileanna teanga. In Éirinn, ar cheann de na cásanna is mó idirdhealaithe ar bhonn teanga ná córas na ndíolúintí Gaeilge. De réir na bhfigiúirí is deireanaí ón Roinn Oideachais, bhí 'beagnach 50,000 dalta iarbhunscoile sa stát anuraidh a raibh díolúine ó staidéar na Gaeilge acu, breis is 12% de líon iomlán na daltaí iarbhunscoile nó duine as gach ochtar.' Níl aon fhianaise nó bunús ann sa taighde náisiúnta nó idirnáisiúnta a thacódh le díolúine ó staidéar ar an nGaeilge. Seachas freastal ar riachtanais speisialta oideachais (RSO) na ndaltaí, tugtar díolúine ó staidéar na Gaeilge dóibh – a fhágann nach bhfaigheann na daltaí seo aon teagmháil fóna leis an teanga ar scoil, agus go ndúnfar amach as deiseanna saoil agus deiseanna oibre níos déanaí iad, ceal aon oideachas sa Ghaeilge. Is gá an Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais a athrú ó bhonn le cinntiú go bhfuil sí inrochtana do gach uile dalta scoile sa tír.
- Moltar tosaíocht a dhéanamh as teagasc agus foghlaim ionchuimsitheach teanga thar an gcontanam d'oideachas múinteoirí. Molann muid go mbeadh an deis ag daltaí i ranganna agus scoileanna speisialta tabhairt faoi foghlaim na Gaeilge, an teanga náisiúnta, roimh thabhairt faoi foghlaim teanga Eorpach.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfear riachtanais na ngaelscoileanna agus scoileanna Gaeltachta san áireamh fosta.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfear na háiseanna tacaíochta ar fáil i nGaeilge ag an am chéanna agus ar chomhchaighdeán leis na háiseanna i mBéarla.

CUID 2C: OIDEACHAS SÓISIALTA AGUS IMSHAOIL

- Tá deis anseo an Oideachas Sóisialta agus Imshaoil a dhéanamh mar chuid den scéim Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga. (is mór an easnamh é nach raibh an

FCÁT Gaeilge luaite mar sprioc do gach bunscoil sa Chreatcúraclam bunscoile nua trí chéile ach is féidir seo a leigheas anois tríd an moladh seo). Chuirfeadh an páirt-tumoideachais oideachas Sóisialta agus Imshaoil trí Ghaeilge go mór le forbairt na ndaltaí in ar a laghad trí phríomhinniúlacht luaite sa cháipéis seo faoi na Torthaí Foghlama, ina measc a bheith i do shaoránach ghníomhach, a bheith i do chumarsáidí agus teanga a úsáid, agus a bheith cruthaitheach.

- Ba chóir go gcuirfeadh riachtanais na ngaelscoileanna agus scoileanna Gaeltachta san áireamh fosta.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfeadh na háiseanna tacaíochta ar fáil i nGaeilge ag an am chéanna agus ar chomhchaighdeán leis na háiseanna i mBéarla.

CUID 2D: OIDEACHAIS NA EOLAÍOCHTA, TEICNEOLAÍOCHTA & INNEALTÓIREACHTA

- Tá deis anseo an Oideachas Eolaíochta, Teicneolaíochta agus Innealtóireachta a dhéanamh mar chuid den scéim Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga. (is mór an easnamh é nach raibh an FCÁT Gaeilge luaite mar sprioc do gach bunscoil sa Chreatcúraclam bunscoile nua trí chéile ach is féidir seo a leigheas anois tríd an moladh seo). Chuirfeadh an páirt-tumoideachais oideachas Eolaíochta, Teicneolaíochta agus Innealtóireachta trí Ghaeilge go mór le forbairt na ndaltaí in ar a laghad trí phríomhinniúlacht luaite sa cháipéis seo faoi na Torthaí Foghlama, ina measc a bheith i do shaoránach ghníomhach, a bheith i do chumarsáidí agus teanga a úsáid, agus a bheith cruthaitheach.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfeadh riachtanais na ngaelscoileanna agus scoileanna Gaeltachta san áireamh fosta.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfeadh na háiseanna tacaíochta ar fáil i nGaeilge ag an am chéanna agus ar chomhchaighdeán leis na háiseanna i mBéarla.

CUID 2E: OIDEACHAS FOLLÁINE

- Tá deis anseo an Oideachas Folláine a dhéanamh mar chuid den scéim Foghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teanga. (is mór an easnamh é nach raibh an FCÁT Gaeilge luaite mar sprioc do gach bunscoil sa Chreatcúraclam bunscoile nua trí chéile ach is féidir seo a leigheas anois tríd an moladh seo). Chuirfeadh an páirt-tumoideachais oideachas Folláine trí Ghaeilge go mór le forbairt na ndaltaí in ar a laghad trí phríomhinniúlacht luaite sa cháipéis seo faoi na Torthaí Foghlama, ina measc a bheith i do shaoránach ghníomhach, a bheith i do chumarsáidí agus teanga a úsáid, agus a bheith cruthaitheach.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfeadh riachtanais na ngaelscoileanna agus scoileanna Gaeltachta san áireamh fosta.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfeadh na háiseanna tacaíochta ar fáil i nGaeilge ag an am chéanna agus ar chomhchaighdeán leis na háiseanna i mBéarla.

Molann Conradh na Gaeilge:

- Go gcuirfean an traenáil chuí ar fáil do mhúinteoirí ionas go dtig leo an páirt-thumoideachas a chur i bhfeidhm.
- Go gcuirfean riachtanais na ngaelscoileanna agus na scoileanna Gaeltachta san áireamh leis an chreatchuracalam seo maidir le hacmhainní tacaíochta, os rud é go mbeidh na scoileanna sin ag plé leis an ábhar trí mheán na Gaeilge.
- Go gcuirfean eolas sonrath ar fáil mar gheall ar mheasúnuithe agus liosta d'acmhainní tacaíochta do na múinteoirí i bhfad sula gcuirtear na sonraíochtaí nua i bhfeidhm.
- Go mbeidh riachtanais ann go gcuirfí traenáil oiriúnach agus phraiticiúil inseirbhíse ar fáil do na múinteoirí sula gcuirtí athruithe curaclaim i bhfeidhm.
- Go gcuirfean ábhair do dhaltáí agus do mhúinteoirí ar fáil ag an am chéanna agus ar chomhchaighdeán leis na hábhair as Béarla
- Plean Digiteach a fhorbairt don Ghaeilge chun áiseanna cuimsitheacha digiteacha a fhorbairt do theagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ag gach leibhéal oideachais.

- Molann muid taighde a dhéanamh ar riachtanais scoileanna maidir leis an tríú teanga a theagasc, pleanáil chuimsitheach chéimíúil a dhéanamh agus na hacmhainní cuí a chur ar fáil. Molann muid go láidir tacú le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge mar T2 agus cur leis na deiseanna idirghníomhaithe teanga atá ag páistí sa Ghaeilge roimh dhul i ngleic leis an tríú teanga. Is gá an cur chuige theagasc an tríú teanga a bhunú ar dhea-chleachtas agus ar thaighde idirnáisiúnta i ndlínse a bheadh comhchosúil le cás na hÉireann. Ní léir dúinn go bhfuil an taighde seo déanta go fóill.
- Ba chóir go gcuirfean le líon na n-áiteanna ar chúrsaí bunoidéachais tríú leibhéal, go háirithe ag cúrsaí lán-Ghaeilge, le freastail ar an easpa múinteoirí san earnáil Gaeilge agus le scoileanna teanga sa Ghaeilge.
- Thiocfadh seo le cur chuige iomlánaíoch a fhorbairt i leith curaclaim agus measúnaithe mar chuid de pholasaí comhtháite agus comhleanúnach don Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais, ón oideachas luath-óige go dtí an tríú leibhéal mar a moltar sa Pholasaí on Ghaeilge sa chóras oideachais ón oideachas luath-óige go dtí an tríú leibhéal, le tacaíocht ó Chonradh na Gaeilge agus 15 grúpa oideachais agus Gaeilge eile.
- Molann muid go gcuirfean níos mó laethanta inseirbhíse ar fáil do mhúinteoirí le tacú le haon athrú sa churaclam agus le tacú leo FCÁT Gaeilge a chur i bhfeidhm i gceart. Is gá oideachas múinteoirí a sholáthar a áiríonn múnlaí éagsúla den fhorbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach le tacú le cur i bhfeidhm CTB
- Molann muid go mbainfean ar a laghad leibhéal B2 amach sa Ghaeilge chun FCÁT a chur i bhfeidhm sa seomra ranga, agus go gcuirfean tacaíocht ar fáil do mhúinteoirí

bunscoile an caighdeán seo a bhaint amach trí dheiseanna oiliúna a chur ar fáil agus a mhaoiniú.

- Is gá tabhairt faoi thaighde cuimsitheach ar chur i bhfeidhm CTB (ROS, 2019) sula rachfaí i ngleic le hathrú eile curaclaim. Is gá na tacaíochtaí cuí a chur ar fáil do chur i bhfeidhm CTB ach go háirithe sna réimsí seo – cur chuige ionchuimsitheach do theagasc na Gaeilge, teagasc i treo traschur scileanna (Gaeilge, Béarla agus teangacha baile), úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil, FCÁT trí Ghaeilge i scoileanna T2 chomh maith le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2.



Submission of Conradh na Gaeilge regarding the Primary Curriculum

7th June 2024

BACKGROUND

Conradh na Gaeilge is a democratic forum for the Irish language community and the organisation works on behalf of the Irish language throughout Ireland and around the world. The main aim of the organisation is to restore Irish as the everyday language of Ireland. Since its establishment on the 31st of July 1893, members of Conradh na Gaeilge have been active in promoting the Irish language in every aspect of this country's life, from legal matters, to education, to developments in the media and Irish language services.

Conradh na Gaeilge has been chosen by Foras na Gaeilge, the all-island body working on behalf of both governments, North and South, as one of the six lead organisations funded to develop the Irish language across the island of Ireland. Primarily, Conradh na Gaeilge has been chosen to protect, represent and to raise awareness of the Irish language. Conradh na Gaeilge has 180 branches along with many individual members, and all members work hard to develop the use of the Irish language in their own areas. Further information about the work of Conradh na Gaeilge is available at www.cnag.ie.

Section 1: Alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework

- A holistic approach to curriculum and assessment must be developed as part of an integrated and coherent policy for Irish in the education system from early childhood to third level education, as promised in the Programme for Government. Any changes

or developments in the curriculum and assessment of Irish should be consistently aligned with the overall long-term vision, rather than making developments one by one, independently of each other. This is in line with The Policy on Irish in the education system from early childhood to third level education as recommended by Conradh na Gaeilge and 15 other groups.

- While we welcome the potential benefits associated with teaching a third language at primary school level, we believe it is too early to take this step. We recommend postponing the decision until the identified challenges of teaching and learning Irish in L2 schools have first of all been addressed. As it is, teachers need a lot of support to implement the Primary Language Curriculum without having to take an additional step with no phased long-term plan regarding support materials and teacher education.
- We recommend postponing the decision until the identified challenges of teaching and learning Irish in L2 schools have first of all been addressed. For years, teachers have spoken about the lowered levels of language skills among students transitioning from primary to secondary school, but the situation is now becoming worse given that pupils have less exposure to the language. There has been a 37% reduction in the amount of time that primary school pupils spend learning Irish, and in an early enactment review of the Junior Cycle Irish L1 and L2 Specifications conducted by SEALBHÚ in 2023, ‘teachers did not think that the specifications were adapted to the standard of Irish for students entering post-primary school. The standard of Irish students had, in their view, was too low to meet the goals of the specifications and the main challenges related to literature. The students agreed with this opinion and did not feel ready for the material of the classes’ (SEALBHÚ, 65).
- It is recommended to prioritise inclusive language teaching and learning across the continuum of teacher education. We propose that every pupil in special classes and in special schools would have the opportunity to learn Irish, the national language, before learning a European language.
- Conradh na Gaeilge recommends that any new language and Irish curriculum should be based on the CEFR (Common European Framework of Reference for Languages) at each level of education for all languages. We advise linking the language learning outcomes to the CEFR at every school level for all languages. This will ensure continuity and phased progression along with a plurilingual approach in language education in Ireland.
- The CEFR approach helps all pupils enhance their language skills, especially pupils with SEN or those who began their schooling in Ireland at a later age. A core principle of the CEFR approach to language learning and assessment is recognising the partial competences and uneven proficiency profiles of learners in language skills. In Ireland,

one of the most significant cases of language discrimination is the system of Irish language exemptions. According to the latest figures from the Department of Education, ‘almost 50,000 post-primary students in the state last year were exempt from studying Irish, more than 12% of the total number of post-primary students or one in every eight students.’ There is no evidence or basis in national or international research that supports an exemption from studying Irish. Instead of meeting the special educational needs (SEN) of pupils, they are given an exemption from studying Irish – which means these students do not receive any meaningful exposure to the language at school and are excluded from opportunities and job prospects later on in life due to a lack of education in Irish. A fundamental change to Irish in the education system is needed to ensure that it is accessible to every single pupil in the country.

- This presents an opportunity to study different subjects as part of the Content and Language Integrated Learning scheme. (It is a significant shortcoming that Irish CLIL was not mentioned as a goal for all primary schools together with the new primary curriculum framework, but this can now be remedied through this recommendation). Partial immersion of education through Irish would greatly contribute to the development of pupils in at least three key competencies mentioned in these documents on Learning Outcomes, including being an active citizen, being a communicator and using language, and being creative.
- The needs of Irish-medium schools and Gaeltacht schools should also be taken into account.
- Support resources should be made available in Irish at the same time and to the same standard as the resources in English.
- It is necessary to transform Irish in the education system to ensure that it is accessible to every single pupil in the country, as recommended in the Policy on Irish in the education system from early childhood to third level education, with support from Conradh na Gaeilge and 15 other groups.

Section 2A: Arts Education

- This allows an opportunity to make arts education a part of the Content and Language Integrated Learning scheme. (It is a significant shortcoming that Irish CLIL was not mentioned as a goal for all primary schools together with the new primary curriculum framework, but this can now be remedied through this recommendation). Partial immersion of art education through Irish would greatly contribute to the development of pupils in at least two key competencies mentioned in this document on Learning Outcomes, including being an active citizen, being a communicator and using language, and being creative (10,11)

- The needs of Irish-medium schools and Gaeltacht schools should also be taken into account.
- Support resources should be made available in Irish at the same time and to the same standard as the resources in English.

SECTION 2B: PRIMARY SCHOOL LANGUAGE CURRICULUM INCLUDING MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (MFL)

- The impacts and learning outcomes of this draft curriculum will not align with the emphasis placed on language awareness and plurilingualism in the learning outcomes: ‘Enhancing awareness of languages and cultures’ (20).
- We recommend using Irish as a medium to encourage plurilingualism and interculturalism, and we suggest that the benefits of the promotion of a plurilingual and intercultural approach to Irish be supported in the curriculum.
- We recommend postponing the decision until the identified challenges of teaching and learning Irish in L2 schools have first of all been addressed. For years, teachers have spoken about the lowered levels of language skills among students transitioning from primary to secondary school, but the situation is now becoming worse given that pupils have less exposure to the language. There has been a 37% reduction in the amount of time that primary school pupils spend learning Irish, and in an early enactment review of the Junior Cycle Irish L1 and L2 Specifications conducted by SEALBHÚ in 2023, ‘teachers did not think that the specifications were adapted to the standard of Irish for students entering post-primary school. The standard of Irish students had, in their view, was too low to meet the goals of the specifications and the main challenges related to literature. The students agreed with this opinion and did not feel ready for the material of the classes’ (SEALBHÚ, 65).
- A holistic approach to curriculum and assessment must be developed as part of an integrated and coherent policy for Irish in the education system from early childhood to third level education, as promised in the Programme for Government. Any changes or developments in the curriculum and assessment of Irish should be consistently aligned with the overall long-term vision, rather than making developments one by one, independently of each other.
- Conradh na Gaeilge recommends that any new language and Irish curriculum should be based on the CEFR at all levels of education for all languages. We advise linking the language learning outcomes to the CEFR at every school level for all languages. This will ensure continuity and phased progression along with a plurilingual approach in language education in Ireland.
- The CEFR approach helps all pupils enhance their language skills, especially pupils with SEN or those who began their schooling in Ireland at a later age. A core principle

of the CEFR approach to language learning and assessment is recognising the partial competences and uneven proficiency profiles of learners in language skills. In Ireland, one of the most significant cases of language discrimination is the system of Irish language exemptions. According to the latest figures from the Department of Education, ‘almost 50,000 post-primary students in the state last year were exempt from studying Irish, more than 12% of the total number of post-primary students or one in every eight students.’ There is no evidence or basis in national or international research that supports an exemption from studying Irish. Instead of meeting the special educational needs (SEN) of pupils, they are given an exemption from studying Irish – which means these students do not receive any meaningful exposure to the language at school and are excluded from opportunities and job prospects later on in life due to a lack of education in Irish. A fundamental change to Irish in the education system is needed to ensure that it is accessible to every single pupil in the country.

- It is recommended to prioritise inclusive language teaching and learning across the continuum of teacher education. We propose that every pupil in special classes and in special schools would have the opportunity to learn Irish, the national language, before learning a European language.
- The needs of Irish-medium schools and Gaeltacht schools should also be taken into account.
- Support resources should be made available in Irish at the same time and to the same standard as the resources in English.

SECTION 2C: SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- This presents an opportunity to study Social and Environmental Education as part of the Content and Language Integrated Learning Scheme. (It is a significant shortcoming that Irish CLIL was not mentioned as a goal for all primary schools together with the new Primary Curriculum Framework, but this can now be remedied through this recommendation). Partial immersion in Social and Environmental Education through Irish would greatly contribute to the development of students in at least three key competencies mentioned in this document on Learning Outcomes, including being an active citizen, being a communicator and using language, and being creative.
- The needs of Irish-medium schools and Gaeltacht schools should also be taken into account.
- Support resources should be made available in Irish at the same time and to the same standard as the resources in English.

Section 2D: Science, Technology & Engineering Education

- This presents an opportunity to study Science, Technology and Engineering Education as part of the Content and Language Integrated Learning Scheme. (It is a significant shortcoming that Irish CLIL was not mentioned as a goal for all primary schools together with the new Primary Curriculum Framework, but this can now be remedied through this recommendation). Partial immersion education in Science, Technology, and Engineering through Irish would greatly contribute to the development of students in at least three key competencies mentioned in these documents on Learning Outcomes, including being an active citizen, being a communicator and using language, and being creative.
- The needs of Irish-medium schools and Gaeltacht schools should also be taken into account.
- Support resources should be made available in Irish at the same time and to the same standard as the resources in English.

Section 2E: Wellbeing Education

- This presents an opportunity to make Wellbeing Education a part of the Content and Language Integrated Learning scheme. (It is a significant shortcoming that Irish CLIL was not mentioned as a goal for all primary schools together with the new Primary Curriculum Framework, but this can now be remedied through this recommendation). Partial immersion education in Wellbeing Education through Irish would greatly contribute to the development of students in at least three key competencies mentioned in this document on Learning Outcomes, including being an active citizen, being a communicator and using language, and being creative.
- The needs of Irish-medium schools and Gaeltacht schools should also be taken into account.
- Support resources should be made available in Irish at the same time and to the same standard as the resources in English.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

Conradh na Gaeilge recommends:

- Providing training for teachers to allow them to implement partial immersion education.
- That the needs of the Irish-medium and Gaeltacht schools be taken into account with this curriculum framework regarding support resources, given that these schools will be engaging with the subject through Irish.
- That specific information about assessments and a list of support resources be made available to teachers long before the new specifications are implemented.

- That there would be a requirement to provide suitable and practical in-service training for teachers before implementing curriculum changes.
- That resources for students and teachers be made available in Irish at the same time and to the same standard as the resources in English.
- The development of a Digital Plan for Irish to develop comprehensive digital resources for the teaching and learning of Irish at every level of education.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

- We recommend conducting research on the needs of schools regarding the teaching of a third language, carrying out comprehensive phased planning, and providing the appropriate resources. We strongly recommend supporting the teaching and learning of Irish as a second language and increasing the language interaction opportunities for children in Irish before engaging with a third language. The approach to teaching a third language must be based on best practice and international research in a jurisdiction that is comparable to Ireland's situation. It is not clear to us that this research has been conducted yet.
- The number of places in third-level primary education courses should be increased, especially in Irish-medium courses, to address the shortage of teachers in the Irish language sector and to enhance language skills in Irish.
- This could help develop a holistic approach to curriculum and assessment as part of an integrated and coherent policy on Irish in the education system, from early childhood to third level education, as recommended in the Policy on Irish in the education system from early childhood to the third level education, with support from Conradh na Gaeilge and 15 other education and Irish language groups.
- We recommend providing more in-service days for teachers to support any curriculum changes and to assist them in properly implementing Irish CLIL. Teacher education that includes various models of continuous professional development must be provided to support the implementation of the PLC.
- We recommend that at least a B2 level in Irish be achieved to implement CLIL in the classroom, and that support be provided for primary school teachers to attain this standard through the provision and funding of training opportunities.
- It is necessary to conduct comprehensive research on the implementation of the PLC (DES, 2019) before engaging with another curriculum change. The appropriate supports must be provided for the implementation of the PLC, especially in these areas - an inclusive approach to teaching Irish, teaching for transfer of skills (Irish, English, and home languages), the informal use of Irish, CLIL through Irish in L2 schools, as well as the teaching and learning of Irish in L2 schools.



Competition and Consumer Protection
Consultation on
the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications
Submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

June 2024



Coimisiún um
Iomaíocht agus

Competition and
Consumer Protection



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In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

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Background: Institutional Framework for Financial Education

The Role of the CCPC

The Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment’s (NCCA) consultation on the Primary Curriculum. The CCPC is the Irish State Agency responsible for the promotion of “the development of financial education and capability in Ireland.”¹ Central to the CCPC’s remit is the empowerment of consumers to make informed decisions.² The CCPC also has responsibilities in a range of other areas including consumer rights, competition law, product safety and digital services.

The CCPC provides and delivers a range of financial education resources and programmes.³ It also conducts research, carries out public awareness and PR campaigns, and participates in domestic and international working groups and forums to influence policy development. Since 2023, the CCPC has also been supporting the Department of Finance to develop Ireland’s first National Financial Literacy Strategy (NFLS).

The integration of financial education across all curriculum stages and areas, beginning as early as possible, is a policy and advocacy priority for the CCPC. The CCPC welcomes the publication of the Primary Curriculum Framework and the draft curriculum specifications, where the emphasis on wellbeing, digital learning, sustainability, and active citizenship aligns with financial education objectives. It supports approaches to education that seek to prepare young people to be critical thinkers and apply their knowledge and skills to real- world problems and recognises that “[c]hildren live their lives in an integrated world, and, for most real-world problems, children need to apply knowledge and skills from multiple areas.”⁴

¹ [Competition and Consumer Protection Act 2014](#)

² [CCPC Strategy 2024-2026](#)

³ This includes school programmes, workplace programmes and financial information for the wider population. For further information and details see [Financial education - CCPC Business](#).

⁴ NCCA, [Primary Curriculum Framework. For Primary and Special Schools](#), p. 26.

Financial education⁵ is an ongoing process of acquiring, applying, and using knowledge to make informed decisions and solve real world problems. Therefore, the CCPC believes that an integrated approach to financial education, that is embedding it across multiple curriculum areas, is the most effective approach to support children's development of financial literacy skills and the broader vision of the Primary Curriculum Framework. This submission highlights how and where financial education can be integrated into the curriculum specifications under review and how the CCPC can support teachers in implementing financial education within the primary curriculum framework.

EU/OECD Financial Competence Framework for Children and Youth

Published in September 2023, the “Financial Competence Framework for Children and Youth in the European Union” was developed in response to a growing awareness of the importance of empowering children and young people to take charge of their own financial future within an increasingly complex financial landscape.

The framework establishes a “a common understanding of financial literacy competences for children and youth at different ages and across different stages of their formal education.”⁶ In addition to sections on the awareness, knowledge and understanding of financial competencies, the framework emphasises the relevance of confidence, motivation and attitudes along with skills and behaviours in financial decision-making. The framework also recognises several cross-cutting dimensions associated with financial competency; most notable here are digital competencies, sustainability, and citizenship. It includes a number of learning outcomes in common with those in the draft curriculum specifications.⁷ The CCPC suggests, if not already done so, that the learning outcomes from this Competence Framework are considered in conjunction with the learning outcomes suggested under the responses to the individual draft subject specifications below.

⁵ The [OECD](#) defines financial education as, “the process by which financial consumers and investors improve their understanding of financial products, concepts and risks, and through information, instruction and/or objective advice, develop the skills and confidence to become more aware of financial risks and opportunities, to make informed choices, to know where to go for help, and to take other effective actions to improve their financial wellbeing.” It is essential to remember that financial education is an ongoing process aimed at acquiring, applying, and using knowledge to make informed decisions and solve problems. This financial capability is one of the three pillars of financial wellbeing, alongside financial inclusion and financial consumer protection.

⁶ [EU/OECD Financial competence framework for children and youth](#), p. 4.

⁷ These are broken down by content area and age group. For further information see [EU/OECD Financial competence framework for children and youth](#), p. 22-24.

Financial Education and the Alignment of the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications with the Primary Curriculum Framework

In response to Section 1 of the consultation, the CCPC believes that the provision of integrated financial education within the existing primary curriculum specifications reinforces a number of the key messages outlined by the NCCA in the consultation submission form. In addition to enhancing an integrated approach to learning and teaching, actively building financial education into the primary school curriculum has the potential to:

Support the new curriculum in responding to changing priorities (section 2.1).

Reinforce the connections across learning experiences from early childhood on to Junior Cycle (section 2.2).

Embed the key competencies in learning outcomes and support a focus on developing skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes (section 2.3).

Benefit all children and bolster inclusion and diversity (section 2.4).

Respond to Changing Priorities

A curriculum reflects educational priorities which society, at a point in time, deems important for its young citizens.⁸

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications aim to prepare children to navigate a wide variety of contexts as critical thinkers who can use and apply their knowledge to make informed decisions. Financial education can play an important role in supporting this aim. Children, note the OECD, not only “have access to money and start using (digital) financial services from a young age,” but they are also “growing up in a fast-evolving financial landscape.”⁹ As a result, young people are increasingly exposed to a wide variety of information and messaging. Being able to analyse these critically and to know and understand their consumer rights and responsibilities both as current and as future consumers is vital. The CCPC recognises this in its strategic aim to ensure that “every

⁸ NCCA, [Primary Curriculum Framework. For Primary and Special Schools](#), p. 3.

⁹ [EU/OECD Financial competence framework for children and youth](#), p. 4

consumer is both informed and empowered, enabling them to make sound decisions, particularly in complex and changing financial markets.”¹⁰

In Ireland, the National Financial Literacy Strategy under development recognises the importance of financial wellbeing for all sectors of society, including young learners: “Financial education should begin as early as possible in life and early childhood and primary level education on financial literacy should be developed.”¹¹ A strong grounding in financial education can help protect consumers, including children and young people, by instilling confidence in their financial decision-making knowledge and skills. Integrating it into the Primary Curriculum Specifications is a significant way to recognise this and will be critical to delivery on the full ambition of the strategy.

Connect with Learning Experiences Provided Through *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the Framework for Junior Cycle

*Financial literacy is a lifelong journey and a very important part of financial consumer protection and financial inclusion.*¹²

The integration of financial education at primary level builds on and reinforces the learning experiences provided through *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.

The Mathematics Curriculum Framework is ideally placed to build on the development of awareness about and understandings of money in the *Aistear Framework*. By incorporating financial education into additional specifications at primary level, *Aistear* learnings around sustainability and active citizenship¹³ can also be bolstered (within the Draft Social and Environmental Education Specification) and the emphasis on wellbeing¹⁴ (Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification) continued. The Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

¹⁰ [CCPC Strategy 2024-2026](#)

¹¹ [Financial Literacy in Ireland, Mapping Report](#), p. 93.

¹² [Financial Literacy in Ireland, Mapping Report](#), p. 8.

¹³ Proposed updates to the *Aistear Framework* include, “Through nurturing relationships within a supportive environment, babies, toddlers and young children will explore and identify their place in the world and be empowered to live sustainably as agentic, respectful, caring, compassionate global citizens,” (Aim 4 of the theme Wellbeing). See NCCA, [Draft Updated *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. For consultation](#), p. 19.

¹⁴ Wellbeing has been one of the themes of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* since its introduction in 2009. See NCCA, [Wellbeing](#) for further information.

Specification notes the importance of “fostering intrinsic motivation for lifelong learning and wellbeing.”¹⁵

An integrated approach to financial education at primary level also supports the transition from Primary Education to Junior Cycle, where Wellbeing is a subject area.¹⁶ At Junior Cycle, students are prepared for making “informed financial decisions and developing good consumer skills.”¹⁷ The CCPC already contributes financial education resources at Junior Cycle, including our programmes “Ábhair Airgead,”¹⁸ “Money Matters”¹⁹ and the “Me and My Money”²⁰ unit of learning.

Comprehensive financial education provision at primary level can provide a solid stepping stone on the way to achieving this outcome at Junior Cycle while providing the opportunity for relevant and age-appropriate learning experiences and outcomes integrated across curriculum specifications. In doing so, it acknowledges the unique and complex position that children hold currently as consumers, while also preparing them as future consumers of a range of ever-changing financial products and services.

Embed Skills, Values, Attitudes and Key Competencies Across Curriculum Specifications

*[The primary curriculum] seeks to equip children with the essential knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes, and values which enable them to adapt to and deal with a range of situations, challenges, and contexts in support of broader Learning Outcomes.*²¹

The emphasis in the Primary Curriculum Framework on attitudes and values is welcome, as is the focus on key competencies. Integrating financial education across the Primary School Curriculum Framework recognises the importance of habits and behaviours in decision-making, including around financial and consumer choices. The OECD recommends that financial literacy be understood as “a combination of financial

¹⁵ [Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification](#), p. 7.

¹⁶ Introduced in 2017, see <https://ncca.ie/en/junior-cycle/wellbeing/>

¹⁷ Statement of Learning 14 in the [Framework for Junior Cycle](#).

¹⁸ [Ábhair Airgead](#), CCPC website.

¹⁹ [Money Matters](#), CCPC website.

²⁰ [Me and my Money](#) Unit of Learning, CCPC website.

²¹ NCCA, [Primary Curriculum Framework for Primary and Special Schools](#), p. 8

awareness, knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to make sound financial decisions.”²²

Financial education supports all seven key competencies of the Primary Curriculum Framework:

Being well. Being well is central to the underlying aims of financial education. Understanding the importance of financial wellbeing as part of a healthy life can support children as they develop resilience and coping skills.

Being a digital learner. Financial education and digital learning are intrinsically linked; the focus on digital learning within financial education supports children to gain confidence in using digital technology in safe and ethical ways.

Being mathematical. Financial education can help children to interpret real world information that is presented mathematically and apply this knowledge to other areas, recognising that mathematics is used regularly in a variety of real-life contexts.

Being a communicator and using language. Understanding and engaging critically with different types of media, including advertising, across a range of platforms is part of financial education. This helps develop children’s confidence in assessing media content.

Being creative. Integrated approaches to financial education can support critical thinking and innovation in problem-solving. Children can identify novel ways of problem solving by applying their skills and knowledge to real-world problems, including those they identify themselves.

Being an active learner. Financial education recognises that children are active and agentic consumers and learners. Acknowledging that different people in different contexts might have different wants and needs can also support children as they develop empathy.

Being an active citizen. Empowering children as responsible consumers encourages them to take positive actions. Being aware of their rights and responsibilities as

²² This is a recommendation of the OECD Council on Financial Literacy, referenced in [EU/OECD Competence Framework](#), p. 18.

consumers can support understandings of how their actions and behaviours can contribute to a sustainable and just world.

Financial Education for Everyone: Inclusion and Diversity

According to the OECD, introducing financial education in the school curriculum can improve the quality, effectiveness and fairness of financial education, as it can reach all students in a setting where they are used to learning. In addition, it can reach those who may not have the opportunity to learn from their families.²³

Certain groups in society, including women, the unemployed, and those with low incomes, have lower financial literacy rates²⁴ and tend to be financially vulnerable, with further segments, such as migrants and people with disabilities or special needs, often having their specific necessities overlooked. Integrating financial education across curriculum specifications at primary school contributes to inclusion both at the societal and school levels. It provides access to financial education for children who may not receive it otherwise. Furthermore, research indicates that financial education in schools can have positive impacts on more than just the students in the classroom:

In addition to affecting students, it helps parents, specifically parents of low-income students (...) there is an important gender effect: it is mostly the parents of daughters who experience improvement in their financial behaviors (...) Financial education in school can be far reaching and can have important spillover effects, in particular for vulnerable groups.”²⁵

Because financial education can have such an impact, including on wellbeing, it is vital to ensure that it is provided appropriately to all children. The CCPC endeavours to reach all children and their families, particularly those from financially vulnerable backgrounds facing additional barriers to accessing any provision of financial education.

The focus on wellbeing, sustainability, and active citizenship within financial education supports visions of inclusive and diverse futures. Financial education offers opportunities to explore and celebrate diversity. Resources can be developed that allow for multi- perspective, supporting the development of empathy and intercultural understanding. The CCPC envisages designing resources using multiple means of representation to ensure that financial literacy can be taught using different approaches that are age and context- appropriate and promote respect and inclusion.

²³ [Financial Literacy in Ireland, Mapping Report](#), p. 63.

24 For further information see CCPC (2023) [Financial Wellbeing in Ireland: Financial Literacy and Inclusion in 2023](#).

25 Lusardi, A. & Messy, F-A. (2023) [The importance of financial literacy and its impact on financial wellbeing](#),

Journal of Financial Literacy and Wellbeing, 1(1):1-11.

Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

The following are the areas in which we believe the embedding of financial education is most readily feasible and aligns with the specification aims, curriculum and learning outcomes:

Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification.

Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum Specification.

Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification.

Draft Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL).

For each specification, we use a sample activity²⁶ to illustrate these connections and include indicative additions to the existing learning outcomes to highlight how financial education outcomes might be infused into and complement the curriculum. Some sample learning opportunities connect to the Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification. This supports children to be arts and drama makers and integrate their learning across specifications, including financial education outcomes, through the arts.²⁷

Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification

*...within the Wellbeing Curriculum, children have the opportunity to develop a holistic understanding of their wellbeing and acquire the necessary tools to lead healthy lives.*²⁸

Financial education is an important tool in supporting people to make informed decisions and improve their financial resilience and wellbeing.²⁹ This contributes significantly to overall wellbeing and supports the “Being Well” competency throughout the Primary Curriculum Framework.

Including financial education in the learning outcomes of the Wellbeing Curriculum Specification acknowledges the important role that social, emotional, and relational

26 These examples of indicative learning opportunities are used for illustrative purposes only and are not designed to be classroom activities/resources.

27 [Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 21 & 28.

28 [Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification](#), p. 1.

29 [Financial Literacy in Ireland, Mapping Report](#), p. 3.

elements play in financial decision-making, with the Wellbeing Curriculum an appropriate space to explore the feelings and emotions linked to financial situations and experiences. Financial wellbeing can support children and young people’s mental health now and in the future. The 2023 Children’s Mental Health Survey by the Ombudsman for Children cites “worries about money/the economy” as one of the causes of mental health stress for children aged 12-17.³⁰

Linking to learning outcomes around emotional awareness and expression (see table below), playful approaches to financial wellbeing can include using narratives to explore the weekly spending diaries of various characters.³¹ Children consider what each character wants, what they buy, where they buy it, how they buy/pay for it and why. These narratives can include insights into emotions tied to consumer experiences, highlighting the impact of money on emotional wellbeing, and reinforcing learnings about money and value. Discussing these narratives allows children to think about the different options the characters have if they want to make changes to their behaviours, and where they might go for support if needed. Building on this, children could create their own characters and write diary entries or role play based on different consumer situations (being drama- makers to support the integration of learning across specifications)³².

This activity helps children consider financial scenarios from multiple perspectives and understand the different values, contexts and experiences that people might have regarding finance. This links to the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum by encouraging empathy and multi-perspectivity.³³ It also allows for depersonalising discussions around money,

which can be important given the potentially sensitive nature of the topic and the differing circumstances children within the class might be in.

Central to the Wellbeing Curriculum Specification and financial education is a focus on safe and responsible decision-making, particularly in a digital context. A recent report suggests

³⁰ Ombudsman for Children (2023), [A Piece of My Mind. Children’s Mental Health Survey](#). This echoes findings from The second My World Survey , the National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland (2019), which found that financial stress was one of the top three stressors of young people in Ireland: Dooley, B., O’Connor, C., Fitzgerald, A., & O’Reilly, A. (2019) [My World Survey 2: The National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland](#), Jigsaw, the National Centre for Youth Mental Health & University College Dublin School of Psychology.

³¹ These examples of indicative learning opportunities are used for illustrative purposes only and are not designed to be classroom activities/resources.

³² [Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 21 & 28.

³³ [Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 13.

that almost a third of young people learn about money through social media.³⁴ The increasing digitalisation of money and finance brings challenges. Understanding the persuasive nature of media and advertising and identifying credible sources of information is vital to safe financial digital behaviour. The OECD/INFE Competence Framework emphasises the importance of children, including younger children, acquiring the necessary competences to navigate the financial landscape and ensure that their financial well-being is not compromised by scams and fraud.³⁵

The exploration of online financial safety is particularly well suited to discovery learning and connects with learning outcomes in media and digital wellbeing (see table below). Activities might include children critically considering different types of (age-appropriate) advertisements. These conversations can be enhanced by introducing a technology element (tying in with the Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum), including digital safety guidelines around online advertising and purchasing and recognising fraudulent content. Children might, again as art-makers,³⁶ then create their own advertisements for real or imagined products, presenting these to the class and seeing if their fellow students would buy the products and what they believe the value of the products to be. This activity further integrates and reinforces learnings from the Mathematics Curriculum around the value of money.³⁷

Learning Outcomes

Financial education plays an important role in the “Being Well” competency. Additionally, infusing financial education outcomes within the existing wellbeing learning outcomes can help support children as they lay the foundations for what will be a lifelong journey in wellbeing. The following tables offer suggestions as to how this can be done, with additions to existing learning outcomes highlighted in green.

³⁴Further details about the social media platforms where children are learning about money can be found in: Lajoie, A. (2024) [Money Attitudes and Behaviours of Young People Living in Ireland](#), Second Edition, Money Advice and Budgeting Service, p. 12-14.

35 [EU/OECD Financial competence framework for children and youth](#), p. 11.

36 [Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 21 & 28.

37 Stage 2 Learning Outcome in the Money strand: “recognise the value of money...” See “Measures” in the

[Primary Mathematics Curriculum](#).

Strand & Stage	Suggested Addition to Learning Outcome
Emotional Awareness Stage 1 & 2, p. 15	Begin to demonstrate empathetic skills in response to peers in a variety of contexts and begin to understand how everyday financial choices can impact emotions and wellbeing.
Emotional Awareness Stage 3, p. 24	Demonstrate an awareness of personal emotional responses, reflecting on influences on emotions and feelings and explore how emotions can affect one's life and how basic financial decisions can influence wellbeing and emotions.
Emotional Awareness Stage 3, p. 24	Acknowledge differing emotional responses in others and demonstrate empathetic skills and support for peers dealing with challenging situations when appropriate and recognising how financial situations can also influence emotions.
Emotional Awareness Stage 4, p. 24	Engage in self-reflection to deepen awareness of personal emotional responses, reflecting on influences and beginning to recognise patterns and the link between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours, appreciate the benefit of communicating about emotions and feelings, and understand how decisions, including financial decisions, can influence emotions and behaviour.
Emotional Awareness Stage 4, p. 24	Employ empathetic skills to provide support to peers experiencing emotional challenges when appropriate, recognising how financial decisions and responsibilities can impact emotions and relationships.
Media & Digital Wellbeing Stage 1, p. 18	Discuss different media, including digital technology, within their own lives and develop and awareness of how advertising can influence their needs and wants.

Media & Digital Wellbeing Stage 2, p. 18	Further develop an awareness of the persuasive nature of media and advertising and learn to identify credible sources of information in relation to wellbeing and financial choices .
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Strand & Stage	Suggested Addition to Learning Outcome
Media & Digital Wellbeing Stage 2, p. 18	Consider personal use of digital technology, identifying some of the benefits, challenges and risks of digital technology use, and develop digital safety skills and strategies to promote appropriate and responsible use of digital technologies.
Media & Digital Wellbeing Stage 3, p. 27	Demonstrate an understanding of the purpose and persuasive nature of media and advertising .
Media & Digital Wellbeing Stage 3 p. 27	Recognise examples of stereotypes, bias and fraud and make judgements regarding the reliability and credibility of sources of information.
Media & Digital Wellbeing Stage 3, p. 27	Appreciate the need for safe and responsible use of digital technologies as part of a balanced lifestyle, understand how digital technologies and financial decisions can impact their wellbeing both positively and negatively, and support strategies to support safe and responsible use.
Media & Digital Wellbeing Stage 4, p. 27	Critique depictions of topics and issues in the media, recognising examples of stereotypes, bias and fraud, understand how advertising influences financial behaviours , and identify how to confirm information is safe and reliable.

<p>Media & Digital Wellbeing Stage 4, p.27</p>	<p>Propose and implement strategies to promote safe and responsible use of digital technologies, recognising personal and communal responsibility to foster a positive, respectful, and safer digital environment, understand consumer rights and the financial implications of online activities, how to protect their personal data online and know safe ways to report inappropriate, harmful, or fraudulent behaviours or content.</p>
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Strand & Stage	Suggested Addition to Learning Outcome
<p>Resilience Stage 1, p. 16</p>	<p>Develop an open and curious approach to appropriate challenges, viewing them as opportunities to learn and develop, building coping skills, confidence to persevere, and recognise the link between effort and progress in a variety of contexts, including how simple financial decisions like saving and spending can contribute to personal growth and resilience.</p>
<p>Resilience Stage 2, p. 16</p>	<p>Approach appropriate challenges with openness and curiosity, viewing them as opportunities to learn and develop. Build coping skills and confidence to persevere, appreciating the link between effort and progress in various contexts, including understanding how managing finances wisely can support personal growth and resilience.</p>
<p>Resilience Stage 3 & 4, p. 25</p>	<p>Embrace and persevere with appropriate challenges, demonstrating an understanding of adaptive skills that support resilience, including making effective financial decisions, and seek support when needed to manage financial challenges.</p>
<p>Decision-making Stage 1, p. 16.</p>	<p>Consider everyday choices made by themselves and others in a variety of contexts, managing healthy risk and adventure, and demonstrate some awareness of factors that may influence decisions or choices, including basic financial considerations such as saving, spending and understanding value.</p>

Decision-making Stage 2 p. 16	Develop an understanding of personal agency in a variety of contexts, recognising everyday choices, managing healthy risk and adventure, reflecting on the factors influencing decisions, including financial considerations , and acknowledging the role of personal responsibility in being actively involved in decision-making.
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Strand & Stage	Suggested Addition to Learning Outcome
Decision-making Stage 3 & 4, p. 25	Demonstrate a growing understanding of personal agency, appreciate multiple influences on decision-making, including financial factors, practise simple strategies, considering short and long-term consequences of spending decisions , and acknowledge the role of personal responsibility in making informed financial decisions alongside other important choices.

38 [Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 4.

39 PISA (2019) [PISA 2021 Financial Literacy Analytical and Assessment Framework](#), p. 18.

40 Fraillon, J., Ainley, J., Schulz, W., Duckworth, D., & Friedman, T. (2019) [IEA international computer and information literacy study 2018 assessment framework](#), Springer Nature. See also OECD, (2019) [OECD future of education and skills 2030: OECD learning compass 2030 – A series of concept notes](#), OCED Publishing.

Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum Specification

*Science, Technology and Engineering nurtures real-world problem-solving skills... Problem-solving fosters a sense of empowerment and demonstrates to children that they have the capacity to make a positive impact on their own lives and the lives of others.*³⁸

The Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum is designed to sit alongside the Mathematics Curriculum offering an ideal opportunity, through integrated STEM learning (section 6d of the Science, Technology and Engineering Specification), to enhance the real-world element of financial education. This supports the PISA Financial Literacy Analytical and Assessment Framework's (2019) focus on "young people's ability to use their knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges, rather than merely on the extent to which they have mastered specific curricular content."³⁹

The Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Specification recognises the rapid advancements in digital technologies. Integrating technology into teaching and learning can support and enhance students' learning and equip them with the digital skills necessary to participate in the "digital age"⁴⁰ and is an important element of financial education. By focusing on empowerment and agency, the specification reflects an understanding of modern childhood and the role of children as competent social actors.

This aligns closely with the CCPC's strategic goal to empower consumers to make informed decisions.⁴¹ Incorporating financial education learning outcomes into the Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum Specification acknowledges the complex financial landscape and its connection to sustainability and problem solving for more sustainable futures. It also recognises the increasing connection between finance and technology in everyday life. Including financial education outcomes in the Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum Specification enhances understandings of STEM, and helps children see the connections between finance and daily living. As digital learners, children are not only exploring existing technology to make informed decisions but are also starting to imagine and design technological innovations for future problem solving.

Within this framework, children have an opportunity to explore and investigate topics of interest and relevance as active learners. Working with their teachers to identify problems, they can draw on learnings from across other curriculum strands and their own lived experiences. For example,⁴² they might compare energy use in various homes by collecting data about energy usage in different contexts such as their own homes (if appropriate) or other sources. They would explore and present the data, identifying patterns that reveal energy consumption differences. They might consider the different appliances used, their energy consumption, and the associated costs. Using this information, children can explore connections between energy/resource use, financial cost and environmental cost. They can then consider how resource use is linked to sustainable futures: What changes can be made to improve energy efficiency? Are there existing

technologies that support this, how do they work? Can they imagine/design future technologies that might help? Further uses of technology might include using MinecraftEDU to build sustainable homes and communities.⁴³ Conversations and activities around this topic support integrated STEM learning, STEM with a conscience⁴⁴ and financial literacy outcomes. Children can explore the cost of energy use and how changing resource use can save money. By considering how different families need and use resources differently, children gain insights into various perspectives and lives, while also connecting with the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification on cause and effect and sustainable futures. This bolsters several key competencies, including:

Being a digital learner. Children can explore a variety of technologies and understand how different technologies have different financial implications.

Being mathematical. Apply mathematics ideas and learnings to real world problems; understand how mathematics and learnings around money plays an important role in wider STEM.

Being an active citizen. Looking for evidence to help find solutions to problems; looking at these from different perspectives; identifying connections between financial decisions and sustainability.

Being creative. Actively exploring pathways to address a question or challenge.

⁴¹ CCPC [Strategy 2024-2026](#).

⁴² These examples of indicative learning opportunities are used for illustrative purposes only and are not designed to be classroom activities/resources.

⁴³ As has been done as part of the national Ireland's Future is MINE initiative. For further information on this initiative see Slattery, E.J., Butler, D., O'Leary, M. et al. (2023) [Primary School Students' Experiences using Minecraft Education during a National Project-Based Initiative: An Irish Study](#), TechTrends.

⁴⁴ [Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 28.

Learning outcomes

Adding financial education outcomes to the existing Science, Technology and Engineering learning outcomes can help to support an integrated STEM approach. The following table offers suggestions, with additions to existing learning outcomes highlighted in green.

Strand & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
Energy & Forces Stage 2, p. 15	Explore the role that energy plays in everyday life and research how energy can be conserved for the good of the planet and understand the financial benefits of energy-saving practices for individuals and families.
Energy & Forces Stage 3, p. 15	Identify and distinguish between renewable and non-renewable sources of energy, and how sustainable these sources are for the environment and how they can benefit society and families financially.

Strand & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
Energy & Forces Stage 4, p. 15	Research and investigate environmental and social aspects of energy, including the role that society can play in reducing energy consumption and promoting clean energy, and understand the financial implications of energy choices.
Materials Stage 4, p. 14	Identify the properties of materials that need to be considered when constructing structures, fashion and food, and understand the financial considerations involved in selecting and using these materials responsibly.

<p>Engineering Stage 3, pp. 16-17</p>	<p>Identify and research design problems of interest, use empathy to consider user needs, risks and limitations when planning solutions, and understand the financial implications of different design choices. Build, test and evaluate prototypes using everyday materials, making improvements based on reflections, feedback from others, and cost-effectiveness.</p>
<p>Engineering Stage 4, pp. 16-17</p>	<p>Collaborate with others to define and refine design problems and solutions, considering the financial feasibility of each option, use sketching, traditional or digital tools to create plans and represent prototypes, test and evaluate the impact of the design solution, and draw conclusions. Present an analysis of the design process, including a reflection on the cost-effectiveness and financial implications of the solutions.</p>
<p>Technology P. 16 Across stages, as appropriate</p>	<p><i>This is a suggested additional learning outcome:</i></p> <p>Explore the role that technology plays in everyday life, understand how using energy-efficient technologies can benefit the environment and recognise the financial savings that come from conserving energy through smart technology choices.</p>

Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification

*This learning area support[s] children to understand local and global issues, and build[s] their capacity to be active, informed, empowered citizens who have an appreciation for the world around them.*⁴⁵

The aims and rationale of the Draft Social and Environmental Education Specification work with the other specifications to support children as they develop understandings into the way their own lives and decisions are linked to the wider world and others around them. This echoes the CCPC's emphasis on empowering consumers to make informed decisions, including informed green choices.⁴⁶

The Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification offers a space for children to develop as responsible citizens and understand the social, environmental, and ethical implications of their own choices as consumers.

Integrating financial education learning outcomes within the Social and Environmental Curriculum Specification contribute to the Global Learning themes (see diagram)⁴⁷ that support children to be informed and active citizens, contributing to equitable and sustainable futures. The curriculum here can be a space to explore how engaging with economic and financial systems, for example through exploring consumer spending/tax and

shared resources/utilities, can support equitable and sustainable futures. Children can be empowered with knowledge to bring about change.⁴⁸

The Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification offers the potential to explore and understand the connections between financial and economic systems and financial decisions with the wider world and the environment.



⁴⁵ [Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 3.

⁴⁶ [CCPC Strategy 2024-2026](#), p. 11.

⁴⁷ [Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 21.

⁴⁸ Connected to learning outcomes in [EU/OECD Financial competence framework for children and young people in the EU](#).

One example⁴⁹ might be looking at and planning for shared resources in the local community. To begin children might research and identify existing shared resources (local playgrounds, swimming pools...) along with other resources that members of the local community need and want. Children can then design a democratic process whereby they decide which resources are most needed and why. What is the value offered by the different resources? How would they decide/justify which new resources to purchase? What is their budget? Are there different ways they might raise money/identify organisations that could help them?

This can then lead to discussions around the tax system, drawing on learnings in the Mathematics Curriculum around the tax system⁵⁰ and how it impacts society. Children can then engage in activities that give insight into how governments decide what to spend taxes on, what the priorities are and what the children believe they could or should be in the future. This offers an opportunity for playful learning and character/scenario work, where imagined characters can argue for and try to justify how they believe tax should be spent. This again supports integrated learning through arts.⁵¹

Learning Outcomes

The Learning Outcomes in the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification are broad, supporting holistic learning and teacher agency, which is certainly important. However, explicit learning outcomes, across stages, that address this economic dimension of Social and Environmental Education would serve to recognise the rich elements of financial education that underpin the specification, i.e. recognise the relevance of economics and financial behaviours across time and space within history and geography learning outcomes.⁵²

This might include developing understandings around managing and planning for shared resources, rights and responsibilities around managing and sharing (scarce) resources, and how human needs, wants and working patterns shape societies and influence decisions. This supports the emphasis within financial education on the importance of informed

⁴⁹ These examples of indicative learning opportunities are used for illustrative purposes only and are not designed to be classroom activities/resources.

⁵⁰ Concepts, Stage 4 in the Money strand of "[Measures](#)." Here children understand that '[t]ax is a contribution to state revenue.'

⁵¹ [Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 21 & 28.

⁵² [Draft Social and Environmental Education Specification](#), p. 14-17.

decisions that can affect not only individuals, but also society more broadly and sustainability.

Financial education outcomes could be infused under many of existing learning outcomes, being strongly linked to elements of history (the evolution of money and finance systems, the history of work etc), geography (trade, movement of people, environment etc.). These are suggested in the table below, with additions highlighted in green.

Strand & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
People, Place & Space Stage 1, p. 14	Become familiar with aspects of their local heritage, and the cultural practices, customs, traditions, religions, beliefs and worldviews, and celebrations/events in their immediate locality and understand their impact on the local economy and their financial benefits.
People, Place & Space Stage 2, p. 14	Reflect on and examine aspects of their local heritage and how they preserve connections to the past, exploring customs, traditions, religions, beliefs, and worldviews in their locality, and assess the financial implication and benefits of preserving these cultural elements and the impact on local tourism, businesses and community development.
Environment and Sustainable Living Stage 1, p. 14	Connect with nature and the outdoors, exploring the natural world around them and recognising their role in caring for it, and consider the financial aspects of environmental conservation efforts, including the costs and savings of sustainable living.

Strand & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
Environment and Sustainable Living Stage 2, p. 14	Recognise the importance of respecting their surroundings for future generations and identify ways in which they can contribute to preserving and enhancing the natural world, including evaluating the financial benefits of conservation efforts and eco-friendly practices, such as conserving water, sustainable fashion and reducing food waste.
Environment and Sustainable Living Stage 2, p. 14	Investigate biodiversity within their local natural environment, looking at changes that have taken place and anticipating changes that may occur in the future because of natural processes and/or human actions, consider the financial impact of conservation efforts and the costs of biodiversity loss.
Exploration of Our World Strand 1, p. 15	Recognise ways in which technology has changed how people live and work at home and in their locality and understand the basic concepts of saving and spending money using these technological changes, such as digital payment methods, online shopping and budgeting.
Exploration of Our World Strand 2, p. 15	Examine the impact of technology on how people live and work in our society and reflect on people’s lives in the past to further develop their understanding that people lived differently in past generations, including the different ways people earned, spent, and saved money then and now.

Strand & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
People, Place and Space (History) Stage 3, p. 16	Investigate aspects of the story of their locality and other places, identifying historical sites of interest and key events and developments, and understand the economic impact of these sites and events on local community and how they contribute to tourism.
People, Place and Space (History) Stage 4, p. 16	Demonstrate an understanding of changes in Ireland's political system and key institutions of government over time and their influence on the present, including the financial policies and economic impacts of these changes, and explore how financial decisions have shaped the current economic landscape.
People, Place and Space (Integrated) Stage 3, p. 16	Develop an awareness and foster an appreciation of the richness of cultural, ethnic, and religious expressions and traditions, becoming familiar with a diverse array of festivals, ceremonies, and celebrations, and understand the economic impact of these cultural events on communities, including their contribution to local economies and the financial support required to sustain them.
People, Place and Space (Integrated) Stage 4, p. 16	Examine different cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions and develop an understanding of how diverse religions, beliefs and worldviews have contributed to and influenced communities, culture, and heritage over time, including their economic impact and financial contribution to community development and local economies.

Strand & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
People, Place and Space (Geography) Stage 3, p. 16	Compare and contrast aspects of children’s lives in Ireland with children’s lives in other regional, national, European, and global contexts, cultivating a sense of identity and belonging as global citizens, and understand the different economic conditions and financial literacy levels among children in these various contexts, exploring how these factors influence daily lives and future opportunities.
People, Place and Space (Geography) Stage 4, p. 16	Investigate people's journeys, the events, and motivations for movement, as well as the impact and influence of movement on people and places, and understand the economic factors involved in these movements and their effects on local and global economies, and the financial implications.
People, Place and Space (Geography) Stage 3, p. 16	Develop an understanding of the borders of places (such as counties/regions/countries), and how borders define and confine places, movement of people, living things and trade, including the economic impact of borders on trade and the financial implications for communities on either side, exploring how borders influence economic relationships.
People, Place and Space (Geography) Stage 4, p. 16	Identify and examine the interrelationship between the human and natural environment on resource use, transport, infrastructure, employment, leisure, and trade, including the economic impact of these interactions on local and global economies and how these factors influence economic development and community prosperity.

Strand & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
Environment and Sustainable Living (Geography) Stage 4, p. 16	Evaluate examples of change in the natural environments of Ireland, Europe, and the wider world due to physical processes and human activity and determine possible actions to support positive change in the environment, including understanding the economic costs and benefits of these actions, and the financial implications of sustainably practices.
Environment and Sustainable Living (Geography) Stage 4, p. 17	Analyse weather patterns and climate, distinguishing between short-term weather events and long-term climate trends and identify factors that influence climate change and their impact on the human and natural environments and daily life, including the economic costs and benefits associated with climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, exploring the financial implications and risks for communities.
Exploration of Our World (History) Stage 3, p. 17	Recognise patterns of change across different periods of time in chosen themes relating to life, society, work, and culture in the past, and understand the economic factors influencing these changes and their financial impact on societies.
Exploration of Our World (History) Stage 4, p. 17	Explore historical periods in Ireland and beyond marked by change and/or conflict, becoming familiar with the underlying reasons and the impact on the everyday lives of people, including the economic factors contributing to these changes or conflicts and explore how these economic dimensions influenced the course of history and affected people's (daily) lives.

Strand & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
Exploration of Our World (History) Stage 3, p. 17	Investigate aspects of the lives of early peoples and ancient societies, examining and responding to a range of evidence we have which tells us about these people, including the economic systems they developed and the financial practices that influenced their societies.
Exploration of Our World (History) Stage 3, p. 17	Consider and respond to stories of people who contributed to society through scientific, cultural, or artistic developments, including the economic impact of their contributions and how financial resources supported their work, explore how financial considerations influenced their ability to innovate and create.
Exploration of Our World (History) Stage 4, p. 17	Examine stories of the lives of people who have contributed to social, cultural, and political developments, developing a sense of their legacy on national, European and/or the wider world, including the economic impact of their contributions and the financial aspects that influenced their work, exploring how financial considerations shaped their ability to contribute and understand the enduring impact of their legacy.
Additional suggestion	Begin to understand how making fair and thoughtful financial decisions can contribute to their community, help create just societies and support the sustainability of our environment.
Additional suggestion	Explore how technology and changing consumer habits influence the way we live, understand how people lived differently in different times and recognise the role of financial decisions in shaping the world.

Draft Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

*[Language] empowers children to develop their thinking, expression, reflection, critique and empathy, and it supports the development of self-efficacy, identity and full participation in society.*⁵³

The Primary Language Curriculum offers opportunities for children to communicate learnings from across the curriculum, reinforcing what they have learned. This is another area where financial education can be integrated in a cross-curricular manner and support children in “exploring and using language”⁵⁴ and “building an awareness of languages and cultures.”⁵⁵ At Stage 4 (5th & 6th class) children are beginning to communicate in a basic level in L3 (third language). This offers an opportunity to reinforce learnings from the Mathematics Curriculum around different currencies and foreign exchange. Children can learn how to ask simple questions about the cost of different products in L3 as an example of a “relevant and meaningful” language experience.⁵⁶ Children can identify the phrases and vocabulary they would need, role-playing these to use them and demonstrate how a financial transaction might take place in L3.⁵⁷ This could be built on with children researching the cost of different items in different countries and comparing them, underscoring critical thinking and evaluation skills.⁵⁸

Exploring a range of simple advertisements in L3 could be included here (supporting learnings from Wellbeing Curriculum). Tying with the Social and Environmental Education Specification,⁵⁹ children might then be encouraged to think about why the same items have different costs in different countries and what this might tell us about a country and the way people live and work there. Once they have a knowledge of the different costs, children could then further draw on their mathematical skills and put a budget together for a trip to the country of their L3 (or another country). This ties to the aim 3.3 of the

⁵³ [Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Language \(MFL\)](#), p. 5.

⁵⁴ [Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Language \(MFL\)](#), p. 14.

⁵⁵ [Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Language \(MFL\)](#), p. 15.

⁵⁶ [Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Language \(MFL\)](#), p. 10.

⁵⁷ These examples of indicative learning opportunities are used for illustrative purposes only and are not designed to be classroom activities/resources.

⁵⁸ These are highlighted throughout the [Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum Specification](#), see Strands and Elements, p. 7-8.

⁵⁹ In particular around learning outcomes for People, Place and Space/History and Geography. See [Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification](#), p. 10-1

curriculum specification, “broaden[ing] children’s understanding of the world through a rich variety of language experiences and through fostering an awareness and appreciation of other languages and cultures in an enriching learning environment.”⁶⁰

Learning Outcomes and Key Competencies

Including financial education within the Primary Language Curriculum enhances key competencies:

Being an Active Citizen. Children learn to critically engage and participate in society, using the L3 to carry out financial transactions such as buying and selling, and understanding economic situations in other countries.

Being a Digital Learner. Finding and analysing relevant information about finances in different countries across platforms and using this information to learn about different economic situations and to make informed decisions about they might use their own finances elsewhere.

Being Mathematical. Using L3 to communicate mathematical concepts around money and buying and selling.

This can also contribute to key learning outcomes as a useful way to learn a language, in this case seeing the very practical element of using the language. It also supports learning outcomes under developing intercultural awareness:⁶¹

“Explore and celebrate their own and other cultures across the classroom, school, local community and wider world, discussing them sensitively and respectfully.”

“Demonstrate an understanding of the connection between linguistic communities and their associated cultures, as well as other factors which can influence the development of culture(s).”

⁶⁰ [Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Language \(MFL\)](#), p. 10.

⁶¹ [Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Language \(MFL\)](#), p. 48.

Element & Stage	Suggested Additions to Learning Outcomes
Developing Communicative Relationships Stage 3 & 4, p. 50	Ask and answer very short and simple questions using common words and expressions in the target language to obtain and give very basic/basic information about concrete objects, and personal and familiar topics, and basic financial transactions.
Understanding the Content and Structure of language Stage 3 & 4, p. 50	Recognise and demonstrate understanding of very short and simple words, questions, prompts, and instructions in the L3 related to everyday concrete objects, and personal, and familiar topics, including basic financial concepts, drawing on supports where necessary.
Exploring and Using Language Stage 3 & 4, p. 50	Produce common words, formulaic expressions and phrases to give very basic/basic information on concrete objects, and personal, and familiar topics, including basic financial transactions, using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication.

The integration of language skills and financial literacy skills is potentially a very significant one. Introducing both skills early in a child’s life is of huge value in their later learning and preparation for engaging and working in a multicultural and interconnected world.

Implementing the Curriculum

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

*Financial literacy opportunity within the curriculum should be supported...This should include teacher support and training.*⁶²

The need to actively resource and support the provision of financial education is very clear in international case studies. The importance of this support has also been identified in the development documents for the National Financial Literacy Strategy produced by the Department of Finance. Similarly, the need to ensure that schools are adequately supported and resourced to include the provision of high-quality professional development has been noted by the Minister for Education, particularly at this time of transition for teachers.⁶³

The CCPC works to cultivate a sustainable and independent model of financial education that meets the needs of all young learners in a variety of contexts as they become independent decision-makers. The CCPC is committed to providing resourcing and tangible supports for teachers and educators to deliver financial education through the curriculum and welcomes future engagement on how this is best provided. It expects this could include supporting the provision of integrated financial education as detailed in this submission, along with supporting the existing provision within the Mathematics Curriculum.

The CCPC recognises the central and valuable role that teachers have, “through their established relationships with the children [in their class(es)], their pedagogical and curriculum knowledge.”⁶⁴ The CCPC is very willing and keen to collaborate with all relevant educational bodies, including the NCCA, Oide, school leaders, teachers and teacher educators, and parent associations to develop resources for the teaching of financial education in the primary school classroom. This might include, but would certainly not be limited to, in class workshops, classroom resources (lesson plans, educational games,

⁶² [Financial Literacy in Ireland, Mapping Report](#), p. 93.

⁶³ Foreword from the Minister for Education in NCCA [Primary Curriculum Framework. For Primary and Special Schools](#), p. 2

⁶⁴ [Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification](#), p. 45.

educational videos, toolkit resources) and appropriate continuous professional development for teachers and inputs at initial teacher training.

Such training is particularly important during the transition phase to a new curriculum and contributes to the conditions necessary to enable and support schools to work successfully with the curriculum. The CCPC understands the importance of a collaborative approach, as outlined in the draft specifications, along with the need to align with the approaches to learning and teaching documented in the Primary Curriculum Framework and the curriculum specification documents. In addition, the organisation is aware of the need to adhere to child safeguarding procedures and guidelines.

The CCPC has experience of working successfully with Oide to produce free, easy-to-use, online financial education resources for use by teachers in the classroom. This includes our programmes “Money Matters” and the “Me and My Money” unit of learning at Junior Cycle, “Money Counts” for Leaving Certificate Applied Students, and “Abhair Airgead,” developed in collaboration with An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta. We also have an online Parents’ Hub and are keen to include parents in our approach to financial education.

The vision overall is one of collaboration and support. The CCPC recognises issues such as curriculum overwhelm and the competing needs within the new curriculum. It is for this reason we believe that embedding financial education outcomes within the new curriculum specifications can help to recognise the strong connections between financial education and the range of subjects taught within the primary school framework. As noted by the Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in Northern Ireland, where financial education has been embedded across the curriculum since 2007,

“[o]pportunities for the teaching and learning of financial capability occur across the curriculum... Many schools and teachers have found that personal finance provides a motivating and meaningful context to enrich many aspects of the formal curriculum as well as the informal curriculum, for example, work experience or planning school trips/events.”⁶⁵

⁶⁵ [Financial Capability in the Whole School Curriculum](#), (CCEA).

Making financial education outcomes more explicit within the Primary Curriculum will also contribute towards breaking the stigma around talking about money. The need to enable conversations around money and break this stigma came through strongly in stakeholder feedback for the development of the National Literacy Strategy,⁶⁶ along with an emphasis on the need for early provision of financial education and teacher supports. The CCPC intends to include evaluation and monitoring processes within the rollout of its educational resources and programmes, ensuring that they are of a high standard and are effective. Again, we will collaborate appropriately to ensure any evaluation and monitoring is carried out in an appropriate and nuanced manner.

As a member of the OECD's International Network on Financial Education (OECD/INFE), the CCPC has access to shared resources and best practices, along with timely updates to a growing database of evidence that supports the value of financial education. The area of financial education provision is increasingly populated by a range of actors, including a significant number of private sector for-profit organisations. The OECD suggest relying solely on these providers runs the risk of leading to the use of/focus on financial education for commercial purposes.⁶⁷ As a statutory body the CCPC is ideally placed to support the provision of free and impartial financial education, drawing on its international connections through the OECD, and oversee national efforts in this area.

Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

The CCPC would like to reiterate its continued support for early intervention when it comes to financial education and the development of financial literacy. In previous submissions to the NCCA we have highlighted the alignment of financial education with many of the key principles and themes in the Aistear Framework (2021), the Primary Curriculum Framework (2020) and the Primary Mathematics Curriculum (2022). This curriculum development offers a unique moment to embed a strong grounding in financial education across curriculum specifications at primary level.

⁶⁶ [Financial Literacy in Ireland, Mapping Report](#), p. 86.

⁶⁷ OECD/INFE (2004) [Guidelines for Private and Not-For-Profit Stakeholders in Financial Education](#), p.6.

The CCPC is happy to collaborate with a range of stakeholders to support this and remains open to ongoing dialogue with relevant partners and providers. The value of financial education has been acknowledged by the Department of Education and NCCA, both organisations having consulted with, and continuing to consult with, the Department of Finance on the development of the National Financial Literacy Strategy.⁶⁸ The CCPC welcomes the focus on Money in the new Primary Mathematics Curriculum and the supports provided in the accompanying toolkit. The current redevelopment is an opportunity to embed financial education across the curriculum, providing a comprehensive approach and recognising the significance of financial wellbeing at both an individual and societal level.

⁶⁸ Further information about the stakeholder process is available in: [Financial Literacy in Ireland, Mapping Report](#), p. 6

Council for the status of the family

Submission to the NCCA on the Draft Specifications for all Primary and Special Schools

In response to your invitation in relation to the draft Primary School Curricula Specifications, herewith is the submission of the Council for the Status of the Family.

It is obvious that a considerable amount of time and thought has gone into the presentation of the draft Primary School Curricula, and at times one could be forgiven for thinking that the material is more a course programme for a higher teaching degree than an outline for a school teaching programme for children from Junior Infants to Sixth Class. Children are children, and they should be allowed to be children and to enjoy and experience their childhood. Granted, as is admitted throughout the text, every child is an individual and may not 'fit-in' with schooling. But we do not want our children to be little old climate activists, or active citizens, or challenging stereotypes, before their time.

It is claimed that "How" children learn is as important as "what" children learn'. On the contrary, *what* children are taught is very important. It is for this reason that the Council wishes to record its concerns in relation to the draft Curricula.

While there are some good ideas mentioned here and there (e.g., promotion and appreciation of music, the arts, drama, etc., and encouraging children to read, and to share stories about aspects of their locality – reminiscent of the great folklore project of the 1930s), the general thrust of the draft Curricula appears to be that of an agenda – the abolition of 'stereotypes', promotion of inclusivity, diversity, 'active citizenship', etc. It is *children* about whom we are supposed to be talking – not an experiment in an ideology based on Dewey-inspired UNESCO plans from the 1960s and earlier.

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ideology. Does a child have to know about morphology, sentence structure and some aspects of phonology in order to read a book?

The draft Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum suggests that children in primary school should identify as ‘scientists, engineers and technologists’. There is talk about ‘holistic development’, and ‘challenging stereotypes’, ‘fostering children’s sense of self-identity’. Why not teach children the three R’s – the basics – and the rest will follow.

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In the draft Wellbeing Curriculum, children are to identify who they are, practise diversity and inclusivity. They are to be ‘catalysts for life-long wellbeing by integrating vital life-skills such as self-awareness, personal safety, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, movement, decision-making, and healthy relationship building’ and be ‘engaged citizens’ to lead ‘healthy, active and sustainable lifestyles.’ Children will be required to ‘develop their ethical understanding of the world’ and know how to practise ‘active citizenship’, at the same time (maybe) comprehending their ‘rights and responsibilities’.

Further, the draft Curriculum ‘supports children in appreciating positive and healthy relationships, encompassing a balanced and inclusive understanding of human sexuality within the context of emotions and connections.’ This is totally unacceptable and inappropriate. The phraseology is used in the Junior Cycle Curriculum to teach an oversexualized RSE programme, and a radical Gender Theory programme. The phraseology is being used in the Primary School Curriculum to disguise its real intent, and it must be removed. The same applies to the talk of ‘bodily autonomy’, and the concept of ‘consent within relationships’. For five to twelve-year-olds? Such would be akin to grooming of the children. In the section on SPHE, there is quite an amount of *Mé Féin*-ism – surely not to be encouraged in children.

To sum up – the Council for the Status of the Family considers that the Draft Primary School Curriculum Specifications are being used as a form of indoctrination to promote an agenda of undermining true and valid education.

Children imbued with ideas of activism, global issues, etc., self-identity, and all the other BIG WORDS that are used throughout the texts, will not survive as normal, mature and

happy people. Respect for one's own dignity, and for that of others, must at all times be practised. Inverted ideas of 'inclusivity', 'diversity', etc., are not acceptable.

Love your neighbour as yourself – this is the basis of life and of education.

Lelia O'Flaherty (Mrs.)

on behalf of the

Council for the Status of the Family

6 June 2024

Council for the Status of the Family

COUNCIL FOR THE STATUS OF THE FAMILY

Submission to the NCCA on the
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*Lelia O’Flaherty (Mrs.)
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6 June 2024*

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I warmly commend the authors of the new Primary Curriculum and all involved in working on Modern Foreign Languages as an integral part of learning in primary level. MFLs in national schools will greatly benefit children while helping teachers address the challenges in today's plurilingual classrooms. There is no doubt that efforts with regard to social inclusion and a respectful engagement with both linguistic and cultural diversity impact on the functioning of our communities and democracies – from local and national to European. While more time should, in my view, be allocated for the teaching and learning of modern languages, I realise the challenges of shaping learning in all its necessary subjects and facets. The new curriculum as it is proposed will support children of today's plurilingual classrooms both in their personal development as active members of Irish society and as global citizens. It is equally important, however, to stress the fact that we not only learn in plurilingual classrooms but that we all live in (multicultural/plurilingual) Europe. By empowering children to act as Irish, European, and global citizens, we strengthen values such as equality, diversity, integration and interculturalism (EDII) as bedrocks of Irish (and the EU's) communities.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

In my comments below, I added to the text of the draft curriculum to productively include Europe as a community that we're also part of. If we do not foster an understanding of active European citizenship among today's children in Ireland, this most significant peace project after the Second World War might well be doomed to fail in the future. p. 3 [Inclusive Education] Drawing on the languages spoken and visible in the local and wider community as a stimulus and content for learning. Whenever possible, emphasize the languages of the EU (German, French, Spanish, etc.) in order to prepare children for secondary school and, especially, foster a sense of European citizenship. Children should begin to understand their citizenship not only as Irish, but also as European. Active European citizenship and an understanding of the flexibility of language use within the community can be aided with very useful online offerings such as The Big Friendly Guide to the EU (www.bfgtoeu). This is the learning resource considered most beneficial in this context by the majority of my B.Ed. students at MIC. p. 6 [2.1] The addition of MFL (at Stage 3 and Stage 4) further supports children to learn about, understand and develop their intercultural awareness. ADD: The inclusion of EU based language resources foster an understanding of European MFLs, develop transnational, intercultural skills, and introduce a sense of belonging to more than one culture. Especially in multicultural, plurilingual classrooms, learning European MFLs and about Europe can promote inclusion and diversity, as children understand that one can belong to more than culture, have more than one 'home'. p. 7 In the context of the Primary Language Curriculum, it is important to note that Ireland is a linguistically and culturally-diverse country ADD: and, since 1973, a member of the EU, i.e. a plurilingual network of countries in Europe. p. 17, 47,

85, 89 and p. 98: Being an active citizen (AC) Whenever 'being an active citizen' is to be discussed, this would be an excellent opportunity to include the EU and the fact that children with Irish citizenship are also citizens of the EU. Active European citizenship should be communicated at Stages 3 & 4. It is unclear why the EU is not mentioned anywhere as it is an excellent example of a plurilingual community at governmental level that has a significant impact on our everyday lives in Ireland. As some of the activities are food related, why not include the EU Smoothie described in the bfgtoeu [<https://bfgtoeu.com/courses/juniors-and-seniors-course-1-copy/>]? This can be introduced at any level with great benefit (and fun). General Comments: As Ireland is a member of the EU, it would be a missed opportunity if MFL teaching were not integrated into EU awareness and intercultural skills. With all the resources available with regard to MFLs and the EU, teachers would be supported in finding materials that relate MFL and to the EU. This is greatly desirable as it develops EDII while fostering a sense of belonging to both Ireland and the EU. If I can offer support in contributing to the curriculum in this regard, please let me know. We would all benefit in Ireland if today's children became aware of their European citizenship. As arguable the most important peace project after World War II, please do not let this opportunity pass to help children understand multiculturalism and MFLs within the EU project and their own (active) place within that. Having developed a range of modules on Teaching MFLs in Primary Schools and Specialisms in German Studies and in Teaching MFLs in Primary School for Bachelor of Education (Primary) together with my colleagues at Mary Immaculate College, I can attest to the great interest and enthusiasm among B.Ed. students in this area. As future teachers they are well aware of the need to address active European citizenship in the context of our plurilingual classrooms.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

With regard to MFL and Plurilingualism, numerous very useful sites with resources are already available -- such as The Big Friendly Guide to the EU (www.bfgtoeu) co-developed by Dr Emmanuelle Schoen-Quinlivan (UCC). If you are interested in a list of resources I prepared for my B.Ed. students, please contact me via email.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

I am so pleased that MFLs are now included! More than 1 hour per week would be great, but MFL learning can productively extend into other subjects in a plurilingual classroom.

Department of Health, and Department of Agriculture, Food and Marine

A Submission for Inclusion of the Topics of 'Antibiotic Resistance & One Health' in the new Primary School curriculum.

Author(s): William FitzGerald, Superintending Veterinary Inspector, Dept of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM)

Ms Sharon O'Keefe, Assistant Principal Officer, Department of Health (DoH)

BACKGROUND

Antimicrobial resistance is the phenomenon by which microbes (most commonly bacteria) mutate or change to grow and survive in the presence of medicines that should be capable of killing them when given at the correct dose, so the medicines no longer work to treat disease.

Antimicrobial resistance (ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE) is recognised as one of the greatest global public health threats of our time and has been defined by the World Health Organisation as "a catastrophe that must be managed with the utmost urgency". The discovery of antibiotics in the last 100 years has revolutionised health care and prolonged global life expectancy by an estimated 20 years but ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE threatens to undermine this progress and take us back to a time when bacterial infections can kill.

The terms 'antimicrobial' and 'antibiotic' are widely used interchangeably but in general when we talk about ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE, we are referring to bacterial resistance to antibiotics. In this document we will refer to ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE as 'antibiotic resistance'.

Modern healthcare delivery depends on the availability of effective antibiotics. Without effective antibiotic cover routine surgical procedures and cancer chemotherapy become high risk and infections that were once deemed relatively minor have the potential to kill. Scientists estimate that if antibiotic resistance continues to spread at current levels, by 2050 10 million people may die annually, from antibiotic resistance related infections, more than the death toll due to cancer.

The Department of Agriculture Food and the Marine and Department of Health believe that educating school children about the importance of responsible antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance is critical to foster responsible behaviour that is vital to combat its growing threat. Including these important topics on the school curriculum is a public good that will contribute to a more informed, responsible, and healthier society going forward.

Antibiotic resistance is a complex multi-factorial issue and affects all of society. Bacteria are everywhere in our environment and can cause disease in both people animals and plants. The same bacteria that cause disease in animals can also cause disease in people. Every time we use antibiotics, we apply a selection pressure that favours the survival of resistant bacteria but the overuse and misuse of antibiotics, either in people or animals accelerates the rate of antibiotic resistance development. In other words, the more antibiotics that are used, the greater the levels of antibiotic resistance that develop and spread. Reducing the use of antibiotics in both the human and animal health sectors is seen as a key intervention in tackling antibiotic resistance. Responsible use of antibiotics can help stop resistant bacteria from developing and help keep antibiotics effective for future generations. A One Health response at global and national level is critical to address the challenge of antibiotic resistance. The One Health approach recognises that the health and well-being of people is connected to the health and welfare of animals, biodiversity, and the environment. We need to use less antibiotics in every sector and use them more appropriately when we do need to use them.

In human medicine, antibiotic resistance becomes life threatening when it diminishes the effectiveness of medicines that are available for the sickest and most vulnerable patients. Doctors in our hospitals are now dealing with infections that are not treatable with any available antibiotics and without urgent action this situation will only get worse. Over the last 20 to 30 years, we have seen many antibiotics

become less effective or even not effective at all for treatment of some bacterial infections due to antibiotic resistance. This pushes doctors to use different antibiotics that may be more toxic, more difficult to use and more costly. Patients with antibiotic resistant infections are sicker for longer and require more complex care.

As well as the human toll exerted by antibiotic resistance, it also carries a large financial cost. In July 2021, the *Economic burden of antimicrobial resistance: An analysis of additional costs associated with resistant infections* was published. This study was conducted by the Health Research Board – Collaboration for Clinical Effectiveness in Ireland (HRB-CICER), a collaboration between HIQA and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). The study was commissioned by the Department of Health under Strategic Objective 5 of iNAP1 and examined the economic burden of antibiotic resistance on the Irish public health system. The study methodology was aligned to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) strategic public health planning for antimicrobial resistance (SPHeP-AMR) model outlined in their 2018 report *Stemming the Superbug Tide: Just A Few Dollars More* and was adapted as the data collection phase coincided with the first wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The study's key findings were:

- In 2019, over 7,400 resistant infections occurred across all 50 public acute hospitals in Ireland, resulting in an estimated 215 deaths and nearly 5,000 Disability-Adjusted Life years (DALYs represent a description for the years of healthy life lost).
- Treatment of these infections resulted in an estimated €12m in additional costs to the HSE across the 16 infections studied.
- The study concluded that a continued focus on antibiotic resistance in the public acute hospitals is warranted and particularly regarding the economic burden of antibiotic resistance.

Certain bacteria, like CPE (which stands for Carbapenemase Producing Enterobacteria) have very advanced levels of antibiotic resistance, which make them extremely difficult to treat. They are commonly referred to as 'Superbugs'. Their presence can render an infection untreatable. In October 2017, CPE was declared a public health emergency in Ireland. Prior to CPE the most commonly known superbug was MRSA.

In animal health, antibiotics are vital tools to protect animal health and welfare, productivity, and facilitate the production of safe, nutritious food. Just like humans, the effect of antibiotic resistance on animals will be due to illness and mortality. The increase in resistance to antibiotics will make treatments on animals ineffective and cause the infections to become more severe. Ultimately, this will lead to lower production and trade of livestock, resulting in higher prices of milk, egg, and meat. Antibiotic resistance is a One Health issue as it impacts human health, animal and plant health and our shared environment including water and soil. Other One Health issues include new and emerging diseases, zoonotic diseases that can spread between animals and people and Climate change.

Optimising public and animal health and preventing disease will reduce the need for using antibiotics. Antibiotics are needed to treat bacterial disease but should be used responsibly as they are a precious resource with no new antibiotics being developed for many years, so we need to maintain the efficacy of the ones currently available. The development of and spread of antibiotic resistance is a challenge for public and animal health into the future, we all have a role to play in keeping antibiotics effective for future generations. There is huge value in educating children about the importance of responsible antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance and this will reap huge benefits in later life for the following reasons:

Early Habit Formation-by learning the importance of responsible antibiotic use, children are more likely to carry these habits into adulthood creating a culture of responsible antibiotic use, minimising misuse of antibiotics in adulthood and the overall antibiotic resistance burden.

Understanding Risks and Benefits- Educating children on the reasons for taking antibiotics and the potential harms arising from misuse helps them understand why antibiotics should always be taken as prescribed by a doctor.

Influencing family and community- Educated children may become advocates of responsible antibiotic use, influencing the behaviour of those around them further amplifying the benefits in terms of mitigating antibiotic resistance.

Improved compliance-educated individuals are more likely to adhere to public health guidance aimed at preventing spread of infection/antibiotic resistance.

PROPOSAL

It is the joint suggestion of the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine and the Department of Health that the basic aspects of ‘Antibiotic Resistance’ and ‘One Health’ should be included in the Draft STEM specifications. It is the considered opinion that the most suitable stages to begin this inclusion is Stage 3 and Stage 4 (see below) and that it would fit

ing Education specification

Stage 3 Learning Outcome	Stage 4 Learning Outcome
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periences, children should be able to

well within the strand of ‘Living Things’, within the learning outcomes of an understanding of ecosystems, the interdependence of people, animals and plants within the realm of biodiversity and the environment.

<p>Explore and investigate the interdependence of living things within ecosystems how they adapt so they can survive and thrive; and how basic food chains operate within them. AL, AC</p>	<p>Demonstrate awareness of how their learning about Living Things connects to the wider field of Biology and other ‘Bio’ fields. Explore how science can serve to better understand and solve biodiversity related problems locally and/or nationally. AL, AC, CL</p>
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The nature of resolving the risk that Antibiotic resistance poses to society is quite complex so it may be challenging to construct a learning event that would allow students to compose solutions to the resolving Antibiotic resistance.

The critical learning outcomes for students in relation to Antibiotic resistance are understanding:

- what it is,
- why it occurs.
- what can be done to reduce the development and spread of antibiotics resistance and keep antibiotics working?
- that an antibiotic is not always needed to treat sickness
- that it is a One Health issue that impacts our environment as well as people and animals that antibiotics should only be taken or given if they have been prescribed by a Doctor or vet
- that they should take the prescribed antibiotic at the right dose for as long as it has been prescribed.

There are several strategies that are used in public advisory documents to assist members of the public to minimise the development of antibiotic resistance and they are summarised in a Draft Learning Plan below. Prudent use of antibiotics is promoted through messaging in relation to the 6 Rs of responsible use the important messages pertinent to children are covered above in the underlined passage. A draft learning plan (or at least the important points of it) to give an idea of how the message could be conveyed is included below.

Draft Learning Plan which could cover all of the aspects that are important

1. Bacteria are tiny, microscopic life forms, that are present everywhere, including on and in our bodies, on and in the bodies of animals and pets and on and in the bodies of the plants and in water and soil that surrounds us.
2. Some of these bacteria can make us very sick and we need antibiotics as medicine to treat the disease and get well.
3. Antibiotics don't kill viruses. The majority of colds and flu are caused by a virus so taking an antibiotic is pointless.
4. The more we take antibiotics the less effective they become over time – this means the bacteria have become resistant.
5. By taking antibiotics unnecessarily when we don't need them, they might not work for us when we do really need them!
6. Antibiotic resistance is a problem in our hospitals today and means that some infections can be very difficult to treat in very sick people.
7. There are some countries in the world where certain diseases cannot be cured by antibiotics because of antibiotic resistance.
8. Antibiotic resistance affects us, animals, plants and the environment we live in.
9. When we get sick it is important that we don't spread the sickness to others. We can prevent passing on illness to others by regularly washing our hands, cover our mouth and nose when we sneeze or cough and if we are very sick, by staying at home.
10. When we get sick, we don't always need an antibiotic to get better. By only taking an antibiotic when we absolutely need them, it will mean that antibiotics will be effective for longer, and more effective for when we really need them.
11. We should only take antibiotics when we have been told to take them by our Doctor.
12. We should only give antibiotics to our animals and pets when we have been told to by our Vet.
13. When we are told to take an antibiotic or give it to our pet, we should always take it exactly as we have been told and for exactly as long as we have been told. We should not skip taking them or we should not stop taking them just because we feel a little better.
14. Avoiding unnecessary use of antibiotics by staying healthy and getting vaccinations helps keep antibiotics working into the future for people, animals, and plants.
15. When we are finished taking the antibiotics, there may be some left, if there is, we should dispose of them correctly and not leave them lying around nor throw them out.

As an additional point, this concept is being rolled out within the primary and secondary educational curricula in Northern Ireland, with tools like 'e-bug' (www.e-bug.eu) developed to assist in the development of learning materials for students and educators alike.

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The content needs to be available to parents and guardians and be in alignment with everyone's religious and moral values.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

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No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Unscientific ideologies,gender topics,transgender,issues,inappropriate sex topics should not be pushed on young children.Parents must be informed of the content of all lessons.Parents conscientious objections should be upheld.Children should be allowed to be children,they don't have the maturity to deal with these sexual issues in a full class situation.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12.In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

In conjunction with consent of parents.Parents should be allowed to withdraw their children if they wish.

13.Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Religious and conscientious ethos.

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The key messages of the new arts curriculum are welcome and encompass a range of really positive additions and emphases, in the main the structure of the specification is very clearly communicated, with one exception (Table 5 . Art Concepts). The acknowledgement of partnerships, learning environments and transitions and continuity within the principles of learning and teaching is really welcome as it puts emphasis on progression and growth, in diverse contexts . Though they were previously mentioned in the 1999 curriculum, they are given more emphasis in this structure. The key messages for (visual) art rationale are broadly welcomed and embraces the central basis for creativity. It is particularly noteworthy to see in relation to 'expressiveness and skills development', the acknowledgement of 'creative risk taking, making and learning from mistakes, developing persistence and discipline in their artistic practice'. Though the rationale for Art has an omission of a key word- imagination , it has a recognition for a broad range of experiences which art can bring to the curriculum. It is particularly relevant to see the inclusion of 'cultivating aesthetic and cultural sensitivity'. The new structure of the strands, has brought about interesting new considerations for performativity in art potentially connecting with contemporary art practices such as performance art. The strand responding and connecting also has broad reaching potential interpretations which will be commented on further in this response. The key competencies diagram interlacing all seven competencies , is a powerful and important aspect of the new curriculum, we see each and every part of this has relevance for Art education. It would be good to see this more included in the learning outcomes section examples. The focus on children as Arts Makers as a key message is direct and strong and its visual impact as in Fig 4. is clear, it is also wonderful to see the acknowledgement of shared processes, across the arts as well as

each area 'having its own knowledge, concepts, skills and intrinsic value'. Teaching approaches to arts Education: all approaches have significance, and it is brilliant to see that 'Playful' as well as 'Creative' approaches feature, allowing scope for it to play a central role in stages one and two. The consistency of including emphasis on 'a culturally responsive pedagogy' in the teaching arts education (Fig. 5), however it seems potentially misplaced. To be culturally responsive as an embedded value rather than placed with teaching approaches. According to Howard (2021) "Culturally responsive pedagogy is more than a way of teaching or a simple set of practices embedded in curriculum lessons and units"(p137, Howard, 2021). Having said all of that, the content of this section is really important and excellently expanded and needs to be included. I

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

2. Rationale: 'Arts education helps children to make sense of the world around them'. This section would benefit from the inclusion of -children connect with nature as part of arts practices in their local environment, as well as connecting with the place- village or street . (P4). Art: include the word imagine..... and enhance their capacity to imagine, observe, demonstrate.....(P4). Include the word 'critically' to They learn to critically analyse and appreciate....(P4). Add imagination to children engage as art makers and express their unique imaginations, ideas, feelings.....(p5). Add the word Confidence ... children can cultivate aesthetic and cultural sensitivity and develop confidence, understanding and competence..... (para 1 P5). Add media competence across a range of skills, processes, media, genres..... (para 1, P5). Addition suggestion Children develop understanding through art, e.g. visual planning, visualising and communicating, visual literacy, understanding visual language, understanding mathematical concepts through art making. (para 1 P5). Last section p5 ... relevance of the arts ... power of the arts to connect children with each other, with nature, with locality, with diverse cultures. Concepts : this section names visual art elements as concepts. This is incorrect, a line, shape, form, colour and tone, texture are not concepts. This section relates directly to visual elements in the existing 1999 curriculum, but Pattern and Rhythm is omitted, it is a visual element which is an important aspect of the visual vocabulary. (p11 table 5). Change art concept to Art Elements, include Pattern and rhythm as 7th

element. Section colour and tone: Colour Value scale describes the lightness of darkness where white adds lightness and is called a tone, and black adds darkness to a colour and is called a shade. Colour can be bright or dull this is the strength of the colour or it's intensity. Colour temperature refers to the perceived warmth or coolness of a colour. Space; this section should include different parts of a composition. Proportion and scale and position of objects placed in space, effect the composition and can create the illusion of depth. Learning Outcomes: A general note Key competency identified within learning outcomes, where ref is made to key competencies , a more diverse range of competencies could be included. e.g. DL could easily be incorporated, and at times being mathematical may be relevant e.g. exploring shape space and pattern. Strand : Creating stage 4 (para 2 , p13). add pattern. colours , tones , patterns and textures. In this creating section the openness for what tools and materials will have to well supported in the toolkits.Strand Performing and Presenting:wording for Art: show and explain; what way does this get interpreted, exhibition, holding it up, digital gallery. Explain: what expectation does this carry, their perspective? The meaning for them ? at stages 1 and 2 this may take the form of questions and quotes from the children while they are making. As this age groups ideas may change several times, and the meaning be fleeting perhaps the value is in the experience not the actual outcome . To interrogate a drawing and why they used this shape there and that line here, may detract from the joy of creating the art (P15 stages 1 -4). Responding and Connecting, stage 4, Art , para 2 (p17). ... identify,compare and contrast art characteristics and techniques, (add in) conceptual ideas e.g. issues and contexts which connect with global citizenship, climate action, human-rights, environmental consumerism. (p19) last paragraph add competencies AC and DL. Section Supporting all learners table 6: Attending: developing visual awareness (P23). Creative approaches: bullet 5 problem solve and create (products) replace with artworks. 6c Assessing Arts Education. Section portfolios (p33) include planning drawings, problem solving maps, images of process.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8.Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9.Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10.Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

CPD

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

In relation to collaboration between schools and outside bodies, there are very good examples of best practice available from CRAFT Ed DCCOI who pioneered teacher artist training days, where the partnership is nurtured. This approach could be very valuable across a range of partnerships, to connect the values of teacher and partner.

NCCA STE Curriculum Consultation: Digital Learning (Primary) Team, DCU Institute of Education

After reflecting upon the contents of the draft STE Curriculum, there are three principle suggestions made:

1. Clear and explicit explanation needs to be made early in the curriculum document as to what each of the three areas within STE are, or entail. A figure or table with a short description of Science, Technology, Engineering, is proposed. Within any description or definition of technology, it is very important to stress that technology involves both digital and non-digital tools. There is a risk of misinterpretation, leading to any use of digital technology being considered 'STE', or digital technology only being used within STE curricular time.
2. The progressive development of computational thinking (CT) needs to be addressed. It is suggested that KS1 + 2 be merged, 4 and 3 moved down a level each, and a new KS4 be drafted. More specific details are included in the table below.
3. To support teachers in translating new learning outcomes to achievable learning activities it is proposed that more '*such as...*' examples be included in the curriculum document. The appendix at the end of the curriculum document is very helpful, but it is proposed that some of these examples be moved closer to the learning outcomes to better support teachers, and avoid the appendix going unread.

Below are page by page suggestions and comments

page	Comment
p.2 - 3 Table 1	Very helpful table to detail the overarching principles conveying what is valued. In particular, the explicit emphasis upon partnerships, including with the school community, other schools, and STE experts. This can help learners make connections to real world issues and scenarios.

	Hyperlinked glossary (e.g. hands-on and minds-on learning) very helpful to teachers
p.4 – final paragraph	<p><i>“The exploratory nature of science, technology and engineering makes it a natural space to engage in play and playful learning with traditional materials such as toys and everyday equipment found in schools, as well as with contemporary and emerging technologies.”</i></p> <p>Could <u>examples</u> be provided here for contemporary and emerging technologies, e.g. ...such as robotic toys...such as augmented and virtual realities.</p>
p.7	Proofing: Full stop after Engineering
	As <i>“Nature of STEM”</i> is likely a new concept for many teachers, this should be explicitly explained at this point and/or hyperlinked to the glossary entry p.34.
	‘creative and critical thinking’ – yet appears to emphasise play and playful learning. Is this the most appropriate title for this Element?
p. 9	<p>Appreciate the repeated emphasis upon <i>“<u>Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences</u>”</i> to signal STE as open and accessible.” However, one suggestion is to focus on ‘purpose’ within ‘play’ so there is an emphasis on learning and not just fun! eg ...”</p> <p><i><u>through engaging and purposefully playful learning experiences</u>”</i></p>
p.9	<p><i>“The draft concepts for the Technology strand are included in Appendix 1. These key ideas may provide useful reference points when planning, teaching and assessing and may serve to remind teachers of key technological knowledge at each stage.”</i></p> <p>Clarification required, will there be concepts for Science and Engineering also? If these are required ‘key technological knowledge’, could they instead be built into the learning outcomes? As Engineering and Technology are ‘new’ subjects to the majority of teachers, it is likely that they will require greater guidance.</p>
	Proofing: There is no p.12
p13	<p><i>“Nature of STEM”</i> reads quite clearly, but may prove difficult for teachers without prior knowledge.</p> <p>In particular, S4, <i>“Build an understanding of key tenets of Nature of Science, Nature of Technology and Nature of Engineering”</i> – are these key tenets being explicitly detailed somewhere in the curriculum?”</p>

<p>p.16</p>	<p>Up to the first Technology Learning Outcome, it is not made explicit that technology refers broadly to all tools used by people/children. This should be flagged much earlier alongside an explanation of what is meant by Engineering.</p> <p>As suggested in the initial overview, this should be addressed in the introduction for teachers to avoid misinterpretations.</p>
<p>Technology Learning Outcomes</p>	<p>It is suggested that computational thinking learning outcomes be separated out from Technology as an independent strand. As presented in the draft curriculum, the top paragraph refers more broadly to ‘technology’ use, whereas the bottom paragraph refers to computational thinking. <u>It is likely that teachers may miss the distinction here, leading to them focusing upon ‘either’ technology or computational thinking.</u> Or, for example, a first class teacher looking only at technology learning outcomes, and the second class teacher only looking at computational thinking.</p> <p><u>For clarity, the next two sections refer to each of these separately.</u></p>
<p>Technology broadly</p>	<p>KS1: Clear, and easily understood by teachers, but suggest providing examples of digital and non-digital (e.g. such as hammer...such as tablet)</p> <p>KS2: consistency of wording, why are these being referred to as ‘technological tools’ now, whereas they were just technologies in KS1. Consider clarifying ‘what makes them effective’, as this could be a judgement issue with a teacher believing a digital tool is not effective owing to perceived concerns.</p> <p>KS2: Could the second LO be rephrased as “build on their understanding of digital and non-digital tools to explore how they operate according to precise instructions”? The addition of non-digital tools here aims to echo the other LO in K2 for being cognitively consistent.</p> <p>KS3: For clarity and consistency, could ‘digital system’ be referred to as a digital device, as this allows for broader playful exploration of how hardware and software work; i.e. sensor + code in virtually any coding system (e.g. LEGO Robotics, Scratch, Microbit...).</p> <p>KS3: reference to software, despite current common place language referring to apps or applications. Could this be rephrased as software/apps? Again, examples would be helpful, if only generic. KS3: The second LO: Could this be rephrased as “Create and test</p>

	<p>instructions (algorithms) or programmes to achieve a desired outcome through an iterative process (iteration)”? The suggested addition here is to include the iteration element of CT. Iteration enhances the refinement of solutions through repetitive processes, aiming for an optimal outcome.</p> <p>KS4: hyperlinked glossary for ‘data’ useful, but suggest dropping ‘facts’ from the data entry.</p> <p>KS4: “use a range of digital technologies to access, select and present information/data that is relevant to their learning.”</p>
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	<p>Suggest adding ‘process’ and ‘share’ to this list. Again, examples or ideas will be needed to make this explicit to teachers. E.g. gathering data (temperature readings with microbit), accessing these (on digital device), and processing them (using spreadsheet to calculate average temperature) and present (barchart) and share (digital story/presentation/web post for school community).</p> <p>KS4: A suggestion could be to align KS4’s LO to one or more junior cycle applied technology LO(s) e.g. https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/2c3fc3c0-064c-4080-980e-a2738512b85b/Applied-Technology.pdf This suggestion aims to prepare 5th/6th graders for future learning in the stage of the Junior Cycle</p>
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<p>CT</p>	<p>A need for an overview image eg Barefoot Computing (with their consent/appropriate referencing) to give teachers an understanding of the difference between concepts and approaches, especially when the language is being used here eg algorithm/debugging and may all be very new to teachers. For example: https://www.barefootcomputing.org/my-barefoot You can email at enquiries@barefootcomputing.org for consent to use the image.</p> <p>Use of spelling eg programs or programmes?</p> <p>Overall, <u>the developmental progression of these learning outcomes needs to be addressed</u>. Wording of the Learning Outcomes change, but the learning activities/skills developed are not really changing between levels. Similarly, there are numerous examples of where Learning Outcomes are pitched too low. Suggest merging KS1 + 2, moving KS3 to 2, KS4 to 3, and drafting a new KS4 which looks more to the development of computational thinking through i.e. more complex representations/simulations/programmes (e.g. loops, more complex use of sensors, if/then statements, etc).</p> <p>KS1: very clear, and achievable. Could/should pattern be addressed here also, as it directly links with both decomposition and algorithmic thinking</p> <p>Ks1: Why are unplugged activities limited to KS1? This could be perceived as suggesting JI/SI are not necessarily able to use digital devices, when there are a multitude of early years specific non-screen robotic toys available.</p> <p>KS1: also a suggestion that 'debugging' is introduced as an approach from this early stage</p> <p>KS2: <i>"Build on their understanding of digital tools to explore how they operate according to precise instructions;"</i> suggest moving to KS1 as this is already being done in many classes using e.g. BeeBots." KS2: <i>"adjust and modify steps when required."</i> Similar to KS1, include specific language in brackets (debug).</p> <p>KS3: seems repetitious, without much development over KS1/2. E.G. <i>"Create and test instructions (algorithms) or programs to achieve a desired outcome;"</i> This is being done in KS1 when applying algorithm in plugged/unplugged activities"</p>
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	<p>KS4: “Explore and use their understanding of algorithms or programs to create a representation (computer model) of something from the real-world;” this could be moved to KS3, as it matches with work already successfully undertaken by many children (e.g. Scratch/LEGO robotics). Suggest rewording ‘computer model’ to ‘program’ as it could apply to any collection of algorithms, and creates an unnecessary differentiation between screen-free computational thinking and device-based coding.</p> <p>KS4: “<i>test and adjust (simulate) these representations to make them more effective.</i>” Again, this could be happening in KS3 or KS2 as in plain language, this is asking for children to test their algorithms/programme using concrete materials (e.g. LEGO Robotics)</p> <p>The Abstraction and generalisation of CT elements seem less covered in the current draft LO. Abstraction is a technique that involves distilling a problem into its essential components, thereby simplifying the complexity and facilitating the creation of models or representations aimed at solving the problem more effectively. Generalisation extends the problem-solving capability by encouraging the identification of patterns across problems, enabling the application of previously successful solutions to new challenges, thereby building upon past experiences. These two elements are critical for facilitating effective and efficient problem-solving processes. However, it is understood if the curriculum chooses to leave them out for different reasons</p>
Engineering	Clear alignment with the Engineering Design Process.

P 21	<p>Key Pedagogical Practices:</p> <p>Table 8: Key Pedagogical Practices</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scientific Inquiry 2. Design Thinking 3. Computational Thinking <p>Please clarify CT is referenced as a ‘process’ in the section below this (pg 23).. It would not usually be referred to as a pedagogical practice</p>
P.23-24	<p>Concepts and approaches of CT should be present and explained. As per NCCA report on CT (Milwood), greater specific details of what these concepts and approaches entail, and how they overlap to create conditions for children to develop ability to think computationally. Useful to look at Barefoot CAS (https://www.barefootcomputing.org/my-barefoot) , as in the absence of concrete supports, this will be used by teachers (recommended by OIDE etc).</p>
p.33	<p>Glossary entries</p>
	<p>Computational Thinking entry strikes a fair balance between meeting the original meaning, while linking to the CT approaches, and remaining accessible to teachers who have not encountered CT previously.</p>
	<p>digital tool and digital technologies. While accurate and generic, these definitions may be overly technical to a teacher. Could generic examples be provided, e.g. devices (tablets, smart phones, laptops); software (including apps); ...generating, storing or processing data (e.g. word processors, spreadsheets, presentation tools, audio recording tools, etc).</p>
	<p>Digital System: this entry Hardware and software components (internal and external) work together to make a digital device work efficiently.</p>
	<p>Data: A collection of information or facts, such as numbers, words, measurements, observations or other descriptions. Computer data is information in a form that can be processed by a computer.</p> <p>THIS could be broadened a lot, as data essentially refers to everything in the digital space – link could be made to personal data and safety in Wellbeing curriculum.</p>

<p>p. 37-40 Table 11</p>	<p>Why not present this table instead of the Learning Outcomes without reference/explanation? Or make a clear reference to this page number?</p> <p>If changes are made on pg 17, they will have to be reflected here. Also, on page 39 of this table, only some CT concepts are being emphasised with little reference to approaches except for debugging. Other approaches, similar to those developed during CT -related activities are mentioned elsewhere eg creativity, collaboration etc</p>
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Response to NCCA Draft Specifications (2024) - Drama

Dublin City University

Members of the drama team in the School of Arts Education and Movement, DCU:

Sharon McArdle, Dr. Kate McCauley, Dr. Paula Murphy, Dr. Annie Ó Breacháin.

Introduction

In our view the draft Arts Education specification (2024) addresses the key messages of the wider draft Primary Curriculum (2024). We welcome a curriculum that embraces and responds to the diverse ways in which children engage with learning. This approach ensures that each child's unique strengths and needs are recognized and nurtured, fostering an inclusive and supportive educational environment. More specifically, we welcome the broadening of drama practice that is reflected in the new arts education strands, to include a performative dimension. We also welcome the attempt to bring all of the arts areas into more alignment in terms of structure. However, we have significant concerns about some changes in language and terminology and feel that the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum specification for Drama (1999) need to be more clearly acknowledged in this regard. Our key concerns pertain to:

Some problematic definitions of drama

The significant deviation in the new list of drama 'concepts' from the list of 'elements' in the 1999 curriculum, with the exception of some welcome additions.

Some of the language used to describe the new strands.

Definitions of Drama (Pages 5, 9, 15 & 17) -

Problematic reliance on 'storytelling'/'enactment of stories'

On page 5, Drama is defined in the following way: "In Drama, children learn to explore and communicate thoughts, feelings and ideas through embodied storytelling in dramatic form" and Page 15 "Enact simple dramatic stories... enhances their dramatic storytelling". While they are related, a clear distinction needs to be made between story and drama in this document. There is a fear that some of the above statements will present an outdated message to teachers that drama is about 'acting out the story'. As we know, one of the key purposes of educational drama is to use story and other stimuli to explore hidden meaning, thematic elements, and to explore alternative courses of action as stated elsewhere in the draft framework (NCCA, 2024, p17). We would regard this to be an important feature of an agentic vision of the child in education/arts education (p9). The term 'fictional situation' would thereby be preferable to 'story' in a number of sections within the text.

Concepts - Reinstate 'belief' and 'significance' and reconsider 'plot'

We welcome some aspects of this section of the document and would like to make recommendations in relation to others. In the first instance, we suggest that some of the currently listed concepts require clearer definitions. Secondly, we would prefer the previous term 'elements' to 'concepts', as the term concepts would seem at odds with the embodied nature of the artform. Thirdly, we welcome the addition of 'movement' as it gives direct acknowledgement to the embodied dimension of drama, and it is likely to draw teachers' attention to its

significance within the drama process. Alongside the introduction of ‘sound’, it is likely to bring more attention to the aesthetic dimension of the process. However, the elements of ‘belief’ and ‘significance’ represented key contributions to the list of drama elements in the Primary School Drama Curriculum (1999) and no longer feature in the draft Arts Education Curriculum (NCCA, 2024, 12 & 40).

Belief (Pages 12 & 13-19)

‘Belief’ is central to all forms of drama-making across the continuum from make-believe play to theatre performance. It represented *the* central element of the drama ‘elements’ grid within the 1999 curriculum (NCCA, 1999, p36). If teachers are not specifically guided to give direct attention to the building of belief in their planning and in their teaching, they are unlikely to engage children meaningfully in the process. Furthermore, we consider the significance of belief to pertain to all three strands of the new draft curriculum. With this in mind, we suggest that it is reinstated as a priority.

Significance (Pages 12 & 13-19)

The element of significance represented another key contribution to the drama elements within the 1999 curriculum. This element refers to the thematic focus of a dramatic exploration, and is considered to represent an essential component of all forms of educational drama. Its inclusion ensures that children move beyond a potentially superficial ‘acting out’ of stories, to an engagement with meaning-making, problem solving and diverse perspectives. We acknowledge that references are made to thematic exploration in the learning outcomes of the new framework (NCCA, 2024, p13-19), but if this is not reflected in the drama concepts it is likely to be overlooked in our view.

Plot

It is our view that the addition of ‘plot’ to the list of concepts is likely to generate confusion in relation to the nature of teaching and learning in this area. This point is linked with a number of references to the notion of drama as storytelling or the enactment of stories in the framework document, which are likely to add to the same confusion (NCCA, 2024, p.5 & p. 15). Drama practice is more often concerned with the *disruption* of plot in its attempt to bring deeper reflection to the process. Sometimes, the literature refers to ‘the story behind the story’ to exemplify this point (O’Neill, 1995; Neelands & O’Toole, 2015). In this regard, participants are encouraged to move forward and backwards in time, to engage with new characters and perspectives in the meaning making process. In this way, the complexity of drama is honoured.

Strands: Reconsider ‘creating’ and ‘responding’

Change ‘Creating’ to ‘Experiencing’

There is overlap between the strands of ‘Creating’ and ‘Performing and Presenting’ (NCCA, 2024, 7). The term ‘experiencing’, which represents a feature of much literature on the teaching of drama at primary level, seems to be relatively absent within the ‘Creating’ strand. However, this term is interestingly present in the framework for working with all learners on p23. We recommend replacing the term ‘Creating’ with ‘Experiencing’ and reviewing the

use of this term throughout the document. If this is problematic in terms of alignment with the other arts areas, we recommend the term ‘Exploring and Creating’ for the first strand.

Change ‘Responding’ to ‘Reflecting’

The new strands no longer include ‘reflecting’ but rather ‘responding and connecting’. This has likely arisen out of a need for a term that speaks to all three disciplines which is understandable. However, something important is lost from a drama perspective when we substitute *response* for *reflection*. *Responding* could be considered more immediate and superficial whereas *reflection* necessitates criticality. This concept also aligns with O’Sullivan et al’s (2023) research stating, ‘...incorporating reflection, is proposed as an essential curricular process for drama (p105)’ By replacing *reflecting* with *responding and connecting* (NCCA, 2024, 7) the specification favours the more immediate and superficial, whereas *reflection* requires more critical thinking.

Additional areas for consideration

Reference to clear theoretical frameworks

It is our view that this document would be significantly enhanced by references to the theoretical frameworks and established practices that are synonymous with the teaching of drama at primary level across the national and international literature. These include ‘process drama’ and ‘applied theatre’, both of which are absent from the draft specifications. Such references would align this curriculum with well-established supports for both researchers and practitioners, and would increase the likelihood of the curriculum’s success in the longer term.

For a long time in the field of Drama Education, there was an unnatural and unhelpful dichotomy between *process/performance* and *pedagogy/art*. Thankfully, that is no longer the case and ended indeed at the end of the last century as O’Toole (2022) confirms with the acceptance of the principle that, ‘whatever its purposes, all the activities that we call drama and theatre share exactly the same elements (p.70)’. It is therefore more fruitful to consider drama along a ‘continuum’ where the key features of children’s *make-believe play, process drama/applied theatre and performance* can be drawn upon in a classroom context. A very significant body of work exists in the field of *process drama* and *applied theatre* both in the Irish and international contexts. The absence of the term *process drama* from the draft Arts Curriculum needs urgent reconsideration for three reasons: Firstly, to build on the Primary School Curriculum (1999) (See Section 1) to minimise confusion for teachers who will interact with the new curriculum; Secondly, in light of the otherwise inclusive and lengthy list of approaches that *are* included in the Arts Education specification (2024) (e.g. storytelling, story-making, devising and rehearsing pieces (NCCA, 2024, 5&13-19); and thirdly, given the emphasis on the call for a balance between both *process* and *performance* in the literature that informed the revised curriculum (O’Sullivan et al, 2023). If the term *process drama* is excluded, we are at risk of a pendulum swing; a dangerous but unfortunately common trend in the context of curriculum development as Walsh (2016) highlighted, having reviewed 100 years of curriculum reform in Ireland.

Emphasising the importance of a safe environment (Page 24-30)

It is important to acknowledge the teacher's responsibility to offer a safe classroom environment when engaging in drama lessons. This is particularly relevant on page 23 of the draft Arts Education specification (2024). The 1999 curriculum stated that the establishment of a safe environment was one of three prerequisites for making drama. This essential feature needs to be foregrounded much more clearly in this document.

Progression (Pages 12-19)

The relationship between *concepts* and *learning outcomes* across *stages* needs to be addressed. For example, references to thematic exploration in the learning outcomes (p13-19) are not reflected in the drama concepts (p12). In the Primary Curriculum (1999) there was a strong connection between the *elements* of drama and the *learning outcomes*; each element had a matching learning outcome at each class level. For example, for the element 'tension', a teacher could track how that would be explored at each level of the curriculum. The learning outcomes offered in the draft curriculum include all the elements (except 'plot') in one learning outcome. It is therefore not clear how these concepts are developed from one stage to the next. There is a significant amount of work to be done on these learning outcomes to honour the complexity of those concepts and to ensure high quality learning experiences. There is, at present, a great risk of 'acting out the story' when you consider this Learning Objective (page 15) 'enact simple dramatic stories in an improvised or rehearsed way showing a basic awareness of character, space, movement, sound and tension.' By first and second class (Stage 2) the children are doing exactly the same thing except the word 'simple' has been dropped. This marks a worrying oversimplification of the rich potential of drama.

Specific guidance - the drama toolkit

We would be grateful for the opportunity to review the content of the Arts Education Toolkit when it is available, as this will be an essential resource for non-specialists teaching the Arts in Primary School. Specifically, we would like to see examples of lessons that distinguish between those that have a process orientation with those that seek to draw on a process orientation to lead to performance. While both orientations are reflected in the specifications, the distinction between them and the relationship between them could be made significantly more clear.

Time allocation

Time allocation for arts subjects varies widely, with some countries allocating substantially more time than others. Finland, Estonia, Hong Kong, South Korea, Japan, and China dedicate more time to arts subjects compared to Ireland, even with similar school day lengths. Some countries, like Canada, allow flexibility in time allocation, but this can lead to disparities in arts provision. A reduced time allocation of 8 hours has been provided for the implementation of Arts Education at Stages 3 & 4 of this draft specification. Whilst it is advantageous that teachers adopt a flexible approach to Arts Education, we worry that without a suggested

time allocation for each Arts discipline, non-Arts specialists may give ‘too little attention (NCCA, 2024, 28)’ to classroom Drama in favour of Music or Art activities that are culturally more established in our schools.

Key Competencies (Page 10)

We value an integrated approach to Arts Education across the disciplines of Music, Art and Drama but feel that certain elements pertaining to individual disciplines should still be emphasised for fear of losing ‘the uniqueness of each of the arts subjects fully available to each child (O’Sullivan et al, 2023, 4).’ For example, it may not be appropriate to try and integrate ‘Being mathematical (NCCA, 2024, 10)’ into Drama lessons through a one-size-fits all tick box exercise.

Dance (Pages 1, 28 & 29)

A formal acknowledgement that Dance (and media arts) are included in Wellbeing might be advantageous at the start of the specification; they are mentioned a number of times throughout the specification (particularly pg 28 & 29) but only as an aside. Those not knowledgeable about the reform process might feel that they are only to be considered as a secondary element to Art, Music and Drama rather than realising that they are also contained elsewhere in the curriculum.

Thank you for reading our submission. We commend the work of the development team thus far, and request that our recommendations are given careful consideration in the composition of the final draft

Dublin City University, Global Citizenship Education Team

Submissions on the NCCA Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Sent on Behalf of the Global Citizenship Education Team, Institute of Education, DCU

18th June 2024

These submissions are compiled by Dr Maria Barry and Dr Rowan Oberman on behalf of the primary global citizenship education team, Institute of Education, DCU. We are willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation and we are willing to have our submission published.

Many thanks for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications in Arts Education; Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the *Primary Language Curriculum*; Social and Environmental Education (SEE); Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE). Our submissions focus on the SEE specifications.

This is a joint response from a number of colleagues in DCU's IoE who teach and research in the area of global citizenship education (GCE). Our response is informed by a desire to make the SEE specification as accessible, engaging and motivating as possible for teachers. It is essential that this specification, which will be the founding statutory document to root this curriculum area, can act as a standalone document in its own right (whilst also accompanied by toolkits etc) as a clear, coherent and concise expression of SEE teaching and learning. It is in this spirit that the following recommendations and suggestions are made.

Overall, this SEE specification has the potential to enable children to work as geographers and historians and to act as global citizens. In particular, we welcome the explicit naming of global citizenship and the inclusion of global learning themes. However, in order to make it as accessible and supportive as possible for teachers, there are a number of crucial areas that need further refinement, consideration and development. We make these recommendations having experienced difficulty ourselves in visualising how teachers can translate the current specification into the classroom, even with toolkits. This submission includes our: overall response; suggestions regarding the structure and coherence of the specifications and suggestions for implementation.

1. Overall response

We very much welcome the explicit naming of global citizenship in the Aims of the SEE specification and the inclusion of global learning themes. These developments, alongside the establishment of the Being an Active Citizen competency are essential and crucial additions to the new primary curriculum framework that readdress previous omissions. A recent national survey of primary teachers understanding of and attitudes towards GCE suggests that this will also be welcomed by primary teachers and school leaders, as respondents rated the importance of children learning GCE extremely highly (Barry et al., 2023).

We encourage the NCCA to build on this important step by considering our comments and suggestions below.

2. Structure and coherence of the specifications

The global learning themes are very welcome. However, each of these concepts is complex in its own right, in addition to the complexity of connecting them together and then integrating them further. It is

important to more clearly articulate global citizenship throughout the specification and we provide some suggestions below.

- **Include an explicit and discrete global citizenship subject including for stages 3 and 4 alongside geography and history.** We submit that SEE includes three interconnected learning areas: history, geography and global citizenship. This is articulated in the draft specification rationale where it states that SEE enhances understanding of “the interconnected historical, geographical, and societal aspects of life” (p. 5). Since the 1999 curriculum there have been significant educational and societal changes which make traditional curricular structures arcane for current contexts. The planetary crisis, global conflict, ongoing racism and discrimination and challenges to democracy call for explicit and on purpose curricular design.

Educational responses to these existential challenges are emerging including most notably the development of the Leaving Certificate in Politics and Society and in Climate Action and Sustainable Development. These support **an emerging education pathway** building students’ active citizenship skills. While the inclusion of active citizenship in the primary and post-primary curricular frameworks are welcomed, their enactment will be supported by clear and purposeful learning outcomes which are distinct, progressional and connected with those in history and geography.

The inclusion of a discrete global citizenship subject within SEE would not require a substantial revision to the draft specifications and would significantly support teachers’ capacity to enact the global learning themes. It is suggested that working as (or being) a global citizen be added alongside the working as a geographer and working as a historian. The integrated concepts and skills apply well to global citizenship which, like geography and history entails empathy, multiperspectivity, using evidence and sources, interpreting, and analysing, evaluating and decision-making. Global citizenship also involves critical thinking, solidarity, advocacy, taking action and democratic decision-making skills and these need to be separately stated. While global citizenship is well encapsulated in the rationale for SEE, to be realised in the classroom it needs specific learning outcomes, particularly at stages 3 and 4 and risks being tokenistic if shoehorned into history and geography learning content.

Agency and action, peace and conflict, migration, racism and discrimination, human rights, climate justice and action, democracy and decision making, critical media (and social media) literacy as well as values and world views should be taught through a progressive, logical and explicit structure involving cognitive (e.g. knowledge and critical thinking), socio-emotional (e.g. empathy and interconnectedness) and behavioural aspects (acting ethically and effectively at local, national and global levels). These themes are central aspects of history and geography and the learning outcomes in these areas, as well as integrated, reflect this. However, these themes need also to be addressed as aspects of global citizenship education. For example, studying peace and conflict in history education does not necessarily ensure students are supported in recognising current conflicts and structures which support peace. The theme of migration in particular, which is intricately linked to other themes including peace and conflict, climate change and human rights, needs to be approached in an integrated way that nonetheless recognises its significance to history, geography and global citizenship.

- **Remove from local to global progression structure:** The current draft specifications suggest students start by learning about “their locality” and progress to learning about the wider world. We strongly challenge this progression based on research highlighting the early prevalence of stereotypes and children’s capacity and interest in learning about the wider world (Oberman et al, 2014; Ruane et al., 2010). This local to global structure reinforces a

conception of local and national belonging over global identity. It ignores the lived experience of students who have multiple connections. It also serves to work against conceptions of global solidarity. It also denies children's interest in the wider world and the emergence of misconceptions about global locations from a young age. Instead, we suggest that learning in SEE from junior infants includes global learning as well as local learning with ongoing recognition of the interdependency of the two.

- **Emphasise human interdependence with eco-systems rather than a model of extraction and protection.** The current learning outcomes suggest children's role in "caring for" and "preserving" (p.14) nature. We suggest that the learning outcomes recognise human dependence on the natural world and that the language and conceptualisation here be altered to reflect this.

- **Emphasise collective action over narratives of individual heroes.** We value the consideration of people who have contributed to society as is set out in the learning outcomes (p.17). These learning outcomes however risk suggesting that societal changes and developments are brought about by exceptional individual heroes, which belies the structural and collective origins of change. It is suggested that these learning outcomes encourage children to explore stories not only of individuals but groups who contributed to society and recognise the ways in which these individuals and groups were supported and challenged by wider structures.

- **Towards more critical global citizenship.** The dominance of soft approaches to GCE in formal education is well established (Andreotti, 2006, Waldron et al., 2014). This is problematic as it risks reinforcing notions of paternalism and western superiority and resulting in actions that are more about 'doing good' than bringing about real change. As such, it is important that efforts are made to ensure that there is a balance between both soft and more critical forms of GCE expressed in curriculum documents. For example, in the SEE draft specification, one bullet in the Rationale states that SEE supports children to 'espouse a sustainable future'. This could be strengthened by the inclusion of 'just' [and sustainable] (which aligns with the social justice global learning theme) and to replace 'espouses' with 'advocates for', 'takes action for', 'champions', 'defends'. A more critical approach to GCE can also be achieved by a more explicit inclusion of references to structural inequalities and global justice themes in the learning outcomes.

- **Address inconsistencies.** For example, empathy is presented in the SEE specification, but also across other specifications. We strongly recommend that there is a) consistency in how empathy is presented across the primary framework and b) an acknowledgement that empathy applies to different subject areas in ways that are both complementary but also distinct. This needs to be clearly and visually represented for teachers.

3. Implementing the Curriculum: curriculum supports needed by teachers and school leaders in implementing the curriculum?

There are several layers and components set out in the SEE specification. Given that SEE is a new departure for teachers, coupled with the integrated aims for global citizenship, there are further steps required between the specification and the toolkit.

- **Provide visual aids.** Visual aids are one useful step for teachers to enable them to see how and where the components that make up the specification are connected, where and how they overlap and develop each other, but also where they are unique and distinct. We also recommend the development of a series of curriculum making maps to support the integration of GCE into SEE.

- **Publish the entire primary curriculum by stage level rather than by subject.** It is further suggested that, given that most classroom primary school teachers plan and teach all areas of the curriculum to one class level, organising all curriculum areas into single documents, which include all curriculum areas for a single stage and highlight areas of integration would support teachers in its implementation.
- **Provide professional development for teachers.** Finally, and specifically in relation to **GCE and Being an active citizen**, research shows that Irish primary school teachers and school leaders' understanding of GCE is multi-dimensional with a strong global outlook (Barry et al., 2023). However, the research also shows a number of gaps and omissions. In particular the study shows that primary school teachers make limited connections between **GCE and action, behavioural change or children taking action**. Furthermore, in the same study, teachers report relatively low levels of confidence in supporting pupils to engage in individual or collective actions. Coupled together, these findings indicate a need for **significant support and professional development for primary teachers in both understanding the role of active citizenship within global citizenship and also how to support pupils**. This needs to be a significant area of focus in curriculum making maps, toolkits and professional development.

4. General Comments

We would be happy to contribute to the further development of the curriculum specifications and toolkit.

References

- Andreotti, V. (2006). Soft versus critical global citizenship education. *Policy & Practice: A Development Education Review*, 3 (Autumn), 40–51.
- Barry, M., Mallon, B., Bourke, A., Usher, J., & Daly, A. (2023) *Teachers and Global Citizenship Education: Values, Attitudes and Practices*. Global Village. Dublin.
- Kavanagh, A. M., & Ruane, B. (2010). *Young children's engagement with issues of global justice*. The Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education. Dublin.
- Oberman, R., O'Shea, F., Hickey, B., & Joyce, C. (2014). *Children's global thinking*. Education for a Just World. Dublin
- Waldron, F., Ruane, B., & Oberman, R. (2014). Practice as Prize : Citizenship Education in two Primary Classrooms in Ireland. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 13(1).

Section 1:

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the Primary Curriculum Framework to:

- **Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities**
- **Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum**
- **Connect with learning experiences provided through Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and the Framework for Junior Cycle**
- **Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class**
- **Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes**
- **Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching**
- **Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment ● Be for all children in primary and special schools**

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Your Response:

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications for SEE build on the strengths of 1999 SESE curriculum in promoting active child-led learning. The promotion of children working as historians and working as geographers is very much welcomed and builds upon the 1999 predecessor.

However the learning Outcomes of the 1999 curriculum were broad but yet more detailed than the current Draft Specifications for SEE. The 1999 curriculum clearly showed progression of content, skills and conceptual understanding. Progression is less evident in the current Draft Specifications for SEE.

The overly broad Learning Outcomes of the Draft Curriculum may work against promoting agency and flexibility to schools. Schools need more solid foundations in terms of Learning Outcomes in order to effectively adapt the curriculum to their local contexts. Learning Outcomes could be improved by separating and fleshing out objectives. Schools should not have to rely solely on an online toolkit to aid them in this task.

The document as a whole is quite confusing in that it is extremely unclear how aims, principles, strands, elements etc. all fit together and the hierarchical nature of these pieces of the SEE curriculum. Furthermore the elements are also very similar to pedagogies and skills (e.g Inquiring as an element and Inquiry as a

Pedagogy, and Communicating as an element and communicating as a skill). It is unclear how elements relate to the strands and how they feed into learning outcomes or if they are even supposed to do so.

Assessment strategies outlined in the curriculum are varied and have potential. It is crucial teachers are made aware and reminded that learning off of lists of mountains, rivers, historical/geographical facts etc. is not beneficial for the development of skills of the SEE curriculum.

The Draft Specifications for SEE have a lack of emphasis on key skills such as mapping throughout the document. There is also confusion pertaining to empathy as a skill or a value/disposition.

The Draft Specifications for SEE fails to promote an integrated approach to SEE in any meaningful manner in that the strands are very much divided along subject lines (Environment and Living Sustainably is Geography, Exploration of Our World is History, People Place and Space is integrated. Moreover certain Pedagogical Approaches are presented as only accruing to one subject in particular (e.g. Story is very much presented as a pedagogical approach for history -the opportunities for geography are not included).

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9.Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Your Response:

We are responding to the Draft Specifications for the Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Page/section of Draft Specs	Issue	Recommendation
General comment on Table 1		Table 1 could follow a more uniform approach to the structure of examples. For example, a focused sentence explaining the example, with additional optional sub-examples.

Page 1, Para 2		Page 1: The coupling of 'Rights and responsibilities' needs to be handled carefully within the curriculum and associated toolkits to avoid any scenario where children are left with the impression that rights are dependent on meeting a social responsibility.
Page 2 Table1	Partnerships are very history-related and are presented as a finite list	Include examples of partnerships that link to geography such as local councils, chambers of commerce, Tidy Towns, NGOs, local experts, local

	rather than examples	employers, environmental community organisations.
Page 2 Table 1	Displaying and celebrating children's learning, e.g. project work, through exhibitions, showcases, and digital media	Include a reference to children taking action here too.
Page 2 Table 1 Transitions and Continuity	The Draft Specs state that "Beginning with integrated curriculum topic(s) in Social and Environmental Education in Stages 1 and 2 to build foundational knowledge and then returning to the curriculum topic(s) in Stages 3 and 4 to further extend this knowledge."	Research has shown that children cannot build foundational knowledge by beginning with integration. Learners must develop foundational disciplinary knowledge first to ensure meaningful integration
Page 2 Table 1	Drawing on a range of pedagogical practices and selecting child centred methods, including digital technologies and applications as appropriate	Wording unclear here - 'including' could be replaced by 'utilising'

Page 2 Table 1	Principles of learning, teaching and assessment outlined in Table 1 not adequately linked to Learning Outcomes	Aspects of Table 1 are strong, however, more guidance and specific connections needed to learning outcomes. LOs in Table 7 and 8 do not reflect how principles in Table 1 should be achieved by teachers.
Page 2 Table 1	Use of sustainable development	Page 2: Would 'sustainability' not be preferable to 'sustainable development'? The former is a broader conceptualisation which might be more long standing than SD, given current critiques.
Page 3 Table 1 Relationships	Co-operating with people within the locality to enhance learning about personal, family, and local history.	This should not just be limited to local history should include knowledge about the locality and understanding local community
	Fostering respectful and caring relationships	Structure of sentence unclear - natural world and other living things seems related to people from

	towards people from different and diverse backgrounds, the natural world and other living things.	diverse backgrounds.
Page 3 Table 1 Pedagogy	Integrating digital tools (for example virtual field trips, multimedia presentations or other online simulations) to	Specific reference should be made to digital mapping
Page 3 Children's learning experiences in Social and Environmental Education	The Draft states: This learning area has a historical, geographical, and contemporary focus... "and considers the challenges that may occur in the future."	A futures-orientated focus should also be included here. This could be broadened to include considering how our actions might impact the future, imagining the futures we would like to see etc. Considering future challenges might be one part of this.

Page 5: Promotes children's critical thinking	Wording	P.5 - "Social and Environmental Education encourages children to ask questions about the historical and geographical world around them" - would this not be better phrased as: Social and Environmental Education encourages children to ask historical and geographical questions about the world around them.
Page 7 Aims	To promote global citizenship. Help to foster a sense of interconnectedness with the world through exploration of diverse cultures, environments, and global issues	Not just global issues! Global citizenship also deals with LOCAL issues -it is important that this is specifically mentioned here so teachers can see where issues apply locally and can be addressed locally
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To connect with children's innate curiosity, imagination, and wonder. Present opportunities for children to spend time outdoors inquiring, interacting, and investigating in their local area. 	The way this is presented suggests that curiosity, imagination and wonder can only be achieved through outdoor learning.
Page 7 Aims	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To learn about, 	The text below this aim does not reflect the children

	explore and appreciate children's own and others' lived experiences.	learning about their own traditions, heritage, culture etc. -this needs to be emphasised also.
Page 8 Strands	Strands are presented but no definition or text is accompanying the strands names, nor is there an explanation to what they are or why	It would be useful to unpack and clarify what these three strands are about and what makes them unique and if they are interconnected etc.

	they were named as such	
Page 7 Aims	To develop children's geographical awareness. Foster an understanding of the Earth's physical and human landscapes, enabling children to analyse and interpret spatial patterns and their significance.	Would a focus on 'human and natural environments' be more in line with what comes later? It's unclear how this understanding leads to analysis and interpretation of spatial patterns.
Page 8 Elements	Elements -it is confusing to present principles, aims, elements, strands etc. -what is the hierarchy??	It would be useful to have a diagram here to show how key principles, strands, elements and key competencies of SEE all fit together and whether there is a hierarchy etc. Question around why there are not elements across all subjects e.g. arts Worth considering whether elements are needed at all, as all elements are incorporated across concepts, skills and pedagogies.
Page 8 - Elements - Inquiring		P.8 - " Through the element of inquiring children gather information, seek clarification, and investigate a curriculum topic or issue in depth." This could be strengthened by a reference to 'generating questions' being included. Toolkit resource needed on how to generate a open investigable question with class
P12 Mathematical	Being Interpreting, processing and evaluating information and data from a	Should specifically mention mathematics in using scale in mapping accurately etc.

	<p>variety of evidence sources and maps, and applying spatial awareness in engagement with fieldwork (e.g., measuring distances covered and identifying patterns and trends). Sentence disjointed and too long with too many details -needs to be split into two sentences</p>	
P12	Being a communicator and using language	Is the example of 'Reading and interpreting materials....' the best example of 'communication'? Maybe the creation of maps and other geographical/historical materials would be better here.
Page 13 Table 5	Historical Concepts	<p>Cause and Effect and Change and Continuity also geographical concepts. (e.g. cause and effect of deforestation)</p> <p>Should these concepts be presented as common/geographical/historical? Stage 1 and 2 integration requires concepts for both history and geography, and shouldn't be confined to empathy/multiperspectivity</p>
Page 13 Table 6	Typo in Table 6	<p>Geographical skills missing from Table 6 -massive omission</p> <p>Other skills are common - e.g. questioning, communicating</p>
P14 Table 7	Lack of progression between learning outcomes for Stage 1 and for Stage 2	<p>Often the Stage 2 learning outcome does not align with the Stage 1 learning outcome -greater consideration needed here to ensure progression is evident and clear.</p> <p>There lies a significant danger that if a topic is not covered in a given stage, it will not reoccur for the children to experience throughout their primary education. Spiral aspect of 1999 curriculum addressed this.</p>

Page 14 Table 7	Environment and Sustainable Living learning outcomes lack a focus on human actions cause and effect on the environment	Need to include specific mention of how human actions have positive and negative impacts on the environment
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Page 14 - People, Place, Space		p. 14: "Immediate locality" could be made clearer.
Page 14 - Environment and Sustainable Living		p. 13 : should this be "current and future generations"
Page 15 Table 7	Exploration of Our World	<p>There needs to be specific mention of map reading and map making in Stages 1 and 2... indeed there is a serious lack of emphasis on mapping skills in the document as a whole, particularly as it is considered a key geographical skill.</p> <p>Explicit reference to children developing understanding and application of elements of mapping (scale, location, perspective, direction and symbol)</p>
Page 16 Table 8	LOs and History/Geography	The weighting of LOs (geography, history, integrated) across the strands in S3 and S4 seems unbalanced. The potential of history to contribute to 'Environment and Sustainable Living' and of geography to contribute to 'Exploration of our world' seems to have been limited/prevented by this structure.
Page 16 Table 8 People Place and Space	Compare and contrast aspects of children's lives in Ireland with children's lives in other regional, national, European, and global contexts, cultivating a sense of identity and belonging as global citizens	Why only children -what about the lives of people in general including workers, etc.?

Page 16 Table 8 People Place and Space	Potential overemphasis on migration (given that two whole learning outcomes out of eight are devoted to this?)	More broader learning outcomes that encapsulate more than migration as a process or concept for sense of place
Page 16 Table 8 People Place and Space	Lack of 'space' related learning outcomes. There are no learning outcomes (aside from mention of borders) that link to sense of space (i.e. spatial awareness, location, mapping skills and elements of mapping, scale, interconnectedness of places etc.)	Include some specific learning outcomes for space

Page 16 Table 8 Environment and Sustainable Living	Identify and compare physical features and living systems of the natural environments in Ireland, Europe, and the wider world.	Why not investigate human action impact on natural features etc. -what of sustainable and nonsustainable ways of living? What of transport travel, manufacturing etc.
Pages 16 & 17 Table 8 Environment and Sustainable Living	Strand is completely focused on natural environment -no mention of sustainable living in an urban /human environment	Need to include the human environment also. What of living sustainably in a human environment/urban environment? Sustainable transport, travel, safe ways to cycle/scoot/walk, land use decision-making such as rewilding areas, sustainable energy usage and sources, etc.
Pages 16 & 17 Table 8 Environment and Sustainable Living	Learning outcomes over emphasise Planet Earth in Space	With such a limited number of learning outcomes it seems disproportionate to devote 2 LOs to Planet Earth in Space/Solar System (which in most other curricula internationally is located in the science curriculum).

<p>Pages 16 & 17 Table 8 Exploration of our world</p>	<p>Where is the geography here? This is extremely concerning -a need for MANY geography learning outcomes here</p>	<p>History LOs mention legacy of conflict and events. Geography LOs are needed here. For example, Geography LOs could include aspects of political geography such as the European Union which is a legacy of world wars and is a peace project and a legacy of conflict).</p> <p>The overall structure of the strands needs to be reviewed. It currently appears that there is one geography strand (Environment and Sustainable Living -which is problematically solely linked to the natural environment) and one history strand (Exploration of Our World) and one integrated strand (People Place and Space). This causes significant issues for integration. You might as well have the 3 strands called Geography, History and Integration. This is not how an integrated curriculum should be presented.</p>
<p>Page 16 Table 8 Environment and Sustainable Living</p>	<p>Evaluate examples of change in the natural environments of Ireland, Europe, and the wider world due to physical processes and human activity and determine possible actions to support positive change in the environment</p>	<p>This is an example of a learning outcome that encompasses a huge amount of teaching and learning. Overly broad, vague LOs such as this, allows for flexibility for a teacher with a wealth of knowledge and confidence, but will act as a barrier for teachers who lack these attributes. LOs need to be broken down into smaller chunks, provide examples and be accompanied by a bank of clear, accessible and context focused resources.</p>
<p>Page 16 Table 8 Environment and Sustainable Living</p>	<p>Evaluate examples of change in the natural environments of Ireland, Europe, and the wider</p>	<p>LOs also need to highlight the importance of learning about natural and human environments and processes which are relevant to the schools location and context e.g. learning about mountains if living</p>
	<p>world due to physical processes and human activity and determine possible actions to support positive change in the environment</p>	<p>near Croagh Patrick, learning about rivers near Boyne etc.</p>

Page 18 Working as a Geographer	No specific mention of mapping (map-reading or map-making) in this definition/explanation	Include reference to mapping skills in working as a geographer definition/explanation
Page 19 Inquiring	The Draft states “pose questions rooted in real life contexts” -it should be stated that these would be investigable questions	Ensure that here and throughout the document where reference is made to children posing questions for Inquiry that these are investigable questions (it is an important skill in itself for children to be able to pose investigable open-ended questions that they can then investigate through inquiry).
Page 19 Inquiring	The Draft states “investigate and explore in their local area”	This should also include places beyond their local area
Page 21	The Draft states “‘how’ children learn is just as important as the ‘what’ of their learning in Social and Environmental Education.”	This is a very contested statement which research both upholds and disproves. Teachers should be led by content (the what) and select the most appropriate approaches and resources (the how) to help learners attain this knowledge, develop skills etc. (i.e. grasp the content)
Page 21 Global Learning Themes	It is unclear how these Global Learning Themes underpin or mirror or align with or overarch or are embedded within the pedagogical approaches?	They are situated as a precursor to the pedagogies section of the Draft but it is not explained how or even if they are overarching or if they are embedded etc.? This needs to be cleared up in some coherent manner.
Page 23 Pedagogical Approaches	There are too many pedagogical approaches put forward	NCCA across all curriculum specs have set out approx. 26 different pedagogical approaches. This is way too many for teachers to grasp and implement effectively. We suggest commonalities should be recognised and pedagogical approaches should be merged. For instance, Applying Digital Skills is not a pedagogical approach. It is in fact as the name suggests -a skill. Learners can apply digital skills in carrying out investigations in inquiry or in presenting learning etc. Dialogical Pedagogy would fit under Inquiry also.

Page 23 Inquiry	The Draft states: “learners are	Learners should not just be posing questions - these should be open-ended investigable questions -this
	encouraged to pose questions, locate...That stimulate curiosity and encourage children to think critically about historical events (for example “W”	needs to be made explicit throughout the document Also why are historical events given precedence here? Geographical events such as storms can also be included.
P.23 - Inquiry	Draft states "geographical places"	p.23 "geographical places" - meaning is unclear. Would just ‘places’ be sufficient?
Page 23 Inquiry	No framework or model for inquiry is presented	There is a need for NCCA to present a model or framework for inquiry that is conducive to both Geography and History with steps for teachers to follow and understand the processes involved. We have some suggested models (forthcoming publication as well as the NCCA SEE Literature Review)
Page 23 Inquiry	No mention of making and using maps	This really needs to be specifically mentioned -it is very scantily referred to throughout the document
Page 24 Story	The Draft states: “Engaging with stories of people in different places allows children to develop empathy with others.”	It also develops a sense of place for these locations...
P. 24 Story	Story - absence of geography -it is completely historyfocused - massive missed opportunity Story is a welcome pedagogy but in this Draft Spec is presented as being wholly linked	There are opportunities to demonstrate the value of story in geography, as a stimulus to support generating enquiry questions, as a resource to support development of sense of place for places near and far (books about different countries and places). Story also can be used to develop a sense of space (exploring and developing descriptions of place; creating maps based on story settings representing various features mentioned; development of story maps, etc.)

	to the history education elements of SEE.	
Page 25 Playful Approaches	Include creating maps alongside scavenger hunts and trails	Include creating maps alongside scavenger hunts and trails
Page 26 Place-based learning and Fieldwork outdoors	This is wholly either nature-based or else only mentions buildings and urban/human environment when linked to history -needs to include human geography	Place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors seems heavily weighted towards nature and the natural environment with little to no mention of human environments as being worthy of fieldwork (e.g. such as the design of public spaces, infrastructure for cycling etc.). Fieldwork, place-based learning and outdoor

		learning are much more than just nature-focused. Children should be encouraged to explore why paths, crossing points, cycle lanes etc. are designed the way they are -whether they could be improved, how accessible is our local street for wheelchair users? How could we design our local playground better? Why are built features developed in such a way? What patterns of development can they observe? Etc. What about investigating places of work in the locality? What about businesses, Transport, public spaces, community infrastructure, land-use etc.?
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Page 27 Dialogical Approaches	Dialogical Pedagogy is very much geared towards the ERB element of SEE but realistically could be subsumed into the Inquiry pedagogy in that it deals with children using various resources in a critical manner to challenge and reduce stereotypes and misconceptions...	Dialogical Pedagogy is very much geared towards the ERB element of SEE but realistically could be subsumed into the Inquiry pedagogy in that it deals with children using various resources in a critical manner to challenge and reduce stereotypes and misconceptions...
Page 28 Applying Digital Skills	no mention of video calls/links to wider community?	Applying digital skills is much more than just ebooks for presenting project work -no mention of digital map projects? basic GIS?? layering maps? adding details to digital maps such as Google Earth projects?
Page 28 Applying Digital Skills	Story maps go beyond just communicating stories	Storymaps go beyond communicating stories but also conveying what issue is cause effect solution etc.
Page 33 Glossary	Missing some key elements	Should include specific terms such as mapping, digital mapping, virtual fieldwork, key, symbol, perspective, scale. etc.
Page 36 Sense of Space	The Draft states “The development of a child's sense of place, starts with the home and local surroundings, and expands through the exploration of diverse human and natural environments in local, national, and global contexts”	The Literature Review states that today’s world is much more nuanced -children develop a sense of space in not such a clear hierarchy - for example they may have family connections in distant countries that they may visit regularly or video call etc.
P. 36	Conceptualisations of empathy	p. 36: Empathy as described is human focused - is a broader ecological/environmental empathy possible to include here?
P. 38 Image		P. 38 - Image seems to have collapsed communicating and questioning/investigating together

Page 38 Evaluating and decision making	Needs to include action and active citizenship here	
Page 40 Mapping/Graphicacy Skills	– location, scale, symbols, perspective, and direction –	Need to be unpacked and specifically explained somewhere in the skills section. These elements of mapping -scale (size and proportion of features and places in relation to each other), location (where features or places are), perspective (the perspective from which the map is made such as birds eye or aerial perspective -i.e. Viewing features from directly overhead), direction (directional language such as passed/around/over. etc) symbols (allocating appropriate symbols and colours to represent features on maps).
Page 40 Mapping/Graphicacy Skills	Progression of Mapping skills	It would be good to give some indication of progression from Stages 1&2 through to stages 3&4 for mapping skills -what might that look like? aerial photos of school grounds.... progressing

Pedagogical approaches: There are 6 pedagogical approaches identified in the SEE Draft. Inquiry is very much wedded to the notion of children working as historians and children working as geographers and appears to be presented in a manner similar to how we would advocate enquiry here in IoE and in the research. Place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors seems heavily weighted towards nature and the natural environment with little to no mention of human environments as being worthy of fieldwork (e.g. such as the design of public spaces, infrastructure for cycling etc.). Story is a welcome pedagogy but in this Draft Specification it is presented as being wholly linked to the history education elements of SEE. Dialogical Pedagogy is very much geared towards the ERB element of SEE but realistically could be subsumed into the Inquiry pedagogy in that it deals with children using various resources in a critical manner to challenge and reduce stereotypes and misconceptions... The conceptualisation of playful learning appears to be very much linking learning to drama and risky play outdoors and creativity -it is unclear how this fits within Geography and History specifically more than other subject areas? Finally, Applying Digital Skills is not, we would argue, a pedagogy but it is in fact the application of a skill! The clue is in the name! For instance, there is nothing in the explanation of this ‘pedagogy’ that could not entail children working through inquiry, using a vast array of tools and resources (some of which could be digital) to investigate a topic or an issue and even in presenting and communicating their learning. It would be more effective to have 3 pedagogical approaches that are clearly defined and presented in a clear and coherent manner.

Strands: The 3 strands are currently presented as aligning with each subject area and one being integrated. This is akin to a composite module and in that case should just be named Geography, History and Integrated -we do not agree with this -The current structure lacks meaningful integration and lacks acknowledgement of Geography in Exploration of Our World for example.

Elements: The elements do not make sense and do not translate clearly to Learning

Outcomes or from Strands. There are overlaps with both skills and pedagogies here in that

Inquiring is an Element and Inquiry is a Pedagogy. Communicating is an Element and Communicating is a Skill. Are the Elements even necessary? Do they add anything? Do they aid teachers in curriculum making and interpretation? We would argue that they do not.

Skills: Obviously Geographical Skills have been omitted from the table within the document (Mapping/Graphicacy Skills & Visual Interpretation and Communication Skills). It appears to be lacking investigation skills? (building from the previous 1999 curriculum which had Geographical Investigation Skills) -there is an opportunity to bring some of these forward to the new Specifications for SEE.

The Draft document is also unclear as to whether the Common Skills apply only to Stages 1 & 2 or if they apply across all stages? Also common skills do not include Critical thinking or Problem-solving? This could be reviewed as these are both mentioned in the document.

Serious lack of emphasis on Mapping Skills throughout the document (need to see progression in mapping). Need to break it into the 5 elements of mapping

- Perspective –view that map is taken from (aerial or bird’s-eye perspective) ● Scale –allows places to ‘fit’ onto a map and represents size of features/places accurately
- Symbols –including shapes, lines and colours to show a variety of features and routes on maps
- Location –stating where features are on maps and finding your way (locational language such as ‘beside’, behind, etc. to more complex grid references) -linked with maths
- Direction –relative directions such as ‘left’, ‘around’, through’, etc. and cardinal directions (northeast) etc.

Concepts: Is Empathy a concept? Historical Empathy is but empathy in geography is more of a value/disposition? What is meant by ‘Sense of Environment and Sustainability’? What about others (e.g. cause and effect) this could also be Geographical in investigating the causes, effects and possible solutions to issues such as peat harvesting/deforestation/flooding events/storms/etc.

Sense of space is not dealt with in any great manner throughout the document

Global Learning Themes: It is unclear how these Global Learning Themes underpin or mirror or align with or overarch or are embedded within the pedagogical approaches?

They are situated as a precursor to the pedagogies section of the Draft but it is not explained how or even if they are overarching or if they are embedded etc.? This needs to be cleared up in some coherent manner.

Learning Outcomes are vague, imbalanced, overloaded, difficult to unpack -no progression not developmental, conceptually confusing -overloaded -overly focused on certain topics such as migration and planet earth in space...

There are significant issues with devoting a large number of Learning Outcomes to specific topics such as Planet Earth in Space/Solar System and Migration. Furthermore the imbalance and lack of progression between Learning Outcomes is evident throughout the Draft. For example, why would Stage 3 focus solely on weather events and Stage 4 look at weather patterns? Would children in Stages 3 and 4 not be measuring and investigating different elements of weather (i.e. wind, precipitation, temperature etc.) and how these elements impact human and non-human life locally, nationally and globally...

Lack of meaningful integration (integration referenced 8 times in doc)

Lack of progression in LOs which are also over emphasis on Solar System/Nature...

Locating the Curriculum in Ireland: The SEE curriculum needs to be clearly situated in an Irish context. The Draft Specifications for SEE currently lack focus on Irish culture, Irish heritage, Irish traditions etc. - instead the focus is entirely on appreciating other cultures and diversity etc.

A visual diagram is needed to visually represent how aims, strands, elements etc. work together and link to planning.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Enter your answer:

Teachers will need curriculum making supports including models to aid them in interpreting and implementing and enacting -the Draft Specs for SEE are currently far too vague and Learning Outcomes are far too vague and imbalanced for teachers to interpret and enact in a classroom setting as they currently are.

Overall, the SEE Specifications document needs greater clarity and coherence

Visual representation/graphic is needed to demonstrate how the elements, aims, strands, etc. fit and work together.

Models of enquiry for SEE for Geography and for History are needed.

More specific learning outcomes which show progression of learning need to be designed.

More clarity for Strands -potentially new strands or at the very least a reconceptualisation of the three strands as they are presented to include meaningful integration is crucial.

Toolkit resources for auditing schools' locality for possible learning activities for History and Geography.

13.Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Enter your answer:

On-site, sustained CPD for schools which will allow teachers time to work together to adapt the curriculum to their own contexts, try out lessons/schemes etc. and return to facilitator of CPD with feedback/questions/challenges etc. is needed. This aspect of the roll-out is crucial. Rushed or one size-fits-all CPD is not sufficient if this curriculum is to be implemented successfully.

Dublin City University, Primary History Team

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on all draft specifications. We are focussing this submission on the SEE specification, and in particular, history education.

History Education team (primary) DCU IoE

Dr. Cairtriona ní Cassaithe, Prof. Fionnuala Waldron, Dr. Maria Barry and Mr. Peter Whelan

Congratulations to the NCCA on the delivery of this specification. There are many important dimensions included in the document that have the potential to continue the good practice set down in what is a very progressive (and still relevant) 1999 curriculum and to position the subject of history within current and future contexts for children of all ages.

In particular, we welcome the explicit inclusion of Inquiry as both a pedagogy and an element. Whilst the 1999 curriculum inferred the use of inquiry to underpin history education in primary schools, this proposed specification strengthens it as a signature pedagogy. We also welcome the provision of opportunities for children to select topics of interest for inquiry and to share stories about aspects of their family and community.

Additionally, we welcome the explicit emphasis on playful learning, connections to the outdoors and place-based learning and connections to local community groups, museums, libraries, historians, geographers and heritage centres. These features build on and, to some degree, extend the aims and objectives of the 1999 curriculum.

Furthermore, we welcome the explicit recognition of the contribution of history to fostering children's global citizenship and the stated correlation between history and global learning themes such as human rights, democracy, equity, social and environmental justice and sustainable development.

Below we outline a number of areas that we have identified in the draft specification that would benefit from further consideration and development. These include the consistency and coherence of the document, the proposed strands and related learning outcomes, historical concepts and skills, omissions from the draft specification, progression, the use of story and local to global dimensions.

Consistency and coherence

- There are several components identified as relevant in this SEE specification (e.g. competencies, principles, elements, pedagogical approaches, global learning themes and strands). We suggest visual aid(s) to support teachers to understand how and where these connect and where they are distinct. We suggest there is also scope to refine these components (e.g. see suggestion related to pedagogical approaches below)
- Inquiry should be explicitly named as a pedagogy for SEE on p. 2 of the document and on P.38 (see Figure on SEE skills). In addition, there is an inconsistency with the skills listed here and the format of the concepts on the page is confusing.
- There is a risk that the document includes too much unnecessary language resulting in obfuscation of the key ideas. For example, p.7, Aims 2 and 3 could be combined under 'to promote global citizenship' as most definitions of GCE include global and cultural awareness (see for example UNESCO, 2015). Another example: on p.23 there are 6 pedagogical approaches listed. We recommend a refinement of these. Consider 4 pedagogical approaches - Inquiry, story, outdoor education OR place-based education and playful pedagogy. Dialogical pedagogy is an important part of historical inquiry (this should be referenced within explanations of inquiry) and 'applying digital skills' is not a pedagogical approach.
- Furthermore, the historical inquiry cycle needs to be more clearly articulated and displayed in the specification to include asking questions, gathering evidence, analysing evidence, synthesis and creating evidence-based arguments and reflecting and connecting to the present. This could be achieved with a simple, visual figure and would reduce the need to include so many pedagogical approaches, thereby making it more concise and accessible for teachers.

The Strands

This is the area that we strongly recommend is revisited. We find the current strands challenging and unsuitable to an integrated specification and to history in particular. For example, history does not feature in the strand 2, Environment and Sustainable Living or in any of the learning outcomes at any level. A strong revision based on recommendations below will:

- create a better, more integrated approach across history and geography
- provide greater opportunities for progression
- recognise children's emergent capacities from a young age
- provide much greater support and clarity for teachers in their curriculum making and

planning.

Furthermore, given that transitions and continuity are one of the principles of teaching, learning and assessment, we recommend reconfiguring and renaming the current strands. We believe that strands more closely aligned to the Junior Cycle specification for history would be appropriate for an integrated history and geography specification.

In this section, we suggest a renaming and reconfiguring of the strands and related learning outcomes and present the reasons why such renaming is important.

We suggest:

My People, My Places The Island Of Ireland The Wider World

Currently, the strands are conceptually vague and do not reflect the aspirations of an integrated specification, particularly in Stages 1 and 2. One suggestion might be to shorten the first strand to “People and Places” or “My People, My Places” in order to indicate the personal and localised nature of the focus, it connects to both local and global connections that children have. As an integrated specification in Stages 1 and 2, the second strand “Environment and Sustainable Living” does not represent an integrated approach for planning and teaching across both subjects. While the inclusion of references to the environment and sustainable living are praiseworthy and indeed essential in current times, they are unsuitable as a strand. Rather, they should be included within the learning outcomes of the other strands.

Concepts related to Identity, belonging, Irish identity and hybridised identities need to be strengthened and one way to achieve this would be to rename and reconfigure the strands. One suggestion might be to rename Strand 2, “The Island of Ireland”. Within this strand, children could explore aspects of Irish culture, physical features, stories, myths and legends. This would involve repositioning some of the learning outcomes and adding some new ones. Similar themes could then be explored in Strand 3, at a global level. A focus on Irish culture and identity in Strand 2 will also be complemented by more personal and global foci in Strand 1 and 3 respectively. See Table 2 below for suggestions.

These suggested strands, with a refinement of the LOs may allow for greater distinction and clarity across the stages and make the specification more accessible for teachers to plan from.

One critique of the 1999 curriculum is the ceiling it places on young children’s capacity for critical engagement with historical context and content in the junior years. Research has

shown that children are capable of highly sophisticated critical thinking and reasoning (Cooper, 1995, Ní Cassaithe, 2020). The current conceptualisation of the strands in this draft specification also places similar ceilings on young children's capacity for historical and geographical engagement, particularly in Stages 1 and 2. For example, Stage 1 and 2 of the three strands limit this capacity by binding it to the immediate environment. Focusing solely on local and personal history in the junior years is reductive and in an increasingly diverse society, such a narrow focus on local and personal history can result in limited perspectives of the world for very young learners.

A Brunerian spiral approach, in which these themes and topics can be revisited throughout the curriculum, we feel, is an essential component of an integrated specification as it reinforces learning, builds on prior knowledge, is developmentally appropriate and allows for the development of historical and geographical thinking and problem-solving skills.

By primarily focusing on the children's immediate surroundings and personal experiences in the early years, there is the potential that they may develop a skewed view of history, geography and the broader aspects of Irish culture and global contexts. By focusing exclusively on local and personal history, children may miss opportunities to develop an awareness of global issues, intercultural competence and the sense of responsibility as global citizens that the aims of this specification advocate.

To offset this, we recommend that a more global aspect is introduced to the **Strand 3 Exploring our World** in Stages 1 and 2. See Table 2 for suggestions.

Finally, regarding the strands, if the strands cannot be renamed and reconfigured, we strongly recommend, at the very least, that there is a renaming of Strand 2 to "Ways of Living over time" and rebalancing the LOs across Strands 2 and 3 with regards to History and Geography (as suggested above and in Table 2). Renaming Strand 2 to "Ways of Living over time", allows for a much more balanced and integrated approach across SEE and with specific reference to History, it allows for the exploration of early peoples, a diversity of societies, nomadism, grandparents' childhoods and much more. It also allows for the exploration of sustainable ways of living, past, present and future.

Clarity of proposed Learning outcomes

We understand that the LOs must and should be broad and that this is intentional. However, there is a risk that many of the proposed LOs are too vague, as opposed to being broad. This is of particular concern given that as a curriculum area, SEE is a new departure for teachers. We recommend that:

1. the LOs are extensively reviewed (see examples in Table 2)

2. strand units are included in the specification as a guiding step between the strands, LOs and toolkit. Strands units should be provided in menu form, as specific History areas of learning from which teacher and pupils can choose from.

Historical concepts and skills

We welcome the concepts listed but believe that can be added to.

1. Consider adding some or all of the following. These concepts are considered by history educators as important to the teaching of history.
 - Significance
 - Agency
 - Interpretation and Argumentation
2. Table 5 on page 13 needs consideration. Historical empathy and empathy are two different concepts. The same applies with multiperspectivity. It could confuse teachers if they are presented as common concepts, which they are not. Moreover, it risks generic approaches to SEE and conflating historical empathy with 'geographical empathy' or multiple perspectives in history with those in geography and can lead to conceptual confusion and generic approaches to history teaching (which research shows does not work or enhance historical consciousness)

Omissions

We have identified a number of gaps, or areas that could be strengthened within the proposed specification. These include

1. **Identity and heritage.** Concepts related to Identity, belonging, Irish identity and hybridised identities need to be strengthened across the specification. For example, the aims of SEE should include fostering a strong sense of identity that recognises the children's family heritage(s) but also develops understandings of Irish and hybridised identities and contributes to children's understanding and sense of the interplay between their own sense of identity and Irish identity today and into the future. History has a significant role to play in supporting children to develop a strong sense of identity and a sense of belonging through connections they make to their own families' past lives, but also by exploring and understanding the histories of the communities, places and nations in which they live. For suggestions on how to do this, see comments in relation to proposed Strand 2 in Table 2.
2. **Peace and conflict.** A distinctive feature of the current history curriculum is the promotion of mutual understanding between different perspectives on this island and further afield. As a postcolonial society still wrestling with the legacies of conflict, it is important that children have opportunities to engage with what is

considered controversial and contested histories. This is increasingly important as migration and conflict continue to be prevalent and present in children's lives.

3. **Explicit references to the classroom as a learning environment.** Whilst we welcome the explicit acknowledgement of the contributions of outdoor learning to children's learning, we recommend that the classroom is named explicitly as an important site of learning, inquiry, debate and cooperative learning. This can be added to the section on learning environments on p. 2.
4. **More critical, rigorous and active LOs.** Consider verbs such as interrogate, evaluate, debate, infer, deduct, justify, hypothesise, verify. In addition, at Stage 3 and 4 it is important to identify the need to interrogate the historical roots of structural inequalities of class, gender and ethnicity and to explicitly explore colonialism and racism over time. This was a gap identified in the 1999 Primary History Curriculum and this gap is still evident in this draft document.

Progression

The 1999 History Education curriculum was lauded for its clear progression and the opportunity for children to revisit topics in more complexity as they moved through the class levels (McCully & Waldron, 2013). This is not as evident in the new specification. For example, at Stages 3 & 4 under Strand 1, "People, Place and Space" the history content for Stage 3 is centred on investigating the story of the locality and identifying historical sites and key events of interest. This focus needs to be progressed and developed into Stage 4.

However, the focus shifts to Ireland's political systems and key institutes of government and the opportunity to investigate the story of the locality etc. is completely removed at Stage 4.

In the 'Strand Exploration of our World' at Stage 3, a focus is placed on examining the lives of early people and Ancient Societies. One approach to examining the lives of these people is through looking at their stories, myths and legends. This is only identified for Stage 4.

Story, myths and legends should be named specifically at each stage of the specification.

Use of story

The draft specification suggests that 'story' be limited to a local focus in Strand 1. We recommend the LO on p.15 references a wider range of story, nursery rhymes, songs, myths and legends and picturebooks. This change recognises children's capacity to engage with historical themes from infant classes through story.

Local to global

There is a risk in the current draft that historical enquiries move from a local to a global focus from Strand 1 through to Strand 4. While all approaches need to be age appropriate,

this does not acknowledge the blend of local and global in classrooms, or children’s capacity to engage with a diverse range of stories and histories from a young age. Our suggestions related to the reconfiguration of the Strands in Table 2 will help to address this.

At the very least, we recommend that the strands be revised to

- Remove a local only focus in Stages 1-2
- Include children’s localities in Stage 4

Working as a Historian

On p. 18, working as a historian is referred to as a concept. We recommend that the presentation of “Working as Historian” in the specification is reconfigured to support the points we make about refinement and consistency across the document but also to connect this component more closely to the strands. We recommend reconsidering this component i.e. working as a historian, as an encompassing strand within which the three Strands sit (see the junior cycle specification for a visual example).

Working as a Historian can enrich children’s historical consciousness by engaging them with the nature of history. Through working as a historian children come to understand that history is constructed, it is provisional and based on evidence at hand. The current description of Working as a Historian can be refined for greater accessibility for teachers by articulating more specific components of working as a historian.

It is important that children have opportunities to understand and explore the nature of history by

- Asking questions
- Understanding history as an interpretation
- Using evidence
- Exploring the nature of history

Integration for Stage 3 and 4, Strand 1: People, place and space, p. 16

We suggest that the boxes related to Integration are removed as they are too easily misinterpreted. While we understand that they represent the integration of ERB into the SEE curriculum, as currently configured, the integration boxes suggest that history and geography are integrated in Stage 3 and 4 rather than discrete subjects. We propose that these are placed as outcomes within both subject areas (see Table 2 for suggestions).

Table 1: Current strands and learning outcomes by stage

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
People, Place and Space	<p>Identify their place in their family and local community demonstrating an awareness of roles and responsibilities and how people’s roles change over time.</p> <p>Become familiar with aspects of their local heritage, and the cultural practices, customs, traditions, religions, beliefs and worldviews and celebrations /events in their immediate locality.</p>	<p>Investigate some aspects of the interconnectedness between people and natural and built features of the local environment tracing important historical relationships and exploring changes over time.</p> <p>Reflect on and examine aspects of their local heritage and how they preserve connections to the past, exploring customs, traditions, religions, beliefs, and worldviews in their locality.</p>	<p>History: Investigate aspects of the story of their locality and other places, identifying historical sites of interest and key events and developments.</p> <p>Geography: Compare and contrast aspects of children’s lives in Ireland with children’s lives in other regional, national, European, and global contexts, cultivating a sense of identity and belonging as global citizens.</p> <p>Geography: Develop an understanding of the borders of places (such as counties/ regions/countries), and how borders define and confine places, movement of people, living things and trade.</p>	<p>History: Demonstrate an understanding of changes in Ireland's political system and key institutions of government over time and their influence on the present.</p> <p>Geography: Investigate people's journeys, the events, and motivations for movement, as well as the impact and influence of movement on people and places.</p> <p>Geography: Identify and examine the interrelationship between the human and natural environment on resource use, transport, infrastructure, employment, leisure, and trade.</p>
Environment and Sustainable Living:	<p>Connect with nature and the outdoors, exploring the natural world around them and recognising their role in caring for it.</p> <p>Observe and appreciate features of the local landscape and monitor changes that occur throughout the seasons.</p> <p>Identify and describe living things in the locality recognising the importance of protecting</p>	<p>Recognise the importance of respecting their surroundings for future generations and identify ways in which they can contribute to preserving and enhancing the natural world.</p> <p>Explore a variety of weather conditions and how they impact the local natural and built environments over time.</p> <p>Investigate biodiversity within their local natural environment, looking at changes that have taken place and anticipating changes that may occur in the</p>	<p>Geography: Identify and compare physical features and living systems of the natural environments in Ireland, Europe, and the wider world.</p> <p>Geography: Explore weather events, identifying the causes and consequences of severe weather to human and natural environments.</p> <p>Geography: Recognise planet Earth’s position as part of a wider solar system, identifying bodies in space such as the sun and the moon and their importance for, and influence on, Earth.</p>	<p>Geography: Evaluate examples of change in the natural environments of Ireland, Europe, and the wider world due to physical processes and human activity and determine possible actions to support positive change in the environment.</p> <p>Geography: Analyse weather patterns and climate, distinguishing between short-term weather events and long-term climate trends and identify factors that influence climate change and their impact on the human and natural environments and daily life.</p> <p>Geography: Examine aspects of the</p>

	biodiversity for a sustainable future.	future because of natural processes and/or human actions.		interrelationship between the Earth and other bodies in space on atmospheric conditions, climate change and weather patterns.
Exploration of Our World	<p>Listen to, enjoy, and respond to stories from or about their locality.</p> <p>Recognise ways in which technology has changed how people live and work at home and in their locality.</p> <p>Encounter a wide range of sources, artefacts and stimuli using suitable expression to describe direction, location, and record sequences of events.</p>	<p>Engage with a wide range of stories, considering different perspectives, demonstrating an ability to order familiar events chronologically.</p> <p>Examine the impact of technology on how people live and work in our society and reflect on people's lives in the past to further develop their understanding that people lived differently in past generations.</p> <p>Examine a range of sources to derive important information, collect and interpret information, locate places and features of significance on maps, and present key data using suitable vocabulary and media.</p>	<p>History: Recognise patterns of change across different periods of time in chosen themes relating to life, society, work, and culture in the past.</p> <p>History: Investigate aspects of the lives of early peoples and ancient societies, examining and responding to a range of evidence we have which tells us about these people</p> <p>History: Investigate aspects of the lives of early peoples and ancient societies, examining and responding to a range of evidence we have which tells us about these people.</p> <p>History: Collect, record, and share samples of local and national folklore, discussing common themes and features which are to be found in Irish myths and legends.</p> <p>History: Consider and respond to stories of people who contributed to society through scientific, cultural, or artistic developments,</p>	<p>History: Explore historical periods in Ireland and beyond marked by change and/or conflict, becoming familiar with the underlying reasons and the impact on the everyday lives of people.</p> <p>History: Explore aspects of the lives of people in the past, becoming familiar with social and economic issues of the time and developing a sense of their impact and legacy in the History of Ireland, Europe and/or the wider world.</p> <p>History: Explore aspects of the lives of people in the past, becoming familiar with social and economic issues of the time and developing a sense of their impact and legacy in the History of Ireland, Europe and/or the wider world.</p> <p>History: Engage with, analyse, and narrate a broader selection of myths and legends from diverse cultures and ethnic origins within Ireland, Europe, and the wider world.</p> <p>History: Examine stories of the lives of people who have contributed to social, cultural, and political developments, developing a sense of their legacy on national, European and/or the wider world</p>

Table 2: Suggested strands and learning outcomes by stage

	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
My People, My Places	Myself and my family	Myself and my family	History: Investigate aspects of the story of the locality and other places, identifying historical sites of interest and key events and developments.	History Collect, record, and share samples of local folklore, memories and events
	My community	myself and my locality	Conduct enquiries into significant people, places and events in the locality	Demonstrate an understanding of how national events, changes in Ireland's political system and key institutions of government over time influenced the local area
	Stories of significant people, places and events	Stories of significant people, places and events	Collect, record, and share samples of local folklore	Conduct enquiries and trails to explore important local sites in depth
	Identify change and continuity in the environment	connections between people and natural and built features of the local environment	Geography: Compare and contrast aspects of children's lives in Ireland with children's lives in other regional, national, European, and global contexts, cultivating a sense of identity and belonging as global citizens.	Geography: Investigate people's journeys, the events, and motivations for movement locally, as well as the impact and influence of movement on people and places.
	Caring for our community	Caring for our community and heritage	Geography: Develop an understanding of the borders of places (such as counties/regions/countries), and how borders define and confine places, movement of people, living things and trade.	Identify and examine the interrelationship between the human and natural environment in the local area on resource use, transport, infrastructure, employment, leisure, and trade.
			Develop an awareness and foster an appreciation of the richness of cultural, ethnic, and religious expressions and traditions, becoming familiar with a diverse array of festivals, ceremonies and celebrations.	

The island of Ireland)	Exploring Irish stories, myths and legends through a geographical and historical lens	Engage with a wide range of stories, through a geographical and historical lens - considering different perspectives, demonstrating an ability to order familiar events chronologically, mapping places	History: Collect, record, and share samples of local and national folklore, discussing common themes and features which are to be found in Irish myths and legends.	History: Demonstrate an understanding of changes in Ireland's political system and key institutions of government over time and their influence on the present.
			<p>Conduct enquiries into significant people, places and events across the island of Ireland</p> <p>Investigate aspects of the lives of early peoples and ancient societies in Ireland, examining and responding to a range of evidence we have which tells us about these people</p> <p>Explore a variety of weather conditions and how they impact the local natural and built environments over time.</p> <p>Investigate biodiversity within their local natural environment, looking at changes that have taken place and anticipating changes that may occur in the future because of natural processes and/or human actions</p>	<p>Explore historical periods in Ireland and beyond marked by change and/or conflict, becoming familiar with the underlying reasons and the impact on the everyday lives of people.</p> <p>Explore aspects of the lives of people in the past, becoming familiar with social and economic issues of the time and developing a sense of their impact and legacy in the history of Ireland</p> <p>Engage with, analyse, and narrate a broader selection of myths and legends from diverse cultures and ethnic origins within Ireland</p> <p>Examine stories of the lives of people who have contributed to social, cultural, and political developments, developing a sense of their legacy on Ireland.</p> <p>Conduct overview studies of change and continuity related to aspects of Irish history</p>
			Geography: Identify and compare physical features and living systems of the natural environments in Ireland,	Geography: Evaluate examples of change in the natural environments of Ireland due to physical processes and human activity and determine possible actions to support positive change in the environment.
			Explore weather events, identifying the causes and consequences of severe weather to human and natural environments.	Analyse weather patterns and climate in Ireland, distinguishing between short-term weather events and long-term climate trends and identify factors that influence climate change and their impact on the human and

				natural environments and daily life.
The wider world	<p>change and continuity in people's lives (eg. toys, the home)</p> <p>Caring for our world</p> <p>Exploring stories, myths and legends from around the world through a geographical and historical lens</p>	<p>change and continuity in people's lives (schools, transport)</p> <p>Stories of significant people, places and events around the world</p> <p>change and continuity in the environment</p> <p>Caring for our world</p>	<p>History: Recognise patterns of change across different periods of time in chosen themes relating to life, society, work, and culture in the past.</p> <p>Investigate aspects of the lives of early peoples and ancient societies across the world, examining and responding to a range of evidence we have which tells us about these people</p> <p>Collect, record, and share samples of folklore and indigenous knowledge,</p> <p>Discuss common themes and features which are to be found in myths and legends.</p> <p>Consider and respond to stories of people who contributed to society through scientific, political, cultural, or artistic developments</p> <p>Develop knowledge of cultural, ethnic, and religious expressions and traditions over time, becoming familiar with a diverse array of festivals, ceremonies and celebrations.</p>	<p>History: Explore historical periods across the world that have been marked by change and/or conflict, becoming familiar with the underlying reasons and the impact on the everyday lives of people.</p> <p>Explore aspects of the lives of people in the past, becoming familiar with social and economic issues of the time and developing a sense of their impact and legacy in the history of Europe and/or the wider world.</p> <p>Explore aspects of the lives of people in the past, becoming familiar with social and economic issues of the time and developing a sense of their impact and legacy in the history of Europe and/or the wider world.</p> <p>Engage with, analyse, and narrate a broader selection of myths and legends from diverse cultures and ethnic origins within Europe and the wider world.</p> <p>Examine stories of the lives of people who have contributed to social, cultural, and political developments, developing a sense of their legacy on European and/or the wider world</p>

			<p>Geography: Identify and compare physical features and living systems of the natural environments in Europe, and the wider world.</p> <p>Geography: Explore global weather events, identifying the causes and consequences of severe weather to human and natural environments.</p> <p>Geography: Recognise planet Earth's position as part of a wider solar system, identifying bodies in space such as the sun and the moon and their importance for, and influence on, Earth.</p>	<p>Evaluate examples of change in the natural environments of Europe and the wider world due to physical processes and human activity and determine possible actions to support positive change in the environment.</p> <p>Analyse weather patterns and climate, distinguishing between short-term weather events and long-term climate trends and identify factors that influence climate change and their impact on the human and natural environments and daily life.</p> <p>Examine aspects of the interrelationship between the Earth and other bodies in space on atmospheric conditions, climate change and weather patterns.</p>
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Dublin City University, Primary Physical Education Team

Response of the Physical Education Team, Institute of Education, DCU to the NCCA
Draft Wellbeing Specifications 2024

June 5th 2024

We, the PE Team in the Institute of Education, DCU offer a response below to the NCCA Wellbeing Specifications with specific reference to Physical Education. Our response is divided into *four* parts as follows

Part A: Summary of the aspects of the Specifications that we welcome: p.1

Part B: General Recommendations that we propose with reference to points that apply across the Specifications: p.2

Part C: Recommendations related to specific sections of the Specifications: p.3

Part D: Editing considerations: p.8.

Part A

We welcome the following aspects of the Specifications which provide very clear statements to guide teachers towards implementation and to guide preservice and in-service professional development

- The *opening statements* about Wellbeing, Physical Education and SPHE are generally very clear.
- The Wellbeing Specifications present a very clear guideline on the allocation of *time* to Wellbeing at Stage 1 and 2 and to PE and SPHE at Stage 3 and 4. The increase in time for Wellbeing is very welcome and increased time allocated to Physical Education provides a unique opportunity for schools and teachers to build enhanced programmes of Physical Education.
- The *Activity Areas* outline a breadth of activities that are appropriate for children in primary schools.
- The *aims* of 'Wellbeing' span knowledge, skills, dispositions, attitudes and values appropriately.
- The *strands and elements* provide a framework for presentation of content that is outlined in some detail later in the Specifications.
- The *Wellbeing Curriculum in Practice* Section encompasses the main features of children's learning.
- The *Glossary* is a useful support in reading the Specifications.

Part B

We propose some General Recommendations below to support the next stage of the work of the NCCA in finalising the Draft Specifications. Within this section, some recommendations stand alone. Others are offered with an explanatory preamble.

Recommendation: Further examples related to *PE Activity Areas* would help clarify some statements that appear vague and general throughout (these are detailed further in Part C below). These will be necessary to guide schools and teachers in selection of content.

There is a lack of emphasis on motor/psychomotor skill development beyond reference to fundamental movement skills (FMS). There are some vague references to ‘movement solutions’ through discovery learning but there is no clear signposting of the development of psychomotor skills beyond mastery of FMS.

Recommendation: More explicit exemplars should be used e.g. specific balancing, travelling, striking, kicking skills to provide some guidance for stages 3 and 4 in particular with clear application to sporting activities. In contrast, discussion of ‘Relationships’ brings in ‘*Sports*’ on p.21 and *Sporting contexts* (p.22) yet reference to generic or specific sports skills is missing. Linking with community is emphasised and there is an obvious link with sports clubs, yet sports skills are not highlighted satisfactorily.

Throughout the Specifications the concept of ‘personal relevance’ needs explanation. While this may be understood at, for example, post-primary level it is important to provide examples of what is personally relevant to young children particularly those with limited exposure to movement experiences in family or community settings. Children making choices on how and what they learn in PE is welcome but ‘within the focus of new learning’ is confusing.

Recommendation: Throughout this strand unit, within the learning outcomes reference needs to be made to ‘while respecting the choices of others’ (hence avoiding dominance of more ‘sporty’ children who wish to choose a sport that they like/excel at and in doing so can lessen the chances of a child with a less popular interest having a voice or a real choice).

Specificity of language seems inconsistent: Within the SPHE Specifications (p.14) very specific language is used (related to body parts for example) whereas there is no comparable detail evident in PE learning outcomes e.g. striking a shuttlecock/ball; dribbling a ball, exploring transferring weight leading to performing a cartwheel, rolling in a variety of ways, creating a dance. *Playful approaches* as well as *relational* (p.7 in

the context of recreational and competitive) is confusing as relational is also used on p.8 (Table 2 and Table 3).

Recommendation: more specific terminology and language related to Physical Education should be used consistently throughout the Specifications. Inclusion of specific exemplars (sometimes phrases or single sentences) to provide guidance to teachers supporting enactment of the Specifications is crucial. Reference to *sport*, the role of *competition*, the place of *tournaments* should be explained and clarified throughout to provide concise insights into important concepts for schools and teachers. Likewise, *PE activities*, *movement experiences*, *movement education* and *movement solutions* need to be explained with clear examples provided in the body of the Specifications. While playful approaches are used across the Specifications in many subjects, there is a need to illustrate the meaning of these approaches with examples drawn from Physical Education activities and Activity Areas.

Recommendation: schools and teachers need advice on the terminology they will use when referring to a typical 'PE lesson' at stage 1 and 2: will this be referred to as 'Wellbeing' and then Physical Education at stage 3 and 4? This is particularly important when explaining to children but also in discussions with or presentations to parents about their children's learning. We propose that it is explained to children that they are now about to engage in a *Physical Education* lesson to distinguish the work from other areas/subjects.

There are key distinctions suggested in the opening statement about Physical Education, sport and physical activity.

Recommendation: It would be helpful to consult Get Active! Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport for Children and Young People: A Guiding Framework (2012, p.4) <https://assets.gov.ie/24930/e079cd26727e4d8283cde036c60683da.pdf> and to consider the terminology used and defined within it. Note, in particular, the definition of cocurricular activities that should be referenced in the Specifications to encourage schools to ensure that any co-curricular activities should reflect the principles outlined in the Specifications.

Part C: Recommendations related to Sections of the Specifications Section 1: Introduction

The principles of learning, teaching and assessment (Table 1) are clearly outlined.

Recommendation: Re-consider the order of these beginning with engagement and

participation as key to PE, followed by assessment and progression etc i.e. an order reflecting their relevance in PE/SPHE

Understanding Wellbeing (p.2) is a balanced statement.

Recommendation: The quotation from the Junior Cycle Curriculum should be replaced by a similar statement drawn from the NCCA Primary Curriculum Framework, 2023, p. 18. This Framework is directly relevant to the young child.

Section 2: Rationale

The opening statements about Wellbeing, Physical Education and SPHE are clear, succinct and very helpful. Within the statement on Physical Education there is an appropriate reference to 'physical literacy'. There is a welcome reference to the importance of *learning* in PE in the Physical Education (PE) paragraph and this occurs more than once.

Recommendation: The definition of sport provided in the footnote, although welcome, should align with the definition provided by Council of Europe/UNESCO and align with Every Move Counts (2024). Following this, it is important to develop a statement that guides schools/teachers on the place of 'sport' in PE, the role of competition and the balance required to ensure that the 'tournaments' referenced elsewhere in the document don't become the dominant means of offering sporting opportunities. It is important to highlight with reference to the school offering opportunities in the 'after school/co-curricular' space that these should align with the principles outlined on p. 2 Table 1.

Recommendation: A footnote might provide the reader with guidance to source the *All Ireland Statement on Physical Literacy* (p. 5) and the concept might usefully be included earlier in the Physical Education paragraph e.g. bottom of first paragraph re: Physical Education on p.4

The definition of Physical Education (p.4) is signposted but later on the term Movement Education is used as a strand (p. 8). Physical education is linked to 'activities' here but on p.43 reference is made to 'physical activity areas'. On p.10 Element 4: Moving is expanded to practical movement experiences. This interchangeable terminology is confusing.

Recommendation: Hence, as the term 'movement' is highlighted so clearly from page 8 onwards...it needs to be reflected more strongly in the description of Physical Education on p.4/5

Recommendation: Use of an example with the definition of physical education can narrow the focus of learning, although the effort to use running across the three definitions is consistent. Following this reference to running, ‘completing a running lap of the yard’ is questionable as an ‘enjoyable’ activity. Could a ‘tag chasing game’ or ‘skipping’ represent a more playful example?

Recommendation: Given these definitions of PE, PA and sport are provided on p4, adding a table/figure presenting further examples that distinguish PE, PA and sport across different activity areas would be useful later in the document perhaps in section 6e?

Recommendation: The intensity of physical activity in the PE lesson should be stated to align with the health agenda from Every Move Counts (2024) and to ensure that the PE lessons are active. Given the inclusion, appropriately of aspects such as discussion, reflection, writing journal entries or developing portfolios as well as preparing for festival or tournaments (as referenced on p.23) the emphasis on learning ‘through’ movement is crucial. This should be stated while acknowledging that PE lessons may be characterised by some less active, short elements for aspects such as organisation and management, responses to closed and open questions or time for reflection. While the online toolkit can exemplify this, a clear statement would provide direction.

Section 3 Aims

These are presented with a clear effort to show commonalities between PE and SPHE. Some edits would be useful (see Part below).

Section 4: Strands and Elements

Strands and strand units are listed clearly.

Recommendation: A short paragraph on each strand unit in Movement Education is required to explain each of the strand units. It is not possible to decipher the learning outcomes effectively without understanding the terminology used in each of the strand units. It will be important to promote early understanding of the four ‘Movement Education’ strand units, in particular. These terms are not widely understood or visible in work in other subjects.

The elements are outlined clearly, and Element 4 (Moving) provides an appropriate description of learning ‘in’, ‘through’ and ‘about’ movement linking very well with the work that has been evident in schools where a broad and balanced programme of PE has been planned and taught. Element 3 provides an appropriate reference to reflection and the empowerment of child voice.

Recommendation: It will be important to guide teachers towards the importance of the balance between the elements in PE to ensure that children are provided with sufficient ‘practical movement experiences’ as outlined in element 4. A statement in the introduction with explicit reference to the emphasis on movement in Physical Education could serve this crucial purpose.

Section 5: Learning outcomes

- The language of learning outcomes illustrates progression from stage 1 through to stage 4 generally.

Recommendation: However, the language needs to be examined for consistency e.g. explore, develop...and to determine if each learning outcome uses language that is specific and measurable.

Key Competencies: the statement here about nurturing wellbeing is useful in the context of the sharing across the curriculum.

Recommendation: A statement indicating that PE and SPHE are particularly important in this process of nurturing wellbeing is crucial here. Table 6 can support this statement explicitly, but it requires signposting with a clear introductory statement. Table 7 should align with Table 6 in the ordering of the key competencies. Could Table 7 ‘legend’ be embedded in Table 6? Each key competency needs a clear identifiable exemplar related to PE e.g. being a digital learner: using a device to record movement and discussing the benefits or drawbacks.

Section 6 The Wellbeing Curriculum in Practice

Section 6a appears to replicate the table provided on p. 10.

Recommendation:

Could 6a. be linked very clearly back to p. 10? These need to be placed together so that it is clear to readers that the 4 elements are providing a framework for learning described on p.10 and then ‘itemised’ on p. 30.

Section 6b: Teaching in the Wellbeing Curriculum

This piece omits ‘integration’ and ‘creative approaches’ which occur elsewhere in specifications.

Recommendation: reconsider the approaches with reference to use across all specifications. The rationale for inclusion/omissions needs to be clear.

Recommendation: Each **approach** should include more PE specific examples to provide a strong rationale for the pedagogical practices/ approaches selected

Collaborative and cooperative learning makes many important claims. This piece provides little guidance specific to PE.

Recommendation: use some of the many fine examples e.g. partner games/team games, composition of partner gymnastics/dance sequences to provide the reader with clear 'visual' prompts.

Direct Teaching

Recommendation: there are many examples drawn from practice in PE which would make this paragraph more explicit and helpful e.g. for organisational purposes, when explaining using an underarm throw with a visual demonstration before scaffolding the children in different ways as they throw and catch, throw at a target or throw to evade/defend in a games situation. Using a poster illustrating a specific skill in gymnastics e.g. balance on four points.

Supporting all learners [p.32]

Recommendation: should be replaced by ***Supporting all learners in PE (and SPHE)***. This piece is very important if the aim is reflected in the title, if the piece is guiding teachers to support learning in these particular contexts. Some exemplars would provide this initial guidance.

Playful approaches: this is a difficult concept to understand in the context of PE where 'play' is used in so many ways. The fifth bullet in the table suggests that a playful approach might be used in *introductions* to PE activity areas.

Recommendation: it could be argued that this playful approach should be employed throughout more of the lesson. The text should be amended to reflect this.

Recommendation: p.37 clear guidelines on *Gamification* are needed. What does this term mean in the context of a PE lesson? This is likely to result in many questions and its meaning may indeed change with time. However, an initial explanation is important with a current example of use of this concept to help illustrate its relevance to learning in Physical Education.

Relational pedagogy has a clear emphasis.

Recommendation: Specific reference to application of relational pedagogy in PE would be helpful.

Section 6c: Assessing Wellbeing. This heading is misleading. It is not possible to

‘assess wellbeing’. It is very contentious to assess any child’s wellbeing. This piece might usefully link back to the statement on p.3/ 5 which lists some of the influences on wellbeing and arguably provides a rationale for *not* assessing wellbeing

Recommendation: The heading on p. 40 ‘assessing learning in the Wellbeing Curriculum’ (6c p. 39) should lead the overall piece. In this way, it is ‘learning’ in physical education/SPHE that is being assessed.

Section 6d. PE activity areas

Preparing for Learning and Teaching in PE is a helpful visual showing the emphasis of movement education strand units drilling down to the PE activity areas (Figure 6 p. 43).

Activity areas as listed in Table 9 pose the following questions:

Adventure: the use of ‘outdoor adventure education’ should be considered here. There is much literature around philosophies of ‘adventure’ and ‘outdoor education’.

Alternative activities: the term ‘alternative’ suggest that children will have new movement experiences. However, some of these may not be new to children at all. These do not merit a category on their own? They could be embedded in Artistic/Aesthetics (why signal ‘pilates’...is this a recognised genre for children?) or in games (juggling skills) depending on the activity. Reference to ‘staff expertise’ here is misleading...the issue of staff expertise applies right across the activity areas.

Recommendation: It would seem that the ‘external facilitators’ piece on p. 45/46 could refer to some examples of activities that could be provided that might be ‘new’ or ‘novel’ where expertise can be accessed without a cost implication locally.

Individual/Partner/Group games: It is difficult to understand what games are being referenced here.

Recommendation: One ‘games’ section is important. Online toolkit can provide the exemplars to prompt school/teachers to make good choices here i.e. balancing types of games. A clear statement is merited on the breadth of games for consideration prompting the balance that seems sensible.

Reference to adapted equipment here is confusing...balloons have distinct challenges in mainstream PE classes. Adapting equipment is just one aspect of pedagogy to support inclusion. It seems somewhat out of place to signify just one aspect here.

Recommendation: This piece needs to be revisited and clarified.

Artistic/Aesthetic

Artistic/Reference to artistic/aesthetic for outdoors...very occasionally arguably. Is it fair to suggest that this is possible in schools?

Pairing gymnastics and dance in one section (given 6/7 recommendation on p.43) is unwise. It is crucial that children are provided with experiences related to each.

Recommendation: Divide into two sections: artistic/aesthetic-gymnastics; artistic/aesthetic-dance;

Athletics: A clear statement is provided with appropriate reference to personal improvement

Aquatics: Excellent statements on rationale for aquatics and central content focus are provided. The organisation of aquatics ie. and ‘for some schools.....’ is not consistent with other activity areas. These statements do not belong here.

Recommendation: Both statements belong in the Practical considerations section 6e.

Section 6e Practical considerations

Time allocations [Section 6e p.45] provides a very clear direction to schools and teachers and we welcome the increased allocation of time to PE. It provides a crucial starting point for building on existing best practice or ‘reenvisioning’ PE provision in schools.

The *Wellbeing Curriculum and wider policy* (p.45) provides a very clear description of the application of policy and circulars.

The section on ‘*the role of external facilitators and programmes*’ (p.45) provides a very clear description of the role of the classroom teacher and the role of external facilitators and programmes in meeting the needs of children. It provides concrete examples of a much-used and valued support for teachers, the external facilitators i.e. (often sports coaches in the context of external facilitators for PE). Yet it retains emphasis on the role of the class teacher.

Recommendation: It is important to emphasise that all programmes that embrace the role of external facilitators highlighted in the online toolkit are consistent with the principles and aims of the PE Specifications.

Part D: Editing Considerations

This section is designed to prompt reconsideration of language or clarification of terms/concepts.

1. Introduction, Rationale and Aims

p. 2: consider reordering these principles of learning, teaching and assessment 'engagement and participation' as number one, assessment as number 2, pedagogy, inclusive education as top priorities ...partnerships, etc can follow....

p.3: this quotation from the JC doesn't appear as relevant as p.18 of the NCCA Primary Curriculum Framework

p. 4: some awkward language in otherwise excellent paragraph on PE cf final sentence

p.5: First paragraph...penultimate sentence reads 'finally'. Last sentence reads 'additionally'. Maybe 'In summary' is phrase required here? p. 7: Aims

First sentence shouldn't refer to the Table...begin with strong statement in second sentence i.e. The Wellbeing Curriculum aims to empower each child to etc etc Could insertion of a column on the left provide a space for 'PE and SPHE'...'PE' 'SPHE' to supplement the explanation on rows?

No. 6: bring *challenge* as first

p. 8: could a strong statement be inserted above Figure 2 explaining that Movement Education is largely the focus of Physical Education with particular aspects of the other strand units underpinning the movement emphasis.

Positioning of Learning Outcomes on p. 11...consider if this could lead directly into learning outcomes beginning p. 14? Key competencies appears to divide the discussion of learning outcomes from the learning outcomes themselves

Could Learning Outcomes for PE and SPHE be presented using different colours? It is difficult to navigate pages 14-29. Will stage 1/2 and 3/4 feature different colours? It is very difficult to find the relevant stages without leafing through pages.

p. 13 Key competencies in table 6 are not aligned in the same order as the legend in Table 7.

A PE related exemplar is needed for more e.g. use of digital technology in movement contexts

2.Strands and Learning Outcomes Learning Outcomes Stage 1&2, PE Stage 3&4

p. 14 Personal relevance: include after PE...while respecting the choices of others (Note: this is important to illustrate the challenging task of accomplishing this element of choice in movement contexts where one's choice impacts on others to a significant degree).

p.14: 'PE activities' 'PE activity areas' 'physical education activities' are used on this page. Consistency of language will help...could 'PE activities' work in each case? This is used effectively in the footnote on p. 15

p. 16: confidence to persevere? Or should it be ability to persevere?

p.17: 'meaningful physical activity: not explained in glossary although there is an explanation of meaningful physical education. Should list read 'nutrition, hygiene, rest and physical activity? Broad terms here that are easy to understand for all.

Meaningful physical education in glossary: this definition is not sufficiently clear: what are 'meaningful' experiences...provide examples?

p. 18: delete 'further' unnecessary as it still reads as progression on stage 1 column?

p. 19: progression not evident in 'identify' from stage 1 – stage 2.'class' to replace 'classroom', 'their school'?

p. 20: movement strategies Stage 3 and 4: review language to examine for samples that will provide teachers with a better understanding of what is meant by strategies e.g.?

Replace 'applied settings' with 'community settings' ...arguably there is a wider understanding of this term

'personal relationship with movement'? insert as in earlier table 'while respecting the choice of others' under personal relevance

p.21: a process goal is 'exploratory' also (cf glossary definition of open and process goals)

3. Implementing the Curriculum/ The Wellbeing Curriculum in Practice

The understanding of 'meaning' in bullet 14 is not clear and the impact of movement on 'meaning'.

p.37 with an appropriate role for competition in activities (avoiding the negative inference)

p.40

Methods for assessing in Wellbeing: 'likely to be used'...recommended for using?

Observations: try to include reference here to resilience in the context of practice of physical skills in PE activities for example running over an obstacle, balancing on a beam or following a route using a map. This section needs to be more specific and provide prompts? Similarly for conferencing, where does this occur in a PE lesson and when? Short phrases to prompt reflection on this?

p.41

Should self-assessment not include reference to *self referenced progress* or is there a need for this term to appear elsewhere? Technology-assisted assessment: reference here to movement contexts? Challenging to capture 'live' but can be rechecked if recorded?

6d PE Activity areas [p.43]

Insert wellbeing before specification?

p.43: table 9: This is a welcome presentation of material. Could *junk play* be included in list of exemplars under 'adventure'

Table 9- Activity Areas

Adventure activities- Consider including 'The use of Adventure centres should be encouraged for day trips to encourage taster activities outdoors where feasible'. p. 43. This provides a strong rationale for extending experiences where possible. Exemplars of 'preliminary skills' needs to be provided.

Sentence 'In choosing'....arguably this does not belong here. It should be included in 6e as an additional paragraph indicating that this provision of some alternative activities could be considered in the context of 'one off experiences' for example?

Circus skills and Pilates...it seems very questionable to include these here without a sense of what is/is not appropriate for teaching in primary schools. A statement signposting the qualifications the teachers should have to teach these activities for safe delivery is important. Reference to these activities suggest use of external facilitators with specific/narrow skill sets. This is inconsistent with games where no specific games/sports are listed other than Gaelic games.

Guidelines need to be provided related to selection of appropriate websites to ensure that lesson transition activities outside of the Physical Education lesson or any use of online 'live' material illustrating activities within Physical Education lessons is treated

with due care avoiding misuse or overuse of online ‘activities’ that children are prompted to merely copy. Within the PE lesson, the learning from engagement in these activities is unclear.

Glossary

Meaningful PE experiences should be included in the left hand column of the glossary. These experiences should be defined on the right hand column...as ‘Meaningful PE experiences support children to...

Movement solutions: a discovery approach or discovery learning? (discovery learning is described in the body of the document in detail)

Wearables: It is important to provide a short statement about appropriate use of ‘Wearables’ given the sensitivity of ‘measuring’ fitness related aspects. Link to [Advice / guidance to schools regarding the use of Physical Fitness Testing in Physical Education lessons \(2022\)](#)

Recommendation: The glossary needs to be expanded to include any terms identified in our earlier recommendations that require clarification.

Dublin City University, Primary Science Team

Response from the Primary Science Education Team, School of STEM Education, Innovation and Global Studies, DCU Institute of Education re the Science, Technology and Engineering Education Draft specification

Submitted by Associate Professor Orla Kelly on behalf of the team

There are a number of positives in the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, which we would like to highlight in our response. We very much welcome the focus on scientific inquiry, especially the specific reference and wording of open-ended inquiry within the learning outcomes. We embrace the specific strands in science, where there is a clear focus on developing children's conceptual understanding of science. The use of specific reference to biological, physical and chemical language (e.g., reflection, refraction, particles) is also a positive change in the new draft curriculum specifications. The embedding of 'environmental awareness and care' within other strands is also welcome, through the use of direct language concerning 'biodiversity' as an example, or considering renewable and non-renewable forms of energy through the energy and forces strand. The technology strand is welcomed and accepted, with the inclusion of digital and non-digital learning outcomes. The engineering strand develops the existing 'design and make' skills appropriately to embrace a STEM context, which is also very appropriate and important for the children. Overall, we feel this draft STE curriculum provides the foundations for a very positive experience for children, and should afford them the opportunities to develop their STEM knowledge, skills, attitudes and values within disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts which is very welcome.

Challenges

We would like to take this opportunity to raise some concerns and propose some amendments to the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum specification.

We have serious concerns regarding the time allocation of 4 hours per month (Stage 1 and 2) and 5 hours per month (Stage 3 and 4) for the teaching and learning of the Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum. Extensive research literature, including the recent research conducted for the NCCA to inform the development of the new STE curriculum (Murphy et al 2023), clearly asserts that effective, inquiry based science instruction requires significantly more time than currently proposed. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the time allocated for primary science in Ireland was one of the lowest of countries that participated in TIMSS 2019 (Murphy et al 2023). In addition to learning

outcomes related to supporting students in developing their scientific knowledge and skills there are now additional learning outcomes related to development of students' technological (digital and non-digital skills). If children are to be effectively supported in developing critical digital competencies, like computational thinking, an increase to the proposed allocated time will be required. Furthermore, it is being suggested that as part of the new STEM curriculum, that teachers should engage their students with one integrated STEM project per term, which also will take considerable time to plan and implement. While we acknowledge the existence of discretionary time within the new framework, we firmly believe that this time will be needed to facilitate the integrated STEM projects, and therefore realistically cannot be relied upon to address the proposed core learning outcomes in the STE curriculum. In light of the compelling research evidence, our professional expertise and the multifaceted nature of the STE curriculum we strongly assert that the current time allocation for the STE curriculum is inadequate. We would like some clarification regarding the rationale for the time allocation for the STE curriculum. Furthermore, we would very much welcome the re-evaluation of the time allocation so the learning outcomes of the STE curriculum are achievable.

We appreciate that a major motivation behind the curriculum change is to combat curriculum overload and therefore the curriculum offers fewer learning outcomes which we generally welcome. However, we can see some challenges with this in terms of the draft STE curriculum specification. The 1999 curriculum embraced a spiral curriculum with children revisiting concepts at developmentally appropriate stages and so building up their conceptual knowledge. In this draft STE curriculum, taking the Energy and Forces strand as an example, there is a clear move away from the spiral curriculum. Instead children will consider specific content areas in different stages e.g. magnets in stage 1, sound in stage 2, light in stage 3 and electricity in stage 4. The challenge with this is that it will take a very skilled teacher with strong subject knowledge to support the children to make connections between these different areas towards the big scientific ideas. The toolkit will need to be very explicit about the big ideas and how these different areas e.g. magnets, light, sound, electricity relate to big ideas around energy (and relating to particles in matter for example). This will require more time and thus adds to the case for a revisiting of time allocation for the STE curriculum area. The toolkit will also need to help teachers make connections to earlier learning - for example in stage 3 connecting to sound from stage 2.

A specific learning outcome that we would like to be reworded is the one related to materials and '*how environmentally friendly they are*' (pg 14). We suggest alternative language drawing from sustainability or the circular economy.

Within the aims, there is a limited focus on *scientific inquiry* with it only being mentioned in the final aim (Science, technology and engineering fosters agency in children pg 5). Yet

inquiry is a core pedagogy as emphasised in the key pedagogical practices (pg 21) as well as core to the process of science (Murphy et al 2023). We would advocate for scientific inquiry (as distinct from critical inquiry) being given *more* emphasis in the aims either through the language of scientific inquiry (or scientific investigations or working scientifically).

In addition to the above point, while there is clearly a focus on scientific inquiry in the learning outcomes, as well as in the rationale and elements to an extent, the fact that scientific inquiry is embedded (implicit in the learning outcomes), there is a concern that the associated skills might be limited/lost or seen as a tick box exercise or not allow for flexibility and most importantly real progression in scientific inquiry skills. For example - open-ended investigations are specified for one learning outcome in stage 3 (in materials pg 14) and in three learning outcomes in stage 4 (in materials and in energy and forces pg 15-16). The challenge with this is that it could mean open investigations only begin to happen in stage 3 (and only in one instance) and at stage 4 in specific content areas. This is one example, but it applies across the strands and skills e.g. fair test investigations are only mentioned in one learning outcome in stage 4 (pg 15). The learning outcomes either need to be worded to be more cognisant of this/allow for flexibility or the toolkit will need to be very explicit about the centrality of inquiry (and the different forms it can take) at all stages and across all strands and to encourage appropriate choice of different modes of inquiry depending on the context. Would it be possible to clarify if the toolkit will highlight this progression of science skills across the strands and learning outcomes?

The 'Nature of STEM' strand is welcomed, though it will require very clear guidance and support for teachers. Pedagogies for teaching about Nature of STEM will also be required. Further clarity over the kinds of support that will be available for the teacher in this regard will be required. This is particularly the case for this learning outcome as many teachers will not have taught about the Nature of STEM while implementing the 1999 curriculum.

We have some suggestions for changes to Table 6 (pg.19) , which outlines learning opportunities in Science, Technology and Engineering Education.

The learning opportunity 'be organised and persevere' is not sufficient for the 'problem solving and applying' element (pg.19). It should reflect the science processes and thinking further. We have suggested the following alternative for 'be organised and persevere' - **'Be systematic and open-minded'**. Additionally, we would suggest that the 'problem solving and applying' element (pg. 19) be replaced by the element **'Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving'**. We would suggest moving the following bullet point, 'investigate and critique ideas for relevance and clarity' (pg.19) to the suggested amended element 'Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving'.

We would also suggest that the ‘creative and critical thinking’ element (pg. 19) be replaced by **‘Be creative and innovative’**. It is suggested to replace the element ‘evaluating and communicating’ (pg.19) with **‘reasoning and evaluating’**. Can we clarify why the final ‘be’ statements (pg.19) are in bold and red e.g., ‘be active and curious’?

Within table 6a, we would like to see more emphasis on the importance of collaborative discussion and argumentation in particular. While we are not advocating for the use of the specific word argumentation, we are recognising its importance in science education. Argumentation is a critically important discourse process in science and it should be taught and learned in the science classroom as part of scientific inquiry and literacy. (Erduran et al 2015) Aspects of argumentation are discussion, discourse, talk, conversation, dialogue, and negotiation as well as reasoning, evidence and inquiry. This supports the case of including reasoning in the evaluating element (as suggested above). The ‘use evidence and logic to justify decisions and support arguments’ bullet could be reworded to ‘use evidence and logic to support arguments and justify decisions during collaborative discussions’.

It is significant that scientific literacy is absent from the draft STE curriculum. Given the centrality of scientific literacy to science education (Murphy et al 2023), this needs to be addressed. While we acknowledge that STEM literacy is included as part of integrated STEM learning (pg 28) this is not sufficient to support scientific literacy.

In relation to Learning environments in Table 1 (pg 2), we feel it is reductionist, as an example, to suggest that using the physical and immediate environment is for facilitating learning experiences (pg 2). We would like to see an example that specifically mentions using *outdoor* environments and that natural and built environments can afford specific learning opportunities in science (or STEM). We also wonder if the phrase ‘fostering learning environments’ is the most appropriate. ‘Designing’ might be more appropriate or ‘engaging with learning environments that promote exploration, investigation and creativity’.

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Murphy, C.; Venkat, H.; Leahy, M.; Broderick, N.; Kelly, O.; Butler, D.; Harbison, L.; Lawlor, C.; Naughton, Y. (2023) *STEM Education: Curriculum & literature overview & Primary science education: Systematic literature review*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

DICE Project

NCCA Policy Submission on draft specification for Wellbeing

About the DICE Project

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Introduction: Context and Background

This policy submission will focus on some recommendations for the new draft specification for Wellbeing in the context of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and its related concepts and themes. The DICE Project advocates for a child-centered and world-minded approach to education which stresses the importance of values, attitudinal and skill development, and believes that there is scope to explore this more fully through the role of GCE. We recommend scaffolding the global dimension more overtly within the community and belonging strand, and naming racism and anti-racism as crucial concepts to be explored through the new curriculum.

At a wider level, it is important to acknowledge that we live in a time of unprecedented change, with interlocking social, political and economic crises which threaten our values of fairness, equality, peace and sustainability. Increased globalization, as well as

international crises such as war, climate change and the Covid 19 pandemic have exacerbated existing global inequalities and structural inequity. At a more local level, it is also important to be cognizant of some of the societal changes that have happened in Ireland since the development of the 1999 curriculum. While distinct religious, cultural and linguistic minority traditions have played a significant part in Irish history for generations, Ireland did not reach its 'migration turning point' (Ruhs, 2005, p. 8) until 1996, transforming Ireland from a country of emigration to one of in-migration for the first time. This has led to a significant increase in ethnic diversity among school populations, with CSO figures revealing that around 12% of children currently enrolled in Irish primary schools come from some sort of migrant background (CSO, 2022). Diversity in primary schools can be further seen through the pupil population of Irish Travellers and increasing numbers of students identifying as coming from mixed race or mixed heritage backgrounds (CSO, 2022). It is also important to mention that since March 1st, 2017, Irish Travellers are recognised as an official minority in Ireland and the subsequent Traveller History and Culture Bill (2018) proposes greater visibility of Traveller history and culture across the formal curriculum.

However, the rich diversity that exists in our primary classrooms across the country is not mirrored in the demographics of our teaching population, and the evidence reveals that teachers in Ireland tend to be overwhelmingly white, female, settled, Catholic and middleclass (Keane, Heinz & McDaid 2023) and their exposure to diversity is very limited. In 2014,

95.8–96.2% of undergraduate primary entrants claimed only Irish nationality and further 2.8–3.5% of undergraduate primary student teachers claimed Irish nationality plus a secondary non-Irish nationality (Keane & Heinz, 2016, p. 9). This is very revealing, showing an overwhelming majority (approximately 99% at upper level of the data) identifying as 'White Irish' based on the census categorisations and important to remember in the context of who is devising the curriculum and associated materials.

The Draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification outlines different dimensions of our wellbeing, including our physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development (NCCA, 2024, p. 1). As a result, it is important that significant issues for the wellbeing of our minoritized pupils, such as racism, representation and the inclusion of multiple perspectives, be articulated and visible in all future development of curriculum specifications and materials. In addition, it is imperative that primary teachers are supported to develop confidence in anti-racism education, anti-bias education and culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies. As a result, this submission represents a timely opportunity to ensure that meaningful change be enacted through future curriculum development which adequately reflects and affirms a more diverse Ireland within a globalised world.

Existing policy context

The DICE Project recommends that a more explicit naming of GCE within the draft specification document will be necessary to maintain congruence with the wider existing educational policy context in Ireland. In an increasingly globalized world, issues that once seemed extraneous to primary educators are now essential to meaningful teaching and learning in a modern classroom. The world is becoming smaller and smaller every day; with the effects of what is happening in other countries having a direct impact on life in Ireland and vice-versa. All children should be afforded the opportunity to try to make sense of their wider world through curriculum and to understand the undeniable interconnectedness of modern life. GCE is a vehicle which can help pupils to understand what it means to be a global citizen in a changing world.

For teaching and learning to have a GCE focus, it should include multiple perspectives, critical thinking, a link between the local and the global, and it should encourage action toward a more just and equal world. These concepts have been articulated and supported through a range of educational policy documents in recent years. For example, the Céim Standards for Initial Teacher Education, devised by the Teaching Council in 2020 now includes global citizenship education (encompassing wellbeing, interculturalism, anti-racism and social justice) as one of just seven core components of initial teacher education programmes. This is an unprecedented development in teacher education policy and means that global citizenship education now has the same status as other significant components of ITE, such as numeracy and literacy, digital skills and inclusive education. The inclusion of GCE in this context sends a clear message to all ITE providers that future programmes must explicitly name their commitment to social and global justice, such that student teachers feel sufficiently competent and confidence to embed principles of justice, equality and antiracism in their own teaching in the future. It is crucial that a similar focus be visible within the new curriculum, such that newly qualified teachers will have space and opportunities to put their learning in this context into practice.

In addition, the Irish Aid Global Citizenship Education Strategy (2021-2025) advocates for a 'broader sense of citizenship in Ireland, encouraging the public to engage with and learn about the issues that will define the 21st century – including climate change, hunger, peace, global inequality and injustice' (Irish Aid, 2021, p. 3). The document has a focus on strengthening engagement with learners at all levels of the education system and emphasizes capacity-building among teachers and other educators and promoting a wholeschool and whole-institution approach to global citizenship education. This strategy also has a strong focus on supporting digital learning, linking schools and communities nationally and globally as well as supporting innovation and research. This focus on supporting capacitybuilding for teachers, and research within global citizenship

education, will have particular significance for the ongoing development of the new primary school curriculum.

Moreover, Global Citizenship Education is considered an essential vehicle in delivering Ireland's commitment under Target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals and in raising awareness of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the National Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) aims to ensure that education contributes to sustainable development by equipping learners with the relevant knowledge, the key dispositions and skills and the values that will motivate and empower them to become informed active citizens who act for a more sustainable future.

In relation to anti-racism education, the first principle of the UNESCO guidelines on intercultural education outlines how the cultural identity of the learner should be respected through the provision of culturally appropriate and quality education for all. It aims to introduce the learner to an understanding and an appreciation of their specific cultural heritage. Similarly, Article 29 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child declares that the education of the child shall be directed to 'the development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values' (UN, 1993). In an Irish context, the Education Act (1998) outlines that schools should respect 'the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society'.

Given the primacy of these issues within existing policy, it is important not to regard intercultural education or Global Citizenship education as an 'add on' or 'afterthought' subject in the daily life of the school (UNESCO, 2003; NCCA, 2005). Intercultural education and GCE are attitudinal educations, transversal disciplines which should be infused naturally throughout all areas of the curriculum. While it will be important to name the disciplines more overtly within the updated specification document, it is crucial that they not be regarded as a 'stand-alone' or 'tick-box' activity. While the Wellbeing curriculum is a 'natural home' for a lot of GCE topics, content and methodologies should be integrated and have resonance across a wide range of subject areas within the wider primary school curriculum. A naming of GCE within the specification document, specifically within the SPHE section, utilizing an accepted definition would be helpful, encompassing an explicit and nuanced understanding of racism, intercultural education and social justice.

Links between Wellbeing and GCE

The DICE Project welcomes the fact that the notion of well-being is enjoying a more prominent status in children's rights discourse of late, and DICE appreciates its centrality within the new draft specification document. The definition of being 'active, responsible, connected, resilient, appreciated, respected, and aware, wellbeing requires ongoing

attention and lifelong nurturing (NCCA, 2024, p.2) is a very welcome conceptualisation which will undoubtedly have positive ramifications on pupil wellbeing in the future.

We further believe that it is important to ensure that a narrow understanding of wellbeing in the context of Irish education is avoided, and that conceptions of wellbeing drawn upon in the document are also grounded in broader philosophical roots. Well-being plays a central role in any moral theory and is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is ultimately good for a person. There is a fair measure of consensus among philosophers of education that the promotion of children's personal well-being is a basic, overarching aim of education: educators should strive to do their best to ensure that our children develop into individuals who enjoy lives that are good in themselves, for themselves (Haji & Cuypers, 2008, p. 85). While it is undoubtedly understandable that wellbeing focuses in on the curricular areas of PE (being good for physical health) and SPHE (being good for mental health), it is important that a broader and more philosophical understanding of the term, i.e.

relating it back to the notion of how well a person's life is going for that person. It is important that a broader understanding of wellbeing, considering its complex and multifaceted nature, is centered in future policy development.

For example, Aristotle's discussion on wellbeing is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics* and his main thesis revolves around the intersection of virtue and reason. He argues that virtue (*arête*) is achieved by following our reason and that reason will lead to our happiness or well-being. He calls this well-being 'eudaimonia', usually translated as 'human flourishing' (Russell, 1961). Many of these 'virtues' are similar to competencies that are cultivated through GCE teaching and learning, and resultingly can contribute to well-being in a new global reality. These include critical thinking and reflection, the incorporation of multiple perspectives, awareness of interdependence (local and global links), values-based approaches and a call to action. The DICE Project strongly believes that GCE, Active Citizenship and Global Justice Education need to be integrated into every aspect of the curriculum including the Wellbeing draft specification.

Racism and anti-racism

In relation to the concept of 'flourishing' outlined above, the issue of racism has a direct impact on the wellbeing of pupils in Irish primary schools, but currently is conspicuously absent from the document. This will need to be addressed as a matter of priority.

Within the principles of learning, teaching and assessment (NCCA, 2024, p. 2), 'inclusive education and diversity' is listed, encompassing fostering a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, equality, and social justice, challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, and promoting empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity and recognising and celebrating the diversity present within the classroom and in wider

society. This is a very positive development, and the aforementioned concepts and values are a welcome and constructive addition to the new curriculum.

However, not naming the issue of racism in this section is a significant missed opportunity. If racism is not mentioned as an issue, nor indeed if anti-racism is not listed as an appropriate response within this section, it runs the risk of adopting a problematic colourblind approach to curriculum development, a significant concern, given the demographic of teachers that was outlined in an earlier section. By not acknowledging the significance of racism it disengages us as educators from our anti-racism responsibilities, and dismisses the lived experience of our minoritized pupils, for many of whom racism is a 'permanent fixture' of their everyday lives (Bell, 1983).

Given that many minoritized young people experience racism in school for the first time (Ndahiro & Osikoya, 2020), given the literature tells us that young people from migrant backgrounds are likely to experience identity-based bullying in a school context (UNESCO, 2019) and the research which tells us that teachers lack confidence and competence in the area of anti-racism, it is crucial to ensure that the next draft specification document gives primacy to this significant social issue. We know that racism is on the rise among young people, and that young people can be both the perpetrators and victims of racism. As such, it is important that meaningful space is created within formal education to facilitate understanding of such issues. It is also important to mention that Ireland's indigenous minority, Travellers, are generally regarded to be one of the most marginalised groups in Irish society, who experience widespread exclusion, disadvantage, and discrimination (Bloom et al., 2014; O'Connell, 2002) and exceptionally strong levels of racism and prejudice (MacGréil, 2011; Watson et al., 2017; NCCA, 2023b). The only evidence of considering racism in the draft specification document is in relation to racist bullying, which is mentioned once on p. 48, but relegated to a mere description within the glossary. Conflating racism with bullying, and not providing a more overt description is quite problematic. In the same vein, when providing a definition of racism, it will also be important that anti-Traveller bias and prejudice is named and understood as a form of racism.

At a wider contextual level, in the aftermath of the local and European elections in Ireland we can see that racist and anti-migrant narratives, hate speech and xenophobia, and farright candidates running on an anti-immigration platform have increased in recent years. Indeed, the spread of conspiracy theories and both mis- and dis-information on these issues is unfortunately a significant issue for us as educators to contend with as they threaten the commitment to inclusion, equality and social justice espoused within the specification document. As a result, within the 'media and digital wellbeing' strand there is a missed opportunity not to include developing awareness of how easily

misinformation can be shared online, and how we can raise awareness of stereotypes and challenge perceptions of how others are portrayed in mainstream and social media.

Again, in relation to the existing education policy climate, there should be consistency of messaging and values. The Irish Aid Strategy on Global Citizenship Education, for example, mentions racism and anti-racism several times. A significant learning outcome of GCE is to raise awareness of racism and to support learners to understand how race is a social construct which supports hierarchical thinking, and how racism permeates throughout society at all levels. GCE supports learners to cultivate empathy and display solidarity to those experiencing this type of inequality and injustice. By focusing on active citizenship within the draft curriculum, there is scope to privilege democracy, human rights and sustainability, all crucial approaches in the fight against racism.

It is essential that future curriculum developments explicitly name a commitment to antiracism education, such that teachers see the imperative to embed principles of justice, equality and anti-racism in their own classrooms in the future. When education recognizes distinct identities and cultures, it facilitates empathy and intercultural dialogue among students. However, when the same system fails to engage with difference, it sanctions stakeholders to not engage with the real issues and prevents the development of a truly intercultural learning environment.

Unfortunately, the draft specification does not go far enough in terms of affirming the ethnic identity of the child. The DICE Project welcomes the renewed focus on identity within the document, but racial identity, cultural identity or indeed ethnicity are not named anywhere in the document. This is a missed opportunity to affirm the cultural identity of learners in our classrooms all around the country. Anti-racism and intercultural understanding are essential competencies of being an active global citizen and it will be essential for the specification documents to adopt broader conceptualisations of identity in this regard.

As a result, the new Wellbeing curriculum should support teachers and other education practitioners to become more confident and competent in leading discussions about the multitude of ethnic and racial identities that exist in their classrooms. Curriculum materials and supports should scaffold culturally responsive pedagogical practice and equality-based teaching across content and methodologies. Teachers should be encouraged to critically reflect on understanding their own ethnic identity and to be aware of how Whiteness, power and privilege manifest themselves within formal schooling structures.

In several places in the draft specification, (e.g. p.2; p. 48), diversity, and the plurality of pupil experience is seen to be something to be 'celebrated'. The DICE Project recommends replacing the word 'celebrate' with the word 'affirms'. This is much more in

keeping with conceptualisations of culturally responsive pedagogy and is less likely to be interpreted in a tokenistic or superficial way. While acknowledging, celebrating and respecting diversity are obviously central components of any anti-racism intervention in an education context, it will be very important to go further with the conceptualisation by framing anti-racism education within a Human Rights perspective and naming the responsibility to support students to both identify and learn to challenge, racial prejudice and unfair discrimination in their lives. Anti-racism education should not be seen as something ‘for’ migrants, or ‘for’ Travellers for example. It should be the right of all children to engage with relevant content and methodologies within this new formal curriculum.

Concluding thoughts

Finally, just a quick word of caution about the positioning of some of these concepts. Within wellbeing, the positioning of the ‘community and belonging’ strand, as well as the ‘rights and fairness’ and ‘citizenship’ strand units as ‘at the end’ is potentially problematic. We know from the Inspectorate that within the previous SPHE curriculum, the similar ‘Myself and the Wider World’ strand was the least taught strand in schools. Teachers also report feeling a lack of confidence in this strand. We would encourage the NCCA to reflect on the order of these sections to avoid a similar situation where positioning them as last means they are perceived as less important.

In sum, The DICE Project advocates for a Wellbeing curriculum that:

Acknowledges the complexity of racism(s) and recognises that racism goes beyond merely the interpersonal

Enables learners to see how it manifests itself in different guises and at different levels

Supports teachers with knowledge, skills, guidance and materials about racism, antiracism, racial justice and human rights

Is explicit about the values and concepts of GCE including equality, global solidarity, empathy, justice and fairness

Identifies and creates space to explore the root cause of global injustice and increasing inequalities in a rapidly changing, globalised and increasingly interdependent world

Strives to include multiple perspectives, a link between the local and the global and encourages action towards a more just and equal world.

Response to NCCA Draft Curriculum Specification for Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum

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DICE strongly believe that GCE, Active Citizenship and Global Justice Education need to be integrated into every aspect of the curriculum including the STE curriculum. Below, are the areas where DICE recommend specific changes to support this aim.. The additional recommendations will ensure that issues are dealt with in an explicit manner to enrich the curriculum for all.

Recommendation One:

Map the active citizenship competency onto learning outcomes at all stages of the curriculum.

Explanation and rationale:

Currently the active citizenship competency is most often found in learning outcomes for stages 3 and 4. This presents the inaccurate impression that this competency is applicable only in older classes. Incorporating learning outcomes which align with active citizenship for stages 1 and 2 would ensure that children have the opportunity to engage with this competency right from the start of their STE Education and to progressively develop this competency throughout their time in primary school.

Expanding the conceptualisation of active citizenship within STE would enable this to be done more easily, which leads to recommendation two.

Recommendation Two:

Expand the current conceptualisation of active citizenship as it relates to STE.

Explanation and rationale:

Currently, active citizenship is defined on p. 10 as *“Searching for evidence and exploring solutions to problems in order to view different perspectives and to help others. Applying skills acquired through scientific inquiry, design thinking and computational thinking to real-life contexts.”*

We propose the inclusion of additional attributes, values, and skills relevant to both active citizenship and STE in this definition. Examples named within the draft curriculum spec which are relevant to active citizenship include:

Attributes: awareness of the impact of STEM endeavours for society, the environment and the planet; striving for improvement and sustainability; resilience

Values: Empathy; respect,

Skills: challenging stereotypes; collaboration; critical thinking and inquiry; creativity

Recommendation Three:

Name a wider range of global citizenship issues (e.g. poverty, migration, gender, power, financial justice) currently only Sustainability and climate change are specifically named.

Explanation and Rationale:

Connecting knowledge in the field of STE to these pressing issues is crucial in empowering students to understand the interconnected nature of our world and the role that STE can play in developing solutions.

There is an acknowledgement on p.4 that STE can enhance our ability to respond to significant global challenges and can empower children to become responsible citizens. However, without explicitly naming these challenges, it is likely that teaching will focus solely on issues of sustainability as named in learning outcomes.

Recommendation Four:

Include a focus on appreciation of nature to enhance a commitment to sustainability.

Explanation and Rationale:

Within the Living Things strand there is a focus on learning about nature and how it works. We propose that the word appreciation be incorporated into many of these objectives to ensure a values focus within this strand. It has been shown in research that developing an appreciation of the natural world can be the first step in ensuring a commitment to sustainability.

Recommendation Five:

P.19: Include within 'creative and critical thinking' a values focus and reflection component.

Explanation and Rationale:

Creative and critical thinking necessitate values and reflective dimensions to ensure that they remain focused on contributing to the greater good of society. Without a values dimension, there is a probability of critical and creative thinking leading to the promotion and fostering of values which are discriminatory and exclusionary in nature. Furthermore, reflective practice enhances both creative and critical thinking by ensuring that learners can make connections between what they are learning about and their own lives.

Recommendation Six:

Ensure that the language used within the principles of learning are also reflected in learning outcomes to ensure they can and will be implemented.

Explanation and rationale:

Table 1 on P. 2 names ‘challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy, respect, collaboration and children's unique contributions to discussions and tasks’ as an example of how ‘Inclusive Education and Diversity’ will be enacted. However, this language is not reflected in learning outcomes. It is crucial that learning outcomes which explicitly name challenging stereotypes, nurturing empathy, respect, and collaboration be included within the curriculum to ensure this principle of learning can be enacted in classrooms.

Response to NCCA Draft Curriculum Specification for Social and Environmental Education (SEE)

This response is in three sections:

Introduction to DICE

Global Citizenship Education in Social and Environmental Education (SEE) 3.
Education and Religions and Beliefs (ERB)

1. The DICE Project

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2. Global Citizenship Education in SEE

Overall structure The inclusion of 'global learning themes' in the curriculum specification is very welcome: human rights, democracy, equity, social and environmental justice, and sustainable development (page 2). Each of these concepts is complex however, in addition to the complexity of connecting them together and then

integrating them further. It is important to more clearly articulate global citizenship through the specifications.

In particular we suggest including an explicit and discrete Global Citizenship Subject including for stages 3 and 4 alongside Geography and History. We submit that SEE includes three interconnected learning areas: history, geography and global citizenship. This is articulated in the draft specification rationale where it states that SEE enhances understanding of “the interconnected historical, geographical, and societal aspects of life” (p. 5). Since the 1999 curriculum there have been significant educational and societal changes which make traditional curricular structures arcane for current contexts. The planetary crisis, global conflict, ongoing racism and discrimination and challenges to democracy call for explicit and on purpose curricular design.

Educational responses to these existential challenges are emerging including most notably the development of the Leaving Certificate in Politics and Society and in Climate Action and Sustainable Development. These support an emerging education pathway building students’ active citizenship skills. While the inclusion of active citizenship in the primary and post-primary curricular frameworks are welcomed, their enactment will be supported by clear and purposeful learning outcomes which are distinct, structured and connected with those in history and geography.

The inclusion of a discrete global citizenship subject within SEE would not require a substantial revision to the draft specifications and would significantly support teachers’ capacity to enact the global learning themes. It is suggested that working as (or being) a global citizen be added alongside the working as a geographer and working as a historian. The integrated concepts and skills apply well to global citizenship which, like geography and history entails empathy, multiperspectivity, using evidence and sources, interpreting and analysing, evaluating and decision-making. Global citizenship also involves critical thinking, solidarity, advocacy, taking action and democratic decision making skills and these need to be separately stated. While global citizenship is well encapsulated in the rationale for SEE, to be realised in the classroom it needs specific learning outcomes, particularly at stages 3 and 4 and risks being tokenistic if shoehorned into history and geography learning content.

Agency and action, peace and conflict, migration, racism and discrimination, human rights, climate justice and action, democracy and decision making, critical media (and social media) literacy as well as values and world views should be taught through a

progressive, logical and explicit structure involving cognitive (e.g. knowledge and critical thinking), socio-emotional (e.g. empathy and interconnectedness) and behavioural aspects (acting ethically and effectively a local, national and global levels). These themes are central aspects of history and geography and the learning outcomes in these areas, as well as integrated, reflect this. However, these themes need also to be addressed as aspects of global citizenship education. For example studying peace and conflict in history education does not necessarily ensure students are supported in recognising current conflicts and structures which support peace. The theme of migration in particular, which is intricately linked to other themes including peace and conflict, climate change and human rights, needs to be approached in an integrated way that nonetheless recognises its significance to history, geography and global citizenship.

We further suggest removing the from local to global progression structure. The current draft specifications suggest students start by learning about “their locality” and progress to learning about the wider world. We strongly challenge this progression based on research highlighting the early prevalence of stereotypes and children's capacity and interest in learning about the wider world(Oberman et al, 2014; Ruane et al., 2010). This local to global structure reinforces a conception of local and national belonging over global identity. It ignores the lived experience of students who have multiple connections. It also serves to work against conceptions of global solidarity. It also denies children’s interest in the wider world and the emergence of misconceptions about global locations from a young age. Instead we suggest that learning in SEE from junior infants includes global learning as well as local learning with ongoing recognition of the interdependency of the two.

Further recommendations regarding GCE in the curriculum specification have to do with conceptualisation, nuancing and emphasis. Including:

DICE recommends that ‘social and environmental justice’ be re-framed as **social justice** and environmental justice. This places a stronger emphasis on the justice element of historical and geographical learning. Indeed, ‘social justice’ is explicitly named on page 7, so it would create a consistency in the document to build this into the principles of learning, teaching and assessment on page 2 (and repeated on page 21).

Page 3: Children’s experiences in SEE. “It plays an important role in supporting children to understand local and global issues, and building their capacity to be active,

informed, **questioning**, empowered citizens....” (Add ‘questioning’ here) • Page 5: Contributes to children’s development as active citizens. “...and in the world as informed, empathetic, respectful, **questioning**, and caring members of a diverse and democratic society”. (Add ‘questioning’ here)

Page 5: Promotes children’s critical thinking. “SEE encourages children to ask questions about the historical and geographical world around them, **including examining structural inequities that have contributed to the shape of the world in which we live.**” We suggest adding the phrase in bold to encourage children to engage in critical global justice education (Jefferess, 2012) • Page 7: To promote global citizenship. “Help to foster a sense of interconnectedness with the world through exploration, **through a global justice lens**, of diverse cultures, environments, and global issues”. We suggest adding the phrase in bold: ‘through a global justice lens’ to this sentence, in order to encourage a *critical* engagement with global issues, i.e. ‘critical’ rather than ‘soft’ development education. Numerous studies have documented the importance of critical approaches to development (or global citizenship) education (Bryan &

Bracken, 2011; Liddy, 2015; Dillon, 2018; Cotter, 2018, O’Toole *et al*, 2020), and if explicitly named in the curriculum document it will then underpin all concepts and skills, and all learning outcomes. For example, on page 16: Geography for 3rd and 4th classes – “Compare and contrast aspects of children’s lives with children’s lives in other... contexts”. It is essential that such exploration is underpinned by a global justice lens so that countries and people in the Global South are not perceived through a deficit perspective.

Similarly, a global justice lens, explicitly stated at the outset and then suffused throughout the SEE curriculum, would encourage a **climate justice approach** to the examination of weather patterns and climate, which forms a key part of the geography curriculum (e.g. page 17). This would enable children to understand the relative contributions of the Global North and the Global South to carbon emissions, along with the disproportionate impact of climate change on communities in the Global South (Tilley et al, 2022; Hickel, 2021).

Page 14: **Human interdependence with eco-systems rather than a model of extraction and protection.** The current learning outcomes suggest children’s role in “caring for” and “preserving” nature. DICE suggests that the learning outcomes recognise human dependence on the natural world and that the language and conceptualisation here be altered to reflect this.

Page 17: **Collective action over narratives of individual heroes.** DICE values the consideration of people who have contributed to society as is set out in the learning outcomes (p.17). These learning outcomes however risk suggesting that societal changes and developments are brought about by exceptional individual heroes, which

belies the structural and collective origins of change. It is suggested that these learning outcomes encourage children to explore stories not only of individuals but groups who contributed to society and recognise the ways in which these individuals and groups were supported and challenged by wider structures.

Page 22: Human Rights. “Learning in SEE takes a **rights-based approach** to supporting the development of intercultural understanding...” We suggest inserting the phrase in bold: ‘rights-based approach’ here as this grounds the exploration of the diversity of the world’s places and peoples in equity and parity of esteem.

Page 22: Similarly, in relation to Equity, “Children develop a **rights-based** understanding of the importance of fairness, recognising that some people require more help than others, and showing empathy towards them”. We suggest inserting ‘rights-based understanding’ here, so that a charity narrative (‘help’ and ‘empathy’) is not championed especially in relation to the Global South. A charity narrative would bypass an examination of structural inequities, rooted in colonial and neocolonial processes, which have contributed to the unequal distribution of global wealth (O’Caoimh & Nyaluke, 2020). These concepts can be explored in ageappropriate ways in the primary school classroom (see Larkin *et al*, 2018 for an example of same).

Page 27: Dialogical pedagogy. “Establish partnerships with schools with greater levels of diversity”. This suggested approach needs to be reviewed as it could promote an ‘add diversity and stir’ type of intercultural education.

Page 28: Applying digital skills. We recommend that a bullet point on the **critical analysis of maps and mapping** be added here, encouraging children to examine how certain perspectives are privileged (i.e. Global North) through the use of particular representations (c.f. use of Mercator vs Peter’s projections).

Page 33: Glossary. We recommend an entry for **global justice education**, which could include some or all of the following – “combines ‘global learning’ with ‘social justice education’, in that it actively seeks to highlight intersectionalities between education about the wider world with a critical intercultural education in which race is foregrounded and analysed” (adapted from O’Toole *et al*, 2020, p. 11)

Page 33: Glossary. Expand ‘environmental justice’ to include ‘climate justice’ (see above)

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3. Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB)

The supporting slides for the draft curriculum document state that SEE *incorporates* “religions, beliefs and worldviews”. Page 7 of the document states among the aims of SEE:

“To learn about, explore and appreciate children’s own and others’ lived experiences.

Develop an understanding of different traditions, cultures, religions, beliefs, worldviews and heritage in different times, places, and circumstances.”

‘Incorporation’ of religions, beliefs and worldviews into SEE could be viewed positively as a ‘neutral’ (i.e. non-confessional) curricular space in which to explore these subjects; however, this response draws attention to certain problems with this placement and raises questions that need to be considered before the curriculum is finalised. The response will focus on the incorporation of ERB into Geography and History within an education system which remains overwhelmingly denominational. It will then raise some questions that need further consideration before the curriculum is finalised.

‘Working as a Geographer’ or ‘Working as a Historian’, stated on page 13 as “the essential building blocks for SEE”, potentially creates a lens of ‘learning *about*’ religions, beliefs and worldviews; in other words, a phenomenological or ‘world religions approach’ to ERB. The literature review, which was commissioned by the NCCA to underpin the specification, identified certain drawbacks of such approaches to learning about religion and beliefs (Pike *et al*, 2023). Furthermore, critics of the world religions paradigm point to discourses of power, asking critical questions such as: which religions are privileged? Which are left out? From whose perspectives are these religions and beliefs explored (Revell, 2012; Vencatsamy, 2024)? Such questions are particularly pertinent in the context of the denominational education system in Ireland, where c.90% of schools are under the patronage of religious bodies. How can religions, beliefs and worldviews be explored in schools where faith formation in one particular religion is core to that school’s ethos, even if ERB takes place in the context of History and Geography? How can a range of beliefs be examined *without* privileging a Christocentric worldview, as to do otherwise would be to compromise the school’s ethos. How can the absolute demands of a particular faith be juxtaposed with learning about religions, beliefs and worldviews? Is there an expectation that the absolutism of these demands will be diluted for the duration of SEE? The draft curriculum specification potentially places unfair demands on teachers in that it may require them either to step back from the school’s stated ethos for the duration of SEE, or to examine religions, beliefs and worldviews through the lens of the school’s ethos. A concern is that ERB could become an exercise in othering, or religious tourism, or exoticisation in these contexts. This is not a solid footing on which to introduce ERB to the majority of schools. Despite the commitment to have 400 multi-denominational/equalitybased schools by 2030, the number currently stands at 152. Introducing a ‘common curriculum’ without having widely available ‘common schools’ simply attempts to bypass challenges posed by the patronage system, which have been widely documented elsewhere (e.g. O’Toole, 2015). Ultimately, this arrangement will fail to do justice to ERB.

This issue is compounded in the draft specification by the stated aim of ‘learning about other people and their beliefs and worldviews’ (page 5), without considering that some of those ‘other people’ could very well be sitting in the classroom. How will children whose families hold beliefs different to the school’s ethos be protected? Will children have the right to ‘opt

out' of SEE lessons where religion/beliefs are being presented to the class? What CPD arrangements will be put in place to support teachers in these complex situations?

Alternative models and further questions

There is much to learn from the experiences of the multi-denominational and equalitybased sector, as issues related to ERB and ethics have been grappled with by these educators for decades and form core components of the patrons' curricula in Educate Together schools (*Learn Together*) and Community National Schools (*Goodness Me, Goodness You*). Many of the complexities associated with education about religions, beliefs and worldviews have already been examined and debated in depth within this sector. These patrons' curricula are thus underscored by decades of experience and scholarship. Future discussions need to centrally include personnel from this sector before the curriculum specification is finalised.

One way that ERB could equitably be approached in denominational settings, would be to adopt the after-school model used in Educate Together schools for faith formation classes, thereby allowing the subject to be decoupled from the religious ethos of the school. After-school classes in ERB, in denominational schools, could be informed by the content of these patrons' curricula; classes could be taught by teachers who have undertaken CPD in the area, perhaps offered by experienced teachers from ETNS and CNS settings. This would enable ERB to be explored through a wider range of pedagogical and philosophical approaches, including the interpretive approach (Pike *et al*, 2023).

This model may not be as 'neat' as integrating ERB into History and Geography, but it would do greater justice to the religions, beliefs and worldviews of children in Irish primary schools. It would relieve teachers in denominational schools from being placed in the invidious position of trying to approach ERB in a 'neutral' manner, when this neutrality is juxtaposed with a school ethos and patron's programme which espouses a particular faith as 'truth'.

However, an after-school 'solution' would be an acknowledgement that the current patronage system is unfit for purpose. Furthermore, this kind of provision would mean that some children in denominational settings would not receive ERB at all, as their families may not be in a position to avail of after-school classes. If ERB is a fundamental part of children's education, then solutions need to be found so that this education can happen for all children, during the school day, in ways that address the challenges and ethical tensions posed by a highly fragmented education system resulting from school patronage. The DICE Project agrees with the NCCA that *all* children, across all schools, should receive high quality ERB. This means that the matters raised in this submission need to be responded to. Further information and guidance need to be provided by the NCCA on how ERB can be taught in denominational settings in such a way that addresses the issues raised in this response.

Teacher educators with expertise in ERB need to be brought centrally into the process of finalising the curriculum specification and developing the subsequent ‘toolkit’. DCU Institute of Education, for example, offers discrete mandatory modules in ERB and Ethics, undertaken by all student teachers. In this context, ERB and Ethics is a separate provision to RE, and as such, is ‘decoupled’ from education about denominational faith formation.

The expertise of ERB teacher educators is thus essential to progressing the roadmap for this curriculum. Furthermore, this model of ERB and Ethics provision needs to be considered by all primary ITE sites. It would underscore the philosophical and ethical independence that is required for approaching ERB across all schools. It would send a clear signal that ERB is a discipline in its own right, underpinned by a body of philosophy, scholarship and pedagogy, and, as such, it cannot simply be shoehorned into a History and Geography curriculum.

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DRAFT Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages

(MFL) For all primary and special schools - Feedback

The DICE Project

The DICE Project is a national strategic educational initiative funded since 2003 by Irish Aid, in the Department of Foreign Affairs, which works with the four publicly-funded initial teacher education institutions in Ireland; Dublin City University, Marino Institute of

Education, Mary Immaculate College and the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education in Maynooth University.

The DICE Project provides support to these institutions to utilise, develop and further extend staff capacity and expertise in integrating development education and intercultural education into existing initial teacher education programmes. The DICE Project aims to equip student teachers with the necessary values, skills and knowledge to integrate Global Citizenship Education across all relevant areas of the Primary School Curriculum.

As such, the DICE Project represents a unique and distinctive inter-institutional entity. It comprises specialists in development education, anti-racism and intercultural education, education for sustainable development and human rights, citizenship education and global justice education who have close links with students, teachers and lecturers, and also with the wider GCE sector. The DICE Project is a significant contributor to national debate on global citizenship education in Ireland.

How we conceptualise active citizenship:

We are most concerned with the implementation of the core competency of active citizenship which we see as very closely aligned to global citizenship in the way that the NCCA have defined it.

Our conceptualisation of global citizenship education is aligned with that of the Global Education Network of Europe (GENE) as outlined in the European Declaration on Global Education to 2050 (2022, p.3):

education that enables people to reflect critically on the world and their place in it; to open their eyes, hearts and minds to the reality of the world at local and global level. It empowers people to understand, imagine, hope and act to bring about a world of social and climate justice, peace, solidarity, equity and equality, planetary sustainability, and international understanding. It involves respect for human rights and diversity, inclusion, and a decent life for all, now and into the future. Global Education encompasses a broad range of educational provision: formal, non-formal and informal; life-long and life-wide. We consider it essential to the transformative power of, and the transformation of, education.

We believe that developing global citizenship is achieved most effectively through engaging diversified perspectives; building evidence through research, sharing ideas, discussion and debate; building an engaging and inspiring community of practice based on trust and collegiality; and guided by the fundamental values of equality, social justice and sustainable development.

Going forward we would be pleased to further consult with the NCCA and to assist with any further phase of consultation or programme of activities which may be set out in future developments of the primary curriculum. Staff connected with the DICE Project support student teachers, primary teachers and teacher educators who work in diverse settings in Ireland and we are well aware of both the challenges and opportunities such teachers encounter on a daily basis infusing a global dimension into their practice.

For further information, please see www.diceproject.ie or contact jenny.gannon@mu.ie for any specific follow up to this policy submission.

DICE strongly believe that GCE, Active Citizenship and Global Justice Education need to be integrated into every aspect of the curriculum including the modern foreign language curriculum. Below, are the areas where it is felt that additional elements will ensure that the issues are dealt with in an explicit manner to enrich the curriculum for all.

The main questions / concerns raised are the following:

We worry that the teaching of MFL may be tokenistic (one hour a week, which language is chosen, etc.).

If it is aimed that MFL will be taught by class teachers, this will influence the languages chosen by schools (based on common languages for Leaving Certificate). If the languages chosen should be based on the demography of the school (Polish, Arabic, etc.), will additional training be in place to ensure that teachers have the language skills- will there be permanent funding for schools to hire teachers fluent in that language with proficient language teaching skills.

Will there be considering of language exemptions in primary schools?

What is the main aim of teaching of MFL in Stage 4 if one hour is given each week?

Greater emphasis needed on children's literature as a way of exploring linguistic diversity & the importance of incorporating diverse voices within text choice.

If teachers are to teach MFL and need a set standard of language proficiency, would this limit students' access to ITE or influence who chooses to apply for ITE (influence diversity within the profession).

Introduction should include mention of Cant & Irish Sign Language as languages of Ireland.

Table 1 (p3: Principles of learning, teaching and assessment) ○ Partnerships: should also include partnerships with local Traveller groups (focus on Cant & Traveller culture), ISL, emphasis on plurilingualism should not be dependent solely on languages of families within school. ○ Inclusive education and diversity: "Fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions." ... are the words 'celebrates and values' practical enough to ensure that work in this area will effectively challenge stereotypes and misconceptions?

○ Engagement and participation: Lámh is mentioned but ISL is not

Rationale 2.1 Language shapes who we are: Mention that language is linked to children's identity. Could make connections to history of Irish language and language policy.

P8 'encouraging children to explore similarities and differences'... should be changed to 'providing opportunities for children....' To ensure that it is an explicit approach rather hoping/presuming it will happen naturally.

P8/9: "Children who are not native Irish speakers are immersed in the language as the school contributes to increasing the number of Irish speakers in the Gaeltacht." - This paragraph is unclear as it references Gaeltacht & IM schools in the first sentence of the paragraph but continues to focus on schools within the Gaeltacht. More clarity needed as to focus on the paragraph.

Needs to take into account that children with additional languages are not necessarily EAL learners. The framework needs to consider its use of EAL learners at times and consider using terms such as 'Home language(s)' in some cases. English may be their first language but they may also speak another language at home- these languages should also be valued and built on in the school as they will be part of the children's identity.

Building an awareness of languages and cultures should also be developed in Stage 1 & 2- all children should be exposed to linguistic diversity and home languages should be recognised and built on at all stages in school. This note is made at times during the curriculum framework but should be made more explicit.

Children’s literature should be used as a way of exploring linguistic diversity (dual-language books, nonsense language texts, picture books, books in languages other than Irish & English, etc.).

P13: Element 2, Understanding the context and structure of language: Make reference to exploring grammatical patterns between languages in the teaching of grammar in Irish & in English & MFL. (see: Ní Dhíorbháin, A. (2021). Embedding social justice and sustainability perspectives in language teaching. In *Teaching for Social Justice and Sustainable Development Across the Primary Curriculum* (pp. 155-168). Routledge.)

P15: “celebrates linguistic diversity within and beyond the school” - what does ‘celebrate’ mean in this context? More practical verb that refers to authentic work should be used.

A missed opportunity to include within the ‘active citizenship’ component – using language as a site for exploring and learning about the world and/or incorporating diverse voices within text choice? (encouraging teachers to use texts that relate to global issues?)

If MFL is only being introduced at Stage 3&4, learning outcomes relating to building awareness of language and cultures should be added to PLC & CTB for Stage 1&2

P51: “The learning of English as an additional language (EAL) will also broadly follow the same trajectory, but with greater exposure to the language and more opportunities to use it outside the school context.” More information could be provided in relation to how will be done and what will this “extra exposure” look like.

P52: “Moreover, teachers can support children to become aware of the linguistic and cultural diversity that exists in their local community, country, and the world.” References could be made here to Cant, Irish Sign Language etc.

P52: “It is not expected or necessary for the school’s L3 to align with the languages taught in the post-primary schools that the children may attend.” – Some guidance needed on how might a school choose the language (based on languages within school community, etc.) / same MFL taught for all of Stage 4 / can MFL change between classes if there are more than one stream within the school / does it depend of demography of school

P57: “For children who are speakers of a language different to the majority in a class, or native speakers of a target language, it is important for the teacher to affirm their language skills. It is also important to provide opportunities to share the culture and customs of the country/heritage of their language.” Onus/responsibility should not be on the children to share information about their culture/customs- teacher should draw on children’s Funds of Knowledge and incorporate into curricular content. Children could share information if they so wish but responsibility should not be on them.

P60: Critical Literacy: Global issues should be explored through the use of literature in the classroom. Importance of incorporating diverse voices within text choice.

Submission from the DICE Project on Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification

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As such, the DICE Project represents a unique and distinctive inter-institutional entity. It comprises specialists in development education, anti-racism and intercultural education, education for sustainable development and human rights, citizenship education and global justice education who have close links with students, teachers and lecturers, and with the wider GCE sector. The DICE Project is a significant contributor to national debate on global citizenship education in Ireland.

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We believe that developing global citizenship is achieved most effectively through engaging diversified perspectives; building evidence through research, sharing ideas, discussion and debate; building an engaging and inspiring community of practice based on trust and collegiality; and guided by the fundamental values of equality, social justice and sustainable development.

Going forward, we would be pleased to further consult with the NCCA and to assist with any further phase of consultation or programme of activities which may be set out in future developments of the primary curriculum. Staff connected with the DICE Project support student teachers, primary teachers and teacher educators who work in diverse settings in Ireland, and we are well aware of both the challenges and opportunities such teachers encounter on a daily basis infusing a global dimension into their practice.

For further information, please see www.diceproject.ie or contact jenny.gannon@mu.ie for any specific follow up to this policy submission.

DICE strongly believe that GCE, Active Citizenship and Global Justice Education need to be integrated into every aspect of the curriculum including the Arts Education Curriculum. Below, are the areas where DICE recommend specific changes to support this aim. The additional recommendations will ensure that issues are dealt with in an explicit manner to enrich the curriculum for all.

We welcome the emphasis that the draft curriculum placed on inclusion of artistic media from different cultures and contexts.

We welcome the inclusion of culturally responsive pedagogy as part of the approaches proposed for the teaching of the curriculum.

Tables 1 and 3 provide good examples of how Arts Education can help realise the principles of learning and key competencies of the primary curriculum framework. In particular in engaging children with various art forms from different cultures; in supporting children in expressing their identities and experiences, in challenge stereotype, in promoting empathy and understanding of others and in generating new ideas to effect change.

Suggestions for Further Developments:

While the possibilities for art education to support active citizenship are set out in the rims and in the connections to the primary curriculum framework, for this to be enacted, more explicit expression in the learning outcomes and progression of concepts would support its enactment.

The arts are recognised to support development of key citizenship skills including:

- futures thinking,
- processing difficult knowledge,
- engaging with diverse perspectives,
- critical thinking,
- developing empathy, -exploring values and validating children's own identities and knowledges.

While there is some recognition of the role of arts in these aspects, we suggest it is more explicitly articulated, for example in relation to the following:

Concepts - these could include something on perspective and context so that the progression in section 9 can ensure that these issues are covered in a systematic, progressive and developmental way.

Learning Outcomes- *Strand Creative*- the only Active Citizenship (AC) related outcome here is in drama for 5th and 6th class. We recommend that the outcomes include an explicit mention of Active Citizenship related learning here. For example the outcomes could refer to children: exploring the experiences of others, communicating their own feelings, identities, opinions, hopes, creations and responses to problems.

Learning Outcomes- *Strand Performing and Presenting*- there are no AC outcomes here. We recommend explicit inclusion of the arts being used to support children’s expression and communication of their experiences and values, recognising that this is itself a part of citizenship.

Learning Outcomes- *strand Responding and Connecting*- students engagement with diverse artistic media is articulated throughout this section. However, given the prevalence of stereotypes and misrepresentations in different media, students here should be given the opportunity to read against texts and offer critique.

6a table

We recommend the following is added into line 7

Creating		
Foster a broad range of skills for self-expression, understanding others and exploration of values and opinions	Share and communicate hopes, opinions and experiences through artistic form.	Recognise identities and diversity in the arts of local, Irish and wider cultures and communities and critique representations.

6 Glossary

We recommend that *representation* and *authenticity* be included here.

Dyslexia Ireland

**Consultation on Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications for
Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary Language Curriculum
Submission from Dyslexia Ireland, June 2024**

Introduction

Dyslexia Ireland is pleased to be able to contribute to the consultation regarding the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) to the Primary Language Curriculum (PLC) at Stages 3 and 4 (Third to Sixth Class). We would like to make observations under the following themes:

1. Low Profile of Additional Educational Needs
2. Need for Explicit Teaching
3. Assessment of and for Learning
4. Teacher Professional Development
5. Pragmatics of Curriculum Delivery

Low Profile of Additional Educational Needs

It is welcome that one of the key principles underpinning the PLC is again stated to be *Inclusive Education and Diversity* including “Acknowledging and supporting children’s varying levels of competence in oral language, reading and writing”. However, it is concerning that special educational needs merit mention only once in the whole document (page 9) and dyslexia (a written language disorder) is not mentioned at all in a document focused on written language in two of its three ‘Strands’. And there is also no mention of similar words like ‘difficulties or ‘disability’ in the entire document, which is perplexing given the prevalence rate of learners with such needs.

It is vital to acknowledge that students with dyslexia have quite different learning journeys from their neurotypical peers, and as such they need specific consideration within the reading and writing strands of the PLC, especially at Stage 4 for MFLs. Specifically this will require significant consideration of teacher awareness about dyslexia, and the types of supports, resources and accommodations that support the needs arising from dyslexia. Dyslexia Ireland is disappointed that those who do not learn in a typical way are again given such a low profile in the updated PLC.

Need for Explicit Teaching

Dyslexia Ireland is concerned that the PLC continues to not be sufficiently clear about the need for explicit teaching of reading (decoding) and writing (encoding) skills, as has been shown to be required as per the accumulated evidence within the Science of Reading. It is insufficient to consider learning outcomes without setting more detailed expectations regarding teaching approaches that will lead to these outcomes. The PLC continues to allow too much scope within its broad guidelines for practice that is not aligned with the science underpinning literacy development.

Whilst the benefits of a plurilingual approach are recognised for neurotypical learners, it is worth emphasising that the differences in orthographic codes between languages can present specific challenges for learners with dyslexia, especially if such differences are not understood and explained by teachers, and reassurance and direct explicit teaching of each code, and differences between each code are taught. “Playful and engaging learning experiences” and an emphasis on a “Communicative approach” are not sufficient for dyslexic learners who require more concrete and explicit teaching.

Assessment of and for Learning

It remains unclear how progress with a MFL will be assessed for those with additional learning needs, and how such assessment will be integrated into the individualised planning processes as set out in the existing Continuum of Support approach. There remain a plethora of questions around the planning and provision that will be made for students with additional learning needs including :

- Whether there will be a suite of supporting learning support resources.
- Whether there will be additional teaching time available within the existing SET allocation to support MFL learning?
- Whether any accommodations will be provided within any assessment framework or standardised testing (e.g. a waiver for spelling and grammar components of any test)?
- Whether exemptions will be provided for those with very significant additional learning needs (e.g. severe dyslexia), including those who attend specialised provision (classes or schools) and who currently are exempt from Irish on this basis.

Professional Development for Teachers

As with all curriculum development there is a very clear need for clarity about how current and future teachers will be provided with training and professional development opportunities. It would be welcome to get clarity on how much time will be provided in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programmes and how Continuing Professional Development (CPD) will be provided for existing teachers on the introduction of additional components to the PLC.

Within such training and professional development there should be a strong focus on how to best support learners with additional educational needs, including those with core reading and writing difficulties arising from dyslexia. Also consideration should be given to teachers who are dyslexic, who perhaps did not study a modern foreign language at second level, and how they can best be supported or accommodated.

Pragmatics of Curriculum Delivery

The document is vague on some of the pragmatics as to what the introduction of modern language will look like when introduced to primary schools around the country in the near future. It is unclear what languages will be prioritised and whether more orthographically transparent languages (Spanish and Italian) will be promoted as languages more easily accessible for those with additional learning needs like dyslexia.

The issue of curriculum scheduling also needs consideration, including what in the current curriculum will be reduced to make room in the weekly timetable for the learning of a modern foreign languages, and how best to schedule lessons to take advantage of 'distributed practice' impacts (four 15 minute lessons per week) as opposed to more traditional and pedagogically sub-optimal 'massed practice' (one 60 minute lesson per week). Dyslexia Ireland would also be very concerned if the introduction of MFLs is at the expense of reducing time on the core languages, as less time spent on English and/or Irish will only exacerbate the challenges already being faced by dyslexic students.

Further Information

Dyslexia Ireland welcomes the opportunity to highlight these issues and hopes that they will be considered to ensure that pupils with additional learning needs (including those with dyslexia) are considered at the vanguard of curriculum development, to ensure that they are then meaningfully included and supported along with their peers. Dyslexia Ireland is available to join future consultation events or perhaps most usefully bilateral discussions with colleagues in the NCAA or the Department of Education to discuss the above areas in more depth.

Dyslexia Ireland
5th June 2024

Educate Together

EDUCATE TOGETHER

Submission on Draft NCCA Curriculum Specifications

Educate Together

Submission on the NCCA Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Educate Together congratulates NCCA on the successful publication of the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications. We are willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation and to have our submission published.

Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications and Key Messages

For the purposes of this consultation, Educate Together has reviewed the Draft Specifications for Social and Environmental Education [SEE] and Wellbeing. For ease of reading, we have presented our feedback on the key messages under each of the principles of the Primary Curriculum Framework.

Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities

Educate Together welcomes the development of the Draft Curriculum Specifications and congratulates the NCCA on the completion of this necessary and timely development. From reviewing the SEE and Wellbeing Specifications, it is clear that integrated and thematic approaches to teaching and learning continue to be enshrined in both curricula. A skills-based approach continues to be adopted for the SEE curriculum, and the expansion and clarification of the skills involved in *working as a historian* and *working as a geographer* is particularly welcome. The inclusion of *'sense of environment and sustainability'* as a concept (p.13) is also a significant addition and will enable teachers to foster this concept through their classroom practice, responding to emerging global climate priorities. Educate Together welcomes the opportunities this presents for integration with our patron's curriculum Learn Together, and in particular with the strand 'An Ethical Approach to the Environment.'

The Wellbeing Specification similarly builds on the previous success of the 1999 SPHE curriculum by including safety and media education as core features. The expansion of intended learning outcomes to include specific substances for Stages 3 and 4 (p.26) and updated content for the element *'Media and Digital Wellbeing'* is noteworthy and will

ensure that lesson content is reflective of contemporary contexts. Educate Together recognise and support the inclusion of *'Family'* as a discrete element and commend the commitment to facilitate teaching and learning about diverse families from Stage 1 (p.19).

The inclusion of *'Aquatics'* as a discrete strand was a particular strength of the 1999 Physical Education Curriculum. The continued inclusion of this content is welcome. However additional financial and logistical supports are required by schools in order to realise this vision for the Wellbeing curriculum for all pupils.

*Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum **and** promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment*

The broad nature of the learning outcomes for both specifications will enable teachers to exercise agency in the selection of content and methodologies. These learning outcomes will also facilitate meaningful engagement with thematic and integrated approaches to teaching and learning, leading to more holistic learning experiences for children. While a flexible approach to curriculum enactment is welcome, further guidance on what this looks like in practice should be included in the toolkit to prevent differing interpretations or misconceptions of flexibility (e.g. some content being perceived as less important or optional).

Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class

The inclusion of the key competencies and attributes developed through learning experiences is effective (p. 13 of *Wellbeing* and p. 11/12 of *SEE*) and supports teachers in recognising how the competencies relate to classroom experiences.

Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes

The learning outcomes for both curriculum specifications encompass a competencybased perspective, and will facilitate development of skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes. The SEE specification effectively communicates the specific concepts and skills to be developed through the learning outcomes (p. 13). Educate Together welcomes the inclusion of *'multi-perspectivity'* as a specific concept to be developed within History, Geography and integrated learning opportunities. Upon consultation with teachers from within our network, several reported confusion in relation to the specific skills and concepts of the Wellbeing specification. Educate Together recommends that a similar table outlining the specific skills and concepts be developed in order to clearly communicate the prescribed skills and concepts.

Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching

The inclusion of intuitive assessment is welcomed, as are the descriptions of assessment practices. The SEE descriptions are to be commended, as they are tailored to the curricular

content and give a clear indication of what assessment should look like within each curricular area. Similar ‘tailoring’ could be adopted in the Wellbeing specification.

Be for all children in primary and special schools

The use of the terminology ‘multiple pathways’ in both specifications is noted. Table 9 (in the SEE specification) and Table 8 (in the Wellbeing specification) outline additional support pathways for ensuring all children can access the curriculum. Further clarity on the application of these pathways to classroom practice is required.

Response to the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification

General Feedback: While the broad nature of the learning outcomes and flexibility that they lend is welcomed, there is a consensus among Educate Together teachers that some teachers may struggle to identify relevant content. This poses a risk that ‘the textbook’ would end up being taught, rather than the curriculum. The ‘menu’ approach in the 1999 History curriculum did give an indication as to what content could be taught. It is recommended that similar guidance be developed and reflected in the toolkit to ensure all teachers can proactively plan, prepare and teach relevant content.

Integrated: The use of term ‘integrated’ to describe learning outcomes for Stages 3 and 4 (p. 16) is noted. While aspects of these learning outcomes will be covered in History and Geography lessons, these learning outcomes primarily relate to content aligned to Education about Religions and Beliefs [ERB].

Education about Religions and Beliefs: Educate Together cautions against the potential erasure of ERB within the draft SEE specification. While included in the underpinning literature review on SEE, best practice within this field has not been fully realised through the development of these learning outcomes. Educate Together recommends the revision of learning outcomes for SEE in order to specifically address ERB as a discrete curricular area. The elements of SEE (specifically ‘*Communicating*’, p. 19) also require further revision to highlight the importance of learning about and from diverse perspectives, and intercultural dialogue. The section detailing pedagogical practices (p. 22 – 25) is comprehensive and the inclusion of dialogical pedagogy is welcomed.

Response to the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification

Educate Together welcomes the updates to the Wellbeing Curriculum as outlined above.

General feedback from teachers in our network indicates that further clarity is required in relation to the structure of the curriculum, specifically the strand units and elements (as outlined on p. 8 – 10). Teachers report that the structure of the curriculum is confusing and suggest the development of a graphic organiser to represent the relationship between strands, strand units, elements and skills.

Sexual intercourse: Educate Together welcomes the continued inclusion of Relationships and Sexuality Education as an integral and integrated part of the Wellbeing curriculum. However, the associated learning outcomes for Stage 4 (p. 26) require further refinement. The use of the verb ‘understand’ should be reviewed in relation to sexual intercourse as it does not reflect a competency-based perspective, as evidenced by other learning outcomes. Similarly, it is unclear whether this learning outcome intends for RSE to encompass a traditional or more holistic approach to sexual education. Further clarification on the intended learning is required to reflect the recommendations of the NCCA report on the review of RSE which advocated for inclusive RSE that is age and developmentally appropriate for pupils.

External facilitators and programmes: Educate Together note the inclusion of guidance in relation to external facilitators and programmes (p.45). While this guidance is welcome, further refinement of this guidance is recommended. There is a clear distinction between the role of external facilitators for Physical Education and Relationships and Sexuality Education. Educate Together recommend that this distinction is communicated and that the use of external facilitators for RSE is discouraged, in line with current best practice.

Opt-out Clause: The toolkit should outline guidance documents and sample templates to support teachers in responding to ‘RSE opt-out’ letters or requests from parents.

Necessary Curriculum Supports

Principal support: Educate Together recognise the pivotal role that principals play in supporting teaching and learning. However, the responsibility for leading and implementing this curriculum cannot fall solely on the shoulders of principals, who are already overburdened with administrative and managerial responsibilities, as evidenced in the IPPN ‘Sustainable Leadership’ report and other research. THE NCCA’s own report on conducive conditions for change emphasises the importance of school leaders having time and space to implement change. Without specific additional supports for school leaders (release time, increased management support, etc) the aims of this curriculum reform will not be achieved. A phased approach to curriculum implementation is crucial, with sufficient time allocated for reflection, evaluation and planning at each stage.

Toolkit: Educate Together welcomes the development of a toolkit for each curricular area. As the Primary Curriculum Framework recognises the importance and value of integrated and thematic approaches to teaching and learning, sample plans should be provided in order to support teachers in embedding this approach with new learning outcomes. The ‘samples of children’s learning’ videos for the Primary Language Curriculum are often cited by teachers in our network as examples of good practice, and so a similar approach should be adopted for other curricular areas.

Time for planning: Teachers should be facilitated to engage in preparation for teaching and learning with their colleagues. This should include time to plan during the school day with their colleagues, without drawing on support teachers to cover classes.

Sustained support: Educate Together would caution against the use of support model adopted for the 1999 curriculum, whereby teachers were taken out of school for a number of days during the year for induction in specific subject areas. Such a model didn’t allow for sustained in-school support which is vital for the success of any new curriculum.

Education and Training Boards Ireland

ETBI Context

Education and Training Boards Ireland (ETBI) is the national representative association for its members – Education and Training Boards (ETBs) and negotiates on behalf of the ETB sector at various forums both within the education sector, the wider public service and at EU level. Its mission is to lead and advance the continued development of education, training and youth work in Ireland and its vision is to harness the strength of the sector to influence and promote collaboration and collective effort. ETBI is guided by its core values of excellence, care, equality, community and respect.

In the context of this consultation, ETBI is representing our current 29 Community National Schools, 5 Community Special Schools and 3 Community Hospital Schools. In preparation for this submission, ETBI facilitated focus groups with teachers and school leaders from across our various school types. The content of this submission is based on the feedback we received in these focus groups.

At the outset, ETBI would like to take this opportunity to thank the NCCA for its incredible work in advancing education in Ireland. The quality of the draft specifications and the processes underpinning their development are of the highest quality. ETBI is delighted to support these processes in any way we can to achieve our collective aims in the context of our shared values.

General Response to the Draft Specifications

- ETBI welcomes the clear articulation of the values underpinning each of the 5 draft curriculum specifications.
- ETBI welcomes the embedding of intercultural education across each of the draft specifications through the principles underpinning learning and teaching (i.e. inclusive education and diversity), as well as through relevant pedagogical approaches (e.g. culturally responsive pedagogy in SEE) and curriculum learning outcomes. To ensure the meaningful recognition and affirmation of difference and diversity through the enactment of these specifications, it is incumbent on the professional development support service teams for each curriculum area to embed opportunities for engagement in intercultural approaches in the training and support materials for teachers.
- ETBI would like to acknowledge that overall, the draft specifications are clear and accessible. ETBI also welcomes the general consistency across the specifications in terms of structure and formatting, which will support teachers in their preparation for learning and teaching. However, ETBI notes that there is not complete consistency across each curriculum specification in terms of structure, with some areas structured in terms of strands, elements and strand units and others only structured into strands and elements and one specification, the Arts, organised solely into strands. This may cause confusion amongst teachers and should be reflected upon before the specifications are published. That said, teachers

participating in ETBI's consultation on the specifications welcomed the layout of the learning outcomes for each stage side-by-side, which it was felt would support progression in learning and teaching and the facilitation of transitions across stages in primary school.

- Although the detail in each of the five specifications is to be welcomed in places, teachers participating in ETBI's consultation felt that the documents could be refined so that they are shorter and subsequently more accessible. Additionally, some of the language within the specifications is overly academic. Although links are made between key terms and the glossary, it should be noted that a need to repeatedly reference the glossary during preparation for learning and teaching could make the specification less accessible. Teachers participating in ETBI's focus group queried whether a condensed version of the specifications should also be produced.
- ETBI welcomes the recognition of special schools in the titles of the draft specifications. ETBs are also patrons of hospital schools and would query whether these and other primary settings are recognised explicitly within the specifications. Furthermore, while special schools are recognised throughout the documents, it should be noted that these schools will need additional support to be meaningfully included in curriculum implementation and supported in their enactment at school level.

Key Messages

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities.

- Overall, ETBI felt that the 5 draft curriculum specifications struck a positive balance between building on the strengths of the 1999 primary school curriculum whilst aspiring to support priority learning needs of children now and into the future.
- These new specifications reflect and reinforce meaningful and effective pedagogical approaches fostered through learning and teaching of the 1999 curriculum, whilst simultaneously incorporating new ways of learning and teaching.
- Like the 1999 curriculum, these specifications are child centred. However, a greater emphasis on inclusion and diversity aims to provide equity of access, experience, and outcome for all children regardless of their identity, background, needs and context.

- Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt that the draft STE curriculum had made positive departures from the 1999 curriculum by responding to changing priorities for children’s learning, whilst still maintaining relevant and appropriate connections with the 1999 curriculum, which would support successful implementation nationally and facilitate teacher confidence in enacting the curriculum locally.

Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum

- As learning outcomes-based specifications, these 5 drafts provide increased agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum. This was noted as a significant departure from the 1999 curriculum, and was welcomed with both positivity and caution through ETBI’s consultations with teachers.
- Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultations welcomed the autonomy to utilise their professional judgement to make decisions about what and how children learn in response to their needs, interest and context. However, it was noted that such autonomy may only be exercised where a teacher possesses a high-level confidence and competence in a curriculum area. Teachers also highlighted the potential risk of learning outcomes-based specifications which, due to their broad nature, may result in topics/themes not being covered. Specific concern was raised for newly qualified teachers or those changing class level within schools, who may struggle to identify the focus of new learning from a learning outcome.
- The need for examples of best practice emerged as an essential support to facilitate the successful enactment of these specifications through agentic and flexible approaches. Although teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation welcomed more autonomy, clarity was also key. The progression steps from the primary language curriculum were noted as a helpful support which could be adapted to support engagement with these new specifications.
- The use of learning outcomes was also noted as an opportunity to provide increased autonomy for children to identify the focus and direction of their own learning alongside their teacher. Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation noted that children could be afforded the opportunity to engage with areas which were of interest to them and more relevant to their lives, but that teachers would need to be supported to meaningfully facilitate children as active agents in their own learning across all stages.

Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*

- ETBI welcomes the efforts of the NCCA to facilitate more meaningful connections across the early childhood, primary and post-primary curriculum frameworks, which if successful could help to support more seamless transitions for children through their education journeys.
- Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt that they key competencies

underpinning these 5 draft specifications would connect with children’s learning experience of the key skills at Junior Cycle.

- The inclusion of playful approaches across the specifications was noted as a meaningful opportunity to build on children’s learning from Aistear. However, teachers also cautioned that playful approaches are more embedded at stage 1 and that guidance and support would be required to meaningfully and consistently embed such approaches from stage 2 onwards.
- Special school teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation noted strong links between the new draft specifications and level 1 and level 2 learning programmes at Junior Cycle.
- Although consultation participants made general connections between the five draft specifications with Aistear and Junior Cycle, there was a sense that recognition of this interconnectedness is challenging when stakeholders are only familiar with the curriculum framework that applies to their own setting.

Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class

- ETBI welcomes the mapping of the key competencies across the learning outcomes of each of the five specifications. Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt this approach would support preparation for learning and teaching.
- Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt the Arts specification could include a greater variety of key competencies across its learning outcomes, including “being a digital learner”, to reflect the increased use of technology in art, music and drama, as well as “being mathematical” through music and “being well” as an outcome of participation in the arts.
- In the wellbeing curriculum, the visual link between the key competencies and SPHE and PE using the relevant symbols is welcomed for stages 1 and 2. However, this is not consistently applied across all learning outcomes.

Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes

- The learning outcomes contained within the draft specifications hold the potential to activate learning and teaching of relevant skills, knowledge, dispositions and values. However, teachers will need to be supported through training and materials to better understand how to identify these skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes within learning outcomes.
- Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt that the STE specification was skills heavy, but that such skills would support children in the present and future. Teachers felt that opportunities to foster STE skills through this draft specification would foster children’s positive attitudes and dispositions towards science, technology and engineering.

Position of assessment as a central part of learning and teaching

- ETBI welcomes the assessment sections included in each of the five specifications. Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation welcomed consistency of format across the specifications, including the three opportunities for assessment:

intuitive assessment, planned assessment and assessment events. Teachers also welcomed that the assessment guidance for each specification was also specific to each curriculum area with the inclusion of the bespoke “methods of assessment” section. Teachers appreciated the detail within this section.

- Teachers cautioned that some assessment approaches may be new for some schools and that support will be required for these approaches to be meaningfully embedded in schools.
- ETBI welcomes the increased emphasis on intuitive assessment across the draft curriculum specifications. This is reflective of and validates existing practice in schools.
- The recognition of intuitive assessment was particularly welcomed within the Arts, where the centrality of assessment within learning and teaching must be taken with care. The teachers with whom ETBI consulted were eager to ensure that the process of learning and engaging in the Arts be valued just as much as a final product.

Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment

- These draft specifications continue to facilitate integrated learning opportunities, as was supported through the 1999 curriculum. However, the integration of the 7 key competencies across each specification provide new avenues to frame and facilitate integration.
- Opportunities for integration will also be enhanced because of the provision of increased flexibility and agency for teachers and schools.

Be for all children in primary and special schools

- ETBI welcomes the inclusion of the additional support pathways in each of the five draft curriculum specifications. Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt that this structure would support them to take more inclusive approaches to learning and teaching. Teachers appreciated the opportunity to recognise the learning experiences and outcomes of all children along the pathway. Some acknowledged that the pathway would also serve to validate and justify their own approaches. Some consultation participants felt the pathway would help to alleviate pressure on children and teachers to meet learning outcomes at the end of a particular stage. As a new structure within these curriculum areas, teachers will need explicit support on how to meaningfully use the pathways to facilitate inclusive approaches to learning and teaching for all children.

Arts Specification

Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

ETBI welcomes the:

- the inclusion of the progression milestones within this specification on p. 36-47.
- That the position of drama, as a subject, within this specification has been strengthened since the 1999 curriculum.
- the inclusion of sensory and embodied approaches within the Arts specification, which emphasises the importance of sensory experiences in the arts for all children. Teachers will need support with this.
- the “key areas for consideration in teaching the arts” on p. 24, including the graphic.
- the distinction between “integration within the arts” and “integration through the arts” on p. 28. Teachers felt that this recognise how meaningfully the arts can be to support learning and teaching in other curriculum areas, but also how the arts can interact with one another.
- Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt that there doesn’t seem to be as many profound changes in the Arts specification compared to the other new curricula, which may facilitate smoother implementation.

Some of the challenges ETBI would like to raise are:

- The learning outcomes in this specification are rather dense and include a lot of concepts (e.g. tempo, pulse etc) or skills in one. Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt that they and their colleagues would require support to break down these learning outcomes to identify the appropriate focus of new learning according to stage.
- Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation on the draft specification felt that more explicit inclusion of playful learning opportunities would strengthen the specification.
- Although the overview of the progression of concepts in art, music and drama as outlined in appendices A, B and C provide structure for teachers and aim to support the enactment of the learning outcomes, it should be cautioned that teachers may rely more heavily on these appendices over learning outcomes and should be supported to use both in tandem when preparing for learning and teaching.
- Teachers who participated in ETBI’s consultation felt that the time allocation for each curriculum area should be reiterated in each specification as outlined in the Primary Curriculum Framework.
- The specification does not allude strongly enough to the positive impact of the arts on children’s wellbeing. Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt that

that the lack recognition of the importance of the arts for recreation, relaxation

and maintaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle was a significant omission from the specification.

- Teachers may struggle in their preparation for learning and teaching to meaningfully integrate a variety of key competencies across the specification when the links within the learning outcomes consistency reference only three of the seven (AL, C, CL).
- This specification doesn't seem to be structured in the same way as others, with strands and elements. This may make preparation for learning and teaching more challenging for teachers.
- On p. 17 an example is given for a learning outcome in stage 2. The approach to including examples, or not, should be consistent across the specification.

Science, Technology and Engineering Specification

Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

ETBI welcomes the:

- the emphasis on fostering and maintaining meaningful partnerships through this specification. Teachers who participated in ETBI's consultation felt that this emphasis would encourage schools to participate in existing STE initiatives and partnership opportunities.
- the suggested "5 step approach" to integrating STE education.
- the recognition of opportunities to challenge stereotypes within STEM across the specification including through the key principles and learning outcomes. Teachers will need training and support to meaningfully engage children in this area.
- the breakdown of concepts underpinning technology from p. 37 and would like to see a similar approach taken to other elements within the specification.

Some of the challenges ETBI would like to raise are:

- Teachers participating in ETBI's focus group felt that getting buy in across the primary school sector into the STE specification would be trickier in comparison to the other four specifications due to a "block" that some teachers experience in terms of their own confidence and competence in this area.
- The specification includes a lot of new terminology (e.g. "debugging" or "minds-on learning") and unless teachers are confident and competent in this area, they could struggle to prepare for learning and teaching. However, teachers

participating in ETBI's consultation acknowledged the support offered by the glossary of terms, which would function as a safety net for teachers.

- Teachers participating in ETBI's consultation felt that STE can be a more challenging curriculum area to integrate. To overcome this, opportunities for integration of STE into other curriculum areas should be highlighted across

professional development opportunities provided by Oide.

- Teachers participating in ETBI’s consultation felt that the learning outcomes within this specification were overly dense and that in some cases there appeared to be three learning outcomes in one. Although it was acknowledged that learning outcomes are intended to be broad, it was felt that these should be refined.
- Teachers who participated in ETBI’s consultation felt that the time allocation for each curriculum area should be reiterated in each specification as outlined in the primary curriculum Framework.

Social and Environmental Education

Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

ETBI welcomes the:

- the inclusion of relevant global learning topics and themes including journeys and movement, sustainable development and human rights within the specification
- the examples of the principles of learning, teaching and assessment in action
- the suggested concepts and skills of social and environmental education in appendix 1. Teachers will require similar guidance on attitudes, skills and dispositions.
- the meaningful connections and opportunities for integration between this specification and the patrons’ curriculum for Community National Schools, Goodness Me, Goodness You! (GMGY).
- the explicit reference to project-based learning, which promotes a hands-on approach to learning and teaching.
- the emphasis on partnerships within this specification.
- the emphasis on enquiry-based learning which facilitates children as active agents in their own learning. This emphasis, according to teachers who participated in ETBI’s consultation, would foster the development of skills (e.g. critical thinking, teamwork) over facts/information.
- the emphasis on fieldwork, including use of the outdoors, in this curriculum specification.
- the emphasis on story within this specification is commendable.

Some of the challenges ETBI would like to raise are:

- teachers’ confidence and competence to engage children with religious and cultural stories through this specification. Teachers often report a lack of knowledge in this area. This would require explicit supports and training.
- given the increased emphasis on outdoor learning experiences in this specification, teachers who participated in ETBI’s consultation felt they and others would benefit from lesson samples/exemplars of outdoor learning and teaching in

action. The lack of suitable/accessible outdoor learning spaces for some schools in

urban areas was also noted as a challenge to curriculum enactment. Suggestions for these schools on how to incorporate outdoor learning was also requested.

Some additional questions ETBI would like to raise include:

- Whether “national issues” should be included alongside “local and global” under “Children’s learning experiences in Social and Environmental Education” on p. 3?
- Whether the specification could more explicitly reference the opportunities to support children to engage with different perspectives and disagree with respect (e.g. under “recognises and appreciates the rich diversity within the world” on p. 5)?
- Whether the time allocation for each curriculum area should be reiterated in each specification as outlined in the Primary Curriculum Framework?

Modern Foreign Languages

Please outline your response on the draft Modern Foreign Languages

Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

ETBI welcomes the:

- plurilingual approach underpinning the specification and the introduction of a 3rd Language in Stages 3 and 4.
- harnessing of children’s curiosity about the languages spoken by their peers
- the introduction of MFL links with the appreciation of different cultures

Some of the challenges ETBI would like to raise are:

- the lack of clarity on how this specification will be rolled out. Without knowledge of the process through which schools will identify a third language, the CPD that will be provided and the resources that will populate the Online Toolkit, it was very difficult to critique the Learning Outcomes. It would be useful if the following key questions could be addressed early in the document:
 - Does the school choose one MFL for all senior classes or is that dependent on the teacher? What process should schools use to identify the MFL to be studied?
 - Are the learning outcomes set out in Stages 3 and 4 related to the class’/school’s chosen MFL or to the children’s additional languages?
 - Will the introduction of a MFL in senior classes affect the time allocation for English and Irish in Stages 3 and 4? As the learning outcomes for the school’s L1 and L2 remain the same, how can they be achieved in less time (if that is the case)?

➤ Will MFL need to factor into the recruitment process?

The following are other challenges that were raised by our stakeholders:

- Teacher Competence – Teachers have a fear of teaching MFLs over the course of a full year (or more in multi-grade classrooms). Ongoing CPD will be required to address this. Could specialised language teachers be considered? Or at a minimum, the practice of teachers with a high competence in a language being able to take other classes in the school being legitimised.
- Teacher Attitudes – There can be a lack of awareness of the personal (social) and academic benefits of taking a plurilingual approach to education. It will be important to bring teachers from a sometimes ‘deficit’ based to an ‘asset’-based view of children with EAL. Some teachers can be afraid of children using their home languages in the classroom and not knowing what is being said/exclusion of other children in the class etc. CPD is needed for teachers to genuinely harness the children’s first languages and know where to draw boundaries. A misconception that teachers will need to be able to speak some of all children’s 1st languages in order to take a plurilingual approach will need to be clarified. What’s being suggested isn’t nearly as daunting as teachers may think.
- Possible Lack of ambition – Some teachers felt that aiming for ‘very basic’ and ‘basic’ language competency in a 3rd language was unambitious over a four-year period. Some teachers run MFL classes over a number of weeks as afterschool activities and at the end of this short period, children are able to hold very basic conversations in that language. ‘Very basic’ and ‘basic’ will need to be clearly defined so that teachers have clarity on what it is they are working towards. The ambition set out will need to balance teachers’ fear/lack of competence in a 3rd

language with an ambitious outlook to what can be achieved in the time allocated to MFL in senior classes.

- Initial Teacher Education – Stakeholders felt that ITEs will play a crucial role in developing student teachers’ confidence and competence in taking plurilingual approaches to the curriculum and to teaching a MFL.
- The 4th element –ETBI welcomes the introduction of a 4th element ‘Building an awareness of languages and cultures.’ However, there are no learning outcomes associated with this element in Stages 1 and 2. The 4th element needs to be integrated in more successfully on the image on p. 12 of the draft specification if this is to remain. It currently looks like an add-on with lesser status than the other elements.

Wellbeing

Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

ETBI welcomes the:

- vastly updated language in the specification since the 1999 curriculum.
- 'whole-school approach' to wellbeing being taken in the specification.
- focus on the importance of school culture on the children's wellbeing with an emphasis on 'relational pedagogies'.
- explicit naming of values throughout the document. The inclusive values underpinning the redevelopment curriculum are explicit throughout all 5 specifications.
- emphasis on resilience and emotional regulation for all children. Previously this may have been targeted at children with Special Educational Needs. However, these concepts apply to all children, and this is acknowledged in the specification.
- concept of 'consent' being brought into the curriculum.
- glossary of terms with links throughout the document highlighted in red. However, the purpose of the words being highlighted in red should be explained clearly at the beginning of each document.
- list of NCCA approved resources and programmes that teachers can use to support wellbeing.

Some of the challenges ETBI would like to raise are:

- Some of the language throughout the specification is too academic. For example, in the early stages of PE the specification states "explore in context a range of fundamental stability, locomotor and manipulative movement skills on land and water." Although there are links to the glossary – it might overwhelm teachers to be over and back when planning.
- In our Community Hospital School contexts greater flexibility will be required in terms of the timing for PE and SPHE. Two hours of PE in a Hospital School will be extremely challenging to achieve due to the medical needs of the children attending the school and the lack of facilities for PE.
- Special schools and special classes may need to do more than one hour of SPHE to give them adequate time to explore some of the more sensitive material in an appropriate way.
- the competence of some teachers to deliver two hours of high-quality physical education. Training will be essential.
- while ETBI understands the caution required when engaging with external organisations for wellbeing (especially SPHE), there are some very positive examples of outside agencies supporting schools in delivering the PE curriculum.

- The 'Making the Connections' document developed to support teachers delivering the current SPHE curriculum will need to be redeveloped in line with the redeveloped curriculum.
- Schools will need to invest in additional PE equipment considering it will now be timetabled for two hours a week.
- Space to facilitate two hours of PE per week will be a significant challenge in schools. In large schools, the hall may be already almost fully booked. Now with the doubling of the time required for PE, the use of the outdoors in all weathers will need to be normalised and the use of the classroom space will have to be maximised (where possible). Realistic examples of how this can be done should be included in the online toolkit.

Implementation

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

- ETBI welcomes the opportunity to consult with the NCCA on the implementation of draft specifications as part of this submission. It is well reported that the structure and supports encompassing the implementation of any curriculum will be key to ensuring successful curriculum enactment at school level.
- Clear and concise communication of an implementation plan for schools is essential to facilitate the effective implementation of these specifications. Schools want to know what is expected of them as well as the supports they will receive.
- ETBI wishes to note in this submission that the staff shortages currently being experienced by schools will make curriculum implementation more challenging.
- School leaders will be key to successful implementation of the new draft curriculum specifications

Online toolkit

- ETBI welcomes the online nature of the 'toolkit' meaning that it can be updated frequently as new resources come on stream. However, teachers participating in ETBI's consultation expressed the need for a base set of support materials and exemplars to be prepared in advance of the roll out of the specifications.
- Significant investment will be required to bridge the gap between the vision set out in the redeveloped curriculum specifications and classroom practice.
- The online toolkit should include samples of children's learning as well as video samples of teaching and learning in action similar to those available on DLplanning.ie.
- The NCCA's existing, online Curriculum Planning Tool should be redeveloped in line with the redeveloped curriculum.

- Support materials and training to meaningfully facilitate inclusive approaches to special education are essential to the successful implementation of the draft curriculum specifications. Although the curricula are intended to be for all children in primary and special schools, teachers who participated in ETBI's consultation felt that the curricula are geared towards mainstream learning, and that there is a need for more guidance on inclusive approaches to special education, including how to use the additional support pathways.
- To inform the development of the online toolkit, the teachers involved in ETBI's consultation suggested that the NCCA and Oide work with "showcase" schools who report a high level of confidence and competence in each curriculum area to pilot the five draft specifications. These schools could be used to develop the samples of best practice and provide feedback on the implementation process and professional learning experiences to allow for a more seamless implementation nationally.
- Teachers who participated in ETBI's consultation felt they would benefit from the development of a "primary curriculum framework map/poster" which provided an overarching view of all curriculum areas. Teachers also felt that they would benefit from the development of glance cards/posters which provide an individual overview of each curriculum specification, including strands and elements.
- Teachers who participated in ETBI's consultation commended the Primary Language Curriculum Ebulletin for its "How To" links and recommended that similar supports be implemented for the new curriculum specifications.

CPD

- Extensive, sustained CPD will be required to support schools in the implementation of the redeveloped curriculum specifications.
- Given the vital role of school leaders in the successful implementation of the new specifications, specific training and supports for these key stakeholders should be considered.
- A variety of professional development opportunities should be afforded to support curriculum enactment including training and live, lesson demonstrations with children. The impact of seeing new approaches to learning and teaching in action cannot be underestimated.
- Professional development should be bespoke to each school's context. Engagement between the support service and a school based 'cuiditheoir' before and after engagement with staff at a whole school level could help to facilitate a more seamless professional development experience and positively impact on curriculum enactment. Training and support for school-based cuiditheoir on their role and responsibilities would also be required.
- Schools would benefit from the establishment of local and/or regional communities of practice or "clusters" to facilitate sharing of effective and highly effective practice in curriculum specifications. Teachers participating in ETBI's consultation felt that these communities of practice would benefit from a "cluster lead" who would facilitate cluster meetings and engagement.

- A “bitesize” approach to professional development on each curriculum specification was recommended by teacher’s who participated in ETBI’s consultation. The teachers commended the training days provided by Oide to date on other specifications but noted that exploring an entire curriculum specification in a single day can be overwhelming.
- A critical part of professional development to support the enactment of the draft specifications will be the provision of in-house time to prepare for learning and teaching following each training day from Oide teams. Such time should be included as part of a timeline for curricula implementation.

Funding/Resources

- Significant additional funding will be required by schools to implement the redeveloped curriculum e.g. if aquatics is a strand in the national curriculum, the school should be supported financially to transport children to the pool. Field trips are also a major feature of the SEE curriculum and this should also be supported. The purchase of devices and other equipment to resource the STE curriculum will also require significant financial investment. Certain resources for the Arts (e.g. clay) are single use and use up a significant portion of a school’s budget. Furthermore, schools shouldn’t be required to invest in some curriculum areas over others.
- Teachers who participated in ETBI’s consultation were concerned about funding/resource equity, particularly for small schools. In STE for example, teachers felt that children in larger schools were more likely to benefit from access to a greater variety of devices and other equipment in comparison to their peers in smaller schools, due to funding allocation/grants.
- The normalisation of diversity clearly underpins the redeveloped curriculum - schools would benefit greatly from a list of resources/library books that would support this aim.
- With “being a digital learner” embedded as a key competency across the primary curriculum framework, schools will need explicit support on how to integrate digital technology into learning and teaching across each specification, with additional support offered to teachers who are less confident and competent in this area.

Timing/Pace of Implementation

- Teachers who participated in ETBI’s consultation expressed concern about all five curriculum specifications being rolled out simultaneously and requested that the implementation of specifications being facilitated on a phased basis to ensure each specification is meaningfully embedded in schools.
- Further, the raft of policies coming to schools in the near future (e.g., revised Child Protection Procedures, Anti-Bullying Policy and Code of Behaviour) needs to be considered in the pace of the implementation of these specifications. The Primary

Education Forum (PEF) will need to consider the entire spectrum of curriculum/policy changes schools are being required to contend with so that they can be implemented at a rate that will ensure their success.

Specialist Teachers/Sharing Skillsets

- ETBI would like to see the sharing of teacher competencies made more legitimate (e.g. teachers moving classrooms to teach a subject they are particularly competent in).

**Education Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI)
Gender and Sexualities in Education Special Interest Group
and Affiliate Members' Submission**

to the

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

for the

Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum Specification

7th June 2024

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Evidence Source 2: Summary of relevant findings from: Higgins A; Downes C; O’Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland. Dublin: Belong To. Available here.

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Our Feedback and Recommended Changes

The following feedback and recommendations are made in light of supporting evidence documents 1 and 2 (pages 10-16).

Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (p. 2)

Feedback:

- The explicit mention of terms such as ‘human rights’, ‘equity’, ‘social justice’ and ‘diversity’ are very welcome. However, these principles could be framed within existing equality legislation and defined more clearly in the glossary.

Recommendation:

- That the glossary define the terms ‘human rights’, ‘equity’, ‘social justice’ and diversity with explicit reference to the nine protected characteristics under Irish equality law, namely: gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

Rationale (p. 4)

Feedback:

- We welcome reference to ‘an inclusive understanding of human sexuality’. However, the rationale should explicitly reference that all genders and sexualities are included. We know from the *Belong To Primary* research (Neary and Power, 2024⁸²) that primary school staff need a really clear mandate and support from the curriculum in order to allay their fears about being LGBTQ+ inclusive. Until such time as LGBTQ+ identities are explicitly referenced in curricula, there is the very real risk that children who have LGBTQ+ parents and children who themselves are becoming aware of their own LGBTQ+ identities (Higgins et al, 2024) will not have their families and lives recognised or acknowledged in ways that allow them to feel like they fully belong.

Recommendation:

⁸² Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: Key Survey Findings*. Research Report. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick. [Available here](#)

- That the rationale on p.4 use the same sentence as the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum rationale: “contributes to building a cohesive, compassionate and fair society; one that is inclusive of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs/worldviews, social classes and abilities/disabilities”.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) (p.5)

Feedback:

- We welcome the spirit of this SPHE section, but we know from the recent *Belong To Primary* study (Neary and Power, 2024) that for parents who are LGBTQ+, and children who are aware of their LGBTQ+ identities in primary school to feel like they fully belong, they need to see themselves reflected in the curriculum and in everyday inclusive language. The vast majority of primary staff (91%) confirmed that they want to be LGBTQ+ inclusive but they need explicit statements in curricula in order to allay uncertainties and fears. They need support from the top in order to be fully inclusive and not feel vulnerable in doing so in their classrooms. For more information on this, please see a summary of key findings on p.10 of this document.

Recommendation:

- That the SPHE/RSE rationale explicitly state that Learning Outcomes under this strand should be taught in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner in the same way as the new senior cycle SPHE curriculum which states: “Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within standalone lessons.”
- That the SPHE/RSE rationale should explicitly reference existing requirements under Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and PostPrimary Schools*, for primary schools to implement education and prevention measures to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying.

Emotional and Relational Education Strand Unit

Feedback:

- Again, we know from the recent *Belong To Primary* research (Neary and Power, 2024) that primary school staff need absolute clarity and support from the curriculum and curricular guidance in order to feel safe in being LGBTQ+ inclusive. Otherwise, the result is deep silence and even stigma for the children of LGBTQ+ parents and children who themselves are trying to make sense of their own LGBTQ+ identities (Neary and Power, 2024). The emotional and relational education strand unit does not go far enough in supporting staff to be LGBTQ+ inclusive in their everyday working lives.
- Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, has required all primary schools to name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, and explicitly detail education and prevention strategies to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying since 2013. The draft wellbeing curriculum misses a crucial opportunity to ensure that these procedures are followed.

Recommendations:

- That LGBTQ+ lives are fully integrated across stages 1 to 4 of the ‘**Identity**’ strand of the *Wellbeing Curriculum*
- Explicitly name and define homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying within the Learning Outcomes of the **Relationships** strand.
- That staff materials and resources accompanying the *Wellbeing Curriculum*, such as those on the Wellbeing Online Toolkit, ought to include practical support materials and best practice guidelines on supporting a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+; the process of engaging with the pupil and their parent, guardian or caregiver; and proactive measures a school can put in place to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all LGBTQ+ pupils, whether they are out or not. This should be supported by clear procedural templates and guidelines published by the Department of Education. Together, these measures will help to safeguard the mental health and wellbeing of LGBTQ+ pupils who begin to understand, become aware of their LGBTQ+ identities and/or come out while in primary school.

Community and Belonging – SPHE Strand Unit

Feedback:

- Again the spirit of the Community and Belonging strand unit is inclusive but the *Belong To Primary* research (Neary and Power, 2024) confirms that primary school staff need more explicit mentioning of LGBTQ+ lives in order to be able to practice LGBTQ+ inclusivity in primary schools. For more information on this, please see a summary of key findings on p. 10 of this document.

Recommendations:

- That the first mention of ‘diversity’ in the **Sense of Belonging** learning outcomes on p. 19 warrants a footnote that makes specific reference to personal characteristics protected under the Equal Status Acts, namely gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.
- That the term ‘LGBTQ+ parents’ replaces the term same-sex parents in the **Family** footnote on page 19.
- That the ‘equality’, ‘inequality’ and ‘discrimination’ learning outcome in the **Rights and Fairness** strand on page 28 includes a footnote that makes specific reference to personal characteristics protected under the Equal Status Acts, namely gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community.

‘Practical Considerations’ (p.45)

Feedback:

- Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, which has required all primary schools to name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, and explicitly detail education and prevention strategies to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying since 2013. The draft specification states that: “When preparing and planning for learning, teaching, and assessment related to the Wellbeing Curriculum, it is essential to consider wider policy and circulars which set out the mandated programmes within

SPHE... the Anti-Bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools sets out the requirements on schools in relation to preventing and dealing with bullying behaviour.” However, this does not go far enough. Primary school staff need support if they are to be LGBTQ+ inclusive. This should come in the form of a clear mandate by explicitly mentioning homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

Recommendations:

- That the Wellbeing Curriculum specifically names homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying within this section, as part of Learning Outcomes that relate to bullying and in the Glossary, along with the provision of comprehensive supports relating to homophobic and transphobic bullying via the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.
- Specifically name homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying within this section, as part of Learning Outcomes that relate to bullying.
- Specifically name homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying within the Glossary.
- Provide comprehensive supports relating to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying via the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

Wellbeing Online Toolkit: Recommendations

- Engage with the Department of Education on developing clear procedural templates and guidelines on supporting LGBTQ+ pupils who come out in school.
- In the Wellbeing Online Toolkit, include practical support materials and best practice guidelines on supporting a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+; the process of engaging with the pupil and their parent, guardian or caregiver; and proactive measures a school can put in place to ensure that the school is a safe and supportive environment for all LGBTQ+ pupils, whether they are out or not.
- That resources and materials provided in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit support teachers to represent LGBTQ+ identities and experiences in the language they use, as well as in their teaching and learning. The vast majority of primary school staff want to be LGBTQ+ inclusive but they reported a lack of knowledge and confidence (Neary and Power, 2024). The Wellbeing Online Toolkit has the potential to provide such support, ensuring that LGBTQ+ parented families and children who are starting to make sense with their LGBTQ+ identity can truly feel like their everyday life at school is supportive, inclusive and reflective of their family forms and lives.
- Engage with relevant stakeholders to produce a range of Continued Professional Development programmes on areas relating to LGBTQ+ identities, experiences and inclusivity.

Glossary: Recommendations

Family Structures Definition

It is welcome that the Glossary clearly states that same-sex families should be included within the definition of family structures, and we strongly encourage its retention. However, LGBTQ+ parents is a far more inclusive term.

Bullying Definition

The definition of bullying is broad, and makes reference to five forms of bullying, namely identity bullying, cyber bullying, racist bullying, sexist bullying, and sexual harassment. These forms of

bullying are not currently defined within the Glossary. They need to be individually defined terms so as to ensure that they are fully and consistently understood among primary staff.

Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying

It is vital that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying be individually listed and defined within the Wellbeing specification's Glossary. Since 2013 the Department of Education and Skills' Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* has required all primary schools to name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their antibullying policy, and explicitly detail education and prevention strategies to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying. The new Wellbeing specification must be aligned with, and support the continued implementation of, existing Department of Education procedures.

LGBTQ+ Terminology

Only one in three primary staff feel very confident in their knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities, and one in four primary staff do not feel confident in their knowledge of gender identity (Neary and Power, 2024). As such, the Glossary should detail specific terminology relating to LGBTQ+ identities and experiences, including terms relating to sexual orientation, gender identity, pronoun use and coming out.

'Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity' (2024)

About the Study

This research was funded by an Irish Research Council 'New Foundations: Engaging Civil Society' grant, enabling a research partnership between the School of Education, University of Limerick and Belong To – LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland.

This research project encompassed two strands: a survey with 1031 primary school staff, and 23 qualitative interviews with the parents of primary school-aged children who identify as LGBTQ+, and parents who themselves identify as LGBTQ+ and have children in primary school.

Taken together, these two strands provide a rich and comprehensive overview of what LGBTQ+ inclusion looks like today in Irish primary schools - relating to the experiences of both primary staff and LGBTQ+ families within primary school communities.

[The full report](#) contains the findings from both of the above strands.

Summary of Survey Findings

Positive Attitudes to LGBTQ+ Inclusivity Amongst Primary School Staff

There is strong support for LGBTQ+ inclusive practice in primary schools. Among primary school staff who participated in this research:

- 9 in 10 believe it is important for primary staff, including principals, deputy principals, class teachers, special needs assistants and support staff, to know about LGBTQ+ inclusivity.
- 86% feel primary lessons should include same-gender parented families in the same way as different-gender parented families.
- 85% staff think that LGBTQ+ characters should be included in primary lessons in the same way as heterosexual characters.

Within open-ended sections for this question, participants shared:

“Representation is very important - inclusion in stories, pictures; seeing people in LGBTQ+ communities in their lives in junior years. Introduction of more targeted support and role models for the children to speak to in middle and later years.”

“I feel that until LGBT+ issues and topics are outlined in the curriculum, we can’t teach them safely yet. Teachers won’t teach something that’s not on the curriculum. Principals won’t put themselves out there unless they have to.”

Low Confidence in LGBTQ+ Inclusive Practice

Despite this high level of support, a significant proportion of primary staff do not feel confident in teaching in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner. Among primary school staff who participated in this research:

- 1 in 4 do not feel confident in knowing how to plan LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons.
- 1 in 4 do not feel confident teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.
- 17% do not feel confident in using LGBTQ+ inclusive language.

Within open-ended sections for this question, participants shared:

“The lack of resources and books and RSE/SPHE materials is a really massive issue. The lack of visibility of different relationships and family types makes it seem like they don’t exist.”

This lack of confidence may shed light on the gap between how important primary staff feel knowledge and representation of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences are, and how this is reflected in their teaching. Among primary school staff who participated in this research:

- 68% never organised LGBTQ+ inclusive activities such as an LGBT campaign, guest speakers or engaging expertise on sexual orientation and gender.
- 1 in 4 teaching staff never teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.
- 1 in 3 teaching staff never use books and resources with LGBTQ+ people represented.

Despite the above, it is positive to see that four in five teaching staff include LGBTQ+ parented families when talking about families.

Relationship Between Confidence and LGBTQ+ Inclusive Practice

Through cross-analysis, this research showed a clear relationship between confidence in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, and likelihood of teaching lessons that include and represent LGBTQ+ figures.

Among primary teaching staff who felt very confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, they reported high rates of LGBTQ+ inclusive practice:

- 93% include same-gender parented families in lessons.
- 88% use LGBTQ+ inclusive books and resources.
- 86% include LGBTQ+ historical or public figures in lessons.

Among primary teaching staff who reported that they did not feel at all confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive lessons, they reported significantly lower rates of LGBTQ+ inclusive practice:

- 44% include same-gender parented families in lessons.
- 23% use LGBTQ+ inclusive books and resources.
- 25% include LGBTQ+ historical or public figures in lessons.

With regard to teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner, 93% of primary teaching staff who were very confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons do, in their classes, teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ way. This is compared to primary teaching staff who did not feel at all confident in planning LGBTQ+ inclusive SPHE/RSE lessons, 44% of whom teach SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive way.

Within open-ended sections for this question, participants highlighted the curriculum and a lack of training as key barriers to teaching SPHE/RSE in an LGBTQ+ inclusive manner: *“I think we are all a little unsure around the SPHE/RSE side of things when it comes to LGBTQ+. I think the curriculum is outdated, and does not address many of the questions and issues that arise during these lessons.”*

High Comfort but Lack of Confidence in Supporting an LGBTQ+ Pupil Coming Out

The *Belong To Primary* research shows that primary staff have high comfort levels with a pupil coming out to them as LGBTQ+, but again we see a gap in openness and knowledge levels in what to do in this circumstance. Among primary school staff who participated in this research:

- 79% feel comfortable with a pupil coming out to them as LGBTQ+.
- 84% feel comfortable with a pupil coming out as lesbian, gay or bisexual.
- 75% feel comfortable with a pupil coming out as trans or non-binary.
- 3 in 10 feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil comes out as LGBTQ+.
- 37% feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil came out about their sexual orientation.
- 24% feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil came out as trans or nonbinary.
- 1 in 4 feel very confident in knowing what to do if a pupil wants to socially transition at school.

Similar to the area of LGBTQ+ inclusive teaching, the findings suggest some relationship between formal training and support and school staff’s confidence in supporting an LGBTQ+ pupil coming out.

Among primary school staff who participated in the research:

- 56% either have no formal school supports for a pupil who comes out as LGBTQ+ or are unsure of whether such supports are in place.
- 57% have never taken part in LGBTQ+ specific professional development.
- Only 1 in 3 feel very confident in their knowledge of LGBTQ+ identities.

- 1 in 4 do not feel confident in their knowledge of gender identity.

Within open-ended sections for questions relating to a pupil coming out as LGBTQ+ in school, many primary staff clearly highlight the lack of supports and training available to them, meaning they feel less prepared to support the pupil in the way that they would like to:

“There is no support structure in place. It would be down to the teacher involved.”

“Very little supports. Not really prepared for what is an inevitability.”

“The reason why I would feel somewhat comfortable and not fully comfortable is because I know our school is not set up to support a child effectively in this situation. I would be very concerned for the child’s welfare and their needs going forward as there is no structure in place for this... We do not have initiatives in place or training.”

“I wrote somewhat comfortable in relation to pupils as I am personally comfortable and supportive of my pupils, but I would be unsure in how I would support them and what kind of support would be tolerated in a Catholic ethos school.”

“I wouldn’t be uncomfortable about the information, I would be uncomfortable about how to support the person/ what to say next/ the best steps forward for them. I would be worried that through ignorance/lack of training/information that I would inadvertently end up saying or doing the wrong thing.”

“This is a situation we have not had the opportunity to openly deal with. We know that a proportion of our pupils identify as LGBTQ+ but they don't publicly and openly come out when they are in primary school. There are a myriad of reasons for this. The only supports that we have to offer is the openness of staff, but our ethos prevents us from providing information or indeed talking to pupils during RSE regarding gender identity.”

Low Knowledge About Department of Education Anti-Bullying Procedures

Since 2013 the Department of Education’s Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and PostPrimary Schools, Circular 45/2013, has required all primary schools to explicitly name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, along with education and prevention strategies to tackle these. However, over a decade on, a significant proportion of primary staff are not aware of whether their school fulfils this requirement. Within the *Belong To Primary* research, among primary staff:

- 1 in 3 either did not know whether their school’s anti-bullying policy mentioned homophobic and transphobic bullying or reported that this was not included in the policy.
- 3 in 10 reported that their school’s anti-bullying policy mentioned transphobic bullying.
- Half reported that their school’s anti-bullying policy included information on education and/or prevention strategies relating to homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying.

This is in spite of primary staff who responded to the *Belong To Primary* research reporting relatively high rates of casual homophobia, and a strong desire to include teaching on antiLGBTQ+ bullying in their practice. Among primary staff who took the survey:

- 44% heard pupils make subtle derogatory jokes or comments about LGBTQ+ people.
- 3 in 10 only sometimes intervene when overhearing subtle, derogatory jokes or comments about LGBTQ+ people.
- 55% reported hearing pupils in their school make statements such as “that’s so gay”.
- 9 in 10 say that primary pupils should learn about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying.
- 57% feel confident in teaching about anti-LGBTQ+ bullying.

Summary of Findings From Interviews with LGBTQ+ Families

- Most parents were very conscious that, in the various facets of their everyday lives, their children had very few representations of LGBTQ+ people and/or LGBTQ+ parented families
- The vast majority of parents articulated attempting to avoid sending their children to Catholic primary schools. They acknowledged that some Catholic schools could be progressive and that the staff in them could be very open, but they considered the Catholic ‘ethos’ itself to be a barrier and a risk to the meaningful inclusion of their child and their family form or a child who was identifying as LGBTQ+.
- Most parents outlined that in their dealings with schools, administrative systems were not always reflective of their family form. Celebratory aspects of school life were also highlighted as moments that required extra negotiation on the part of the families and sometimes the teachers too.
- Several parents asserted that, irrespective of how progressive they were in their own views, staff could be fearful and/or not on solid ground where it came to enacting LGBTQ+ inclusivity in an explicit way.
- The parents’ accounts in this study confirmed how hard they worked to achieve a kind of ordinary, easy visibility and inclusivity for their children in a quiet, nonconfrontational way. Most were acutely conscious of not ‘rocking the boat’ and worked to achieve inclusivity for their children in a non-demanding way.

Recommendations From ‘Belong To Primary’ Study

The *Belong To Primary* research made a number of recommendations to policymakers relevant to the review of the draft specification, including:

- **Implement** Action 2.11 of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* by reviewing and updating the SPHE/RSE curriculum across primary schools to ensure that it includes LGBTQ+ identities in an age-appropriate manner.
- **Engage** with primary schools and the inspectorate to ensure that, as per the existing Circular 45/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, all primary schools explicitly name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their antibullying policy, along with education and prevention strategies to tackle the same, and that all school staff are aware of these inclusions.

The research also made a number of recommendations to policymakers relevant to the roll-out of the *Wellbeing Curriculum*, including:

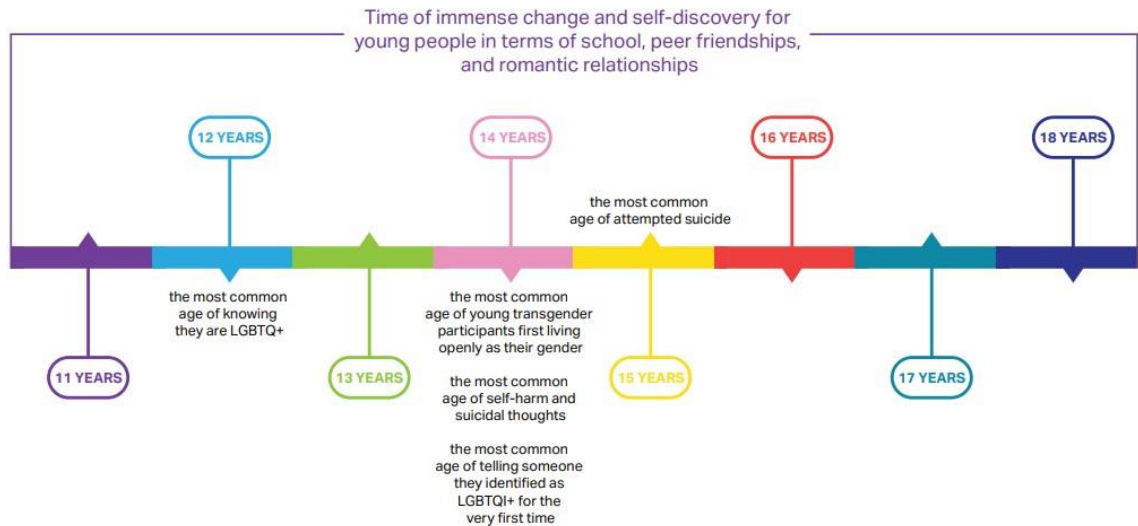
- **Retain** the specific naming of homophobic and transphobic bullying upon updating Circular 45/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, as per Action 3.3 of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying*.
- **Fund** initiatives, similar to Belong To's *LGBTQ+ Quality Mark* for post-primary schools, which take a holistic approach to whole-school community LGBTQ+ inclusivity at primary level.
- **Invest** in the development of tailored professional development courses on specific areas of LGBTQ+ inclusivity as related to named policies and procedures, including on the areas of anti-bullying, coming out and social transition at school.
- **Provide** comprehensive CPD on LGBTQ+ awareness and identities to all primary staff, both teaching and non-teaching.
- **Integrate** LGBTQ+ awareness and inclusivity in undergraduate and postgraduate teacher education programmes.
- **Resource** primary staff to foster sustainable LGBTQ+ inclusive practice through ongoing training, policy development and local information-sharing networks.
- **Encourage** school leadership, including principals, deputy principals and Board of Management members, to take part in LGBTQ+ inclusivity training.
- **Engage** parents in LGBTQ+ inclusive work at primary level, including the provision of evidence-based information on the importance and impact of fostering an open and inclusive environment.
- **Prioritise** the implementation of Action 3.6 of *Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying* by developing and publishing an updated version of the *Being LGBT in School* resource, with consideration of the provision of best-practice guidelines for primary schools.
- **Develop** clear guidelines for primary schools, grounded in Irish equality law and taking a rights-based approach on LGBTQ+ inclusivity and its interaction with school ethos.

'Being LGBTQ+ in Ireland' (2024)

Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland is a research project conducted by Trinity College Dublin (Higgins et al., 2024⁸³) and published in partnership with Belong To – LGBTQ+ Youth Ireland that examines the mental health and wellbeing of Ireland's LGBTQI+ population and investigated public attitudes towards LGBTQI+ people. The research sample includes over 2,800 LGBTQI+ people aged 14-84 living in the Republic of Ireland. The key findings and full report are available [here](#).

As demonstrated in the table below, the experience of LGBTQI+ 14-25 year olds understanding their LGBTQI+ identity, sharing this with people in their life, and the likelihood that they will first experience suicidal thoughts or self-harm is closely tied to the final years of primary school and early years of post-primary education.

⁸³ Higgins et al. (2024) *Being LGBTQI in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland*. Dublin: Trinity College Dublin and Belong To



Among this cohort, age 12 is the most common age at which a person knows they are LGBTQI+. The most common age to live as one’s gender identity and/or to tell someone about their LGBTQI+ identity for the first time is age 14. Among 14-25 year old LGBTQI+ people, age 14 was also the most common age at which a person experienced self-harm or suicidal thoughts. The most common age of attempting suicide for this cohort was age 15.

Many people experience challenges to their mental health and wellbeing during adolescence. However, the report findings show that, **compared to the general youth population in Ireland, LGBTQI+ young people aged 14-18 experience three times the level of severe or extremely severe depression and anxiety, three times the rate of selfharm, twice the rate of suicidal thoughts, and five times the rate of suicide attempts.**

Research participants named the importance of supportive family and friends, a supportive workplace and support from the local community for LGBTQI+ people as important safeguards for mental health and wellbeing. Members of the LGBTQI+ community felt strongly that being able to come out and be accepted not only positively impacted their mental health and wellbeing but also fostered a greater sense of belonging and resilience.

However, members of Ireland’s LGBTQ+ community continue to navigate their lives within a climate of fear – despite being almost a decade on from the marriage equality referendum of 2015. *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* finds that **53% of LGBTQI+ people in Ireland feel unsafe holding hands with a same-sex partner in public, and over half of trans and non-binary people feel unsafe expressing their gender identity in public.** The research further found that one in four members of Ireland’s LGBTQI+ community have been punched, hit or physically attacked due to being LGBTQI+, and 72% experienced verbal abuse due to being LGBTQI+.

Primary schools are hugely formative places of socialisation where children learn important lessons about respect for diversity and difference. **There is a crucial need for awareness of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences to be fostered at all levels of education,** in an age and stage appropriate manner, so as to ensure the safety and equality of Ireland’s LGBTQ+ population generally.

The *Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland* research made a number of recommendations relevant to this submission, including:

- The Department of Education should continue to prioritise the timely implementation of Cineáltas: Action Plan on Bullying Implementation Plan 2023-2027, with a focus on initial teacher education and continuous professional development for new and existing post-primary school staff.
- The survey of attitudes of the general public showed that the knowledge base of the general public around LGBTQI+ identities include many uncertainties. As a result, the population is vulnerable to misinformation aimed at discrediting the LGBTQI+ community, in particular transgender, intersex and non-binary groups. While progress has been made since 2014 in terms of inclusivity and reduction in prejudice, in order to sustain this progress targeted educational initiatives rooted in evidence-based research are needed. Therefore, through a community partnership approach the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth should implement specific actionable, achievable, concrete, measurable and time-bound interventions to increase the knowledge and understanding of LGBTQI+ lives among the general public with targeted consideration regarding transgender, non-binary, intersex and bisexual experiences and needs.

Engineering Technology Teachers Association

This is a response on behalf of the Engineering Technology Teachers Association (ETTA) in relation to the Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Specification.

The ETTA is a voluntarily administered subject association, a Teacher Professional Network (TPN) representing teachers of Engineering, Technology and Design and Communication

Graphics (D.C.G). It was founded in 1983 by Engineering Teachers to collectively promote Engineering in education in Ireland. As a Teacher Professional Network, we support teachers by creating networking opportunities through training, upskilling and CPD. We represent teachers through various committees and communicate with a wide range of agencies on their behalf. We have been represented and involved in the Junior Cycle redevelopment of the subjects of Engineering, Applied Technology and Graphics and are currently involved in the Senior Cycle redevelopment of Engineering with the NCCA, represented by 2 members of the National Executive and multiple other members of our Association on the development group.

While we welcome the developments in recent years around STEM education at both primary and post-primary levels, we are still some way off regarding a coordinated approach to STEM education in schools in Ireland. The Draft Specification for Primary STE sets out some muchneeded clarity and focus on several areas which will no doubt improve the provision of STE education for students.

Notwithstanding this, we feel this draft falls short in several areas, particularly in fostering a solid foundation and enthusiasm for technology that can carry forward into secondary education and potentially inspire careers in Technology and engineering. As post-primary educators, the transition of students from primary education to post-primary is a key point in their education journey. Prior to this transition, their experience in primary education can influence choices that will affect their journey through post-primary. Primary education is a predominantly female profession with 85% female teachers. Depending on their own exposure to Technology and Engineering as subjects, this will tend to influence their own approach to those subjects. This approach inevitably influences their students and the conceptions on subjects during the transition to post-primary. Some primary students first exposure to these subjects is at open nights in post-primary. While the draft specification will go some way to addressing this, the specification outlines a continued disproportionate slant on science education while only providing a tokenistic approach to Technology and Engineering.

The content in the specification seems to outline Technology as something that is only relating to digital technology and computational thinking. This view is narrow and short-sighted in the breath of the subjects we teach in post-primary. While a valid area of STE subjects, it seems that the development group did not consider the specifications already in place at post-primary level. The subjects of Technology and Engineering are well established in post-primary, yet the strands which are well thought out and reasoned, are as far away from the STE specification as ever. This is evident in the Transitions and Continuity section on Table 1, page 2.

Drawing awareness to the subjects of Biology, Physics, Chemistry, Engineering and creating with Technology that children will encounter at post-primary school.

“Creating with Technology” is not a subject at post-primary school level. This is further reinforced in the Glossary, pages 33-35. The subjects of Biology, Chemistry and Physics are defined, yet Technology and Engineering are noticeably absent. Digital Technologies is defined, but this is not the subject of Technology. Digital Technologies is as much related to Mathematics, Chinese or Geography as it is to Technology. Mechatronics, a key strand in JC Engineering combines electronics, mechanisms, and control processes to capture key elements of later education and industrial practices, is not defined or alluded to in the draft. This is the issue surrounding this Draft Specification. There is a fundamental lack of awareness about STE in a broader context in Irish Education.

Page 6 outlines the Aims of the specification. While appropriate, the aims for Skills Development and Conceptual and Procedural Understanding refer to skills, concepts, and procedures. The content in the Strands in section 4 does not refer to the skills, concepts and procedures referred to in the Aims. From a Technology or Engineering viewpoint, not quantifying specific skills to be addressed, appropriate to the subjects of Technology and Engineering leave much too much scope for interpretation when choosing skills, concepts, and procedures.

The Learning Outcomes, Table 5, pages 13-17, outlines explicit areas to be covered in most of the strands. Technology and Engineering in our opinion, are treated in a different regard. We address these in more detail later while comparing the to the JC Applied Technologies Learning Outcomes. The learning outcomes in the draft relating to Technology are indeed quite explicit, but explicit in a very narrow focus of Technology. When considering the JC Applied Technology specification, see Appendix A of this document, it is evident that this draft only regards digital technologies and coding (and its associated skills) as important. There is no mention of corresponding strands in post-primary Applied Technology, and it fails to allude to specific topics as other strands do.

On a positive note, Appendix 1 expands on the strand of Technology outlining the key concepts that will be addressed in the various stages. But our positivity is quickly eroded when reading the content of the key concepts. Inexplicably, the various concepts focus on 'technology' in the most general sense of the term and relates only to a small area of the subject in post-primary schools. The purpose of this specification is not a precursor to post-primary specifications but at the same time it should be a broad outline of experiences that could be built on for students in post-primary. The content of the key concepts as laid out are much too narrow to allow this and will lead to students completing the transition from Primary to Post-Primary with unrealistic expectations of what Technology is.

The strand of Engineering, unfortunately without an appendix for more detail of key concepts, is noticeably light on detail compared to the other strands. The theme of design problems runs through the stages and speaks in generality about the concepts and skills associated with it. Compared to the strand of Energy and Forces which mentions renewable and non-renewable energy, light, colours, refraction, reflection, electrical conductors and insulators, the

Engineering strand is void of anything but generalities surrounding design. The potential to build on electrical conductors to build circuits and mechatronic solutions to problems is a natural progression that could be facilitated. The complete strand is aspirational with no detail for teachers or others. Engineering is about interpreting design problems to manufacture improved solutions to such problems. But the structure of the strand in its current form limits students from the manufacturing element of Engineering. While we would not envisage manufacturing in the sense that we undertake in post-primary, there are many different hands-on activities which could be undertaken to make the Engineering and Technology elements of the specification appealing to students on a practical level.

Here are the key issues relating to the Technology strand of the draft and recommended solutions:

Key Shortcomings:

1. **Lack of Depth in Technological Understanding:** The primary school outcomes are superficial, focusing more on basic awareness rather than deep understanding. While it is important for students to recognize distinct types of technologies and their uses, this does not sufficiently prepare them for the analytical and practical skills required in secondary education.
2. **Insufficient Emphasis on Problem-Solving and Design Thinking:** Outcomes related to problem-solving are introductory and do not challenge students to engage in systematic analysis or iterative design processes. Junior cycle outcomes emphasize the development of design solutions, prototyping, and iterative planning (JC Outcomes 1.1 to 1.4), which are critical skills that need early cultivation.
3. **Minimal Focus on Real-World Applications and Impact:** The primary school specification lacks depth in exploring the real-world impact of technology. Junior cycle students are expected to consider user needs, environmental impacts, and societal implications (JC Outcomes 3.1 to 3.9), which are essential for developing responsible and innovative future technologists.
4. **Limited Hands-On Experience:** While the primary outcomes include creating and testing programs, there is a lack of emphasis on hands-on, project-based learning that involves building, experimenting, and troubleshooting. Junior cycle outcomes require students to engage deeply with materials, tools, and processes (JC Outcomes 1.8 to 1.10), which should begin at a younger age.
5. **Insufficient Preparation for Future Learning:** The primary specification does not align well with the skills and knowledge required in the junior cycle, potentially leading to a gap in preparedness. Junior cycle students analyse control systems, design solutions, and evaluate effectiveness (JC Outcomes 2.1 to 2.10), necessitating a stronger foundational understanding from primary education.

Recommendations:

1. **Enhance Technological Literacy:** Introduce more detailed and advanced concepts in technology at the primary level. This should include a deeper exploration of how various technologies work, beyond mere awareness.
2. **Integrate Design Thinking Early:** Incorporate design thinking and problem-solving methodologies from an early age. Primary students should engage in projects that require them to design, test, and iterate, fostering a mindset geared towards innovation and creativity.
3. **Focus on Real-World Applications:** Embed learning outcomes that encourage students to explore the real-world applications and impacts of technology. This can include projects that address community issues or environmental challenges, linking classroom learning to broader societal contexts.
4. **Increase Hands-On, Project-Based Learning:** Provide opportunities for hands-on experimentation and project-based learning. This can involve using kits, tools, and simple materials to build and program devices, giving students practical experience and problem-solving skills.

5. **Align with Secondary Education Outcomes:** Ensure a seamless transition from primary to secondary education by aligning the primary school outcomes more closely with those of the junior cycle. This can be achieved by gradually introducing concepts and skills that will be developed further in secondary school, such as systematic analysis, prototyping, and evaluating technological solutions.

The above points would also be relevant to the Engineering strand of the draft specification. We would welcome any correspondence, written, verbally or in person to discuss our point of view with the development group or the relevant Education Officer of the NCCA to further elaborate on it. By addressing these shortcomings, the NCCA can create a more robust and inspiring STE education framework that not only prepares primary students for secondary education but also ignites a lifelong interest in Technology and Engineering. This approach will better equip students with the necessary skills and mindset to thrive in an increasingly technological world.

Appendix A – Applied Technology Learning Outcomes

Strand 1

- 1.1 develop a design solution drawing on experience and using evidence, reasoning, and decision making
- 1.2 analyse problems using a systematic approach
- 1.3 refine ideas through the use of prototyping
- 1.4 review planning decisions throughout
- 1.5 consider the end-user experience at each stage of the design process
- 1.6 understand the role, impact and potential of existing and emerging technologies
- 1.7 apply innovative approaches in design solutions
- 1.8 develop a plan for the realisation of a solution
- 1.9 select appropriate materials, equipment and processes in solving a problem
- 1.10 execute a plan using appropriate tools, materials and processes
- 1.11 demonstrate adherence to recognised health and safety standards
- 1.12 document progression from concept to realisation
- 1.13 communicate evidence of the iterative process of design

Strand 2

- 2.1 investigate relationships between the inputs, transformations, and outputs occurring within simple control systems
- 2.2 evaluate ideas through the use of simulation
- 2.3 recognise the principles of control systems when developing their solution

2.4 design a logical sequence of instructions to control a device or system

2.5 apply innovative approaches to designing control system solutions

2.6 explore energy conservation and efficiency

2.7 identify appropriate energy and control systems for design solutions

2.8 create control solutions to identified problems

2.9 communicate technical information in appropriate forms

2.10 explain the transformation of inputs to outputs

Strand 3

3.1 analyse the impact of constraints on the design of solutions

3.2 evaluate the effectiveness of solutions

3.3 explain how human, societal and environmental considerations affect solutions and outcomes

3.4 explore applications of technology in local contexts

3.5 justify their selection of materials and processes based on factors such as environmental, economic and ethical considerations

3.6 consider user needs at all stages of design

3.7 recognise their responsibility for ensuring security and privacy of personal data

3.8 evaluate the impact of technologies on their lives, society and the environment

3.9 discuss the potential of technology to affect society and the environment

Engineers Ireland

Engineers Ireland submission to the consultation on ‘Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Specification. For primary and special schools’

For the attention of NCCA

Date: 14/06/24

Introduction

Engineers Ireland is one of the oldest and largest representative bodies on the island of Ireland, with over 28,000 members of which over 9,000 are Chartered Engineers. This membership incorporates all disciplines of the engineering profession in Ireland: consulting and contracting organisations, the public sector, semi-state bodies

and educational institutes. A recent survey conducted by Ipsos B&A shows that 92% of the public views engineers as highly competent, the highest number of any profession.

Engineers Ireland awards the professional title Chartered Engineer (CEng MIEI) in line with the Institution of Civil Engineers of Ireland (Charter Amendment) Act, 1969. This registered professional title is recognised internationally and under Irish law. Additionally, Engineers Ireland accredits third-level engineering programmes at NFQ6 to NFQ9 and is a recognised leader in developing global standards in engineering education. The organisation chaired and hosted the meetings of the International Engineering Alliance (IEA) in Ireland during 2022. The IEA sets international engineering education exemplars for engineers globally.

Encouraging future generations of engineers is integral to Engineers Ireland's mission, and a crucial component of our advocacy efforts is the Engineers Ireland STEPS Programme. For twenty-five years, our STEPS outreach programme to primary and secondary schools has interacted with over a million school children. In 2024 alone, over 98,000 schoolchildren took part in "Engineers Week" events, which ran from the 2nd to the 8th of March this year, with 500 organisations participating.

Our STEPS programme also provides a Young Engineers Award, an Engineering Your Future programme for Transition Year students, and a dedicated engineering merit badge developed with the Girl Guides. Each year hundreds of our members and volunteers visit schools nationwide to provide insights into the exciting world of engineering. The programme is detailed at www.steps.ie

Comments on the draft document.

Thank you for providing the draft “*NCCA Science, Technology and Engineering Education Specification for primary and special schools*” to Engineers Ireland for consideration.

Engineers Ireland acknowledges the significant work already done in formulating this document and welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback.

Engineers Ireland has a number of concerns, which are outlined below with recommendations in each case:

- The lack of representation of the engineering profession, more specifically of engineering academia on the board responsible for commissioning this report, is perhaps an oversight, particularly given the strength of engineering education research in Ireland. For context, TU Dublin hosted the European Society for Engineering Education (SEFI) conference in September 2023 on their Grangegorman campus, which saw over 500 delegates in attendance, a disproportionately large number of which were Irish engineering academics and researchers.
- The second concern is that of the learning outcomes presented in the specification and how they link to assessment, which at present is unclear. For example, pg. 13 of the specification states that students will “*Develop an understanding of the nutritional value of everyday foods and the importance of good nutrition on the human body. AL, W*”. The question to the NCCA is, *how is understanding going to be assessed?*
- It is noted from the Appendix on pg. 37, that the learning outcomes for the Technology strand are much better constructed in that they can be readily linked to assessment, however, they have learning aims and learning outcomes, which have not been clearly delineated, and are presented as being solely learning outcomes. More clarity can be created by delineating aims and outcomes and increasing consistency in how the various learning outcomes have been written.

Engineers Ireland recommends the following actions be taken:

- 1) Elect an engineering academic to the board to represent the interests of the profession and consult on the development of discipline-specific learning outcomes for the engineering stream. A suitable member of Engineers Ireland can be recommended.
- 2) Write learning outcomes for each stream and ensure a consistent approach to formulating them, i.e., distinguish between a learning objective and a learning outcome, and link the learning outcomes to the assessment.
- 3) Increase focus on active engagement with experienced engineers, encouraging tours, talks, or online engagement. Example resources [Schools | Engineers Ireland, I'm an Engineer, Get me out of here! – An engineering education and engagement event! \(imanengineer.org.uk\)](#)
- 4) It is important to note that engineering is a 'doing' profession. Schoolchildren need to develop skills in application and spatial awareness to maximise their potential in this area. Spatial ability is the most reliable and consistent predictor of success in STEM fields, and has been for the past 65 years. A recent article published in [Nature](#) as well as a large scale study published in [The Journal of Educational Psychology](#) on the subject may be of interest on this topic. Ireland is actively engaged in this research, via the EU-funded [SellSTEM project](#), which seeks to address deficits in spatial ability among children.
- 5) While it is perhaps beyond the scope of the consultation, it is important that pupils (and their parents) are made aware of the part engineering plays in everyday life and to avoid adhering to stereotypes (e.g. all engineers work in construction).

In conclusion, Engineers Ireland welcomes the opportunity to work with the NCCA in developing a curriculum that reflects the diverse and exciting world of engineering and the opportunities it provides for society, and supporting the next generation of Ireland to develop STEM skills.

[ENDS]

Submitted by:

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Background to Engineers Ireland

With over 28,000 members from every discipline of engineering, Engineers Ireland is the voice of the engineering profession in Ireland. Engineers Ireland was established in 1835 making us one of the oldest and largest professional bodies in the country. Members come from every discipline of engineering and range from engineering students to fellows of the profession.

Our responsibility is to

- Promote knowledge of engineering
- Establish and maintain standards of professional engineering and engineering education
- Provide opportunities for Continuing Professional Development (CPD)
- Maintain standards of professional ethics and conduct
- Ensure that professional titles are granted to qualified candidates
- Act as the authoritative voice of the engineering profession in Ireland

Our Vision Statement

Engineers Ireland: a community of creative professionals delivering sustainable solutions for society.

Our Mission Statement

Engineers Ireland is an institution that enables the engineering community to progress their professional development and make a sustainable impact on society, advocates for the profession, quality assures education and encourages the future generations of engineers.



Submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on the
Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum Specification

Professor Jennifer Schweppe, School of Law, and Professor Amanda Haynes, Department of
Sociology and European Centre for the Study of Hate, University of Limerick

Key Issue:

The Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum must take appropriate care to ensure that the Curriculum meets the standards of the Council of Europe with respect to promoting inclusion and preventing hate crime.

Context:

The [Council of Europe Recommendation CM/Rec\(2024\)4 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on combating hate crime](#) seeks to ensure that hate and hate crime in its multiplicity of manifestations is targeted across societies. It recognises that one of the key means of combating hate crime is to *prevent* hate crime in a comprehensive manner within the framework of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Indeed, the Preamble to the Recommendation concludes that a:

“comprehensive multistakeholder approach is needed to prevent and combat hate crime, comprising a coherent strategy and a wide-ranging set of legal and policy measures that take due account of specific situations and broader contexts...”

Paragraphs 62 and 63 of the Recommendation addresses themselves to education systems in particular:

“62. Member States should ensure that education institutions, teachers and educators contribute to developing a culture of inclusiveness which values diversity and human rights. To this end, the following measures should be introduced and properly resourced by member States across education systems:

- a. comprehensive, research-based teacher education;
- b. comprehensive, research-based educational resources for use in education and classrooms;
- c. the integration of diversity, gender equality and inclusion into education policy.

All curricula should be reviewed for the purposes of fostering an inclusive ethos that promotes mutual respect and equality, and to ensure that curricula are free from discriminatory content. Curricula should be “living” and evolving, co-constructed in meaningful ways with children and young people, and, where appropriate, civil society organisations.

63. Member States should take a trauma-informed approach to managing and addressing offences within education systems which is also sensitive and responsive to gender, disability and other protected characteristics. Member States are encouraged to introduce distinct reporting systems for hate crime across education systems. Consideration should be given to the introduction of trained and specialised liaison officers to provide such support.”

Explanatory Memorandum

The [Explanatory Memorandum to the Recommendation](#) goes into further detail as to the requirements of paragraphs 62 and 63. The relevant sections in a primary curriculum include:

On paragraphs 62-63

143. Educational systems should be seen by member States as a key means of recognising and addressing the particularly insidious impacts of hate crime on young people. In this regard, Chapters II and III of the [ECRI GPR No. 10 on combating racism and racial discrimination in and through school education](#) contain a set of relevant recommendations which should be adopted and adapted to apply also to other protected characteristics. In this context, ECRI provided an example of a good practice in Cyprus’ “Shield against Homophobia” organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture, the Commissioner for Administration and Human Rights and the Commissioner for Children’s Rights, to train educators of different levels on the topic of homophobia in schools. Cases of hate crime may be part of a broader problem of bullying in school settings, especially where there are hate elements present. Although general bullying may focus on a wide range of characteristics of the victims, and all forms of bullying should be stopped and addressed properly by school staff, bullying due to the **victims’ identity as an ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability or other protected minorities** should be taken particularly seriously by the school staff and leadership. The importance of early intervention in this regard cannot be overemphasised. Any case involving criminal activity should of course be referred to the police by school authorities.

144. A research-informed and quality assured approach should be taken to teacher education and the development of educational resources for use in education and classrooms as part of primary and post-primary education. **Human rights education, education for democratic citizenship and media, and information literacy, all of which should address offline and online hate speech, should be embedded in the general education curriculum at all stages. Diversity and inclusion should be embedded in educational policy, from teacher education, ongoing training and curriculum development, and through classroom resources.** Such resources, training, and policies should be cyclically reviewed. Expanding awareness on trauma and its effects is also a key skill that will assist educators to understand the experience of all victims of hate crime...

146. As well as seeing educational systems as a key means by which hate can be prevented and addressed, educational systems can also be a means by which hate can be fomented and reproduced. Accordingly, measures to prevent this from occurring should be considered at national, regional and institutional levels. Where possible, teachers and educators should be

trained on managing and addressing hate crime in a trauma-informed manner. Additionally, the Recommendation suggests that specialist liaison officers could be considered to provide support across educational districts and to ensure consistency in areas such as reporting of hate crime in educational institutions.

Good Practices

The [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) subjects member States to iterative review with respect to how racism and intolerance are addressed in society. ECRI is now in its [sixth monitoring cycle](#), with each monitoring cycle lasting approximately five years. At the start of each monitoring cycle, key areas of focus are determined, and for the sixth monitoring cycle, the three areas of focus are:

- Effective equality and access to rights;
- Hate speech and hate-motivated violence;
- Integration and inclusion

In the ECSR report [ECRI - Good Practices in Addressing Hate Crime: A Mid-Cycle Analysis](#), students working with the European Centre for the Study of Hate reviewed the reports of 23 countries which had been published by ECRI at the time of review, representing exactly half of the Council of Europe member States. The group identified particularly good practices with respect to scholastic education and training including:

- In Albania, in the field of inclusive education, the project “Fighting Bullying and Extremism in the Education System” 2016-2019 supported the authorities in their efforts to develop strategies and responses to these phenomena in schools.
- In Denmark, in 2017-2018 a program to prevent hate crimes in schools was implemented in a state school, using different tools to strengthen democratic skills such as tolerance, critical thinking, dialogue, and reflection in order to prevent polarization, prejudices, violent behavior and hate crimes. Several projects directed at mobilizing young voices in the prevention of online radicalization and hate speech have received funding in 2017- 2019 as part of the National Action Plan for Preventing and Countering Extremism and Radicalization.
- In Georgia, a 20-hour course for current primary and secondary civic education teachers with senior teacher status, entitled Peace Education – Peace processes, which also addresses intercultural relations was developed by the National Centre for Teacher Professional Development. In 2021, twelve groups were organized and over 500 teachers were trained.
- In Germany, the ministers of education of the Länder have elaborated a set of recommendations on inclusive education and the Länder are implementing large projects to prevent and counter racism, homophobia, and transphobia at school. The implementation of such education could assist in the identification of factors and conduct that may relate to Hate Crime offences.
- In Hungary, in the field of inclusive education, the authorities have adopted a wide range of anti-segregation measures, including the setting up of anti-segregation working groups in 2019 in every school district.
- In Iceland, in the field of inclusive education, the Education Policy 2030, which was adopted in 2021, defines “equal opportunities for all” as one of its five pillars. Several bullying prevention programs were also implemented. Several developments promoting LGBTI equality have taken

place. These include the adoption of the Act on Gender Autonomy in 2019 and the first-ever Icelandic LGBTI Action Plan in 2022.

- In Luxembourg, an awareness-raising campaign on school bullying and violence was launched in 2021. An awareness-raising campaign to promote acceptance of intersex people was also launched. This promotion of awareness-raising and education is no doubt a successful measure in combating hate crime, as it will improve the ability of relevant and future actors to identify factors and conduct that may lead to hate crime.
- In Monaco, in the field of education, promising practices for the promotion of equality and the fight against racism and intolerance have been developed, as have measures to tackle bullying in schools. Hate-motivated verbal or physical violence is rare, and measures to raise awareness of it and prevent it have been taken in schools and the sports sector.

Conclusion

In developing the Primary Wellbeing Curriculum, the ECSH would recommend that particular care be taken to ensure that recommendations emanating from the Council of Europe with respect to educational institutions be carefully implemented to ensure that children at all educational levels are protected from harm and wellbeing promoted. In particular, care should be taken to ensure that the well-being of children across all identities, and in particular their ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, gender expression, disability and other protected characteristics are respected and protected.

European Movement Ireland



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Dear Officials in the Department of Education,

I trust you are keeping well. I am writing to you on behalf of European Movement Ireland (EMI) who are delighted to have worked with the education partners on developing programmes to educate young people on the EU. From our experience of working in this area there is a large appetite among pupils and teachers to learn about Europe and their European identity.

Since our foundation in 1954, EMI has worked to build the connection between Ireland and the EU. We remain keenly aware of the value of constructively engaging with younger members of Irish society; and how primary schools, teachers, and wider school communities in Ireland have a vital role to play in ensuring an informed, active, and engaged population on Ireland's relationship with the EU. We have particularly seen this through our work on implementing the Blue Star Programme, a Department of Foreign Affairs' programme that supports Primary school pupils to learn about European history, geography, culture and its institutions.

Learning about Europe in Primary school is important for pupils as it provides wider context to their studies. In addition, it provides an inclusive foundation for pupils across Ireland to learn about shared European cultures and to develop the values of active citizenship and participatory democracy at a young age. As such we have identified several aspects of the new Draft National Primary School Curriculum where Europe, the EU and European identity should be embedded.

Under the 'Responding and Connecting' aspect of the Draft Arts Education Curriculum, a focus should include examining art forms from European cultures. A European focus has previously encouraged teachers in the National Curriculum, curriculums and in programmes such as the Blue Star Programme. In the new Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) should recognise the importance of learning some of the 24 European languages given that almost half of non-Irish citizens in Ireland are EU citizens (CSO, 2022). As the curriculum already indicates that learning a foreign language 'supports the development of self-efficacy, identity and full participation in society' as such the learning of European languages would support pupils in fostering their European identity.

We recognise the importance of supporting young people develop their own personal identity and the various cultures that may feed into this as highlighted in the new Draft Wellbeing Specification. It is

important that teachers and the wider school community can highlight to pupils that being European, and for most pupils in Irish schools being an EU citizen, feeds into this identity. We would also recommend expanding on the references to Europe in the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum to include specific references to the European Union and its institutions when referring to democracy, particular; ‘Fostering a culture based on the global learning themes of: Human rights, Democracy, Equity, Social and Environmental justice, Sustainable development.’

EMI are committed to implementing the Blue Star Programme and other education programmes that support and/or complement the national curriculum, however, for all pupils to have an understanding of Europe and the EU, it should be integrated into their education at Primary school level. This will ensure that all pupils and the wider population have a greater understanding of the EU and its role in Irish people’s lives resulting in a more informed and engaged society.

From our experience of running similar initiatives, we have found that learning about European culture and identity promotes inclusivity, empathy, and cross-cultural integration among participating teachers and pupils. In addition, it helps them understand Ireland's role in a broader European context, fostering a sense of belonging and cooperation within Europe. It equips them with the understanding required to actively participate in shaping Ireland's relationship with the EU.

We would appreciate your support in recognising the value of Irish pupils learning about their European identity, European shared culture and the EU institutions and values. We believe that this recognition should be the inclusion of a European dimension in the updated Irish Primary School Curriculum.

We look forward to seeing the final edition of the Primary Curriculum with the inclusion of the European dimension. Should you require further support from our organisation on how to embed the European element into the curriculum or for any clarification on our submission please do not hesitate to contact our Education Manager, Elizabeth Moody in copy, elizabeth@europeanmovement.ie.

Le gach dea-ghuí,



Noelle O Connell

CEO European Movement Ireland

Family and Media Association

We note with concern that there is an effective downgrading of the role of spirituality in the new draft(s) compared with the 1999 Primary School Curriculum.

We note also that ('nature abhors a vacuum') this gap is being filled in the new draft(s) not by true religion but by the pseudo religions of ideology and activism. Children should not be allowed to be the prey of failed repackaged ideologies and it is highly irresponsible and not merely wasteful of their time to impose these political perspectives on them (ironically in the name of diversity) all at the expense of their basic education.

The Wellbeing draft states, "RSE supports children to acquire accurate and developmentally appropriate information about human development and sexuality that is evidence informed." The implicit contrast (though a false dichotomy) between (scientific) evidence seen as superior and religious belief seen as inferior is indeed ironic given the very strong *scientific* evidence for the importance of religious belief in wellbeing and, to call a spade a spade, *happiness*. Prof Martin Seligman's work is very important in this regard and would appear to be all but impossible to ignore, unless of course, one is either captured by a form of groupthink or ideologically driven to discount the very scientific evidence one claims as support for one's position.

Going back to the last century, there have also been attempts to abuse both children and science -- See for example Dr Judith Reisman on Kinsey: Crimes & Consequences -- with pseudoscientific and even fraudulent claims about what is 'developmentally appropriate'. Also, a concept of "consent" detached from absolute values of right and wrong, supported by religious belief, can actually end up bringing about the opposite to what is apparently being sought (the protection of children). Just as consent cannot *really* turn 'prostitution' into 'sex-work' (it remains prostitution in reality), neither can it turn all manner of child sexual abuse and corruption into benign or value free phenomena. Word washing won't work!

Finally, as the Family and Media Association, we are of course determined to 'promote a better understanding of the media', but immersing understanding in the 'ideologies-as-religions' which appear to run through these drafts seems a recipe for hardwiring '*mis*' and even '*dis*' understanding.

conc

Donal O'Sullivan-Latchford

Family and Media Association



Family Solidarity Submission on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Introduction

Family Solidarity appreciates the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft primary school curriculum specifications. Our organisation represents the interests of families who are deeply concerned about the well-being and appropriate development of their children within the educational system. Our primary concern is the excessive politicisation of the draft curriculum, which encourages young children to engage in social activism, a role we believe is inappropriate for their age and maturity level.

Additionally, we are concerned that the new curriculum may allow teachers to influence students according to their personal ideologies, which might not align with the views of the parents. This approach fails to respect the plurality and diversity of political opinions held by parents, thereby undermining the educational practice.

Arts Education

The draft Arts Education curriculum specification introduces a “culturally responsive pedagogy” that emphasises inclusivity and the celebration of diverse backgrounds, languages, and cultures (p. 29). While these goals are laudable, the document frequently uses ideological language, such as “promoting inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity” (p. 2). This focus shifts the primary objective of arts education from fostering creativity and individual expression to serving as a vehicle for social change.

The concern arises from the explicit aim to develop empathy and understanding towards different cultures and perspectives, potentially encouraging young students to adopt

specific political stances. For example, the curriculum includes objectives such as “exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others, and fostering a sense of global citizenship” (p. 10). These goals, while seemingly benign, embed a level of activism within the arts that is not age-appropriate for primary-level students.

Primary Language

In the draft Primary Language specification, including modern foreign languages, there is a significant emphasis on fostering an inclusive educational environment that celebrates linguistic and cultural diversity. The curriculum aims to “challenge all stereotypes and misconceptions” and “promote mutual understanding, tolerance, and respect for identities and cultural diversity” (p. 12).

While promoting the appreciation of cultural diversity is important, the language used in these objectives can be seen as prioritising social justice over the practical aspects of language acquisition. The primary goal of learning a new language should be developing proficiency and communication skills. However, the curriculum’s focus on social cohesion and challenging stereotypes may detract from these fundamental aims.

Social and Environmental Education

The draft Social and Environmental Education (SEE) curriculum combines history and geography into a single subject, focusing on global issues such as climate change, social justice, and sustainability (pp. 21-22). This integration is a clear example of the curriculum’s politicisation, as it encourages students to adopt activist roles from a young age.

For instance, one of the key competencies is “Be an Activist,” which includes social justice activism, environmental activism, and empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes (p. 18). This approach aligns with political ideologies, promoting the questioning of societal structures and encouraging children to engage in social activism. The curriculum’s emphasis on global learning themes, such as equity, equality, and social justice, further underscores this political orientation.

This focus on global concerns over local, tangible issues relevant to the children’s immediate environment is inappropriate.

Science, Technology, and Engineering Education

The Science, Technology, and Engineering Education (STEM) curriculum also reflects an ideological shift. The curriculum aims to “challenge stereotypes and nurture empathy” within the context of STEM education (p. 2). While inclusivity in STEM is important, the primary focus should be on developing scientific knowledge and technical skills.

The emphasis on sustainability and climate awareness is a significant component of the curriculum. However, there is a concern that this focus might create climate anxiety among young students. The curriculum should prioritise teaching foundational scientific principles and practical problem-solving skills, rather than embedding political ideologies within its framework.

Wellbeing Education

The Wellbeing specification, encompassing Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education (PE), introduces new areas such as consent, diversity in family structures, and digital wellbeing (p. 11). While the goal of supporting children’s social, emotional, and physical development is commendable, the specification notably lacks sufficient reference to "spiritual wellbeing."

In the 1999 curriculum, the spiritual dimension was acknowledged as an integral part of a child’s development. However, in the draft framework, spirituality is briefly mentioned in the context of overall wellbeing but is not given due emphasis in the specific activities and learning experiences of the Wellbeing course (p. 11, p. 17). This omission overlooks the importance of spiritual growth as part of holistic education.

Additionally, the Wellbeing curriculum’s focus on fostering a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, equality, and social justice (p. 2) aligns with the broader trend of encouraging political activism. This approach may not be suitable for primary-level students, who are still developing their understanding of the world and their place within it.

Also, there is an overlap between the Social and Environmental Education (SEE) specification and sections of the Wellbeing curriculum. The strand called “community and belonging” is redundant as such themes are already covered in the SEE course.

Conclusion

Family Solidarity firmly believes that the draft primary curriculum’s emphasis on activism and social justice is not age-appropriate for young children. The politicisation of education risks undermining the respect for all political views that should be central to the curriculum. We urge the NCCA to reconsider the integration of these elements and to refocus the curriculum on providing a balanced and comprehensive education that prioritises foundational knowledge and skills over ideological goals.

We recommend the following revisions:

Arts Education: Reduce the emphasis on social justice and inclusivity as primary goals. Focus on developing creativity, individual expression, and appreciation of cultural heritage.

Primary Language: Prioritise language proficiency and practical communication skills over social justice objectives.

Social and Environmental Education: Maintain a balanced focus on local and national content alongside global issues. Ensure that foundational knowledge in history and geography is not compromised by broad, vague learning outcomes.

STEM Education: Emphasise foundational scientific principles and practical skills. Address sustainability and climate awareness in a way that does not induce anxiety.

Wellbeing Education: Restore the emphasis on spiritual wellbeing as part of holistic development. Ensure that the curriculum supports children’s overall growth without encouraging premature political activism.

We appreciate the NCCA’s efforts in updating the primary school curriculum and look forward to a revised version that better serves the educational needs of our children.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Angelo Bottone

On behalf of Family Solidarity

References

Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification, NCCA, p. 2, p. 10, p. 29.

Draft Primary Language Curriculum Specification, NCCA, p. 12.

Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification, NCCA, p. 18, pp. 21-22.

Draft STEM Education Curriculum Specification, NCCA, p. 2, p. 31.

Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification, NCCA, p. 2, p. 11, p. 17.

Aighneacht ó Fhoireann Theagasc na Gaeilge, Scoil na Teanga, na Litearthachta agus an Oideachais Luathóige, Ollscoil Chathair Bhaile Átha Cliath maidir le

Dréachtchuraclam Teanga na Bunscoile – lena n-áirítear na Nuatheangacha Iasachta (NTI) Do Bhunscoileanna agus Scoileanna Speisialta.

Fáiltíonn muid roimh an deis seo aighneacht a dhéanamh. Tá na tuairimí ar mhaith linn a roinnt leis an CNCM pléite faoi na teidil seo thíos.

Dáileadh ama sa Chreachuraclam

Impíonn muid ar an CNCM agus ar an Aire Oideachais athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an gcinneadh laghdú a dhéanamh ar an am teagaisc don Ghaeilge i scoileanna T2. Téann an cinneadh seo i gcoinne gach atá ar eolas againn maidir le teoiricí foghlama teanga maidir le foghlaim mionteangacha agus i gcoinne an taighde idirnáisiúnta ar fhorbairt scileanna teanga agus litearthachta i réimse mionteangacha. Teastaíonn ionchur ar leith i gcás sprioctheanga ar nós na Gaeilge ar scoil go mbeidh deis ag páistí i scoileanna T2 scileanna maithe cumarsáideacha a fhorbairt sa Ghaeilge. Teastaíonn ionchur teanga, deiseanna idirghníomhaithe teanga agus deiseanna aschuir teanga sa Ghaeilge i scoileanna T2 leis an dara teanga (An Ghaeilge) a shealbhú go rathúil (Lightbown & Spada, 2020). Bainfidh an laghdú ama seo atá molta go tubaisteach ó dheiseanna foghlama na bpáistí a fhreastalaíonn ar scoileanna T2. Is aisteach, cé go bhfuil laghdú ar an am teagaisc, nach bhfuil athrú ar na torthaí foghlama nó ar na hionchais d'fhoghlaim na bpáistí i gcéad agus i ndara teanga na scoile. Cé go n-aistríonn straitéisí, scileanna agus eolas teangeolaíoch ar leith ní aistríonn gach gné den eolas teangeolaíoch (Cummins, 2021). Teastaíonn am agus ionchur teanga ar leith ó fhoghlaimoirí le scileanna maithe teanga agus litearthachta a fhorbairt sa Ghaeilge. Mura mbíonn neart ionchuir ag foghlaimoirí ní éireoidh leo inniúlacht teanga a bhaint amach (Lightbown & Spada, 2020). Teastóidh níos mó ionchuir agus níos mó tacaíochta ó fhoghlaimoirí áirithe (Kay Raining Bird, Genesee & Verhoeven, 2016). Tagann an laghdú ama seo salach ar pholasaí eile na Roinne Oideachais agus an Rialtais i leith chur chun cinn na Gaeilge (Rialtas na hÉireann, 2010; Rialtas na hÉireann, 2018). Ní dhéanann sé ciall go mbeadh laghdú ama mar seo sa bhunscoil agus gan athrú leis na hionchais ag leibhéal na hiarbhunscoile ach oiread. Teastaíonn polasaí leanúnach don Ghaeilge a nascann gach leibhéal oideachais agus a fhreagraíonn do na cearta teanga atá ag gach páiste Gaeilge a fhoghlaim de réir a chumas féin. Ba chóir go mbeadh an curaclam ag teacht le mórpholasaithe eile an Rialtais don Ghaeilge.

Easpa Taighde ar Chur i bhFeidhm Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (CTB)

Molann muid gan an tríú teanga a thabhairt isteach gan taighde a dhéanamh ar chur i bhfeidhm CTB mar atá. Níl taighde cuimsitheach déanta ar CTB (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna (ROS), 2019). Tá gnéithe áirithe den churaclam, cur i gcás teagasc i dtreo scileanna a thraschur, úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil, An Fhoghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teangacha (FCÁT) trí Ghaeilge, cuir chuige ionchuimsitheacha don Ghaeilge, oideolaíochtaí cumarsáideacha teanga agus cuir chuige ilteangacha, nach bhfuil á gcur i bhfeidhm go rathúil nó a dteastaíonn tacaíocht ó mhúinteoirí lena gcur i bhfeidhm. Tá sé léirithe ag Taighde na gCigirí le blianta anuas go dteastaíonn tacaíocht ó mhúinteoirí le teagasc na Gaeilge (Cigireacht na Roinne Oideachais, 2022). Nárbh fhearr tacú le cur i bhfeidhm an churaclaim mar atá leagtha amach ar an gcéad dul síos? D'fhéadfaí breathnú ina dhiaidh sin ar theangacha eile Eorpacha a theagasc ach ba ghá breathnú ar sholáthar ar bhonn níos leithne agus ar leanúnachas sa chóras leis an bhforbairt sin a chur i bhfeidhm go rathúil. Ba chóir go mbeadh an CNCM freagrach as tacú le cur i bhfeidhm CTB (ROS, 2019). Ní heol dúinn go bhfuil a dóthain taighde déanta go fóill. Is eol dúinn go bhfuil tacaíocht ag teastáil ó thaobh theagasc na Gaeilge de i scoileanna T2. Molann muid díriú ar na tosaíochtaí reatha mar chéad chéim.

Múineadh an Tríú Teanga

Má dhéanann muid athbhreithniú ar an taighde i Sasana ní raibh rath ar theagasc teangacha Eorpacha sa bhunscoil, a mhalairt ar fad atá fíor (Myles, 2017; Whiting & Marshall, 2023). Theip ar an gcóras mar nach raibh dóthain tacaíochtaí ann. Molann muid don CNCM léirbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an taighde reatha ar theagasc teangacha sa bhunscoil. Molann muid don CNCM breathnú ar an múnla atá molta sa chreachuraclam i gcomhthéacs an taighde idirnáisiúnta. An bhfuil taighde déanta ar dhlínsí ina bhfuil múinteoir ginearálaithe ag múineadh iliomad ábhar agus trí theanga agus mionteanga san áireamh sna trí theanga? Ní fheiceann muid an chiall leis an múnla atá molta mura bhfuil múinteoirí atá cáilithe leis na teangacha Eorpacha a theagasc agus mura bhfuil dóthain ama ar fáil. Is gá breathnú ar sholáthar múinteoirí agus ar sholáthar ama. Léirítear sa taighde go hanoiléir go dteastaíonn neart ama ó pháistí le teanga a shealbhú go rathúil. D'fhéadfadh rath níos mó a bheith ag foghlaimeoirí ag foghlaim an tríú teanga agus iad níos sine agus scileanna agus straitéisí eile forbartha acu agus an t-am ceart tugtha don phróiseas. Tá sé léirithe go soiléir sa taighde idirnáisiúnta nach ionann tús luath agus rath san fhoghlaim teanga (Collins & Muñoz, 2016; Lightbown & Spada, 2020). Ní dócha go mbeadh inniúlacht sa tríú teanga ag Céim 4 réadúil mar sprioc mar atá cúrsaí faoi láthair agus má thosaítear ar theanga eile san iarbunscoil ní fheiceann muid an leanúnachas sa chóras mar atá ann faoi láthair.

Bronnann teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge iliomad deiseanna saibhre ar fhoghlaimeoirí feasacht ilteangach agus idirchultúrtha a fhorbairt, féach Ní Dhiorbháin, Concannon-Gibney & Ní Dhubhghaill (2024 – le foilsíú) mar shampla. Toisc go bhfuil inniúlacht sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla ag gach múinteoir bunscoile molann muid tacaíocht a thabhairt do chur chuige feasachta teanga agus dearbhú teangacha baile atá éagsúil ón nGaeilge agus ón mBéarla trí mheán na Gaeilge agus trí mheán an Bhéarla.

Faoi láthair tá go leor dúshlán roimh mhúinteoirí agus cleachtas ionchuimsitheach á chur i bhfeidhm acu ar scoil i ngach réimse ábhar (Larios & Zetlin, 2023; Shevlin, Winter & Flynn, 2013). Tá sé seo fíor go háirithe sa Ghaeilge, ábhar a bhfuil sé de nós go traidisiúnta go díolúine a thabhairt ó staidéar na Gaeilge do go leor daltaí a bhfuil riachtanais bhreise oideachais acu (Darmody & Smyth, 2016). Is cleachtas é seo nach gcuirtear i bhfeidhm go hidirnáisiúnta, mar féachtar ar fud an domhain ar an dátheangachas agus ar an ilteangachas mar phróiseas nádúrtha foghlama teanga agus go bhfuil sé de chumas ag gach dalta an dara theanga a fhoghlaim (Kay Raining Bird et al., 2016). Mar gheall ar chleachtas diúltach na ndíolúintí tá go leor de na buntáistí a bhaineann leis an dátheangachas ceilte ar na daltaí seo, go háirithe iad siúd i ranganna speisialta agus i suímh scoile speisialta (Cioè-Peña, 2020; An Roinn Oideachais, 2024). Ar an drochuair, tá sé seo ag éirí níos forleithne i ranganna príomhshrutha freisin. Táimid mar ghrúpa ag moladh go gcuirfí curaclam idirdhealaithe ar fáil do mhúinteoirí le samplaí de chleachtais ionchuimsitheacha agus dearadh uilíoch don fhoghlaim chun ligean do gach dalta a bheith páirteach i gceachtanna Gaeilge roimh thús na nuatheanga iasachta. Tá sé tábhachtach go bhfaigheadh múinteoirí an tacaíocht seo ar dtús, sula n-iarrtar orthu oideolaíochtaí ionchuimsitheacha a chur i bhfeidhm sa tríú teanga. Tá sé an-tábhachtach chomh maith go dtabharfaí deis do gach dalta an Ghaeilge a fhoghlaim sula dtugann siad faoi theanga Eorpach. Tá ortagrafaíocht trédhearcach ag an Ghaeilge (Hickey & Stenson, 2011) agus de bharr sin ba chóir go mbeidh sé níos éasca don mhúinteoir an Ghaeilge a mhúineadh do gach dalta má tá treoir churaclaim curtha ar fáil dóibh maidir le difreáil agus cur chuige ionchuimsitheach. Tá sé ríthábhachtach go dtabharfaí tacaíocht do mhúinteoirí maidir le difreálú agus tacú le gach uile fhoghlaimoir teagmháil a bheith acu leis an nGaeilge ar na bealaí is mó a oireann dóibh féin (Tynan, 2018). Is gá dul i ngleic le ceist na ndíolúintí go práinneach sula bhfágfaí páistí a bhfuil riachtanas oideachais sa bhreis acu ar an imeall (Darmody & Smyth, 2016). Arís, molann muid am a ghlacadh le dul i ngleic leis na dúshláin atá aitheanta le cur i bhfeidhm CTB ar nós na díolúintí sula ndéanfaí athruithe móra curaclaim.

Oideachas Múinteoirí

Molann muid taighde a dhéanamh ar na riachtanais fhorbartha ghairmiúla atá ag cleachtóirí i scoileanna le CTB (ROS, 2019) a chur i bhfeidhm agus aghaidh a thabhairt ar na riachtanais sin roimh an tríú teanga a thabhairt isteach. Teastaíonn saineolas ar leith ó mhúinteoirí le teanga a theagasc a áiríonn inniúlacht sa teanga, eolas ar struchtúir na teanga chomh maith le scileanna oideolaíochta teanga (Andrews, 2007; Ó Ceallaigh, Hourigan & Leavy, 2019; Wright & Bolitho, 1993). Molann muid go láidir tacaíocht a chur ar fáil do mhúinteoirí le teagasc na Gaeilge roimh an tríú teanga a thabhairt isteach agus ualach sa bhreis a chur orthu ach gan an inniúlacht chuí acu sa teanga.

Teanga agus Litearthacht i Scoileanna T1

Molann muid aird a thabhairt sa churaclam ar chomhtháthú na teanga le hábhair eile curaclaim ach go háirithe i gcás scoileanna T1. Tá cur chuige frithchothromaithe mollta sa taighde idirnáisiúnta le tacú le foghlaimoirí cothromaíocht a bhaint amach idir foghlaim na teanga agus foghlaim an ábhair i scoileanna tumoideachais (Lyster, 2017; Tedick & Lyster, 2020). Faoi láthair tá

ábhair na gcuraclam eile aistriithe go Gaeilge, cur chuige a dhéanann róshimpliú ar an gcastacht a bhaineann le foghlaim ábhair trí theanga nach máthairtheanga na bhfoghlaimoirí í i gcásanna áirithe. Is gá d'fhoghlaimoirí an teanga agus na struchtúir teanga a bhaineann leis na hábhair eile a fhoghlaim go mbeidh rath ar a gcuid foghlama.

Cur Chuige Tasc-bhunaithe

Molann muid béim a leagan ar thascanna teanga sa churaclam mar bhealach leis an gcur chuige cumarsáideach a chur i bhfeidhm. Tá an cur chuige tasc-bhunaithe i bhfoghlaim agus teagasc teangacha aitheanta go hidirnáisiúnta mar mhodh atá éifeachtach le foghlaim an dara teanga a chur chun cinn (Fitzpatrick et al., 2019) agus molta i *Sonraíochtaí Ghaeilge na Sraithe Sóisearaí (An Roinn Oideachais, 2023a; An Roinn Oideachais, 2023b)*.

Comhchreat Tagartha na hEorpa um Theangacha (CTET)

Molann muid torthaí foghlama an churaclaim a nascadh leis an CTET le teacht le deachleachtas idirnáisiúnta san fhoghlaim teangacha agus le cosán trédhearcadh foghlama a leagan amach do gach foghlaimoir thar theangacha.

Áiseanna Digiteacha & Eile

Is é ceann de na príomhthorthaí a d'eascair as léirmheas litríochtaí maidir le teagasc agus foghlaim an dara teanga ná go bhfuil féidearthachtaí iontacha ag baint le húsáid na teicneolaíochta (Concannon-Gibney et al., 2023). Molann muid don CNCM grúpa oibre a bhunú a thabharfaidh faoi áiseanna digiteacha a fhorbairt do theagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge. Bheadh closleabhar iontach cabhrach do thuismitheoirí nach bhfuil Gaeilge acu. Teastaíonn scéim teanga chomh maith do scoileanna Gaeltachta agus scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge a thiocthadh in áit Shéideáin Sí le freastal ar na riachtanais teanga atá ag páistí i scoileanna T1.

Focal Scoir

Mar ghrúpa, feictear dúinne go mbaineann an-chuid buanna le CTB (ROS, 2019) agus go bhfuil an curaclam reatha fianaise-bhunaithe agus treoraithe ag an taighde agus an teoiric chuí. Tacaíonn muid go mór leis na moltaí a bhaineann le cur chuige cumarsáideach do theagasc na Gaeilge, traschur scileanna thar theangacha, úsáid na Gaeilge taobh amuigh den cheacht Gaeilge i scoileanna T2 agus cur chuige ilteangach do theagasc teangacha ach go háirithe. Tá dea-phrionsabail oideolaíochta léirithe tríd an gcuraclam maidir le teagasc na Gaeilge. Teastaíonn tacaíocht ó mhúinteoirí leis an gcuraclam reatha a chur i bhfeidhm áfach agus molann muid do CNCM freagairt do na riachtanais reatha atá ag múinteoirí agus ag foghlaimoirí roimh leasuithe móra eile a dhéanamh.

An Dr Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin, An Dr Jacqueline de Brún, An Dr Sinéad Nic Aindriú & Máire Ní Láimhín

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Gaelic Athletic Association, Ladies Gaelic Football Association and Camogie Association Draft Wellbeing Specification for all Primary and Special Schools

Submission on behalf of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), Ladies Gaelic football Association (LGFA), and Camogie Association

Introduction

The Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), Ladies Gaelic football Association (LGFA), and Camogie Association welcome the opportunity to make this submission regarding the Draft Wellbeing Specification for all Primary and Special Schools. There has traditionally been a close link between Gaelic games and Primary Schools, and we welcome the continuance of this relationship.

Wellbeing Curriculum Structure and Aims

The draft curriculum for Wellbeing integrates Physical Education (PE) and Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) both recognising the importance of these programmes, while reflecting the interconnected nature of a child’s physical, social, emotional, and spiritual development. Indeed, building upon the Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and connecting to the learning experiences provided in Junior Cycle provides a pathway for the development of children and teenagers, while acknowledging the individual nature of learning.

It is also significant that the Wellbeing Curriculum recognises the interconnectedness of personal wellbeing with the broader community and social context (Section 3: Aims). Addressing issues of this nature inevitably leads to questions such as “who am I, where do I come from, what are my values, how can I enhance the common good, where am I going and what are the things that I fear most.” This reflects a shared process, which people care deeply about, and which also provides an expression of who they are and who they might become. A sense of identity and place - and the deep-rooted emotional attachment, which derives from these - are significant factors when it comes to the enhancement of Wellbeing.

Physical Activity

That the draft curriculum aims to provide opportunities for children in enhancing their motivation for physical activity and facilitating informed and healthy lifestyle choices is noteworthy (Section 2: Rationale). In 2020, the WHO released updated global guidelines, which now recommend that children and adolescents engage in at least 60 minutes per day of mostly aerobic MVPA across the week (WHO, 2020). More broadly, regular physical activity has been shown to have a positive impact on a range of health markers, including improved cardiometabolic biomarkers, body composition, physical fitness, bone health, mental health (Donnelly et al., 2023; Poitras et al. 2016) and improved academic performance (Marques et al. 2017). Furthermore, physical activity behaviours adopted during adolescence are likely to be maintained into adulthood (Hayes et al. 2019). A physically active lifestyle helps to prevent disease in adulthood including cancer, type II diabetes, osteoporosis, and cardiovascular diseases (Endes et al., 2016; Van de Laar et al., 2011).

While the draft curriculum rightly differentiates between physical education, physical activity, and school sport (P4), the GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association would argue that there needs to be a greater alignment between physical education, physical activity, and school sport. We believe that there

is a strong alliance between the espoused aims of the proposed Wellbeing Curriculum and the nursery and Go Games programmes operational across Gaelic games.

Physical Literacy

The focus on physical literacy is also to be welcomed (Section 2: Aims). Actions towards the development of Fundamental movement skills (as part of the physical literacy model) is a particular priority in the Irish National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027 (e.g., Action 2, Action 3) and the subject of an All Island Physical Literacy Consensus Statement (AIP LCS) . Previous research in this domain (the Moving Well-Being Well programme - MWBW) has examined FMS proficiency across the full range of Irish primary school children, with findings indicating Irish Primary School children had achieved a low level of FMS proficiency (for example, just 16% of participants demonstrated mastery of the overhand throw), that gender differences exist (girls scored significantly higher than boys in locomotor and balance tests, with the boys outperforming the girls in object control skills), and highlighted the need for more programmes that focus on developing these FMS at an early age (Behan et al., 2019).

On the back of the results collated during the first Phase, the MWBW team completed a pilot intervention in 30 Dublin schools with over 1500 children participating. The programme included a GAA coach led FMS based class, a teacher training element, in class activities for the teacher to follow, and home activities for the children to include their parents. Results showed an increase of over 25% in the children's fundamental movement skills proficiency in just 8 short weeks (Behan et al., *under review*).

PE Activity Areas

The GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association support the specification of seven PE Activity Areas (Section 6D) and believe that Gaelic games can contribute towards the achievement of the specified outcomes across a range of activity areas. While the more broadly recognised Gaelic games (Hurling/Camogie and Gaelic football) will provide significant opportunities for teachers and schools within the Group Games activity area, we suggest that GAA Handball provides an ideal game opportunity within the Individual/Partner Games activity area. Handball can be played by all age groups and genders while catering for all abilities. It is easy to learn and play, and helps develop basic motor skills and coordination. Equally, we suggest that GAA Rounders is an ideal candidate to further develop movement skills, strategies, alongside other cognitive, social and affective learning across withing Group Games.

We strongly endorse the recognition of Gaelic games as being of cultural significance. Indeed with the recognition of Hurling/Camogie on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, the potential of the Wellbeing curriculum to contribute to the exposure of children to Hurling/Camogie is considerable.

Implementing the Wellbeing Curriculum

Time Allocation

The recommendation that the minimum weekly allocation of time towards the Wellbeing area be increased to 2 hours and 30 minutes for Stages 1 and 2, and 3 hours for Stages 3 and 4, is very much welcomed.

Wellbeing Toolkit

The GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association have a long history of providing materials and resources to classroom teachers, and the broader school community, to support the delivery of lessons.

GAA resources, such as the Activity Planner, Fun Do learning resource park, and the Céim ar Aghaidh resources provide significant supports for teachers. Equally, the Gaelic games teacher summer courses and the Leading Gaelic Games in Primary Schools' course in collaboration with Mary Immaculate College have been refined in recent years to more closely align to the PE curriculum.

The GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association commit to reviewing and updating materials to ensure the alignment with the Wellbeing Curriculum.

Input of External Facilitator

The provision of support to the classroom teacher in the implementation of the previous PE curriculum by Gaelic games staff and coaches has been a key feature of activities within Primary Schools across Ireland. Gaelic games coaches have provided supports to over 2, 100 Primary Schools, over 290, 000 children, with 6.1m cumulative opportunities in 2023.

The GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association recognise, and greatly appreciate, the support provided by school communities and nationwide leadership in the implementation of these programmes. As Gaelic games Associations, we recognise the significant work of the classroom teacher, not alone in providing guidance and supervision, but to 'provide opportunities for reflection, making connections, gathering feedback' (P46).

In recent years, the GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association undertook a significant research report led by Dr Richard Bowles as part of a cross-university team of researchers. This report recommended that there exists a significant opportunity to enhance the programme through a closer alignment between classroom teacher and Gaelic games coach, with the following benefits:

Lesson content can be planned more coherently with a clear focus on the needs of each child

CPD opportunities can be provided for the teacher to gain subject content knowledge about skills that are specific to Gaelic games

The coach can gain a greater knowledge and understanding of inclusive practice, group management skills and differentiation of activities

There may be long-term benefits if the teacher continues to promote and enable Gaelic games activities after the formal coaching block has finished, leading to a more sustainable structure

A suite of recommendations for the external facilitator were also made, which the GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association have committed to implementing, including:

All coaches working in schools should have a clear understanding of their role and what the leadership within the school requires of them. They should understand the structure and context in which they are delivering.

This will be achieved by:

Understanding what their 'purpose, vision, and mission' within the school setting is

Having clarity in regards to the purpose of their input: ensuring what is being delivered during curriculum time relates to the curriculum; ensuring that what is delivered during extra-curricular time has a clear focus on the development of the young person by providing opportunities for them to engage in activity away from the school

Developing an educational process that upskills those that are offering lessons/sessions to young people in the school setting to understand the curriculum.

Establishing clear lines of communication between schools and coaches and expectations which will lead to standardisation of what is offered.

Emphasising a participant centred approach in regards to the delivery, so that children are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate at a developmentally appropriate level

Conclusion

In conclusion, implementing a comprehensive Wellbeing Curriculum in Primary and Special schools is crucial for fostering the holistic development of children. By prioritising mental, emotional, social, and physical wellbeing, such a curriculum lays the foundation for a positive school experience and long-term personal growth. The GAA, LGFA, and Camogie Association believe that this is a significant and positive progression.

Alongside the collaborative efforts of teachers, parents, and the broader community we commit to creating a supportive environment where children can thrive. We believe that we can support the implementation of the Wellbeing Curriculum through the provision of continuous professional development for teachers (alongside our own external facilitators), the provision of appropriate resources and supports (such as the Online toolkit), ensuring that wellbeing initiatives can be effectively tailored to meet the diverse needs of all students.

We further believe that the closer alignment of Wellbeing, physical activity, and school sport can equip children with the tools to navigate the complexities of life, empower them to become healthy, happy, and productive members of society.

We thank the NCCA for the opportunity to make a submission on the draft Wellbeing curriculum and would like to reiterate our commitment to further supporting the development and implementation of this programme.

Dr Peter Horgan	GAA Head of Strategy, Insights, and Innovation
David Britton	Head of GAA Handball
William Harmon	LGFA Head of Coach Development
Lyn Savage	LGFA National Development Manager
Lizzy Broderick Manager	Camogie Association Technical Development and Participation



Submission to the Draft Primary Curriculum Consultation

Submitted by: Genspect

Director: Stella O'Malley

Date: June 13th, 2024

Email address: info@genspect.org

Genspect requests that it is listed as a contributor to the consultation on the NCCA website.

Genspect background

Genspect is an alliance of professionals, parent groups, trans people, detransitioners, and others who seek to promote high quality information about sex and gender. We want to see schools, colleges and higher education establishments hold neutral space for students as they explore their gender, sexual orientation and identity formation. We value supportive environments for students, so they feel neither encouraged nor discouraged to follow certain paths.

We raise public awareness of the issues facing gender-questioning children and young people in schools and seek to inform schools how to support gender non-conforming children with compassion and integrity. We note that gay, lesbian and bisexual youth are often gender non-conforming and rather than supporting an approach that seeks to suppress hormonal urges with medication, we support an approach that allows adolescents to explore their sexuality with freedom and acceptance.

We are a non-partisan, independent organisation, with members hailing from across the political spectrum and holding a range of personal beliefs. Our interest relates exclusively to the well-being and safeguarding of children and young people and does not extend to party-political or religious allegiance. We welcome people of all faiths and none.

Genspect has members all over Ireland and from 20 countries across the world. Since launching in June 2021, we have gained thousands of members and we have provided training to schools in Ireland, UK and USA .

We represent parent groups in Ireland who report that schools are inadvertently contributing to the growing incidence of gender dysphoria (which inexplicably increased by 2000% in Ireland over the last decade). This is in part because education policies have become one-sided, repositioning gender non-conformity as a “transgender” identity and teaching children that gender identity ideology is the only way to think about gender.

Genspect is an international organisation that promotes a healthy approach to sex and gender | <https://genspect.org> | info@genspect.org

Purpose of this submission

1. To request the NCCA to explicitly define what it means by gender identity.
2. To request the NCCA ensure that the curriculum will leave no opportunity to imply or explicitly teach children they can be ‘born in the wrong body’.
3. To seek assurances that NCCA have studied and accepted the findings of The Cass Review and that this will be reflected in the new curriculum.

How does the NCCA define ‘gender identity’?

We are concerned by a reference on page 32 of the Primary Curriculum Framework that states:

‘The framework is concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity.’

What does the NCCA mean by ‘gender, and sexual identity’? Does ‘gender’ in this context mean biological sex, gender identity or both? Does the term ‘sexual identity’ mean biological sex, gender identity, social sex-role, sexual orientation, a combination of any of these terms or all these terms?

Gender identity is typically understood as an inner sense of self as being male, female, neither or both, and may or may not match your sexed body. It cannot be observed or measured and has been described by some as a ‘gendered soul’. The NCCA must clearly state how it defines gender identity and sexual identity before the redevelopment process can proceed to the next stage. Parents need to know if the NCCA intends to promote gender identity as a fact in the curriculum.

Gender identity is promoted as fact by certain elements within the Irish teaching profession. This was demonstrated in the training video produced by the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) entitled ‘Facilitating a social transition’ that tells children that ‘boys can turn into girls and girls can turn into boys’? Genspect considers this a dereliction of the duty of care adults have to children.

The NCCA must assure parents that it has not misinterpreted the Equal Status Act (2000- 2018) that protects all citizens from discrimination based on nine grounds - gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. Has the NCCA erroneously expanded the gender ground to include ‘gender identity’ and/or ‘gender expression’? If so the NCCA misunderstands the scope of the legislation. We seek clarification on this specific point.

Parental Rights

The undefined terms ‘gender and sexual identity’ are now ‘locked’ into the Primary Curriculum Framework and will be woven into every aspect of the curriculum (science, history, wellbeing). If these terms are expansive and go beyond the nine grounds listed in the Equal Status Act the NCCA is undermining parents’ constitutional and statutory rights to opt out of education that run contrary to their beliefs. This is unjust.

The Primary Curriculum Framework claims that:

A curriculum reflects educational priorities which society, at a point in time, deems important for its young citizens [and] [a]s such, the framework embodies society’s broadly held view of what a curriculum should provide for our children as we look further into the 21st century.

Reasonable people would broadly agree that the above statement is fair. A curriculum is a powerful tool and should embody what society agrees are priorities in education at a specific point in time. However, while there may be changes in what a curriculum priorities one thing remains steady, and it is that education must be based on facts not ideologies. Where elements of the curriculum are founded on disputed beliefs parents must have the opportunity to remove their children from these lessons.

Children’s Rights

Children have the right not to be exposed to education that is harmful. Introducing concepts like gender identity to children ignores decades of developmental psychology that demonstrates clearly that identity formation begins in childhood and continues throughout adolescence. An awareness of sexual orientation, an important psychosocial stage of development for young people, usually begins between 12 and 25 years old (Arnett, 2000; Erikson, 1968). It is negligent for the curriculum to introduce concepts to children that they lack the capacity to understand and are not able to critique. Children with additional learning needs, mental health diagnoses, who have experienced trauma, are in care or have multiple diagnoses are particularly vulnerable to the lie that a child can be born in the wrong body.

Children who hold this belief may request to ‘socially transition’. Some Irish schools, including primary schools, facilitate social transition and allow students to change their names, pronouns, clothing and use the bathrooms of the opposite sex. **The Cass Review found that social transition is a pipeline to medical transition (puberty blockers, cross sex hormones and surgery). Schools in Ireland are socially transitioning children. They are doing so under the misapprehension that, at its worst, it is a neutral act. It is not, it is a profoundly harmful act. The redeveloped Primary Curriculum must not give succour to the concept that children can be born in the wrong body and that ‘social transition’ is an appropriate way to deal with children’s distress about their sexed bodies.**

Although individuals are free to subscribe to any set of beliefs, schools must not misrepresent a belief — no matter how passionately held — as science. Gender identity theory disregards the impact of biological sex and, as a result, disregards the specific needs of girls and boys in favour of addressing their gender identity rather than their sex.

Girls, for example can have challenges pertaining to periods, pregnancy and unwanted sexual attention. Boys can face other issues. Favouring gender identity over biological sex does not accommodate these needs.

The NCCA must act as the bulwark against anti scientific and ultimately abusive content being inserted into the curriculum. The NCCA must provide clear definitions for the terms ‘gender and sexual identity’ as referenced in the Framework document.

Why is the Cass Review relevant to the Primary Curriculum Redevelopment?

The Cass Report, published in April 2024, is the largest review of the evidence for youth gender medicine ever undertaken. **If it wasn’t clear before, we hope it’s clear now: no one is born in the wrong body**, so called “gender affirming” medical interventions cause harm and there is not, and has never been, quality research supporting the medicalisation of a person’s inner

Chaired by eminent pediatrician Dr Hilary Cass, the Review was commissioned after grave concerns were raised about the treatment received by children and young people at the UK’s Gender Identity Development Service (GIDS).

In short, the Cass Review found no evidence that so called “gender affirming” medical interventions improve the wellbeing of gender distressed children and young people. In particular, the Report identified a complete lack of data on the long-term outcomes of “gender affirming” medical treatments, meaning that we simply have no idea what happens to children who take puberty blockers and cross sex hormones in the long term. An independent systematic review of the evidence for these treatments was undertaken by the University of York, identifying a total of 103 scientific papers of relevance, only two of which (2%) were assessed as high quality. Forty-three (40%) were so poor that they had to be excluded from the review.

No child is born in the wrong body but if an adult tells them they can be, particularly a teacher, they will believe it. For this reason, it is imperative that the redeveloped primary curriculum explicitly prevents this abusive idea being taught to children.

The Cass Review made a series of recommendations to improve the treatment of gender distressed children and young people. The NCCA must ensure the primary curriculum redevelopment process reflects the following specific recommendations:

Social transition: Social transition is a significant intervention that may permanently alter the trajectory of gender incongruence in children and young people. Clinicians should help parents recognise and embrace developmentally appropriate identity exploration and healthy expression of gender nonconformity. Social transition places a heavy burden on children and should not be undertaken without careful consideration of the likely consequences and risks. **In short the NCCA must ensure that the curriculum provides no justification, subtle or explicit, for social transition of children.**

First do no harm: Standard psychological interventions are already known to be effective in alleviating distress and treating the mental health and neurodevelopmental issues common to this patient cohort. Psychological support, not irreversible medical intervention, should be the first line treatment for patients presenting with gender distress. **As social transition is a pipeline to irreversible medical interventions the curriculum must not encourage the belief any child can be born in the wrong body.**

“This is an area of remarkably weak evidence, and yet results of studies are exaggerated or misrepresented by people on all sides of the debate to support their viewpoint. The reality is that we have no good evidence on the long-term outcomes of interventions to manage gender related distress” - The Cass Report, 2024.

Social Transition by stealth: A transgender person is living in “stealth” if they have concealed their biological sex from others, who therefore assume them to be the sex they identify or present as. For example, a transwoman who is biologically male but “passes” as female and is assumed to be a biological woman, or a transman who is biologically female but “passes” as male and is assumed to be biologically male. In recent years, there have been increasing reports of children and young people socially transitioning in “stealth”, with families sometimes going so far as to move house or change schools so that their child is known only to others by their self-identified gender.

Early social transition is associated with increasing a young person’s sense of urgency to undergo irreversible medical interventions in general but, unsurprisingly this is particularly acute in children and young people living in stealth. **The Cass Review found that as puberty approached, and the development of secondary sex characteristics threatened to “out” them to their peers, children living in stealth experienced worsening mental health, escalating anxiety, depression and behavioural issues.** Typically, children disclose their true biological sex to their good friends as they begin to grow up. This can create a good deal of conflict, for example when some of the classroom know the secret and others don’t.

Genspect believes that the “gender affirming” model has done a huge disservice to children and young people living in stealth. They have been led to believe that puberty is optional and taught that it is healthy and acceptable to deceive people about the reality of their biological sex. This normalization of dishonesty has the potential to have devastating consequences in adulthood. In many jurisdictions, concealing your biological sex from a sexual partner is considered “sex by deception” and can be prosecuted as a criminal offence. Adult transsexuals who do not disclose their biological sex in an intimate relationship are liable to experience a very strong negative reaction when caught out by their sexual partners. Tragically, this sometimes takes the form of physical violence.

Genspect believes that living in stealth places an intolerable burden on a child or young person. A healthy approach to sex and gender can never involve encouraging children and young people to deceive their friends, community members and themselves in this way. All young people should be free to express themselves without reference to restrictive gender stereotypes and without the need to reject, hide or change their bodies. **Schools should model openness, acceptance of difference, transparency and honesty as the healthiest way to approach gender nonconformity.**

In conclusion Genspect requests that the NCCA explicitly define what it means by gender identity and will ensure that the curriculum will leave no opportunity to imply or explicitly teach children they can be ‘born in the wrong body’. The NCCA must confirm that it has studied and accepted the findings of The Cass Review and that this will be reflected in the new the curriculum. If the NCCA rejects the findings of the Cass Review this must be made public.

Stella O'Malley

Director of Genspect

June 13th, 2024

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The Church of Ireland Board of Education welcomes the opportunity to engage in this consultation and makes the following observation in regards to the extent to which the draft primary curriculum address the key messages outlined. The 1999 primary curriculum had a number of strengths. In particular, the conceptualization of integration subjects across the school day was promoted in the delivering of teaching and learning. It is positive to see the same general approach being taken in this new framework, particularly at stages one and two. In this regard, the experience of teachers in our schools over the last two decades is that the integration of the patron's programme has not been prioritised as a subject to be promoted within the provision of the curriculum. We note that integration is a priority across all of the other five curricular areas and, given the essential nature of the patron's programme as reflecting the characteristic spirit of our schools, it is the view of the Board that the patron's programme should hold strong prominence generally, and in particular in the areas of social and environmental education and Wellbeing. The Board is conscious that the workload of teaching principals continues to be an issue which is consistently raised as a matter of concern. Two thirds of principals in schools under Church of Ireland patronage are teaching principals and as a consequence, the workload involved in relation to the introduction of the new curriculum will cause anxiety and stress for teaching principals. While the Board understands the message of agency and flexibility, it should be highlighted that the ability of teachers to exercise such agency and flexibility may be limited by other constraints. The Board requests that the NCCA take cognizance of this context in implementing the new curriculum. The Board is very supportive of the key message of inclusivity, which reflects the characteristic spirit that prevails in all our schools.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The Board is interested to learn of the provisions of the Arts Education curriculum and notes in particular that there are many opportunities for the integration of the patron's programme through the arts education curricular area. The Board notes in particular, page 28 of the specification document that refers to integration through the arts involves connecting across curricular areas. The Board welcomes this provision and the opportunity it gives to teachers in exercising agency. The Board also welcomes the inclusion in the specification document of the recognition and valuing of a culturally responsive pedagogy, and, given the nature of the diversity in our schools this will be greatly welcomed and could provide meaningful links to the local parish and broader community.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The Board notes that the patron's programme provides an authentic context for language development and opportunities for both disciplinary literacy and critical application of language and literacy skills.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The Board notes that page 27 of the specification document outlines how children will learn about religion beliefs and world views in this curricular area. The Board welcomes this inclusion but is concerned that it appears that there is a significant overlap with the existing provisions in our patron's programme in regards to the content. The Board wishes to highlight the distinctiveness of the 'Follow Me' RE curriculum, the patron's programme in Church of Ireland schools. This is a Religious Education programme, two aims of which are 'to enable the child to have a knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith' and 'to enable the child to develop an awareness of other faiths and none'. In this connection, the Board would welcome clarification on the approach to be taken in the 'toolkit' to ensure that the Church of Ireland is accurately represented. The Board also wishes to note that any cpd or training to be provided would need to reflect such an understanding. The Board notes the language used on page 27, paragraph two, and the use of the term 'safe space'. The Board is of the opinion that the term 'safe space' in conjunction with learning about world beliefs and world views in

the social and environmental curricular area may indicate that the patrons programme is not be a 'safe space' as described in the specification document.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The Board welcomes the draft Wellbeing specification which sits comfortably with the outworking of the characteristic spirit in our schools. The Board particularly welcomes the reference on page 38 to a positive school culture and climate underpinning the learning and teaching in Wellbeing. The Board would welcome further guidance and elaboration on how spiritual development (mentioned on page 1) is to be taught through the curriculum and would highlight that this is core to the patron's programme. The Board notes that reference is made on page 4 to 'children developing an ethical understanding of the world'. The Board wishes to highlight that both the patron's programme and the outworking of the characteristic spirit will further inform and vivify the children's ethical understanding. The Board also notes that are various opportunities for integration of the patron's programme with SPHE, including under the strand of Rights and fairness on page 28 and citizenship on page 29; and this will be greatly welcomed by schools.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

The Board highlights that it is a necessity in implementing the curriculum, for a number of key support resources to be provided. In the first instance, the Board is of the view that, strong CPD must be a part of the practical implementation of the curriculum for teachers and especially for the teaching principal. Clear guidance, template resources and ongoing support as teachers develop the delivery of the curriculum in their own context will be needed. The Board is of the view that the provision of resources must also include the provision of substitutable in-service days, as was provided for in the implementation of the 1999 curriculum.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

The Board assumes that the NCCA will continue to review the implementation of the curriculum on an on-going basis and particularly to listen to the voice of teachers, who have been given much agency in the delivery of the new curriculum. Such a reflexive approach keeps the agency of the teacher active and valued, and also gives expression to the recognition that society changes and develops regularly and that the curriculum should be responsive to societal change and development.

Global Village Written Submission to NCCA in response to the Consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications June 2024

1. **I am responding** on behalf of an organisation or body.
2. **Organisation or body name:** Global Village.
3. **Are you willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation?** Yes.
4. **Are you willing to have your submission published?** Yes.

Summary

Global Village is the strategic partnership for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in primary schools in Ireland, between Irish Aid at the Department of Foreign Affairs and a consortium of four partners: Dublin City University (DCU), Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO), Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) and Trócaire. We welcome the opportunity to engage with this consultation process and look forward to supporting primary school leaders and teachers to implement the new Curriculum in the coming years.

Our key points are summarised here, with greater detail and examples provided on the following pages, under each of the three sections listed on the online consultation form.

1. We strongly recommend that the core elements of the curriculum (principles, key competencies, curriculum areas/subjects, strands, learning outcomes, concepts, global learning themes) be presented **in an integrated manner** to show how they are intended to interact with one another, and that **sample planning templates** be provided showing teachers how they might include all key elements in their planning, teaching, and evaluation.
2. We welcome the framing of the SEE Specification through the **global learning themes** of sustainable development, human rights, democracy, equity, and social justice. However, we strongly recommend that this framing be used for every specification, rather than presented as relevant only to SEE.
3. Across the curriculum, we recommend that reference be made, and guidance be provided, as to how schools and teachers can **model sustainable and ethical living, learning, and working** e.g. the use of sustainable materials and practices in Arts Education and Science, Technology and Engineering Education.
4. **Arts Education:** we recommend the addition of a global citizenship aim e.g. *Global Citizenship: The ability to explore global citizenship themes through the arts, imagining and exploring creative responses and solutions to global challenges such as the climate crisis.*
5. **Language:** we suggest a whole-school approach to Modern Foreign Languages, with children from Stage 1 onward being included in the exploration and celebration of languages from around the world. We also look for a shift from the language of 'tolerance' to that of '*appreciation*' for diverse identities and cultural diversity.
6. **SEE:** across the specification, reference is made to three focus areas – history, geography, and contemporary/societal issues. It would be clearer and more user-friendly to use one term consistently to refer to contemporary/societal issues, and we recommend the use of the term *global citizenship/global citizenship education*. To further support this third area, we would expect to see a paragraph on 'Global Citizenship/Global Citizenship Education within Social and Environmental Education' as well as the existing ones on History and Geography, and the concept of 'Being a Global Citizen' alongside 'Working as a Historian' and 'Working as a Geographer.' We also strongly advocate for the pairing of sustainability and justice e.g. "Espouses a just and sustainable future" (p.6).
7. **SEE:** overall, the aims are impressive and aspirational. We suggest that the key challenge will be in how they are realised in the primary school setting, in particular how strong links between local and global themes will be made, and how teachers will be supported to develop the confidence and competence to achieve these aims. The Global Citizenship Education sector is a key resource for NCCA and Oide in the roll out of the full curriculum.
8. **STEE:** we recommend the addition of an aim regarding global citizenship e.g. *to analyse the role of science, technology, and engineering in contributing to and solving global challenges.*
9. **Wellbeing:** we recommend that additional context be provided for this specification, namely a recognition of the impact of the wider world on Wellbeing e.g. "By integrating PE and SPHE within the Wellbeing Curriculum, children have the opportunity to develop a holistic understanding of their wellbeing, to recognise the local environmental and wider societal influences that shape their wellbeing, and to

acquire the necessary tools to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.” We suggest that eco-anxiety be named and recognised as something that needs to be tackled as part of a holistic approach to well-being.

10. Global Village would welcome the opportunity to engage with NCCA and Oide in the implementation of the curriculum, in particular through the development of **curriculum toolkits** and in the provision of **continuous professional development** associated with the roll out of the new curriculum. The Global Village team includes three primary school teachers with expertise in identifying and integrating opportunities for Global Citizenship Education across the curriculum, which would be of particular value for, but would not be limited to, the key competency of ‘being an active citizen.’

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The overarching principles and key competencies from the Framework are evident within each of the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications. The tables of examples provided showing how each specification develops both principles (Section 1: Introduction) and key competencies (Section 5: Learning Outcomes) are very useful. However, we suggest that the connections between these core elements be presented in an integrated manner for teachers to use in their planning and evaluation, so that these components do not get lost in the practical application of the learning outcomes. This could be achieved by:

- Integrating the existing tables to present a high-level table showing the links between each principle, competency, curriculum area/subject (strands, learning outcomes, themes/concepts).
- Presenting a table for each class level showing the links between each principle, competency, and curriculum area/subject.
- Hyperlinking key concepts/information across each document e.g. hyperlinking appendices that contain more information on key concepts.
- Numbering and incorporating reference to the corresponding Learning Outcomes for each class level into a table showing principles, competencies, curriculum areas/subjects.
- Fully naming the key competencies relevant to each Learning Outcome, in place of the current shorthand/acronyms for key competencies listed in the Learning Outcomes tables.
- Providing a suite of exemplars and sample thematic plans showing how teachers might plan and deliver lessons that clearly reflect the interaction between these key components of the curriculum framework: principles, key competencies, curriculum areas/subjects, strands learning outcomes, concepts/themes.
- Providing sample planning templates showing how teachers are expected/advised to incorporate principles, key competencies and learning outcomes into their work towards the delivery of each curriculum area/subject. This could include samples of how to work with themes and subthemes at a whole school level. Competencies could be used as the overarching theme, with subthemes linked to specific curriculum areas to show how these competencies relate to and can be developed through each curriculum area. The alignment between learning outcomes and key competencies already outlined in each specification could be used to populate such work plan samples.

The above suggestions would support the achievement of the curriculum aims, in particular embedding the seven key competencies into the learning outcomes from Junior Infants to Sixth Class; and promoting an integrated approach to learning, teaching, and assessment.

The promotion of agency and flexibility of schools in enacting the curriculum is welcome and evident in the specifications. However, it is to be expected that in practice, schools will require much support to adjust to the broader Learning Outcomes in these specifications, and to develop curriculum plans accordingly. Some of the Learning Outcomes are broad to the point of being quite vague – we suggest specific improvements below in the sections on individual specifications.

Regarding the aim of building on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and responding to changing priorities, we recognise and support the updated language and focus of the new Framework and specifications, namely the increasing focus and prioritisation of intercultural education and active citizenship (examples identified in individual specification feedback below). We particularly welcome the framing of the Social and Environmental Education Specification through the global learning themes of sustainable development, human rights, democracy, equity, and

social justice. However, we strongly recommend that this framing be used for every specification, rather than presented as relevant only to Social and Environmental Education.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Suggested text changes/additions are indicated below in *italics*.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Introduction:

- p.1: we welcome the emphasis on child creativity, expression and multi-perspectivity.
- p.2: Table 1 – this is an example of where an integrated table showing principles, key competencies, curriculum area examples and learning outcomes would be very useful for planning e.g. Some of the examples under Pedagogy (“Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences”); and under Inclusive education and diversity (“Making connections between and appreciating various art forms, music genres, and dramatic traditions from different cultures”; “Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect and multi-perspectivity”) are directly link to the key competency of ‘being an active citizen’ and it would be useful for teachers to have this link explicitly identified.

Rationale:

- p.4: we support the emphasis on inclusion, community and belonging in the Rationale.
- p.4: ‘Arts Education helps children make sense of the world around them’ – we suggest that the concept of global citizenship be named, by adding to this sentence: “In Arts Education, children learn to explore and appreciate multiple interpretations of the world [and] develop respect and empathy for multiple viewpoints and *build an understanding and appreciation of global citizenship*”.

Aims:

- p.6: we welcome the inclusion of ‘cultural and contextual awareness.’
- p.6: we recommend the addition of a global citizenship aim e.g. *Global Citizenship: The ability to explore global citizenship themes through the arts, imagining and exploring creative responses and solutions to global challenges such as the climate crisis.*
- p.6: we suggest that the importance of passive enjoyment, experience of and exposure to the Arts be added as an explicit and crucial aim of Arts Education as well as the creation of artistic pieces.

Learning Outcomes:

- p.10: we suggest that an ethical and sustainable approach to the use of artistic materials, particularly with regard to materials for Art, be included as an example of the application of ‘being an active citizen’ e.g. *Using and discussing the use of ethically and sustainably sourced art materials.*
- p.13: it would be useful to include examples of materials that can be used in Art (e.g. clay, fabric, fibre) as per the 1999 curriculum, along with guidance on sourcing and using sustainable materials.

The Arts Education Curriculum in Practice:

- p.21: we suggest that a point on ethical and sustainable approaches to the use of artistic materials also be included in ‘Being an arts-maker.’
- p.24: we support the inclusion of ‘Culturally Responsive Pedagogy’ as one of the key areas for consideration in the teaching of Arts Education and the inclusion of ‘images from around the world’ as one way of engaging children in sensory and embodied Arts Education (p.27). We highly recommend that Global Citizenship Education practitioners be engaged in the development of supporting materials, including in-service training, to ensure that these aspirations regarding Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and the ethical use of imagery are achieved.
- p.32: we recommend that the ‘Assessment Events’ are used as an opportunity to celebrate diversity and GCE while also engaging the local community and development partnerships (e.g. *community art exhibition/showcase using sustainable materials*).

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Introduction:

- p.1: we support the inclusion of Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary Language Curriculum, particularly the plurilingual approach and framing of this inclusion in the recognition and celebration of “languages that children bring to the classroom”, and the explicit connection made between “the important value of linguistic and cultural diversity to foster inclusivity and promote social cohesion”.
- p.1: we suggest a whole-school approach to Modern Foreign Languages, with children from Stage 1 onward being included in the exploration and celebration of languages from around the world.
- p.3: we support the emphasis on partnerships with families and communities and the child-centred approach to language learning as outlined in Table 1.

Rationale:

- p.6: we welcome and support the framing of MFL through an intercultural lens i.e. “The addition of MFL (at Stage 3 and Stage 4) further supports children to learn about, understand and develop their intercultural awareness”.
- We recommend that this be expanded to ‘intercultural awareness *and appreciation*’ and that this emphasis be centred in all support materials and training.

Aims:

- p.10: we suggest a shift from language of ‘tolerance’ to that of ‘appreciation’ e.g. 3.1: “promote mutual understanding, *appreciation* and respect for identifies and cultural diversity.”

Strands and Elements:

- p.12: we support the inclusion of the new element on linguistic and cultural awareness and that it is woven throughout the other three elements. We suggest the name of the element be focused on appreciation as well as awareness i.e. “Building an awareness *and appreciation* of languages and cultures”, so as to emphasise the openness to and respect for children’s own and others’ cultures which is evident in the descriptor for this element.

The Primary Language Curriculum in Practice:

- p.52: although no specific languages are suggested for L3, given the demographics of Irish primary school teachers, it is likely that European languages will be chosen as the focus. We would like to see clear guidance on how a school should select their L3, the consideration of democratic processes (e.g. school audit, class votes) in this selection; and guidance on how to integrate native L3 speakers from the community effectively into lessons.
- We query whether there might be a more progressive and practical approach to additional language learning. Namely, that the emphasis be on exploring a range of languages across several years, and that the focus be on appreciation for language and culture, and on methodologies for learning languages, rather than on proficiency. The school community, children, staff, and parents alike, could together learn vocabulary, phrases, and cultural information about one language each year, without the need for anyone to be an expert in that language. Existing language skills within the wider school community, along with digital tools such as Duolingo could be used to support this.
- We would welcome the explicit inclusion of Irish Sign Language as an L3 choice.
- We recommend specialised guidance for Special Schools on their use of and access to MFL.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Introduction:

- p.1: we welcome and support this specification, particularly the centring of democracy, equity, and justice in the opening section. We suggest that this vision be extended to acknowledge the interconnected world within which we live and to promote aspirations for Ireland to continue to play a key role in promoting these values domestically and internationally e.g. “...plays a pivotal role in contributing to a democratic, equitable and just Irish society *and international community*”.
- p.2: Partnerships – throughout the specification there are opportunities to better emphasise local and global connections and learning opportunities. E.g. “Inviting members of the local community and/or local interest groups to contribute to learning in local *and in globally themed* case studies”.
- p.2: Learning environments – there are opportunities in this and in other specifications to centre and promote an understanding of humanity as being part of the natural world, not separate to it. E.g. “Undertaking learning in the school and local outdoor environment that includes purposeful fieldwork,

fostering of respect for the natural world, and recognition of our place as humans as part of that natural world”.

- p.3: Relationships – we suggest that the role and value of global history be incorporated into the following example: “Co-operating with people within the locality to enhance learning about personal, family, local *and globally-linked/themed* history”.
- p.3: Relationships – the use of the word ‘different’ suggests that there is one norm and that all other backgrounds are divergent from this norm. We suggest: “Fostering respectful and caring relationships towards people from *a diversity of backgrounds*, the natural world and other living things”.
- p.3: Children’s learning experiences - across the specification, reference is made to three focus areas – history, geography, and contemporary/societal issues. It would be clearer and more user-friendly to use one term consistently to refer to contemporary/societal issues, and we recommend the use of the term *global citizenship/global citizenship education*.

Rationale:

- p.5: as above, in place of the term ‘societal aspects’, we recommend the use of the term ‘*global citizenship*’ i.e. “historical, geographical and *global citizenship* aspects of life”.
- p.5: we strongly support the listing of active citizenship as the first in the list of Social and Environmental Education features. We suggest that much support and guidance in the form of training and teaching and learning materials will be required for teachers to feel confident and competent in exploring, in their classrooms, key concepts such as democracy, justice and human rights.
- p.6: we strongly advocate for the pairing of sustainability and justice e.g. “Espouses *a just and sustainable future*”.
- p.6: as this specification presents three core focus areas, we would expect to see a paragraph on ‘Global Citizenship/Global Citizenship Education within Social and Environmental Education’ as well as the existing ones on History and Geography. For example:

Global Citizenship Education within Social and Environmental Education

Within Social and Environmental Education, the role of Global Citizenship Education involves active, creative teaching and learning to increase awareness and understanding of the world in which we live. Through inquiring; communicating; and understanding and connecting, children learn to think critically, to consider a multiplicity of perspectives and to recognise and challenge stereotypes. They are supported, in age-appropriate ways, to develop empathy, to reflect upon and to make connections between their own lives and international social justice issues. They are encouraged to collaborate with one another and to take action for justice and positive change. ‘Being a Global Citizen’ promotes the development of global citizenship skills, an understanding of global challenges (see Appendix 1) and fosters a positive disposition towards Global Citizenship Education.

- p.6: Geography within Social and Environmental Education: we ask that the climate crisis be named and recognised for the chronic crisis that it is. It is a crisis that is likely to outlast the duration of any curriculum and should therefore be recognised and presented as a core feature of the world within which this curriculum will be delivered.

Aims:

- p.7: we suggest that the aim: ‘to promote global citizenship’ be moved to first place, to mirror the list of Rationale points on p.5.
- Overall, the aims are impressive and aspirational. We suggest that the key challenge will be in how they are realised in the primary school setting, in particular how strong links between local and global themes will be made, and how teachers will be supported to develop the confidence and competence to achieve these aims. The Global Citizenship Education sector is a key resource for NCCA in the roll out of the new curriculum.

Learning Outcomes:

- p.10: we recommend that the concept of global citizenship be added to this introduction of the Learning Outcomes i.e. “Building on Stages 1 and 2, Learning Outcomes for Stages 3 and 4 outline specific historical, geographical *and global citizenship education* attitudes, concepts, dispositions, skills, and values to reflect children’s...”. Likewise, ‘Being a Global Citizen’ should be added as a core concept i.e.: “The concepts of ‘Working as a Historian’, ‘Working as a Geographer’ *and ‘Being a Global Citizen’* (See Appendix 1) underpin children’s learning in this curriculum area and permeate all Learning Outcomes...”. Without this explicit naming and exploration, the third focus area of contemporary/societal issues i.e. global citizenship, may be lost.
- p.11: being an active citizen – we recommend that at every opportunity, local and global issues, and the links between the two be identified e.g. “Engaging in inquiry to analyse and evaluate evidence,

promoting critical understanding of the world we live in, *considering both local and global challenges and opportunities*".

- p.12: it is confusing that Table 4: Key competencies, lists the competencies in a different order to which they are listed in Table 3.
- p.13: there is scope here and we strongly advocate for the inclusion of global citizenship terminology e.g. replacing 'Common' with '*Global Citizenship*' in the concepts and skills tables. The existing 'Common' skills of empathy and multi-perspectivity are essential components of Global Citizenship Education (GCE). GCE could be the connecting approach that ties together the common/integrated elements of History and Geography that are presented in the draft specification.
- p.14: there are opportunities for global learning to be incorporated into the People, Place and Space Strand e.g. "Reflect on and examine aspects of their local heritage and how they preserve connections to the past, exploring customs, traditions, religions, beliefs, and worldviews in their locality *and beyond*".
- p.14: it is important to present the need to look after the natural world for current as well as future generations i.e. "recognise the importance of respecting their surroundings for *current and future generations...*" (Environment and Sustainable Living Strand).
- p.15: teachers will require support to reflect upon, audit, plan for and resource themselves and their schools with "a wide range of stories, considering different perspectives" with which they are expected to engage children.
- p.16: as above, there is scope for highlighting and strengthening the global component of many of the Stage 3 and 4 learning outcomes. E.g. "Demonstrate an understanding of changes in Ireland's political system and key institutions of government over time and their influence on the present *at both national and international levels*" (People, Place and Space Strand).
- p.16: there is an opportunity in the People, Place and Space Strand to name and celebrate indigenous learning e.g. "Develop an awareness and foster an appreciation of the richness of cultural, ethnic, and religious expressions and traditions, becoming familiar *with indigenous ways of living, and with a diverse array of festivals, ceremonies and celebrations*".
- p.16: in addition, or instead, a new integrated/global citizenship learning outcome could be added e.g. "*Develop an understanding of and appreciation for indigenous knowledge, with a particular focus on how indigenous groups live/have lived in greater harmony with the rest of the natural world, and how this knowledge might be used to combat climate and environmental crises*".
- p.16: the learning outcome regarding borders provides an opportunity for Integrated/Global Citizenship Education around colonialism e.g. "*Develop an understanding of how and why borders have been defined in the past, through processes such as colonialism, and how these actions continue to influence people and places today*".
- p.17: we recommend the use of the term 'climate crisis' rather than 'climate change' to emphasise how urgent it is (Environment and Sustainable Living Strand).
- p.17: we suggest that industrialisation and colonialism be named e.g. "Explore aspects of the lives of people in the past, becoming familiar with social and economic issues of the time, *including industrialisation and colonialism*, and developing a sense of their impact and legacy in the History of Ireland, Europe and/or the wider world".
- p.17: we welcome the inclusion of a "selection of myths and legends from diverse cultures and ethnic origins within Ireland, Europe, and the wider world". However, as children become aware of and start to absorb negative stereotypes from early childhood, this is an outcome that is important to include for each Stage from 1 to 4, alongside learning of local and national folklore.

The Primary Social and Environmental Education Curriculum in Practice:

- p.18: as above, we request the inclusion of 'Being a Global Citizen' alongside the concepts of 'Working as a Historian' and 'Working as a Geographer'. We recommend that the description of this concept draw on the three domains of learning as per [UNESCO's Global Citizenship Education framework](#): Cognitive, Socio-Emotional, Behavioural. For example:

Being a Global Citizen

Within Social and Environmental Education, the concept of 'Being a Global Citizen' promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy. It encompasses global learning under three domains: cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural (UNESCO, 2015). When 'Being a Global Citizen', children are informed and critically literate - developing knowledge about local, national, and global issues; understanding connections between local and global concerns; and developing skills for critical inquiry and analysis (cognitive domain). They are socially connected and respectful of diversity - sharing values and responsibilities based on human rights; and developing attitudes to appreciate and respect

differences and diversity (socio-emotional domain). They are ethically responsible and engaged - demonstrating personal and social responsibility for a peaceful and sustainable world; and developing motivation and willingness to care for the common good (behavioural domain).

- p.19: as these elements have also been presented on p.8-9, it would be useful in this section to show how the elements are intended to interact with the other components of the curriculum i.e. how, in practice, will teachers incorporate Inquiring; Communicating; and Understanding and Connecting into the learning outcomes, and how will they support the delivery of curriculum principles and key competencies?
- p.19: under 'Inquiring', we suggest inclusion of the global picture e.g. "critically examine the world around them *and the wider world*".
- p.21: we strongly advocate for the global learning themes to be clearly visible throughout the Learning Outcomes and clear guidance provided to teachers as to how they are expected to incorporate these themes into their practice. There are key international frameworks and commitments, knowledge of which would support teachers e.g. Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Convention on the Rights of the Child, Sustainable Development Goals.
- p.21-22: 'Social justice' is the label used on p.22 but 'Social and Environmental Justice' is used on p.23.
- p.23: there is an opportunity here for identifying and strengthening global connections e.g. "providing opportunities for children to investigate geographical places and sites of interest in the locality, *nationally and globally*" – digital technology could be used to facilitate this.
- p.24: we advocate for the inclusion of an additional point on promoting the use of story i.e. "*include narratives from marginalised/oppressed groups and move beyond dominant narratives*".
- p.26: we recommend additional points e.g. "*emphasising that, and exploring how, humans are part of nature*" and "*explicitly identifying and exploring responses to and solutions for the climate crisis*".
- p.26: when promoting outdoor learning, we recommend that a staged exemplar of how schools can engage with their outdoor space is provided that suggests a range of activities based on the outdoor environment available to the school community (e.g. from window boxes to access to a forest). We also suggest that a list of local outdoor organisations/practitioners be shared with teachers to support their own professional development and practice in outdoor learning (e.g. Heritage in Schools, Irish Forest Schools Association).
- p.28: we recommend including Peter's Projection maps as an example in the list of map types.

Glossary:

- p.33: we suggest adding to the Biodiversity description e.g. *Biodiversity loss refers to the decline or disappearance of biological diversity.*
- p.33: we suggest adding a description of 'Global Citizenship' to the Glossary e.g. *Global citizenship is the umbrella term for social, political, environmental, and economic actions of globally minded individuals and communities on a worldwide scale* (definition from the [United Nations](#)). Alternatively, the term 'Global Citizen' could be used e.g. *A global citizen is someone who is aware of and understands the wider world – and their place in it. They are a citizen of the world. They take an active role in their community and work with others to make our planet more peaceful, sustainable and fairer* (definition from [Oxfam](#)).
- p.33: we suggest including reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Human Rights description.
- p.33: we recommend the extension of the 'Migration' description e.g. There are many different reasons for people to migrate, and there are many different categories within migration. For example, a refugee is a person who has fled their own country because they are at risk of serious human rights violations there. An asylum-seeker is someone who is seeking international protection abroad, but hasn't yet been recognized as a refugee (definitions from [Amnesty International Ireland](#)).
- p.33-34: Equity and Democracy, two of the Global Learning Themes, are not listed in the Glossary, whereas Human Rights, Social Justice, and Sustainable Development (though labelled as Sustainability) are.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Introduction:

- p.1: we welcome the identification of 'global challenges' as a focus for STEE.
- p.2: we support the example under 'inclusive education and diversity' of "Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy, respect, collaboration and children's unique contributions to discussions and tasks". We recommend that clear guidance be provided to teachers on how to bring these elements of Global

Citizenship Education into their practice, and that the expertise and experience of the Global Citizenship Education sector be drawn upon to support this.

- p.3: Table 1: Relationships – we suggest that this principle and associated examples be extended to encompass the wider world e.g. “Designing and creating solutions for the benefit of the school community *and wider world...*”.
- p.3: Table 1: Pedagogy – we also suggest that global themes be incorporated into the following example: “Encouraging children to investigate solutions and solve problems that are related to their everyday lives, circumstances, interests *and to a range of global themes*”.

Rationale:

- p.4: we suggest that the challenges of digital technologies also be acknowledged e.g. inequitable access to the benefits of digital technologies; links between technology use and mental health problems; the use of technology to further exploit the natural world and contribute to the climate crisis.

Aims:

- p.6: we recommend the addition of an aim regarding global citizenship e.g. *to analyse the role of science, technology, and engineering in contributing to and solving global challenges*.

Learning Outcomes:

- p.10: being an active citizen – we suggest that the second example be extended to include global challenges e.g. “applying skills acquired through scientific inquiry, design thinking and computational thinking to real-life contexts *including global challenges*”.
- p.10: being a digital learner – we suggest adding awareness of the challenges of the technological world also e.g. “*...fostering an awareness of the potential and of the challenges of the technological world*”. We also recommend the addition of a learning outcome on ‘Online Wellbeing and Data Protection’ to address pupils becoming overwhelmed by online content and cyberbullying. Schools are already undertaking this work, so it would be preferable to recognise this in the Learning Outcomes so it will be included in curriculum plans.
- p.13: Nature of STEM – the Stage 1 Learning Outcome is relevant across all stages and shouldn’t be restricted to just one stage i.e. “*...help to solve problems, big and small, that impact our world*”.
- p.14: Materials – there is an opportunity here across all stages to investigate how biodegradable or not a range of materials might be. The sustainability of materials and processes should be central to the full curriculum specification.
- p.15: Energy and Forces – the distinction between renewable and non-renewable sources of energy and their sustainability is one that should be evident from Stage 1 onward.
- p.16: Engineering – there are opportunities in Stage 2 in particular to make strong links between the use of empathy and the skills and approaches fostered through Global Citizenship Education.

The Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum in Practice

- p.18: we strongly recommend that sustainability and global citizenship values and practice underpin this curriculum specification and the guidance and associated tools for putting it into practice. In particular there should be alignment with the use of ethical and sustainable materials and practices. This would link more closely with the ‘STEM with a Conscience’ statement on p.28.
- p.28: we recommend the addition of an overarching statement on the use, benefits and cautions around Artificial Intelligence to accompany the existing ‘STEM with a Conscience’ and ‘STEM Literacy.’ This will need to be accompanied by guidance and support as many teachers are aware of but also nervous/apprehensive about dealing with AI and how to use it as a tool in the school setting, cognisant of both positives and negatives/challenges’.
- p.29: we suggest that teachers be encouraged to explore global challenges/topics as part of phase 1: Identify.
- p.30: we recommend the inclusion of ethical and human rights considerations alongside safety issues, risks, and environmental considerations as part of Phase 2: Refine.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Introduction:

- p.1: we recommend that additional context be provided for the Wellbeing specification, namely a recognition of the impact of the wider world on Wellbeing e.g. “By integrating PE and SPHE within the Wellbeing Curriculum, children have the opportunity to develop a holistic understanding of their wellbeing,

to recognise the local environmental and wider societal influences that shape their wellbeing, and to acquire the necessary tools to lead healthy and fulfilling lives.” We suggest that eco-anxiety be named and recognised as something that needs to be tackled as part of a holistic approach to well-being.

- p.1: Wellbeing also needs to be integrated with other subject areas including STEM.
- p.2: Learning environments: we suggest adding an example that reflects the interconnection between human wellbeing and the wellbeing of the natural world e.g. *Exploring the connections between human wellbeing and the health and wellbeing of the natural world, locally and globally.*
- p.2: Inclusive education and diversity: we recommend an additional example reflecting the potential impact of exclusion and discrimination on wellbeing e.g. *Understanding the potential impact on wellbeing of exclusion and discrimination and working collaboratively to mitigate against the latter two.*
- p.2: Engagement and participation: we welcome the direct reference to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and suggest that this be referenced in each of the five specifications.
- p.3: environmental aspects should be included in the list of external factors, along with the current aspects (social, economic, cultural).

Rationale:

- p.4: we welcome and support the fostering of “qualities such as empathy, inclusivity, a sense of community, teamwork, fairness and social justice” and the emphasis on children developing “as engaged citizens who recognise the importance of leading healthy, active, and sustainable lifestyles.” We advocate for clear and ongoing support for teachers in bringing these concepts to life, with many examples of how, in particular, social justice and sustainable lifestyles might be fostered in the primary school setting and linked with efforts towards social justice and sustainability being made around the world.
- p.5: it is very positive to see the language used in describing Irish society - “the rich tapestry of cultures, identities, backgrounds, and families”. Likewise, the language around “embracing democratic practices and exploring personal and societal values, rights and responsibilities” (p.6). As above, teachers will require time, support, and resources to reflect upon, interrogate, discuss, and become confident in the exploration of these concepts in the primary classroom.

Aims:

- p.7: we recommend consistency between the specifications. Rather than presenting the aims of the Wellbeing Curriculum in table format, we suggest they be presented as per the other specifications, with a statement aim “to...” followed by a short explanation. This would emphasise the key focus of each aim in a clearer manner.

Strands and Elements:

- p.8: the strand units provide a holistic approach to Wellbeing. Global Citizenship Education offers much support in the delivery of the Community and Belonging strand unit in particular. We suggest that each of the strand units Emotional and Relational Education, Health Education and Community and Belonging incorporate both global citizenship and recognition of the interdependent relationship between humanity and the rest of the natural world.
- p.9: we welcome the integrated approach to learning and teaching. We suggest that a suite of thematic plans be provided to teachers to model and support this integrated approach.

Learning Outcomes:

- p.12: we support the idea of a whole-school approach to wellbeing.
- p.13: ‘being an active citizen’ - we suggest replacing the word ‘while’ with ‘and’ so that the two sets of concepts don’t appear to be considered in contrast to one another i.e. “Fostering a sense of fairness, responsibility, empathy, teamwork, and respect, *and* encouraging appreciation for diversity and community”.

The Wellbeing Curriculum in Practice – 6e. Practical Considerations

- p.45: The Wellbeing Curriculum and wider policy - we suggest that reference also be made here to children’s rights commitments, namely the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- p.45: The role of external facilitators and programmes – we welcome the openness to working with external facilitators and programmes and would like to highlight the availability of Global Village to support schools to deliver the full curriculum, including the Wellbeing Curriculum, in a holistic and thematic way.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Teachers and school leaders will require a suite of curriculum supports, including exemplars of the new curriculum in action (written and video lesson plans and thematic plans); training days (face-to-face) with colleagues; school closures to facilitate training; opportunities for reflection and discussion with peers; a range of teaching and learning resources. We recommend that it be made clear that teachers are not expected to be ‘subject experts,’ and that care be taken not to present/share an overwhelming number of resources but instead that a graded approach to the new curriculum be taken. For example, that resources be presented on a scale from ‘starter/beginner’ for teachers that are less confident in a subject area, to ‘expert/advanced’ for those that are more confident and experienced in a subject area. We suggest that greater clarity be provided regarding how the different components of the curriculum fit together, in particular the principles, competencies, strands, learning outcomes and concepts/themes.

While the aspirations regarding teacher agency are positive, in practice many teachers will require support to become familiar, comfortable, confident, and competent with this concept. This will need to include many examples of and opportunities to develop thematic plans, with the examples provided clearly incorporating the key elements of the curriculum framework: principles, key competencies, concepts, skills, learning outcomes, pedagogical approaches. We also suggest the provision of clear guidance on using the key competencies as a starting point for planning and delivery of the curriculum in an integrated way.

A key challenge in supporting school leaders and teachers to implement the full curriculum will be the role played by textbooks and the potential for over-reliance on these, which may limit the range and depth of learning that happens in classrooms, despite the aspirations of these specifications.

Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Global Village would welcome the opportunity to engage with NCCA and Oide in the implementation of the curriculum, in particular through the development of curriculum toolkits and in the provision of continuous professional development associated with the roll out of the new curriculum. The Global Village team includes three primary school teachers with expertise in identifying and integrating opportunities for Global Citizenship Education across the curriculum, which would be of particular value for, but would not be limited to, the key competency of ‘being an active citizen.’

Feedback on the Draft Curriculum

Modern Languages

- Proposed curriculum is very worthy, and aspirations are timely given the current growth of anti-immigrant sentiment and the rise of the far right.
- Highly ambitious curriculum given suggested time allocation. What is dropped to make room for this in an already over-loaded curriculum?
- Concerns include:
 - o How will school's L3 be chosen
 - o What training will be given in L3 to teachers – or will it be teachers with existing knowledge of the language who will service the teaching of L3
 - o Will exemptions be granted for pupils with existing Irish exemptions
 - o Huge emphasis on linguistic knowledge – teachers seem to have to be able to compare & contrast multiple languages including languages spoken in the home in addition to schools L1, L2 and L3.
 - o Training in inter culturalism will be absolutely needed as this seems to be a massive part of the new curriculum.
 - o How to implement CLIL through L3 especially when already challenging for some to use CLIL for L2 which we are all proficient in
 - o What role will there be for pupils whose home language is already L3 – will they participate or be exempt?
- Is it an option for external teacher with native language proficiency to continue to teach a language that might potentially be school's chosen L3 and internal staff teach the intercultural elements of the curriculum once trained.
- What is the suggested time frame for the trial/exploration & implementation of the new curriculum, given that the new Maths Curriculum will only be formally implemented from September?
- The document is very long to read & a lot of terminology requires a prior knowledge of applied linguistics – few of our staff would have this.

STEM Science, Technology and Engineering Education

It is very idealistic and it is difficult to see how implementable it is in a classroom situation.

Loads of support material would be required in terms of videos on how you teach x topic – a step by step approach for a teacher.

Resources available – would everyone classroom have the required resources to keep 30 children busy and able to explore and investigate a topic?

It is hard to understand exactly what the new curriculum is proposing because it is very high brow and assumes a level of knowledge that a normal primary teacher may not have

Effective delivery of the new curriculum requires teachers to be well-trained in both content knowledge and inquiry-based teaching methods.

Differences in school funding and resources can lead to uneven implementation of the curriculum across different regions, potentially widening the educational gap between well-resourced and under-resourced schools.

While the integration of digital tools is beneficial, an overreliance on technology may be a disadvantage to students in schools with limited access to digital resources or those who have less experience with technology at home. Teachers would also need continued professional development with up to date technologies and softwares

The Arts

o Strand Name - Creating. I have always felt that the 'exploring' term in the current curriculum is very important for children, particularly in the junior end of the school. Many children do not yet have the confidence or skills to create in some areas but can 'explore' the idea of creating, making music, performing, drawing, etc. I'd suggest that this strand is named Exploring and Creating.

o Drama concepts - Good range here. I feel an additional concept of 'socialisation' or 'interaction with others' could be added. Social stories, morals and role play of real-life scenarios can be explored through the use of drama. I believe it is important to highlight that as a concept when we are planning our teaching and learning in drama schemes/lessons.

o The importance of design in future careers and lives of children cannot be understated. Design and Communication Graphics is now a leaving cert subject. Fifth and Sixth class curriculum areas could have more digital design referenced in the curriculum, to emphasise the importance of becoming digital learners and also to prepare them for further study in the area in second/third level.

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Principal

Guardian Angels' N.S.

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Blackrock Co. Dublin

Heritage Council

WRITTEN SUBMISSION RE PRIMARY CURRICULUM DRAFT SPECIFICATIONS

PARTICIPANT DETAILS

I am responding on behalf of an organisation
i.e. The Heritage Council

Are you willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation?

Yes.

Are you willing to have your submission published?

Yes.

SECTION 1

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No comment.

SECTION 2

You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- **Science, Technology and Engineering Education**
- **Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)**

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2a: Arts Education

Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Our comments will be confined to heritage-related matters. The Heritage Council acknowledges that via this draft specification children explore ‘types of dance from diverse heritages and cultural contexts, including folk dancing’ and that this process ‘provides children with a knowledge and experience of dance from both Irish and broader cultures’ (p. 29). It is worth pointing out that forms of dance, as well as other artistic and craft practices inherited from the past can be viewed as examples of intangible cultural heritage.

In relation to culturally responsive pedagogy, the specification states: ‘where it celebrates the rich tapestry of cultural diversity, including local, national, Irish and international traditions and heritages, Arts Education helps children to appreciate and value different identities’ (p. 29). The Heritage Council agree that an inclusive approach to learning about heritage (including the tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage which may be studied in relation to Arts Education) can help children to appreciate different cultures and perspectives.

Section 2b: Primary Language Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Our comments are confined to heritage-related matters. This specification acknowledges that ‘engaging with the Irish language broadens linguistic experience and can deepen intercultural awareness, allowing children to share in a unique and rich strand of the cultural heritage of Irish society’ (p. 5). The Heritage Council agree that engagement with Gaeilge can have this impact, and propose that pupils’ engagement with and appreciation for the language may be supported by them learning more about the history surrounding the language, its development and connections to peoples and places over time, and by greater engagement with the language’s utility and products, past and present. These opportunities, which intersect with heritage, could be better reflected in the specification text.

The specification also aims to ‘encourage children to be proud of and share their linguistic and cultural heritage’ (p. 10). The Heritage Council appreciates this aim and recognises it is important to facilitate an inclusive approach to heritage in education where all children, regardless of their background(s), can be proud of and share their linguistic and cultural heritage(s). Relatedly, the specification acknowledges that ‘an awareness of the culture and heritage associated with other languages children encounter (including the L3 from Stage 4) engages children and gives them an appreciation of cultures and customs different to their own’ (p. 57). The cultural heritages (including heritage languages) of pupils from diverse backgrounds might be recognised explicitly as being relevant and valuable in this context too, as they have the potential to facilitate this language and intercultural awareness in a very real and relatable way in classrooms.

Section 2c: Social and Environmental Education (SEE)

Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The Heritage Council are in agreement with the draft specification’s statement that ‘Social and Environmental Education helps children to discover and explore their own and others’ heritage’ (p. 7). It

is worth acknowledging though, that learning about heritage in primary education has the potential to facilitate all aspects of the draft specification's Rationale (pp. 7-8) and relatedly, its Aims (p. 9). Consequently, there is greater potential for heritage to be included and highlighted within the final text of specification in these sections. By way of illustration, learning about their own heritage (local and national), as well as its significance and the need to protect it, 'contributes to children's development as active citizens' (p. 7). This is further supported by an inclusive approach to heritage in education which involves children learning about the heritage of different groups in our society. The specification's desire that the learner 'recognises and appreciates the rich diversity within the world' is equally served by this inclusive approach to heritage in education (p. 7). Engaging with heritage as evidence (e.g. analysis of artefacts, buildings, sites, pieces of natural heritage) via active and even place-based learning also 'promotes children's critical thinking' and 'engages children's natural sense of curiosity and wonder' (pp. 7-8). Likewise, the ability we have to interrogate our heritage for what it can teach us re more sustainable materials and ways of living may assist in the specification's goal to espouse 'a sustainable future' (p. 8).

In view of the deep, fundamental connections between heritage and the SEE curriculum's rationale and aims, the Heritage Council is also suggesting that the specification's learning outcomes more directly and explicitly engage with 'heritage' at all stages of the curriculum. Some suggestions for achieving this are listed below, but this is not an exhaustive or necessarily prescriptive list, and we appreciate that the NCCA will know themselves how best our suggestions might be accommodated:

- 'Connect with nature and the outdoors, exploring the natural world around them and recognising their role in caring for it' (p. 16): could include the phrase 'natural heritage' either in place of, or to complement 'nature' or 'the natural world'.
- 'Recognise the importance of respecting their surroundings for future generations and identify ways in which they can contribute to preserving and enhancing the natural world' (p. 16): could include the phrase 'their natural heritage' either in place of or to complement 'the natural world'.
- 'Listen to, enjoy, and respond to stories from or about their locality' (p. 17): consider adding 'as part of their engagement with their cultural heritage'.
- 'Develop an awareness and foster an appreciation of the richness of cultural, ethnic, and religious expressions and traditions, becoming familiar with a diverse array of festivals, ceremonies, and celebrations' (p. 18): could include an explicit reference to 'cultural heritage' or might instead include 'heritages' alongside 'expressions and traditions'.
- 'Engage with, analyse, and narrate a broader selection of myths and legends from diverse cultures and ethnic origins within Ireland, Europe, and the wider world' (p. 19): could rephrase to 'Engage with, analyse, and narrate a broader selection of myths and legends associated with diverse cultures, heritages and ethnic origins within Ireland, Europe, and the wider world'

In line with facilitating an inclusive approach to heritage in education, the following learning outcomes might also be re-worded in such a way as to encourage teachers and those who create/provide resources to engage with the accomplishments of individuals from diverse backgrounds:

- 'Consider and respond to stories of people who contributed to society through scientific, cultural, or artistic developments' (p. 19): consider adding after 'people', 'including those from underrepresented groups' or similar.
- 'Examine stories of the lives of people who have contributed to social, cultural, and political developments, developing a sense of their legacy on national, European and/or the wider world' (p. 19): consider adding after 'people', 'including those from underrepresented groups' or similar.

In relation to the section on 'place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors', which is an important part of heritage education, on page 28 of the draft specification, the following sentence might be amended to make the potential role of heritage sites clearer to the reader:

- ‘Opportunities afforded to children to gain affective, material, physical and sensory experiences by immersion in/first-hand exploration of local familiar places and sites of interest are essential for historical and geographical learning’ (p. 28): consider adding ‘(including heritage sites)’ or similar after ‘sites of interest’.

Finally, turning to the section on ‘principles of learning, teaching and assessment’ towards the beginning of the draft specification, we have a suggested rephrasing to ensure all heritage organisations are considered by teachers for collaboration:

- ‘Forging partnerships with the library, museum, heritage centre to access resources including books, articles, photographs, maps, artefacts, and collections’ (p. 4): consider rephrasing to ‘Forging partnerships with libraries, museums, and other cultural and heritage organisations to access resources including books, articles, photographs, maps, artefacts, and collections’.

Section 2d: Science, Technology and Engineering

Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No mention is made of heritage in this draft specification, however, there is potential to do so as learning about heritage conservation can support pupils’ learning of STEM disciplines. Concomitantly, it has the potential to broaden for students the areas with which they associate the subject areas of science, technology and engineering. For example, there is potential for the specification to provide opportunities for pupils to engage with natural heritage via conservation. There is also potential for pupils to learn about cultural conservation relating to archives, manuscripts, artworks, archaeological artefacts, antique objects, and buildings, for instance. Some focus on these conservation techniques and the careers associated with them would facilitate integrated teaching of the Science, Technology and Engineering curriculum with SEE, and possibly even Arts Education and the Primary Language Curriculum in places. Given this utility, it might be worth briefly but explicitly highlighting heritage conservation, and specifically the conservation of natural, built and cultural heritage in the final text of the specification so teachers are aware of these connections and the potential they have for teaching and learning.

Section 2e: Wellbeing

Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No mention is made of heritage in this draft specification, however, there is significant potential to do so given that learning about one’s own heritage, as well as those of others, has the potential to facilitate wellbeing. For example, the wellbeing of learners from underrepresented groups (sometimes vulnerable) can be enhanced by greater inclusivity and representation of their heritage (and consequently aspects of their identity) in the classroom. Likewise, learning about the different heritages of people (past and present, including peers) has the potential to facilitate pupils’ development of empathy and multiperspectivity. Similarly, engaging with local heritage has the potential to impact wellbeing by encouraging a greater sense of belonging in learners regardless of their background. Some or all of these connections might be acknowledged in the text, perhaps in relation to the areas of identity, family, citizenship, community, and belonging.

SECTION 3

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

It will be important for the successful implementation of the curriculum that teachers can access or

create high-quality, well-researched, and accessible classroom resources (which both disseminate the relevant knowledge and engage students in relevant active learning exercises). Teachers will likely need support in this area (e.g. input of relevant expertise).

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

The Heritage Council already offers provision to support primary education in the area of heritage (e.g. the Heritage in Schools scheme) and is currently undertaking research and policy development work to lay the foundations for future provision to both primary and post-primary schools. Such actions could be particularly relevant to those parts of the curriculum where an emphasis on heritage was explicit in the specification wording.

HSE Health and Wellbeing

HSE Health & Wellbeing response to the Draft Wellbeing Specification for Primary and Special Schools.

Submitted by Meabh McGuinness meabh.mcquinness@hse.ie

on behalf of HSE Health and Wellbeing

HSE Health and Wellbeing

HSE Health and Wellbeing is focused on helping people to stay healthy and well, by reducing health inequalities and protecting people from threats to their health and wellbeing.

HSE Health & Wellbeing's support of young people in the school setting

HSE Health and Wellbeing work closely with colleagues in the Education system at both national and regional level to promote the wellbeing of young people in the school setting. Over the years we have developed a range of resources and teacher professional learning (TPL) opportunities to enhance the delivery of the SPHE curriculum, and to support the implementation of the overarching [Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice within schools](#)

See **Appendix 1** for the HSE Health and Wellbeing's current supports for primary SPHE and the wellbeing promotion process.

HSE Health and Wellbeing comments on the Draft Wellbeing Specification for primary and special schools.

HSE Health and Wellbeing welcome the publication of the Draft Wellbeing Specification and acknowledge the increase in time allocation for wellbeing in the Primary Curriculum Framework. This draft specification achieves a good balance of emphasis on the social determinants of health such as inclusivity and social justice, and individual determinants of health such as physical activity, self-awareness, decision making etc.

3: Aims

‘Equip children with the knowledge, critical thinking skills and resilience necessary to make informed and responsible decisions regarding substance use’

Informed decision making is relevant in many areas of wellbeing and is strong thread through many other strand units including; Motivation for healthy living, Media and digital wellbeing, Safety. Would it be appropriate to consider widening the scope of this aim beyond substance use? This could be achieved by naming other areas where decision making is important e.g. food, sleep, or by removing the reference to substance use, which narrows the focus.

‘Provide children with a balanced, inclusive, age and developmentally appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality, fostering healthy attitudes and relationships while recognising the diversity of human experience.’

Could consideration be given to replacing the word ‘while’ with the word ‘and’ as this would recognise the diversity of human experience is not in conflict with the other elements listed.

4: Strands and Elements

Figure 2 reflects the holistic nature of wellbeing and the connections between the learning in each strand unit. It communicates the ethos and approach of this wellbeing specification very well and will be a useful guide for teachers.

Elements

HSE H&W welcome the focus on the process of teaching and learning for wellbeing described in the Elements section, and in section 6b Teaching in the Wellbeing Curriculum. Methodologies that provide opportunities for learners to access and apply skills are essential for social and emotional learning. This guidance provides a rationale for this approach and a useful description for teachers. It places the learning appropriately in the overall context of the SPHE specification. The SPHE toolkit will be an important resource to support teachers to embed these approaches into their everyday practice.

Emotional and Relational Education

It is positive to see a strong focus on emotional and relational wellbeing, and the inclusion of a strand focused on community and belonging, this acknowledges the broad range of factors that impact on our health, at individual and community level.

Identity

It's good to see a focus on developing children's sense of identity and self-worth. As part of this, it would be important to see a strong emphasis on enhancing children's self confidence *and self efficacy* across all stages of primary school.

Emotional awareness and expression

Is it possible to include "Emotional regulation" as part of this set of skills? These are three separate skills; emotional awareness, emotional expression and emotional regulation, and it would be important that they are all reflected separately within this section.

It would also be important to see emotional awareness, building children's emotional vocabulary, reflected in Stage 3 and 4. It is not mentioned in the current draft in Stage 3 and 4. It is important that this is covered throughout primary school as it's a key foundational skill to support emotional regulation.

Regarding the development of children's skills in relation to empathy, it would be good to also focus on 'perspective taking' as part of empathy. These skills are often taught together.

Relationships

It would be important to see a stronger emphasis on communication skills within this section. It is a core skills that is essential to supporting positive relationships. This needs to be reflected throughout the stages.

Resilience

Meta-cognitive skills including engagement and persistence are important part of enhancing resilience, it is positive to see this reflected in the learning outcomes, particularly in Stage 3 and 4.

Decision Making

As part of this, it would be good to see an emphasis on "planning and self-evaluation" which are important skills that support decision making.

Links across strand units

Decision making is central to all aspects of wellbeing. The relevance of emotional and relational education in supporting decision making is clear, however decision making is a key skill that is relevant to other strand units e.g. Motivation for healthy living, Substance use, Media and digital wellbeing. Would it be appropriate to thread more learning related to decision making through these strand units.

CASEL⁸⁴ have identified the following components of responsible decision making, which may support the development of learning outcomes related to this skill:

- Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness
- Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts
- Identifying solutions for personal and social problems
- Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions
- Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school
- Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being

⁸⁴ <https://casel.org/fundamentals-of-sel/what-is-the-casel-framework/#responsible>

- Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts

Health Education

Motivation

The HSE felt that the title for the strand unit ‘Motivation for healthy living’ did not clearly reflect the learning outcomes within the unit. Understanding and nurturing are key themes in this learning outcome, which reflects the overall aim of developing self –awareness. The concept of ‘taking care’ was used in the 1999 SPHE curriculum, and is also used in the wellbeing definition in this specification ‘*take care of their physical wellbeing*’ p. 3. ‘Taking care’ reflects themes of self-awareness, understanding and nurturing more fully than ‘motivation’, could this concept be used in this strand unit title?

Decision making

The complexity of decision making is reflected in the earlier strand unit ‘Decision making’, where it references the balance between risk and adventure. In this strand unit, decision making focuses on ‘considering positive choices’ with little reference to the critical thinking or reflection involved in the process. The term ‘informed decisions’ is used in the aims of the curriculum (p. 7), we feel that using the term ‘informed decisions’ here would strengthen the links between the aims and learning outcomes.

Substance Use/Misuse Prevention

Substance use is very important aspect of this specification. It is clear that the learning outcomes in substance use strand unit for stage 1&2 provide the foundation for the learning outcomes at stage 3&4. However when considered solely in the context of the health education unit for stage 1&2 it could appear to have more focus than food, hygiene, rest, sleep and meaningful physical activity combined, which seems unbalanced. This could be addressed by adding more learning outcomes to the Motivation for healthy living strand unit.

‘Understand the risk factors associated with substance misuse, and the role of personal choice and responsibility to support them to make informed . . . ‘

In this learning outcome emphasising confidence and assertiveness in relation to decision making may be more helpful than focusing on personal choice and responsibility. This would highlight that developing the skills required to make and enact decisions is critical and would be a more empowering approach for the learner. Personal choice is a term often used by the food and drink industry, and it can minimise the impact of the environment on health behaviours.

Role of external facilitators and programmes

HSE Health and Wellbeing are often asked to provide speakers and/or programmes for SPHE, at both primary and post primary level. We welcome the reminder regarding best practice for implementation of SPHE on page 45, this supports our service model of providing TPL to build the capacity of teachers in SPHE.

Appendix 1

For more information visit www.hse/schoolswellbeing



All in-person training has been approved for substitution cover by the Department of Education



HSE Supports for the Primary School Wellbeing Promotion Process

This flyer lists the range of HSE resources and training to support student wellbeing in primary school. For updates and additional information on our trainings, resources and supports visit www.hse.ie/schoolswellbeing



Zippy's Friends – Mental Health

Zippy's Friends is an evidence based programme for teaching social and emotional skills to 5-7 year olds. The programme has been evaluated in Ireland and internationally.

N.B. Programme materials are only available with training

Teachers can attend either:

- 1 day in-person training – suitable for all teachers. [Book Here](#)
- Or
- 2 hour online training – suitable only for teachers experienced in delivering SPHE to this age group. [Book Here](#)



Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit

This toolkit will guide schools through the process of developing and implementing a new policy, or reviewing and improving an existing policy including: carrying out an audit; drafting a policy; consulting with parents; implementing the policy.

[Click Here](#) to download the toolkit

Order a hard copy on www.healthpromotion.ie

Although the resource can be freely downloaded, the accompanying, **Wellbeing Through Healthy Eating Policy Development Training**, is recommended:

- A 1 day in-person training in the use of our Healthy Eating Policy Toolkit. [Book Here](#)



Physical Activity

Physical Activity Resources

3 resources to support your school to promote physical activity throughout the school day, on the journey to and from school, in the classroom, and in the playground. Also available in Irish.

- [Get your school walking.](#)
- [Get active in the classroom.](#)
- [Active playgrounds.](#)



Although the resource can be freely downloaded, the accompanying **Wellbeing Through Physical Activity Training** is recommended:

This 1 day in-person training supports participants to take a whole school approach to physical activity by promoting physical activity throughout the school day.

[Book Here](#)


Parents' Resources

The following resources may be signposted to parents, and may also be of use to teachers in their preparation for SPHE delivery:

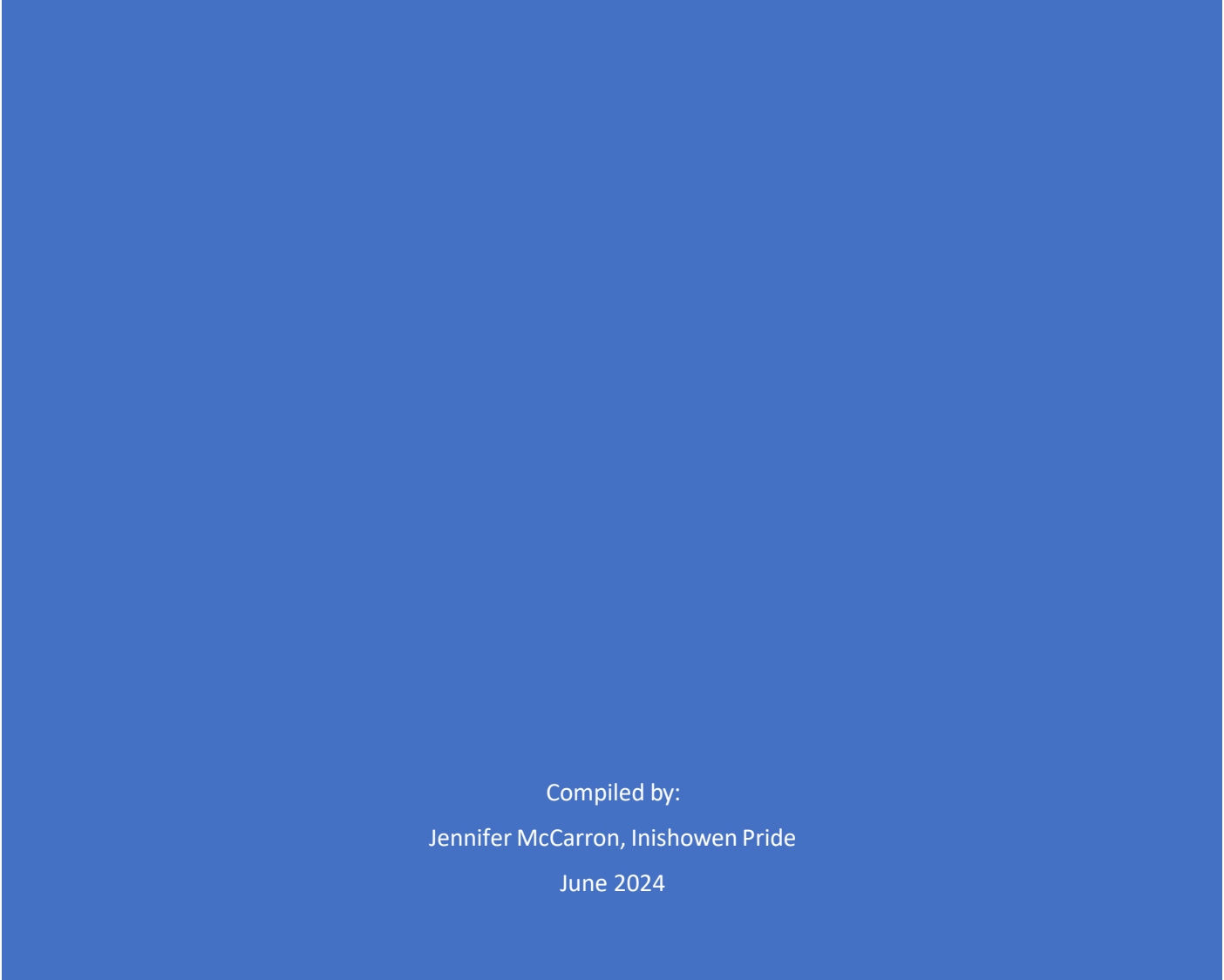


- [RSE- Making The 'Big Talk' many small talks: For parents of 4 -7 year olds](#)
- [RSE - Making The 'Big Talk' many small talks: For parents of 8 - 12 year olds](#)
- [RSE- Making the 'Big Talk' many small talks: Healthy Ireland library collection](#)
- [Alcohol and Drugs: A Parent's Guide](#) - practical advice to help parents and children communicate about alcohol and other drugs.
- [Healthy Eating – START your child on a healthy lifestyle, with tips and advice on how to create a healthy lifestyle for your children](#)
- [Healthy Eating – START Healthy Lunchbox Leaflet](#)

Order or download from www.healthpromotion.ie



Submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in relation to planned changes to the Primary Curriculum Specifications



Compiled by:
Jennifer McCarron, Inishowen Pride
June 2024

Introduction:

Firstly, we would like to express our appreciation for your work to improve the curriculum to date. Our hope is that the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) will be open to taking guidance from our contributions as well as findings from recent research carried out nationwide and be motivated to do further work to improve the proposed curriculum.

We very much welcomed the research carried out this year *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools*¹ which explored the attitudes, views and professional needs of primary school staff. We are delighted that findings indicate that the vast majority of primary school staff across Ireland show support for LGBTQ+ inclusion for students. An overwhelming 90% of school staff believe it is important for those working in primary schools to know about LGBTQ+ inclusivity and 80% feel comfortable with a student coming out to them as LGBTQ+. However, the research also reveals that school staff feel they have lack knowledge and skills needed for their practice to be fully inclusive.

We are acutely aware of gaps in our education system which we learn of through the families who reach out to us for support and connection. Often young people and parents feel on their own, not sure of what attitudes school staff may have and level of acceptance they may or may not experience at their primary schools. We also know that many young people do not see themselves or their families reflected in a meaningful way in the teaching, conversations or resources within schools.

Our hope is that LGBTQ+ youth can enjoy the same sense of value and belonging as their peers and that LGBTQ+ individuals and families can be reflected within day-to-day life in Primary schools just like other individuals and families in our community. With this in mind we have compiled our recommendations.

Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment

We would like to acknowledge the positive steps to include themes of human rights and diversity. However, there needs to be more clarity around the legislative frameworks and clear definitions outlined. We recommend that clear and direct references are made to Irish Equality Law and the nine characteristics protected under this law which are gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community².

Rationale

While the reference to ‘*an inclusive understanding of human sexuality*’ is a positive step in the proposed curriculum it is not sufficient to ensure that LGBTQ+ families and children who identify or are realising they are LGBTQ+ have a sense of being valued equally and belong equally within school settings. Research indicates that School staff need more direct and clear messages to feel confident

¹ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity*. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick.

² [Equality laws in Ireland - IHREC - Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission](#)

to teach inclusively. ³Primary school staff need clear and direct guidelines that they are encouraged and required to be LGBTQ+ inclusive in teaching the curriculum to students.

We recommend that the same sentence used in the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum⁴ is used in place of the existing line on Page 4 which is vague and open to interpretation. The line in the Junior Cycle SPHE reads as follows: *“contributes to building a cohesive, compassionate and fair society; one that is inclusive of all genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religious beliefs/worldviews, social classes and abilities/disabilities”*.

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

We are glad to see an effort to improve the social, personal and Health education section. However, we know from the findings earlier this year by Belong To organisation that young people who are LGBTQ+ need to see that they are included in the school curriculum and that staff use inclusive language on a daily basis in order to feel like they belong fully. We know from the same study that the vast majority of primary school staff want to be LGBTQ+ inclusive but need very clear and direct support and encouragement from school management and the department of Education to alleviate any fear or uncertainty they have in being LGBTQ+ inclusive.

The recommendation for this section is that a wholly LGBTQ+ inclusive approach should be taken to teaching SPHE/RSE. The statement within the new senior cycle SPHE curriculum could suitably be applied to this curriculum also which reads: *“Each of the learning outcomes below should be taught in a way that LGBTQ+ identities, relationships and families are fully integrated and reflected in teaching and learning, as opposed to being addressed within stand-alone lessons.”*

The SPHE/RSE rationale should clearly outline the existing requirements under Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, for primary schools to implement education and prevention measures to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying. It would be important

Emotional and Relational Education Strand Unit

School staff need absolute clear support, clarity and direct encouragement to be LGBTQ+ inclusive in their approach within schools. This section of the curriculum does not offer adequate support to staff to ensure that they feel safe and comfortable being inclusive on a day-to-day basis with the students they work with. We ask that the curricular guidance be changed to include the direct support and clarity around this matter.

Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*⁵, has required all primary schools to name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, and explicitly detail education and prevention strategies to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying since 2013. However, while this line is included in the anti-bullying policy in all schools because it is required there are few effective strategies in place to tackle these forms of bullying and the stigma attached with identifying as LGBTQ+. Promoting LGBTQ+ inclusive learning environments continues to be overlooked or ignored due to uncertainty staff have that they are indeed permitted or welcome

³ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity*. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick.

⁴ [Relationship Sexuality Education; RSE \(ncca.ie\)](https://www.ncca.ie)

⁵ [gov - Anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools \(www.gov.ie\)](https://www.gov.ie)

to create LGBTQ+ inclusive spaces. This section would benefit young people more if it looked at how homophobic and transphobic bullying could be tackled and how more inclusive learning environments could be created within schools.

We ask that LGBTQ+ identities being included and reflected across the 'Identity' strand of the Wellbeing Curriculum. We ask that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are directly named and explained within the Learning Outcomes of the 'Relationship' strand. We ask that practical supports and practice guidelines be provided to teachers around how to support a young LGBTQ+ person who is openly LGBTQ+ or who has not come out or realised that they are LGBTQ+. The curriculum should offer guidelines on how staff can ensure learning environments are safe and supportive regardless of whether a young person opens up about their sexuality or gender identity. Organisations such as Shoutout⁶, LGBT Ireland⁷ and Belong To⁸ can offer training and support that would be helpful for school staff to gain confidence in creating inclusive school environments. Improvements in this section are crucial to ensuring positive outcomes for LGBTQ+ youth in relation to their mental health and wellbeing. National research carried out as recently as this year highlights how vulnerable LGBTQ+ youth are⁹. It is vital that we give due attention to these concerns and make every effort to promote positive sense of self worth from Primary school years.

Community and Belonging – SPHE Strand Unit

While this section introduces some level of positive inclusion, the research by Belong To (2024)¹⁰ informs us that the curriculum needs to be direct in allowing and encouraging school staff to be LGBTQ+ inclusive. When referring to Diversity it again needs to be made explicitly clear that characteristics protected under the Equal Status Acts include gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community. We also suggest that the term same-sex parents in the footnote on page 19 is replaced by the term LGBTQ+ parents.

Practical Considerations

The Circular 0045/2013, *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools*, requires that all primary schools to name homophobic and transphobic bullying in their anti-bullying policy, and explicitly detail education and prevention strategies to tackle homophobic and transphobic bullying since 2013. This is not adequate to ensure LGBTQ+ student have safe spaces within schools. School staff need clear guidance and support in order to be able to introduce effective strategies to prevent these types of bullying and also to create LGBTQ+ inclusive learning spaces. School staff need clear mandate that directly addresses the issue of homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying. School staff need clear mandate and guidance on how they should create LGBTQ+ inclusive schools.

⁶ www.shoutout.ie

⁷ www.lgbt.ie

⁸ www.belongto.org

⁹ Higgins A; Downes C; O'Sullivan K; de Vries J; Molloy R; Monahan M; Keogh B; Doyle L; Begley T; Corcoran P; (2024) Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland. Dublin: Belong To

¹⁰ Neary, A. and Power, J. (2024) *Belong To Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity*. Dublin: Belong To and University of Limerick.

We recommend that the Wellbeing Curriculum specifically names homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying within all sections of the curriculum that relate to bullying, as well as within the Glossary in clear and certain terms. We recommend that supports to tackle these forms of bullying are included in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

Wellbeing Online Toolkit:

We recommend that the Wellbeing Online Toolkit include supports and guidelines around best practice as to how to best support a student who comes out as LGBTQ+, and how to best support their parents/carers. We recommend that the Toolkit includes guidelines for school staff around how to create safe and supportive school environments for young people and staff whether they are out or not. We recommend that the Online Toolkit include resources for teachers so that they can have a confidence in knowledge and awareness around language and LGBTQ+ inclusion in classrooms.

We recommend that the Toolkit make children's books and resources readily available that reflect LGBTQ+ lives and that school staff are mandated to use resources with LGBTQ+ themes regularly in their classrooms and schools. With such resources available, visible and in common use within schools, children who are LGBTQ+ and children of LGBTQ+ parented families can experience a true sense of belonging and a sense of being supported when the curriculum reflects their family and lived experiences.

We recommend that ongoing development and training opportunities are provided for school staff in relation to LGBTQ+ identities, equality and inclusion matters (as highlighted also in previous sections).

We recommend that the Glossary terms be reviewed with an established reputable LGBTQ+ organisation such as Belong To, LGBT Ireland or ShoutOut so that it is as inclusive as possible. We also again recommend that the individual forms of bullying are identified and listed (homophobia, transphobia and biphobia) so that it is in line with the existing legislations relating to anti-bullying in primary schools.

We strongly recommend that training and guidance is provided to all school staff (as outlined throughout this submission) so that staff can develop the confidence and support needed to use the Wellbeing Toolkit effectively to create inclusive school environments.

This Submission has been endorsed by the following individuals, groups and organisations:

	Endorsed by	Role/ position	Location
1.	Jennifer McCarron	Inishowen Pride Team & Social worker	Donegal
2.	Elizabeth Curran	Inishowen Pride Team & Dance teacher	Donegal
3.	Philip O'Donnell	Inishowen Pride Team & teacher	Donegal
4.	Mel Bradley	Foyle Pride Chairperson	Derry
5.	Pól Penrose	Bród na Gaeltachta Chairperson	Donegal
6.	Kayleigh Bowery	Letterkenny Pride Chairperson	Donegal
7.	Galway Community Pride	Community members	Galway
8.	Jamie Kenny	Dublin Pride Co-CEO	Dublin
9.	Karl Hayden	Co-Founder of the LGBT Restorative Justice Campaign	Dublin
10.	Elaine Murphy	ShoutOut - Education Manager	Dublin
11.	Ruadhán Ó Críodáin	ShoutOut - Executive Director	Dublin
12.	Shauna McClenaghan on behalf of Inishowen Development Partnership	Joint CEO of Local Development Company	Donegal
13.	Dr Brian Lacey	Historian/archaeologist. Author of 'Terrible Queer Creatures: homosexuality in Irish history'.	Donegal
14.	Isobel O'Reilly	Lecturer	Dublin
15.	Kate O'Callaghan	Development Education Worker	Donegal
16.	Helen Gallagher	Teacher	Donegal
17.	Jennifer Tedstone	Primary teacher	Donegal
18.	Orla McKinney	Classroom assistant	Derry
19.	Alison McLaughlin	Life long learning community support worker	Donegal
20.	Niall Bonner	Past volunteer at local school. Early years student at NWRC	Derry
21.	Matthew Joyce	Teacher	Donegal
22.	Fiona Mc Carron	Special needs assistant	Donegal
23.	Kathleen mcginley	Educational psychologist	Donegal

24.	Diarmaid O'Meara	Primary Teacher	Donegal
25.	Peter Willis	Teacher & Designer / yoga teacher	Dublin
26.	Mr Dennis C A Mc Daid	Former teacher, former care giver, member of the Donegal Gay walking group	Donegal
27.	Fernando Cosentino	Former teacher	Donegal
28.	DonnaMarie mc Faul	Teacher	Donegal
29.	Elizabeth Doherty	SNA	Donegal
30.	Helen Bernadette Ryan	Teacher	Donegal
31.	Rebecca Dalton	Parent	Donegal
32.	Bríd Ní Chumhaill	Retired teacher and parent of LGBTQ person	Tipperary
33.	Marie McLaughlin	Trainer	Donegal
34.	Patience McCarron	Student	Donegal
35.	Saurabh Washimkar	Student	Ireland
36.	John Cutliffe	Parent	Donegal
37.	Leanne McBrearty	Parent	Donegal
38.	Laura Marshall	parent	Donegal
39.	Paul Williams	Group member	Sligo
40.	Lorraine Martin	Parent	Donegal
41.	Louise Gill	Parent	Dublin
42.	Karen Kirkegaard	Parent	Donegal
43.	Sharon McLaughlin	Parent	Donegal
44.	Fiona Harvey	Parent	Donegal
45.	Kerry-Ann McMahan	Parent	Tyrone
46.	Rosaleen Kelleghan	Parent	Donegal
47.	Jackie Power	Parent	Donegal
48.	Eilis Quigley	Parent	Donegal
49.	Rebecca Strain	Parent	Donegal
50.	Breege Mulhern	Parent	Donegal
51.	Paul Doherty	Parent	Donegal
52.	Annabella Stewart	Granny	Donegal
53.	Suzanne Harkin	Nurse and parent	Donegal

54.	Shaun Canavan	Director of nursing	Donegal
55.	Jennifer Anthea Clifford	Psychologist(retd)volunteer	Londonderry
56.	Domhnaill Harkin	Social Worker	Donegal
57.	Clare McCarroll	Physioterapist	Donegal
58.	Ciaráin Mellon	Business Owner	Derry
59.	Linda Doherty	Occupational therapist	N. Ireland
60.	Liam Mc Carron	Carer	Donegal
61.	Roberto Angrisani	Owner	Donegal
62.	Albert Dolan	Pensions Manager	
63.	Paul Mahon	Director Managed Services	Dublin
64.	Rev. Seamus Mac Ghille Aindraís	Independent Catholic Priest	Donegal
65.	Pauric Havlin	Marketing	Donegal
66.	Lorraine Mc Donnell	Training Development Lead	Dublin
67.	Molly Gillespie	Shop assistant	Donegal
68.	Elene Bergin	Welfare rights adviser	Donegal
69.	John McFadden	Sports Therapist	Donegal
70.	Margaret Mc Clean	Psychologist	Donegal
71.	Mary Syron	Retired	Mayo
72.	Georgina Gallagher	Community Worker	Donegal
73.	Mary Moran	Counsellor Trainer	Presently Co. Donegal
74.	Aisling Sheehy	Community Member	Donegal
75.	Elly Barr	Counsellor	Donegal
76.	Sharon McMenamin	Community Engagement & Outreach Officer at an Arts Festival	Donegal
77.	Séamus Mac Fhionnlaóich	Community member	Donegal
78.	Nurul Shuhadah binti Muhamed (Yoyo)	Co-founder of LGBT Social Centre in Malaysia (past)	Donegal
79.	Yvonne McGrory	Therapist	Donegal
80.	Shauna McClenaghan	Community member	Donegal
81.	Pearse McGee	Computer Software Test Team Leader	Donegal.
82.	Claire Doherty	Administrator in a local development company & patent	Donegal
83.	Adrian McMyler	Community Leader	Donegal

Institute of Physics

NCCA Consultation on the Draft Primary Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum

Question: The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities

Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum

Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*

Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class

Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes

Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching

Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment

Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Answer:

The Institute of Physics welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Draft Primary Specification for Science, Technology and Engineering. The Primary Curriculum Advisory

Group convened by the IOP, the Royal Society of Biology, the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Association for Science Education has recently produced a framework for future primary science curricula, and it is heartening to see several of their recommendations echoed in the rationale and underpinning principles of the draft specification. The full framework is available here:

https://www.rsb.org.uk/images/edpol/Primary_Curriculum_Advisory_Group_report.pdf

The emphasis on key competencies is helpful, particularly around harnessing children's instinctive curiosity to help them understand the world around them. These key competencies could be more closely aligned with the elements on pages 6 and 7 of the draft specification. Table 2 specifically draws out problem-solving and investigation as key components of the curriculum, but this is then softened in the key competencies, where problem-solving becomes part of "be creative". Given the centrality of problem-solving skills to the rationale and aims of the specification, we recommend that problem-solving be given specific mention as a key competency.

The focus on "playful and engaging learning experiences" throughout the draft specification is positive. Many of the principles of learning, teaching and assessment in Table 1 highlight the value of situating these learning experiences within a local context – making use of the child's immediate environment, collaborating with local STEM professionals and engaging with the child's lived experiences. This enables young people to connect with their learning and identify with the sciences, ensures that all children feel included in the sciences, and helps them understand why they are learning the things they are – at primary level the "why" is as important as "what" they are learning; and helping them to build a personal identity in which they feel that the sciences can be for them is as important as acquiring knowledge. This approach necessitates teachers having flexibility within the curriculum to choose the contexts that are relevant and familiar to their pupils.

The intentions and design principles of the curriculum are good – and well expressed. However, they do not seem to be carried through into the statements of content. These statements do not seem to be derived from the principles expressed at the start of the document. Instead, as is often the case, the statements seem to be taken from ideas that

are traditionally taught in early secondary school. Therefore, many of the ideas are not age-appropriate (which will be off-putting), they will be repeated anyway at secondary level (resulting in students feeling that they are not making progress), and they are taking up space which could be better used to give students valuable, age-appropriate experiences that build up both the desire to explore and understand the physical world and their confidence to do so.

Therefore, we recommend that the statements are developed based on the design principles and give consideration to what is going to be most effective for this age group; rather than being based on curricula in early secondary school. We discuss these concerns with respect to energy below; however, another example might be forces: students should experience, investigate and feel the effect of forces. However, they do not need to label them or know about force arrows.

Our main recommendations for a primary curriculum are that it should:

have a strong emphasis on purpose, considering not just what is taught and learned, but why and how, so that children develop a coherent and cognitively appropriate understanding of how the world works and their own agency within it;

help children identify with the sciences by providing opportunities for teachers to choose contexts that are relevant to their pupils;

help all children to feel included in the sciences through the experiences that they have, and the perspectives put on science narratives and by encouraging teachers to use contexts that are familiar to primary age children;

ensuring the curriculum plans for progression to avoid content being taught before it is appropriate for the age/development stage of the child;

encourage children to think scientifically, to discuss and explain their thinking and, through practical experience, gain a sense of the nature and practices of the sciences;

Currently, the principles in this consultation document align well with these recommendations. However, the detailed content does not.

Question: Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Answer:

We welcome the new alignment of the sciences with technology and engineering. To equip students to study the sciences, including physics, at post-primary level, they should observe and experience as many interesting physical phenomena as possible. Making things is an effective way for them to do this, and practical activities (such as making paper straw rockets or machines with pulleys and levers) allow them to feel forces and see the effects of, say, switches in circuits. It has the added advantage of demonstrating the close links between the sciences, technology and engineering. The learning outcomes in the existing SESE curriculum specifically mention practical design/building tasks. Given the draft specification's consistent emphasis on hands-on, playful learning, it may be worth explicitly including these practical learning outcomes.

A central recommendation of the Primary Curriculum Advisory Group is to ensure that content is not taught before it is appropriate for the age and development stage of the child. Content that is too advanced for the pupils reinforces the negative stereotype that the sciences are difficult or confusing. As such, the recommended knowledge maps within the group's report contain detailed sections on what should *not* be included, in addition to recommendations on what should.

Full knowledge maps of what should be taught at primary level science are available in the Primary Curriculum Advisory Group's report: <https://www.iop.org/about/news/report-on-future-of-primary-science-curriculum-published>. We would be very happy to further discuss our recommendations and the work of the Advisory Group.

A key component of science at primary level is embedding basic numeracy. In maths and science classes, students should be able to observe, measure and describe real-world phenomena using numbers and should also be able to identify simple patterns that will enable them to make predictions. It is important that the computational thinking practice outlined in page 23 of the draft curriculum is underpinned by students' experience of using numbers and observing patterns in the real world.

To ensure that the content is age appropriate, abstract explanations should be avoided and activity should instead focus on tangible, observable phenomena: how long does it take to run across the playground, what shape will the moon be tonight, which of these objects do we expect to float?

Among other things, and as another example of ensuring that what is taught is appropriate for the age group, the Primary Curriculum Advisory Group recommends that energy and energy transfer should not be taught at primary level at all. And we agree: the Energy and Forces strand should be reconsidered to omit energy. We recommend that the strand focuses on more concrete and measurable ideas – like forces and movement – and that its title reflects this: something like Movement and Machinery.

Our three main reasons for suggesting omitting energy ideas at this level are:

energy ideas are not appropriate for this age group

including them can result in misconceptions

these ideas will be repeated in early secondary school.

Therefore, teaching it in the primary phase is both risky and unnecessary; and takes up valuable time. We expand on those concerns in the following paragraphs.

Energy ideas are abstract. It is not possible to have a meaningful discussion of energy at primary level so it will be reduced to regurgitating generic statements that sound scientific but, in general, do not bear up to scrutiny (see below). Many school-level statements relating to energy can easily be used to explain away important ideas. They sound scientific but mask the underlying mechanisms and processes which would provide genuine insight and understanding.

There is also a risk that energy will be taught in a way that initiates or reinforces misconceptions. This is exemplified in the first learning outcome in this topic:

“Build on their awareness that energy is all around us. Explore and identify common sources and forms of energy and investigate how energy is used to make things work, including our bodies.”

“Energy is all around us” is a generic statement with no specific meaning. It also reinforces the inaccurate conception of energy as a substance. Similarly, “energy is used to make things work” is generic and may be understood as energy being “used up”, incorrectly implying that the overall amount of energy is decreased. Exploring and identifying common sources and forms of energy is neither generic nor inaccurate, but reduces discussions of energy to meaningless energy labelling exercises, which do not fit the “playful and engaging” remit of the draft specification.

Question: In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Answer:

A relevant and age-appropriate curriculum will be the most effective tool for primary teachers. Ensuring the physics content in the curriculum is suitable for primary students

will ensure that teachers have the knowledge, skills and confidence to teach the content to their pupils. Students have the best learning experience with confident, engaged teachers, whereas a lack of teacher confidence may compound the notion that physics and science are especially hard.

A robust and rigorous programme of professional learning, including the opportunity for subject-specific learning and development, will enable teachers to teach and assess the new curriculum effectively.

INTO Global Citizenship School

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

With regards to the Draft SEE Curriculum Specifications we, in Global Citizenship School (G.C.E.) particularly like and agree with the following: 1. The INTRODUCTION (Page 1) Education, as noted in the Primary Curriculum Framework, plays a pivotal role in contributing to a democratic, equitable, and just Irish society. Also, Inclusive education and diversity • Fostering a culture based on the global learning themes of: Human rights, Democracy, Equity, Social and Environmental justice, Sustainable development. • Creating a safe and accessible learning space for the active exchange of ideas, perspectives, and knowledge. • Challenging all stereotypes and misconceptions while promoting empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity. 2 Rationale (on page6) Espouses a sustainable future Social and Environmental Education plays a pivotal role in realising a sustainable future through the development of children's individual and collective sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility. Children's capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national, and global levels is cultivated through learning experiences in this curriculum area, thus fostering their ability to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world. Also Section 3 AIMS on page

7: Framed by considerations for global learning which include human rights, democracy, equity, social justice, and sustainable development, the aims of Social and Environmental Education are: • To promote global citizenship. Help to foster a sense of interconnectedness with the world through exploration of diverse cultures, environments and Global Issues. In 5. LEARNING OUTCOMES / Key Competencies we agree that "Being an Active Citizen" and "Being an Active Learner" are indeed KEY. To conclude, we in GCS 100% endorse the GLOBAL LEARNING THEMES on page 21 which state: Teaching in Social and Environmental Education is framed by global learning including human rights, democracy, equity, social and environmental justice, and sustainable development empowering children to be informed and active citizens who can contribute to a more equitable and sustainable future.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Page 1 of the Draft SEE Curriculum Specification states that "Education, as noted in the Primary Curriculum Framework, plays a pivotal role in contributing to a democratic, equitable, and just Irish society.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Institute of Sathya Sai Education

NCCA Consultation on the Primary Curriculum for Ireland

Submission Supporting the Incorporation of Education in Human Values (EHV) Throughout the Primary Curriculum

We are making this submission on behalf of the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education of Australia and Hong Kong, members of a global organisation with a focus on bringing education in human values into all aspects of education and community life.

Although we are not a part of the Irish education system, we believe that the problems facing societies nowadays are universal and that any initiative to promote values education in curricula in any country sets a key example for the rest of the world.

(Dr) Margaret Taplin: Education Consultant and Retired Teacher Educator, with 30 years of experience in integrating education in human values into schools

(Prof.) Roger Packham: University of Western Sydney; has over 40 years' experience in research and education, including as deputy chair of the EHV-based Sathya Sai School, Murwillumbah, NSW, Australia.

Kevin Francis: Retired Teacher/Counsellor with 44 years of experience as a counsellor, teacher and facilitator in teacher education and positive psychology, integrating Education in Human Values into schools, both Catholic and Public.

Co-Editors of: Packham, R., Taplin, M. & Francis, K. (2024). *How Values Education Can Improve Student and Teacher Wellbeing*. UK: Routledge

Why do we need human values education?

Values education is needed for the traditional reasons of educating people of character who will ensure a harmonious society, one that can deal in better ways with many of the current social issues and helps to promote the wellbeing of all. It is also our contention that the issues of the Anthropocene, the current geological age, the period during which human activity has been the dominant influence on the Earth, are dramatic (for example, see Steffen et al. (1975)¹, Steffen

et al.²(2115), and Ellis³ (2018)) and require a values-based approach if they are to be improved. Such issues must be addressed urgently, which means that education holds a key role *if* human society as we know it and all other life is to be sustained rather than doomed.

World change is a current topic on the minds and in the hearts of many people, particularly the issues of climate change and the COVID and other potential pandemics. World events appear to be spiralling into ever greater manifestations of negativity, and many who hope to change the world with more positive actions and intentions are frustrated by the apparent lack of effect of their good work.

In recent times we have seen the rise of fundamentalism in a number of religions, which seems to be a manifestation that is exactly the opposite of the more peaceful, spiritual world that many are seeking to create. There are issues of mental health, of young people lacking direction, of drug taking, domestic violence, mental health issues, inequality, poverty, racism, and racist attacks.

To understand the process of world change, it is necessary first to understand the current times we live in. Never before have human beings been more interconnected. The acceleration of communications technology has created what is, for many, a global community where individuals are increasingly aware of the whole of humanity. The teaching that '*we are all one family*' is rapidly manifesting itself, as the reality of our interdependence and interconnectedness reveals itself. The extreme imbalances in our world are also being revealed, and it is impossible to shut out the reality of the large human family of which we are all a part. It is no longer possible to make someone else '*the other*'. Change is badly needed in a world where increasing numbers of people are lacking basic resources for survival, and a relatively small number have an overabundance of resources.

As humans are complex creatures with a good side and a not-so-good side, the question is which side do we turn to? This is beautifully illustrated by the story of The Two Wolves⁴, a popular legend of unknown origin, possibly Cherokee Indian: It is a story of a grandfather using a metaphor of two wolves within him, one representing his noble, helpful qualities, the other his more negative and harmful traits, to explain his inner conflicts to his grandson. When the grandson asks, "*Which wolf wins?*" the grandfather answers, "*Whichever wolf I choose to feed is the one that wins*"

¹ Steffen, Will; Broadgate, Wendy; Deutsch, Lisa; Gaffney, Owen; Ludwig, Cornelia (2015). "The trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration". *The Anthropocene Review*. 2 (1): 81–98

² Will Steffen,, Katherine Richardson³, Johan Rockström, Sarah E. Cornell¹, Ingo Fetzer, Elena M. Bennett,

Reinette Biggs, Stephen R. Carpenter, Wim de Vries⁷⁸, Cynthia A. de Wit⁹, Carl Folke¹, Dieter Gerten, Jens Heink, Georgina M. Mace, Linn M. Perss, Veerabhadran Ramanathan Belinda Reyers¹ Sverker Sörlin, (2015) Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet. Science 13: Vol. 347, Issue 6223, 1259855

³ Ellis, Erle C. (2018) Anthropocene: A Very Short Introduction (Very Short Introductions) . Oxford University Press, Oxford. ⁴ See for example

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Two_Wolves#:~:text=The%20story%20of%20the%20Two%20Wolves%20is%20a%20metaphor%20of%20two%20wolves%20fighting%20within%20him

Rutger Bregman⁸⁵ (2020) has described what he believes to be a radical idea, that “*most people deep down are pretty decent*”. Unfortunately, most people think that everyone will only look after themselves when panic breaks out, and that humans by nature are selfish and governed by self-interest. This view drives the headlines that are read each morning and the laws that govern lives. Yet Bregman provides a realistic alternative to this pessimistic view, that is based on overwhelming evidence demonstrating the opposite; neighbours help each other, and people are willing to give their lives even for perfect strangers. While this truth has been shown many times over by every branch of science, is corroborated by evolution, and confirmed by everyday life, it is still not accepted by rulers, is denied by many religions and ideologies, and ignored by the news media and most histories of the world. Bregman⁸⁶ presents case after case of real-world examples, as well as scientific and psychological research, to support his argument. However, it is still true that most people believe others ‘cannot be *trusted*’ and hence that is how they act.

Clearly there is an urgent need for change to happen, and it seems to be falling to the education system to instigate and facilitate this change, especially considering that the best time to shape a person’s character is in the early years. Educators therefore need to be equipped with ways to support the positive view of humankind, that humans have the inherent potential to be cooperative rather than competitive, that human kindness and altruism can change how we think and act, all as a foundation for achieving true change in our society. This is where the need for consistent, systematic values education, with a key aim to stand up for human goodness despite opposition that this may bring out in others, and the fact that it may need us to stand up for our consciences. If we believe that most people are decent and kind, everything changes, and a complete rethink can occur about how we organise our schools, prisons, businesses, and democracies, as well as how we live our own lives. This more realistic view of human nature will have major implications for how individuals interact with others and how young people are educated to this truer view of humankind in order to create a better world.

⁸⁵ Bregman, Rutger (2020) Humankind: A Hopeful History, Bloomsbury, publishing, London, UK.

⁸⁶ Ibid

Humans need to think bigger than their individual lives to imagine the operations of an entire planet, together with its potential changes over very long time scales. But at the same time, it is important for individuals to start with themselves, as they learn to appreciate that it is the sum of their own individual actions that cause, or overcome, the issues faced by humanity. For this to happen, it is critical that individuals realise these issues are not just for 'others' to deal with, that every person's actions do make a difference, even those who see themselves as "just one small person". The challenge is to encourage a critical mass of people to examine their own behaviours and to want to make changes. If we can achieve this, there is hope that humans can still shape a future in which both humans and nonhuman nature thrive together. This needs to be a values-based approach if it is to succeed. It is the loss of values, such as respect for nature and for each other, and the increase in individualism, that are contributing to the adverse Anthropocene, social, and personal issues.

Hence the need for a values education that draws on the good work that is being done already and expands it, not as a separate speciality within education, but as a responsibility of all of society, enabling all educators to incorporate values into the whole school environment.

Why is it important to embed human values in all aspects of the curriculum and not only in moral education classes?

In our experience it has been clear that the one-off "moral education" lesson does not bring about fundamental and lasting changes in students. They tend to give the answers they know are expected, but not to apply what they have learned to their daily lives.

While it is possible to achieve some good results by adopting single components of values education, to achieve optimum impact it is important and necessary to integrate all aspects, including the values, the teaching strategies, the stakeholders involved in the school, and all of the dimensions of the human being. This includes addressing the goal of creating a respectful and responsible school community and to enable teachers to feel that they are working in a supportive team and not alone in a vacuum to implement values education. Ideally values initiatives have the same priority as academic and behavioural expectations, so that values education provides a foundation for improved academic performance and behavioural outcomes, and underpins the whole school culture as well as its curriculum.

Values education is most effective when it is 'owned' by a partnership of the whole community and directed by teachers, administrators, parents, and students. Through an effective and

active committee. Such a school's values initiative can provide a definite and deliberate direction that supports a positive school climate. Some obvious points to note are:

- Include stakeholders from both the school and the wider community
- Invite committee members from each main area of the school
- Invite a parent and a student from each grade/year level to serve on the committee
- Include the school principal as an active member of the committee
- Hold committee meetings regularly, possibly twice per term
- Share the ideas and initiatives discussed with all staff members
- Rotate committee members on and off, leaving a core group that has a history of directing the values education initiative while new members are acclimatized to the initiative.

Above all, it is important to remember that if a school is to become truly a values-rich one, the important starting point is for it to touch the teachers' and other stakeholders' hearts first so they can experience and understand how it enhances their own lives, so they do it because they can see the benefits, not because somebody has told them to do it.

Students are most likely to appreciate the place of values in everyday life if values are connected throughout the curriculum, with teachers of all subjects taking advantage of *'teachable moments'* that relate to values and character. Creating a school culture of values takes more than a few posters and several morning announcements, even though these are an important component of the overall school values environment and are helpful in creating a common sense of direction. Integrating values education into the vision and life of a school requires a whole-school cross-curricular approach so students see that values have a place in every aspect of their lives, not only in specific *'values education'* lessons. Ideally, values education components are woven into the curricular for all subjects as all are replete with authentic examples and opportunities to expand a student's understanding of life's social and ethical issues. Ways to promote a values school include:

- Share the purpose, goals, and concepts of values education so that they may be reinforced throughout the school community.
- Align all aspects of the character education initiative to the curriculum so that there is a congruence of core values.
- Build a collection of resource materials, including activities, that support the common core values. This could include a quotation list, 'hero' profiles, and a collection of relevant contemporary articles from newspapers, magazines, and the internet.
- Create a professional library that includes values education resources.
- Correlate the values education programme to the achievement standards set by the relevant State Education Authority.
- If necessary, rewrite conflict resolution, violence prevention, antibullying, and anti-harassment activities, along with celebrations of diversity, in values language within the school's strategies for developing good character.
- Empower students by giving them opportunities to establish goals, engage in service initiatives, plan activities and actions, and explore career, skills, and higher education options.
- Recognise that the inevitable occurrence of breakdowns and transgressions of values are also '*teachable and learning moments*' and add authenticity to the idea that values are for all and require persistent practice.

To ensure that the students receive the same message at home and at school, regular workshops can be held for parents as well as training seminars for teachers.

The more the teachers integrate the practices of the values into their own lives, the more the transformation is extended to their students, with the whole school environment becoming more harmonious for everyone. This can be referred to as *constant integrated awareness* of values.

Some evidence of the impact of education in human values on teachers and students

Our experiences of working with and observing teachers around the world reflect that we cannot teach values, but rather that it is our obligation as teachers to draw out what is within the pupils. Good values teachers utilize some timeless strategies, including storytelling, music, positive affirmation, quotation and silent sitting and creative visualization to achieve this. These all combine to have the effect of stilling the conscious and subconscious levels of the mind and storing positive stimuli so that the individual can come to be in touch with his/her true inner self (like polishing an inner diamond) and draw on the wisdom and values that are inherent in the true self.

Transforming teachers

There is no doubt that a special change occurs whenever teachers begin consciously to be aware of the principles of values education in their teaching. Over and over again we hear stories of teachers who have become happier and more fulfilled in their chosen profession as well as in their personal lives. In our values education projects, we ask teachers to write their personal reflections. Let us take a look at some of the ways in which teachers have described themselves to have changed.

Changing their perceptions of education

One of the earliest transformations that happens to teachers is that they begin to reexamine their ideas about what teaching should be, and shake off some of their old philosophies that may have been making them unhappy:

- *'Under the influence of the traditional ideas, I thought I was a good teacher as long as the students were getting results. Therefore, in my teaching I would always strive for perfection and always thought the students had grasped the complete knowledge as long as they obtained good test results. But the fact is not so. You pay very much, but the harvest is actually very little. Facing this fact, I had become excessively sad, excessively disappointed and very tired. My teaching did not have any meaning. Then I started to participate in the values education training and we became aware of the theory to "awaken the child's innermost feelings, thoughts and values", "help the children to know they all have special qualities" and "the deepest impression the student has is of the teacher's personality, not the knowledge which she teaches". All of this touched me in a very big way and I blushed with shame when I recalled the past.*

Though I had thought myself to be a teacher, only pursuing the academic score was really superficial. I have learned the “humanist” side of the work, to “take the love as the starting point” even if the student’s outcomes are not so good. I try as much as possible not to look at the superficial things but to discover the students’ true intrinsic selves.’

- *‘The values education has allowed me to make a big transformation in my thinking. I have learned to forgive and forget; I have changed from hot tempered to restrained. Before in the classroom I would often scold the students but now I patiently guide them to speak the truth.’*

Teachers recognize themselves as being better people

- *‘In my own life I have changed to become calmer. For example, when students are mischievous or quarrel or do not listen to me in class, I respond with repeated patience. With this “gentle mood” treatment I try to guide the students with kind expression, enlighten their thoughts and avoid the stiff teaching methods. I also reconsider myself frequently. For instance, with the moral education strengthened and my understanding more profound, I feel my teacher’s sense of mission more strongly, love the students more deeply, am more harmonious in my relationships with the students, and more artistic in my methods of work. In brief I have enhanced my ability to be a good person.’*
- *‘At that time my heart’s core did not have a foothold – I therefore became immersed in my own moods. Life and work can lose their direction. When the values education came to our school I was very happy to participate in the research. In the year of the research my impetuous heart has gradually become tranquil. Even if my husband does not come home for his meal, I am tranquil. I will watch television, prepare a lesson, perhaps practice some calligraphy. I no longer get into a rage or slam down the telephone, but look at it from his point of view, understand, and forgive him.’*
- *‘As an average teacher, I think that the values education has changed me in many ways. The values education has changed my disposition when I encounter a difficulty. Instead of being irritable or having a fit of temper, it has helped me to learn to endure patiently and be tolerant.’*
- *‘In my family I am the only daughter, therefore I was often impulsive, did not consider others’ feelings and always expected to be the “centre”. If something happened to not meet my expectations I was unable to recover after a setback. But after participating in the values education I changed optimistically upward. I have become magnanimous,*

open minded and forgiving. I say frequently to myself that others must feel happy and joyful because of my existence. If I can make others joyful, I can also be truly joyful.

Recognising the importance of teaching from the heart

- *'In the past teachers may just have taught children but not from heart to heart. My concept has changed. I use my heart, and am keen to build up a good relationship with students, and to use encouragement instead of punishment.'*

Controlling their own behaviour

A natural consequence of teaching about human values is that the teachers naturally become aware of their own values. We quickly come to realize that if we are going to encourage children to be truthful we cannot tell lies. If we want them to value love, we must be loving. If we want to convince them that it is important to cultivate inner peace, we find ourselves consciously looking for ways to cultivate our own inner peace.

- *'I realize that as a teacher I need to put more effort into raising/enhancing myself and controlling my own conduct – that I have to be very cautious with my words and actions and try to set a good example for the students.'*

Becoming more valuable to their colleagues and families

As teachers become more and more conscious of their roles as models of Education in Human Values, they begin to realize that their behaviour is transforming not only themselves but also others around them:

- *'The values education has been like a light radiating to others. For a year I was like a honeybee taking honey, absorbing the nutrition from the values education. This led to very good results in my work, and I have shared these experiences with other people.'*
- *'The values education has changed me and my relationships with my colleagues. Before I would speak extremely candidly and had not considered the feelings of the person I was speaking to. Now I have learned to pay attention to others' feelings, which has helped to build a harmonious atmosphere with colleagues. Many look from the other's point of*

view, render encouragement and assistance and respect each other equally as one respects one's own family members.

Transformation of students

Around the world there are countless stories of students being transformed through exposure to values education in their regular schools. Teachers have described many examples of students who have been bullies, self-destructive, sad or lacking a sense of selfworth who have changed dramatically through an integrated approach to values.

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- *'There has been some transformation in the students' thoughts and behaviour. The love, non-violence, right conduct etc. have started to seep through the class.'*
- *'First regarding the students' physical and moral integrity development, the values education has been like a beacon light illuminating the students' paths, improving their quality, and their behaviour and habits have made very big progress. The students have changed from being quarrelsome to peaceful, from liking fighting to becoming loving, caring schoolmates. Even those who did not like studying have come to like it, those who did not understand politeness have become civil, and their academic records have also slowly improved. The quality of their behaviour has changed, and they now show compassion and filial piety. It has built a solid foundation for the students' future.'*

The students' own voices

Some comments that signify amazing changes come from students from a model valuesbased school in Zambia (extracted from Kanu, 2000):

- *I stopped doing many of the bad things I was doing at home. Here at Sathya Sai School I have improved. I am in Grade Eight, still in school and enjoying the lessons, especially the SSEHV. Instead of laughing and mocking at me, my friends now admire me. Some are drunkards and they have nowhere to go." [Year 8 student]*
- *People in the neighbourhood didn't like me because I was in bad company and we even used to bite people who tampered with us, calling ourselves the 'Trouble Gun Stars'. After failing my Grade Seven exams I became depressed. The gang I used to play with abandoned me because they did not want failures in the group. People around me disliked me because I was badly behaved towards them. My parents were not happy. This really pained me because I thought that that was the end of me... I am now loved by the people in the community I live in.... to me, life is peaceful. I'm happy about myself*

because the people around me are happy with me, love me and I love them. [Year 12 student]


Conclusion

We can see from all of the above examples that an integrated approach to values education is an important and powerful tool for bringing about transformation in mainstream schools, and that the process is a two-way one, in which teachers and students support each other's growth. More evidence of the benefits, methods and educational philosophy of values education can be found in our book "*How Values Education Can Improve Student and Teacher Wellbeing*"⁸⁷ cited at the start of this submission, but also in another recently published book "*Second International Research Handbook on Values Education and Student Wellbeing(2023)*" Lovat ,T., Toomey, R., Clement, N., and Dally, K., Springer International Publishing AG, Cham⁸.

Thank you for your consideration of this submission. We wish you well in your endeavours and sincerely hope that your revised Primary Curriculum includes Education in Human Values as both a core philosophy and a practical methodology for future Primary education in Ireland.

⁸⁷ <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781003478607/values-education-improve><https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781003478607/values-education-improve-student-teacher-wellbeing-roger-packham-margaret-taplin-kevin-francis> ⁸ <https://link.springer.com/referencework/10.1007/978-3-031-24420-9>

Irish Cycling Campaign

<p>Irish Cycling Campaign Formerly Cyclist.ie. The Irish Cycling Advocacy Network</p> <hr/> <p>The Member for Ireland of:</p>  <p>Irish Cycling Campaign 5 Foster Place Dublin 2 D02 V0P9 www.irishcyclingcampaign.ie RCN 20102029</p>
<p>To: National Council For Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)</p>
<p>Date: 6th June 2024</p>
<p>Re: Public Consultation on the Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification</p>

Dear Sir / Madam,

Irish Cycling Campaign (formerly Cyclist.ie, the Irish Cycling Advocacy Network), is the national organisation of cycling advocacy groups, greenway groups and bike festivals on the island of Ireland. We are the Irish member of the European Cyclists' Federation. Our vision is for an Ireland with a cycle friendly culture, where everyone has a real choice to cycle and is encouraged to experience the joy, convenience, health and environmental benefits of cycling.

We are very thankful for the opportunity to submit our observations of the new draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification and fully support its vision to holistically empower children with skills across subjects such as Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Physical Education (PE) to live healthier, more connected and happier lives.

Our submission has been drafted by a number of primary teachers supported by experts in paediatric health with direct experience of delivering support to children of all mobilities.

Introduction:

The Irish Cycling Campaign believes that cycling should be an integral component of the physical education curriculum, aimed at fostering holistic development and promoting well-being among primary school students. The inclusion of cycling aligns with the overarching aims of the curriculum, as outlined below:

- 1. Physical Well-being:** Cycling encourages regular physical activity, contributing to the development of cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, and overall physical health. Through cycling, students enhance their motor skills, coordination, and balance, laying the foundation for a healthy and active lifestyle.
- 2. Social Well-being:** Cycling offers opportunities for social interaction and collaboration, promoting teamwork, communication, and peer support. Group cycling activities foster a sense of community and belonging, while also cultivating empathy and respect for others.
- 3. Emotional Well-being:** Engaging in cycling activities can have positive effects on mental health and emotional well-being. Riding a bike provides a sense of freedom, independence, and achievement, boosting self-esteem and confidence. Moreover, outdoor cycling experiences promote connection with nature and community, reducing stress and promoting relaxation.
- 4. Cognitive Well-being:** Cycling stimulates cognitive development through problem-solving, decision-making, and spatial awareness. Navigating different terrains and traffic conditions requires critical thinking and concentration, enhancing students' cognitive skills and resilience.
- 5. Climate Responsibilities:** Children cycling not only benefit from the activity themselves but also contribute positively to mitigating climate change. By adopting cycling as a mode of transport, students reduce their carbon footprint, thereby fostering a sense of environmental stewardship from a young age. Emphasising the climate responsibilities associated with cycling empowers students to recognize their role in addressing global environmental challenges and encourages them to make sustainable choices in their daily lives.

Incorporating cycling into the primary school curriculum reflects a commitment to holistic education, encompassing physical, social, emotional, cognitive, and environmental dimensions of well-being. By providing students with opportunities to cycle safely and

confidently, the curriculum aims to empower them to lead healthy, active, and sustainable lives while fostering a sense of responsibility towards the planet.

A further point to note here is that Irish transport policy, investment plans and the mobility culture are all having to change quickly now in response to the need to rapidly decarbonise the transport sector. Therefore it is important to equip school children with the skills to be able to use the transport infrastructure networks of the future - i.e. those 'active travel' routes which are being developed extensively countrywide as part of the National Cycle Network Plan, CycleConnects plans, BusConnects bus and cycle network plans and the metropolitan cycle network plans such as the Greater Dublin Area Cycle Network Plan. Training in being a competent bicycle user at a young age will help pupils to confidently navigate the multi-modal transport systems which will become increasingly common in Ireland (and indeed abroad) over the coming years. Becoming a competent cyclist is a skill for life in a rapidly changing world.

Requested Amendment:

The Irish Cycling Campaign is recommending the following changes to the *Table 9: Description of Physical Education activity areas* contained within Section 6D: PE Activity Areas on pages 43 and 44 of the Draft Primary Wellbeing Specification to strengthen the place of cycling as both an enjoyable activity and a key travel mode for children in our primary school system.

- (a) From the section labelled "Adventure" we recommend the removal of "*Wheel based activities are also an important element of adventure activities incorporating a focus on the lifelong activity of cycling, alongside other wheel-based activities such as scooter and scooter board.*"
- (b) With this deletion we would recommend the inclusion of a new separate section titled "Cycling, Wheeling and Walking" to replace this reference to cycling.

Within this "Cycling, Wheeling and Walking" section we would suggest the following as the body of text to better support cycling within the curriculum:

Cycling empowers independence and connection in children allowing them the freedom and safety to travel to and from school in a method that both enables activity and climate responsibility. Direct teaching of cycling skills will enable them to travel in a safe and enjoyable fashion while learning to be considerate road users.

Social cycling to school instils within children a habit of regular, daily activity within their lives. It creates a connection to their peers and their wider community further fostering active citizenship and acts as a base for a healthy and active lifestyle.

Cycling, walking and wheeling also provide opportunities for children to be active outside directly taught PE classes and organised sports. Taken together these movement types instil a lifelong love of movement that includes children of all abilities.

Additional Observations:

(a) Teacher Training and Upskilling

Existing cycle training programs in schools tend to be outsourced to external cycle training providers. This poses challenges for many schools as they may not be in a position to provide funding for these training providers or book training providers due to timetabling issues or geographical location.

We recommend that the Wellbeing curriculum encourages and expects class teachers to directly engage with teaching and learning related to cycling. We appreciate that there will be training needs in this area but feel that this may be achieved through the provision of Continuous Professional Development and EPV training courses and events.

These training courses should intend to enable class teachers to ensure that the children in their class are able to:

1. Develop the foundational skills in order to cycle safely between two points.
2. Carry out basic checks and tasks on a bike (move saddle height, check brakes, pump tyres).
3. Understand the rules of the road.
4. Develop an interest and curiosity in cycling.



(b) Health benefits

HSE guidelines on physical activity in children say that children over 5 should have at least 1 hour of energetic play a day – ‘where they sweat and breath faster than normal’. Staying fit is imperative for a child’s growth and development to have a healthy body, develop self confidence and improve learning and attention (HSE, 2022). We argue this activity could be done on route to and from school where possible.

Additionally, being overly car-dependent poses both direct and indirect risks to children. An Irish child’s outdoor environment is made physically more dangerous with increasing number and size of vehicles and their associated pollution. The indirect effects to health in taking sedentary transport to school is the opportunity cost of not walking, cycling or scooting to school. In effect, this is about more than teaching a child to cycle a bike; rather, it is about using it it as a transport tool and supporting this positive transition can improve baseline paediatric health and create lifelong healthy habits. According to the Department of Children in 2018, approximately 50% of children aged 10–17 reported being physically active for at least 60 minutes per day on more than four days per week, early intervention at primary school level can help develop these healthy habits.

Walking or cycling to where you are going will be good for a child and allow them to engineer physical activity into their daily lives by transport. An easy win. According to the Road Safety Authority figures show that 2 of 3 child casualties on our roads were child pedestrians or cyclists. Between 2014 and 2022 there were 56 fatalities aged 0-15 years and 852 seriously injured road users, representing 4% of total fatalities and 8% of total serious injuries. Although we believe the responsibility of reducing road danger lies with the adult driving the car, road safety awareness starts by being a pedestrian or cyclist. Cycling is a core life skill, a building block to road safety to improve awareness, it should be part of the syllabus at primary level.

Cycling is inclusive, children with different physical and mental needs are capable of cycling a bike. This may not be the same for children during other activities.

(c) SEN Children: Focus on Cycling and Autism

Children with autism are very often some of the most creative and detail oriented children within the classroom. They are keen observers and are incredibly resilient, accepting and honest. In addition to the huge positives children with autism bring to school and family life, they also have a number of common challenges which may include:

- Difficulty with social interaction.
- Delayed or limited communication skills.
- Sensory processing difficulties.
- Restrictive patterns of behaviour or interests.
- Delays and difficulties with motor skills development.
- Stereotypical behaviours.
- Concentration difficulties.

Some of the motor skills problems that children with Autism experience include difficulties with balance, postural stability, joint flexibility and movement speed. The secondary consequence of motor skills difficulties include avoidance of group activities including team sports and therefore decreased opportunity for physical activity and social interaction. We would firmly maintain that our cities and schools must provide support and facilities to allow all children to avail of the right amount of physical activity for optimum health and wellbeing.

Exercise of all kinds increases opportunities for social interaction and improves social motivation and communication for all children but especially for children with autism. It

promotes calmness and relaxation while also having clear improvements in physical health. Physical stimulation obtained through body rocking, arm flapping and spinning can decrease with regular daily exercise. As with all school children, physical exertion helps children with autism to complete classroom tasks with increased accuracy.

Motor Skills and FUNdamental Movement Skills

If we examine motor skills and fundamental movement skills we can very clearly focus on the benefits cycling in particular can bring to children with autism. With many of these children experiencing roadblocks in developing different aspects of their motor skills, the development of physical literacy is a key part of their schooling and life skills development. They may need more time and support to learn to cycle but once accomplished their sense of achievement is powerful. The therapeutic and emotional benefits gained are very worthwhile.

The *Move Well, Move Often* programme ([PDST, 2017](#)) has been rolled out in schools in recent years and has a far more skills and assessment focused take on physical literacy than previous physical education programmes. It has been adapted for use by many Special Education Needs (SEN) teachers in Irish primary schools over the past number of years for both individual and group teaching of fundamental movement skills. When looking at these skills it's important to understand that while they may be given specific instruction during motor skills teaching with children with autism, all of these physical literacy skills are complementary and interconnected. While locomotion and manipulative skills may be easier to teach within a standard school PE hall setting, the stability skills benefit hugely from extra interventions such as cycling.

Locomotor Skills Transporting the body in any direction from one point to another	Stability Skills Balancing the body in stillness and in motion	Manipulative Skills Control of objects using various body parts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking • Running • Hopping • Skipping • Jumping for height • Jumping for distance • Dodging • Side stepping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balancing • Landing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Catching • Throwing • Kicking • Striking with the hand • Striking with an implement

For many children with autism regulation of sensory inputs can be a particular challenge. They may be overloaded by noisy, busy environments. Proprioceptive (body awareness) and vestibular (balance) sensory senses can often be challenging areas too. This can lead to a more limited ability to explore their environment and, in turn, less opportunity to develop their sensory systems, resilience and relationships with peers. Children with motor difficulties require activities that challenge these systems to help them to improve and develop. They need activities that challenge balance, coordination and motor planning such as cycling to help address these sensory issues. Activities such as these have a hugely calming influence on the sensory systems of children with autism.

Social Skills Development

Social skills, difficulties with social interactions and making meaningful and lasting connections with peers is a key focus of a lot of school aged interventions. A huge aspect of the teaching of primary school aged children focuses on building and developing these skills. Children with autism have both discrete social skills teaching and social group teaching as part of their school-based interventions. Cycling to school with peers in a group or a cycle bus (a group of children cycling together in convoy to and from school under parental supervision) helps develop a sense of belonging and community with their peers that sits perfectly alongside this. The shared communal routines provide incredible benefits to their levels of social interaction, communication skills and most importantly their self-confidence.

The importance of cycling to both children’s feelings of belonging and inclusion within a group and their mental health cannot be overstated. This is especially important as children reach adolescence where interests and behaviours develop. A shared way of moving together such as cycling gives children a sense of belonging and a common interest. It also ensures that the exercise they need to help self-regulate is an enjoyable and communal experience. Having the outlet for their feelings is an especially important part of guiding children with autism through this particular phase of their lives and having a solid peer group such as a cycling group strengthens this resilience.

We know that physical activity rates decrease from childhood to adolescence. Older individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) living in community settings have been observed to live very sedentary lifestyles. If children with ASD do not develop participation skills in active leisure time activities, they will most likely become increasingly sedentary with age placing them at risk of diabetes, heart disease and certain cancers. We must therefore strive to encourage physical activity for these children in our schools and communities.

Support children with autism to learn to cycle and provide the infrastructure to keep them cycling, and they will gain lifelong benefits for their physical and emotional wellbeing. Of equal importance, they will have increased opportunities for meaningful daily social interactions.



Conclusion:

We wish to thank the NCCA and its staff for what is an excellent draft specification for the new Primary Wellbeing Curriculum. We hope that you find our observations helpful and that you will consider them for inclusion in the final draft of the curriculum. If we can be of any further help please do not hesitate to contact us at any stage.

Regards,

Neasa Ní Bheilbigh - Chairperson of the Irish Cycling Campaign, (Primary Teacher - Galway)

Dave Tobin - Vice-Chair of the Irish Cycling Campaign (Primary SET - Limerick)

Conn O'Donovan - Irish Cycling Campaign (Primary Teacher - Cork)

Vinnie Wall - Executive Member of the Irish Cycling Campaign (Paediatric Anesthesiologist Cork)

Colm Ryder - Submissions Officer of the Irish Cycling Campai

NCCA Consultation on the Primary Curriculum

Submitted on 14th June 2024

Introduction

This document is a response to the call by NCCA for consultation on the Primary Curriculum. IDS will specifically address the **Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Language Draft Specification** with respect to the inclusion of Irish Sign Language (ISL).

The IDS is the only national Deaf-led representative organisation of the Deaf, and it serves the interests and welfare of the Deaf community. It provides a number of educational, personal and social services delivered through ISL to Deaf children, adults, and their families. ISL is the first and/or preferred language of the Deaf community and was recognised as such via the ISL Act 2017. The Deaf community sees itself as a linguistic and cultural minority group.

The IDS is recognised as a Disabled Peoples Organisation (DPO) under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). IDS are members of the World Federation of the Deaf and the European Union of the Deaf and have consulted with international Deaf representative bodies in relation to a number of societal issues that impact on Deaf people.

The IDS leads the ISL Act Cross Community Group, which is a group of National organisations and service providers working in the Deaf community. We consult with this group in relation to topics of interest to Deaf people including the ISL Act and the topics discussed in this submission. This group includes the following members: Bridge Interpreting, Centre for Deaf Studies (CDS) TCD, Chime, Council of ISL Interpreters of Ireland (CISLI), Council of ISL Teachers (CISLT), Greenbow LGBTQ+, Irish Deaf Research Network (IDRN), Irish Deaf Youth Association (IDYA), National Deaf Women of Ireland (NDWI), Sign Language Interpreting Service (SLIS), Deaf Reach Services and Deaf Sports Ireland (DSI).

There are no accurate statistics on the size of the Deaf community in Ireland, but it is estimated that 5,000 people communicate in ISL as their primary language together with a community of an estimated 40,000 including family, friends and those working in the Deaf community. The most recent data from the central statistics office show there are over 233,000 people who are deaf and hard of hearing in Ireland. However, not all communicate in ISL as their primary language, or many may not consider themselves to be part of the Deaf community. The IDS use the term Deaf to cover all Deaf people, regardless of the degree of hearing they have.

Response to the Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Language Draft Specification

The Primary Curriculum Framework states that *“language learning enables children to understand the world around them and to communicate effectively with others. Communication takes many forms and is often multimodal”*. It further states that the curriculum *“acknowledges and harnesses the diversity of languages, including Irish Sign Language”*. Some of the aims of the draft specifications are *“to respond to changing priorities”* and *“embed the seven key competencies in*

learning outcomes”. At the moment there are more Deaf children in mainstream education than in Deaf schools which contributes to increased interest in learning ISL. Taking all of this into account, we will highlight some points to be considered with respect to the **Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Language Draft Specification** and the inclusion of Irish Sign Language (ISL).

ISL should be explicitly listed beside English and Irish as a language

The overall framing of ISL in the draft specification must be elevated and placed on equal footing with the other spoken languages- English, Irish and Modern Foreign Languages. ISL is an indigenous language of the Deaf community in Ireland and should not be considered a Modern Foreign Language. The Deaf community whose first and/or preferred language is ISL see themselves as a linguistic and cultural minority group. However, ISL is currently not listed in its own right beside English and Irish, in fact it is mentioned in sections that address special education and other

“methods of communication”. This perpetuates the stereotype that ISL is merely a tool and not a language. This must be taken into account considering one of the listed Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment is about *“fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions”*. Prior to the ISL Act, ISL was referred to as a “support service” in the Education Act. Now that ISL is a recognised language, the wording and framing of ISL in the draft specification should reflect this. On this note, we would like to differentiate ISL from Lámh. Lámh is not a language, but a communication system that adopts and then adapts simplified versions of some signs that are used in ISL and is used with speech. There are about 500 gestures/signs that are used in this communication tool. Lámh is seen as a standardised option for augmentative communication in special education. We do acknowledge the references to ISL as *“a recognised language of Ireland”* which *“has its own unique linguistic structure, rules and features”* and a *“home language”* whose functions *“are exactly the same as for oral language”*. To fully commit to this understanding, we recommend ISL is explicitly listed beside English and Irish from the outset and throughout the specification.

How ISL and Deaf Culture contribute to linguistic and cultural diversity and the benefits of this

The draft specification commits to *“a continued focus on developing an awareness of languages and cultures”* and *“emphasises the important value of linguistic and cultural diversity to foster inclusivity and promote social cohesion”* which are both in line with key competencies listed in the Primary Curriculum Framework, particularly *“being an active citizen”* and *“being a communicator and using languages”*. In this regard, the draft specification acknowledges spoken languages and the importance of raising awareness of their respective cultures and the overall importance of linguistic and cultural diversity which is also in line with the Primary Curriculum Framework. However, this could be taken further with respect to ISL. In the draft specification ISL should be on equal footing with other languages in terms of the importance of cultural awareness. The inclusion of ISL in the curriculum should be accompanied with education about Deaf culture. It should be explicitly outlined how the learning of ISL and awareness of Deaf culture further contributes to linguistic and

cultural diversity in a unique way. ISL and Deaf culture contribute to the rich linguistic and cultural

diversity of Ireland. The Deaf community are one of the most marginalised groups in society, and the widespread learning of ISL can promote social inclusion and empathy. The unique linguistic and cultural background of both Deaf children and children of Deaf adults (CODAs) should be celebrated as the draft specification cites a plurilingual approach to language learning that *“draws on the knowledge and experiences of languages that children bring to the classroom”*.

The draft specification also states that *“the learning of English and Irish both play an important role in developing an understanding of Irish cultural identity. Engaging with the Irish language broadens linguistic experience and can deepen intercultural awareness, allowing children to share in a unique and rich strand of the cultural heritage of Irish society”*. ISL and Deaf culture should be included in terms of developing an understanding of Irish cultural identity and heritage as ISL is the language of the Deaf community in Ireland. This also relates to Point 1 where ISL should be listed beside English and Irish as a recognised language in Ireland. Further to being taught and learned, ISL should be actively celebrated in similar ways to Irish, taking the case of Seachtain na Gaeilge as an example. ISL Awareness Week takes place each year in September and should be included in the school calendar to be celebrated if ISL is going to be on the curriculum.

Additional feedback regarding implementation of ISL on the curriculum

1. Resourcing ISL on the curriculum

The inclusion of ISL on the curriculum requires the critical shortage of ISL teachers to be addressed. At present, the only pathway to qualification as an ISL teacher is via the Bachelor in Deaf Studies (TCD) and the number of graduates from the ISL Teaching stream is less than 5 on average per annum. Given this shortage, careful consideration must be given to who should teach ISL.

The recent NCCA report on ISL on the curriculum highlights *“access to high-quality Sign Language learning resources which originate from the Sign Language/Deaf community”* and *“the availability of suitably qualified teachers and/or external specialist expertise”* as key enablers for the learning of ISL. Ensuring the availability of *“appropriately skilled/qualified”* teachers is cited as one of the 12 key issues for consideration when incorporating the study of ISL in the

mainstream curriculum. Consideration must be given to how “appropriate skilled” is defined and evaluated should the person not be a qualified ISL Teacher. The World Federation of the Deaf (2023) outlines the following three key points with respect to sign language teaching and the involvement of Deaf people as linguistic and cultural models:

- “Deaf people and Deaf communities must stand at the forefront of all activities related to sign languages. In particular, Deaf people must be given the opportunity to teach their own sign languages, their national sign languages.
- Deaf people's lived experiences as Deaf people and as users of sign languages must be recognised as having primacy in the teaching of their national sign languages. This is particularly critical in situations where the field of sign language teaching is relatively new and still developing. Measures must be taken to develop training of sign language teaching skills and qualifications to build the capacity and capability of Deaf people in this field.
- The languages and cultures of Deaf communities are rich resources for societies. Deaf people are best able to model and share these resources with their societies, to those who want and need to learn sign languages, including Deaf children, their families, and others.”

The ‘Say Yes To Languages’ programme for primary schools has also shed further light on the critical shortage of qualified ISL teachers. There has been huge demand for the ISL module since the beginning, however there have been many instances where schools were unable to source a suitable tutor.

The recent NCCA report on ISL on the curriculum

Although the content of this report is not specifically relevant to this submission, we would like to take this opportunity to comment due to its relevance to the overall issue of the implementation of ISL on the curriculum. We acknowledge the aim of the report was to “*provide an evidence base to inform potential future ISL curriculum development in Ireland, not to put forward ‘best practice’ examples*”. Echoing points made above, ISL is often referred to as a “means of communication” in the report as opposed to “language”. It must be noted that the text of the ISL Act 2017 cites ISL as a language after an official amendment was made to replace the text “means of communication” as it did not accurately describe ISL.

The report highlights 12 key issues for consideration when incorporating the study of ISL in the curriculum which was based off of a comparative analysis of six jurisdictions ranging from the identification of aims & priorities to certification, key enablers, resourcing and planning. Now that an evidence base is provided, IDS would like to seek clarification about the follow-up from this report in terms of what actions will be taken with respect to the key issues, where responsibility lies and a timeline for this. An action plan from this report is also central to the goals set out in our Strategic Plan. Going forward with this endeavour, meaningful engagement with IDS as a DPO, subject matter experts, professionals and the Deaf community is vital. We ask that this feedback is shared with the relevant stakeholders, should it not be considered for this submission.

Conclusion

The purpose of this submission was to respond to the NCCA Consultation on the Primary Curriculum 2024. IDS specifically addressed the **Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Language Draft Specification** and the inclusion of Irish Sign Language (ISL). We also included a section which provides additional feedback with respect to resourcing and the recent NCCA report on ISL on the curriculum.

In summary, ISL should be elevated and placed on equal footing with English and Irish in terms of its framing in the text of the draft specification. It should be highlighted more the benefits of learning ISL and accompanying Deaf culture and the conceptualisation of the Deaf community as a linguistic and cultural minority should be promoted and celebrated. In order to further efforts regarding ISL on the curriculum, the national shortage of ISL teachers must be addressed and careful consideration should be given to who should teach ISL. IDS would like to seek clarification about the follow-up from this report and meaningful engagement with IDS as a DPO, subject matter experts, professionals and the Deaf community is vital in this regard.

IDS have a strong position on the implementation of ISL on the curriculum, however it is noted that this submission does not give the opportunity to expand on this specific topic. For this reason, a section dedicated to additional feedback was provided. IDS plans to develop a proposal for the implementation of ISL on the curriculum as outlined in our Strategic Plan. We ask that this additional feedback is shared with the relevant parties and to advise us if the feedback should be directed

elsewhere.

Supporting Documentation

IDS Deaf Education Policy Paper- <https://irishdeafsoc.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Irish-Deaf-Society-Policy-Paper-on-Deaf-Education-15.09.22.pdf>

IDS Strategic Plan 2023-2026- <https://irishdeafsoc.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/IDS-Strategy-2023-2026-Web-Download-1.pdf>

World Federation of the Deaf Position Paper on the primacy of deaf people in the development and teaching of national sign languages-
<https://wfdeafnew.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Position-Paper-on-the-the-primacy-of-deaf-people-in-the-development-and-teaching-of-national-sign-languages.pdf>

ISL Act 2017- <https://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2017/act/40/enacted/en/print.html>



Irish Development Education Association (IDEA) Written Submission to the NCCA Consultation on the Five Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications under the Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment Process.

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

[IDEA, the Irish Development Education Association](#), is the national network for Global Citizenship Education (GCE) in Ireland and a leading voice for the sector. We represent over 120 [members](#) involved in GCE in formal, non-formal and informal settings. Together we work to strengthen GCE in Ireland and to raise awareness of the crucial role it plays in fostering global citizenship and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We appreciate the chance to engage in this consultation process. We see this curriculum redevelopment as a unique and exciting opportunity for Ireland to be a global leader in education, by prioritising the truly essential skills, attitudes, values, and dispositions required of pupils in today's complex and interconnected world.

We recognise the alignment of the five specifications with the Primary Curriculum Framework through the consistent application of the principles and key competencies. We also see the influence of Aistear through the preface to each Learning Outcome (“Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences children should be able to”). To strengthen the alignment between the five specifications and between the specifications and the Framework, we suggest that the connections between each different component of the curriculum be set out clearly for each class level, i.e. principles, key competencies, curriculum areas/subjects, strands, elements, learning outcomes.

We observe far fewer learning outcomes in these new specifications than in the 1999 Primary School Curriculum, and that they are broader in nature. We appreciate the benefit of this breadth as it supports greater teacher agency. However, we also note that there is also a risk that teachers will not have sufficient guidance and will feel that they are expected to start from scratch in creating a set of teaching and learning plans. Therefore, we suggest that a suite of support resources including sample plans be provided for teachers, with specific examples of how learning outcomes might be achieved in practice. It would be useful if this were to include cross-

curricular thematic plans showing how the principles, key competencies and learning outcomes link together.

From a GCE perspective, we particularly appreciate the inclusion of Partnerships as one of the Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment. IDEA and its members have been working in partnership with government, schools, and educators for twenty years, and look forward to continuing and building upon these partnerships to support the delivery of the Primary Curriculum through GCE.

We see the key competencies of ‘being an active citizen’ and ‘being an active learner’ to be of particular relevance to GCE and offer the expertise of our members to support these, and all seven competencies. For example, IDEA members could support the NCCA in the development of accompanying toolkits, including examples linking GCE to each of the key competencies and could support Oide in the planning and delivery of professional development for teachers, using GCE as an approach to model cross-curricular teaching and learning.

In fact, in recognition of the multiple crises facing humanity and the wider natural world, we advocate for global citizenship and sustainability to be at the heart of each of these five specifications and provide some guidance below on how this might be achieved.

On this note, we put forward the IDEA [Code of Good Practice on Development Education](#) as a valuable tool for strengthening the global citizenship component of each of the five specifications, and we suggest including it in each of the accompanying toolkits to support teachers’ confidence and competence in incorporating GCE across the curriculum. For example, Principle 4 of the Code is “Encourage CRITICAL THINKING in our exploration of local and global justice issues and seeking of solutions” and Principle 8 is “IMAGINE and EXPLORE SOLUTIONS for a better world” (see Code of Good Practice Principles poster [here](#) and Background Note on Principles [here](#)). These principles can be drawn upon to encourage teachers to explore global themes using age-appropriate, curriculum-linked approaches with children, as they centre critical thinking skills, imaginative and creative thinking, and foster well-being through an emphasis on solutions, hope and possibility.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

6. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

We welcome the inclusion of multi-perspectivity, empathy and challenging stereotypes identified in Table 1 (p.2). The GCE sector has valuable experience and expertise to offer to support the implementation of the Arts Education specification, particularly with regard to the above-

mentioned elements which require the use of creative methodologies to explore key challenges and injustices facing our world today and to empower pupils to respond imaginatively and empathically to these issues.

As per Chapman and O’Gorman (2022), arts education can support young children to understand issues of sustainability - the language of the arts and arts immersion can provide young children with opportunities to understand issues related to sustainability, to express this understanding [in arts form], to strengthen their development in literacy, numeracy, social and physical development. We recommend that global citizenship and sustainability principles underpin this and all specifications, and that supporting material, including the online toolkit and in-service training, include thematic plans and resources that support teachers to explore global themes through Arts Education. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a useful framework and source of themes for teachers, with many resources available online and from IDEA members.

As part of a principled, ethical approach to education, we advocate that the use of ethically and sustainably sourced art materials continue to be promoted by NCCA, and schools supported with guidelines on how to achieve this.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

7. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the Primary Language Curriculum to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

We welcome the inclusion of Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary Language Curriculum and the new element of ‘Building an awareness of languages and culture’.

We suggest that the guidance under this specification be clarified to indicate the expectation regarding the choice and teaching of L3, in particular whether the emphasis is on preparing children for future language proficiency or on an intercultural exploration.

If the priority is on intercultural exploration, which we would very much welcome, we suggest that a whole school approach to learning an L3 is taken. We think that clearer guidance on the selection of L3 is required, particularly if the aspiration of this new element is to be realised. As it is currently explained, L3 must be the same from Stage 3 to Stage 4. This is likely to result in the selection of a European language based on the language skills of particular teachers. From both a practical and a global citizenship perspective, we recommend that the emphasis be placed on the whole school community learning a language that is new to most members of that community, without expectation of teacher expertise in the language. In this way, there would be a possibility of learning L3 from within and beyond European contexts. For example, the school could embark on one year of learning a particular language and focus on a different language the following year

(e.g. Portuguese, Swahili, Arabic, Zulu, Mandarin, Ukrainian, Spanish, French etc.). This could also support integration of migrant communities in Ireland, thus complementing official government efforts.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

8. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

We welcome the framing of the introduction, key competencies, and principles of the Social and Environmental Education Specification, which centres concepts such as democracy, equity and justice. The key competencies of ‘being an active citizen’ and ‘being an active learner’, and the inclusion of celebration of diversity, curiosity and wonder, connection with the natural world and sustainable development are welcome inclusions.

We welcome the structure and layout of the document, as it recalls the key principles and competencies throughout each section, which is clear and logical. The three strands in the SEE Specification are an improvement on the SESE Curriculum. The information presented could be clearer still - we would welcome the structure of the document to have a section that combines all the concepts, skills, learning outcomes needed for each primary school class. It would make it clearer if the wording in tables 5 and 6 were reflected in other sections, i.e. the word ‘common’ is used in these tables but the word ‘integrated’ is used in the learning outcome tables. We would suggest expanding upon the common skills section of Table 6 to include: questioning, observing, predicting, recording, communicating. In addition, we suggest adding investigating and experimenting under the list of Geography skills. We also suggest referencing the glossary definitions and their page number, where relevant, throughout the main document, as teachers might skip to the section on learning outcomes and not see the definitions provided in the glossary.

With regard to learning outcomes, we welcome the purposely broad outcomes in Table 7, which enable teacher agency. However, at times they could be more specific and could benefit from having examples in brackets. For example, Stage 4 Geography, Environment and Sustainable Living LO3: clarify what is meant by ‘other bodies in space’ and instead of “on atmospheric conditions, climate change and weather patterns”, replace it with “such as atmospheric...”.

The difference between Stage 1 and Stage 2 learning outcomes are not clear at times, in particular what progression is expected from Stage 1 to Stage 2. For example, the second set of learning outcomes under People, Place and Space and the first set of learning outcomes under Environment and Sustainable Living. More detail is required to show this progression or

alternatively, the learning outcomes could be combined and presented for Stage 1 and Stage 2 together.

The value of GCE in supporting the implementation of this Specification should be explicitly identified, e.g. through the three strands: people, place and space; environmental and sustainable living; exploration of our world; and the three elements: inquiring; communicating and understanding. We welcome the global learning themes presented on p.21. On p.23 there is a specific reference to project-based work which presents an opportunity for programmes delivered by IDEA members (e.g. Educating the Heart, Children in Crossfire; Child Rights School, UNICEF Ireland; Game Changers programme, Trócaire).

Overall, we advocate for inclusion of more global citizenship education concepts and principles, as defined in the IDEA [Code of Good Practice for Development Education](#), so that the societal/wider world focus of this Specification does not get lost. For example:

- Table 5: rather than using the label of ‘common’ concepts (p.13), the concepts of empathy and multi-perspectivity could be labelled as ‘Global Citizenship’.
- Environment and Sustainable Living: (p.14): teachers may not have much prior knowledge on the topic of biodiversity. Therefore, we recommend (a) referencing the page number of the glossary of definitions and (b) providing training and planning support with specific examples of how to approach this complex topic.
- We recommend including the wording ‘sustainable living’ in the learning outcomes themselves under the strand Environment and Sustainable Living, so that this concept does not get lost.
- We strongly recommend that the term ‘climate crisis’ or ‘climate breakdown’ be used instead of ‘climate change’ in recognition of the severity and urgency of the planetary situation and that this subject matter should be named and taught at every stage, not only at Stage 4. This should also include reference to the impacts of human behaviour on our planetary habitat and impacts for humans of the climate crisis. ● We note that only Geography appears under the strand of Environment and Sustainable Living and that only History appears under the strand of Exploration of our World. We suggest including an Integrated category under both of these strands, where GCE competencies such as ‘being an active citizen’ are mentioned. We suggest this category be named Sustainable Development.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

As mentioned under Section 1, we advocate for the addition of sustainability and global citizenship as threads that are woven throughout every curriculum specification, and made evident throughout the Principles, Rationale, Aims, Key Competencies and Learning Outcomes. For example, in this specification, we suggest including the global learning themes of human rights, democracy, equity, social and environmental justice and sustainable development, as per the Social and Environmental Specification. We also recommend including an aim around the creation of a safe and accessible learning space for the active exchange of ideas, perspectives, and knowledge.

In Table 1 (p.2), under Engagement and Participation, we suggest the addition of the following examples: "Promoting collaborative work as children engage in investigations and inquiry-based challenges" and "Providing opportunities for children to select curriculum topics for inquiry based on their interests, and preparing rich, playful, and engaging learning experiences which expose children to new interests".

In Section 2: Rationale (p.4/5), we advocate for inclusion of a section on "Contributes to children's development as active citizens" and "Espouses a sustainable future" – for consistency with these features of the Social and Environmental Education Specification.

In Section 3: Aims (p.6), we advocate for inclusion of a specific aim on sustainability and global citizenship.

In Section 4: Strands and Elements (p.7/8), we advocate for sustainability and global citizenship to be added as an additional element or woven throughout the other elements. This would create greater cohesion with the Senior Cycle.

In addition, as there is no strand on environmental awareness, we strongly recommend that it be embedded into all the elements of the new strands, including technology and engineering.

In relation to implementing Science Technology and Engineering education, it is imperative that there is a focus on the importance of sourcing raw materials in a sustainable and ethical way, to the extent possible, in the 'Exploring and understanding' Element (p.19), so that children are educated around the importance of ensuring their learning does not impact negatively on human rights or biodiversity of natural environments.

With regard to planning and implementation, we suggest that the Maths specification be clearly and logically integrated with the Science, Technology and Engineering Education Specification. Thematic plans based on Global Citizenship Education themes could support this in practice.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

We recommend a strong emphasis be placed on the interconnections between the Wellbeing of Planet Earth, its people around the world, and people in Ireland. We are all, including children, increasingly exposed to media showing destruction of people, places and planet, and this has an impact on Wellbeing, as evidenced by mounting ‘climate anxiety’ and vicarious trauma from witnessing real-time atrocities and devastation around the globe, among children and young people. Drawing on the concept of ‘living ecologically’ can be useful in framing the concept of Wellbeing in a way that connects humans and the rest of the natural world as part of the same ecosystem.

The role of empowerment and action in Wellbeing must also be clearer, particularly with regard to collective action for systemic change and the health benefits of connecting with other people and uniting for a common cause e.g. responding to the climate crisis.

In the Learning Outcomes section, there are opportunities for greater clarity and streamlining. For example, under the Emotional and Relational Education Strand Unit Emotional Awareness and Expression (p.15), the distinction between Learning Outcomes for Stages 1 and 2 is unclear. They could be combined to simplify the visual presentation of this information and allow for teacher agency to guide the nuance required for these Learning Outcomes to be achieved with each particular class.

There are opportunities for Global Citizenship Education concepts and principles to be drawn upon to strengthen Learning Outcomes and demonstrate stronger connections with Key Competencies, especially ‘being an active citizen’. We advocate for more GCE language under the SPHE section in particular. For example, under the Relationships strand unit, a GCE approach as defined in the IDEA [Code of Good Practice on Development Education](#), could be mentioned explicitly as a way to strengthen this strand unit. For example, Principle 5, which advocates for the ‘use of PARTICIPATORY, CREATIVE approaches in our educational practice’ could be drawn upon as a guide to foster participation and active citizenship as children work collaboratively with one another and learn how to show respect for one another. This element of the Code is inspired by the Lundy model of children’s participation in education.

Under the Citizenship strand unit, the word ‘global’ could be used in place of ‘wider world’, to familiarise teachers with the language of global citizenship and to ensure a truly global focus is included.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

11. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Teachers and school leaders will require a range of supports to implement the curriculum. This will include the need for planning time, guides, training, and support resources. Examples and

thematic plans will be required, in particular to highlight the interaction between the many different concept categories within each specification, namely principles, key competencies, strands, elements, learning outcomes, concepts and skills. Teachers and school leaders will need information to be presented by class level also, so that, for example, a teacher teaching First Class, will have a clear understanding of what is expected of them.

With regard to implementation, the IDEA network offers a multitude of supporting GCE resources and could assist with the development of the accompanying online curriculum toolkits, to include signposting to existing GCE programmes, resources and resource banks (e.g. www.developmenteducation.ie; www.thediceproject.ie)

Page 27 of the Specification explores details in relation to “establishing partnerships with schools with greater levels of diversity”. There is an opportunity here to engage with the IDEA network and identify partners within NGOs, who would be open to helping to create connections with primary schools. This in turn would enable learning in connection with the strands and elements identified above. For example, there are many existing resources that could be shared with teachers and drawn upon to support the implementation of both the Arts Education and Social and Environmental Curriculum from IDEA members including the Concern Debates, Plan International, GOAL etc. Through the IDEA network, there are also opportunities for establishing partnerships between schools which would broaden opportunities for theme-based portfolio learning in relation to different contexts, drawing strong connections between Arts Education and Social and Environmental Education.

At the end of the draft specification for SEE, there is reference made to online resources. Links to Global Village, Trócaire and IDEA learning resources would be helpful to signpost here so that once these specifications are rolled out, teachers know where to go for resources to help with this aspect of their teaching practice.

Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

IDEA (the Irish Development Education Association) has over 120 members, many of whom work at primary level and who are available to contribute to the development of supporting resources (including the online toolkits) and the delivery of in-service training.

IDEA would welcome further opportunities to engage with and support the NCCA with the implementation of the new Curriculum and the integration of Global Citizenship Education across

the Curriculum. Representatives of IDEA and its members would be available to sit on NCCA curriculum development groups and would welcome the opportunity to do so.



Consultation

**Submission on the
Draft Primary**

Curriculum

June 2024



Background

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are a major cause of mortality and morbidity globally. The World Health Organization (WHO) has estimated that NCDs account for 80% of the global burden of disease. Most NCDs are associated with modifiable lifestyle factors. The Irish Heart Foundation (IHF) promotes policy changes that reduce premature death and disability from cardiovascular disease (CVD).

The Irish Heart Foundation (IHF) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to this consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications. This builds on previous submissions in 2022 and 2023 to the NCCA on the Junior Cycle SPHE programme, the Junior Cycle Digital Media Literacy consultation, the Draft Transition Year Programme Statement and the Senior Cycle SPHE programme.

The Irish Heart Foundation is committed in our work with schools, particularly focused on increasing opportunities for physical activity, increasing knowledge of CPR and supporting schools in their efforts to provide healthy food for students. The IHF has worked in and with schools on physical activity and wellbeing for many years on programmes including Y-PATH 'PE 4 ME', Action for Life, Bizzy Breaks for bizzy bodies and bizzy minds, Let's Get Active, Happy Heart @ School Catering Award, CPR 4 Schools, and the Irish Heart Foundation's Schools Health Literacy programme. Many of these programmes are part-funded by the HSE while our physical education programmes are in partnership with Oide and DCU.

What is Health Literacy?

The health literacy of an individual can be defined as the knowledge, confidence and comfort – which accumulate through daily activities, social interactions, and across generations – to access, understand, appraise, remember and use information about health and health care, for the health and wellbeing of themselves and those around them (Osborne et al., 2022).

Health literacy can also be defined as entailing people's knowledge, motivation and competences to access, understand, appraise, and apply health information in order to make judgments and take decisions in everyday life concerning healthcare, disease prevention and health promotion to maintain or improve quality of life during the life course (Sorenson et al., 2012).

Health literacy is developed over time through social practices, education and media (World Health Organisation, 2022). This means that the skills and knowledge associated with being health literate are not just developed through learning specifically about health-related topics. Therefore, it is of great importance to understand how all subjects and the school environment play a key role in the development of health literacy.

The Irish Heart Foundation believes that health literacy very closely relates to the new Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications in a number of subjects, beyond merely Wellbeing. The below list is adapted from the Schools for Health in Europe Network (SHE) Health Literacy in Schools factsheet 6 (2020).

Building capacity in terms of health literacy means being able to:

- Source and appraise health information
- Think critically about health claims and make informed decisions about health
- Influence others
- Manage their day to day lives making informed decisions about self-care and self- management of their health or decisions that may affect their health.
- Communication skills - communicate about health topics and concerns
- Become aware of their own thinking and behaving
- Act ethically and socially responsible
- Develop a sense of citizenship and be capable of pursuing equity goals
- Identify and assess bodily signals (e.g. feelings, symptoms)
- Engage in healthy activities and avoid unnecessary health risks

Section 1: Alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications demonstrate a clear alignment with the seven key competencies, which are thoughtfully laid out for each specification. This clarity is immensely helpful for understanding how to weave these competencies throughout the subject areas. Moreover, the integrated approach is particularly welcome.

Our research and work at the post-primary level have revealed that students often struggle to apply learning from one subject to another and fail to see the relevance of their education beyond exams. The emphasis on transferable skills, as highlighted in the Social and Environmental Education (SEE Ed) specification under “Connecting and Understanding,” addresses this challenge. It’s encouraging to witness a focus on meaningful and personally relevant learning, especially within the local context of schools and communities. The interconnectedness within and across subject areas, along with the emphasis on life skills and connections between strands and strand units in Wellbeing, further enhance the holistic learning experience.

While we won’t comment specifically on the Science, Technology, and Engineering Education (STEE) and SEE curriculum specifications in section 2, we recognise clear connections with these subjects in our existing and planned work. For STEE, we appreciate the reference to specific organs as learning outcomes in stage 3. We are currently developing resources for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and SPHE (Social, Personal, and Health Education) related to how the heart works, the cardiovascular system, and maintaining heart health. The four elements of the STEE specification—Exploring and Understanding, Creative and Critical Thinking, Problem-Solving and Applying, and Evaluating and Communicating—align with the principles of health literacy (described above). They provide pupils with valuable opportunities to develop skills, problem-solving approaches, and critical thinking abilities that will serve them well in real-world situations and their future health.

Additionally, we commend the inclusion of Design Thinking as one of the three key pedagogical practices. We regularly utilise this methodology with children and young people during co-design processes for programmes and school initiatives at the local level. As the Irish Heart Foundation (IHF), we intend to develop resources supporting the use of Design Thinking processes in post-primary schools to amplify student voice and identify strengths and opportunities for health and well-being. We would be delighted to extend this support to primary schools in the coming years.

The phrasing of learning outcomes as “appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences” is refreshing, especially when considering play beyond Aistear (the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework) and its application to infant classes. However, we recognise the need to explore how play and playfulness are operationalised within the school context. While play is commonly defined as “freely chosen, personally directed, and intrinsically motivated,” its application in

educational settings can be contentious due to planned outcomes and limitations related to permission, space, and time. Ireland lacks national resources or support organisations akin to Play England, Play Wales, Play Scotland, or Playboard NI. Therefore, it remains essential to provide teachers with guidance on what quality play and playful pedagogy look like in practice. Defining playful pedagogy and distinguishing it from other approaches or traditional learning experiences will be crucial for successful implementation. Page 37 of the Wellbeing specification begins to describe playful learning experiences: “During playful learning experiences, teaching and learning are fluid and flexible, and unexpected and emerging learning opportunities arise.” However, further exploration and support for teachers in interpreting and implementing playful pedagogy are necessary to ensure its effective integration into the curriculum.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Overall comments

The Wellbeing curriculum specification receives overall support, particularly in its potential to enhance children’s health literacy. The four elements—Communicating, Exploring & Applying, Reflecting & Understanding, and Moving—are valuable concepts that contribute not only to physical literacy but also to a holistic understanding of health. The rationale, definition, and aims of health literacy are clearly reflected throughout the specification.

However, there are areas for improvement. While the importance of food for health and wellbeing is acknowledged, its inclusion in the specification remains sparse. Specifically, food is mentioned as part of a list of positive and personal choices within the strand unit of “Motivation for Healthy Living” (pages 17 and 26).

To address this, guidelines for teachers on best practices related to healthy eating are crucial. These guidelines should cover discussions about food and provide opportunities for skill development around food preparation. Teachers cannot solely rely on their own interpretations of healthy eating, especially given the prevalence of misinformation and conflicting sources online, including social media. Additionally, teachers face the challenge of countering junk food marketing.

The Media and Digital Wellbeing unit within the Health Education strand deserves more attention. While it is present, it should be integrated across the curriculum rather than treated as isolated learning outcomes. For instance, developing an awareness of the persuasive nature of media and advertising and identifying credible sources of information related to wellbeing should permeate various aspects of learning. Digital marketing across harmful industries is covert and insidious, and spending is rapidly increasing. Digital marketing reaches children at too young an age, and there is evidence that it affects their attitudes, habits and consumption, and their health in later life.

Children’s digital rights have been an explicit concern of the international children’s rights community and accordingly must be at the heart of considerations on online harms.

In their submission to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment on children’s rights in relation to the digital environment, leading academics and experts in the area of law, child development, childhood studies, psychology, food and nutrition, media studies, and child, consumer and digital rights called for the recognition of the far-reaching harms caused by digital marketing and the personal data extraction on which it is predicated, and the need to protect children from these. This, they note, is because digital media marketing is subjecting children to intense commercial practices of implicit influence, neuromarketing, attitudinal structuring and behavioural modification, without independent evaluation to ensure they do no harm. As a result “children are thus commercial digital test subjects for marketing practices affecting their development, health and privacy.” Indeed,

“The data-driven, personal data extraction and behavioural design practices of 21st century

media advertising in digital technology systems mean that food marketing now sits at the intersection of multiple harms, infringing not only children’s rights to health and to food, but also their rights to privacy and to be free from exploitation.”

Therefore, on making healthy choices, it must explicitly recognise that there may be cases where self-management and self-regulation, and ways to develop strategies to help make informed choices, may not be as straightforward as young people may believe.

Regarding Health Education in PE (page 22), the phrasing “benefits and drawbacks of technology” in Stage 3 is preferable over “Distinguish between healthy and unhealthy use of digital technology” in Stage 4. The dichotomy of healthy versus unhealthy oversimplifies complex issues. Nuanced discussions about technology’s impact on health are essential.

Furthermore, the Irish Heart Foundation’s Action For Life physical literacy programme aligns with the All-Island Physical Literacy Consensus Statement, emphasising cognitive, socio-emotional, and physical learning (“Head, Heart, and Hands”). However, caution is advised against using the term “physically literate.” Physical literacy is a lifelong journey influenced by changing contexts and individual development. It cannot be reduced to a fixed status.

The Irish Heart Foundation (IHF) offers programmes that align with this curriculum and is open to further resource development. Our successful collaboration with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in developing guidance for discussing food in the Junior Cycle SPHE toolkit demonstrates our commitment. We are equally willing to contribute to primary school resources when the curriculum is finalised.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

p.2 – *“Understanding wellbeing: Wellbeing encompasses various aspects of learning crucial for children’s holistic development. Through PE and SPHE, this specification develops the physical, social, emotional, and relational dimensions of children’s wellbeing.”*

The inclusive definition of wellbeing within the Wellbeing curriculum specification is commendable. By encompassing various aspects of learning crucial for children’s holistic development, the specification recognises that wellbeing extends beyond mental health alone. Our work with both primary and post-primary students has revealed that children often perceive wellbeing solely through the lens of mental health. This perspective is also reflected in schools’ approaches and activities related to wellbeing.

p.3 *“The Wellbeing Curriculum recognises the interconnectedness of personal wellbeing with the broader community and social context. It acknowledges that sometimes, external factors like social, economic, or cultural aspects can impact individual wellbeing, and conversely, individual behaviour may affect collective wellbeing at local and global levels.”*

This alignment with the socioecological model and consideration of wider determinants of health are essential. However, there is room for improvement. In the Health Education strand, the current phrasing of the strand unit “Motivation for healthy living” places undue responsibility on pupils for their own wellbeing. It implies that their wellbeing is solely determined by their motivation to lead a healthy life, disregarding external circumstances or environmental factors beyond their control. An individual’s nutritional status is not solely a matter of personal choice but is heavily influenced by a wide range of social and environmental factors affecting the availability, affordability and acceptability of different foods.

We advocate for a shift away from individual responsibility alone and encourage empathy for pupils’ diverse situations. Teacher professional development should emphasise this broader perspective. See IHF guidance on talking about food for NCCA in SPHE toolkit: <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/a8888f95-c75a-465e-8d26-b42acd5cf572/Taking-a-fresh-look-at-teaching-about-food-Guidance-for-teachers-from-the-Irish-Heart-Foundation.pdf>

Additionally, the learning outcomes related to “Motivation for healthy living,” such as “considering positive choices,” “willingness to make positive choices,” and “demonstrating a positive attitude,” risk oversimplifying health behaviours. Health should not be dichotomous—merely good or bad.

Rather, it is nuanced and context dependent. Grounding health discussions and relevance is crucial to avoid misinterpretations by teachers.

p.4 *“At its core, the Wellbeing Curriculum serves as a catalyst for lifelong wellbeing by integrating vital life skills such as: self-awareness, personal safety, emotional regulation, **resilience**, empathy, movement, decision-making, and healthy relationship-building. It establishes a platform for children to develop as engaged”*

By integrating vital life skills—such as self-awareness, personal safety, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy, movement, decision-making, and healthy relationship-building—it equips children with tools to navigate their health and wellbeing throughout life. These life skills are intrinsically linked to health literacy, fostering informed and empowered individuals.

p.4 *“PE prioritises learning, participation, enjoyment, **self-referenced progress**, and the creation of a supportive environment for all children, over high-level performance emphasised in sport or isolated physical activity. Therefore, recognising the differences between Physical Education, Sport, and Physical Activity can support the achievement of these priorities within PE”*

Priorities for PE here reflect IHF’s post primary junior cycle PE programme and primary PE and SPHE programme (Action for Life) which emphasise self-referenced progress and feedback, as well as supportive environments, learning, participation and enjoyment. The distinction here between PE, sport and physical activity is also a positive step as this is something we try to make clear in our primary school Action For Life training, as well as Bizzy Breaks (movement breaks) and our resources provide for both PE and physical activity in school and home.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Implementing the new curriculum will indeed require a whole new way of thinking and planning for schools. While integrated learning is welcome, it will necessitate adjustments. Toolkits will play a crucial role in supporting teachers and school leaders during this transition. Continuous Professional Development (CPD) should be relevant, practical, and efficiently delivered—preferably in smaller, consistent portions rather than overwhelming full in-service days. Specifically for Wellbeing, Physical Education (PE) demands facilities and infrastructure to support physical activity, aligning with the specification’s movement opportunities. Adequate funding for facilities, maintenance, and equipment is essential. Additionally, given the limited mention of food in this specification, teachers will benefit from guidance on discussing food with students, considering potential biases and judgments. For further insights, refer to the Irish Heart Foundation’s guidance produced for the Junior Cycle Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) toolkit.

The Irish Heart Foundation provide several free programmes and resources, subject to organisational fundraising and donations, which will support the new curriculum in Wellbeing and beyond and will be adapted to the new specifications.

1. *Bizzy Breaks – movement and mindfulness breaks for the classroom* See: irishheart.ie/bizzybreaks

Short simple activities which break up sitting time and help pupils to regulate, calm and focus, as well as contributing towards the daily 60 minutes of physical activity recommended for health. This programme highlights for teachers the opportunities for physical activity little and often throughout the school day, offering a practical example of the distinction between PE, physical activity and sport (p.4).

This programme and associated resources will support the Wellbeing curriculum in the Element of Moving, as well as the strands of Movement Education and Health Education, and the strand units of Emotional awareness & expression (in the strand of Emotional and Relational Education as a tool for self-regulation and understanding the connection between body and mind, as well as Sense of belonging (in strand of Community and Belonging).

Additional digital and printable resources in the Bizzy Breaks programme support other health and wellbeing topics like healthy eating and heart health.

2. *Action For Life – Physical literacy for PE and SPHE.* See: irishheart.ie/actionforlife

This programme was designed to help develop physical literacy (p.5). All activities and lessons centre around learning for the “head, heart and hands” (thinking, feeling and doing) and exemplify the four Elements (p.10) of the specification, offering opportunities for communicating, exploring & applying, reflecting & understanding and moving, in an applied and practical way. The IHF feel that this aligns with the Wellbeing curriculum overall throughout all four stages, within all four of the strands:

- Movement Education strand units (skills, concepts and strategies) are woven throughout each lesson and at the heart of the programme is a collaborative PE Agreement co-created by the class to ensure that pupil voice is at the core of the class and learning is personally relevant.
- Similarly, the strand of Community and Belonging is emphasised in Action For Life through fostering a sense of belonging and citizenship within the PE and SPHE class, through democratic processes, adaptability, inclusion and engaging and relevant assessment methods for and of learning. The assessment of and for learning within the programme also cover the range of opportunities for assessing learning in Wellbeing (pages 40-42).

3. *Let's Get Active – 4 week physical activity challenge* See: irishheart.ie/letsgetactive

Let's Get Active consists of a printed colourful and personalisable booklet, stickers and certificates for pupils. The challenge focuses on learning about physical activity, reflecting on what it means and how it feels, as well as gradually building up pupils physical activity each week towards the 60 minutes in an enjoyable way. The booklet includes a weekly physical activity tracker (where physical activity is tracked in blocks of 10 minutes and provides space for rough work to complete addition of totals each week, linking with Maths) with reflections, inspiration and ideas for different ways to be active and things to try, introduces topics such as goal setting and motivation and offers pupils the opportunity to creatively express how they feel being active and what they like to do with space for drawing and writing in response to prompts. The booklet was codesigned with children all around Ireland and will be a valuable resource for schools in the new Wellbeing curriculum and beyond.

Some of the ways it links with the Wellbeing curriculum:

- “enhancing their motivation for physical activity and facilitating informed and healthy lifestyle choices” – p.4

Let's Get Active is a fun and inclusive way to highlight the positives of physical activity and help children to increase their activity, regardless of where they're starting from. In our most recent survey of teachers who used the resource, 85% said that they continued the activities beyond the 4 weeks and 100% said it supported them integrating health and wellbeing into the school day.

- Reflecting and Understanding: “develop journals/portfolios to reflect on their learning, noting progress, challenges and personal goals” – p.30

The booklet acts as a log and reflection of their learning and progression each week. There are opportunities to write, draw and colour to provide variety and different methods to demonstrate and reflect on their achievements.

4. *Other resources*

The Irish Heart Foundation previously collaborated with NCCA to produce a resource to support teachers at junior cycle to talk about food in a way that is not stigmatizing or judgemental and takes the wider context of students' live and circumstances into account. See:

<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/a8888f95-c75a-465e-8d26-b42acd5cf572/Taking-a-fresh-look-at-teaching-about-food-Guidance-for-teachers-from-the-Irish-Heart-Foundation.pdf>

We would be happy to work with the NCCA to produce something similar for primary level. We also have a number of resources for primary stages 1 and 2 around healthy eating as part of the Bizzy

Breaks programme: <https://irishheart.ie/schools/primary-schools/healthy-eating/>

The Irish Heart Foundation intends to create resources appropriate for STEM and SPHE in stages 3 and 4, focusing on exploring the heart and cardiovascular system, understanding how the heart works, what the pulse is and how to keep your heart healthy.

The Irish Heart Foundation will also be creating resources for post primary schools as part of our Schools Health Literacy Project at post primary level which will include resources for Design Thinking in schools. This could be adapted for primary level also if useful for teachers in the context of the new STEM curriculum.

Conclusion

As ever, the Irish Heart Foundation (IHF) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to this consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications.

As with other consultations, the Irish Heart Foundation and our experts in health promotion and school-based health promotion initiatives, are always available to discuss any of the issues raised in this submission further.

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Irish National Teachers Organisation

INTO Submission

Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

June 2024

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Submission on behalf of the INTO
Irish National Teachers' Organisation
To the National Council for Curriculum and
Assessment
On the Draft Primary Curriculum
Specifications for

Arts Education

Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in the Primary Language Curriculum

Social and Environmental Education (SEE)

Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE) and
Wellbeing

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Introduction

The INTO wishes to thank the NCCA for the opportunity to present the views of our members on the draft specifications for the redeveloped primary curriculum. The importance of teacher involvement throughout this process cannot be understated. Teachers provide a real-life perspective, ensuring that the curriculum not only addresses academic outcomes but also considers the practical realities of everyday classroom life. Teachers and school leaders' firsthand experiences will ensure the realisation of a curriculum that will be adaptable and responsive to the needs of all pupils throughout its lifecycle.

Irish primary schools have witnessed profound transformations since the last major curriculum change in 1999. The educational landscape has shifted significantly, influenced by advancements in educational best practices, pedagogical methods, and assessment techniques. Concurrently, societal changes such as evolving individual and family identities and experiences, the increasing diversity and unique needs of our pupils, and rapid technological advancements deeply influence the learning within our primary schools. These shifts are evident in our classrooms, where modern teaching and learning methods no longer fully align with the 1999 Curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999). The cumulative effect of these changes is the need for a curriculum that not only reflects modern educational theories and practices but also embraces the rich diversity and complexity of our modern society.

The process of redeveloping the primary curriculum provides our education system with the opportunity to adapt to the ever-evolving demands of our society and to meet the diverse needs of all our primary school pupils. The redevelopment of the primary school curriculum is not just an update, but a comprehensive overhaul intended to better prepare our children for the complexities of the modern world and to bring the curriculum into line with what is happening in our primary classrooms. This INTO submission lays out the collective opinions and concerns of our members, gathered through our engagement with them via online and face-to-face district consultations and an online written questionnaire. These member engagements capture our members current observations and thoughts in relation to the five draft specifications and the practical supports they need to support the implementation of the redeveloped curriculum in their classrooms and schools.

Alongside this feedback, recent world events have demonstrated how global crises can drastically affect educational systems. The COVID-19 pandemic, for example, profoundly disrupted traditional education delivery and demonstrated the need for our curriculum to be both adaptable and resilient. Such events highlight the need for a curriculum that can swiftly respond to short-term global challenges, whether they are pandemics, wars, or other crises. It is crucial that our curriculum lays a foundation that not only addresses the immediate needs of our pupils but also equips them with the skills and knowledge to navigate and adapt to unforeseen global events. This will ensure that our education system remains relevant and robust, capable of supporting our pupils in this rapidly changing world.

Despite the positive steps towards involving teachers in the consultation process for the new curriculum, there are concerns regarding the speed at which curriculum change seems to be happening

and the breath of new content that is being introduced across the curriculum specifications. This has led to feelings of frustration and uncertainty which could undermine the implementation of the new curriculum if not addressed. Teachers have expressed the need for a gradual approach to curriculum change, one that includes comprehensive discussions about the rationale for changes and more transparent communication about implementation timelines and expectations.

Teacher's experiences of implementing the primary language curriculum and the primary maths curriculum have also provided valuable lessons. Teachers have stressed the importance of clear communication and adequate face-to-face CPD during the rollout of the redeveloped curriculum to ensure they are well-equipped to meet its demands. Additionally, the feedback highlights a persistent concern regarding the workload and resource implications of the new curriculum, with teachers advocating for adequate support in terms of material resources to effectively implement the new curriculum.

In this evolution of the primary curriculum, it is important that it reflects the diverse spectrum of pupils' needs within our classrooms. This includes addressing the unique educational requirements of children with additional needs, EAL learners, migrant children, those arriving from war-torn regions and children who are victims of homelessness. The success of the new curriculum will not only lie in its vision and content being fully integrated into our schools but also on the availability of support systems that ensure schools and families can provide their children with the best education possible. To ensure equitable access for all pupils to all the new curriculum specifications, there must be a concerted effort to support schools and families with adequate therapeutic and social services and resources. These are essential for all children to avail themselves of the same education opportunities across the national primary school system. Such supports will ensure that every child can fully participate in and benefit from the redeveloped curriculum, allowing for a truly inclusive educational experience.

The INTO recognises the substantial effort made by the NCCA in facilitating this extensive consultation process. However, as this submission will elaborate, there remains a need for ongoing dialogue, clearer communication, and a measured approach to implementing curriculum changes. Our goal is to ensure that the Redeveloped Primary Curriculum not only meets the educational needs of our children but also enhances the professional lives of those tasked with delivering it. This submission will further outline the specific feedback from our members and offer constructive recommendations to strengthen the curriculum and its implementation.

Section 1 Primary Curriculum Framework

Learning Outcomes

A learning outcomes approach represents a significant shift in curriculum design from the 1999 Curriculum, which will require substantial support for teachers. Implementing any curriculum model that relies heavily on teacher judgement is demanding and challenging (Stenhouse, 1975). The INTO stresses the need for ample time, support, and professional development to help teachers adapt to this new approach. Learning outcomes will naturally differ from school to school and class to class, placing teachers in the best position to use their professional judgement in making educational decisions, but only if they have a deep understanding of how to manage a learning outcomes-based curriculum.

Learning outcomes are often presented as instruments to solve problems of transparency, quality, accountability, and efficiency – as they provide precision and avoid overlaps/repetition in learning (Souto-Otero, 2012). They are also seen to aid equality as they replace the traditional emphasis on equality of access with equality of outcomes, promote learner-centred education and help teachers to better organise curriculum content. However, the approach also attracts criticism and prompts debate among teachers with some literature arguing that learning outcomes can hinder useful learning processes, inhibit explorative and unintended learning, and create a target-led culture (Goss, 2022; Li et al., 2020).

Broad learning outcomes offer positive opportunities in terms of teacher agency, enabling them to cater for and modify learning for their own class or group of children. However, when learning outcomes are overly broad, they can be vague and unclear. For example, a learning outcome for Stage 2 in the STE specification states that pupils should ‘Build on their understanding of digital tools to explore how they operate according to precise instructions; plan and create a program using a step-by-step process (algorithm); adjust and modify steps when required.’. This learning outcome provides teachers with insufficient detail of the learning experiences they should create, or what content to teach, therefore, teachers will require clarification and guidance on where they can go for further detail. INTO members feel strongly that this learning outcomes approach must be balanced with the need for some degree of clarity and definition, while recognising that teachers are often working in demanding and complex environments with an over-loaded curriculum, super-sized classes, and multiclass settings.

Recommendations

- Provide sustained face to face PD to help teachers adapt to this curriculum's learning outcomes approach.
- Develop comprehensive toolkits for each curriculum specification to guide teachers in implementing the redeveloped curriculum. Provide clear, detailed guidance on how to achieve broad learning outcomes, including examples of effective learning experiences and assessment strategies.
- Allocate non-contact planning time within the school schedule to allow teachers to effectively incorporate learning outcomes into their teaching practices. This should be supported with substitute cover.
- Provide, within this non-contact time, opportunities for teacher collaborations to share best practices and support each other in adapting to curriculum changes.
- Address curriculum overload by ensuring the number of learning outcomes and associated tasks are manageable within schools' weekly/monthly time allocations.

Planning in the Redeveloped Curriculum

Embracing the concept of teachers as agentic professionals, as outlined in the *Primary Curriculum Framework (PCF)* (NCCA, 2023), necessitates an approach to planning that empowers teachers to make informed decisions based on their professional judgment. The "Preparation for Teaching and Learning" (PTL) (Government of Ireland, 2021) guidance document aligns with the principles and vision of the framework. The PTL places value on all types of teacher preparation—visible, invisible, and recorded—in creating meaningful lessons. This validation of the various forms of teacher preparation promotes a more flexible planning approach, allowing teachers to draw on their knowledge of their pupils, the curriculum, and effective pedagogical methods.

However, challenges remain, particularly concerning the expectations of the Inspectorate and school management. Teachers are concerned that the positive and flexible approach to planning promoted in the PTL may not align with the expectations of inspectors and school leaders, who might lack awareness or hold different perspectives on the PTL guidance. To mitigate this, ongoing and sustained communication, and professional development, made available by the Inspectorate, is essential to support the PTL's practical implementation. This would help build a collective understanding that respects teachers' professional judgment and reduces the perceived disconnect between the PTL and inspector/school leader expectations.

Teachers have, and continue to, express a need for practical supports to navigate this shift in preparation for teaching and learning. Sample templates and collaborative planning tools, developed with the Inspectorate, can provide valuable scaffolding. These tools should be designed to streamline

documentation, ensuring that preparation remains practical and not overly burdensome, while allowing teachers to focus more on delivering quality learning experiences.

The INTO believes that the planning methods outlined in the PTL and incorporated in the PCF offer a path towards flexible, teacher-driven planning. However, robust support must be provided, with input from the Inspectorate, to ensure its successful implementation. By prioritising practical, teacherfriendly tools and fostering a culture of trust in teachers' expertise, primary schools can significantly enhance teaching and learning for all pupils.

Recommendations

- Promote a culture within schools and the Inspectorate that values and respects teachers' professional judgment and expertise.
- Establish a communication strategy to ensure that all teachers, school leaders, and inspectors build a common understanding of the PTL that respects teachers' professional judgment.
- Develop practical, collaborative planning tools in consultation with the Inspectorate. These tools should be designed to simplify planning documents, making it practical and less timeconsuming.
- Ensure that all support materials are available as Gaeilge.
- Organise regular professional development focused on the PTL guidance and its practical application for all teachers including those returning from teaching abroad and NQTs.

Supporting SEN/AEN Learners in the Primary Curriculum Framework

The PCF highlights the importance of inclusive education and diversity, which supports equity of opportunity and participation for all children by acknowledging their unique circumstances and needs. It highlights the importance of building on children's prior learning and experiences, offering flexibility and choice to support their holistic development.

The redeveloped primary curriculum must address the needs of children with special and additional educational needs (SEN). Early intervention is crucial, as delaying until junior infants can result in the loss of critical developmental time (McGough et al., 2006). Therefore, early assessments by multidisciplinary teams are essential. These assessments should be readily available in early years settings to enable timely interventions that can significantly improve educational outcomes for children with SEN. Transitions and continuity in children's learning are a vital component in supporting all children and the establishment of protocols around the transfer of information and resources are necessary to ensure successful transitions between early years and primary education.

The Joint Committee on Education, Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation, and Science report on Mental Health Supports in Schools and Tertiary Education (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2023) highlighted the urgency of establishing a national mental health programme for children and young people, with on-site mental health supports in schools being a key recommendation. The INTO calls for the nationwide rollout of the on-site counselling pilot scheme and age-appropriate mental health supports to be funded for all children to support the vision of the PCF. To achieve this, the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) should be augmented, the in-school and Early Years Therapy Support Demonstration Project should be reinstated and expanded and funding for the School Completion Programme increased. Additionally, it is vital that a grant be provided per pupil for schoolbased mental health supports, such as on-site counselling services, from September 2024.

Schools and school leaders cannot continue to be tasked with the administrative load being requested by NCSE, NEPS, TESS, etc., in the provision of supports to pupils. These support services must handle the logistical and administrative side of their supports and ensure it does not continuously fall to principals. Principals are prepared to work with the support services but want and need support in managing the programmes these services bring to the school.

The professional development of teachers is another vital component. Initial teacher education now includes modules on inclusive education, but ongoing professional development is necessary to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge required to support SEN pupils effectively. This includes opportunities for teachers to engage in CPD and to gain firsthand experience in special education settings.

Addressing physical aggression in schools is paramount. Teachers frequently encounter physical aggression, often from children with additional needs who struggle to communicate or regulate their emotions effectively within an inadequately supported system. The government's interventions to date, fall short of addressing the comprehensive needs of our effected members. The INTO report on physical aggression highlights that aggression is not an exception but a daily reality in many of our special classes and special schools. Teacher's report sustaining serious injuries, such as broken fingers and severe bites, which require immediate and long-term medical attention. The emotional and psychological toll on teachers is profound, with many feeling unsupported and vulnerable. It is unacceptable that the health and safety of our teachers is compromised due to systemic failures. The government must provide clear guidelines on managing aggressive behaviour and ensure that schools have the resources to implement these guidelines effectively. Professional development and training in crisis prevention and intervention should be provided to all schools, with the necessary funding and resources allocated to support this. The Department of education must ensure the availability of calming environments like quiet rooms, sensory spaces, and nurturing rooms in all schools for children who require them.

Only by addressing these needs and implementing the recommendations provided, can the redevelopment of the primary curriculum better support children with special and additional

educational needs, ensuring they receive the education and care they deserve. The government's interventions must go beyond pilot schemes and piecemeal measures, adopting a holistic approach that includes significant investment in mental health services, a restructuring of support systems within schools, and a society-wide commitment to valuing and supporting the physical and mental health of our teachers and pupils.

Recommendations

- Ensure ongoing face-to-face CPD for teachers, focusing on inclusive education and special educational needs. Provide opportunities for student teachers to gain experience in special education settings.
- Commence with the nationwide rollout of the on-site counselling pilot scheme and fund age-appropriate mental health supports for all children to support the vision of the PCF.
- Increase funding and resources for NEPS to provide comprehensive psychological support for all pupils.
- Reinstate and expand the in-school and Early Years Therapy Support Demonstration Project to ensure early intervention and support for children with SEN.
- Increase funding for the School Completion Programme to support pupils at risk of dropping out.
- Ensure that early assessments by multidisciplinary teams are readily available in early years settings to enable timely interventions that can significantly improve educational outcomes for children with SEN.
- Establish protocols around the transfer of information and resources to ensure successful transitions between early years and primary education for all children.
- Provide information on the Universal Design for Learning Pilot on an ongoing basis, particularly around its benefits to children with SEN/AEN.
- Release the guidelines for managing behaviours of concern to schools. Provide professional development and training in crisis prevention and intervention, and ensure schools have the resources to implement these guidelines effectively.

Teacher and Child Agency as part of the Primary Curriculum Framework.

Agency, both for teachers and children, is a cornerstone of the PCF. This concept encompasses the capacity to act independently, make informed choices, and influence one's own learning and teaching

environment (Cong-Lem, 2021). For teachers, this means making professional decisions based on their pupils' needs and interests, while for children, it involves taking active roles in their learning.

An agentic teacher is one who makes professional and informed decisions in response to their pupils' learning needs. This involves utilising their skills, knowledge, and professional judgement to create learning experiences that are engaging, relevant, and responsive. Teacher agency is shaped by both professional and personal experiences, suggesting that the development of agency is a continuous process that involves reflective practice and professional development (Kneyber, 2016). This reflective engagement is critical for teachers to adapt their teaching strategies to the diverse needs of their pupils.

Child agency refers to the ability of children to act independently, make choices, and influence their own learning. The curriculum framework notes the importance of providing opportunities for decisionmaking, creativity, and collaboration. It recognises that children are capable of more than passive learning of knowledge but can actively engage with and shape their learning experiences. Children's agency is nurtured through interactions with adults who provide them with the necessary support, information, and opportunities to express their views and make informed decisions (Oswell, 2012).

Embedding the ideas of teacher and child agency into the redeveloped curriculum will require some consideration. Teachers need to be provided with CPD opportunities that provide examples of agentic and reflective practice. By creating a supportive environment for both teachers and pupils, the curriculum can ensure that agency is a lived experience in the classroom.

Recommendations

- Provide face-to-face CPD focused on fostering teacher agency which includes practical examples of agentic and reflective practice.
- Engage parents and the wider community in supporting children's agency.

Transitions and Alignment with Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and the Framework for Junior Cycle

The NCCA's work on *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*, the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, and the *Framework for Junior Cycle* shows that a well-integrated education continuum that emphasises holistic development, inclusivity, and the development of lifelong learning skills is a key priority for the organisation. Each framework aims for the continuity of learning experiences for pupils and an understanding that one must support the other in a pupil's learning journey.

Aistear, the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, and the *Framework for Junior Cycle* each embody a vision that values holistic development, inclusivity, and active participation in learning. Aistear views babies,

toddlers, and young children as competent and agentic learners, presenting the importance of respectful, loving relationships, and the role of play in learning. It promotes a vision of early childhood as a time of being, enjoying, and learning from experiences, laying important foundations for later learning. Continuing, the PCF builds on this vision, aiming to provide a strong foundation for every child to thrive and flourish. It recognises children as unique, competent, and caring individuals and teachers as committed, skilful professionals who provide high-quality learning and teaching that is inclusive and evidence-based, ensuring all children make progress across all areas of their learning and development. Lastly, the Framework for Junior Cycle maintains this vision by supporting pupils' holistic development through a focus on key skills and competencies that prepare them for further education and life.

Alongside this, the learning structures outlined in each framework align closely, providing continuity in children's learning journeys. Aistear's themes—Wellbeing, Identity and Belonging, Communicating, and Exploring and Thinking—serve as the foundation for its principles and goals. These themes are designed to promote holistic development through playful, inquiry-based learning experiences. The PCF extends these themes into seven key competencies: Being Well, Being Creative, Being a Communicator, Being Mathematical, Being Digital, Being an Active Learner, and Being an Active Citizen. These competencies build on the capabilities developed in early childhood and show the interconnected nature of learning experiences and the importance of developing skills that are applicable across various contexts and stages of education. The Framework for Junior Cycle continues to develop these competencies, ensuring that pupils build on their earlier. Key skills in the Junior Cycle include managing information and thinking, being literate and numerate, staying well, being creative, working with others, and communicating effectively.

However, a potential tension lies in the differing pedagogical approaches used in each framework. Aistear advocates for a slow relational pedagogy, where the educator's role is to be attentive and responsive to each child's needs and interests. In contrast, primary and post-primary education often require teachers to balance individualised attention with the demands of a broader curriculum and large class sizes. This can create a tension between the need for personalised learning experiences and the practicalities of delivering a comprehensive educational program to larger groups of pupils.

Finally, the alignment between the PCF and the Framework for Junior Cycle can be effectively implemented given that both are part of the national education system where their structures facilitate better transitions and ensure that teachers can collaborate effectively to support continuous learning and development for all pupils. However, the privatisation of the early years sector presents a significant challenge to this cohesion (Murphy, 2015). The lack of a nationally managed early childhood education system undermines the efforts of the NCCA to create a seamless educational journey from early years through to post-primary education. The disparities in quality, access, and pedagogical approaches in the privatised early years sector may not support smooth transitions to primary level. This fragmentation hampers the ability of early years teachers to align their practices with the PCF and JCT, resulting in inconsistencies in children's educational experiences. In the national interest, the government must act decisively to align all stages of education by bringing the early years sector into the fold of the national

education system. Such an alignment would ensure that all children benefit from a coherent, high-quality educational pathway that supports their holistic development and prepares them for lifelong learning.

Recommendations

- Invest in face-to-face CPD that promotes joint training and collaboration among early childhood, primary, and post-primary sectors.
- Create professional learning communities to share best practices, align pedagogical approaches, and support professional growth.
- Bring early childhood education under national management to provide a seamless and high-quality education for all pupils from early years through to primary and on to postprimary education.

Play in the Redeveloped Curriculum

In the context of the PCF, play and playfulness are recognised as vital elements of a child's educational journey. Play is seen as a fundamental aspect of learning that supports cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development. Play in the primary curriculum is structured as child-led play, teacher-led playful activities, and collaborative play between teachers and pupils. This structure allows for flexibility and responsiveness to children's emerging interests and learning needs, fostering an environment where unexpected learning opportunities can thrive. According to the PCF, these play-based approaches are instrumental in promoting children's agency and responsibility for their learning, as they encourage independence and decision-making.

The framework advocates for extended periods of play at all class levels, alongside a supportive atmosphere to maximise the benefits of play. Teachers are encouraged to create diverse and engaging learning spaces that reflect children's interests, promoting a sense of ownership and engagement in their education.

Research supports the centrality of play in the curriculum, highlighting its role in developing critical thinking, problem-solving, and social skills. A review by Bubikova-Moan et al. (2019) stresses the positive impact of play on children's holistic development and the necessity of integrating various play types to support a range of skills, including academic learning. However, studies like those by Gray and Ryan (2016) and Hunter and Walsh (2014) highlight the challenges of implementing play-based learning, noting that while teachers generally value play, they face obstacles such as time constraints, lack of resources, and insufficient training.

Despite the recognition of play's benefits, the INTO survey on playful pedagogy awareness indicates that teachers feel playful pedagogy decreases as children progress through primary school. This shift often begins as early as first class, driven by curriculum pressures and a perceived need for more traditional,

measurable learning outcomes. Teachers report that play is more common in infant classrooms, with a noticeable decline in its use in senior classes, where curriculum demands take precedence.

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach, including targeted professional development, adequate resourcing, and a shift in school culture to value play across all class levels. The INTO survey highlights the need for explicit training in playful pedagogy, as only 25% of teachers reported having received such training. This gap presents an opportunity for support services to prioritise CPD that equips teachers with the skills and confidence to integrate play into their teaching practices.

Recommendations

- Provide comprehensive face-to-face CPD for teachers that focuses on the implementation of playful pedagogy. This CPD should include practical examples, and continuous support to help teachers integrate play into their teaching practices.
- Ensure that schools have the necessary materials and resources to support play-based learning.
- Schools should be supported to cultivate a culture that values and integrates playfulness into their classrooms by promoting the benefits of play to teachers and parents.

Assessment in the Redeveloped Curriculum

The PCF and the DE's Preparation for Teaching and Learning (PTL) both present innovative approaches to assessment in primary and special schools. The PCF puts forward a broad vision of inclusive and meaningful assessment practices, promoting the principles of equity, engagement, and progression. It highlights the importance of considering diverse learning contexts and integrating various forms of assessment to support children's holistic development. The PCF introduces a continuum of assessment practices, ranging from intuitive assessments that occur spontaneously and informally, to planned interactions that involve structured observations and dialogues, culminating in formal assessment events like tests and quizzes.

The PTL complements this framework by providing practical guidance on implementing these assessment principles in everyday teaching. It encourages teachers to utilise a wide array of assessment methods, ensuring a balance between child-led and teacher-led approaches. The document also advocates for assessments to be flexible and responsive, allowing teachers to adapt their methods based on the evolving needs and interests of their pupils.

Both documents align in their promotion of inclusive and holistic assessment practices. They stress the importance of understanding each child's unique learning journey and adapting assessments to reflect this diversity. This alignment ensures that assessments are not merely tools for measuring academic achievement but are integral to fostering an engaging and supportive learning environment. The use of

varied assessment methods promotes a deeper understanding of each pupil's strengths and areas for improvement, facilitating more targeted and effective teaching supports.

Implementing these assessment methods presents several challenges for teachers. The need to use a wide range of assessment techniques will be time-consuming and will significantly increase their workload. To use these methods effectively, teachers will require ongoing professional development and support to become proficient in various assessment techniques and their integration into teaching. Additionally, maintaining comprehensive records of diverse assessments demands extensive recordkeeping, which can be burdensome. Therefore, streamlined and user-friendly record-keeping systems are essential to manage the large volume of information collected and ensure the workload remains manageable for teachers.

While the INTO recognises that the assessment strategies outlined in the PCF and the PTL offer numerous benefits, including a more inclusive, responsive, and holistic approach to student evaluation, they also require careful consideration of the practical challenges they present. Addressing these challenges will be crucial in ensuring these assessment practices are embedded successfully as part of the redeveloped curriculum.

Recommendations

- Provide comprehensive training focused on the assessment methods found in the various *Primary Curriculum Framework Specifications*.
- Ensure any systems introduced to support record keeping reduces the administrative burdens associated with the assessments presented across the different specifications.

Time Allocation

Teachers generally view the flexibility in time allocations proposed in the PCF positively. This flexibility is seen as an opportunity to tailor their timetables to the needs of their pupils and to engage more with project-based learning. However, the introduction of new subjects, particularly modern foreign languages, has raised concerns about managing the already overcrowded curriculum within the existing school week. Many teachers feel that the curriculum is currently overloaded, and adding new subject areas will make it difficult to cover all required curriculum content.

The primary issue arising from the flexible time allocations is the need to shift time between subjects to accommodate new ones. This reallocation is being viewed by teachers as a reduction in time for the core subjects of literacy and maths. Teachers are concerned that without careful planning and support, the quality of education in these core subjects could be affected.

The concept of the integrated curriculum is key to addressing the challenges associated with time allocation. By integrating subjects, teachers can create cross-curricular lessons that cover multiple areas of the curriculum simultaneously. Teachers need comprehensive PD to navigate the flexibility in time allocations and to implement an integrated curriculum effectively. This PD should demonstrate

how integrating different subjects can create efficiencies, making it possible to cover the curriculum without overburdening teachers or pupils. This approach also requires adequate resources and materials be provided to support integrated teaching methods, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to make the most of time allocations.

Recommendations

- Provide training that focuses on implementing an integrated curriculum within the *primary curriculum frameworks* time allocations.
- Provide sufficient resources, including teaching materials and technological tools, to support the integrated curriculum.

Digital Learning

The INTO supports integrating digital technology across all curricular areas, rather than teaching it as a standalone subject. This method better meets pupils' digital learning needs and acknowledges that technology is woven throughout all parts of children's lives (Feerick et al., 2022). Many teachers have observed the positive impact of technology in enhancing teaching and learning and capturing pupils' attention. However, concerns remain around the availability of digital resources in schools, teachers' skill levels, and a perceived over-reliance on technology. The Covid-19 school closures also highlighted the "digital divide," faced by many of our pupils who lacked devices and access to technology in their homes.

Inconsistencies in resources and equipment at school level, coupled with varying broadband quality, affect digital technology engagement. Respondents to the INTO Survey on Remote Learning called for increased investment in digital technology and continuous professional development for teachers. Research has also showed that nearly one-third of the world's young people are already digitally excluded (Ayllón et al., 2023), and school closures exacerbated this divide. Addressing this divide requires proper funding and support to close the gap for all learners.

At the primary level, the curriculum should reflect societal changes, equipping pupils with necessary ICT skills to navigate confidently and safely an ever-evolving digital world. Digital literacy enables access to a broad range of media but is not fully understood in schools (Feerick et al., 2022). Further study is needed to understand the implications of developing and implementing digital literacy strategies in the Irish context. Skills needed in education today are much broader than those required ten years ago, making it essential to explore digital literacy to support teaching and learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the importance of digital literacy for both teachers and pupils, revealing the unpreparedness of school systems for digital learning. This period also exposed further inequalities, particularly in access to expertise, training, broadband, and ICT infrastructure. A strategic priority for the Department of Education must be equal access to digital learning for all pupils through

investment in infrastructure, professional development, technical support, and high-speed broadband in all Irish primary schools.

Assistive technology (AT) has significantly improved learning for children with special educational needs, enhancing their access to the curriculum. The Department of Education funds schools to purchase equipment for pupils with physical or communicative needs. This aligns with the idea of agency in the PCF by providing alternative ways for pupils to access teaching and learning. The INTO believes increased access to AT is crucial for inclusion and calls for extended funding for AT across the primary sector throughout the rollout of the redeveloped primary curriculum.

Parents also need education on internet dangers and online safety. Social media bullying remains a large concern for teachers and principals, who often find themselves dealing with issues in the classroom which have occurred outside school on children's private devices. Parents must be educated through a nationwide campaign on safe internet usage to safeguard their children and take responsibility for their exposure to online content. The INTO believes children's safe engagement with technology requires both pupils and parents to be trained in cyber safety.

The goal of digital technology in education is to make ICT an integral part of teaching, learning, and assessment in every classroom, embedded across all curriculum areas. Teachers welcome the inclusion of 'being a digital learner' as a key competency within the PCF, aligning with approaches in other European countries. To achieve this, all schools must be provided with well-equipped, fully resourced learning environments with digitally competent and confident teachers. Without these foundational elements, building digital knowledge and skills is unachievable.

Recommendations

- Ensure equal access to digital learning by investing in infrastructure, professional development, technical support, and high-speed broadband for all schools.
- Provide continuous professional development for teachers to improve their digital literacy and skills.
- Increase funding for AT to support children with special educational needs, ensuring inclusivity in digital learning.
- Develop digital content both in English and as Gaeilge to support the redeveloped primary curriculum and meet the diverse needs of pupils in Irish primary schools.
- Implement nationwide campaigns to educate parents on internet dangers and online safety to protect children from cyberbullying and inappropriate content.
- Ensure all schools are well-equipped with the necessary digital devices and resources to support teaching and learning.
- Conduct further research on developing and implementing digital literacy strategies tailored to the Irish context.

Education for Sustainable Development

The inclusion of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the primary curriculum is pivotal in addressing the urgent sustainability challenges of our times. Despite its recognition in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* by NCCA, there remains a critical need to integrate ESD more effectively across all areas of the curriculum. The fragmented approach to ESD, with it being mainly embedded in the SEE specification, limits the potential for comprehensive engagement with sustainable practices across the other subject areas. It is important that ESD is not merely appended to existing subjects but woven throughout, enabling a holistic development of sustainable mindsets from an early age.

For this integration to be effective, substantial support must be provided in terms of CPD for teachers, sufficient implementation time for the underlying pedagogies and philosophy of ESD, and adequate resources. Face-to-face CPD specific to ESD is crucial. Teachers need to be equipped with the latest pedagogical strategies and content knowledge to effectively deliver integrated lessons that not only convey information but also empower pupils to take action for a sustainable future.

The integration of ESD into the redeveloped curriculum demands thoughtful planning to avoid curriculum overload. A practical solution lies in weaving ESD outcomes into the learning objectives of all subjects, thereby enriching rather than burdening the curriculum. This approach ensures that sustainability becomes a lens through which students view all aspects of their learning, fostering a comprehensive educational experience.

Additionally, the infrastructure within schools must reflect and support sustainable practices. The INTO again calls for the retrofitting of older school buildings with energy efficient systems and sustainable design in new constructions. This infrastructure will act as a practical example of sustainability in action but also enhance the learning environment for pupils, making the school a model of environmental sustainability.

To ensure that schools and teachers are fully prepared to implement this broadened scope of ESD, the Department of Education must also provide the necessary funding and resources. This includes both physical materials and digital resources. The integration of outdoor learning environments, as suggested by the INTO, can provide hands-on experiences that are invaluable for instilling a genuine appreciation and understanding of environmental and social sustainability.

The ambition to weave ESD throughout the curriculum requires a coordinated approach at all levels of the education system. This includes policy support from the Department of Education, leadership supports within schools, and active engagement from the community. To facilitate this, the Department of Education should consider establishing a dedicated team to support ESD initiatives, ensuring that these are not only implemented but also continuously evaluated and improved upon.

While the NCCA has laid a solid foundation for the inclusion of ESD in the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, there remains a significant need to expand ESD across all curricular areas. The support provided must be strategically linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), ensuring that all educational initiatives align with these benchmarks. With targeted face-to-face CPD, adequate resources, and a supportive infrastructure, teachers can be empowered to develop the next generation of environmentally conscious citizens. This holistic approach not only enhances pupils' understanding of sustainability but also equips them with the skills and values necessary to lead and support sustainable development globally. By aligning educational supports with the SDGs, we ensure that the curriculum not only addresses local educational needs but also contributes to global sustainability objectives.

Recommendations

- Ensure Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is purposefully and visibly woven throughout all specifications rather than being confined to specific specifications by embedding ESD outcomes in learning objectives across the curriculum, making sustainability one of the central lenses through which all subjects are taught.
- Provide face-to-face CPD specifically focused on ESD, equipping teachers with the latest pedagogical strategies and content knowledge to effectively deliver integrated lessons that promote sustainability.
- Retrofit older school buildings with energy efficient systems and incorporate sustainable design in new constructions.
- Ensure the allocation of sufficient funding and resources, including physical materials and digital toolkits, to support the integration of ESD across specifications.
- Establish a dedicated team within the Department of Education to support and oversee ESD initiatives. Ensure policies align with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and foster a coordinated approach to sustainability education across all levels of the education system.

Section 2: Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Arts Education

The redeveloped arts specification represents a significant step towards creating an arts education that aligns with contemporary educational needs and societal changes. INTO members have expressed a positive outlook on the draft specification, acknowledging its potential to enhance the creative and expressive capacities of pupils. The feedback from INTO members highlights a strong appreciation for the expanded scope of the arts specification, which now includes media arts and dance, alongside the traditional disciplines of visual arts, music, and drama. This broader inclusion is seen as a good change, offering pupils a richer array of creative experiences. The specification's user-friendly structure and clear learning progression are also commended, with specific praise for the concrete improvements in the drama component.

However, concerns remain, particularly regarding the forced integration of arts subjects, which some members feel is inadequately supported by the current framework. There is a consensus that the specification should allow for more natural and flexible integration, respecting the unique qualities and educational value of each arts discipline. Additionally, there is a need for greater clarity and support concerning culturally responsive pedagogy and sensory accommodations for pupils with specific needs across the Arts subject areas.

A recurring theme in the feedback is the necessity of robust CPD to build teacher confidence and competence in delivering the arts specification effectively. Teachers are calling for full-day in-service training, particularly in the arts, over webinars to develop understanding and practice hands-on practical skills. Members are also insisting that schools be provided with adequate resources and materials, which should be regularly replenished through a central fund. Additionally, they request samples of integrated arts lessons to be made available through the specification toolkit.

It was also noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted arts education, as teachers had to adapt to remote learning environments, at the expense of hands-on, collaborative artistic experiences. INTO members report that during the pandemic, other subjects were prioritised over arts subjects, leading to a reduction in creative opportunities for pupils. Members are now looking to reinvigorate and prioritise arts education and see the redeveloped curriculum as a key moment for the arts to reestablish their role in fostering creativity, cultural awareness, and holistic development in children.

Class Size, Classroom Space, and Classroom Organisation

Current class sizes do not adequately support pupils' creativity due to overcrowded conditions. Members feel that large class sizes lead to a diluted focus on each student's creative development and force a generalised approach rather than tailored instruction in the arts. The physical constraints of a typical classroom are also a major issue, with many classrooms being too small to support the arts as presented in the specification. Traditional classroom layouts, such as rows of desks facing the teacher, further limit the flexibility required to provide a dynamic arts education.

Effective classroom organisation in arts education necessitates rethinking traditional layouts. According to the draft primary arts education specification, creating spaces that facilitate movement, sensory engagement, and access to diverse materials can significantly enhance the learning experience. Inadequate classroom space and organisation are likely to severely restrict the practical application of arts education.

Given these challenges, it is crucial to address the issue of funding. The INTO calls for an increase in capitation funding and the minor works grant to ensure that schools have the necessary resources and infrastructure to provide the support needed to create learning environments that truly foster creativity and exploration in arts education.

Planning and Professional Support

The broadness of the arts specification demands a thoughtful and well-structured approach to planning and instruction. Planning in arts education involves designing lessons that are engaging, educational, and flexible. The draft arts specification calls for planning that includes clear learning outcomes, diverse instructional strategies, and appropriate assessment methods. This extensive planning can be overwhelming, particularly given the broad range of areas in the arts specification. The INTO would be concerned about the increased workload this may impose on teachers.

With this, teachers are also tasked with creating lesson plans that allow for exploration and experimentation while ensuring that learning outcomes are met. This requires a deep understanding of both artistic processes and the pedagogical methods that support them. Teachers who lack confidence or experience in different areas of the arts specification may find this balance particularly challenging and will need comprehensive training to support them. Managing time for the equal delivery of visual arts, drama, and music will also be a significant challenge.

Professional development is critical in supporting teachers to develop effective planning and teaching methods. CPD opportunities must be provided to help teachers stay updated with the latest pedagogical strategies and gain confidence in their ability to teach the arts. It is important to prioritise the provision of high-quality exemplars and practical strategies that teachers can apply in their classrooms.

Resources for Arts Education

The availability of resources will determine the successful implementation of the arts specification. Resources in this context include not only physical materials and equipment but also access to external expertise. Arts education becomes significantly more challenging without essential resources. Schools are currently managing very limited budgets, which restrict the range and quality of materials available to pupils. Inadequate resourcing will stifle creativity and limit the scope of arts projects that teachers and pupils can do.

Access to external expertise, such as visiting artists, musicians, and drama practitioners, can enrich the arts education experience. Partnerships with cultural organisations and community artists provide pupils with exposure to professional practices and new techniques. Establishing and maintaining these partnerships will require its own level of funding and support. The INTO would insist that these partnerships be funded by a Department of Education fund, allocated to all schools, ensuring that schools are not asked to bear the costs of these valuable collaborations.

The INTO would insist that these partnerships, be funded by a Department of Education fund, allocated to all schools, ensuring that schools are not asked to bear the costs of these valuable collaborations. The recent application-style funding models imposed by the Department of Education are fundamentally flawed. For example, the current “Creative Clusters Scheme” forces schools to apply and be assessed to avail of limited funding for the arts. The Department of Education must abandon this ineffective and inequitable application-style funding model in favour of a more equitable system that guarantees all pupils have access to the creative and educational benefits of a well-resourced arts education programme. The INTO calls for a general allocation of funding specifically for arts materials and resources. This approach will ensure that all schools receive the necessary financial support to provide high-quality arts education.

Lack of Confidence in the Arts

Teachers often enter the profession with varying levels of training and experience in the arts. Many primary teachers have a limited ITE education in the Arts, leading to a lack of confidence in teaching these subjects. This is particularly true for media arts, which may not have been included in their ITE programmes. As a result, teachers may feel ill-equipped to deliver these components of the arts curriculum effectively.

There is a pressing need for professional development that focuses on building teachers' skills and confidence across all art forms. Sustained CPD will help teachers stay updated with new techniques, pedagogical strategies, and developments in the arts. Providing teachers with access to high-quality exemplars and practical teaching strategies will also help them feel more confident in their teaching.

Mentoring and collaborative teaching can also effectively address this knowledge gap. Experienced teachers or teachers with a special interest in certain art forms can support less experienced colleagues, providing them with guidance. Co-teaching arrangements, where teachers work alongside each other, can provide valuable on-the-job learning experiences also.

Integrating technology into arts education can create new opportunities for teaching and learning. Online resources, instructional videos, and virtual workshops can provide teachers with additional support and ideas for their lessons. The draft arts specification highlights the potential of ICT to enhance arts education, though it acknowledges that this potential has not yet been fully realised in many classrooms. To achieve this, proper ICT resources must be available in all primary classrooms.

Recommendations

- Provide face to face, hands-on PD to build teacher confidence and competence in the delivery of the arts specification.
- Establish a central fund to regularly replenish arts materials and provide schools with adequate resources.
- Address overcrowded classrooms and infrastructural limitations to support the delivery of this specification's creative activities.
- Support schools to foster partnerships with external experts, like visiting artists and cultural bodies, to enrich the learning experience.
- Develop and provide a comprehensive toolkit with sample integrated arts lessons and practical strategies.
- Ensure arts subjects receive equal emphasis alongside core subjects to restore and enhance creative opportunities for pupils, fostering their holistic development and cultural awareness.
- Support and encourage mentoring & co-teaching arrangements to provide on-the-job learning experiences, fostering collaboration and the sharing of best practices in arts education.

Modern Foreign Languages

The INTO welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft specification for the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) into Irish primary schools in September 2025. As the only entirely new subject area in the redeveloped curriculum, MFL's integration into the *Primary Language Curriculum* (PLC) and not the *Primary Curriculum Framework* (PCF) raises significant concerns that must be addressed to ensure a smooth and effective implementation.

INTO members have expressed a range of views on the draft MFL specification, reflecting both optimism and concern. The inclusion of language awareness and the focus on building basic communicative competence at the pre-A1 and A1 levels are seen as relatively realistic goals. However, there are substantial concerns regarding teacher competency and the adequacy of professional development to meet these new demands. The feedback indicates a strong need for a national longterm plan that clearly outlines the teaching and learning strategies for MFL, including which languages will be available, how schools will select these languages and how the natural movement of teachers/NQTs in the school system will be managed.

Another issue highlighted by INTO members is the tension between the PLC, developed prior to the 2023 PCF, and the new MFL specification. The rushed integration of MFL into the PLC is viewed as problematic, with questions about whether these contrasting curriculums will fit together effectively. Members have highlighted that this hurried approach to add MFL to the PLC will undermine the potential benefits of MFL by not allowing sufficient time for the necessary teacher training, support structures and resources to be developed to truly embed MFL into our primary classrooms.

Several practical challenges are anticipated with the introduction of MFL. A significant concern is the development of teacher competency, especially given the high standards required to teach languages effectively. The draft specification does not adequately address the current lack of language competency among primary teachers or the research-based need for teachers to possess a high level of proficiency to teach languages effectively. It is essential to create academic pathways for teachers to upskill in languages and time for this to embed across the system. Furthermore, if the NCCA and Oide do not proactively address this issue, there is a high likelihood that private textbook companies will step in to fill the knowledge gap with their own language programmes due to insufficient support service input.

While INTO members appreciate the detail in the specification around language awareness, basic language learning and the integration of language learning across broader curriculum activities, they stress the need for detailed guidance on assessment methods and explicit inclusion of assessment strategies within the specification. The current draft's lack of clarity in this area needs to be addressed to ensure effective implementation.

The INTO believes that the introduction of MFL into the Irish primary school curriculum can enhance pupils' language learning and cultural awareness but it necessitates extremely careful planning and robust support systems. The INTO urges the NCCA to consider the detailed feedback from its members below and look to address the concerns about teacher competency, proper resourcing, realistic expectations and the need for a cohesive and easily useable integration of MFL with current PLC structures. The importance of clear communication, thorough planning, and substantial support for teachers and schools throughout the implementation process are key priorities for the INTO who remain committed to working collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure our members can implement MFL effectively.

Tension Between the PLC and Modern Foreign Languages under the PCF

The attempt to integrate MFL into the PLC (PLC) highlights several significant differences and tensions between the two curriculums. The 2019 PLC was designed with focus on the development of English and Irish language skills across four stages, emphasising deep linguistic and cultural understanding within the national context. It promotes an integrative approach, where the existing linguistic knowledge and experiences of children are leveraged to support learning in both English and Irish. The PLC is structured to provide a gradual, immersive language learning process from the infant to the senior classes, focusing on building solid foundations in the first language (L1) and second language (L2).

The draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) specification adds a third language (L3) to be introduced at Stages 3 and 4. This specification shifts the focus to developing initial language awareness and basic communication skills in a new foreign language. The inclusion of MFL in this manner disrupts the continuity of the language experience intended in the PLC. The integration of an additional language learning track alongside English and Irish adds complexity and potential confusion for both teachers and pupils.

The pedagogical approaches further illustrate the disparities between the two documents. The PLC emphasises immersive, integrative language experiences that build progressively on children's existing linguistic knowledge. It supports a deep, participatory approach to language learning that aligns with the children's developmental stages and cognitive abilities. Starting MFL at Stage 3 requires teachers to adapt to new instructional strategies, around language awareness, that might not align seamlessly with the established practices for teaching English and Irish. This sudden shift can disrupt the flow and continuity of learning, making it challenging for pupils to adjust to a new language learning process while still mastering their L1 and L2.

Structurally, the PLC's time allocations were not designed to accommodate the addition of MFL. The PLC was designed within a specific time allocation for language development, but incorporating MFL requires additional time that is now looking for space in an already overcrowded weekly time allocation. Schools will now need to juggle their timetables significantly as the draft MFL specification proposes

time allocations that our members feel do not account for the already packed curriculum, further straining and overloading the teaching and learning for both pupils and teachers.

The pressure from the Department of Education to quickly integrate MFL into the primary curriculum is the main driver of the above issues. The NCCA is under significant pressure to adapt the PLC to include MFL without adequate time for thorough preparation or consultation with teachers and stakeholders. This rushed implementation is likely to result in poor outcomes and resistance from teachers who are unprepared for such a substantial change.

To mitigate this, the Department of Education must acknowledge that the embedding and implementation of the 2019 PLC has not been entirely successful and undertake a thorough redevelopment of the language curriculum, considering the integration of MFL from the ground up. Extensive consultations with teachers, parents, and stakeholders are essential to gather input and ensure a well-rounded approach. A phased implementation of MFL within a redeveloped language curriculum is required to allow time for developing appropriate teaching materials, training teachers, and adjusting the curriculum based on the needs of our schools. Moreover, the Department of Education must commit to providing substantial support in terms of professional development for teachers and additional resources to facilitate the integration of MFL.

The attempt to incorporate MFL into the existing PLC under the new framework is fraught with challenges. The inherent tensions between the PLC and the new MFL curriculum requirements, combined with the Department of Education's pressure for quick implementation, risk undermining the quality of language learning in primary schools. A fully redeveloped language curriculum is the only way to develop a coherent and effective language curriculum that truly benefits all pupils.

Recommendations

- The Department of Education must acknowledge the limited success of the 2019 PLC rollout and commit to learning from past implementation mistakes to ensure that the same issues do not affect the integration of MFL.
- A thorough ground up redevelopment of the PLC to integrate MFL should be initiated so that the language curriculum supports English, Irish, and MFL in a coherent and integrated manner, allowing for a seamless language learning experience for pupils from infants to senior classes.
- When completed the DE must implement the fully redeveloped language program in a phased manner allowing for a gradual embedding of the curriculum, providing time to develop appropriate teaching materials, train teachers, and adjust the curriculum based on feedback and observed outcomes.
- Realign curriculum time allocations to accommodate MFL without overloading teachers. The current time allocations for language were not designed to include MFL. Adjusting the timetable to ensure balanced and manageable time for all language learning activities is essential.

Teacher Competency

The Department of Education's shortsighted and poorly conceived plan to introduce MFL into the primary curriculum blatantly disregards the current lack of teacher competency in foreign languages. This demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the practical realities faced by schools trying to introduce MFL. Forcing this initiative upon teachers without providing the necessary training and resources will undermine the quality of language education while also placing undue stress on already overburdened teachers. The INTO will not stand idly by while our members are coerced or pressured into acquiring new language skills without adequate supports or the availability of opportunities to upskill. We are prepared to use all options available to us to protect our members' working conditions and wellbeing. Should the Department attempt to take advantage of teachers in their rush to implement MFL, we will respond decisively and vigorously to ensure that our members are fairly treated.

Our members have expressed serious concerns regarding their ability to effectively teach a new language without adequate training and support. As highlighted in the feedback from the INTO MFL Development Group, "Concerns around teacher competency and the level of competent language speaking teachers" are prevalent. This sentiment points to the urgent need for a national long-term plan for MFL education in primary schools, including comprehensive, front-loaded, in-service CPD.

Teacher competency is a critical determinant of the success of the MFL specification. Research consistently shows that the skill of the language teacher significantly outweighs other curricular factors in effective language teaching. For instance, Darling-Hammond (2000) and Enever (2014) highlight the link between teacher effectiveness and student achievement, stressing that content knowledge and

pedagogical skill are essential for successful language instruction. This is further supported by Shulman (1987), who emphasised the importance of combining expert subject-matter knowledge with pedagogical skills to meet learners' needs.

Our members fear that without sufficient proficiency in the target languages, the teaching of MFL will mirror the challenges currently faced in teaching Irish in English-medium schools. The Chief Inspector's report (2020) revealed serious difficulties in the teaching of Irish in English medium schools, with many teachers relying heavily on textbooks and failing to provide adequate opportunities for communicative language use. This has resulted in subpar learning experiences for pupils, a situation that is likely to reoccur with MFL if teacher competency issues are not addressed. One member starkly put it, "How are we supposed to teach a language we don't know ourselves? The demands are unreasonable".

The lack of language competency will lead to a reliance on private textbook companies to fill the gap, which could result in an inconsistent implementation of MFL. The danger here is twofold in that it not only undermines the agency of teachers but also risks standardising language education in a way that may not cater to the diverse needs of pupils across different schools. To bridge the competency gap during the interim and early years of MFL implementation, specialist language teachers may be required. As a member noted, "Employ specialised language teachers to provide MFL instruction on fixed term or permanent contracts similar to shared SET, the supply panel model, or teaching principal admin days." These specialists can provide high-quality language instruction while existing primary school teachers undergo the necessary upskilling. By bringing in specialists, we can alleviate immediate pressure on current teachers, allowing them the time and space to acquire the required proficiency through state-funded opportunities.

The path to improving teacher competency must include state-funded postgraduate diplomas and master's programmes in language education, robust and sustained CPD opportunities, and practical support mechanisms such as sound files linked to all MFL exemplar pages. This approach will help ensure that teachers are not merely "one page ahead of the pupils" in their language books but are confident and competent in delivering high-quality language education. Consideration must also be given to the large number of Irish teachers likely to return from teaching abroad in the coming years, ensuring they are effectively upskilled as and when they return.

Teacher competency is the key to the successful implementation of the MFL specification. Without addressing the current gaps in knowledge and skills, the introduction of MFL risks repeating the challenges seen in the teaching of Irish, thereby failing to realise the full potential of language education in primary schools. It is essential that robust, research-based strategies are employed to upskill teachers in a way that does not, in any way, impact a principal's ability to allocate teaching resources within their schools. Principals must retain the flexibility to manage their staff in a manner that best meets the needs of their student populations. All PD should be designed to complement, not complicate, the administrative responsibilities of school leaders, thereby ensuring a smooth and

effective integration of MFL into the curriculum without disrupting existing resource allocation and school operations.

Recommendations

- The Department of Education must create a comprehensive, long-term plan for MFL education in primary schools. This plan should include state-funded programmes in language education, as well as sustained face-to-face CPD opportunities.
- Immediate and extensive CPD should be provided to all teachers in MFL instruction. This includes practical supports that ensure teachers are well-prepared and confident in their ability to deliver high-quality language education.
- CPD initiatives must be designed in a way that does not impede principals' ability to allocate teaching resources within their schools. Principals must retain the flexibility to manage staff assignments to best meet the diverse needs of their student populations

without being constrained by additional administrative burdens from the implementation of MFL.

- To prevent an over-reliance on private textbook companies, the Department should ensure that all necessary teaching materials and resources for MFL are provided centrally.
This approach will help maintain consistency in MFL instruction across schools.
- The Department of Education should employ specialist language teachers to provide immediate, high-quality language instruction while allowing current primary school teachers the necessary time to upskill through state-funded PD opportunities

Introduction of MFL and Early Language Learning

The decision to introduce MFL at Stage 3 of the primary curriculum rather than beginning in infant classes raises significant questions about the long-term efficacy and strategic planning for MFL by the Department of Education. Research overwhelmingly supports the benefits of starting language education at a younger age. Studies indicate that younger children have a distinct advantage in language acquisition due to their heightened neuroplasticity, which allows them to absorb new sounds, syntax, and vocabulary more naturally and efficiently than older children and adults. Birdsong and Molis (2001) as well as Hakuta, Bialystok, and Wiley (2003) highlight that early exposure to language learning leads to better pronunciation and a more native-like accent, a crucial factor for long-term proficiency. Furthermore, children who start learning languages earlier tend to achieve higher levels of grammatical proficiency and develop a deeper understanding of linguistic structures.

Introducing MFL in infant classes would leverage these cognitive advantages, creating a solid foundation for more advanced language skills in later years. The incremental decline in language learning abilities with age suggests that delaying the introduction of MFL until Stage 3 misses a critical window of opportunity. Moreover, younger children are more likely to engage with languages through playful and immersive activities, which research shows to be highly effective for language retention and enjoyment (Lew-Williams & Fernald, 2010).

The Department of Education's decision to commence MFL at Stage 3 reflects a concerning lack of understanding of these fundamental principles of language acquisition. This misstep places undue pressure on the NCCA to accommodate a curriculum framework that is not optimally aligned with best practices in language education. The NCCA has been forced to work within constraints that compromise the potential effectiveness of MFL instruction, disadvantaging pupils who might have benefitted significantly from earlier exposure.

Starting MFL at Stage 3 imposes additional challenges on teachers who are already grappling with the complexities of the current curriculum. Without early language learning experiences, pupils and teachers alike face a steeper learning curve, requiring more intensive supports to achieve the desired outcomes. This highlights the Department's shortsightedness and points to a gap in strategic planning for language education in primary schools.

Ideally, the introduction of MFL should begin in the infant classes to maximise cognitive and linguistic benefits. The current approach not only overlooks well-documented research but also imposes unnecessary challenges on teachers and pupils. The INTO calls for a reevaluation of this strategy, advocating for an evidence-based approach that aligns with the best practices in language education to ensure a more successful and enriching language learning experience for all pupils.

Recommendations

- The Department of Education, as part of a redeveloped PLC, should plan to introduce MFL starting in infant classes rather than at Stage 3.
- The NCCA should be empowered to design an MFL curriculum that reflects best practices in language education, starting from the earliest years of primary education.

Integrating New Concepts from the MFL Specification

In the draft MFL specification, teachers are presented with a lot of new terminologies and concepts deemed essential for engaging with the updated language curriculum. Among these, plurilingualism and intercultural awareness stand out as key elements, reflecting the growing recognition of linguistic diversity and cultural diversity in our nation's classrooms today.

Plurilingualism refers to the capacity of individuals to use multiple languages to varying degrees and for different purposes. This approach encourages learners to draw upon all their linguistic resources,

fostering a holistic language development process. Research highlights the cognitive, social, and academic benefits of plurilingualism, including enhanced problem-solving skills, greater cognitive flexibility, and improved metalinguistic awareness. Kirwan (2015) demonstrates that integrating pupils' home languages into the classroom promotes a more inclusive and supportive learning environment, validating the linguistic identities of pupils and enriching the learning experience for all by exposing them to a wider range of linguistic inputs and cultural perspectives.

Intercultural awareness, closely linked to plurilingualism, involves understanding and appreciating the cultural contexts of languages. It is crucial for fostering empathy, respect, and effective communication in a multicultural world. By integrating intercultural awareness into the MFL curriculum, teachers can help pupils develop the skills necessary to navigate and thrive in diverse cultural settings. This includes recognising cultural differences, challenging stereotypes, and engaging with various cultural expressions and practices. Kirwan (2018) again notes that the benefits of this approach extend beyond language proficiency, contributing to pupils' overall personal and social development.

However, the implementation of these concepts poses significant challenges, particularly for generalist teachers who will require extensive PD to fully grasp and effectively apply them. The INTO has expressed support for the inclusion of plurilingualism and intercultural awareness in the MFL specification, acknowledging their potential to enrich language education. However, there is concern about the substantial knowledge that teachers must acquire to support pupils effectively as part of the draft specification. In addition to plurilingualism and intercultural awareness, the glossary of the draft MFL specifications includes numerous complex terms and ideas that would necessitate dedicated CPD for full understanding.

Recommendations

- Develop targeted initiatives to build teachers' understanding of the new terms and concepts introduced in the MFL specifications. This should include expanding beyond glossaries and supporting teachers with practical strategies for integrating pupils' home languages into the classroom and developing cultural sensitivity.
- Conduct regular reviews of the language curriculum to ensure it remains relevant and effective in addressing the needs of our diverse student population.

MFL and Inspectorate Support

The introduction of MFL into the primary curriculum is a significant educational reform that will require support from Department of Education inspectors. The Inspectorate will play a role in ensuring that the implementation of MFL meets the high standards expected in primary education. However, many inspectors do not possess the necessary competency in the languages that may be taught, which will affect their ability to accurately assess the quality of MFL teaching and learning. This lack of

competency will necessitate inspectors allowing for a blended teaching approach when supporting MFL lessons.

A blended approach to MFL instruction involves allowing teachers to organise and introduce the lesson in their first language (L1) before transitioning to the main lesson in the chosen MFL. This method provides a scaffolded learning experience for pupils, enabling them to grasp the foundational concepts in a familiar language before applying them in a new language. This blended lesson structure harmonises the primary MFL specification with the existing MFL curriculum at post-primary level. It is essential for inspectors to understand and support this model, recognising its benefits in facilitating effective language learning at this foundation stage of introducing MFL to primary schools.

This blended approach to MFL should not interfere with the teaching of Irish, which should continue to be taught through Irish. The Irish language holds a unique position as our national language, embodying significant historical importance. It is vital that the teaching of Irish is safeguarded within the primary curriculum with the relevant education support services ensuring the CPD provided for Irish language instruction receives the highest priority in the redeveloped curriculum.

The Department of Education must provide comprehensive guidance around how inspectors will support the implementation of the MFL specification. These documents should provide clarity on how MFL lessons will be evaluated, reflecting the language competencies of both teachers and the inspectors themselves. Such guidance will ensure consistency and fairness in evaluations, fostering an environment where teachers feel supported to deliver high-quality MFL education.

Recommendations

- The Department of Education must distribute, alongside the release of the MFL specification, detailed guidance documents around support from inspectors which outline how they will evaluate MFL lessons considering their own potential language competency gaps.
- DE inspectors should support the use of blended instructional approaches where teachers introduce lessons in their first language (L1) before transitioning to the chosen MFL.
- DE inspectors should ensure that the introduction of MFL does not compromise the teaching and promotion of the Irish language. Curriculum documents and resources should clearly differentiate the instructional approaches for MFL and Irish

Assessment in MFL Specification

The MFL draft specification lacks a dedicated section on assessment, highlighting a significant gap when compared to the comprehensive detailing of assessment in the other curriculum specifications.

The PCF highlights assessment as an integral part of the learning and teaching process, involving collaboration among children, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders. Assessment is seen as existing along a continuum, ranging from intuitive assessments to planned interactions and formal assessment events. This comprehensive approach ensures that assessment informs and supports progression in children’s learning across the curriculum, providing necessary feedback across all specifications.

By insisting that the NCCA overlay the assessment principles of the PLC onto the MFL specification, the Department, again, exhibits a lack of coherent strategy and depth for the future of the specification. Such an approach does a disservice to teachers and pupils alike, revealing a hasty attempt to align disparate curricula rather than a thoughtful, comprehensive integration with the PCF to truly reflect the educational objectives and pedagogical commitments of the redeveloped curriculum. To rectify this, a section on assessment must be included in the MFL specification which connects assessment strategies as to the PCF. This alignment is essential to avoid the disjointed implementation of assessment practices across the redeveloped curriculum.

Recommendations

- Develop an assessment section within the MFL specification that aligns with the principles of the PCF. This section should reflect the educational and pedagogical philosophies of the redeveloped curriculum, ensuring unified and effective assessment across specifications.

Social and Environmental Education

The draft specification for Social and Environmental Education (SEE) has garnered a mixed response from members of the INTO. Based on the feedback collected from INTO members, it is evident that while there is general support for the redeveloped SEE specification, significant concerns remain regarding its implementation and specific content areas.

Members pointed to the overall user-friendliness of the draft specification, appreciating that the curriculum is designed to be accessible and easy to navigate. Another area members have referred positively to is the emphasis on environmental sustainability, outdoor learning, and play-based methodologies. Members commend the curriculum for promoting active learning where children can engage in hands-on activities, communicate, and present their ideas. This focus on experiential learning is appreciated for fostering essential skills in pupils.

The focus on inclusivity and diversity within the curriculum is also positively acknowledged. Members appreciate the curriculum's aim to foster a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, social and environmental justice, and sustainable development. The creation of safe and accessible learning spaces that promote empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity is seen as a valuable part of the draft specification.

However, INTO members have pointed out potential barriers to this focus on inclusivity and diversity such as large class sizes, inadequate support staff, and insufficient resources. They emphasise the need for front-loaded PD and face-to-face training to ensure all teachers are prepared to deliver the curriculum effectively. Moreover, concerns about whether all schools have the necessary infrastructure and resources to support the curriculum's goals and address safety issues in certain areas remain unaddressed.

While the draft specification promotes learning in various environments, including outdoor and local settings, INTO members note practical challenges such as financial constraints and safety concerns that can limit the feasibility of these activities. Ensuring that all schools, regardless of their location and resources, can implement these aspects of the curriculum is crucial.

The integration of 'Education about Religions and Beliefs' (ERB) within SEE has sparked some debate. Some members stress that teaching ERB under the umbrella of history and geography could lead to potential biases and misrecognition of diverse belief systems. Their feedback suggests that ERB should either remain a discrete subject or be part of the patron's programme, rather than being integrated into SEE without clear guidelines and frameworks.

Infrastructural, Resourcing & Policy Issues

The barriers identified by INTO members in the SEE specification present significant challenges for schools. One major issue is that many schools are not adequately resourced to meet the learning outcomes as presented in the draft specification. Even schools that have some resources may find it difficult to implement the specification fully because the infrastructure of the school may not support many of the methods outlined in the SEE specification. For example, schools may lack adequate outdoor spaces for environmental learning activities or suitable facilities for the hands-on, experiential learning experiences promoted by the specification.

To engage fully with the SEE specification, schools need access to community areas if they do not have the necessary infrastructure themselves. Teachers have noted that community partnerships could play an important role in providing these resources. By collaborating with local organisations, such as libraries, museums, heritage centres, and local sports groups, schools can gain access to valuable learning environments and materials that they might otherwise lack. However, establishing and maintaining these partnerships requires significant support for school leaders. They need guidance and resources to navigate potential issues that might arise, such as the cost of travel and ensuring student safety.

Another concern raised by INTO members is the apprehension around engaging in outdoor activities or organising school trips. The costs of insurance and the litigative nature of society today act as substantial barriers to children's learning experiences outside the classroom. Schools are wary of the potential legal implications and financial costs that could result from accidents or incidents during

these activities. This caution can limit the opportunities for pupils to engage in the immersive, real-world learning experiences that are central to the SEE curriculum.

To address these concerns, legislative action is required to ensure that schools are safeguarded as they work towards achieving the learning outcomes of the SEE curriculum. This could involve reforms to reduce the financial and legal risks associated with outdoor and community-based learning activities. Providing schools with clear guidelines and support on managing these risks, alongside appropriate legislative protections, would help alleviate the barriers and enable schools to offer richer SEE experiences.

Recommendations

- Ensure schools are supported to meet the learning outcomes of the SEE specification by providing funding and support for necessary infrastructure improvements.
- Encourage and support schools in establishing partnerships with local organisations, such as libraries, museums, and local sports groups. Provide guidance and resources to school leaders to navigate associated challenges.
- Advocate for policy/legislative reforms to mitigate the financial and legal risks associated with outdoor and off-site learning activities.

Education about Religions and Beliefs

Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) in the SEE specification presents several issues that need to be addressed. The outlined learning outcomes are broad and vague, posing a challenge for teachers and schools in determining what exactly needs to be taught in ERB. A specific listing of worldviews and belief systems, including non-theistic ones, is necessary to provide clear guidance. Without such specificity, there is a risk of inconsistent teaching practices and potential bias. This lack of clarity can also lead to confusion and make it difficult for teachers to deliver the specification effectively.

The current draft's approach could also result in a superficial teaching of belief systems, failing to provide the depth and rigour necessary for a comprehensive understanding of diverse religions and beliefs. Concerns about the potential for textbook companies to produce inadequate materials further highlights the need for strong toolkits. The toolkit must include materials that are objective, critical, and pluralist in nature to foster a respectful and inclusive learning environment for all pupils.

The integration of ERB into history and geography raises concerns about potential conflicts with religious beliefs, leading to opt-outs like those seen in Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). Managing these opt-outs could pose significant challenges for schools, particularly in maintaining an

inclusive educational experience for all pupils. If not handled carefully, the opt-out option could result in pupils missing valuable learning opportunities in SEE.

Training for teachers is necessary to handle the complexities of teaching ERB. This training should emphasise the importance of understanding and respecting diverse beliefs, equipping teachers with the skills and knowledge to deliver the curriculum appropriately. The INTO is particularly concerned about the level of work required for teachers to become proficient in teaching ERB. This is another area of the redeveloped curriculum that will require a shift in how schools plan for teaching and learning, significantly increasing the workload of principals and teachers if not managed and supported properly.

Recommendations

- Provide a detailed listing of worldviews and belief systems, including non-theistic ones, in the ERB curriculum.
- Ensure the availability of high-quality educational resources that are objective, critical, and pluralist to support a respectful and inclusive learning environment.
- Establish clear protocols for handling opt-outs related to ERB integration in history and geography.
- Implement robust training programmes for teachers to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to teach ERB effectively while mitigating any increased workload.

Science, Technology and Engineering Education

INTO members have an overall positive view of the draft Science, Technology, and Engineering (STE) specification. The draft specification is praised for its reflection of classroom realities and its potential to engage pupils meaningfully. It is recognised as progressive, promoting active and creative learning, and marks a significant step towards a more inclusive and engaging STE specification. The emphasis on “hands-on and minds-on learning” is also noted for aligning well with contemporary educational practices in STEM encouraging active participation and creativity among pupils.

One major concern by teachers is the need for a shift in classroom organisation to support the dynamic and child-led learning activities proposed by the specification. Traditional classroom layouts must now evolve into more interactive environments. This will require not only a change in teaching methodology but also a reorganisation of physical spaces to facilitate group work and hands-on activities. Classrooms will need to be larger and more flexible, with movable furniture and dedicated areas for different types of activities to support the new specification effectively. Without infrastructural improvements, the specification's potential to engage pupils and foster active learning will be significantly limited.

Adequate funding for materials and resources is also a concern among members. The specification's success depends heavily on the availability of materials to support hands-on learning. Without sufficient funding, schools may struggle to provide the necessary resources, thereby limiting the specification's potential impact. The 2023 STEM Learning Grant is insufficient in addressing these needs, and a more substantial, general allocation of funding is imperative to ensure all schools are adequately supported.

Some teachers have expressed worries about losing control in the more open-ended, pupil-led environment proposed by the STE specification. Professional development and support will be crucial in helping teachers feel confident and capable of managing these new learning dynamics. The emphasis on open-ended scientific inquiry is welcomed but requires teachers to be comfortable with a level of unpredictability and pupil autonomy that may be hard to introduce into classrooms that have broad learning needs.

The rollout of the Maths specification has provided a blueprint for the introduction of STE in 2025. While the rollout of the new Maths specification has been broadly successful, it has also highlighted the need for substantial support and resources. The phased approach to integrated STEM learning, involving the phases of Identify, Refine, Plan, Implement, and Evaluate, presents both opportunities and challenges. Ensuring that teachers have the necessary training, resources, and time to implement these phases effectively is essential. Any difficulties, such as engaging all pupils or addressing gaps in knowledge, can be mitigated through comprehensive PD and ongoing support.

While the draft STE specification represents a positive step towards modernising science, technology and engineering in Irish primary schools, its successful implementation depends on addressing varied concerns. The INTO is advocating for a collaborative approach in refining and implementing the specification to best serve the diverse needs of pupils and teachers alike.

Recommendations

- Provide schools with classrooms to accommodate interactive environments and facilitate diverse learning activities.
- Reduce class sizes to 20 pupils per class to ensure we consign supersized classes to history so children in primary school learn in classes that are in line with the EU average.
- Provide PD to help teachers manage open-ended, pupil-led learning environments confidently.

Transition to New Maths and STE Specifications in Primary Education

The rollout of the new Maths specification in primary schools has set a precedent for the upcoming introduction of the STE specification in September 2025. The Maths specification, which emphasises active and playful learning, problem-solving, and the use of manipulatives, has been well-received, with

significant investment in professional development being welcomed by teachers. This support has been crucial in helping teachers adjust to new teaching methodologies and ensuring that they can effectively deliver the specification's objectives. However, the transition has not been without its challenges. Teachers still require time to understand and integrate the new ideas and approaches, and some have found the shift from known methods to more interactive, pupil-centred learning difficult.

Looking forward to the rollout of the STE specification, we must see similar, if not greater, levels of support and resources provided. The STE specification is complex, encompassing not only the traditional scientific principles but also the practical and theoretical aspects of technology and engineering. Teachers will need ample professional development opportunities to gain confidence in these areas, particularly those who may not have a strong background in technology or engineering. Additionally, schools will require funding to acquire the necessary materials and equipment to facilitate hands-on learning, which is a core component of the STE specification.

The structured approach to integrated STEM learning proposed in the specification, outlined in five phases, is designed to provide a flexible framework for guiding and supporting children's learning. The phases—Identify, Refine, Plan, Implement, and Evaluate—encourage pupils to generate questions, refine their focus, develop plans, implement their designs, and evaluate their outcomes. This approach promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and collaboration, skills essential for success in STE fields. Teachers will need practical examples of what this looks like in different types of classrooms, including special education settings and mixed class settings.

The integrated STEM approach provides a comprehensive framework for developing essential skills in pupils. However, the successful implementation of this approach depends on adequate support for teachers, including professional development, resources, and ongoing guidance. By ensuring that these supports are in place, we can facilitate a smooth transition to the new STE specification and help pupils develop the skills they need to thrive in an increasingly complex and technology-driven world.

Recommendations

- Provide face-to-face CPD focused on technology and engineering to build teacher confidence and competence in these areas.
- Provide practical examples tailored to different classroom settings, including special education and mixed classes.
- Allow teachers sufficient time to understand and integrate new methodologies, ensuring a smooth transition to a more interactive, pupil-centred learning experience.
- Establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback from teachers, principals, and pupils to continuously improve the implementation process.

Flawed Funding Models

The recent STEM Learning Grant falls woefully short of addressing the comprehensive needs of our primary schools. The INTO strongly opposes this piecemeal approach and insists on a general allocation of funding to support all schools adequately.

The provision of €1.5 million in 2023, with a maximum of €10,000 per school, is insufficient given the extensive needs of schools aiming to develop robust STEM programmes. This funding cap ignores the significant disparities in school sizes, resources, and student populations. Larger schools or those with higher enrolments and diverse needs will find this amount grossly inadequate for fostering a meaningful STEM education environment. Moreover, the expectation that this limited funding can significantly enhance, develop, or re-establish comprehensive STEM programmes is unrealistic and undervalues the true cost and effort required.

The application process itself is burdensome and exclusionary. By requiring detailed project plans and expressions of interest, the grant system places an undue administrative burden on already overworked principals. This is particularly problematic for schools with a teaching principal that may lack the administrative support necessary to complete the application process. Instead of empowering schools, this approach risks further entrenching educational inequities by privileging those with the resources to produce polished applications over those with genuine need but fewer resources to articulate it.

Alongside this the phased payment system of 85% at the start of December and the remaining 15% in the summer term, creates unnecessary complications and uncertainty. This fragmented schedule does not reflect schools funding needs and adds an extra layer of financial management that schools could do without. Schools require steady and reliable funding to plan and deliver the curriculum effectively, not staggered payments contingent on bureaucratic assessments of "project progress."

Furthermore, the expectation that schools must manage these projects with nominated persons who may already be stretched thin is impractical. Effective STEM education requires dedicated personnel who can commit fully to these programmes. Without proper staffing and professional development, the burden falls back on already overworked teachers, detracting from their teaching responsibilities. It is crucial to reinstate all middle leader posts to primary schools before the rollout of the STEM specification to ensure that the specification is effectively managed in schools.

To rectify this funding debacle, the INTO insists on a general allocation of funding that ensures every school receives the support necessary to build and sustain effective STEM programmes. This should include substantial funding for resources, CPD and staffing. Only through a robust, well-funded approach can we ensure that all pupils, regardless of their school's location or current resource level, have access to high-quality STEM education.

If this demand is not met, the INTO is prepared to mobilise to ensure that every school is adequately resourced. We will not stand by while our members are burdened with unrealistic expectations and our pupils are deprived of the quality education they deserve. It is imperative that the Department of

Education rethinks this flawed grant system and commits to a more equitable and sustainable funding model that truly supports all schools in nurturing future generations of STEM learners.

Recommendations

- Provide a general allocation of funding for STEM that adequately supports all schools.
- Ensure this funding model provides a consistent and reliable funding schedule that reflects schools' actual financial needs and simplifies financial management year on year.
- Reinstate all middle leader posts in primary schools, before the 2025 rollout, to ensure the effective implementation of the redeveloped curriculum.

Wellbeing

INTO members have responded positively to the draft curriculum specification, acknowledging its well thought out learning outcomes alongside clear strands and elements. The importance of teacher agency and autonomy, as well as the value of pupil voice, has been particularly well received. However, several areas require attention and improvement to ensure the curriculum's success and the wellbeing of all pupils.

A recurrent issue identified by INTO members is the urgent need for additional space and resources to facilitate PE, as current school facilities often fall short. Members have highlighted that different schools have varying levels of resources, leading to disparities in implementing the curriculum effectively. Timely and comprehensive resourcing, particularly the provision of toolkits and teacher guidance will be key to the success of the implementation of the redeveloped wellbeing curriculum. The quick delivery of these toolkits is essential to support teachers in adapting lessons to meet their pupils' needs.

Alongside this, members continue to call for CPD to bolster teacher confidence and expertise in delivering the curriculum, particularly around complex and sensitive topics within PE and SPHE. Teachers have consistently highlighted this need in previous feedback, and they continue to call for these essential supports. The Department of Education must take decisive action to ensure that all topics are comprehensively covered, enabling a fully rounded wellbeing education for all pupils.

Inclusivity and accessibility are also areas requiring enhancement. While the draft specification addresses the needs of various learners, there are gaps in providing guidance around differentiated support for children with additional needs. Members have also pointed out the necessity for specific training and resources to assist in teaching diverse student groups, including those with language barriers and other accessibility challenges. Additionally, the curriculum should explicitly incorporate and address the needs of LGBTQ+ community and other minoritised identities to foster an inclusive school environment.

A broader systemic issue impacting the wellbeing of children is the insufficient support at governmental and societal levels. Schools are making considerable efforts to cater to pupils' wellbeing, but wider societal issues such as the lack of therapeutic supports and inadequate municipal facilities significantly hinder these efforts. The wellbeing of children cannot be fully realised without a multi-disciplinary and inter-agency approach that includes in-school mental health support services, readily available therapeutic services, and adequate funding for necessary school and community resources.

In line with this, INTO members' feedback also highlights the need for clear and practical guides to the wellbeing curriculum for parents and guardians. Parental involvement is important for reinforcing the principles taught in school and ensuring that children receive consistent messages about wellbeing at home. Misinformation regarding the wellbeing curriculum is already an issue and providing accurate and comprehensive information to parents is essential to combat this misinformation. The Department of Education should, proactively, explore avenues for engaging parents, such as information sessions and resources for home use.

Finally, members highlighted the need for ongoing CPD that keeps pace with evolving educational needs and societal changes. Sustained training opportunities for teachers will ensure they are well-equipped to handle new and evolving topics, thereby maintaining the effectiveness and relevance of the wellbeing curriculum. Adequate funding, clear communication, and robust CPD must be prioritised to support teachers and school leaders in delivering the wellbeing specification.

Physical Education - Infrastructure, Funding and Policy Supports

To support PE in schools, it is imperative to provide facilities that are suited to the Irish climate. Schools face challenges with limited or no access to halls and are overly reliant on outdoor spaces, which are reliant on good weather conditions. Investing in municipal infrastructure, such as sports halls and multipurpose rooms in schools, will ensure that PE is not disrupted by inclement weather. These facilities can serve not only schools but also the entire community, promoting physical activity and wellbeing for all and fostering a culture of health and fitness across schools, homes, and communities.

Funding for PE must prioritise the regular updating and maintenance of equipment without asking schools to compete through application-based funding systems, which can be unpredictable and inequitable. Instead, a model that allocates an annual fund specifically for PE equipment is needed. This ensures that all schools can plan and budget effectively, maintaining up-to-date and safe equipment for their pupils and carry-out a phased replacement of old equipment.

Integrating physical activity across the curriculum through the concept of an outdoor classroom can be highly beneficial. This approach allows physical activity to become a natural part of various subject areas, enhancing pupils' engagement and learning. For example, science lessons can include nature walks, while maths can involve physical exercises that illustrate mathematical concepts making learning more dynamic and engaging. However, there are significant concerns among schools regarding the increasingly litigious nature of society and the associated high costs of insurance. Robust

government policies that help mitigate these worries and costs will ensure that the benefits of PE can be fully realised while also safeguarding teachers and schools.

Recommendations

- Prioritise funding for the construction and maintenance of sports halls and multi-purpose rooms to ensure PE can proceed regardless of weather conditions.
- Provide specific funding for transport and lessons to ensure all pupils have access to an annual aquatics programme.
- Provide an allocation specifically for the regular updating and maintenance of PE equipment, avoiding the inequity of application-based funding models.
- Develop robust government policies to mitigate the high insurance costs and litigative fears associated with outdoor activities, ensuring that schools can safely and confidently implement outdoor activities.

Inclusive and Diversity Education

Given the well-documented limitations of ‘celebratory’ approaches to diversity (Borrero et al., 2012; Nilsen et al., 2017), the INTO is concerned about the reference to ‘recognising and celebrating the diversity present within the classroom and in wider society’. The word ‘celebrate’ can be problematic in the context of diversity as the focus shifts to what makes people different, rather than creating a space where everyone feels welcome and valued regardless of their background. While diversity is valuable, constantly celebrating it can make people from minority groups feel ‘othered.’ Sometimes ‘celebrating’ diversity becomes a performative act, a box to be ticked, rather than leading to actual change or dismantling existing inequalities.

It is crucial that the curriculum aims to address the underlying issues that create challenges for minoritised groups and goes beyond celebration, working towards creating a more equitable environment. Instead of ‘celebrating’ diversity, it is better to use language that frames diversity as a natural, ongoing process of learning, growth, and inclusion. Within that context, the INTO suggests that the ‘celebratory’ language is reviewed and replaced with more inclusive language. The draft wellbeing specification commendably incorporates inclusive language in other areas, particularly around family structures, and acknowledges the diversity of family structures by referring to mother-and-fatherheaded families, co-parenting families, one-parent families, same-sex parent families, extended families, stepfamilies, adoptive families, foster families, and more, rather than assuming a single-family model. This should be mirrored across the entire document.

The INTO notes with disappointment the dearth of reference to LGBTQ+ identity in the draft specification. The INTO has long been assured by the Department of Education and its various agencies that LGBTQ+ inclusion would be addressed within the context of the redeveloped SPHE/wellbeing curriculum. The glaring absence of LGBTQ+ inclusion in the specification is a missed opportunity to create a safe, respectful, and inclusive learning environment for all pupils. Invisibility is a powerful force

for breeding marginalisation. This lack of reference has the potential to make LGBTQ+ pupils, and other marginalised groups, feel invisible and marginalised within the school environment. The INTO is concerned that if this is not addressed that it could be another 20 years before this issue can be tackled.

Recent research undertaken by *Belong-To* (2024) indicates that Irish primary school teachers show a strong interest in, and commitment to, the creation of inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ pupils. Notwithstanding this positive disposition to address LGBTQ+ inclusion, teachers reported that they lack the confidence and knowledge to effectively implement LGBTQ+ inclusive practices. This highlights a need for additional support, training, and guidance in this area. One noteworthy comment from a participant suggested that “until LGBTQ+ issues and topics are outlined in the curriculum, we cannot teach them safely yet. Teachers will not teach something that is not on the curriculum.” The research also identified a lack of specificity in the curriculum as a key barrier to being LGBTQ+ inclusive in teaching. The INTO is concerned that the Wellbeing curriculum continues with a broad and general approach to equality and inclusion rather than specifically naming and addressing areas of injustice and inequality. A truly inclusive curriculum can create a safer space, reduce isolation, and contribute to better mental health outcomes for all pupils. LGBTQ+ pupils, teachers and families are a significant part of society and ignoring their stories and experiences presents an incomplete picture of the world. Overall, addressing LGBT+ issues in the curriculum contributes to a more inclusive, respectful, tolerant, and understanding learning environment that will benefit all pupils.

It is difficult to respond comprehensively to the draft specification in the absence of the wellbeing online toolkit which promises to contain a range of supports for enacting the curriculum such as support materials and examples of children’s learning. It is crucial that the toolkit will include resources and supports with strong and authentic representation. A truly inclusive curriculum ensures minoritised pupil groups see themselves reflected in what they learn, which can be validating and empowering. The curriculum is a mechanism for crafting social narrative and for telling stories about individuals, groups, and society. As such, it is important that all members of society be represented within the narrative. Inclusive texts that represent a diversity of pupils must be present in the curriculum if we are to work toward a more equitable and just society. When children see characters who reflect their own identities and experiences, it sends a powerful message that they are normal, valued members of society. By exposing children to diverse families and relationships, inclusive texts and resources can help to break down stereotypes and create a more inclusive learning environment.

The definitions of equality, inequality, and discrimination within the wellbeing curriculum should be strengthened with specific references to the personal characteristics protected under the Equal Status Acts (gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and membership of the Traveller community). By explicitly naming these characteristics the curriculum will provide a clearer framework for understanding and addressing discrimination in all its forms.

The draft specification also draws attention to the fact that socio-economic status can significantly impact a student’s wellbeing and educational outcomes. The specification should explore ways to

incorporate meaningful discussions and activities that address socio-economic diversity. By doing this, the curriculum can help foster empathy and understanding among pupils from diverse backgrounds, promoting a more inclusive school environment.

The redevelopment of the curriculum should also be viewed as a period to develop teachers and school leaders' capacity to create trauma-informed school environments. Many pupils experience trauma, which can significantly impact their ability to learn and thrive in school. By training teachers to recognise and respond to signs of trauma, and by incorporating trauma-informed practices into the curriculum, schools can better support the mental health and wellbeing of all pupils. The INTO notes the reference to Circular 0042/2018 which states that 'the qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with pupils and she/he can have a powerful impact on influencing pupils' attitudes, values, and behaviour in all aspects of wellbeing education'. The INTO agrees that the classroom teacher is best placed to effectively implement the Wellbeing Curriculum given their established relationship with the children and their pedagogical and curriculum knowledge.

The wellbeing curriculum must reflect the diversity of the society we live in now and into the future. It should actively seek to support and amplify the voices of those who champion inclusivity and the varied life experiences of all people. The curriculum should not only acknowledge these diverse perspectives but also foster a critical lens through which pupils are encouraged to challenge and call out prejudiced thinking that prevents individuals from being their authentic selves. By doing so, the curriculum will lay a foundational understanding of empathy, equality, and social justice in primary school pupils, empowering them to advocate for a more inclusive and equitable society. This approach is essential for developing a fully rounded wellbeing education that truly supports every student's right to be themselves and thrive in a supportive community.

Recommendations

- Explicitly include references to personal characteristics protected under the Equal Status Acts (gender, marital status, family status, disability, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, and Traveller community membership) to provide a clear framework for understanding and addressing discrimination.
- Explicitly mention LGBTQ+ identities and experiences in the curriculum to address stigma and discrimination, fostering a supportive environment and affirming these identities.
- Provide professional development for teachers to support the delivery of the wellbeing specification.
- Incorporate discussions and activities that address socio-economic diversity to foster empathy and understanding among pupils from different backgrounds to their own.
- Support school leaders to create trauma-informed environments, recognising and responding to signs of trauma to better support the mental health and wellbeing of all pupils.

Relationship & Sexuality Education

The INTO strongly supports the inclusion and development of Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) within the wellbeing specification of the redeveloped curriculum and notes its key role in fostering child safety and well-being. Grounded in best practice, RSE must remain an integral part of the wellbeing curriculum, being introduced from an early age to equip children with the knowledge and skills necessary for understanding their relationship with themselves and others.

RSE from an early age ensures that children develop the capability to recognise and establish healthy relationships while identifying and avoiding those that are harmful. RSE, as part of the wellbeing specification, also teaches children about the natural changes their bodies undergo, promoting a sense of normalcy and understanding about their development. Through RSE, children learn that their needs and experiences are acknowledged and supported, fostering a sense of security and well-being.

RSE in the Wellbeing specification does not only focus on the biological aspects of sexuality but also includes social, emotional, and ethical dimensions. This curriculum's approach to RSE includes lessons on respect, consent, healthy relationships, and personal safety, promoting a holistic and safe development for all children.

While the Irish Constitution designates parents as a child's primary teachers, the well-being curriculum must balance parental roles with the educational needs of pupils. It is essential for all stakeholders, including parents and schools, to collaborate and support the delivery of RSE, ensuring it is consistent

with best practices. Parental views should be respected yet balanced with the overarching goal of child safety and well-being.

Opposition to RSE in the curriculum often stems from a lack of understanding around pupil safety. Here, it is important that both the government and wider society supports schools in developing a clear understanding for the need for a comprehensive RSE programme in our primary schools. Schools cannot combat the misinformation circulating around RSE on their own. Recent events outside our public libraries, where extreme elements protested books on relationships and sexuality, highlight the potential for similar events to occur outside our schools. This poses a real concern for schools, as they fear these events could directly impact the lives of their staffs and pupils. It is crucial for all stakeholders, including parents, and all relevant government departments, to collaborate and stand firmly in support of RSE to ensure the well-being and safety of all pupils.

With that in mind, INTO members have voiced a need for more support and training to effectively deliver RSE, particularly in senior classes where the content can be more complex and sensitive. The INTO highlights the necessity for comprehensive professional development to support teachers to confidently teach RSE, so that the curriculum is delivered uniformly across all primary schools.

The INTO also wishes to point out the importance of teachers being trained to identify signs of neglect or abuse, advocating for children who may not be supported adequately at home. The role of teachers as advocates for their pupils is crucial in safeguarding children's well-being, particularly when their home environments may not.

The continuation and frequent review of the *Stay Safe* programme is also strongly endorsed by the INTO. This programme is vital in educating children about personal safety, teaching them to recognise and resist abuse and bullying through lessons on safe and unsafe situations, inappropriate touch, secrets, and stranger danger. Aligning the *Stay Safe* programme with the wellbeing specification ensures it remains as a key tool in preventing child abuse.

Recommendations

- Provide comprehensive training and support for teachers to ensure they can confidently and uniformly deliver RSE across all primary schools.
- Ensure all teachers have training enabling them to identify signs of neglect or abuse.
- Regularly review the *Stay Safe* programme to maintain its effectiveness in educating children about personal safety and preventing child abuse.
- Develop wider society's understanding of RSE through national and community-based awareness campaigns to help combat misinformation and support schools.

- Provide meaningful and sustained training around child safety protocols in primary schools.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

Time for Implementation

Time for teachers to engage with a new curriculum is identified as a key priority. Reflecting on schools' experience in enacting the Primary Language Curriculum and the Primary Maths Curriculum, teachers, through INTO consultations, highlighted the importance of an appropriately staged and well-managed implementation that provides schools with the time to become familiar with new content, learning outcomes, and pedagogies, ensuring these approaches can be embedded across all curricular areas. There is a consensus among INTO members that comprehensive in-person in-service training is required to develop teachers' confidence and familiarity with the new curriculum specifications. Members who experienced the transition to the 1999 curriculum recall the extensive in-service support provided at the time, contrasting this with the more "rushed" implementation of the Primary Language Curriculum. Teachers call for a phased introduction of the new curriculum, allowing ample time for schools to explore and trial new methods of planning and preparation for effective teaching and learning in their individual contexts. This staged rollout must include facilitated face to face in-service training and school planning days for all teachers within school contact hours.

Teachers expressed concerns around the timing of the rollout of the revised curriculum and their confusion around what they perceive to be an ad-hoc, unstructured approach to curriculum change. The INTO notes with some worry that the overarching philosophy and structure of the *Primary Curriculum Framework* may not be fully embedded in schools before the rollout of subject specifications begins, causing uncertainty for teachers. A well planned out and structured approach to curriculum development must be provided, with clear communication to ensure a consistent rollout of the redeveloped curriculum across all primary schools.

Developing a strong understanding of the *Primary Curriculum Framework* alongside the DE's *Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning* would be an appropriate starting point. These documents provide a foundation for teachers and school leaders, aiding their understanding of how to approach the proposed subject specifications. The INTO is aware that neither document has received the necessary time and supports to have them fully embedded across the system. Prioritising training around these guidance documents in the next school year will allow teachers to engage meaningfully with the new approaches for teaching and learning at both individual and whole-school levels.

It is extremely important that the Department of Education heeds the needs of teachers regarding the time required for implementing the redeveloped curriculum. A comprehensive, long-term plan outlining the rollout of the redeveloped primary curriculum is essential. This plan must consider the current teaching context, characterised by overcrowded classes, under-resourced classrooms, an overloaded curriculum, an ever-increasing workload, a lack of support services, and a recruitment and retention crisis. The INTO will not hesitate to mobilise its members and take decisive action if schools are asked to begin the rollout of the curriculum without a comprehensive plan before the end of 2024.

The Department should minimise the number of new initiatives introduced in schools over the coming years. The focus should be on embedding the redeveloped curriculum effectively in all primary schools. Without adequate implementation time and high quality face to face CPD, teachers will perceive the curriculum rollout as rushed, leading to long-term negative perceptions among most primary school teachers. This would result in the curriculum being viewed unfavourably for the next 20 years.

Recommendations

- Implement the new curriculum in a phased manner, allowing sufficient time for teachers to become familiar with new content, learning outcomes, and pedagogies.
- Provide in person facilitated in-service training and school planning days for all teachers within school contact hours to develop teachers' confidence and familiarity with the new curriculum.
- Develop a thoughtful and structured plan for the implementation of the curriculum, ensuring clear communication and consistent rollout across all primary schools.
- Focus on embedding the *Primary Curriculum Framework* and the DE's *Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning* ahead of the proposed September 2025 specification rollout.

Support for School Leaders

Leading and managing a school today is a challenging endeavour. Understanding and meeting the needs of all stakeholders involved in a school environment requires a dynamic set of skills (Bush & Middlewood, 2013). This multifaceted job demands principals to be leaders, HR managers, accountants, policy developers, motivators, counsellors, conflict mediators, public relations experts, curriculum experts, data analysts, facilities managers, health and safety officers, IT coordinators, community liaisons, fundraising managers, and SSE planners, to name but a few. The imminent rollout of the redeveloped curriculum in September 2025 adds another layer of complexity to their role. There is a critical need for comprehensive and timely training for school leaders not just in subject delivery, but also in managing their schools through change.

School leadership significantly influences the success of student learning, second only to teacher instruction (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008). The ability of school leaders to effectively lead and manage their schools is paramount. Unfortunately, with less than 15 months before the redeveloped curriculum rollout, INTO members feel that school leaders have been left in the dark about upcoming changes as they relate to the running of and the impact on, their schools.

INTO members have been unanimous in calling for the provision of supports around curriculum delivery to be prioritised for primary school principals. The Department of Education has, regrettably, delayed addressing this need, leaving principals without the necessary supports to effectively implement the new curriculum changes. This lack of foresight and preparation by the Department is a disservice not only to the principals themselves but also to their teachers and the pupils in their schools. Well informed and well prepared school leadership is needed for a successful curriculum rollout, and this absence of training will negatively impact the overall learning outcomes for pupils.

Another important step towards addressing the lack of support for school leaders, is the full reinstatement of middle leadership posts in all primary schools before the rollout begins. Middle leaders play an essential role in supporting principals. By reinstating these 1700 vacant positions, schools can better manage the demands of the coming years, allowing principals to utilise the expertise that exists in their schools. This distribution of leadership knowledge and skills will ensure a smooth and more effective rollout of the new curriculum in our primary schools.

The Department of Education's neglect in providing adequate training and support for school leaders ahead of the new curriculum rollout is a significant failing. This oversight risks undermining the effectiveness of the curriculum implementation and the overall quality of education provided to pupils. School leaders must be equipped not only with the skills to deliver curriculum content but also to manage their organisations through this period of change. The Department, through OIDE Leadership, must act swiftly to rectify this situation, ensuring that school leaders are not left to navigate these challenges alone.

Recommendations

- Provide PD for all primary school leaders that covers both curriculum content delivery and school change management.
- Reinstate all 1700 posts of responsibility to support school principals in distributing responsibilities to effectively manage the upcoming and continuous school changes.
- Establish clear and ongoing communication channels between the Department of Education and school leaders to provide timely updates and support regarding upcoming changes and expectations.
- Conduct reviews and provide feedback sessions for principals to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum rollout and the support being provided to school leaders.

Training & CPD

The INTO firmly believes that the success of the redeveloped curriculum hinges on a robust and comprehensive training and CPD plan. Our members have unanimously insisted that the core training and CPD for each subject specification be delivered face-to-face within school hours. This school closure time should not be viewed as a disruption but rather as a vital investment in the future success of our education system.

It is inherently unfair to ask any worker, including teachers, to complete core training outside of work hours. Teachers already face significant challenges, and adding to their workload during their own personal time only adds to these. Teachers who feel properly supported through investment in their training during school hours will return that investment in their teaching, benefiting their pupils.

High quality training ensures that teachers are well-prepared to deliver the redeveloped curriculum effectively, fostering a deeper understanding and confidence in the material. This, in turn, directly benefits the pupils, who will receive a higher quality of education. Ancillary and elective CPD opportunities, while valuable, must complement and not replace the essential face-to-face training within school hours. Additional sessions can be offered online or after school but should not make up the core CPD package.

The provision of high quality training is non-negotiable, and if the training and CPD schedule for the redeveloped curriculum falls short of the required standards, the INTO is prepared to take decisive action to ensure our members receive the professional development they deserve.

The Department of Education must prioritise the needs and best interests of teachers, principals, and pupils alike. Ensuring that teachers have access to high-quality CPD with school closures is essential for the effective implementation of the redeveloped curriculum and for delivering a high quality

educational experience for all pupils. The INTO is committed to advocating for our members and will continue to push for the necessary support and resources to achieve these goals.

Recommendations

- Ensure that the core training, support and CPD for each subject specification is delivered face-to-face within school hours.
- Ensure that ancillary and elective CPD offered outside of school hours, complements, and does not replace core training.

Curriculum Review

The rollout of the redeveloped curriculum in Irish primary schools must ensure ample opportunities for thorough and meaningful curriculum reviews from a diverse array of stakeholders. A particular emphasis must be placed on prioritising the insights and experiences of teachers and principals. As the education professionals, implementing the curriculum, teachers and principals possess the practical knowledge and firsthand experience that is critical to its continuous evaluation and improvement.

Research highlights the significance of ongoing curriculum evaluation as an essential component for maintaining the relevance and effectiveness of education systems. The OECD's findings (2018) state that systematic curriculum review processes are vital for adapting educational practices to evolving societal needs and technological advancements. This ensures that pupils will be equipped with the skills necessary for the 21st century, making the curriculum not only contemporary but also future-oriented.

The implementation plan for the redeveloped primary curriculum should include reviews at least 18 months after the implementation of each subject specification. These reviews should be conducted through school networks that are representative of the national school system, with different schools selected for each review cycle. The involvement of the INTO in facilitating the selection of schools will ensure that the process is representative and thorough.

The findings from these reviews must be taken seriously, with the feedback from teachers and principals driving necessary adaptations to the curriculum. This will ensure that the redeveloped curriculum is continually refined to meet the actual needs of the primary education system. In valuing and prioritising the voices of those who implement the curriculum daily, the education system can foster a more responsive, and inclusive educational environment for all pupils.

Recommendations

- Implement systematic curriculum reviews 18 months post-rollout of each subject specification using representative school networks.
- Prioritise the insights and experiences of teachers and principals during curriculum reviews.
- Integrate the findings from curriculum reviews to maintain the curriculum's relevance ensuring it meets the evolving needs of Irish primary pupils.

Textbooks

INTO members have expressed concerns about aspects of the *Primary Schoolbooks Scheme*, noting that it potentially channels public funds into the hands of private textbook publishers. This allows these publishers to interpret and shape the national curriculum through their own lens, which can introduce biases and inconsistencies. The scheme may put pressure on schools to purchase and use textbooks, creating a dependency that is not aligned with the pedagogical methods in the PCF.

Textbooks can be rigid and inflexible, failing to cater to the needs of all pupils. They also may not reflect current knowledge and societal changes, leading to outdated and sometimes irrelevant content being taught in classrooms. Textbooks can also perpetuate stereotypes and lack inclusive representation of various ethnic, cultural, and social groups, which can alienate pupils from minority backgrounds and fail to provide them with a relatable and inclusive learning experience.

The Department of Education's *Primary Schoolbooks Scheme* stands in stark contrast to the principles outlined in the PCF, which advocates for a more holistic, flexible, and inclusive approach to education. The framework emphasises the importance of varied pedagogical methods and the use of diverse learning materials to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

It is essential that the Department of Education reimagine this scheme to ensure it best serves the interests of pupils and supports the successful implementation of the redeveloped curriculum. Providing subject-specific toolkits and resources that enable teachers to move away from a textbookcentric approach should be considered. These toolkits should include up-to-date digital resources, interactive activities, and materials that reflect the diverse backgrounds of pupils, fostering a more engaging and inclusive learning environment. The Department of Education must guide funding for materials and resources that support innovative and inclusive teaching practices, ensuring that all pupils receive a high-quality education tailored to their unique needs and contexts.

Recommendations

- Provide schools with access to diverse materials such as educational videos, interactive lessons, and online supports on a digital platform created by the NCCA.
- Create toolkits that teachers can adapt to meet the specific needs of their pupils.
- Establish a platform where teachers can share lessons and resources with each other.
- Support schools in creating learning environments that can be adapted for various lessons and activities.
- Ensure funding is distributed in a way that enables schools to purchase a variety of educational resources.
- Develop resources to help parents support their children's learning at home.

Manging Expectations

As mentioned in previous sections, teachers regularly refer to the burdensome paperwork associated with their role and express their dissatisfaction at the diminution of creativity owing to the large amount of time devoted to preparation of lengthy documents. Many members feel that this time could be used more effectively, efficiently, and creatively in other ways to benefit the holistic wellbeing of pupils. Excessive amounts of time spent on written planning and recording could instead be used to create more stimulating resources that are suited to classroom context and/or organise activities within the local environment. Such collaboration with community projects or local arts and cultural organisations reflects the ‘partnership’ principle of the *Primary Curriculum Framework* and helps to develop pupils’ competency of ‘being an active citizen.’

Teachers also highlight the demands that they face in engaging with initiatives and extra-curricular projects. Schools are sometimes viewed as the ideal venue to address many societal issues with many lobby groups and state organisations providing schemes and initiatives which schools are expected to implement. This is evident in the various programmes for which schools are awarded a flag, for example ‘Green Schools’ and ‘Active School Flag.’ In the INTO survey on workload school leaders identified participation and engagement in whole-school initiatives as a contributing factor to increased workload and paperwork. Teachers also highlight the time and effort that engagement with these programmes demands but point to pressure from parents/guardians and the wider public to respond to societal trends and current issues. Addressing this dilemma is difficult as teachers and principals recognise the value of many of these programmes, but the reality is that in an already overloaded curriculum, too

much is expected of schools. It is hoped that the integrated approach to teaching and learning at the core of the PCF could help to alleviate the burden associated with the ever-increasing demands of school-based initiatives.

The INTO has expressed significant concerns regarding the language used in relation to the redeveloped curriculum. It is imperative that the Department for Education and its support services understand that the five specifications may seem like merely five subject areas, however, when broken down, these specifications encompass fifteen distinct subjects that will need to be addressed during the curriculum rollout. An oversimplification may suggest a lack of depth in the department's understanding of the true scope and complexity of the task at hand.

The INTO is deeply concerned at the level of understanding within the Department for Education regarding what this redevelopment entails. We believe there is a fundamental underestimation of the resources, time, and planning required to effectively implement these changes. The INTO demands that the Department for Education acknowledge the complexity of this curriculum redevelopment and respond with a detailed implementation plan. Anything less would not only undermine the process but also fail to address the legitimate concerns of teachers who are on the frontline of delivering this curriculum. We urge the government to take these concerns seriously and act promptly to ensure the successful rollout of the new curriculum.

Recommendations

- Promote a supportive and advisory approach among Inspectors, ensuring they provide consistent guidance during the curriculum rollout.
- Streamline any required paperwork and written planning, allowing teachers to focus more on creating engaging teaching and learning experiences.
- Promote an integrated approach to curriculum planning, with specific non-contact time supported by substitution cover, to allow teachers to engage in collaborative planning without adding additional out of hours workload.
- Limit the expectations placed on schools to participate in numerous societal initiatives and extra-curricular projects.
- Establish a dedicated task force comprising teachers, curriculum experts, and departmental support services to collaboratively develop a comprehensive implementation plan for the redeveloped curriculum.

Conclusion

The process of redeveloping the primary curriculum in Ireland presents an opportunity to enhance and modernise education, reflecting the needs and realities of our current educational and societal landscape. Teachers hold the 1999 curriculum in high regard for its holistic and child-centred approach, clear objectives, and emphasis on collaboration and active learning. Any new curriculum must retain these strengths.

Irish teachers have consistently shown their commitment to providing high-quality education, even in the face of significant challenges such as large class sizes, curriculum overload, inadequate resources and school infrastructure, and lack of therapeutic and social services. Their resilience during the COVID19 pandemic, where they adapted to remote learning virtually overnight, exemplifies their dedication to their pupils' success. As we look to the future, it is essential that we build on this dedication and provide teachers with the tools they need to deliver a redeveloped curriculum that meets the needs of all pupils.

The voice of teachers and school leaders must be the most listened to in relation to the rollout of the curriculum. These are the professionals who understand the practical realities of the classroom and who are best placed to provide valuable insights into what works and what does not. Their experiences and feedback should continue to guide the development and implementation process, ensuring that the curriculum is both practical and works in our classrooms.

The imminent rollout of the redeveloped curriculum must address the unique needs of all pupils, including those with special and additional educational needs. Early intervention programmes and social, emotional and behaviour supports are essential, and this requires a concerted effort by the Government to provide schools with adequate therapeutic and social services. The success of the new curriculum will depend on the availability of these support systems, ensuring that every child can fully participate in their education.

The NCCA has laid a foundation with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*. This framework emphasises thematic and integrative teaching, inclusive education, diversity, and updated assessment practices. However, for the redeveloped curriculum to succeed, it requires more than just a solid framework; it needs ample time and resources. The INTO stresses that this process must not be rushed. Rushing the implementation of the new curriculum will have detrimental effects on education outcomes for years to come. It is essential that the Department of Education commits to a phased and well-supported rollout, ensuring that every teacher is adequately prepared, and every school is sufficiently resourced.

The Department of Education must recognise that there will be a cost associated with these changes. Cutting corners is not an option. The INTO is ready to act decisively should there be any attempt to implement the curriculum on a shoestring budget, which would inevitably compromise the working conditions and well-being of our members. We will not allow the quality of education or the professional dignity of our teachers to be undermined by insufficient funding or support.

As we move forward in the coming years, it is essential that all stakeholders work collaboratively to create a curriculum that stands the test of time. The most innovative curriculum in the world has no value if it is beyond the capability of the teachers to teach it. It is crucial that the redeveloped curriculum's specifications are realistic, practical, and supported by comprehensive professional development and toolkits. The INTO calls on the Department of Education to provide comprehensive professional development opportunities, adequate resourcing, and sufficient time for the successful implementation of the new curriculum. Together, we can build a curriculum that will stand the test of time and provide every child with the chance to thrive. The future of our primary system is in our hands, let us rise to the challenge and make it a future we can all be proud of.

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Irish Ocean Literacy Network

To whom it may concern,

Please accept our feedback on the new draft curriculum in particular for the areas of SEE (geography) and STEM (science) on behalf of Galway Atlantaquaria and the Irish Ocean Literacy Network, which has been running on the Island of Ireland since 2016. (www.irishoceanliteracy.ie). As an Island national, Ireland's territory consists of more than 880,000km² of land under the sea. Our coastline stretches for more than 7,500 km and we share this unique marine space with millions of other living creatures.

In line with **IOC Circular Letter No 2951, dated July 2023 attached below**, the Irish Ocean Literacy Network would like to highlight the Call to include Ocean Literacy in school curricula by 2025 as a part of the Education for Sustainable Development.

Ocean Literacy is a major opportunity to highlight the importance of the ocean to the general public, and inspire a new generation of ocean scientists and marine practitioners. At the One Ocean Summit 2022 in Brest, the UNESCO Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay stated that:

“the international community must make education one of the pillars of its action for the ocean. Because if we want to protect it better, we must teach it better. On the occasion of the One Ocean Summit, I am setting a common goal for our 193 Member States: to include ocean education in school curricula by 2025.”

With this in mind we would like to note that under Draft Curriculum Specification: Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities, Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum

The need to provide students and teachers with more information and awareness of the Ocean, and the impacts of human actions on ocean health and functions. In Stage 3&4 Develop an understanding of borders of places (such as counties, regions/countries) we feel Marine territories, and Ireland Marine Spaces should be added to learning objectives and outcomes. As an island nation our marine environment is what defines us. Exploring the 'real map of Ireland' is something that is vital to our pupils and teachers, without which our citizens have little or no understanding of the geographical reach and

expense of the country they are part of. See - <https://www.marine.ie/site-area/irelands-marine-resource/real-map-ireland-0> . We cannot talk about how we manage and protect our shared spaces without a knowledge of marine territory at stage 3.

The links between the natural world and our life support systems and human health. In the learning outcomes for natural environments, marine environments should be noted. If it's not specifically stated on the learning outcomes there will be a tendency to stick with what's familiar land based approach, and miss the opportunity for students to develop a good basic understanding of the role of the ocean in our everyday lives (food/ oxygen/ water).

Ireland's role in creating positive change for caring for and protecting the natural world. Examples of Irish Conservation Projects and the role of Irish Scientists and Environmentalists. IOLN members include over 140 individuals and organisations working in the marine sector. Many are linked to formal education programmes, such as the Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme. As part of the Ocean Decade (2020-2030) members are coming together to explore marine education in Ireland and its role in the wider global context, including the EU BLUE Schools, All Atlantic Blue Schools and the UNESCO Global Blue School Initiative (currently in development). While our Ocean and marine spaces are made up of many different biological, physical and chemical elements, humans, and human actions are at the forefront of the challenges it faces. As an island of people who have spent centuries leaving our shores to explore what is beyond, we now must look to our own ocean and what's below, to celebrate and connect people to the marine world. We must move from considering just knowledge, awareness, communication, to how we adapt to a changing world, how we access and disseminate data and information, how our emotions are linked to the ocean and nature, and most importantly how we can create a bridge between the diverse range of stakeholders and community members that share our marine spaces. We have the opportunity to help our pupils and teachers to be part of this movement and create a wave of active citizens.

IOLN Members provide a range of Marine educational Materials

<https://irishoceanliteracy.ie/blue-schools/>

Beach School has developed the first Ocean Literacy Learning Platform for Early Years Educators

<https://www.galwaychildcare.com/childcare/e-learning-programmes.php>

This year Ireland's first marine national park was announced:

<https://www.npws.ie/news/ministers-announce-ireland%E2%80%99s-first-marine-national-park>

Twelve months ago Ireland's first Hope Spot was announced:

<https://missionblue.org/2023/01/greater-skellig-coast-recognized-as-irelands-first-hope-spot/>

UNESCO Blue Curriculum Toolkit

<https://repository.oceanbestpractices.org/handle/11329/2137>

Curious Minds (formerly the Discover Primary Science and Maths Programme) Ocean Literacy Video for Schools on RTE Learn

<https://www.rte.ie/learn/home-school-hub/2021/0114/1189761-science-ocean-literacy/>

If we are serious about our identity, our locality, our environment and our planet then the words 'marine environment' need to feature in the LO's for both Geography and Science.

In our view, we must also supply good quality CPD training and resources to support teachers and school leaders in implementing the curriculum changes. Many IOLN members already supply this type of content including

- The Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme - <https://www.marine.ie/site-area/areas-activity/education-outreach/explorers/explorers-teachers-training?language=en>
- Galway Atlantaquaria with Galway Childcare Committee - <https://www.galwaychildcare.com/childcare/elearning/Ocean-Connections/index.html#/>
- Galway Atlantaquaria in association with BIAZA members in Ireland and Oide (formerly the JCT) - Oceans Workshop in 2018/2019 - https://jct.ie/steAm/cpd_workshops_steAm_2018_2019
- The Water Forum - <https://thewaterforum.ie/learn-about-water-some-useful-resources-for-schools/>
- An Taisce Green Schools - <https://greenschoolsireland.org/resources/>

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about the work of the IOLN or any of the materials noted above.

Kindest Regards

Dr. Noirin Burke

**Director of the Irish Ocean Literacy Network and Head of Education at Galway Atlantaquaria
(Galway Atlantaquaria Limited 2022-2025)**

www.irishoceanliteracy.ie

#WeAreIslanders

Irish Primary Principals Network



IPPN Submission to NCCA

Consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

June 2024

Introduction

As the professional body for primary school leaders, IPPN welcomes the opportunity to offer perspectives on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications.

IPPN acknowledges and welcomes

the ambition to provide a broad, holistic and aspirational curriculum and the avoidance of a more pragmatic, functional and limited focus

the thoroughly considered and planned approach that has been taken to the development of the framework, in the first instance, and to the draft specifications

the coherence of approach and structure that has been achieved across those specifications

the measures that have been taken to address curriculum overload

the reduced number and size of the documents detailing the specifications

the comprehensive and multi-faceted consultation process that has been undertaken

the primacy that has been given to student and teacher agency

the flexibility that has been introduced into the specifications with regard to allocation of time.

Observations

This is a generational opportunity to embrace, implement and embed a curriculum that has the potential to have a profoundly positive impact on the learning and life experiences of children.

To better ensure that the opportunity is not missed, or not availed of to the fullest extent, it is IPPN's view that it is imperative that

the nature/extent of the professional development and learning opportunities afforded to school staffs is both comprehensive and adequately funded/resourced

the professional development and learning opportunities afforded to school leaders, with regard to leading the process of implementation of the curriculum, are designed and delivered by professionals with school leadership experience

the conducive conditions are created to ensure that sufficient capacity exists within schools to enable the effective implementation of the curriculum, including

an additional allocation to all schools of discrete time for leadership

the undertaking of a comprehensive pre-implementation assessment of what impact the rolling out of a new curriculum will have on workload for schools

a pausing or scaling back of the rollout of other DE actions or initiatives during the implementation phase of the curriculum

engagement with the Primary Education Forum with regard to the pacing and implementation of change linkages are created and practical supports are provided to ensure that the guidance for the preparation for teaching and learning is aligned with the professional development on planning for the implementation of the revised curriculum

practical support and advice is available to schools from the Inspectorate, in a non-evaluative context, to assist with the process of curriculum implementation

meaningful professional development is afforded to all teachers with regard to the teaching of modern foreign languages

the implications for Initial Teacher Education are considered and comprehensive engagement is undertaken with the HEIs to ensure that student teachers are equipped with the skills, competencies and confidence required to plan and deliver effective learning experiences that are in keeping with the revised curriculum.

For consideration

Is there a danger that this revised primary curriculum framework, with its emphasis on increased agency and flexibility, will exacerbate the disconnect that already exists between approaches and drivers in post-primary education?

Irish Primary PE Association



Irish Primary PE Association
Cumann Corpoideachais Bunscoile na hÉireann

IPPEA Response to the Draft Primary Wellbeing Specifications

IPPEA Response to the NCCA (2024) Primary Wellbeing Specifications

The Irish Primary PE Association is a voluntary organisation, that was founded in 2002, by and for primary teachers, who were particularly interested in the subject of Physical Education. For information regarding our mission and aims, please refer to our website: www.irishprimarype.com.

The IPPEA initially contributed to the Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment (IPPEA, October 2020), and attended subsequent consultations (2022, 2023).

We recently participated in the NCCA Consultative Conference on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications and the online focus group meeting for the Wellbeing (PE and SPHE) Draft Curriculum Specifications (March & April, 2024).

The IPPEA welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Draft Wellbeing Specifications. Our submission was created collaboratively, based on the views of our executive committee and members, with their responses and perspectives gathered through various media. The following three questions were considered:

What are the strengths or positive aspects about the Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specifications?

What are your concerns or worries about the Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specifications?

Do you have any additions you would make to the draft or any further comments?

IPPEA Feedback

General observations

Definitions:

The IPPEA welcomes the different definitions for Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport. See IPPEA advocacy document [Physical Education, Physical Activity and School Sport-what are the differences?](#). We are pleased to note that the definitions of Physical Education and physical activity are included, and the differences between both outlined. However, we feel that clear definitions regarding Physical Education, Physical Activity and Sport must be provided in the glossary, to avoid confusion amongst stakeholders. This ties in with our earlier curriculum response in 2020, when we stated that to make linkage work, attention would need to be given to terminology, definitions, focus and practice, to enable connections across the entire curriculum. It would be beneficial if terminology was consistent across all levels. We question whether Wellbeing can be used by teachers as a name for the PE lesson? Will teachers in stage 1 & 2 resort to calling the lesson time PE? This ties within our earlier point regarding clear terminology and definitions to aid stakeholders.

Terminology within the Wellbeing Draft Specifications:

In the description of Physical Education activity areas (p.44), the IPPEA suggests keeping “Games” as one activity area, as opposed to dividing this activity area into Group games and Individual Partner games.

We question the example of **Pilates** on page 44. A definition of ‘staff expertise’ is required for safety reasons. Is it a formal qualification? The use of **etc** (p.44) is very concerning. Practices, for example, fitness testing, mindfulness or yoga could be misunderstood and not suitable or safe for children. More clarity is needed around what is meant by gamification (p.37 & 49), and how teachers will implement this teaching pedagogy.

Time

The IPPEA strongly supports and commends the increased weekly time allocation for PE under Wellbeing. The IPPEA are in agreement that a greater agency apportioned to schools is a goal many have worked toward during the consultation process, and it is excellent to see it reflected, both in PE and other subject areas. We feel that with this new time allocation, schools will be empowered to design PE programmes, within the parameters of the curriculum, that meet their individual needs, allowing for the use of indoor and outdoor facilities, as well as using local or available initiatives. It provides integrated learning possibilities in and through PE. The IPPEA also recommends that the time allocations currently on page 45 are mentioned earlier in the document.

Learning Outcomes

Overall, the IPPEA welcomes the learning outcomes (LO) in PE as presented. However, they represent a dramatic shift in thinking around the teaching of PE, as LO connected to SPHE are expected to be explicitly taught within the PE setting. We foresee this as being problematic to the integrity of physical skill levels, and confusing for teachers as they embark on their planning of lessons. Forced integration, to the detriment of both PE and SPHE, is also a concern. For example, in relation to time allocations in both subjects, specific PE skills like Fundamental Movement Skills and specific SPHE topics like RSE, may not receive the adequate and explicit focus they require.

The terminology used may be challenging to some teachers, therefore it may be helpful to have explanations of some terms e.g. locomotor, manipulative, throughout the document and not just in the glossary. Perhaps as you hover over the word locomotor, an example of said skills are listed? We suggest a paragraph explaining physical literacy development and the role of Fundamental Movement Skills in PE is included in the first few pages of the document.

We question if it is necessary to list the key competencies in the LO section of the document. We query the relevance of this in relation to the LO, and overall clarity for teachers. We recommend the LO being kept as simple and clear as possible. We feel there is a significant amount of new language for teachers.

Dance

The IPPEA finds it confusing that **Dance** is included in both the Draft Wellbeing Specification and Draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications. We find the explanation of Dance as an activity area within the Wellbeing specifications is clear. We welcome that it is linked with Artistic and Aesthetic activities within this. This aligns with Junior Cycle Physical Education activity areas.

However, it appears that Dance is a mode of response only in the Arts Education Curriculum specifications. Furthermore, it seems that there is less weighting placed on Dance in comparison with the other Arts areas of Drama, Art and Music which are clearly distinguished with capital letters throughout the document.

As stated in the IPPEA's response to the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework in October 2020, "The IPPEA supports the retention of dance within the Wellbeing Curriculum Specifications. Whilst there are undoubted links with the arts, the potential to achieve physical, social, emotional and cognitive learning outcomes through Dance within Physical Education may be compromised. If Dance remains within the Physical Education curriculum, both the aesthetic and creative nature of Dance, as well as the physical aspects can be captured. If there is a shift to the Arts, there is a risk of some of this being lost. Moving through dance also represents movement concepts similarly found in gymnastics,

games, athletics and even outdoor and adventure activities, and accordingly opportunities for effective linkage may be reduced.

Dance is also best undertaken in a setting with appropriate space for movement and learning (i.e., not the classroom) and accordingly, if placed under the banner of arts education, the opportunity to use a hall for dance may be limited due to timetabling. Dance is also an important avenue towards lifetime physical activity for many people and a move to Arts Education may reduce the opportunities for pupils to engage with this activity due to a comparably lower time allocation for Arts Education. In addition, dance, within Physical Education provides options for children who may not be as inclined towards traditional games activities. The positioning of dance within arts education at primary level would also be in contrast to Junior Cycle where dance is maintained as an important part of Physical Education. Transitions between primary and post primary may accordingly be hampered through the repositioning of dance to arts education” (p.13). Please click here for further details [IPPEA response October 2020](#).

Implementation of Curriculum

A timeline of roll-out, CPD and communications has not been provided, specifically for the seven key competencies outlined in Table 7, pg 13, and the format of the online toolkit.

Online Toolkit

The online toolkit to be added to in the coming months and years will need to be demonstrated with sufficient support for teachers, due to the interrelatedness shown in Appendix 1, page 51, across the four strands. The IPPEA strongly feel that the Online Toolkit is a necessity, and would be welcomed sooner rather than later. We are disappointed with the lack of specific content information to guide teachers further. We welcome the acknowledgement that teachers teach in a variety of contexts (p. 11) However, we feel that the toolkit is needed to support these teachers.

Funding

The IPPEA wishes to highlight the importance of adequate funding to support Physical Education, the implementation of the Wellbeing Curriculum and digital assessment tools.

Teacher CPD

If the potential of the draft Wellbeing Specifications are to be realised, CPD in a re-imagined format is essential. The IPPEA wonders what format CPD provision will take, and how it will be accessed by teachers initially to help plan and implement new developments in Wellbeing and Physical

Education. With this in mind, the IPPEA strongly believes that ongoing CPD will be required. The IPPEA cannot emphasise how essential face-to-face CPD provision for all staff members is required. We feel that Wellbeing CPD training should follow the same format as the training days provided for the Literacy and Maths curriculum to date.

Assessment in PE

We recognise the valuable role that assessment plays in PE and the assessment strategies outlined in the specifications, but we are unsure how to assess Wellbeing effectively (Definition of Wellbeing, p. 3).

Role of External Facilitators and Programmes

The IPPEA welcomes the clarification about the role of external facilitators and programmes in PE lessons, particularly that external facilitators will “always work under the guidance and supervision of the classroom teacher who remains with the children at all times” (p. 46). The IPPEA have always been acutely aware of the role of the external facilitator in schools. See [The Role of the External Provider in Primary School Physical Education](#).

More specific guidelines or criteria on suitable programmes would be welcomed in the toolkit.

Additional thoughts

We would recommend that reference to teachers’ expectations to teach 6 out of 7 activity areas (p.43) could be allocated a subheading status. Ideally, the stages would list benchmarks towards the achievement of designed learning outcomes, and would support, rather than overwhelm teachers. We feel that more guidance is needed here, as without guidance this may become an issue. Guidance might include different scenarios that reflect - what to teach, in what order to teach, how to teach, how time might be allocated. The online TOOLKIT, in time, may provide an overview, ongoing support and aid in alleviating some of the issues raised here regarding the 6/7 activity areas on page 43.

The IPPEA looks forward to the final version of the Curriculum Specifications. We are happy to contribute to any aspect of the development of the online toolkit or any further contributions to Physical Education and Wellbeing Curriculum.



Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications Consultation

Introduction

The Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice (JCFJ) is an agency of the Irish Jesuit Province, dedicated to undertaking social analysis and theological reflection in relation to issues of social justice, including housing and homelessness, penal policy, environmental justice, and economic ethics.

The JCFJ is engaged with the other works of the Irish Jesuit Province, including its renowned Educational Sector. It is also embedded within a European network of similar institutions – known collectively as the European Social Centres – in nine countries across the continent, stretching from Portugal to Hungary.

We welcome the consultation process established to refine the draft curriculum specifications. We write not as educational providers, but informed by our consultation with teachers and keenly aware that students in primary school are not just ‘citizens of the future’ but are already in and of themselves valued members of our society. As the Consultation Framework document states, quoting Kofi Annan, “Tomorrow’s world is already taking shape in the body and spirit of our children” (p. 2).

Unpacking a Key Competency

There is much to be welcomed in these documents. In our consultations, teachers have especially appreciated that the specifications maintain the long-standing tradition of honouring the teacher in the classroom but allowing flexibility in how a curriculum is pursued. From within the expertise of the Jesuit Centre for Faith and Justice, we especially welcome the focus on critical thinking, which is understood to be a broad capacity encompassing cultural competency as much as logical rigor.

Assessing these texts as we do – as a team made up of scientists, social scientists, ethicists and theologians – we are concerned by the free-floating use of terms like “value”, “ethics”, or “ethos”. Granting that a diversity of overlapping interpretations is possible, it remains the case that these are intrinsically tradition-conditioned terms. When no reference to historical context, religious culture, and philosophical underpinnings are mentioned, we do not end up with an open, inclusive interpretation of these important terms but a reversion to the default meaning held by the State. Acknowledging that such terms are storied, complex, and contested invites constructive engagement in a way that the undefined usage never can. “Ethics” is a black-box in these documents. We would strongly encourage those drafting revisions to grant that the specificity of an ethos is what is intrinsically significant.

Put plainly: A Jesuit school carries an Ignatian ethos. That can mean many things but it means many things *because* it is rooted in a community of specific men (Ignatius Loyola and his companions) who gathered

together around a specific purpose (“to find God in all things”) at a specific place (Paris) at a particular time (1540). Over the centuries, they and their successors took that message around the globe and around Ireland, always seeking to work in the service of faith and promotion of justice. That particularity matters. What makes the category “ethos” meaningful is that they all carry a genealogy like this. The document’s confusion about this disables meaningful, productive conversations on a local level. It is simply harder for families to discern where they stand in relation to ethos, ethics, values, justice, and other related terms if they have only a formal function.

But our major concern arising from engaging with these documents relates to one of the 7 Key Competencies. We affirm the decision to include “Being an Active Citizen” as one of the core goals of the Curriculum. It is a noble goal to “develop children’s capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national and global levels” (p. 8).

But throughout the five Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications we have noted with dismay that there is no reference to the fact that the majority of students in our schools have citizenship in the European Union and that the EU constitutes a primary political and cultural reality in which all students live their lives.

It may be the case that as the documents recognise “global” dimensions⁸⁸ it is taken that this includes the EU. But quite literally taking this for granted is a profound mistake.

Throughout the documents, citizenship is allied to concepts of responsibility or agency.² This is appropriate. But to be a citizen is to have a sphere of influence. Just as the student is encouraged to tend to the space in the classroom over which they have influence when they are taught to keep a clean and safe workspace, the student is being formed to exercise their citizenship in particular contexts – their local community, their county, the nation. All of these identity-forming spheres are accounted for but the EU is absent.

We do not wish to disparage the importance of fostering a global perspective in young people. But the context in which Irish law and policy is forged, the markets in which Irish firms trade, and the cultural exchanges that constitute Irish arts and letters are all grounded mostly in the EU. At present, “Europe” exists as a feature of Geography and History classes later in the curriculum. It ought to be a core concept running through the different spheres.

In making this suggestion, we are just asking that the Curriculum would reflect the reality as it already exists in the classroom. Through initiatives like the Blue Flag programme, schools are already taking the lead in forming young people to see their identity in terms of Europe. Acknowledging that in the framework documents will licence teachers to experiment with and deepen this necessary pedagogical outcome.

In our collaborations with Social Centres across Europe, it is clear that one of the most pressing political and cultural challenges we face involves integration in the EU, both between members and within member States. The rise of extremist, increasingly xenophobic

⁸⁸ For example: “Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.” *Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification*, p. 10. ² For example: “Searching for evidence and exploring solutions to problems in order to view different perspectives and to help others.” *Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Specification*, p. 10.

voices in Ireland and across the continent only underlines the importance of recognising how already our identities are more complex than “Ireland” and “global”.

In our conversations with teachers, a vivid example of this was shared with us. Working in an inner city context of profound economic disadvantage, one teacher noted how a commitment to exploring European identity served as a great aid to students from a Roma background. As Europe’s largest ethnic minority, Roma children suffer yet another disadvantage when identity is discussed primarily in terms of nation states – the Roma have no nation state who will claim them. The teacher explained that in that context, they can “just be seen as incomers, as people who don’t belong”. But when identity is framed in terms of the European Union, students from a Roma background find ground on which they can stand. This is a community which includes them. And that makes the transition to a conversation about how they see their identity as people living in Ireland much more fertile.

This is just one example, but it is significant because of how it exposes that engaging with the reality of our relationship to the European Union can serve populations of students who face various marginalisations.

Conclusion

By neglecting to deploy the European Union as a key sphere in which students enact active citizenship, the Curriculum unintentionally disparages the great gain to Irish society that the Four Freedoms represent. The EU began an audacious vision shared by a people living in the ruins of war. It is central to the peace process still in development on this island. And the freedom of movement for goods, capital, services, and people determine the material reality of our children’s lives. If Active Citizenship is a key competency, then the EU must be a key concept and context throughout the different elements of the Curriculum.



**Submission to the Consultation on the
Draft Primary Language Curriculum
to include
Modern Foreign Languages**

June 2024

The Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI) aims to support and inform those concerned with the development of literacy nationally and internationally (teachers and educators at all levels and in a variety of formal and informal settings), encourage them in reflection and dialogue,

challenge them in their practice and give public voice to their concerns through organising bilingual events such as conferences, seminars, workshops, courses, and webinars.

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Submission to the Consultation on the Draft Primary Language Curriculum to include Modern Foreign Languages

The **Literacy Association of Ireland (LAI)** welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the public consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications. The current submission relates specifically to the draft specification for the inclusion of Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary Language Curriculum.

The Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) is an opportune development on a number of fronts. Specifically, we wish to note our support for the following emphases in the 2024 draft specification:

- The increased focus on supporting linguistically diverse classrooms
- The asset-based approach to acknowledging and valourising the contributions of multiple languages and cultures
- The increased focus on the potential for developing children's language awareness
- The heightened focus on commonalities and transfer across languages, advancing the underpinning theories of linguistic interdependence and commonly underlying proficiency

(Cummins, 1981; Cummins, 2021)

In particular, we endorse the adoption of a plurilingual approach to the teaching of languages, in line with guidance from the research literature and policy at a European level. The introduction of a MFL offers the chance to have a more co-ordinated approach to language teaching and to utilise a plurilingual approach to teaching Irish (O'Toole, 2023), with attendant benefits for the teaching of English.

Notwithstanding the potential benefits of the 2024 specification, we wish to note a number of concerns. In our view, addressing these concerns would make the success of the new specification more likely. Our specific concerns include:

1. Lack of a full review of the Primary Language Curriculum (2015/2019)

Though we welcome the addition of an additional language to the curriculum *in principle*, it is imprudent to proceed with this addition without first reviewing the successes and challenges experienced in the enactment of the Primary Language Curriculum for English and Gaeilge (2015/2019). At post-primary level, early enactment reviews are a regular feature of curriculum renewal. However, close to ten years since the publication of the Primary Language Curriculum for

Junior Infants to Second Class (2015), no such review has been conducted. Early research on the Primary Language Curriculum has suggested significant challenges in its implementation (e.g. Mac Domhnaill & Nic an Bhaird, 2022; McGarry, 2017). This has also been highlighted in the Chief Inspector's Report (Department of Education Inspectorate, 2022). Crafting a third language into the structure of the Primary Language Curriculum without any reference to the successes (or otherwise) of the first two languages belies good practice in curriculum renewal and evaluation.

Recommendation 1: Ensure a thorough review of enactment prior to layering a new curriculum language into the Primary Language Curriculum (2015/2019).

2. Reduction in time allocation for L1 and L2

In our submission to the public consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework, LAI noted significant concerns with the proposed reduction in the explicit time allocation for L1 and L2 (see [here](#)). Unfortunately, the publication of the final Primary Curriculum Framework did not allay these concerns, as the NCCA/Minister proceeded to reallocate time away from L1/L2. Despite this reduction in instructional time, no amendment has been made to the content of the learning outcomes for either English (L1/L2) or Gaeilge (T1/T2) set out in the Primary Language Curriculum. It is difficult to envisage or explain how these same learning outcomes can be achieved with less curriculum time. Furthermore, it is difficult to envisage or explain how the big ideas and pedagogical approaches set out in the introduction to the Primary Language Curriculum can be achieved within the very truncated time allocations set out. Of even more concern, the new time allocations for literacy places Ireland out-of-step with the literacy time allocations noted internationally, and, in particular, the time allocations adopted for children who require additional support in reaching their full literacy potential (e.g. children in disadvantaged settings; children who encounter difficulties in literacy acquisition).

Recommendation 2: Revise the decision to reduce the time allocation to literacy (L1/L2); resolve the apparent conflict that has arisen in leaving learning outcomes for L1/L2 unchanged while reducing the instructional time available for their teaching.

3. Limited conceptualisation and definition of literacy within the draft Primary Language Curriculum (2024)

The draft Primary Language Curriculum builds on the 2019 and 2015 version of the same specification in including the strands of reading, writing and oral language. However, there is no direct explanation of how literacy is

conceptualised within the curriculum. As part of a broader review of the enactment of the Primary Language Curriculum, we urge that literacy is given more prominent attention within the specification. We also believe that more careful attention needs to be afforded to the research literature on high quality literacy pedagogy, including the need for explicit and systematic teaching.

Recommendation 3: Include a more specific explanation/definition of literacy in the curriculum, following an enactment review; ensure that all aspects of the Primary Language Curriculum relating to literacy are in line with current research.

4. Lack of clarity regarding the roadmap for ISL as a language within the Primary Language Curriculum

LAI notes that the NCCA has recently published an audit of Sign Language in the mainstream curriculum (O'Donnell, 2024), with further actions for Irish Sign Language (ISL) noted in Ireland's Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024- - 2033. While we understand that ISL is *not* a modern foreign language, we urge that greater high-level consideration be given to how multiple languages can be incorporated into the curriculum in a considered and methodical manner.

Recommendation 4: Devise a broader road map for how Irish Sign Language, Modern Foreign Languages, Gaeilge and English will be conceptualised and operationalised in tandem in the coming period. Avoid the ad-hoc introduction of separate policies and initiatives relating to the respective languages.

5. Greater clarity on the conceptualisation and operationalisation of Modern Foreign Languages is needed

While MFL is described in the Draft as including '... **all** languages that support 'Building an awareness of languages and cultures' in Stages 3 and 4' (p. 1), greater clarity on the exact languages which will be acknowledged in the curriculum as a MFL is required.

LAI notes that a number of significant operational matters have not been addressed at this point. In the absence of clarification, it is difficult to envisage how teachers can engage meaningfully with the draft specification. We deem it imperative that the NCCA and the Department of Education addresses questions such as:

- How will a school decide on a MFL?
- Will all teachers in the same school need qualifications in the same MFL? If so, what happens in the case of substitute teachers / fixed-term teachers moving from school to school / relocation of teachers etc?

- In terms of initial teacher education, what MFL will Higher Education Institutions focus on in order to best equip their students for their future teaching careers? How will this align with Teaching Council accreditation requirements?
- Will entry requirements to teacher education now require a basic minimum Leaving Certificate grade in a MFL?
- Will sustained, language-specific professional learning be provided to teachers in relation to the teaching and learning of MFL and teachers' own language competence? How will teachers with no competence in a MFL be supported to acquire this competence?
- How will additional teaching supports (in English and Irish) or peripatetic teachers be used to support the enactment of a MFL?

Without convincing answers to the questions above, it is difficult to see how a MFL will be enacted.

In the entry requirements for initial teacher education courses for primary teachers in 2024 (CAO competition), there is no specific requirement for studying a modern foreign language (MFL) to pursue a B.Ed or PME. It is crucial to thoroughly weigh the language requirements for both English and Irish entry requirements for the B.Ed. When such requirements are required for those languages, we must evaluate a student teacher's potential proficiency in studying and teaching an additional language if there is no requirement to have studied or knowledge of a MFL. In addition, we must consider the effects of introducing the teaching of a MFL for in-career teachers. Significant DE investment in professional development will be required to upskill in-career teachers. Moreover, if changes were made to a student's requirements for entering ITEs, would there be an effect on the Teaching Council registration for in-career teachers?

Due to ongoing financial constraints, schools may find implementing new facets of a curriculum challenging. This is especially true following the recent implementation of the mathematics curriculum, which places a strong emphasis on hands-on learning experiences and has received no additional funding. The reduction of over 16% per child in the School Book Grant this year further exacerbates the situation. With decreased funding, there is a pressing need for more resources to support the current curriculum before considering incorporating a new language learning component.

Recommendation 4: Further detail must be provided on the conceptualisation and operationalisation of a modern foreign language in the curriculum and related documentation. This must include a short-, medium- and long-term road map for its enactment, accompanied by credible resourcing and professional learning commitments from the Department of Education.

6. Conceptualisations of languages, bilingualism and plurilingualism in the Curriculum

Concepts of bilingualism and plurilingualism have evolved in recent years and moved away from the traditional binary view of native versus non-native speaker (O'Rourke & Ramallo, 2011) to an understanding that there is a continuum

of bilingualism and plurilingualism (Baker & Wright, 2021), and that speakers draw on their repertoire of languages in different ways and in different contexts. There is also a growing awareness that people can communicate in a variety of ways (Barnes et al., 2022). This could be highlighted more in the draft framework.

Primary schools have a very important role in nurturing positive attitudes to the Irish language and in providing spaces for children to use their Irish in formal learning, outside the Irish lesson and creatively with their peers. There is both a need to (a) maintain separate spaces for different languages so that children have the opportunity to deeply process the target language and to (b) soften the boundaries between them (García & Lin, 2017). This demands nuanced and complex teacher pedagogical content knowledge, supported by clear curricular guidance.

Recommendation 6: The curriculum should more specifically address how its various languages will interact, informed by up-to-date understandings of plurilingual practice and consideration of the unique position of the Irish language within and outside the school system.

7. Increase emphasis on cultural connections

The Draft appears to place a major emphasis on the development of both languages *and cultures*. Such development, with a particular priority given to cultural development, is a crucial component to the successful acquisition process of any given second or third language. While in theory LAI supports the specific attention given to cultural awareness in the Draft, we caution that a focus on the same appears somewhat absent in the proposed Learning Outcomes. If teachers are expected to enhance an awareness of both languages and cultures and between languages and cultures in primary classrooms, clear guidance is warranted on how exactly this is expected to materialise in the classroom.

Recommendation 7: More clearly outline the interconnection between language and culture in the curriculum and the practicalities of how to bring this to life in the classroom.

8. Clarity on implementation of CLIL

Stemming from objectives outlined in the 20 Year Strategy for the Irish Language (2010-2030), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) is celebrated, and further recommended, by the Primary Language Curriculum (2019) as an effective pedagogy to support the teaching and learning of both content and a second language (Irish, in the case of the PLC (2019)). While the Draft appears to recommend a similar CLIL approach to enhance the teaching and learning of a MFL, it may be useful to collate data in relation to the implementation of the current CLIL Pilot Project (2023/2024), devised and implemented in schools in Ireland by the Department of Education, to further inform CLIL practices through Irish, prior to the recommendation of CLIL through a MFL. Extending CLIL to a third language, in the absence of this review, risks further complicating its enactment in schools.

Recommendation 8: Ensure that a thorough review of the current place and practice of CLIL is carried out prior to extending its application to a third language.

9. Exemptions from the Irish Language

Circular 0054/2022 denotes the changed circumstances in which a pupil, in primary school education, may be granted an exemption from the study of Irish, the second language of the school in English-medium schools. Some of these circumstances include:

- A pupil moving from a different country without previous experience of learning the Irish language
- A pupil who experiences significant literacy difficulties which are an obstacle to their learning across the curriculum
- A pupil who experiences a high level of multiple and persistent needs that are a significant barrier to the pupil's participation and engagement in their learning and school life
- A pupil in a recognised special school or class or who was previously enrolled in a recognised special school or class or who has a recommendation and has been deemed eligible for a place in a recognised special school and/or in a special class in a mainstream school
- A pupil whose parent(s)/guardian(s) is a/are diplomatic or consular representative(s) of another country to Ireland irrespective of age or educational history

In the case of a pupil with an exemption from the study of Irish in primary school, will this pupil be automatically exempt from the study of a MFL? There has been considerable debate on the provision of Irish exemptions in recent years. It is crucial that greater clarity is provided prior to the enactment of a third curriculum language.

Recommendation 9: Ensure that there is a clear, research-informed basis for the provision of exemptions to any language in the primary school system prior to the enactment of a Modern Foreign Language.

Conclusion

The LAI Executive Committee wishes to re-iterate its support, in principle, for many of the underpinning messages and values outlined in the draft specification for Modern Foreign Languages in the Primary Language Curriculum. We underscore our significant concerns about the diminution in time for literacy in L1 and L2 and the absence of a thorough review of current practice and curriculum enactment prior to progressing with a Modern Foreign Language. We look forward to continuing our engagement with the NCCA, the Department of Education and other partners in advancing a rich, meaningful and evidence-informed national curriculum for learners in all primary and special schools.

Literacy Association of Ireland Executive Committee - June 2024

Clara Fiorentini (President)

Patrick Burke (Incoming President)

Claire Dunne (Past President)

Miriam Colum (Treasurer)

Róisín Ni Mhulláin (Secretary)

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Tara Concannon Gibney

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Susan Nic Réamoinn

Maureen Colleran

National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education

RE: NABMSE Submission to NCCA Consultation Curriculum Framework

The National Association of Boards of Management in Special Education (NABMSE) has been supporting Boards of Management (BOMs) in Special Education for over 50 years. Over 300 School Boards of Management are members of NABMSE, this includes most special schools and mainstream schools at primary and post primary level. NABMSE employs a General Secretary, a part-time Data Protection Advisor, a part-time Special Schools Officer and two part-time administrative officers. A team of dedicated, experienced practitioners serve on a voluntary basis on our Executive Committee and oversee the governance of the organisation. The General Secretary and two members of NABMSE EC attend regular meetings with the Department of Education and its agencies.

Our schools work with and support students with Special Educational Needs (SEN) from 4 - 18 years old with mild, moderate, severe, and profound disabilities, with autism, with social, emotional, and behavioural difficulties (SEBD), and with complex medical needs. The access to education, and the wellbeing of our pupils is, as always, the central consideration of our Boards of Management.

NABMSE liaises closely with its member schools, providing advice and guidance, training seminars, conducting research and providing updated information to all. As part of the preparation for this consultation, we urged our member schools, their Leaders and Teachers to respond themselves to the surveys and met with them to get their views on the draft curricular areas.

NABMSE acknowledge the improvements observed in the structure of the new curricula and that the NCCA obviously considered previous feedback given by our organisation during PLC and Maths consultations. The design of an "Online Toolkit" sounds promising and again builds on previous feedback provided.

The emphasis on "Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences' in learning outcomes supports the active and supportive learning environments that our member schools provide. The promotion of an integrated curriculum also compliments the teaching that occurs in our member schools at present. The inclusion of "additional support pathways" across all curricula is welcomed. We believe this will greatly benefit our pupils with complex and profound learning needs as well as pupils with Mild/Moderate intellectual disabilities, those attending special schools, special classes in mainstream schools and also support inclusive practices between mainstream and special classes.

The five curricular areas, reflect current practice under Aistear and fit well into the progression pathway to Junior Cycle education at levels 1,2 and 3. We also believe these curriculum areas will complement our work with students at second level currently receiving accreditation with QQI and will help inform the NCCA Senior Cycle reform.

Wellbeing: The standalone Wellbeing curriculum has been positively received by our members due to the benefits it will have for their pupils.

Arts Education: Reference to engaging children in sensory and embodied learning is very relevant to our pupils (page 28). Supporting all learners (pages 23 – 28) resonates well with our schools and is inclusive of all those pupils in Special Education. However, we believe some more work needs to be done to ensure that pupils with severe and/or profound learning disabilities can attain outcomes (e.g. Stage 1 page 13). NABMSE has previously worked with Creative Schools and Music Generation to find ways of enriching the learning experience of these pupils who may not progress as easily as their peers.

Social and Environmental Education: The aims of the SEE curriculum (page 7) could encapsulate the experiential learning strategies and techniques that many pupils with severe and profound learning disabilities rely on to access the curriculum. Playful approaches (page 25) will support our pupil's meaningful engagement in aspects of the curriculum. Place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors also provides opportunities for our children to engage meaningfully in some activities.

Science, Technology and Engineering Education:

Table 6(a) could be further developed with consideration of a rich learning environment for children with severe and profound learning disabilities. The Additional Learning Pathways is a valuable addition and will support the inclusion and learning of our pupils with Mild/Moderate intellectual disabilities. We recommend that, in relation to Key Pedagogical Practices (page 21), practical examples are developed for pupils with severe/profound learning disabilities in the special school setting.

Recommendations:

Department of Education need to provide **dedicated time** to support whole staff familiarity and understanding of the new curriculum documentation. **Further dedicated time** is required to support staff implementation of the curriculum.

Model and coaching support should be provided to each school by means of an assigned Oide advisor for a period of at least 3 years. During this time **dedicated release time and staff substitute cover** should be provided by Department of Education.

NCCA provide schools with whole school plan templates, long term planning templates and short term planning templates to support the new curriculum.

NCCA communicate effectively with NCSE and DE/Inspectorate in relation to consistent communications with schools in relation to planning and curriculum implementation requirements.

NCCA, NCSE and DE support **one primary curriculum**. There should be no launch of additional programmes / curricula e.g. flags, frameworks etc that schools are required to introduce.

NCSE have put a large emphasis on Universal Design for Learning (UDL) to support inclusive practices in our schools, which is very relevant for our pupils. There is no reference to UDL in any curriculum documents.

NCCA need to ensure consistency in language used: **Wellbeing:** Support all learners (page 32); **Arts:** Supporting all learners (page 23); **SEE:** Supporting all children (page 19); **PLC** no reference to support all learners/all children; **STEE:** Supporting all children (page 20)

Our members have raised concerns in relation to consistent accessibility to the curricula for children with severe/profound learning disabilities. The need for pupil voice in relation to curricula for children with severe/profound disabilities is emphasised by our organisation. We agree with aspects of the EQUALS pre-forma curriculum that aims to put the learners in control by giving them an environment that they can understand, and they are allowed to keep changing in order to encourage development. We encourage the NCCA to further research the needs of and outcomes for children with severe/profound learning disabilities and ensure their learning is adequately catered for in curricula documentations. This will then ensure the final curricula documentation supports all learners in primary and special schools.

Finally

NABMSE is committed to supporting curriculum reform. We know our members are invested in learning and successful outcomes for all children. We would ask to be involved in the development of whole school training for special schools and classes.

National Adult Literacy Agency

Submission on Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Submitted to the National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment

June 2024



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About NALA

Introduction

We are the National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA), a registered charity with 1,700 members. We believe literacy is a human right. We are committed to making sure people with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs can fully take part in society, and have access to quality learning opportunities that meet their needs.

Some people have their **literacy needs met**; others do not.

This can be for **many reasons.**



We are pleased to contribute to the development of the Primary Curriculum Specifications, under the new Primary Curriculum Framework (Department of Education 2023).

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy

Literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills involve listening, speaking, reading, writing, using numbers and everyday technology to communicate, to build relationships, to understand information and make informed choices.

Literacy, numeracy and digital skills enable people to reach their full potential and be active and critical participants in society. These life skills allow us to participate in, and make sense of, the world.



Literacy, numeracy and digital skills:

- are not static and they evolve.
- are not something that you get once in school and you have forever – you must practise these skills or you lose them. This is called “deskilling”.
- can vary depending on the context, for example, dealing with a financial service for a loan involves financial and legal terminology.
- are different for each person – you can be good in one area, for example reading, but weak in another, for example writing.

In this submission, the word “literacy” may refer to all these skills (for ease of reading).

Literacy needs in Ireland

The most recent adult literacy survey (CSO 2013) showed that:

- About one in six (18%) adults (aged 16 to 65) struggle with reading and understanding everyday text. For example, reading a bus timetable or understanding medicine instructions.
- One in four adults (25%) has difficulties using maths in everyday life. For example, working out a bill or calculating percentages.

Another survey of adult skills (CEDEFOP 2020) showed that in Ireland:

- About 2 in 5 (38%) adults struggle with basic digital tasks. For example, looking up a website or sending an email.

The majority of people who have digital literacy needs have underlying literacy issues.

There are also literacy needs among many adults where English is their Second or Other Language (ESOL).

Results of the latest PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests in 2022 show that Irish 15-year-olds are performing well in reading and maths compared with other countries. However, Government targets for reducing the share of students scoring below Level 2 – the baseline level of proficiency - have not yet been reached, and the trends are in the wrong direction (ERC 2023, p27). Since 2015, the percentage of students scoring below Level 2 in reading has actually increased slightly to 11% (p78), or around one in ten students. The percentage of students scoring below Level 2 in maths has also increased significantly to 19% (p52), around one in five students.

The 2022 PISA results also show gender and “class” differences. Almost twice as many boys (15%) as girls (8%) are below Level 2 in reading (p79). Higher-ESCS (Economic, Social and Cultural Status) groups score higher than lower-ESCS groups in maths and reading (p56 and p82).

Literacy inequalities begin in childhood - at home and in school. That is why we are making this submission on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications. We want to see fewer and fewer young people leaving school with literacy needs.

Literacy and equality

Literacy is not about individual intelligence. Unmet literacy needs arise because of educational and wider structural inequalities. As education professionals are well aware, equality is not about treating everyone in the same way - individuals' needs are sometimes best met in different ways. Having equal access to suitable learning opportunities is key.

At present, those who need to access education and training the most have the least access. This is the Matthew effect where “without intervention, those who have acquired more education get more and those that have not, get little or nothing” (Kerckhoff & Glennie 1999).

NALA believes that priority should be given to those experiencing the most educational disadvantage – the **furthest behind first** principle in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (UN 2015). For the furthest behind, there must be enhanced and targeted opportunities and supports.

Literacy policy in Ireland

The Government has published a [10-year Adult Literacy for Life Strategy](#) (Government of Ireland 2021). It aims to: “ensure that everyone has the necessary literacy, numeracy and digital literacy to fully participate in society and realise their potential” (p4). The Adult Literacy for Life Strategy commits to a cross-Government, cross-economy and cross-society approach to support literacy needs. It means that a whole range of sectors will understand literacy barriers and work together to remove them. This can include early education providers, schools, and government agencies such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

Family literacy is highlighted in the Adult Literacy for Life strategy as a key adult literacy domain (p21). The strategy commits to “enhancement of family literacy and family learning approaches which have proven to help break down intergenerational disadvantage” (p61). “Enabling parents and communities to support learners’ literacy, numeracy and digital literacy” is the first of five pillars in Ireland’s new Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033 (Government of Ireland 2024a). These commitments recognise that educational disadvantage often passes on through generations. These commitments also recognise the important role that parents and other adults play in helping children to develop literacy skills.

The NCCA is listed as a key stakeholder for 26 actions in the Literacy, Numeracy and Digital Literacy Strategy 2024-2033 implementation plan (Government of Ireland 2024b). This shows the importance of curriculum and assessment in supporting literacy development.

Comments on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

We would like to make the following comments on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications as a whole:

- It is essential that literacy, numeracy and digital literacy are integrated throughout the whole primary curriculum, in accordance with the Government's literacy strategy. This should be emphasised in the guidance that is provided to teachers and school leaders about the new primary curriculum specifications.
- Teachers and school leaders will need clarity on what literacy, numeracy and digital literacy mean. The definitions in Section 4 of the new literacy strategy should be used for the sake of consistency across the Irish education system. The connection between these definitions and the related competencies in the Primary Curriculum Framework (being a digital learner; being mathematical; being a communicator and using language) should be explained.
- The NCCA is no doubt aware that Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) is currently developing Broad Award Standards at NFQ Levels 1-4 (QQI 2023). We recommend that the NCCA and QQI work together to ensure that the Primary Curriculum and the Broad Award Standards for Levels 1-4 are aligned.
- Ireland should also adopt international frameworks in its primary curriculum, such as the Digital Competence Framework for Citizens (European Commission 2022) and the Common European Numeracy Framework (Hoogland, Díez-Palomar, O'Meara 2020). These frameworks are based on best available evidence and using them would provide opportunities for international benchmarking.
- The draft specifications contain many references to experiential, creative and project-based learning. We are in favour of these kinds of approaches, which can support diverse learning styles.

We would like to make the following comments on the draft specification for Language, including Modern Foreign Languages:

- Through our own work as an educational provider and through feedback from our members, we are aware of the increasing numbers of adults in Ireland who are learning English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Many of these adults also have literacy needs in their first language. They may struggle to support their children's education in Ireland. Bringing students' home languages into the classroom could help to bridge the divide between home and school, which would benefit students and their parents.
- The draft specification also promotes general awareness of language and communication. This is a clear opportunity to integrate and reinforce literacy learning.
- Any system for exemptions from learning Modern Foreign Languages (like exemptions from learning Irish) should be carefully considered. Some students will benefit from an exemption, allowing them to focus on developing literacy in their first language. However, all students should have the opportunity to learn a modern foreign language and be supported in doing so.

Conclusion

The primary curriculum will have a huge influence on how the next generation develops their literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills. The NCCA has a crucial role in turning the government's literacy policies into action in our schools.

We support the integration of literacy, numeracy and digital literacy across all specifications through the Key Competencies of the Primary Curriculum Framework – these core literacy skills should be explained in guidance for educators, and their importance should be highlighted.

We also support the inclusion of a wide range of teaching and learning approaches in the draft specifications, and the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages with an emphasis on languages that are spoken in the local community.

The new curriculum will be most effective if it is aligned with national literacy policies, the Broad Award Standards for Levels 1-4 being developed by QQI, and international competency

frameworks. A collaborative, joined-up approach is needed to ensure that all young people finish their compulsory education with at least functional literacy, numeracy and digital literacy.

Contact

We are happy to discuss our comments and recommendations with you further.

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About NALA

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) is a charity and membership based organisation. We work to support adults with unmet literacy, numeracy and digital literacy needs to take part fully in society and to have access to learning opportunities that meet their needs. NALA does this by raising awareness of the importance of literacy, doing research and sharing good practice, providing online learning courses, providing a tutoring service and by lobbying for further investment to improve adult literacy, numeracy and digital literacy skills.

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**Adult
Literacy
for Life**

Adult Literacy is co-funded by the Government of Ireland and the European Union.

National Council for Special Education

Submitted by:

Dr. Catherine Merrigan, on behalf of the National Council for Special Education (NCSE)

Date: 18/06/24

Section 1: Alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment □ Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The NCSE welcomes the overarching vision for primary and special education described in the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, which underpins the development of the Draft Primary Curriculum specifications. In particular, the key competencies outlined provide an inclusive vision for all children in primary and special schools, which will be achieved through an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment across all curricular areas. Central to this will be the creation of inclusive learning environments which promote both teacher and child agency, with the flexibility to enact the Primary Curriculum in a meaningful way.

The NCSE welcomes the emphasis on participation, engagement and enjoyment of school and the fundamental message that ‘*The Primary Curriculum Framework recognises primary education as a time of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ – highlighting the importance of interesting,*

relevant and appropriately challenging experiences for children' (Draft Wellbeing specification, p.1).

The continued emphasis on the principles and key competencies from the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to the Draft specifications is welcome. This emphasis on the principles will become a helpful support for school leaders, as they work towards creating a positive and holistic learning environment in their schools. The competencies encompass the skills, values and attitudes that teachers will strive to develop in their pupils and will support all teachers in identifying a clear focus in learning, teaching and assessment.

NCSE Overall Key Considerations and Recommendations:

The NCSE poses the following considerations to enhance the Draft Primary Curriculum specifications overall:

1. Building on the structure of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)*:

- Aligning the five Draft specifications to ensure that a consistent structure and approach is followed in terms of layout, language and graphics to enhance readability and familiarity across all curricular areas for teachers.

2. Pedagogies:

- Integration of pedagogies across all five Draft specifications and creation of a Chapter 6, such as 'Integrated Pedagogical Approaches across the Primary Curriculum'.

3. Stages 1 to 4:

- Providing clarity around the stages in terms of their alignment with children's chronological age, class level and developmental stage. Recommendation that all learning outcomes will be described across all four stages and can be accessed at the stage that is most developmentally appropriate for the individual child, regardless of their chronological age and class level.

4. Additional Support Pathways:

- Providing clarity around using the Additional Support Pathways to access the learning outcomes for all children. Providing reassurance for teachers that the Additional Support Pathways are not a direct replacement for the *Guidelines for Teachers of Students with General Learning Difficulties (Mild, Moderate or Severe to Profound)*. The development of interagency support materials in this area will be required and will be very helpful for all schools, particularly special classes and special schools.

5. Linking the Key Competencies to the Learning Outcomes:

- Recommendation to remove the initials representing the key competencies currently linked to the learning outcomes, as this could imply an expectation to include these in a teacher’s recorded preparation. Suggestion to link the key competencies to the learning outcomes in the Introduction section only.

6. Integrated Approach:

- A positive emphasis on the integrated approach throughout the Draft specifications could promote thematic teaching in multi-grade and diverse classrooms.

7. Modern Foreign Languages and Irish Sign Language:

- Recommendation to introduce ‘Language and Cultural Awareness’ for all children from Stage 1, rather than Stage 3. Provide clarification regarding the practice of exemptions in terms of language learning and whether this will also apply to Modern Foreign Languages. Consideration must be given to the position of Irish Sign Language (ISL), as the third official language of the State, in the redevelopment of the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) from the draft specifications relevant to your comments.

NCSE Feedback on the Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specification

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

The Draft Primary Curriculum specification for Arts Education is a welcome document which will enable teachers to reflect on the diverse needs of their class and ensure playful and engaging learning experiences for their pupils.

The introduction to the specification (p.1) states that Arts Education is presented as an integrated curriculum area for Stages 1 and 2 with increased emphasis placed on subject based learning in Art, Drama and Music at Stages 3 and 4. It would be very helpful for teachers if there was clear **consistency** across all curricular areas, including Arts Education, in relation to design, titles, label, and sections. There is a lot of information for teachers to grapple with and a consistent approach in terms of layout would make it easier to read. Specifically, in relation to the Arts Education, there are many sections of information but it is somewhat overwhelming, as they are all presented as very important.

Aligning the strands in Arts Education will be helpful to all teachers, as they prepare playful and creative learning opportunities for their classes. Balancing the three strands will ensure a broad and balanced approach to Arts Education. In the past, in certain contexts, children with complex learning profiles may have been over-assisted in creating finished art works rather than ensuring that the children were gaining the most from the process. This is something that educators should be aware of and that, while children may initially respond to art works, it is hoped that they can create something new.

The consistency in relation to the **Key Competencies** across the Framework and subject areas is very welcome. However, it seems unnecessary to link them through initial letters to the learning outcomes. This may cause confusion in terms of what is expected of the teacher? Will teachers be expected to link all learning outcomes to the key competencies? This approach would appear to limit, rather than enhance, the competencies where a teacher could use their own agency to interpret them in relation to the children in their class.

The **concepts** for the different subject areas are the basis on which each subject is built. They are clearly laid out on pp. 11 and 12 for Arts Education. The appendices for the concepts on pp. 36 – 47 are very helpful but the link between the two is not clear enough and could be emphasized more.

The **learning outcomes** on pp. 13 – 19 show expected progression across the four stages. Clarity as to what this should look like for pupils with Moderate, Severe or Profound General Learning Difficulties and other additional needs would be helpful. Is it anticipated that teachers will solely rely on the Additional Support Pathways to ensure access to the curriculum for all? However, the broad nature of some learning outcomes may give some cause for concern e.g. p.13 'explore, experiment and improvise in Art, Drama and Music'. The Arts Curriculum (1999) provided examples of various appropriate songs and different musical pieces for the different concepts at class level. While the free range may suit some teachers, particularly those in mainstream primary settings, it may prove challenging for teachers who have a small number of very diverse pupils in their classes. While circle time

may lend itself to certain music concepts and songs, there is a worry that pupils may not be afforded opportunities to move past the learning outcome of ‘perform chants, play instruments and sing songs...’

The **Progression Continua** are an essential resource to support teachers of pupils with such additional needs. This is what has made the *Primary Language Curriculum* and the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* more accessible for teachers in special schools and special classes and, without this, teachers may not be able to appropriately identify the small steps within the given learning outcomes to plan quality learning experiences for their pupils. Learning outcomes are deliberately broad in nature, therefore, teachers need to be adequately supported with samples which can still maintain teacher agency. Without this, there is a risk that certain learning outcomes will not be developed.

The emphasis on **multi-sensory approaches** is very welcome and will be beneficial to teachers as they support pupils accessing the Arts curriculum. However, it is important to acknowledge that some children may have particular sensory preferences, sensory processing issues or tactile defensiveness. This should be highlighted within this section and that the advice of relevant professionals should be followed for pupils’ individual needs.

Teachers will require support in relation to **the integrated curriculum** at stages 1 and 2. Exemplars and good practice videos would be welcome here with examples to cater for the needs of all class types.

While it is welcome to see that **collaborations and partnerships** are seen as beneficial, adequate support material across all settings will be vital in ensuring that all teachers have the confidence to implement the Arts curriculum themselves. Collaborations and partnerships must be used to enhance teachers’ practice, not replace it.

The **assessment** section of this specification is very helpful for teachers and further support material and suggestions, such as checklists and rubrics, would be very welcome to ensure access across the areas for teachers in all school contexts.

The **sensory and embodied approaches** will be a very useful reference point for teachers of pupils with additional learning needs in both primary and special schools. The images on p.27 are particularly useful and could be explored further for different primary and special school contexts.

Section 2(b): The *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

The NCSE supports a pluri-lingual and participative approach embedded in the *Primary Language Curriculum* (PLC). It is very welcome that the PLC focuses on universal design for learning (UDL) processes in terms of engagement in language, meaningful student voice, multiple means of representation and expression, and specifically looking at the communication environment as a means of supporting authentic language development, where children's strengths are fostered, encouraged and utilised. This is very positive in ensuring that all pupils are engaged in learning and will ultimately lead to better educational outcomes for all children.

Some suggested amendments that may enhance the *Primary Language Curriculum*, including the Modern Foreign Languages specification:

P.1: Replace '*the curriculum presents for children across the eight years of primary school*', with '*...for children across the eight years of primary education*', in order to include children in both primary and special school settings.

P.3 Learning Environments: Language encompasses literacy, so it would be more accurate to amend and add in the following quote:

'Providing a communication friendly environment which recognises and uses appropriate visuals and other supports to enable multimodal means to language learning within a universal design for learning framework.'

'Providing a print rich environment that recognises and uses print and text as crucial supports for language learning. This includes texts on a variety of topics and across genres.'

P.3 Inclusive Education and Diversity – adding in adopting a universal design for learning approach.

P.3 Engagement and Participation – expand to include a range of communicative expression in line with UDL and inclusion, for example:

'Creating opportunities for all children to use different modes of communication and expression e.g. visuals, oral language, Lámh, written, video etc during learning experiences.' P.3

Assessment and Progression – include student voice in supporting next steps.

P. 8 Insert the following '*...They should also be encouraged to use language spontaneously to fulfil communicative needs and all communicative forms (verbal,*

multilingual, visual) are accepted and acknowledged. Teachers can further increase exposure to the language’.

P.8: Consider the position of Irish Sign Language (ISL), as the third official language of the State, in terms of the introduction of MFL and make specific reference to this.

P.9 Amend last paragraph to include – *‘An inclusive approach to language learning in the classroom enables all pupils to develop their language and communication skills across languages. An inclusive approach focuses on fostering the abilities and interests of children with consideration of their age and stage of development. It provides opportunities within a communication friendly environment for language learning for all with individual teacher, coteaching and whole school level planning being essential to ensure the success of this approach’.*

P.12: Final paragraph – It is mentioned that the Oral Language strand, which includes listening and speaking, requires specific attention in the early years of school. Oral language is an integral part of all learning across the curriculum at all stages and this is not clear here.

P.16: The *Preparation for Teaching and Learning Guidance* identified a new understanding of the term ‘planning’. Consideration should be given to aligning the key messages from the *Preparation for Teaching and Learning Guidance* in this revised language specification. The following statement may cause some confusion for teachers e.g. *‘they support teacher agency in making professional judgements when **preparing, planning, teaching and assessing all children**’.* Consideration should be given to removing the term ‘planning’ here.

In terms of the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages, consideration should be given to commencing MFL from Stage 1 to offer opportunities for all learners to engage in language awareness. We also need to consider learners who have come to Ireland from a different cultural background. The specification suggests that teachers cannot teach / celebrate the language and culture of their native countries, until Stage 3 which could exclude some learners with additional needs. For example, on p. 15: *they learn to understand, celebrate, compare and contrast their own and other cultures and approach children from other cultures with openness and respect’.* A celebration of culture could be included at Stage 1 for all learners. This is further supported on p.58 with reference to the transfer of skills for children who learn EAL. *‘For children who learn EAL, it is vitally important that the use of the child’s home language(s) is supported in school.* This statement suggests that it applies to all children, regardless of Stage 3.

P.47: Highlighting and suggesting three key competencies for each of the learning outcomes could be viewed as confusing, in terms of the message of teacher agency. It

also states that *'in many instances other key competencies outside the three identified, are also embedded in the LO'*.

P.50 Element: Developing communicative relationships – In the learning outcomes, consider adding *'using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication'* to the following statements:

- Ask and answer very short and simple questions using common words and expressions in the target language to obtain and give very basic/basic information about concrete objects, and personal and familiar topics *'using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication'*
- Start, maintain and end a short and simple interaction using very short and simple expressions, demonstrating an awareness of social conventions and drawing on supports* where necessary *'using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication'*.
- Participate in very simple classroom routines, activities, tasks and interactions, including very simple games using the L3 *'using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication'*.

Understanding the content and structure of language:

- Identify and demonstrate understanding of key information in very short and simple texts*, that relate to concrete objects, and personal, and familiar topics (although they may not understand every word) *'using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication'*.
- Recognise and demonstrate understanding of very short and simple words, questions, prompts, and instructions in the L3 related to everyday concrete objects, and personal, and familiar topics, drawing on supports* where necessary.
- Recognise and pronounce a range of sounds and sound patterns relevant to the language being learned and compare them across languages.

Exploring and using language:

- Produce common words, formulaic expressions and phrases to give very basic/basic information on concrete objects, and personal, and familiar topics, *'using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication'*.
- Prepare and recite very short and simple texts*, like a statement, poem, rhyme or song *'using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication where needed'*.
- Gather, create, and share texts* using English, Irish, the L3, and other languages to demonstrate and celebrate what they have learned about their own and other cultures *'using visuals, gestures, and supports to aid communication where needed'*.

P.78 Final paragraph – The NCSE welcomes the focus on the broad functions of language. There is a need to replace the sentence on ‘PECS’ as PECS is a licensed and specific form of augmentative and alternative communication that is rooted in operant conditioning and does not utilise a neuro-affirmative approach or strengths based approach. The NCSE does not endorse or fund the ongoing use of PECS.

Replace ‘Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) can also be used effectively to communicate needs, information and feelings ‘ with ‘Visual communication supports and systems are augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) which support pupils to understand and communicate across the functions of language. These can range from simple visual choice boards, communication core boards and using Lámh to using high tech augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) devices.’

NCSE Feedback on the Draft Social and Environmental Specification

Section 2(c): Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

The NCSE recommends that the rationale to make SEE more inclusive for all learners, in both primary and special schools, should be included in this specification. The NCSE welcomes the clear description of the **learning outcomes** (pp.16-19) across all four stages.

The **Global Learning Themes** (p.23) is a welcome addition, as this highlights the relevance of the SEE curriculum to global concerns. This is an important addition, as in order for all pupils to have a positive disposition, they must see value, meaning and relevance in real life. Pupils are more globally connected than previous generations and will be aware of the prevalence of war, famine, catastrophic weather patterns etc. As we focus on sustainability across the globe, building the awareness of global citizenship and partnerships will foster the environmentalists of the future.

The **Pedagogical Practices** (p.25) emphasise classroom practices that will provide opportunities for pupils to engage in learning experiences which will develop the skills inherent in the SEE curriculum. The **Concepts** (p.37) will be helpful for teachers as they prepare to implement the SEE curriculum across all stages. The **Skills** of SEE outlined on pp. 40- 42 will be a very useful support for teachers as it lists, breaks down and describes the skills underpinning the learning outcomes in the SEE curriculum.

The NCSE notes that the draft SEE specification includes the following language:

- 8 principles
- 8 aims
- 3 strands
- 3 elements
- 7 key competencies
- 8 concepts
- 8 skills
- 4 global learning themes
- 6 pedagogical practices
- 7 Additional Support Pathways

To assist with the reading and accessibility of this document, consistency around the language used will be required to avoid potential confusion for teachers, for example:

- *P.4 – ‘Concepts and skills’*
- *P.13 - List of specific ‘concepts’ and ‘skills’*
- *P.10 - ‘historical and geographical attitudes, concepts, dispositions, skills, and values’*
- *P.13 - ‘the concepts and skills of working as a geographer and working as a historian are the essential building blocks for SEE’*
- *P.21 – ‘key attitudes, concepts, dispositions, skills and values of geographers and historians’*
- *P.35 – ‘valuable skills, knowledge, attitudes, and dispositions’*

There appears to be a lack of consistency in language, in structure, in layout and emphasis. In contrast to the 1999 curriculum where “*Each curriculum statement has a similar structure and similar components [...including] overview tables*” (Primary School Curriculum Introduction 1999, p.41). This will have an impact on successful embedding of the redeveloped curriculum.

Consideration should be given to how the Global Themes, Pedagogical Practices, Concepts and Skills are presented in the document. Rather than the appearance of checklists for teachers to document or use for self-reflection, they should be presented as ideas to support the teacher in creating rich and engaging learning experiences for all children in primary and special schools.

NCSE Feedback on the Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Specification

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

The NCSE recommends that the rationale to make STEM more inclusive for all learners, in both primary and special schools, should be included in this specification.

The NCSE notes that the draft STE specification includes the following language:

- 8 principles
- 5 rationale
- 6 aims
- 6 strands
- 4 elements
- 7 competencies
- 7 Additional Support Pathways
- 3 pedagogical practices
- 4 overarching statements on integrated stem
- 5 phases /5 steps of approach to integrate stem learning.

As the Science, Technology and Engineering (STE) specification will be combined with the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* (PMC) to create STEM, consideration should be given to the rationale for using the following language and terms:

- *Curious disposition* (STE) versus *Productive Disposition* (PMC)
- *Conceptual and Procedural Understanding* (STE) versus *Conceptual Understanding* (PMC)
- *Conceptual and Procedural Understanding* (STE) versus *Procedural Fluency* (PMC)

In addition, consideration should be given to the rationale for using the following language and terms when describing the Elements:

- *Exploring and Understanding* (STE) versus *Understanding and Connecting* (PMC)
- *Evaluating and Communicating* (STE) versus *Communicating* (PMC)
- *Problem Solving and Applying* (STE) versus *Applying and Problem Solving* (PMC)
- *Creative and Critical Thinking* (STE) versus *Reasoning* (PMC)

To assist with the reading and accessibility of this document, consistency around the language used will be required to avoid potential confusion for teachers, for example:

- P.1 – ‘*Knowledge, skills and dispositions*’
- P.3 – ‘*Concepts and skills*’
- P.9 – ‘*Knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes, and values*’
- P.25 – ‘*Knowledge, skills and dispositions*’

- P.32 – ‘*Concepts and skills*’
- P.37 – ‘*Technology concepts with STEM*’

Consideration should also be given to the implications for all learners when sharing the learning outcomes in STEM with an entire class. Not everyone will achieve to the same extent and peers will be perhaps more aware of this, *‘when shared with children, learning outcomes can support them to have clear expectations and to be active agents in their own learning’*.

Finally, consideration should be given to developing the assessment section with a visual to explain the models and the various available options. This section could build on the UDL principles and look to develop pupil voice and choice within the assessment process.

NCSE Feedback on the Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

The NCSE welcomes the development of the Draft Wellbeing specification as a discrete curricular area, rather than being present incidentally in all subjects across the school day. The new specification focuses on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes in their broadest sense. It is to be commended that reference is made to attitudes and dispositions towards the importance of self and co-regulation for all pupils and the emphasis on developing skills in these areas (p.14). The focus on emotional development recognises that pupils often require support around specific skill development in emotional and behavioural regulation strategies, and these are skills which can be supported and developed, rather than expected dispositions within the school environment.

It is heartening to see reference to playful approaches and relational pedagogy in this specification. These are prime opportunities to focus on student development in the area of wellbeing in an authentic and integrated manner, particularly for pupils with complex learning profiles.

The learning outcomes are well presented across all stages and the Pedagogical Practices will be a useful resource for teachers, as they create learning experiences which will best support learning, teaching and assessment in their classrooms

The P.E. activities emphasise the key skills and also a variety of activities which will suit a diverse range of learners’ abilities, and school environments.

The following areas could be considered further:

Reference to Spiritual (p.1): The reference to *spiritual* appears on p.1 but could be developed throughout the entire specification for PE and SPHE.

Reference to Regulation (p.7): Meaningful learning experiences in PE could be connected with regulation and emotional wellbeing. The role of the teacher regarding concerns about children's regulation needs to be considered, as teachers are not always best placed to make such decisions and referral to professionals may be required. On p.7, the table could include headings on the left for Wellbeing, second row, PE and third row, SPHE.

Relational Education (p.8): Reference to relational education is welcomed. Consideration should also be given to connecting to pedagogy, as relationships need to be modelled.

Elements (p.10): The concept of learning through movement in the primary classroom could be promoted as a core part of the 'moving element'. For example, the concept of a chair-free classroom could be considered in terms of pedagogy.

Learning Outcomes (p.11): Consideration of a UDL approach could underpin the following statement: *'Differentiation and teacher judgement play an important role in supporting each child's progression towards the Learning Outcomes'*. Similarly, reference to a UDL approach would greatly enhance the following statement: *'A Learning Outcomes approach recognises that teachers are best placed to determine the learning needs and strengths of the children in their class. They make decisions about what, and how, to teach and assess by using appropriate pedagogical approaches and tools'*.

Key Competencies: (p.12)

The following statement could be enhanced by including reference to lunch and break times:

'Nurturing children's wellbeing requires a combination of formal and informal learning. It seamlessly integrates into the entire school experience'. Including reference to lunch and break times would emphasise the importance of these periods for children's mental health over the course of their entire school experience.

Learning in the Wellbeing Curriculum (p.30)

There needs to be more emphasis on the concept of co-occupation, as well as teamwork, in this specification. Working effectively as part of a team is a developmentally advanced occupation that some children will never achieve, nor may be motivated to do so. Pupils with additional learning needs may struggle with activities and sports where teamwork is required. However, they may thrive in environments where the expectation is to do alongside a peer, tolerate their company and move towards paired activities, group work and potentially team work. Physical education needs to be about more than teamwork, sports and competition with more consideration given to being active and healthy, in line with individual preferences and abilities.

Playful Approached (p.37)

The focus on play in the context of learning is welcomed, and in particular, affording space for unstructured, exploratory play.

Outline of the Wellbeing Online Toolkit (p.37)

The NCSE is working on developing a new NCSE Relate Framework, which could be a useful resource/toolkit to support the Emotional and Relational Education strand of the new proposed curriculum. Other examples of resources that could be included in the Toolkit are: **Movement Education** <https://www.smartcc.co.uk/smart-smartmoves.html>

Children and the Outdoors Lessons for schools (UCC)

A Play Friendly School: Guidance for a Whole School Approach (Play Wales)

<https://england-athletics-prod-assets-bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/2018/11/National-Autismhttps://england-athletics-prod-assets-bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/2018/11/National-Autism-Society-Autism-sport-physical-activity-PDF-2.1MB-.pdf>
<https://england-athletics-prod-assets-bucket.s3.amazonaws.com/2018/11/National-Autism-Society-Autism-sport-physical-activity-PDF-2.1MB-.pdf>

Emotional and Relational Education

NCSE Relate Framework

[Embedded Strategies - Every Moment Counts](#)

Health Education

[Public Health Framework - Every Moment Counts](#)

<https://www.drugsandalcohol.ie/28689/1/the-sleep-project.pdf>

Consideration should be given to the development of Progression Continua in Wellbeing. This will ensure that the Wellbeing curriculum is inclusive for all learners.

External Facilitators (p.47): This is an important message which needs to be emphasised.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

The specifications should endeavour to first and foremost be a guide to support the teachers in all school contexts. The inconsistency in presentation and language will not facilitate the embedding of the curriculum and may cause over reliance on educational publishing programmes to get a sense of the structure of the curriculum. Consideration should be given to the consistent use of graphics, language and structure across all subjects. This will support positive engagement with the new Curricula.

The inclusion of the Additional Support Pathways needs to be enhanced to support the stages of learning for pupils with additional learning needs. The Progression Continua in the *Primary Language Curriculum* and the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* were very inclusive of all learners in all school contexts and supported teachers in creating rich and engaging learning experiences. Consideration therefore needs to be given to the development of Progression Continua across all curricular areas. The online toolkit should also aim to guide and enable teachers to develop meaningful learning experiences for all pupils in all school contexts. Support materials for thematic teaching at all stages could also be considered.

If the curriculum specifications are to be implemented for all children in all school contexts, exemplars of effective assessment practices for pupils with a range of abilities will need to be included in the support materials. For example, in the Arts curriculum, consideration should be given to assessing song singing in the case of a pupil who is non/pre-verbal, or assessing art works for pupils with limited mobility and fine motor control.

The toolkit should aim to be inclusive and reflective of pupils' additional learning needs in primary and special schools. Including children who use eye gaze technology to be art makers, for example, would help in ensuring that teachers of pupils with more complex needs have been considered in the toolkit.

Ensuring that support materials are provided for teachers in relation to using the Additional Support Pathways in a meaningful way will be an important consideration. This will be

particularly relevant for pupils with complex learning profiles and those with physical disabilities. For example, providing exemplars to illustrate how a student who has limited mobility might engage with making music or creating art.

In terms of the Wellbeing curriculum, a range of supports regarding emotional and sensory regulation will be important in helping teachers to understand the complexities associated with moving from teacher-led regulation to co-regulation and finally to self-regulation.

Teacher familiarity with these concepts cannot be assumed. Explicit focus on what these concepts mean and how they can be supported by teachers will be important.

National Disability Authority



Údarás Náisiúnta Míchumais
National Disability Authority

NDA Submission on NCCA Primary Curriculum

Introduction

The National Disability Authority (NDA) is an independent statutory body that provides information and advice to the Government on policy and practice relevant to persons with disabilities. We have a role to assist the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in the co-ordination of disability policy. We work through our Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (CEUD) to promote the Universal Design (UD) of the digital and built environment, services and systems, so that they can be easily accessed, understood and used by everyone, including persons with disabilities.

As the NCCA undertakes the major work of developing new primary curriculum, it is critical that the curriculum be designed for all. Ireland has a diverse population, with a diverse set of needs in education. One component of diversity is disability. The most recent Census by the Central Statistics Office indicated that 22% of Ireland's population is disabled or has a disabling condition, which is approximately 1.1 million people.⁸⁹ As such, it is critical that all new curriculum is designed with disability in mind.

The NDA welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft primary curriculum. As the subject of Primary Curriculum for Science, Technology, and Engineering is greatly aligned with Universal Design, it will be the focus of this submission. Additionally, while many of our recommendations could be applied to all stages of the curriculum, they will largely be aimed at Stages 3 and 4 at the primary level. However, the NDA would like to highlight that there is a legal obligation to promote equality, prevent discrimination, and protect human rights in education.⁹⁰ As such, we encourage the NCCA to integrate the promotion of human rights across subjects and through all stages of the primary curriculum.

⁸⁹ Census 2022, Profile 4 – Disability, Health, and Carers, available at: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-cpp4/census2022profile4-disabilityhealthandcarers/disabilityandeverdayliving/>

⁹⁰ Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014, Section 42.

Similarly, all our recommendations flow from Ireland’s national and international obligations to ensure the human rights of disabled people, which are detailed below.

The Disability Act (2005) and the UNCRPD

Section 26 of the Disability Act (2005) outlines the obligation on public bodies to ensure that their services are accessible to people with disabilities, highlighting the need to provide integrated access to mainstream services where practicable and appropriate. Accessibility in education is a critical gateway to social and economic inclusion; inclusive education ‘is the primary means by which persons with disabilities can lift themselves out of poverty, obtain the means to participate fully in their communities and be safeguarded from exploitation. It is also the primary means of achieving inclusive societies.’⁹¹As such, accessible curriculum must be considered with the highest importance.

In 2018, Ireland ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). In doing so, Ireland became a State Party to the convention and therefore subject to the obligations of its articles. For the purposes of this submission, Articles 8 (Awareness Raising), 9 (Accessibility), and 24 (Education) of the UNCRPD are relevant.

Article 8 (Awareness Raising) outlines State Parties’ obligations to foster, at all levels of the education system, an attitude of respect for the rights of persons with disabilities.⁹² The obligation to provide inclusive education at all levels is enshrined in Article 24 (Education), which also directs State Parties to strengthen the respect for human rights through education.⁹³ The obligation to raise awareness and to foster respect for the rights of disabled people, is directly related to Article 9 of the UNCRPD, which covers the right to accessibility.

Article 9 outlines the obligations on State Parties to ensure that persons with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to many facets of our physical environment and society.⁹⁴ The UNCRPD committee outlined the application of Universal Design as a mechanism to ensure accessibility.⁹⁵ Universal Design marries the objectives of Articles 8, 9 and 24 and provides an effective path for promoting inclusion and accessibility to the greatest extent possible.

⁹¹ CRPD/C/GC/4, ‘General Comment No. 4 on the Right to Inclusive Education, Para 10(c)

⁹² UNCRPD Article 8.2(b) – Awareness-raising

⁹³ UNCRPD Article 24.1(a) – Education

⁹⁴ UNCRPD Article 9.1 – Accessibility

⁹⁵ CRPD/C/GC/2 ‘General Comment No. 2 (20114) on Article 9: Accessibility’, para 15: “The strict application of Universal Design should ensure full, equal, and unrestricted access for all potential consumers, including persons with disabilities, in a way that takes the full account of their inherent dignity and diversity.”

Universal Design

The promotion of Universal Design is enshrined in the Disability Act (2005), and is defined as, ‘the design and composition of an environment so that it may be accessed, understood, and used to the greatest practicable extent...by persons of any age or size or having any particular physical, sensory, mental health or intellectual ability or disability.’⁹⁶ Universal Design is based on a set of 7 principles and an associated set of 29 design guidelines; these principles and guidelines are intended to be used to evaluate designs. Universal Design can be used to design and evaluate the digital and built environment, services and systems—whether that be in engineering, web design, or the design of curriculum. Universal Design principles and guidelines can also be taught to students in order to inform the underlying thinking they use to approach design challenges, and ultimately to construct inclusive solutions.

The NDA has promoted the integration of the Universal Design principles and guidelines in education to guide students on how to design universally in age-appropriate terms. The NDA has published several resources to this end, including guidelines and modules.⁹⁷ We will include examples of primary and second level curriculum in Universal Design later in this submission.

In this submission we will expand on many practices that have grown out of the concept of Universal Design, including the [Universal Design Approach](#) and [Universal Design for Learning](#). Each of these concepts are interrelated and complementary; they apply Universal Design to different contexts to ensure that we don't discriminate by design, no matter what stage of the process we are in and no matter what we are designing.⁹⁸

Universal Design can complement design thinking, problem solving, and learning to help ensure accessibility and promote human rights in our education system. The NDA believes the primary curriculum for Science, Technology, and Engineering is an important pathway with which to foster this.

⁹⁶ Disability Act (2005), Part 6, Section 19A.

⁹⁷ ‘Universal Design for Education’, National Disability Authority, available at: <https://nda.ie/education/universal-design-for-education>

⁹⁸ A recent government publication is an example of Universal Design applied to a social problem that can be found in the [Universal Design Guidelines for Electric Vehicles Charging Infrastructure](#). These guidelines included a diagram of Universal Design principles on page 10, which is useful to understand how the principles are applied. See: ‘Universal Design Guidelines for Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure’, Government of Ireland, See diagram on p 10.

Consultation

The NDA notes the efforts taken to consult with the public on the draft primary curriculum. However, the NDA would like to draw the NCCA's attention to the absence of alternative or accessible formats for the five primary curriculum specifications on the [NCCA Consultation 2024](#) webpage. Similar accessibility issues were noted with the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#) document. The NDA also could not find any statement on the website indicating where accessible formats of these documents might be obtained on request. Without providing materials in a variety of accessible formats, meaningful consultation with people with disabilities and their representative organisations becomes impossible. Consultation with disabled people is particularly important when it comes to the development of curricula that will be used for students with disabilities. Consultation can help identify practices that may not at first appear problematic but, in practice, are exclusive or negatively affect parts of the population.

The right to accessible communications is underpinned by the Disability Act (2005). Under Section 28 of the Disability Act (2005) public bodies should, as far as is practicable, make electronic communication accessible to customers with vision impairments who use assistive technology, and make relevant information accessible to customers with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, Article 21 of the UNCRPD outlines that State Parties shall ensure access to information by, 'providing information intended for the general public to persons with disabilities in accessible formats and technologies appropriate to different kinds of disabilities in a timely manner and without additional cost.'⁹⁹ The statutory [Code of Practice on Accessibility of Public Services and Information provided by Public Bodies](#) is designed as a guide to assist public bodies in meeting this obligation.

The Primary Curriculum for Science, Technology, and Engineering's Alignment with Primary Curriculum Framework

The NDA observes that the key competencies of the Primary Curriculum Framework could be strengthened by implementing Universal Design in the curriculum and the corresponding toolkits. The two key competencies that could be strengthened by taking a Universal Design approach are:

'Being an Active Citizen':

Under this key competency, it is noted that students should develop a competency to, '[explore] solutions to problems in order **to view different perspectives and help others.**' Universal Design is critical to enable this, as the second principle of Universal Design asks

⁹⁹ UNCRPD Article 21(a) – Freedom of expression of opinion, and access to information

us to consider that any design ‘accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities,’ (principle 2).¹⁰⁰

Also under this competency, it is highlighted that students should apply skills learned through ‘applying...**design thinking**...to real life contexts.’¹⁰¹ In addition, ‘**design thinking**’ is identified as a key pedagogical practice in the Science, Technology, and Engineering Curriculum.¹⁰² The Universal Design principle three can inform and focus design thinking by asking students to design with real people in mind, by considering ways to simplify the design for ease of use (principle 3).¹⁰³

Additionally, principle seven instructs designers to consider the appropriate size and space requirements for different body sizes, postures and mobilities (principle 7).¹⁰⁴ To guide the application of principle seven, the NDA has produced the [Guidelines on Body Size](#).

‘Being a Communicator and Using Language’:

This key competency is defined, in part, as, ‘**Co-constructing** and articulating...**designs**’

¹⁰⁵ The co-construction of designs is a key feature of the design process. The Universal Design Approach can complement any design process by engaging with and prioritising the needs of people with more diverse abilities, characteristics, and preferences, including people with disabilities.¹⁰⁶ The approach involves accommodating for the needs of people that are at the highest and lowest percentiles of any given category.

Disability is merely one aspect of diversity, and Universal Design considers many diverse characteristics of potential users of any given design. However, effort is needed to understand the variety of specific design considerations that need to be addressed for the use of a given design by disabled people. As such, it is critical to embed the concept of co-design and consultation with disabled people in the curriculum to meet this competency. The NDA has developed the [Participation Matters](#) and [Collaborative Research with](#)

¹⁰⁰ The 7 Principles, Principle 2: Flexibility in Use, available at: <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/the-7-principles>

¹⁰¹ ‘Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education and Specification’, p. 10.

¹⁰² ‘Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education and Specification’, p. 21 and 22

¹⁰³ The 7 Principles, National Disability Authority, available at: <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/the-7-principles>

¹⁰⁴ The 7 Principles, National Disability Authority, available at: <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/the-7-principles>

¹⁰⁵ ‘Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education and Specification’, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Universal Design of Products and Services, National Disability Authority, available at: <https://universaldesign.ie/about-universal-design/products-and-services>

[Disabled People](#) guidance, both of which can inform co-design and consultation processes with disabled people.

The above components of the key competencies greatly parallel the aims of the Universal Design principles and the Universal Design Approach, and therefore would be strengthened by the integration of these concepts in the curriculum.

Curriculum for Science, Technology and Engineering Education

The NDA welcomes the mention of ‘creative problem solving and innovation,’ under the ‘Design Thinking’ heading in the draft curriculum.¹⁰⁷ The NDA would like to draw attention to some previous work that could be integrated into the curriculum to provoke ‘creative problem solving.’ The NDA previously prepared curriculum for a Junior Cycle [short course](#) on Universal Design. That curriculum material was used as part of ‘[The Big Idea](#)’ (TBI). The Big Idea is a creative education programme for students in Transition Year and Leaving Cert Applied. During the Big Idea, students work in teams to respond to one of five socially conscious project briefs while also developing key skills in critical and creative thinking, collaboration, and communication. More can be read about the Big Idea in [The Big Idea Ideation Tool Report 2022 -2023](#).

The NDA would also like to recommend that the NCCA consider integrating the double diamond model to complement the ‘Design Thinking’ process. The NDA considers that the objective to support, ‘authentic problem solving and innovation,’¹⁰⁸ would be greatly improved by integrating the [double diamond model](#), as it emphasises the design process journey by breaking down the stages and phases involved in design. The double diamond model can be found in the Action Plan for Better Public Services.¹⁰⁹ The NDA has had previous success integrating this model into design curricula.

Similarly, the NDA appreciates the NCCA’s attention to the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL), although we suggest reviewing its application in assessment.

Universal Design for Learning, ‘is a set of principles and guidelines that aim to develop expert learners by using a variety of teaching methods in order to lower barriers to learning and give all learners equal opportunities to succeed.’¹¹⁰ More information on the background and application of UDL can be found in the [UDL guidance for Further Education and Training \(FET\) Practitioners](#). UDL has three core principles:

¹⁰⁷ ‘Draft Science, Technology, and Engineering Education and Specification,’ p. 22.

¹⁰⁸ ‘Draft Science, Technology, and Engineering Education and Specification,’ p. 22.

¹⁰⁹ ‘Action Plan for Better Public Services,’ p. 14.

¹¹⁰ ‘UDL for FET Practitioners, Summary Version’, p 2.

Provide Multiple Means of Engagement (Why)

Provide Multiple Means of Representation (What)

Provide Multiple Means for Action and Expression (How)¹¹¹

UDL was created with the intention to provide a path to support all children, which is outlined as a teaching objective in the draft curriculum under the ‘supporting all children’ heading.¹¹²

The NDA welcomes the inclusion of multiple methods for assessing learning, where students can act and express their learning outcomes in the different assessment methods listed on pages 25-27. This approach to assessment is in alignment with the third principle of UDL. However, a more explicit tie to the third principle of UDL could help to add more clarification as to the reasoning behind multiple methods and potentially expand the methods to include more alternative formats.

The NDA would also like to recommend that there be more mention of disability and aging in the ‘Living Things,’ strand of the learning outcomes, outlined in table 5.¹¹³ Given that this strand is focused on developing the awareness and understanding of the unique characteristics of the body, it is critical that diverse and aging bodies are highlighted to students. Such a diverse perspective is necessary in the understanding of ‘the basic needs for humans to grow and thrive.’¹¹⁴ Here, again, there could be incorporation of content from the previously mentioned [Guidelines on Body Size](#).

Toolkit for Science, Technology and Engineering Education

To aid in integrating Universal Design principles and guidelines in the curriculum, the NDA would like to draw the NCCA’s attention to some of our programs that have content that could be included in the Science, Technology, and Engineering curriculum toolkit.

The NDA would like to draw the NCCA’s attention to our primary level workshop titled, [The Power of Design](#).¹¹⁵ The workshop is facilitated by Junior Achievement Ireland and introduces students to Universal Design. The Power of Design is a program for 5th and 6th class that focuses on awareness raising. It includes curriculum that guides students to consider how design can impact Ireland’s population in terms of diversity, inclusion, and

¹¹¹ ‘UDL for FET Practitioners, Summary Version’, p 20-22.

¹¹² ‘Draft Science, Technology, and Engineering Education and Specification,’ p. 20.

¹¹³ ‘Draft Science, Technology, and Engineering Education and Specification,’ p 13.

¹¹⁴ ‘Draft Science, Technology, and Engineering Education and Specification,’ p 13.

¹¹⁵ Universal Design in the Power of Design Project Report 2022 – 2023, available at:

https://universaldesign.ie/uploads/publications/Universal-Design-in-the-Power-of-Design_Project-Report-2022_2023.pdf

sustainability. It explores what design is and the importance of design in day-to-day life, along with an exploration of careers in design. The UD part of the workshop called ‘It’s Normal to be Different.’ ‘It’ highlights the needs and preferences of a diverse range of people and illustrates how these can be integrated in design.

As mentioned above, the NDA developed a short course for Junior Cycle titled, [Creating Design for Our Tomorrows](#). ‘The Short Course explores the positive contributions a Universal Design approach can have in the community, by enriching student experiences with Products and Services, the Built Environment and Information and Communications Technologies (ICT).’¹¹⁶

Additionally, the NDA would like to draw the NCCA’s attention to [Universal Design in Education and Training – Policy Landscape in Ireland report](#). This report discusses Universal Design in education as a whole systems approach to include the Universal Design of facilities and learning environments, services, and systems, as well as UDL for teaching and learning. The report also offers further policy background that underpins the integration of Universal Design in education, and points to resources that can help in formulating equality and inclusion in Irish education.

Implementation and Supports Across All Primary Curricula

In addition to the conceptual components of the curriculum and toolkits proposed above, it is critical that the implementation of the curriculum include concrete guidance for instructors to deliver and assess learning content in a range of accessible formats. [The NDA’s Customer Communications Toolkit for Services to the Public – A Universal Design Approach](#), includes guidance on communicating in written, spoken and signed, and digital forms, to ‘help ensure we provide services that are accessible to everyone.’¹¹⁷

The NDA would like to draw your attention again to Section 26 of the Disability Act (2005) which requires services administered by a public body to be accessible where practical and appropriate.¹¹⁸ The UNCRPD supports the right to accessibility in education and has outlined that, to ensure access, ‘the entire education system must be accessible, including buildings, information and communications tools (comprising ambient or

¹¹⁶ Creating Designs for our Tomorrows, Universal Design Short Course Project, Phase 1 Final Report, p 2.

¹¹⁷ Customer Communications Toolkit for Services to the Public – A Universal Design Approach, Centre for Excellence in Universal Design, available at: <https://universaldesign.ie/toolkits/customer-communications-toolkit-for-services-to-the-public-a-universal-design-approach-2#Introduction>

¹¹⁸ Disability Act (2005), Section 26.1(a)

frequency modulation assistive systems), the curriculum, educational materials, teaching methods, assessments and language and support services.¹¹⁹

Following from this obligation, the NDA observes that there are some concerns about the accessibility of the curriculum at the implementation phase. For example, in the Primary Language Curriculum there are concerns that there is potential to exclude those that rely on assistive technologies to access materials. This issue is highlighted particularly where the ‘Learning Environment’ principle is suggested to be implemented by ‘providing print rich environment that recognises and uses literacy as a crucial support for language learning.’¹²⁰ It is critically important that accessible tools that support language learning are available. For example, the only currently known software for speech recognition for Irish is ‘Abair.’ This speech synthesiser was developed as part of funded research, and never proceeded to commercial implementation or incorporation into Assistive Technologies. Assistive technologies and synthetic speech software technologies need to be made readily available as tools to ensure that the language learning curriculum is accessible.

Additionally, the implementation of the curriculum around Computational Thinking (CT), which aims to teach programming languages in the primary curriculum, is seemingly rooted in visual space. Where there are visual aspects to the curriculum there must be accessible variants to ensure that children with visual impairments are not excluded.

One such example of a tactile variant to this is the Code Jumper. This project provides a tactile approach which enables blind children to build introductory-level programs using tactile components which can be connected. It is, therefore, analogous to the Scratch programming environment which has gained prevalence recently. The importance of designing this curriculum with a Universal Design approach cannot be overstated for the reasons illustrated above. The NDA advises that the NCCA takes a multimodal multisensory approach to its learning materials, in line with the Universal Design Principles.

The NDA is active in monitoring compliance with the Web Accessibility Directive and, as such, we host a range of [design guidance](#) to help inform parties to prepare all their materials in various accessible formats. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.2. includes recommendations to make content more accessible to a wider range of people with disabilities and can aid in NCCA’s effort to ensure all their curriculum can be implemented accessibly.

¹¹⁹ CRPD/C/GC/2 ‘General Comment No. 2 (20114) on Article 9: Accessibility’, para 22.

¹²⁰Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)’, p 3.

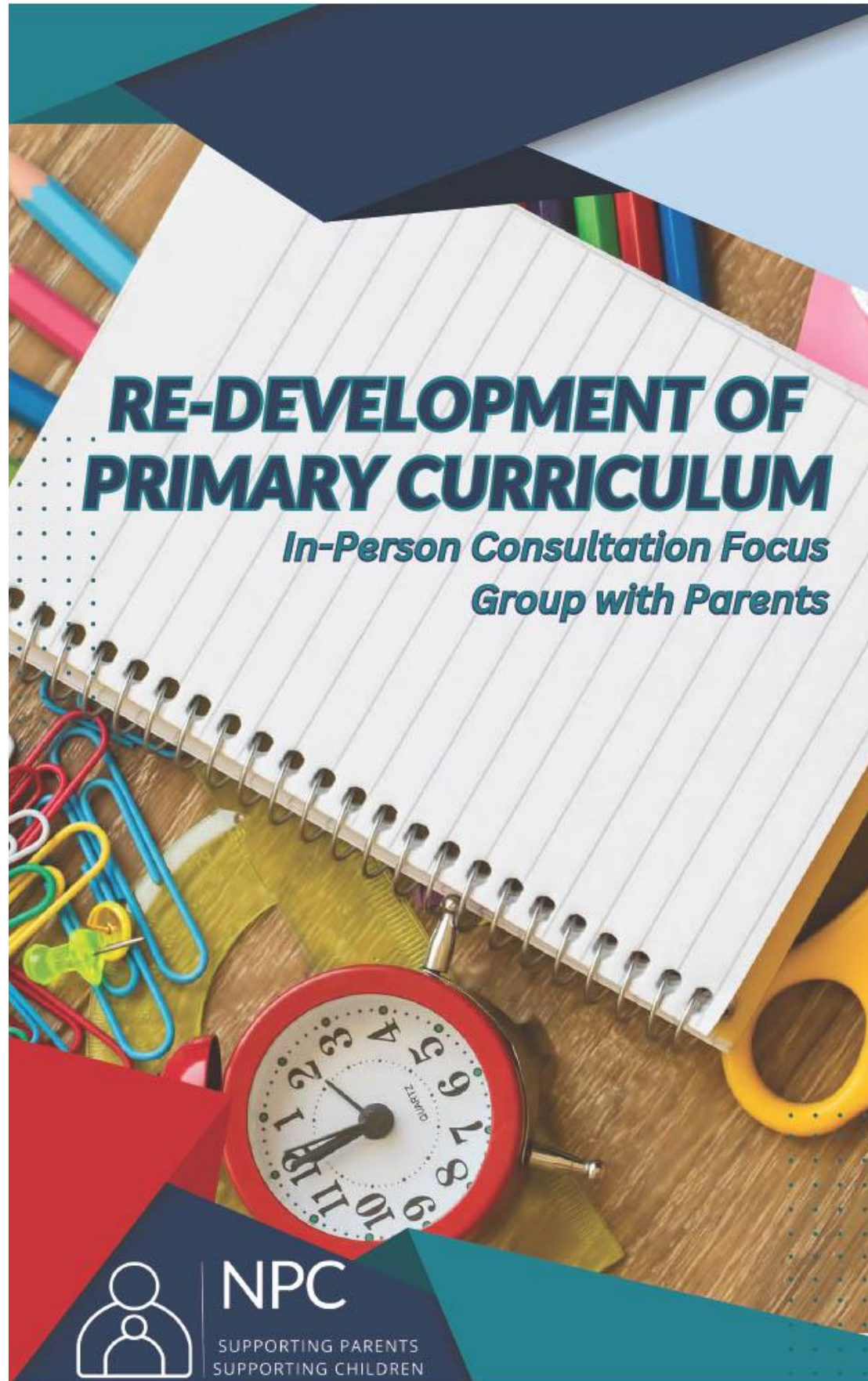
For this curriculum to be accessible and therefore effective, it is essential to ensure that the requisite tools and/or supports are put in place to enable children with disabilities to enjoy a rich learning experience. It is also important that teachers with disabilities have such tools available, as this can facilitate their active participation in the classroom, thus ensuring that the diversity in Irish society can be adequately represented.

Conclusion

Universal Design is not just for technical experts or third level students. Rather, Universal Design is foundational to an inclusive, innovative society. ‘The application of Universal Design makes society accessible for all human beings, not only persons with disabilities.’¹²¹ Universal Design should inform the approach we take to each facet of society, and the solutions we form to address the most pressing issues that future students will face. There is an opportunity to embed this approach into the national primary curriculum, which will ultimately help Ireland to deliver on its national and international obligations.

The NDA is thankful for the opportunity to prepare this submission and would be happy to meet to engage in further discussion. The NDA welcomes further opportunities to work with the NCCA to help ensure that Universal Design is integrated into the curriculum being developed for primary education.

¹²¹ CRPD/C/GC/2 ‘General Comment No. 2 (20114) on Article 9: Accessibility’, para 16.



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Introduction

The National Parents Council (NPC) is delighted to share the views of parents on the primary curriculum review and redevelopment with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

NPC invited parents to a consultation event on the 11th of May 2024. Invitations were sent to our database; our members and the event was promoted on our website and social media channels.

13 parents from around the country attended the event.

NPC was supported at the consultation by the NCCA who gave a brief overview of the progress to date of the redevelopment of the primary curriculum and acted as note takers.

Parents were given the opportunity to comment on the 5 subject areas and the key competencies which will form the basis of the redeveloped curriculum.

We asked two key questions for each area.

Q. 1 Name one thing you think is important in this subject area.

Q. 2 What do you think your involvement as a parent should be?

We also gave parents a chance to share their views on any other aspects of the proposals for the curriculum review.

All comments were recorded and have been shared here.



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

ARTS EDUCATION

ART, MUSIC & DRAMA



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Question 1: Name one thing you think is important in this subject area:

Drama Education:

A few parents expressed the view that drama classes provide an excellent outlet for children to explore their creativity, build confidence, and develop communication skills. Some parents specifically suggested including structured drama sessions, where children can learn about storytelling, role-playing, improvisation, and even scriptwriting.

Music Education:

Some parents stated that schools have a responsibility to encourage music education among children. They suggested different ways to do this including, allowing children to bring their own instruments to practise during music time, establishing music clubs in schools to promote musical exploration, inviting professional musicians to inspire children, and introducing each child to a simple musical instrument during primary school. One parent stated that finding music teachers can be challenging, while emphasising that making music education accessible within schools is important.



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Confidence Through Performance:

Some parents gave the view that performing can boost confidence, especially for shy children. For these parents, incorporating performances into the curriculum is important as it allows students to showcase their talents. There was a view also that while the arts should be open to everyone, not every child wants to perform. In the view of these parents, children can still contribute as prop designers, musicians, or directors. In addition to that, while the artistic process is essential, parents stated that there's joy in the final product of whatever artistic work children are undertaking. There was an alternative view that balancing assessment in arts education is crucial. This group of parents stated that too many performance-based assessments can lead to anxiety among students.

Art Exploration:

A small group of parents felt it would be a good idea to invite artists to present different art forms (e.g. Lino cutting/printing) to engage children, who may not always be interested in art. They added that it is important that their children be encouraged to experiment with various techniques and materials, such as clay from the beach.

Advantages of Arts Education:

Most parents acknowledged the advantages of arts education, including the development of skills such as critical thinking, open-mindedness, imagination, and creativity. Some parents also emphasised the therapeutic effects of the arts through reducing stress and promoting healing.

**NPC**SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Question 2: What do you think your involvement as a parent should be?

Additional Support:

There was a view among a small group of parents that there is a need for more support and advice from school on encouraging children to be engaged in the arts. Some parents stated that they prefer hands-on work, while others stated that they prefer digital technology. A small group of parents think there is lots of advice for parents in language and numeracy, but not so much in the Arts. They suggested that a check-list on how to support their child would be beneficial. One parent added that there is lack of feedback provided by primary schools to them compared to post-primary. When it comes to faith-based schools in Ireland, a small group of parents from other faiths stated that they need to be consulted on the ways their children are being involved in certain artistic practices.

Parental Involvement:

Some parents said they want to be involved in bringing their children to watch performances by artists and musicians in the streets. In their view, not only is it important that their children are following their interests in the Arts, but that teachers and the curriculum facilitate that for their children. For instance, one parent suggested organising a 'language week', where parents are invited to use their language and the Arts of their culture. This will show children, in their view, that parents are part of the school and care about what they learn at school. Another parent said they are responsible for encouraging their children to listen to different songs and share them with friends as a form of cultural exchange.



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND ENGINEERING EDUCATION



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Question 1: Name one thing you think is important in this subject area.

The Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI):

According to most parents, technology is important in children's lives. While a small group of parents recognised the importance of learning about AI and how it can be used as a method of assessment, they had concerns around it. In their view, there will always be a need for teachers because the human element of teaching is irreplaceable.

Concerns around STE Subjects:

A minority of parents stated that they had concerns about Maths, Science, and Engineering. When it comes to the Maths curriculum, these parents were of the view that it is not challenging enough. They also added that particular attention should be given to science to help children cultivate a strong foundation for laboratory work. As for Engineering, a small group of parents stated that children should be engaged in physical and visual learning without a screen.



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Concerns around the use of Technology:

All parents agreed, technology is important, yet some had reservations around it. Some parents said they don't allow access to technology at young ages, so their decision should be respected when it comes to technology use in school. Parents highlighted that in science and engineering, hands-on projects are important, and no screens should be used. Some parents added that their primary school does not offer computer classes, creating inequalities among students.



NPC

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SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Question 2: What do you think your involvement as a parent should be?

Technology as a Tool:

While recognising technology as an important tool, some parents stated that they wanted their children to come out of school with good mathematical skills, be able to read, and understand their place in the world. In order to understand what their child is being taught at the school; one parent emphasised the need for Toolkits in STE to be published.

There was a view, Rote Learning cultivates foundational knowledge in the maths and sciences. Based on this view, most parents find it important that children understand that technology is a tool rather than an alternative to other learning methods. As part of using this tool, some parents stated that children need to understand what the role of technology is, the values underlying it, and its history. In doing so, these parents asked that their children continue developing their social skills, which should not be replaced by technology.

Concerns around Technology:

According to a small group of parents, children should learn about the history of technology, and the developments it has undergone before using it. At the same time, one parent stated that technology could have effects on the mental health and wellbeing of their child. This parent was specifically worried about the muscle at the back of the eye of their children due to the overuse of phones. Most parents think introducing technology must be done at an appropriate age, while not replacing books.



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Concerns around Technology:

They emphasised that the physicality of books is important for some students. One parent gave the example of neuro-diverse children, who sometimes prefer books rather than the use of technology in classrooms.

Many parents stated that they want to be consulted about the use of screens in schools. They emphasised the importance of integrating competencies in this area. Some parents objected to what seemed in their view, an “in-direct messaging related to SPHE” being brought into other topics (e.g. non-traditional family structures). They stated that learning should be neutral, where social issues, values, and concepts in wellbeing are left for parents to teach their children about.

Concerns around Content:

Some parents highlighted STEM as a crucial area, where it must be promoted amongst all children. These parents stated that the way children are being educated about STEM is very foundational. Instead, they suggested the need for a space for some children to excel in these areas. They added that Science books in first class and second class are very similar, so there needs to be different topics for each class.

Some parents asked that gifted child programmes be more equitable. They suggested that teachers engage them more when it comes to math and sciences. One way to do this a parent suggested is through sending home materials to allow parents to incorporate it at home and in the day-to-day life of their children.

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SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

(GEOGRAPHY & HISTORY)



NPC

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SUPPORTING CHILDREN

Question 1: Name one thing you think is important in this subject area.

Initial comments

Children's learning about who we are, where we are, and where we fit in the world as part of Geography was identified by some parents as an important aspect of Social and Environmental Education

Referring to the proposed strand 'Exploration of our world' it was stated by one parent that the world 'their' would be more appropriate ('Exploration of their world')

Concerns around Content:

A small group of parents had concerns around the use of the term 'equity' within the document. These concerns are based on their view of equity as being different from equality. This is because, in their view, children may have equality of opportunity, but there will not be equality of outcome. One parent also expressed dissatisfaction at the incorporation of the term 'social justice' as this term means something different depending on the community. One parent made a point that some of the concepts within the draft Social and Environmental specification speak to critical race theory and serve to promote racism rather than avoid it. One parent made another point about History being used as a tool for activism and the inclusion of gender identity in the redeveloped primary curriculum. (This was more relevant to the draft curriculum specification for Wellbeing but there was a fear that this could also fall under the 'Social' aspect of 'Social and Environmental Education').



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Outdoor Activities:

Most parents agree that outdoor activities are important as they offer the opportunity for practical learning. Field trips, for example, were identified by one parent as a key aspect of learning in Geography. In addition, the emphasis on the local environment was welcomed. Many parents think children should be provided with opportunities to learn about people from their locality who have made a difference to society in different spheres (such as the Arts, Sports, STEM, etc.)

Methods of Learning:

A small group of parents believe it is important that teaching in this curriculum area is based on facts rather than ideologies. One parent highlighted the importance of learning from history instead of focusing merely on certain events within a particular history. For example, when engaging with the theme of conflict, this parent felt that children should learn about how countries overcame conflict and the lessons learnt rather than a narrow focus on the causes of conflict.

An opinion was expressed by one parent that teaching religion in Social and Environmental Education is not a good idea. From the viewpoint of this parent, religion always has a connection to politics. Another parent made a point that time allocated to teaching about religion is being taken from other curriculum areas, and that more time should be afforded to core subjects.

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Repercussions of Learning about Challenges:

According to some parents, an over-emphasis on challenges and crises can pose a potential risk, where learning about such challenges could have a negative effect on children and their wellbeing. A view was expressed that children in primary school are too young to be dealing with issues such as climate change and that “it is the role of parents to protect children and solve problems”. One attendee cited recent research which reveals an increased level of distress among children and expressed fear that some of the proposed content of the Social and Environmental Education curriculum could exacerbate children’s anxiety. One attendee made the comment “they are primary school children; it is not their job to save the world...let them enjoy childhood and learn about these in secondary school”.



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Question 2:
What do you think your involvement as a parent should be?

Some parents called for regular updates from schools on what is being taught to enable them to complement this / build on this through activities in the home. It was suggested that reports be provided to parents on a weekly basis outlining what is being covered in school. Moreover, it was recommended that such information be provided to parents in advance, so that they are aware of the topics that children are learning about and are prepared to provide responses /clarifications, as necessary. Whilst it was acknowledged that many parents already try to extend children's learning in SEE (i.e. promoting an awareness and appreciation of the natural world, drawing attention to seasonal change, encouraging children to engage in outdoor activities, more information and guidance for parents would be welcome.

It was stated that identifying meaningful connections between children's learning and their lived experience is important and one parent referred to the upcoming Olympic Games and the potential for children to develop knowledge relevant to SEE (Geography and History) when watching coverage of the Olympics. It was noted that there is also scope to develop literacy / oral language skills and knowledge associated with Arts Education (e.g. different symbols, cultures, dance, song etc.)



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MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES



NPC

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Question 1: Name one thing you think is important in this subject area.

Learning a language of interest:

Some parents stated that their children should be learning languages that they are interested in. Such languages should be useful and functional. One parent recognised learning Irish is a nice idea but questioned the usefulness of the subject in the long run. While some parents noted that choosing a language that children can practise will be important, they stated that the relevance of the language in the lives of children is as important, especially when it comes to languages like French, German and Spanish. Some parents also recognised that 'hard languages to learn' can be important too – as this will help build resilience in students.

Time management for Modern Foreign Languages (MFL):

Some parents expressed the view that Irish dominates a lot of the time in the week along with English and Maths. They expressed the need to introduce other languages early on, while finding ways to manage time allocation within the classroom and week. Some parents suggested that there should be a place for all languages. One way to start learning a foreign language, they suggested, is by being exposed to the music and cultures of the community speaking that language. For instance, they suggested that on a specific week, the school could select the language for immersion throughout the week – including music, culture, stories, customs, food and dress. This will bring a mix of cultures and a celebration of a particular language.



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Newcomers as a source of knowledge:

Some parents stated that MFL at primary school can support integration of children in schools with a diverse population. For example, Ukrainian children coming to Irish primary schools could be an opportunity for Irish communities to learn about this group of children, their language, and their community. It is a way to enrich all children's experiences by sharing their language with Irish students. While newcomers to Ireland can remain within their own community, MFL learning, in the view of these parents, could help children share their language outside their community. Some parents note that awareness of languages is important. These parents think it can be empowering for a child to teach their peers about a language they know.

Learning a Language early:

Some parents stressed that there is a benefit of learning a language early. They stated that learning a language later can be a struggle – the earlier the better. There was an example given of the teaching of Spanish in a local primary school in junior infants. The majority of parents noted that it would be good to see more foreign languages being taught in some schools. They believe that the child's mind works differently to adults – it is more malleable, and it is growing and building knowledge. Some parents think that if a child begins learning the language early, then that will be most beneficial.

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Methods of Teaching:

Some parents stated that early immersion in Irish can support a love of the language. In addition, one parent suggested that an Irish programme like RTE Junior works well and can support interest in the language. This also supports the culture around the language. One parent highlighted the need for explaining ‘why’ the learning is taking place is important – ‘why’ is it good to learn a language (Irish and MFL). Some parents noted that children should be able to cultivate confidence in their study of languages - not being afraid to make mistakes, which are part of the learning process.

Additional Support for Non-Irish parents:

Non-Irish parents stated that they could not help their children with their Irish learning, especially that the books do not come home so they don’t know how to help. This left them, they added, feeling confused as to how to help their children. It was stated that parents need help to support their children in learning Irish while at home. Non-Irish parents expressed how important it is for them to keep children’s native tongue and culture. For some parents, they noted that their children were coming home and using the Irish language in their household, where the parents do not speak Irish. Other parents stated that their children benefited from the additional support provided in the learning of English. They suggested that the same additional support should be extended to the learning of Irish.

Qualified teachers:

Many parents stressed the need for qualified teachers to teach MFL. They also highlighted the need for Continuous Professional Development for teachers and incorporating this into the introduction for MFL.

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Question 2: What do you think your involvement as a parent should be?

Consulting parents:

Some parents stated it is important to consult parents before MFLs are chosen. With MFL being a new subject in schools, parents noted that they may not be able to support children with this learning and they may not have the competence themselves. That is why they suggested that knowing what is going on in school is important. Some parents also noted that the foreign language teacher scheme in post-primary schools works well and wondered if that could be mirrored at primary level.

Experiencing language as a way of Learning:

According to a small group of parents, they have a responsibility to encourage children in ways that exposes them to languages. Pen pals still happen – this often leads to travel also. Parents noted that with Ireland being close to Europe, connections are easier to build than in other parts of the world.



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WELL BEING
(PHYSICAL EDUCATION - PE; AND
SOCIAL, PERSONAL AND HEALTH
EDUCATION - SPHE)



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Question 1: Name one thing you think is important in this subject area:

Health and Wellbeing:

Some parents emphasised the link between mental and physical health. They supported the idea of educating children about diet and physical activity for their wellbeing. Some parents also stated that they had concerns about the appropriateness of certain topics in Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) and their impact on children's mental health.

Developmental Appropriateness:

According to some parents, there is a need for aligning educational content with the developmental stages of children. From the viewpoint of these parents, their children may not critically analyse information and easily accept what adults tell them. For instance, parents gave the example of the introduction of topics like gender identity and sexual education at a young age. These parents stated that they want evidence to support the effectiveness of exposing children to such topics. They further noted that when it comes to topics involving sexual education, they need to be asked for consent.



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Parental Involvement:

Some parents expressed interest in more parental involvement and transparency in curriculum development. They said it is important for them to be informed about what their children are being taught. They also commented that teachers seem to have too much autonomy in decision-making while parental involvement remains very minimal. They asked for improved communication with parents about curriculum content and changes. They also asked for workshops and face-to-face meetings to gather parental input and ensure they are well informed.

Curriculum Clarity and Content:

According to a small group of parents, the new curriculum is vague compared to the 1999 curriculum, making it hard to discern specific teaching requirements. They noted that toolkits should be available, so that they are aware of the specifics of what their children will be taught. They acknowledged the challenges teachers face in adhering to the curriculum, while wanting the best for children, but further noted having concerns about them making decisions that parents feel they should be making themselves.

Diverse Family Situations:

According to some parents, the curriculum should reflect diverse family structures and situations to be inclusive and supportive of all children.

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Question 2: What do you think your involvement as a parent should be?

Ensure Curriculum Consistency and Clarity:

According to some parents, there is a need to develop clear and consistent guidelines for what should be taught across all schools to avoid variability based on individual teachers' or schools' values and worldviews.

Introduce Sensitive Topics at Appropriate Ages:

According to some parents, the introduction of topics like sex education and gender identity should be delayed until at least the sixth class. These parents call for consideration of the developmental stage of children and respect cultural differences in the timing of these topics.

Review and Adjust SPHE Content:

A small group of parents expressed the view that a distinction should be made between sex education and broader discussions of sexuality. They mentioned concerns about the incorporation of ideas around gender and sexuality into school curricula.

Reevaluate the Role of Religious Education:

Some parents stated that concerns about religious education should be addressed, and they questioned whether it should remain part of the school curriculum or be taught separately.

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Carefully Integrate Social Justice Themes:

According to one parent, the integration of social justice themes should be approached with caution.

Support Parents with Information and Resources:

Many parents told us they want to be provided with advance notice and resources about the curriculum, especially for SPHE, to help them prepare and support their children.

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KEY COMPETENCIES



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The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes introducing seven key competencies to equip children with the essential knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes and values which enable them to adapt and deal with a range of situations, challenges and contexts. The seven competencies are:

- Being well
- Being a digital learner
- Being mathematical
- Being a communicator and using language
- Being creative
- Being an active learner
- Being an active citizen



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We asked parents two questions:

Q1 How important is it for you as a parent that your child will gain these skills and abilities, which are known as competencies?

&

Q.2 How do you think these competencies could be included within these subject areas?

Parents had a wide range of views on the key competencies. Firstly, there were some views expressed regarding the decision to include these competencies at an early stage of the re-development of the primary curriculum. Some parents were of the view that there should be an opportunity at a later stage to consider the key competencies in the context of the redeveloped specifications for the five broad curriculum areas. (NPC and NCCA representatives explained that the seven key competencies are already included within curriculum policy as they are within the Primary Curriculum Framework).

These parents expressed a level of dissatisfaction (and frustration) that the key competencies are not open to review or discussion.



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Secondly, it was acknowledged that some of these competencies are supported within the existing primary school curriculum, and it would be prudent to look at how they are being achieved at present to build on the strengths of the 1999 curriculum and children's current experiences, and to identify gaps / scope for improvement. In addition, it was noted that some of the terminology used within the section on key competencies was too complex and advanced for children at primary school level.

There was some discussion also regarding children who are high achievers. There were calls for more support and appropriate learning opportunities for them, at their level. A number of attendees drew on their personal experiences of this where their children feel "bored" at school and called for a more explicit focus for those who have a high level of attainment in a particular area. One suggestion was that regional programmes could be developed / partnerships between a network of schools.

The remaining comments can be recorded under the heading of the some of the competencies.

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Being an Active Citizen:

Some parents said promoting activism is not appropriate for young children at primary school level. They questioned who made the decision that children should be active citizens. It was noted that the focus on promoting 'social justice' and some of the language around 'being an active citizen' is "dragging children into the adult world".

Some parents indicated that they do not want the curriculum to promote activism – they feel that children should be armed with facts and make decisions to be activists in certain areas, later in life. It was argued that engaging in activism must be of an individual's own choosing rather than being "forced upon them" and "to be capable of being an active citizen you need to be capable of critical thought".

Concern was raised about the political dimension of 'being an active citizen', there was a view that teaching at primary level should be fact-based, and the teacher should remain neutral. One parent commented that they "do not want my children to be warriors" and they do not want political ideology being associated with 'being an active citizen'.

Many parents feel it is their role to instil values in their children.

One attendee made the comment that the competency of 'Being an active citizen' may not be inclusive as it does not reflect the increased number of neurodiverse children who may be withdrawn or children with an introverted disposition who may not feel comfortable speaking out / engage in activism.

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Being a digital learner:

Concern was raised at the emphasis on digital technology across the specifications as it was stated that excess use of technology has an adverse impact on young children. Parents spoke about their efforts to reduce children's use of digital devices and that this approach will be at odds with the promotion of digital tools as advocated within the redeveloped primary curriculum. There was a discussion about the use of textbooks and how this might be replaced by technology. It was stated that there is still a need for textbooks to ensure that the basics of literacy and numeracy are taught and that children learn about how things work, how electricity is used etc.

Being an active learner:

The inclusion of active learning and being outdoors was welcomed as some parents commented that this supports children's natural sense of wonder, awe, and inquisitiveness. Field trips and field work in SEE was also welcomed.

It was noted that critical thinking is a key component of being an active learner

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Being well:

Some parents expressed some concern at the language of the competency of 'Being well' as they indicated that it is difficult to measure 'wellness' and 'being well' will be different for different people (influenced by a variety of factors). There was a view that 'competency' may not be the correct word in this instance. The question was asked "how do you define 'being well'?" Moreover, a question was raised as to whether a child who "is not well" is failing if 'being well' is listed as a key competency.

There was concern also around teaching children about controversial topics in primary school (such as climate change). Some parents commented that this would negatively impact the wellbeing of their children.

One attendee expressed the view that 'being well' and 'being a digital learner' contradict each other and emphasised the importance of promoting healthy use of digital learning.

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National Women's Council

NWC Submission on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Participant details

I am responding.

as an individual

on behalf of an organisation or body

Organisation or body name: National Women's Council

Are you willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation?

Yes

No

Are you willing to have your submission published?

Yes

No

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities.

Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum.

Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*

Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class.

Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values, and attitudes.

Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching.

Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching, and assessment.

Be for all children in primary and special schools.

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

NWC notes that the Wellbeing curriculum encompasses two important subjects: Physical Education (PE) and Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) and focuses its responses on SPHE.

Draft Primary Curriculum Specification for Wellbeing (PE and SPHE):

The curriculum builds upon its predecessor from 1999, but positively incorporates many of the evolving priorities of modern Ireland. However, there are areas to strengthen particularly with respect to addressing gender equality, tackling harmful gender stereotypes, sexual and reproductive health, and using education to combat gender-based violence. Additionally, there is a lack of reference to LGBTQ+ inclusion, which is crucial for a comprehensive and inclusive curriculum.

The proposed assessment process appears rigorous, but it's crucial to consider support for students who may feel uncomfortable to participate openly, such as allowing anonymous questions and sharing. Additionally, ensuring that the assessment process is culturally sensitive and inclusive is paramount, to meet the needs of marginalised groups of children, including disabled children, migrant children, Traveller, and Roma children, among others.

While the Wellbeing curriculum is intended for all children in primary and special schools, it lacks specific guidance for children in special schools. This aspect requires attention and inclusion in the curriculum framework.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)

Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

Science, Technology and Engineering Education

Wellbeing (Physical Education and Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

NA

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

NA

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

NA

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

NA

Section 2(e) draft wellbeing curriculum

Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

NWC provided an intersectional feminist analysis for both the Junior cycle and Senior Cycle SPHE consultation process. For the Primary school, the following is the overall feedback on the curriculum specification:

Whole-school Approach

Internationally, whole-school approaches to health promotion and RSE integration have resulted in increased engagement in education, improved social and emotional well-being, and reductions in risk-taking behaviours. To ensure the effective implementation these approaches, it is crucial to couple them with training and capacity building for educators, and schools, alongside the provision of appropriate teaching tools and resources.

Advancing gender equality

It is essential that all stakeholders within the educational system, including parents, guardians, and caregivers, understand the significance of a curriculum which is firmly rooted in gender equality for the well-being of young people. This involves tackling harmful gender stereotypes, promoting positive and healthy relationships, and addressing issues of consent. Additionally, awareness of reproductive justice is important to help children make informed decisions about their bodies and reproductive health as they grow up. Incorporating these in the curriculum will ensure students understand respectful interactions and personal boundaries from an early age.

Positive sexuality and reproductive rights

Recognition of positive sexuality and reproductive rights as an essential element of the curriculum is of fundamental importance. Presenting sexuality in a positive light and providing students with age-appropriate sexual health information is essential to establish a foundation of knowledge before students enter their teenage years.

Provision of evidence-based and objective information

There is a need to ensure access to accurate, evidence based, age appropriate, non-judgemental and Relationship Sexuality Education (RSE) and information for all primary and special school children, as well as children out of school.

Specific feedback with page numbers:

Page 4- Table 1: Principles of learning, teaching, and assessment in the Wellbeing Curriculum

The phrase 'celebrating the diversity' of ethnicity in the Wellbeing curriculum may superficially acknowledge diversity. It's crucial to ensure genuine integration and respect by addressing complexities and promoting inclusivity.

Page 7-Aim

An additional aim on inculcating values of gender equality should be included within the curriculum.

The UNESCO international technical guidance on sexual education provides clear recommendations that should be considered in the development of the curriculum.

Specifically, it recommends that students (5- 8 years) should be able to understand that:

It is important to understand the difference between biological sex and gender.

Families, individuals, peers, and communities are sources of information about sex and gender.

All persons are equally valuable, regardless of their gender.

Understanding what Gender-Based Violence (GBV) is and knowing where to seek help are crucial.

UNESCO recommends that the following issues are explored with students (9- 12 years):

Social and cultural norms and religious beliefs are some of the factors which influence gender roles.

The way that individuals think of themselves or describe themselves to others in terms of their gender, is unique to them and should be respected.

Gender inequalities and differences in power exist in families, friendships, relationships, communities, and society.

Stereotypes about gender can lead to bias and inequality.

All forms of GBV are wrong and a violation of human rights.

Gender stereotypes can be the cause of violence and discrimination.

Page – 17 Health Education – SPHE

There is scope for further elaboration on sexual and reproductive health in the curriculum. The UNESCO international technical guidance on sexual education (2019) includes recommendations for sexual and reproductive health for different age categories, for the primary school, the relevant age category suggests the following:

5-8 years:

Educate children about the natural process of pregnancy and emphasise the importance of providing love, care, and support to everyone. Along with promotion of culture of inclusivity and respect for all individuals' health needs.

Page – 26 Health Education – SPHE

Sexual and reproductive health can be further elaborated in the curriculum. The UNESCO international technical guidance on sexual education (2019) has recommendations for sexual and reproductive health for different age categories, for the primary school, the relevant age category suggests the following:

9-12 years:

Recognise the significance of comprehensively addressing pregnancy, contraception, HIV, and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). By fostering an open and supportive environment it will empower students to understand the complexities of sexual health, navigate gender roles and peer influences, and

advocate for safe practices, respectful dialogue, and reproductive justice.

Page 15 (Emotional and Relational Education - Stage 1 & 2), page 25 (Emotional and Relational Education - Stage 3 & 4), and page 48 (Glossary)

There is no mention of LGBTQ+ identities and experiences in content regarding bullying. It's crucial to include references to homophobic, biphobic, and transphobic bullying in learning outcomes, the glossary, and to provide support in the Wellbeing Online Toolkit.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

To ensure the curriculum's successful implementation, teachers and school leaders will require training and access to education tools/resources. This includes:

Mandatory delivery of the curriculum: To ensure equitable delivery of learning and support, SPHE should be mandatory for all students. The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) baseline evaluation report for Ireland also recommends including topics such as gender stereotypes, gender equality, and the various forms of violence against women in the mandatory SPHE school curriculum.

Continuous teacher training and Professional Development: Offering thorough training sessions and ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers is crucial. The lack of

confidence and competence among teachers in teaching Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE) emphasises the need for proper training and guidance. Workshops and seminars should cover the theoretical foundations of SPHE, effective teaching methodologies, and practical strategies for classroom implementation. Additionally, providing resources for continuous learning, such as online courses or peer mentoring programmes, can support teachers in refining their SPHE instruction skills.

Teaching Resources and Materials: Accessible and diverse teaching resources and materials are essential for facilitating engaging SPHE lessons. This includes textbooks, worksheets, multimedia materials, and interactive online resources covering various SPHE topics. These resources should also be available in Irish to support students attending Gaelscoils. Additionally, materials should be designed with the diversity of Irish society in mind, ensuring there is culturally appropriate references and depictions of marginalised communities – including Travellers, migrants, Roma, etc. This supports all young people to feel they are represented and valued in the classroom.

Parent and Community Involvement: Engaging parents and the wider community in supporting SPHE education is vital for reinforcing learning beyond the classroom. Schools can organise information sessions, workshops, and family events to educate parents about the SPHE curriculum and encourage collaboration in promoting students' social, personal, and health development. Partnering with local organisations and health professionals can also provide valuable resources and expertise to enrich SPHE initiatives.

Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Inclusive and Intersectional Approach: It is imperative that the implementation of the new SPHE curriculum adopts an inclusive and intersectional approach, addressing the diverse needs and experiences of all students. This includes considerations of gender, socio-economic background, ethnicity, disability, and other intersecting identities. By ensuring inclusivity from the outset, the curriculum can better serve the needs of all children, promoting equality and respect for diversity.

Comprehensive Teacher Training: Effective implementation hinges on comprehensive teacher training and professional development. Teachers require adequate support and resources to confidently deliver SPHE lessons that are engaging, relevant, and culturally sensitive. Investing in ongoing training programmes will empower educators to navigate sensitive topics, facilitate open dialogue, and create a safe and supportive learning environment for students.

Integration with Whole-School Approach: The successful implementation of the SPHE curriculum necessitates a whole-school approach that fosters collaboration among teachers, parents, and the wider school community. Schools should prioritise the integration of SPHE principles across the curriculum, extracurricular activities, and school policies. By embedding SPHE into the fabric of school life, it can maximise the curriculum's impact on young peoples' personal and social development.

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement: Regular evaluation and feedback mechanisms should be built into the implementation process to assess the effectiveness of the new SPHE curriculum and identify areas for improvement. By soliciting feedback from teachers, young people, parents, and other stakeholders, policymakers can ensure that the curriculum remains responsive to evolving societal needs and educational priorities. Any evaluations should include targeted approaches to garner the perspectives of marginalised groups, including young people who are from the Traveller community, Roma community, and migrant community. This would ensure the curriculum is inclusive and culturally sensitive to the experiences and perspectives of these ethnic and other minority groups in Irish society.

*The National Women's Council consulted its members for this submission and would like to acknowledge *Belong To* and Irish National Teacher's Organisation for their inputs.*

Natural Women's Council

Dear Sir/Madam,

We wish to thank the NCCA for the opportunity to respond to the draft Primary specification. The Natural Women's Council, a grassroots non-profit group in Ireland, is dedicated to protecting the well-being of children, women, and families. Our evidence based approach inspires people to take action on the many issues adversely impacting children, women and families. Through our advocacy, we mobilise communities, campaign for policy reforms and help citizens take a stand against oppressive ideologies. The Natural Women's Council includes parents, grandparents, therapists, health care workers, teachers, lawyers and more with over 20,000 supporters across the country. We have committed to over 2,000 volunteer hours this year without any funding other than donations from people around the country who see the value of our work.

We note the appalling lack of engagement with parents right throughout all curriculum consultation conducted since the Junior Cycle by the NCCA. Parents are locked out of the process by the NCCA, and instead activist groups and NGO's are made the primary stakeholders, in violation of the Irish Constitution and the Irish Education Act 1998.

There is a complete and consistent failure to engage parents early and often and as the primary stakeholders in the changes to what their children are taught. Parents are only allowed to submit feedback to the proposals at the very end of a long consultation process that never involved them. It's far too late to now ask parents what they think about it all.

Both reports issued by the NCCA on the Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle consultations reflect the NCCA's lack of interest and concern with parents as stakeholders. It is even unclear from the Reports how many parents raised concerns and what those concerns are. They are swept under the rug.

The Pause button must be hit on the Primary consultation and the new Junior Cycle Curriculum as well as the pending Senior cycle Curriculum. Time is Up. The NCCA were on notice from the Junior Cycle that parents would not consent to being locked out of the consultation process any longer yet the NCCA continued to ignore parents during the Senior Cycle Process and now the Primary. Enough is enough.

The Pause button must be hit not only due to the appalling lack of consultation with parents, but also because the path the NCCA is attempting to bring education down is anti-education and anti-child welfare and based upon radical ideology and the government's bizarre desire to create woke political activists instead of well educated children. We note just a few of the recent matters that have arisen that make it abundantly apparent that a pause is required;

1. The Cass Report and WPATH files make clear that transgender ideology is just that, an ideology, and not science or fact based reality. Children suffering from gender dysphoria need specialised and compassionate medical care, not ideological indoctrination in our schools.
2. The recent draft English Statutory Guidelines published in relation to sex education in English schools which removes radical gender ideology from the curriculum, prevents any explicit sex education until an appropriate age and makes it a statutory requirement that parents are provided with all materials in the way

forward for child safeguarding. This draft document makes very clear that all the recent NCCA SPHE/wellbeing curriculum proposals are well out of step with child safeguarding, parents rights, science and common sense.

3. Senator Ronan Mullen has reviewed the NCCA's draft primary curriculum documents and spoke at length in the Senate Chamber on the recklessness of intentionally inducing "climate grief" in very young children. It is clear that the intention is to traumatise young children with the goal of using that trauma to then politicise the frightened children. Just as transgender ideology is finally getting a proper public scrutiny, so is the issue of "climate change" and we must stop the trend of the last 40 or 50 years of telling children that the world will end in 4 or 5 years if they don't submit to climate tyranny.

4. A recent Irish Independent article decried the dumbing down of the curriculum, noting that "Teachers and academics have questioned the future impacts of "dumbed down" school curriculum..." and squarely and fairly laid the blame on the NCCA.

5. David Quinn discussed the new proposed Primary Curriculum and noted its new focus on political activism and the removal of the aim of "fostering a sense of Irish identity". This aim of "developing a sense of Irish identity" is currently in the primary level curriculum. It should not be removed.

More specific feedback on the draft primary curriculum consultation is as follows;

Section 1: Summary Feedback and Alignment with Curriculum Framework Document

The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include;

- **Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes** (generic/ unspecified).
- **Unclear, underdeveloped progression** across Learning Outcomes.
- **Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices** and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.
- **The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes** loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education.
- **Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness** (not starting from where the child is at)
- **More focused on global concerns** than local tangible concerns of the child
- **Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what'** - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts.
- **The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses** e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is '**Be an Activist**' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and

empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education.

- **Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity.** Focus should be on the subject matter.
- **Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound:** Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.
- **Provide no visibility for parents:** 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

The Arts Curriculum uses **the Arts as a vehicle for social change** (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns.

P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...'

'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.'

P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 '*Learning Outcomes*' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

Under '*Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions*' & '**foster inclusivity and social cohesion**' & '*celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity*' '*promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity*'

Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language.

Section 2(c): Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

- Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): **this is woke indoctrination**, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (*Be an Activist* is a Key Competency)

- **This is in opposition to child-centred teaching**, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development.
- **The Global Learning Themes (p21-22)** could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger.
- **SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear.** Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.
- **This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis** on lenses such as *empathy, respect* and *challenging worldviews* 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate?

Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer:

"...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy"

The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer" , seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of **what the learning objectives should be**. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination.

Page 21

Global Learning Themes

Looks like a **"woke" playbook**. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using **the curriculum to push political interests** rather than service the educational needs of the child.

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/2vvcabyb/draft_ste_specification_2024.pdf

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM?

Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge.

The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality.

Page 16: Learning Outcomes

Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1

Page 31

"Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time."

This last paragraph implies a **lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained**. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst.

Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but “spiritual” is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. **Physical education (PE)** has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the *PE Activity Areas* (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)

1. **‘...inclusive understanding of human sexuality’** (p.4) – we’ve seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools.

2. **‘...the concept of consent within relationships’** (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed.

4. The terms **‘diversity’** and **‘inclusion’** have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory.

5. **‘Recognise examples of stereotypes** (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote **gender equality through roles and responsibilities’**. (p.28). ‘Stereotypes’ in this context is **an attack on ‘heteronormativity’** the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society.

6. **Relational pedagogy - ‘children’s right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.’** (p.38) - **Parents rights** should supersede **‘Childrens rights’** at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact.

7. **‘Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum’** (p.45) – **Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area** and there should be **no secrecy pacts** between teachers and children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age

appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the “**Education for Social Justice**” woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of **psychological and emotional harm** to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include:

1. **Parental Visibility and Transparency:** There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials
2. **Curriculum Definition and Clarity:** Totally lacking.
3. **Concern over the reduction in the literacy allocation** to half of the 2012 guidance for the youngest learners. What has changed since 2012 to drive this?
4. **Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation:** Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:
 - a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final **Cass report** into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that **gender ideology should not be taught in schools**. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.
 - b. The introduction of **Critical Social Justice** and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable.
5. **Any cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed:**
 - a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,
 - b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs
6. **Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism.**
7. **Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches:** Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – **indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable**. They embed “**Critical**” **Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found.**
8. **Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.**

General Comments related to Schools

1. **Parental Consultation:** The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered.
2. **Ethos:** It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos.
3. **Social Transitioning:** Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools.

4. **Parental Knowledge**, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy.

5. **The Infinite Dignity document** issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.

In closing, we again question the legitimacy of this consultation process in light of the lack of parental involvement in the development of the draft curricula. As well, the emergence of the Cass Report and the English draft Statutory Guidance all suggests that an immediate halt should be put on this consultation process and a serious rethink occurs over what and how we teach our children.

As the above submission makes clear, the proposed draft Primary Curricula is not fit for purpose and will worsen children's experience in primary school. The NCCA are prioritising politics, ideologies and social justice over child welfare with this proposed curricula. This is not acceptable to parents and the consultation must be halted immediately.

We would appreciate a confirmation email that this submission was received. We confirm that this response may be published by the NCCA.

Yours Sincerely,

The Natural Women's Council

Ombudsman for Children

Arlene Forster
Chief Executive of the National Council of Curriculum and Assessment,
National Council of Curriculum and Assessment,
35 Fitzwilliam Square,
Dublin 2,
D02 KH36

Please note that this letter is being sent by email only

04 June 2024

RE: Consultation on the Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

Dear Ms. Forster,

I am writing to you to welcome the publication of the Draft Wellbeing Curriculum for all primary and special schools (Curriculum) along with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment's (NCCA) consultative approach to its development, including its consultation with children.

As you will be aware, the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) is an independent statutory body, which was established in 2004 under the Ombudsman for Children Act 2002, as amended (2002 Act). I am writing this letter pursuant to my statutory function under Section 7(1)(b) of the 2002 Act, which provides that the Ombudsman for Children shall encourage public bodies to develop policies, practices and procedures that are designed to promote the rights and welfare of children.

I am mindful of the wide-ranging experience and expertise of the many stakeholders who are contributing to the NCCA's consultation on this curriculum. Having regard to the OCO's statutory role to promote children's rights and welfare, this letter seeks to highlight a small number of ways in which the content of the draft curriculum could be further strengthened to more fully promote awareness and understanding of the rights and welfare of children.

I would like to welcome, in particular, the following aspects of the draft curriculum:

- The draft is comprehensive and detailed, and both the principles of learning, teaching and assessment, and the aims of the curriculum are clearly identified.
- Attention is given to the importance of participation and the views of the child in the learning environment within the curriculum, and children’s personal agency is expressly recognised.
- The new relationships and sexuality education curriculum incorporated within Social, Personal, and Health Education (SPHE) has a broad focus on accurate and developmentally appropriate information about human development and sexuality that is evidence informed, and incorporates consent, healthy relationships, communication and bodily autonomy. This is in line with the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child who state in their General Comment on Health that “Sexual and reproductive health education should include selfawareness and knowledge about the body, including anatomical, physiological and emotional aspects, and should be accessible to all children, girls and boys”.
- The emphasis placed on inclusive education, the recognition of the increasing diversity of the primary school population, and the emphasis on working collaboratively with schools, parents and the local community to support children’s wellbeing and provide children opportunities to develop a sense of community and belonging.
- The learning outcomes within the curriculum have been written to align with and compliment the anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools.
- The curriculum outlines new areas of learning including consent, diversity in family structures, media and digital wellbeing, as well as a renewed emphasis on emotional and relational learning across both Physical Education (PE) and SPHE.
- The curriculum incorporates the importance of play as a tool for learning, in line with the recommendations of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- The curriculum emphasises the need for children to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly, and includes an emphasis on the influence of technology in movement settings. The curriculum also acknowledges that a learning environment can “incorporate technology to enhance learning experiences” and mentions the use of technology-assisted assessment. Being a digital learner is identified as a key competency.

It appears that much of what is in the draft curriculum is consistent with a child rights-based approach, acknowledging and supporting the rights of children outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We also note that there are positive references to human rights values such as diversity, active citizenship and equality, and there is an emphasis on children developing an understanding of their rights throughout the curriculum (for example in pages 2 and 19).

However, I would encourage the NCCA to make more explicit and comprehensive references to children's rights under the UNCRC in the curriculum as express reference to children's rights would increase the visibility of the rights of children. It is important that children are facilitated to understand that rights and responsibilities are interdependent and to explore how this interdependent relationship is linked to the notion that rights are universal. The manner in which a number of rights in the UNCRC are defined offer concrete examples in this respect, which children might be supported to consider in accordance with their evolving capacities.

Some of the relevant international children's rights standards in this area which would provide some useful guidance in this area are:

- the UNCRC, with a focus on Article 2 (non-discrimination); Article 12 (children's right to be heard); Article 24 (the right to health); Article 28 (the right to education); Article 29 (the aims of education); and Article 42 (children's right to be made aware of their rights).
- the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No.1 on the aims of education;
- General Comment No.12 on the right of the child to be heard;
- General Comment No.15 on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health;
- General Comment No.17 on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts; and
- General Comment No.25 on children's rights in relation to the digital environment.

The inclusive and equality based content of the curriculum is welcome. However, we note that there is a lack of reference to particularly vulnerable cohorts of children within the framework. Although the framework recognises the diversity of the human experience, other than a footnote on page 3 of the framework outlining Ireland's obligations in relation to equality legislation, there is no specific reference to particularly vulnerable groups of children, for example Traveller and Roma children, children with disabilities, migrant children, children living in direct provision, homeless children, LGBTI+ children and children who are living in poverty. The OCO would encourage the NCCA to further acknowledge these groups of children within the framework, in order to ensure that it reflects children's lived realities, and supports them in achieving their educational potential.

Furthermore, we note that the curriculum will be accompanied by a Wellbeing Online Toolkit, which is yet to be developed. We believe that this Toolkit should include content related to the specific needs of, and challenges faced by, these groups of children.

I hope this will be of some assistance, and if you wish to discuss anything further please feel free contact me at privatesec@oco.ie.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Niall Muldoon". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dr Niall Muldoon
Ombudsman for Children

Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland

Submission on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specification for Arts Education

Organisation: Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland

The organisation is willing to be listed as a contributor and to have the submission published.

Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland would contribute to the consultation on the Draft Curriculum for Arts Education with regard to music, movement and dance, and to holistic arts practice and cross curricular creative practice in schools.

Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland is a newly formed association currently seeking membership of the International Orff-Schulwerk Forum Salzburg and recognition as a national Orff Society. Among its aims are:

- a. to promote and encourage an approach to music and movement education which is inspired by the work of Carl Orff and Gunild Keetman, their supporters and students, in Ireland and internationally ("the Orff Schulwerk approach").
- b. To develop the use of the Orff Schulwerk approach in an Irish context, drawing on Irish traditional culture and the wider contemporary and diverse musical cultures in Ireland.
- c. To provide a forum for all those interested in creative artistic practice to collaborate, learn and develop in the areas of pedagogy, music and movement practice, and well-being

The membership of Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland includes musician educators with extensive experience of working creatively in music and movement education with primary aged students, and training in the Orff-Schulwerk approach alongside other primary classroom teachers, both generalist and specialist music and dance teachers, in the UK and US.

Section I: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes

- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

This response is with respect to the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications for Arts Education.

The strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) for music lay chiefly in the specification of composing as a specific curriculum strand, alongside Performing, and Listening and Responding. This provided the potential for child-centred, creative practice of the type enabled by the Orff-Schulwerk approach to music and movement education. How well schools and classroom teachers have been equipped and able to fulfil this potential, however, is debatable at best.

The strands of the 1999 curriculum have been transformed into the strands of the Arts Education draft curriculum, responding to the increased focus on child-centred, holistic and creative practice in the new strands of Creating, Performing and Presenting, and Responding and Connecting. Even more so, this revised curriculum can be enabled through the Orff-Schulwerk approach, which is fundamentally child-centred and seeks for children to create their own music, dance, drama and art through the mediums of speech, song, movement, instrumental and broader sound and media.

This draft curriculum certainly has the potential to promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum, giving the opportunity for creative arts practice, and cross curricular creative work that supports all areas of learning. However, in order for this to be successful, classroom teachers need to be enabled to themselves develop an instinctive feel for the creative pedagogy that enables success in arts practice, and for the myriad ways in which arts practice can permeate all aspects of the curriculum. The splitting up of the curriculum into allotted times for each subject area risks a continued silo approach to subject areas. A further significant risk exists most greatly to music and movement practice, that these areas will be neglected due to lack of confidence, experience and training, in favour of other arts areas which teachers may feel are more accessible to them.

The draft curriculum for Arts Education has the potential to embed all seven of the key competencies into its implementation. This is contingent however upon music and creative movement being a full element of the delivery of the curriculum in schools. Through music and creative movement students can:

- experience and embody elements such as form and pattern, therefore contributing to mathematical understanding,
- practise active learning and citizenship through the creative process in their classroom and wider community,
- develop communication and language skills through the use of language as an expressive medium, rhythmic and musical impetus, and as inspiration for creativity and communication in terms of language and gesture,

- experiencing music and movement as a recognised route to wellness
- experience digital learning through incorporation of digital sound and visual production and reproduction methods into creative activities,
- experience an holistic route to creativity across the whole curriculum

Equally, this draft Arts Education curriculum has the potential to develop children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes across all curriculum areas through its child-centred and creative focus which can enable children to have real agency in working together and individually for artistic goals.

The assessment practices described in the draft curriculum give an overview of effective assessment in Arts Education. How this can be applied meaningfully in the classroom will require careful planning and experiential training for classroom teachers so that parameters can be developed and understood that support all learners.

The Draft Curriculum for Arts Education can be implemented in an inclusive manner to all students in primary and special schools. However, as with all aspects of this creative and child-centred approach, the need for experiential training for teachers in facilitating this approach to learning should not be underestimated. Providing an online toolkit can in no way compensate for the need for teachers to experience the creative processes involved in order to be able to process and scaffold these for their learners. Without such training, many teachers will lack the confidence and experience to explore these processes with their classes, to ensure that children learn and develop the skills they need for creative success at each level, and to scaffold and direct the activities in an inclusive and child-centred manner.

Section 2: You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:
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- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama) |
|---|

Our principal response to the Draft Curriculum for Arts Education is that it has the potential to provide creative and inclusive arts education in primary schools. However, the skills and knowledge required of teachers to successfully facilitate, process and scaffold this type of integrated arts practice are considerable, with particular reference to the areas of music, dance / movement and drama with which Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland is primarily concerned. The type of creative pedagogy described in the Draft Curriculum can be effectively approached through the lens of Orff-Schulwerk, which is an holistic creative approach to music, dance, movement and drama as well as wider artistic practice, which draws on other pedagogic approaches in these areas as required.

With reference to page 12 *Music concepts*, we observe that teachers need to understand how to structure and process creative activities so that musical concepts are experienced, explored and understood as part of the creative process, and not as separate concepts but arising naturally from musical activity. Without this approach to the teaching musical

concepts, children may learn in abstract, without understanding how these concepts lead to music, and activity risks actually being unmusical.

Orff Schulwerk practitioners undertake substantial training, from regular collaborative CPD, to intensive teacher training in summer courses, and also through postgraduate degrees and diplomas in these areas. These are accessible to trained music and dance educators and also to generalist teachers. A number of music educators in Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland have undertaken all levels of US teacher training in the Orff-Schulwerk approach. Orff-Schulwerk Association Ireland would welcome the opportunity to include classroom teachers in its activities and CPD provision and enable this approach to be of benefit in implementing the new Arts Education curriculum.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

As discussed earlier, it is our principal concern that teachers should receive substantial and experiential training by trained practitioners in this form of artistic practice for children. This is particularly pertinent in the areas of music and dance where there is considerable evidence that many teachers already feel a lack of confidence in their abilities to lead and teach these subjects.

Orff Association Ireland would welcome the opportunity to be involved in the development of teacher training modules, and to include classroom teachers in its activities and CPD provision and enable this approach to be of benefit in implementing the new Arts Education curriculum.

Physical resources that are desirable for the success of music, dance/movement and drama activities include such as sound-proof rooms and hall space, and instruments that are accessible for successful music-making by primary aged children without any outside instrumental instruction. Space and resources are at a premium in many primary schools, and this must be addressed lest it detriment the potential experience of the curriculum for under-resourced schools.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Since the foundation of the State, music curricula have been introduced and revised. In general, the verdict in retrospect has been that the implementation of each curricula has missed its potential due to lack of training and understanding on the behalf of teachers. It is our hope that this new curriculum can be the exception to this, and provide an international example of successful music, dance, drama and integrated arts education in primary schools.



**Maynooth
University**
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of Ireland Maynooth

**PACT team, Department of Computer Science, Maynooth
University**

**Roinn Ríomheolaíochta Ollscoil Mhá Nuad
Maynooth University Department of Computer Science**

To:

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

Date:

18.6.2024

Consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specification in Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE)

Our overall response to the Draft Primary Curriculum Specification in Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE)

- Listing computational thinking (CT) as one of the three Key Pedagogical Practices is very appropriate and we support this approach (p. 21).
- The section on computational thinking is appropriate (p. 23-24). It explains CT clearly and covers a good choice of CT concepts.
- The content of the “Technology Strand” is an excellent introduction to important computational thinking and computer science concepts at primary school level (Appendix 1, Table 11).
- This curriculum responds well to the desire from multiple stakeholders to introduce computational skills at primary level.
- There are two changes we strongly recommend (detailed below).

Two changes we strongly recommend

1. Renaming the “Technology strand” to **“Technology and Computing”** or **“Computing Technology”**. Our reasoning is as follows:

- The name currently does not accurately reflect the content the strand. Almost all of the topics within the strand (as outlined in the Table 5, p. 12) relate to computing, rather than what would be typically understood as technology.
 - The current name “Technology” may suggest link to Junior Cycle subjects “Applied Technology” or “Wood Technology”, which might not be the intention.
 - At Senior Cycle, the NCCA has already named the subject in which more advanced versions of these exact topics are taught as “Computer Science.”
- We propose removing ambiguity from the name of the strand by adding the word computing to yield a name such as “Technology and Computing” or “Computing Technology”.

2. It should be made clear that **unplugged activities** can and should be used throughout the primary curriculum from Stage 1 through Stage 4 in the “Technology strand”.

- The draft document gives a clear impression to the reader that unplugged activities are suggested to be used only as a starting point for teaching computational thinking (only at the first of four stages) and not at all stages of the strand (Table 5, p. 16, Learning Outcomes for Technology Strand, and Appendix 1, Table 11, both only refer to unplugged activities in Strand 1).
- We would argue that best pedagogical practice in computer science uses unplugged activities as an effective way to teach computational thinking and computer science concepts at all stages of education. As examples,
 - (a) unplugged computational thinking problems are used in Leaving Cert Computer Science and have appeared on the exam (e.g. LC exam Computer Science, ordinary level 2023, Question 13(c) is an unplugged Bebras computational thinking task from 2014 about scheduling with electric car charging substituted for mobile phone charging), and
 - (b) at third level, unplugged computer science problems are used to introduce concepts in introductory computer programming and introductory algorithms and data structures modules.
- We suggest either of the following two possibilities to avoid the misinterpretation that unplugged activities are recommended only for stage 1:
 - (a) Include examples of which key concepts could be taught using unplugged activities in Stages 24 in Table 11 (p. 37–40) [examples suggested in the table below].

- (b) Modify the sentences on p. 23, Computational Thinking section, third paragraph, to make this explicit (addition in **bold**):

“CT can be fostered through the experience of unplugged activities in the classroom setting which do not require the use of traditional or digital technology. However, **while unplugged activities are appropriate at all stages**, as children progress through primary education, it is important that they have increased opportunities to apply and build on their CT through engagement with plugged activities which use digital technology.”

Additional minor proposed changes

Additional suggestions are provided in the table below.

Change	Reason	Location
Abstraction definition (change in bold) “The process of filtering out and ignoring the characteristics of patterns details that are not needed in order to concentrate on those that are.”	Abstraction is often applied independent of patterns.	Glossary, page 33
Current text: “It can be useful to look for patterns...” Add this new sentence to the end: “ This is an example of generalisation, which can be practiced using plugged or unplugged activities. ”	This is an opportunity to highlight the value of unplugged activities in Stage 3.	Appendix 1, Table 11, page 39, row 4, Stage 3
Current text: “Abstraction is the process...” Propose adding this new sentence to the end: “ This can be practised using unplugged or plugged activities. ”	Opportunity to highlight that unplugged activities can be used to teach abstraction in stage 4.	Appendix 1, Table 11, page 39, row 1, Stage 4
Propose adding a new learning outcome: “ Explore problem solving using a range of computational thinking strategies. ”	Problem solving is referred to in the learning outcomes for stage 1 (decomposition) and stage 3 (debugging) but not stage 4.	Appendix 1, Table 11, page 37, Learning Outcomes row, Stage 4

Organisation submission details

PACT team, Department of Computer Science, Maynooth University:

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The PACT team at Maynooth University Department of Computer Science develops computer science resources and supports for teachers at both primary and secondary

school level. All our workshops, school visits, and materials are available free of charge. Teachers do not need any prior knowledge of computer science to attend our teacher CPD workshops. We specialise in computational thinking, using our resources to increase students' problem-solving skillsets and their engagement in STEM subjects.

Our “unplugged” teaching materials are adapted from our involvement as the national representatives developing tasks for the International Bebras Computational Thinking Challenge, through the Irish Computer Society’s National Bebras Challenge. Our teacher training and school visit programme has been funded by Science Foundation Ireland Discover Programme (InSPECT, CoCoA, and CoCoA23 projects) and Maynooth University. Since 2012, the PACT team has directly engaged with over 500 teachers and 30,000 students.



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Parents Rights Alliance

Draft Primary Curriculum 2024 - Consultation Comments

Parents Rights Alliance and Catholic Secondary Schools Parents Association (CSSPA)

Feedback is captured Blue text below.

Link to the main NCCA consultation page: <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/primary-curriculum-review-and-redevelopment/consultation-2024/>

Section 1: Alignment with the Primary Curriculum Framework

Link to the NCCA Primary Curriculum Framework: <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/primary-curriculum-review-and-redevelopment/the-primary-curriculum-framework/>

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

General Points

In response to the statements above, the proposed Draft Curricula would seem to undermine the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum. The 1999 Curriculum had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The above 'Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications' are debatable considering the following points, as each of the 5 Draft Curricula show:

Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes (generic/ unspecified) – the intent of each outcome is not clear from the language used;

Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes (little differentiation between 'Stages' (age groups) and across skills development); many learning outcomes specified for Stage 1 (Junior & Senior Infants) could be as easily applied in Stage 4 (5th and 6th classes).

Tore content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.

The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes could lose the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have certain minimum standards in each subject for a balanced provision of education across schools (whether urban/ rural, large/ small, mostly Irish/ newcomer, advantaged/ disadvantaged status) across the country. Therefore, one must ask:

How will schools be able to ensure and maintain standards across the curriculum across the country?

How will schools be able to Assess unclear Outcomes?

The ‘spiral’ nature of the 1999 curriculum seems to have been lost (where children would revisit a concept again later in their school lives at a greater level of challenge to develop and deepen understanding)

Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness (not starting from where the child is at)

More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child

Shift in focus to ‘how’ children learn over ‘what’ - could lead to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts. This is not appropriate or inclusive for all learners.

The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is ‘**Be an Activist**’ (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes, promoting particular positions and opinions): this follows Queer Theory and Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and foreign concepts of Race (such as ‘white privilege’). These approaches could trigger guilt, fear, anger, and existential anxiety, leading to a general decline in mental health and should not be used in the Curricula.

Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity could be challenging for children and not always age appropriate. If a Subject is being taught through a lens (e.g. of empathy/ activism/ of challenging stereotypes), where is learning for learning’s sake? The focus should be on the subject matter.

The deprecation of History as a subject at both Primary and Secondary level is a major concern. A foundational knowledge of both the history of Ireland, the history of Europe and the World as a whole has been a basic ingredient of any Irish child’s education. Understanding the past helps guide decisions for the future and helps act as a warning against repeating errors and atrocities from the past. It also helps put current conflicts into context. We have a concern that the NCCA are succumbing to the current fashionable trend of curriculum “de-colonisation”, something that appears to be rampant in Western culture right now, driven by radical Post Colonial Theory with it’s destructive political motivations.

In summary, these Draft Curricula:

Lack structure and clarity in the Learning Outcomes: need to start where the child is at and have a clear progression of skills and concepts to scaffold learning. The content is driven by high-level ideals and are intangible and invisible.

Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.

Provide no visibility for parents in their unspecified nature: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'. Moreover, the NCCA would appear to be going out of their way to circumvent parental visibility by every means possible – books staying at school, whole school and cross curriculum approaches, class contracts. All of these are attempted violations of parental rights by the NCCA and we are putting the NCCA on notice now that this will not be accepted for the Primary curriculum where there must be 100% transparency for parents.

Lack consistency: without a clear Curriculum (programme of work), how will the high standards of Irish Primary education be maintained across the country? From school to school?

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/ihskm40/draft_primary_artseducation_specification_2024.pdf

6. Please outline your response on the draft **Arts Education Curriculum** specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

1. This Curriculum uses **the Arts as a vehicle for social change** (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. Furthermore, this level of integration, means children do not get to enjoy and experience the Arts as valuable in their own right.

P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.'

P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'
Is this an appropriate goal of an Arts Curriculum? This is using the Arts with an ulterior motive, which is not appropriate? Is it in conflict with developing personal meaningful responses to the Arts?

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children:

P4&5 Rationale: **very intellectual intentions** around ‘*appreciation*’ and ‘*enhanced aesthetic and cultural understanding and begin cultivating their unique and collective ... identities*’ – is this age-appropriate? **This type of teaching is not inclusive as it is not accessible for all children.** There is over emphasis on Identity over Experiences and Skills development.

p6 Aims of *Artistic Engagement, Aesthetic Appreciation, Cultural and Contextual Awareness* – again these Aims are very high-level, intellectual concepts with little emphasis on skills development or enjoyment.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 ‘*Learning Outcomes*’ It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome’s content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes. Eg Stage outcome could as easily be applied to Stage 1 pupils and vice versa.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

https://ncca.ie/media/5pcpf4je/draft_plc_modernforeignlanguages.pdf

Language Curriculum – First Pass Assessment

Under ‘*Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions*’ & ‘**foster inclusivity and social cohesion**’ & ‘*celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity*’ ‘*promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity*’

Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language. Does this suggest an agenda of teaching a foreign language as integration of newcomer migrants over preparing children for their futures? How could it be possible to create social cohesion? Teach the language of newcomers? Surely learning a language should be being able to communicate, as a priority over Inclusion ideologies?

Section 2(c): Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/aqtb5phc/draft_primary_seeeducation_specification_2024.pdf

Social and Environmental Education Curriculum – First Pass Assessment

Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is an **indoctrinating agenda in how to be a good Global citizen**, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (*Be an Activist* is a Key Competency)

This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. Ireland has historically had strong identities around parish/ county/ province/ nation. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. These are strengths of the country which should be embraced, not diluted or diminished.

The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could all be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. All Children have a right to be proud of where they come from, including Irish born children.

SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear around the dangers of the modern global world (war, famine, natural disasters...) Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.

This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as *empathy, respect* and *challenging worldviews* 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate? Is this an appropriate burden to place on young people? Could Big questions like these lead to increased anxiety and disempowerment?

What about learning History and Geography for the benefit and enjoyment of the subjects themselves without an agenda of moulding vulnerable young minds and hearts?

Social and Environmental Curriculum – Further Review Notes and Comments

Page 18 / 23

Working as a Geographer:

"...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy"

This where the concerns go up a notch. The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer" , seriously ? We are already introducing a massive challenge with the integrated curriculum and in summary, this approach, while on the surface appearing as a progressive form of pedagogy, becomes **too "loosely constructed"** for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of **what the learning objectives should be.**

Working as a Historian: The exact same points apply as above.

Discussions in relation to climate change and sustainability are more appropriate for older children, once they have a pre-existing knowledge base to build upon and contextualise. Without this baseline, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination.

Page 21

Global Learning Themes

Quite frankly, this looks like a "**woke**" **playbook** and these themes would appear to be the real priority with respect to this particular aspect of the curriculum, over and above any learning objectives in history or geography. The fact that these same 5 themes are also likely to serve as "generative themes" across the entire Primary curriculum is also a concern, using **the entire curriculum to further political interests** rather than service the educational needs of the children involved.

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/2vcabyb/draft_ste_specification_2024.pdf

Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum – First Pass Assessment

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM?

Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge.

The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality.

Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum – Further Review Notes and Comments

Page 16

Learning Outcomes

Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centred, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1 (these are infants)!

Pages 16 & 17

Engineering

This is all very vague.

Pages 24 - 27

6c. Assessing Primary Science, Technology and Engineering

Further to concerns expressed above, the lack of specificity and clarity with respect to the curriculum content carries into assessment - without a clearly defined foundational core, the variation in learning experience and outcomes between different schools could become a major issue, particularly at the lower end of the scale.

Page 31

"Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting

children’s learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time.”

This last paragraph is worrying - it implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst.

Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf

Wellbeing Curriculum Specification – First Pass Assessment

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but “spiritual” is mentioned only 3 times (2 of those in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development.

Physical education (PE) has been co-opted to include more SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) content than “Physical” content in the learning outcomes. (e.g. at Stage 3 & 4: p20 PE Movement Education gets only 1 page, p21-23 show SPHE aspects of PE Emotional and Relational PE, Health Education PE, Community and Belonging PE. This is paying lip service to PE as a subject and introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the *PE Activity Areas* (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)

Additional Review Notes and Comments

1. ‘...***inclusive understanding of human sexuality***’ (p.4) – what does ‘***inclusive sexuality***’ mean – gay or lesbian, non-binary, transgender etc? ‘Inclusive’ human sexuality is quite inappropriate for Primary School children and should not be included. The teaching of radical Gender Identity theory – that a child could become ‘*a boy or a girl, neither or both*’ - as fact should be removed from the Primary curriculum in view of the recent findings of the **Cass report** into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria: **that gender identity ideology should not be taught in schools**. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools.

2. ‘...***the concept of consent within relationships***’ (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is most unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed.

3. ‘Provide children with a balanced, inclusive, ***age and developmentally appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality ...***’(p.7) - in view of the references in NCCA

and HSE documents in the school curriculum to the *WHO Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe* which indicate a highly sexualised approach to children (eg ‘0-4 years of age – teach masturbation; 9-12 years of age - teach first sexual encounter’), the age-appropriateness for sexuality and relationship education needs to be specified. It’s important to safeguard children and their innocence.

4. “Foster **respect for diversity**, championing **active citizenship, human rights, fairness, and social responsibility to create inclusive and compassionate learning environments**’ (p.7) - Schools should not be used to transform children into social activists, and ‘**diversity**’ and ‘**inclusive**’ are established terms for a pro-LGBTQ emphasis in SPHE material, which has led to an excessive emphasis on sexual orientation and gender identity. **Identity politics** has no place in the classroom - putting labels on children and notions of systemic racism, white privilege, oppression and intersectionality.

5. ‘Recognise examples of **stereotypes** (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote **gender equality through roles and responsibilities**’. (p.28). ‘Stereotypes’ in this context is **an attack on ‘heteronormativity’** the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. This is confusing for young children and should not be depicted in the Primary School Curriculum.

6. Relational pedagogy - ‘children’s right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.’(p.38) - **Parents rights** should supersede ‘*Childrens rights*’ at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact – e.g. transitioning to a different gender – and children should not be indoctrinated to become social activists.

7. ‘Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum’ (p.45) - External facilitators in the area of sexuality education who are pushing an agenda – e.g. *BelongTo*, *TENI* re LGBTQ content – should not be allowed to make presentations to children, especially in view of *BelongTo*’s training manual which advised instructors to lie to parents. There should be **no secrecy pacts** between teachers or instructors and children to keep teaching material secret from parents – this breaches parents constitutional rights.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

11. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

At this time, **the overall curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented** either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the obvious **“Education for Social Justice”** agenda which is blatant attempt at political indoctrination which, if implemented, would represent a **threat to the Irish state** as well as a source of **psychological and emotional harm** to the affected children.

Over-reach: There would appear to be an over-reach in terms of combining an integrated curriculum across major subject groups along with new pedagogical approaches, and with an overlay on top of social engineering goals in terms of Social Justice, Sustainability etc – this is a **recipe for failure**.

Parental Visibility and Transparency

There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts.

Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials

Curriculum Definition and Clarity

Notions that “being a Geographer” or “being a Historian” alone can be the primary learning outcome are not acceptable.

Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Removal of all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:

Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization

Parents reject the WHO and UNESCO Sexuality Education Guidelines – these are not age appropriate, they violate safeguarding and seek to problematise sex, gender and sexuality for very young children.

The introduction of **Critical Social Justice** and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism, either in terms of name or in terms of substance are not acceptable.

The teaching of radical Gender Identity Theory – that a child could transition their gender from boy to girl and vice-versa - should be removed from Primary curricula. The final **Cass report** into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that **gender ideology should not be taught in schools**. Also the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.

Cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed, be it in relation to themes of sex and gender or any other political themes, be it in terms of those in 3c. above, or themes such as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Climate or Sustainability.

This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,

Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs

Learning needs to be for knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism. In line with the above, all knowledge given to pupils must be factual, science based, age appropriate and not based on contested ideologies, e.g. **Gender self-Identification** Ideology cannot be taught in primary schools.

The “**lived experience**” of a 5-12 year old is very limited in the context of most of the themes being pushed in this curriculum, so the level of child agency and of a child-centred approach would appear to be inappropriate.

Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches

The focus on Social Justice is a huge concern. Education for Social Justice would point to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all of which would be heavily weighted in politics and radical postmodern ideologies – **indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable.** Unfortunately, most modern pedagogical scholarship intrinsically embeds “**Critical**” **Marxist activism**, which, based on the experience we see in other countries, **is pitched at destroying Western Society.** We’re not having that here so **alternative approaches need to be found.**

Fundamentally, the curriculum must be de-politicised and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.

12. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Collaboration with parents: There will clearly be a level of teacher agency with respect to the curriculum implementation and this will introduce a level of a level of customization at a local school level. Historically, the engagement with parents and the visibility to parents of what is being taught has been worked in a very open and collaborative way at primary level. It is essential that this level of cooperation is maintained.

Parental Consultation: The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered.

Ethos: It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos.

Social Transitioning: Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools.

Parental Knowledge, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy.

The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.



**RESPONSE OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND PANEL OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN IRELAND TO
THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT (NCCA) CONSULTATION ON THE
PRIMARY CURRICULUM- WELLBEING SPECIFICATION**

JUNE 2024

Background

1. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland (PCI) has over 190,000 members belonging to over 500 congregations across 19 Presbyteries throughout Ireland, north and south. The Council for Public Affairs is authorised by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to speak on behalf of PCI on matters of public policy, with the Council's Republic of Ireland Panel carrying specific responsibility for matter that relate to public policy in the Republic of Ireland, including education. Additionally, PCI is the patron for a number of primary schools in the ROI.
2. Throughout the denomination many hundreds of PCI members work across a wide variety of roles within education including principals, teachers, classroom assistants and support staff. In addition, hundreds of others serve on Boards of Management for both primary and post-primary levels.
3. PCI recognises that the delivery of the primary and special school's curriculum, specifically the Well-Being Specification will include aspects of identity; and social, personal and health education (SPHE), including how and what is taught, this will cover sensitive and personal issues. At the outset PCI would wish to thank the NCCA for the redevelopment of the curriculum and the teachers who currently provide SPHE to children and young people in their care, in a way which is appropriate for their age and stage.

Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

4. The report notes that, an integrated aspect of SPHE, Relationships and Sexual Education (RSE), plays a crucial role in helping children establish and sustain health and supportive relationships with themselves and others. **RSE supports children to**

acquire accurate and developmentally appropriate information and about human development and sexuality that is evidence informed.¹²² With the aims of the Wellbeing Curriculum include to: *‘provide children with a balanced inclusive, age-appropriate and developmentally appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality, fostering health attitudes and relationships while recognising the diversity of human experience.’*¹²³

5. Every approach to RSE is shaped by a particular worldview. Embedded in every approach, and every resource, are explicit and implicit judgements about the meaning and purpose of relationships and sexuality. It is naïve to suggest that any topic under the auspices of RSE can be presented in a way which does not involve moral or ethical considerations as there is no ‘neutral’ worldview or understanding of human identity and relationship.
6. It follows then that in developing the curriculum the NCCA will be making value judgments on what facts and what science is presented, and what is understood by ‘ageappropriate, comprehensive and scientifically accurate’. The content and resources used to deliver this curriculum should therefore be open to scrutiny, and should ensure that they acknowledge differences in worldview positions e.g. the Christian belief in the sanctity of life from conception.
7. In an increasingly pluralistic context, Relationships and Sexuality Education should, of course, be taught in a sensitive and inclusive manner, where teaching is reinforced and supported by policies and processes that schools have in place around safeguarding, bullying and pastoral care. Young people should have the opportunity to explore their own personal morals, values and beliefs including the moral and ethical considerations around sensitive issues like abortion and contraception.
8. At various points the report references ‘identity’ and the ‘development of children’s identity’³ however, the NCCA fails to provide a definition for what ‘gender’ or ‘identity’ means in the context of this report. It would be beneficial for both parents and stakeholders if these were clearly defined.
9. The NCCA curriculum fails to outline how much time in class will be spent teaching SPHE, and whether teachers have an opportunity to ‘opt-out’ should they have a moral or ethical objection.

¹²² NCCA Draft Wellbeing Specification For all primary and special schools for consultation (March 2024) page 5.

¹²³ NCCA Draft Wellbeing Specification For all primary and special schools for consultation (March 2024) page 7. ³For example NCCA Draft Wellbeing Specification For all primary and special schools for consultation (March 2024) page 4, 6, 17, 26 etc.

10. Finally, PCI urges that the NCCA takes account of the findings of the Cass Review and that these should be reflected in the Wellbeing Specification of the curriculum.¹²⁴

¹²⁴ The Cass Review, 'Independent review of gender identity services for children and young people' (April 2024)

Primary Schools Mini-Basketball Group

**Submission to the NCCA on the draft Wellbeing
Specification for all primary and special schools document
for consultation issued March 2024**

From the following on behalf of Primary Schools Mini-Basketball

Richie O'Mahoney: Gaelscoil an Eiscir Riada, Tulach Mhór. Acting chair of the Primary Schools Mini-Basketball National Committee (PCMNC).

Carmel Murphy: Principal St Columbanus N.S Dublin, Chairperson Dublin Primary Schools Mini-Basketball Board.

Noel Keating Associates: retired teacher and facilitator to the PSMNC.

Note: A copy of a brochure follows this text. Hard copies are available from the email address below.

c/o Noel Keating Associates, Woodlawn, Hillcrest Rd, Sandyford Dublin 18 D 18E0Y8

Email: noelkeatingwoodlawn@gmail.com

Introduction

Primary Schools Mini-Basketball is a school sport programme which enables children to learn, play and enjoy basketball in an educational environment. The Primary Schools Mini Basketball National Committee (PSMNC) is the governing Committee for Primary Schools basketball in Ireland and there are registered areas organising local programmes. A copy of the current Primary Schools Mini-Basketball brochure which outlines our approach follows this text.

In general, we welcome the document and in particular the reference to PE in the second paragraph of the heading Physical Education (PE) on page 4, and the increase in the recommended time for Physical Education (PE).

Re Primary Schools Mini-Basketball.

- The Mini-Basketball approach was first introduced to Ireland in 1972 and was based on a child-centred approach to introducing basketball to children of primary school age which was developed in Spain and then spread worldwide. It evolved into MiniSport and then later to PSMNC.
- The Mini-Basketball approach continues to be innovative, and the recent introduction of Mini 3x3 in particular (as explained in the brochure which follows this text) provides teachers with an opportunity to enable children to learn, play, enjoy, appreciate and understand physical activity in a practical way. It can be experienced in any school facility with baskets, both outdoor and indoor.
- We suggest the activities as outlined in the brochure are closely aligned with the concept of Physical Literacy and what we understand are the aims and principles of the draft Wellbeing Specification.
- Basketball is already a highly popular sport among primary school children with 65% of them participating in the sport during PE and 33% taking part in basketball as an extra-curricular school sport (Source: CSPPA Study 2022).
- In practice, Mini-Basketball offers a wide range of movement, ball handling, shooting, dribbling and team games suitable for the PE lesson in all schools, particularly through the Mini3x3 game.
- The PSMNC (ref brochure) supports the empowerment of teachers to deliver the PE programme and extra-curricular sport, supported by external agents and agencies.

Recommendation

The combination of basketball's existing popularity among primary school children, Mini-Basketball's compatibility with the principles and aims of PE, and the empowerment by the PSMNC of teachers to deliver the PE programme, makes MiniBasketball an ideal vehicle for incorporation as a key component of the PE

programme as part of the new Wellbeing Framework, which we are now recommending.

General observations and recommendations

- 1 According to the 2022 CSPPA Study published by Sport Ireland, 23% of children attending primary schools met the National Physical Activity (PA) Guidelines. It is clear that such a low standard of achievement in respect of numeracy or literacy would lead to an outcry. And, while we can draw on data regarding literacy and numeracy to “inform, shape and guide future learning experiences” as page 2 of the draft Wellbeing Specification aspires to, we currently have no Irish data on the levels of physical literacy among children of any age, including primary school children. **The development and introduction of a mechanism to address this deficit is a priority if we are to aspire to realistically measure the progress of our children’s development as recommended in Action 1 of the National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027 and we recommend that action is taken to address this as a matter of urgency.**
- 2 The 2022 CSPPA study found that only 21% of primary schools had an indoor sports hall while 77% of post Primary schools had sports halls. **The Department of Education and Science needs to invest significantly in indoor sports halls and or facilitating schools to avail of nearby sports facilities, in order to deliver the proposed PE curriculum with its emphasis on other areas in addition to games.**
- 3 It is widely believed among primary teachers that PE is the most challenging of subjects in the primary school, given concerns re facilities and training. The draft specification document is, by its nature, quite theoretical. It is hard to envision teachers being solely motivated or inspired by it to upskill in and commit to PE both in terms of delivery and in terms of responsibly supervising the multiplicity of agents and agencies involved. **It is essential therefore that the proposed Toolkit is drafted in such a way as to provide a practical, realistic and engaging document which motivates, inspires and supports teachers in all types of schools.**
- 4 The Houses of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Education and Science Third Report on the Status of Physical Education published in June 2005, described the then current system of PE in Irish Primary schools as “ad hoc”. The same Report recommended that “specialist PE teachers should be provided at primary level (while not exempting the class teacher)”. **In rejecting a specialist approach (ref (Department of Education Circular 0042/2018), it is incumbent on the Department to invest significantly in pre-service, specific in-service in the new approach to teaching PE, and in continuous professional development in PE, for all practising teachers and principals.**

Specific suggestions regarding the draft Specification document

- 1 Page 4: The phrase “over high level performance emphasised in sport or isolated physical activity” is misleading. For instance, Primary Schools Basketball (as can be seen from the brochure) emphasises learning, playing and enjoying over performance outcomes. Other sports bodies (but not all) do likewise. Also the term High Performance is used to describe elite sports performance at national and international levels by the Government and by Sport Ireland.

For many reasons, extra-curricular sports activities tend more and more to take place during school hours. The current Curriculum states that “The extra-curricular programme, therefore that involves the implementation of competitive activities, should always reflect the aims and objectives of the physical education programme”. Perhaps consideration might be given to the following wording:

PE prioritises learning, participation, enjoyment, self-referenced progress, and the creation of a supportive environment for all children. Extra-curricular sports and physical activity programmes should reflect the aims and principles of the Wellbeing Curriculum.

- 2 Page 23 Citizenship: we suggest that the word training is deleted as it is unclear what it actually means.
- 3 Page 44 Group games: we suggest the addition of the word Mini – perhaps amending as follows “**appropriate Mini, small-sided games and activities....**” The prefix Mini assumes small-sided, but also primary school child appropriate equipment, rules and activities.

We are not sure what is meant by the phrase “and those from other cultures”. If the term is meant to describe games like the two most popular ones described in the 2022 CSSP Study which are Basketball and Soccer (in that order), then the phrase could be considered unintentionally offensive as these and others are global games. We therefore recommend the sentence be re-drafted along the following lines: **Schools are recommended to enable children experience a wide range of games played in Ireland.**

We would like to see a greater emphasis placed on the development of sports skills in addition to fundamental movement skills (ref brochure).

We also recommend that the term invasion games is defined in the Glossary.

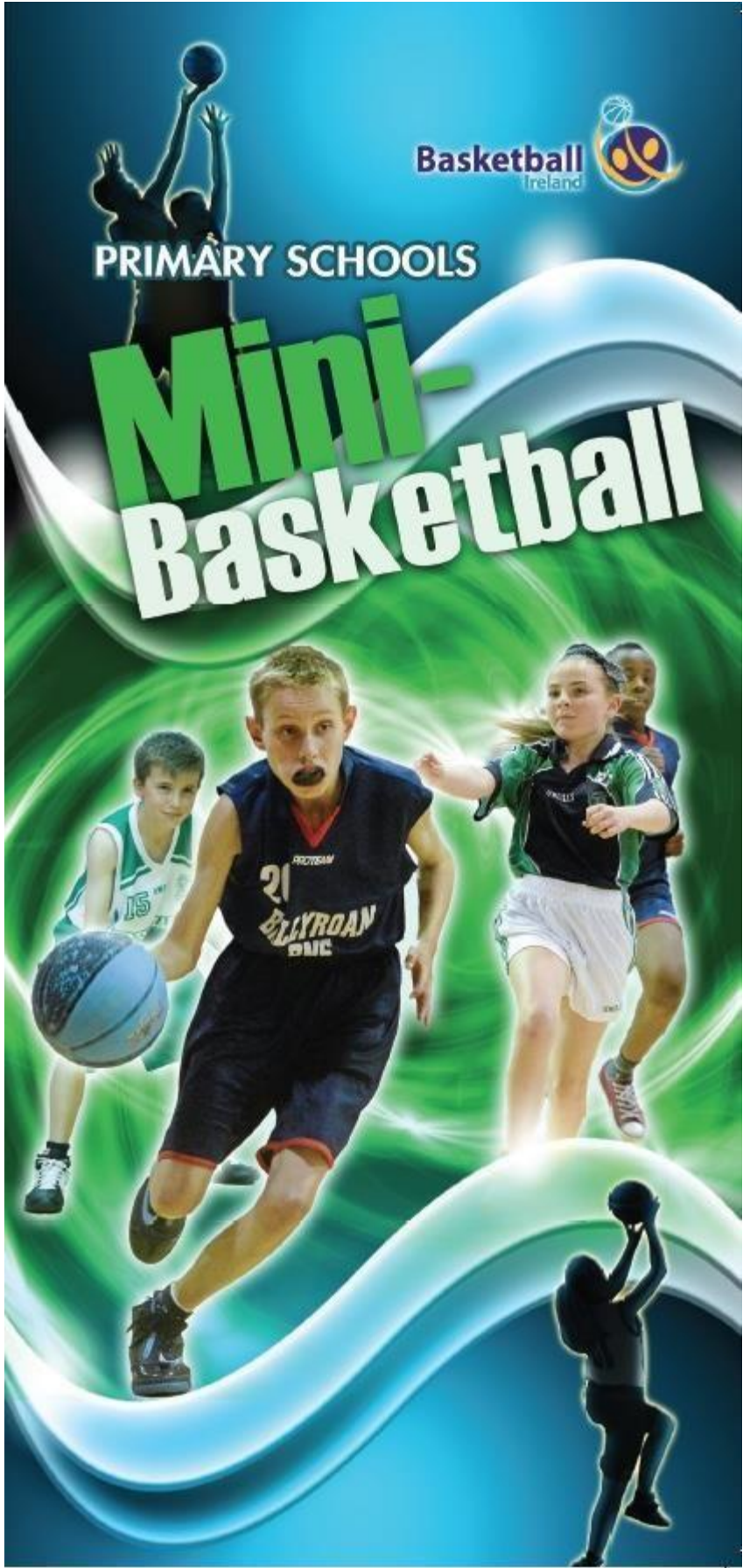
We wish the new approach to the teaching of PE every success.

References

Primary Schools Mini-Basketball brochure which follows this text.

Children's Sport Participation and Physical Activity Study 2022 published by Sport Ireland and Sport Northern Ireland.

Government of Ireland National Sports Policy 2018 -2027.



PRIMARY SCHOOLS MINI-BASKETBALL
www.primaryschoolsminibasketballireland.com

Primary Schools Mini-Basketball is a schools' sport programme which enables children to learn, play and enjoy basketball in an educational environment.

The programme complements the Primary PE Curriculum and current thinking around the increasingly important concept of Physical Literacy. It also aligns closely with the Government's current National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027 (see links at end).

Most importantly, it can contribute to the child's physical, emotional, social and ethical development.

Underpinning values of Primary Schools Mini-Basketball

- Emphasises the importance of learning, playing and enjoyment.
- A child-centred game for boys and girls.
- Equal opportunity for all to participate in each game, through the 4 v 4 (six periods), 5 v 5 (four quarters) and Mini 3x3 formats.
- Primary School teachers are empowered to deliver the programme in line with the underpinning values.
- The support of Basketball Ireland personnel is welcomed in supporting teachers in line with Government Sports Policy.
- Children are encouraged to understand and appreciate; playing, refereeing and table officiating, particularly in the Mini 3x3 game.



Key features

- Is indoor and outdoor - can be played in nearly every schoolyard.
- Uses modified equipment including a size 5 basketball, lower 2.6m (8.5 ft.) baskets for 10 year olds and younger, and adult 3.05m (10ft) baskets for 11 and 12 year olds.
- Showcases suitable learning activities for the PE lesson.
- A variety of event options including: Mini 3x3, Just Play, Leagues, Tournaments and Festivals.
- An appropriate balance in emphasis between, learning, participation and competition.

Mini-Basketball and Physical Literacy

The current Government National Sports Policy 2018 - 2027, lists the components of Physical Literacy as fundamental motor skills (which includes fundamental sports skills), physical behaviour, physical fitness, and knowledge awareness & understanding.

Mini-Basketball cultivates and develops locomotor skills and object control skills, running (forwards and backwards) hopping, jumping for height, dodging, side stepping, landing, balancing, catching, passing, bouncing, striking with the hand (dribbling) all of which are promoted by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) as fundamental motor skills. The child also learns important team skills such as cooperation with teammates, awareness of the game situation, passing, creating and using space, and defending.

It is widely accepted that Mini-Basketball helps develop fundamental motor skills and sports specific skills that are transferable to other sports.



Primary Schools Mini-Basketball approach to competition

Like all Primary School sport, Mini-Basketball largely occurs during school time. As such, It is important to ensure that it aligns with the ethos of the PE Curriculum around competition which states that “The extra-curricular programme, therefore, that involves the implementation of competitive activities, should always reflect the aims and objectives of the physical education programme”

So, to the extent that Mini-Basketball is a competitive game, it emphasises the positive aspects of competition such as the incentive to improve and develop individually, and as part of a team. It also seeks to avoid the negative aspects of competition for children such as playing the best players only, inclusion of excessively complex tactics, early elimination structures, and trying to win matches at the expense of the child’s development. Where trophies and medals are awarded, this should be done judiciously and not over-emphasised.

It is a prerequisite that Mini-Basketball avoids selecting the best players only as they often may be early developers or have had extra access to sport outside school. Rejecting other interested and committed children may lead to developing a poor sense of self-worth and furthermore might even dissuade them from further participation in sport and physical activity.



Primary School Mini-Basketball formats

5 v 5 with Four Quarters

The traditional Mini-Basketball game which started in Ireland in 1973.

- Minimum ten and maximum twelve players.
- 4 Quarters with all children playing in at least one and preferably in 2 Quarters.

4 v 4 with Six Periods

- A variation to encourage more spacing, less bunching and more fundamental movement
- 12 players essential.
- 6 Periods where all children must play in two Periods.

Mini3x3.

Based on the adult 3x3 game which is gaining in popularity worldwide and is planning to become a full Olympic sport soon. 1 Basket, 6 players per team. 3 playing & 3 refereeing, scorekeeping and timekeeping. All rotating. Check the Mini 3x3 Brochure and the Videos. See website below.



Primary School Mini-Basketball in practice

Within the PE lesson.

Mini-Basketball offers a wide variety of movement, ball handling, shooting, dribbling and team games suitable for the PE lesson, particularly through Mini3x3.

Internal School Leagues.

Mini-Basketball is an ideal game to encourage as many as possible to enjoy sport.

As part of a Primary School Sport/Extra-Curricular programme.

Tournaments.

- All teams should receive the same number of matches to ensure maximum participation. This works best in an 8 or 6 team Tournament played on 2 courts. At the end of the Pool matches, a rank order 1 to 4 for each Pool in a 2 Pools of 4 format, or a rank order 1 to 3 in a 2 Pools of 3 format, is set out. The final matches involve the 1s, 2s, 3s and if applicable the 4s playing their opposites. Variations can work for 4 and 5 Team Tournaments. Team trophies are generally presented to the 1 v 1 Winners and Runners up.
- In Just Play Tournaments, scores are not recorded, leaving children free to play under less pressure.
- Mini3x3 Tournaments can accommodate 2 teams of 6 children per basket.

Leagues

- Normally organised on a home and away basis. Teams should be involved for as long as possible and Leagues should avoid eliminating teams early on and ideally not at all.
- A particularly successful approach has involved local clusters early on, with all teams then getting an appropriate Final where the winning team may be awarded a trophy (but this is not essential).

Festivals/ Jamborees

Children from different schools play as school teams or form new combination teams and take part in skills sessions and possibly competitive matches.

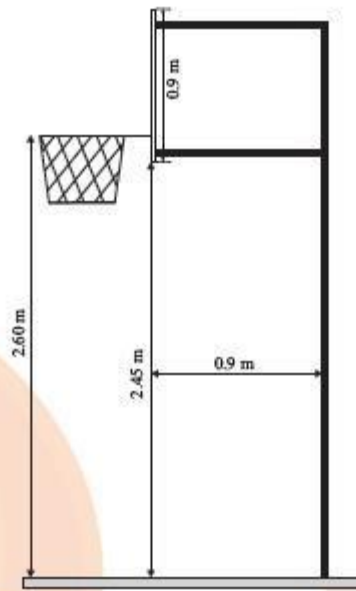
General Points

- Child protection is of paramount importance and there must be full compliance with school policies and Government legislation.
- The adult referee in Mini-Basketball has a major role in the education of the children. While the referee must apply the rules, it is important that the children learn from the experience. A good Mini-Basketball referee strikes a balance between protecting skill and explaining why a call is made.

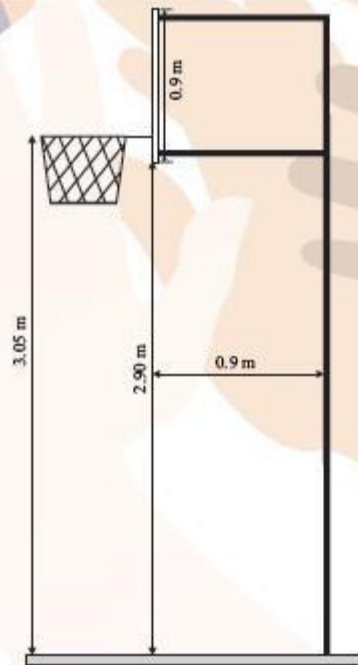
Equipment

- The size 5 (maximum) ball should be used with smaller sized balls for lower classes to encourage better learning outcomes and for safety reasons.
- Some schools have found that it is safer to provide 3.05m (10ft) high baskets to avoid having older children and teenagers swinging out of the lower baskets.
- It is very important to have a safe distance (overhang) between the backboard and the supporting stand or wall to allow for moving under the basket after a lay-up shot.
- Some manufacturers provide baskets which can be adjusted for both the 3.05m (10ft) and 2.6m (8.5 ft.) heights. These work particularly well indoors.
- Wall mounted units (noting the overhang) and portable baskets are also available from manufacturers.
- Padding on supporting poles should be provided.
- The following diagrams are provided as a guideline only. Local conditions may warrant modifications

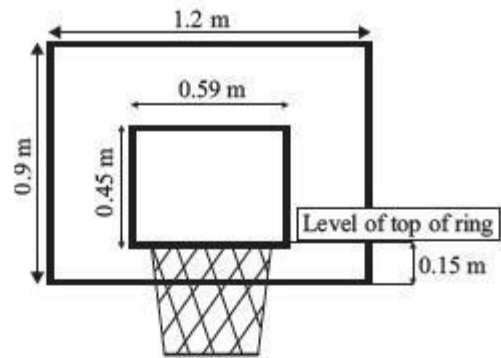
MINI STAND (10 YEAR-OLDS AND YOUNGER)



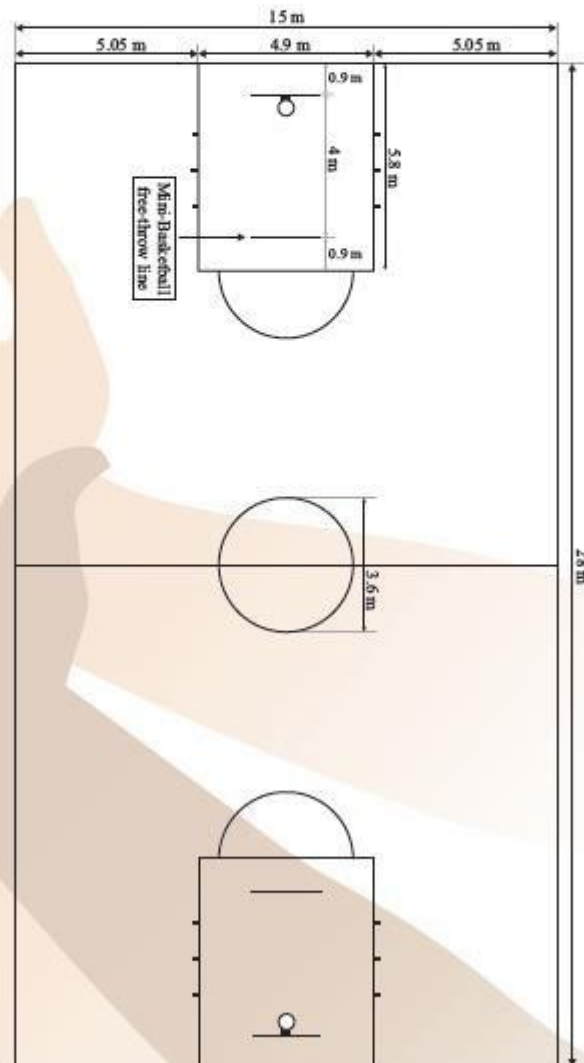
MINI STAND (11 YEAR-OLDS AND OLDER)



BACKBOARD



COURT



The Primary Schools Mini-Basketball National Committee

The Primary Schools Mini Basketball National Committee (PSMNC) is the National Committee recognised by Basketball Ireland (BI) as being responsible for the promotion, development and control of Primary Schools extra-curricular school sport Mini-Basketball on the Island of Ireland. Local Area Committees which are registered with BI are responsible for organising Primary Schools Mini-Basketball activities in their respective localities. Primary Schools Mini-Basketball is organised locally and in keeping with its ethos, results do not lead to qualification for National events.

The Objectives of the PSMNC are:

- To enable children in primary schools to learn, play and enjoy Mini-Basketball in an educational environment.
- To empower and support teachers so that they can provide quality learning experiences in Mini-Basketball to the children under their care both in a PE and an extra-curricular school sport context.
- To develop and support sustainable Primary Schools Mini-Basketball programmes throughout Ireland at local level.

For further information and for available resources, contact us through our dedicated website; www.primaryschoolsminibasketballireland.com

Resources on the website

- Videos on skills, teaching activities, 5 v 5 and Mini3x3 suitable for teachers and children.
- Brochure explaining Primary Schools Mini-Basketball values, features, activities and equipment.
- Mini3x3 brochure.
- Rules brochure.
- Scoresheets with guidelines for 5 v 5, 4 v 4 and Mini3x3.

Further reading

Primary School PE Curriculum https://www.curriculumonline.ie/.../PSEC05_Physical-Education_Curriculum.pdf

Northern Ireland Primary PE Curriculum
http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/area_of_learning/fs_northern_ireland_curriculum_primary.pdf

Government National Sports Policy 2018 – 2027 <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aaa7d9-national-sports-policy-2018-2027/>

PDST Move Well, Move Often. <https://www.scoilnet.ie/pdst/physlit/>

Coaching Ireland Coaching Children. www.sportireland.ie/Coaching-Ireland/Coaching-Children

Basketball Ireland. www.basketballireland.ie



Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The RDS welcome the new alignment of subjects that sees Science aligned with Technology and Engineering (STE) instead of Science aligned with History and Geography as in SESE (Social, Environmental and Scientific Education) in the 1999 curriculum. However, we believe that Social and Environmental Education should be closely linked with the STE curriculum as the solutions to challenges in areas such as "Environment and Sustainable Living" are to be found in STE. These areas should not be siloed, but brought together and taught in an integrated manner. The RDS also welcome the dedicated

time allocated to STE in the Primary Curriculum Framework (page 38/39) but would strongly prefer that the allocation of time was specified on a weekly basis rather than a monthly basis as outlined below: Stage 1 – 3 hrs 20 min per month Stage 2: 4 hrs per month Stages 3 and 4: 5 hrs per month We believe that a weekly engagement with STE is in the best interests of all children. We believe that the 1999 SCIENCE curriculum was excellent, however in some cases a lack of teacher confidence in their knowledge of science meant it sometimes lacked the necessary delivery. There needs to be more attention given to STE in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). While the draft STE specification has very many commendable features and aspirations that are praiseworthy, it is not a suitable document for teachers who rely on clear detailed instructions on what needs to be taught. The 1999 syllabus is excellent in that regard. The Draft STE specification needs more detail. Page 1 – refers to the STE specification sitting alongside the Maths curriculum (STEM). We would prefer a stronger statement to the effect that Mathematics is a language that enriches Science and that wherever possible the teaching of both should be well aligned and integrated, not siloed. Pages 2/3 – We wish to see a much greater emphasis placed on practical work where children do science and are given plenty of “hands-on” opportunities. The section “Principles of learning, teaching and assessment” needs to explicitly address this. Page 3 – We recommend that the support materials (toolkit) include detailed lists of recommended scientific equipment that schools should have. Page 6 - Aims: We recommend that the “scientific method” should manifest itself in the aims, rationale, learning outcomes and skills development, but it is largely absent from the STE specification. Page 9 – Learning Outcomes We are surprised that only the learning outcomes for Technology are elaborated in Appendix 1. The other strands are not elaborated and in particular, Engineering is very minimally outlined. Will there be appendices added for the other strands?

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Overall, the RDS strongly encourage active engagement and partnership with existing initiatives to support: - Delivery of diverse learning opportunities to complement and enhance the STE curriculum - Delivery of high quality and accessible CPD - Leveraging of technology in the development of supports to reach larger audiences - Providing access to / developing extensive libraries of digital resources to assist teachers in planning and delivering STE lessons - Development of comprehensive Teacher Guidelines - Ongoing tutor/mentor support to build confidence and competence - Funding supports for purchase of scientific equipment, engagement with informal education initiatives, transport to locations / events to promote diverse learning experiences.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

The RDS welcome a strong focus on partnerships as an overarching principle, guiding schools in pursuing the vision of the new primary curriculum. There is a large eco-system of informal initiatives in the STEM education sector providing diverse learning experiences that are aligned to the aim of the new STE curriculum to support children's capacity to understand and engage fully with the world around them. The RDS would actively encourage the Department of Education to work with and leverage these existing initiatives to support teachers and students in the objectives of the new curriculum. These initiatives are already positively recognised in delivering diverse learning experiences for children at a large scale and complement the new curriculum. For example, ESB Science Blast which is delivered by the RDS, had almost 17,000 primary school participants from across the island of Ireland in 2024 alone, with almost 70,000 participants across its first 6 years. The RDS convened a round table in May of informal education providers to look at how collaborations could amplify the impact of the many already existing excellent initiatives. One issue that was highlighted as a challenge was funding. Many of the informal initiatives delivering practical supports for schools are charities, each funded annually limiting the capacity to plan on a multi-year basis. Support from the Department of Education in terms of funding would be very positively welcomed by these initiatives, allowing multi-annual planning and the development of partnerships to further amplify impact. There is a great opportunity to use an already recognised and strong ecosystem to support the roll-out and implementation of the new STE curriculum, to provide a strong and supported learning experience for all. The round table discussion also recognised the constraints on teachers and the demanding nature of their role in delivering the curriculum. One solution to support teachers was the development of accessible CPD modules. Additionally, the possibility to leverage technology more in the development of supports and capacity to reach larger audiences was also identified as a topic to examine further. The RDS have carried out an independent evaluation of the ESB Science Blast programme this year, yet to be published. The report is very positive with the large majority of participating teachers and students hugely valuing the programme with outcomes for students closely aligned to the new STE curriculum from critical thinking, creativity and problem solving to communication and collaboration. Most teachers also reported increased skills and confidence to teach in an integrated way, to teach STEM and in inquiry-based learning. By leveraging existing programmes such as ESB Science Blast, the Department has an eco-system ready to collaborate and support the transformations in teaching needed to deliver the new curriculum. The evaluation also uncovered the biggest barriers to participation in ESB Science Blast which were teachers' lack of confidence with science, not enough time in the school year, the cost of travel, and teachers' lack of confidence with inquiry-based learning. These barriers are also common across other informal STEM education initiatives and can be addressed through the new STE curriculum. Addressing these barriers will strengthen both classroom learning and more diverse learning opportunities.

Revenue

Introduction

Revenue's mission is to serve the community by fairly and efficiently collecting taxes and duties and implementing customs controls.

Revenue's response to the NCCA's consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications will focus on two of the five draft specifications namely the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification and the Draft Wellbeing Specification.

These specifications were chosen as the most synergies exist between the Rational, Aims, Strands and Elements and Learning outcomes of these specifications and Revenue's mission, Statement of Strategy and Corporate Priorities.

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities.

From the perspective of Revenue, the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications builds on the successes and strengths of previous curricula while recognising and responding to challenges, changing needs, and priorities. We understand that children's learning experiences have evolved and that the draft specifications are designed around these experiences and underpinned by the latest research in the area.

Revenue notes considerable synergies between its mission and vision and the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum and the Draft Wellbeing Specification, in particular a shared focus on serving and being trusted by the community.

Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum.

Not in a position to respond.

Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications have a clear and linear connection with Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and the Framework for Junior Cycle. The continuity of learning experiences can be seen most profoundly in the areas of wellbeing which is identified across the three frameworks as *Wellbeing, Being Well* and *Staying Well*; and communicating which is identified across the three frameworks as *Communicating and Exploring, Being a Communicator using Language* and *Communicating*. Finally, the representation of numeracy and literacy across the three frameworks adds further to the continuity of learning experiences.

Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class.

The key competencies can be clearly identified within the learning outcomes in the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum and the Draft Wellbeing Specification. From the perspective of Revenue, the key competencies of *Being an Active Citizen*, *Being a Digital Learner* and *Being Mathematical*; provide a foundation onto which students can build the skills necessary to independently manage their taxes when they progress to their teenage years, young adulthood and beyond.

Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes.

Revenue along with other National Tax Administrations in Europe provided an advisory role to a European Commission initiative in 2017 to create tax education content for Primary school age students between 9 – 12 along with other age groups. This initiative is known as TAXEDU.

The Micro learning materials addressed topics such as:

What is tax?

Who collects taxes and why?

Do I benefit from taxes? How?

What happens if you don’t pay your taxes,

What kinds of taxes are there? and

Can tax help protect the environment?

Revenue also provided feedback via the Department of Finance on the joint EU/OECD-INFE Financial Competence Framework for Children and Youth published in 2023. The framework covers age cohorts 6-10, 11 – 15 and 16 – 18 years old.

Some of the topics and subtopics covered under the 6 – 10 year old cohort include:

Tax and Public Spending

Purpose and impact of taxes

Citizenship

Digital financial competencies

Revenue believes that addressing and incorporating these broad topics within the primary school curriculum will enhance children’s skills, knowledge, values and attitudes and sit well within the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum and its focus on sustainable development, human rights, social justice, equity and democracy. We also believe that the Draft Wellbeing Specification will further

develop children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes specifically by cultivating a strong sense of connection among children to their school, community, and wider society.

Both specifications, have the potential to instil the values and attitudes that enhance students’ knowledge of citizenship and the obligations that go along with it such as meeting their tax obligations and being compliant with obligations under the Social Contract.

Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching

Not in a position to respond.

Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment

Not in a position to respond.

Be for all children in primary and special schools.

Not in a position to respond.

Please outline your response on the draft: Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History) and Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education) specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

On review of the draft specifications, Revenue believes that there are numerous ways in which tax education aligns with elements of both the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum and the draft Wellbeing Curriculum.

[Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum](#)

The desired goal, in which *children are enabled to see themselves as members of society with rights and responsibilities, and are empowered to contribute to matters of local, national, and global priority* (pg. 1) is referenced throughout the curriculum. For example, among the Rationale (pg. 5), the Aims (pg. 7), and the Strand *People, Place, and Space*, pg. 14)

Revenue believe that tax education can foster within children an appreciation of their community and the public services from which they benefit, for example, public spaces such as playgrounds. Simultaneously, they can gain an increased sense of ownership and responsibility for these services and

facilities through the realisation that they are funded by members of the public, including themselves. This increased sense of ownership, and responsibility, for the services and wider environment in which they live will encourage them to play a positive role in protecting and positively shaping the future.

The draft curriculum espouses *a sustainable future* (pg. 6). This is detailed in the Strand *Environment and Sustainable Living* (pg. 14).

In addition to increasing children's ownership and responsibility towards their surrounding community and environment, tax education can provide children with an understanding of how taxes can be used to help protect the environment in which they live. Examples include the plastic bag levy, and environmental taxes.

Within the draft curriculum, aims include promoting global citizenship (pg. 7). This is expanded upon within the Strand *People, Place and Space* (pg. 16).

Tax education can provide children with an introduction to the European Union, including its countries, organisations, and the benefits enjoyed by citizens such as free movement.

The strand *People, Place and Space* (pg. 16) also refers to Ireland's political system and key institutions of government over time and their influence on the present.

Revenue has been a consistent establishment within Ireland since its inception in 1923. Revenue works closely with various institutions of Government. A good example of this is the development and enacting of the annual Finance Bill (which gives legislative life to the annual Budget process) as it progresses through the Oireachtas.

Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

The draft Wellbeing Curriculum recognises children as "*empowered citizens*", aiming to foster "*a perspective in which children not only perceive themselves and others as unique individuals but also as integral members of communities and society*" (pg. 3).

Although they may not be aware, children play an active role in contributing to their communities as taxpayers. For example, when they purchase items in a shop, children pay Value Added Tax (VAT) which contributes to local services which they and their families use. By educating children on their contribution to society, tax education will encourage children to view themselves as contributing members of the community.

The draft Wellbeing Curriculum is also stated to integrate vital life skills, such as personal safety (2: Rationale – Wellbeing pg. 4). Competency in relation to digital technology, including safe online behaviour, is noted in the Key Competency *Being a Digital Learner* (pg. 13), and the strand unit *Media and Digital Wellbeing* (pg. 27).

In an increasingly digital world, an understanding regarding online safety is essential for children. Revenue, along with many other Government organisations, provides a range of online services for taxpayers. Thus, Revenue believes that the provision of education in relation to basic steps that children can take to protect themselves in the online sphere, such as not disclosing personal information and the use of 2-factor authentication will benefit children, both at their current age and as they enter adulthood.

The Wellbeing curriculum aims to educate children on their rights as citizens, as expanded upon in Strand *Rights and Fairness* (pg. 28).

As the provider of services to a diverse taxpayer base, Revenue recognises the importance of the Equal Status Acts and other legislation enacted to provide a fair, equal, and equitable society. As such, Revenue supports educating children regarding their rights when dealing with, among others, Revenue and other Government organisations.

In addition to fostering an awareness of their rights, the Wellbeing curriculum also discusses educating children about their responsibilities, empowering *children to balance personal motives with a sense of social responsibility. This prepares them to become active citizens connected to their community and broader society* (pg. 6). This goal links to strand units *Rights and Fairness* and *Citizenship* (pg. 19), and *Decision-making* (pg. 25).

The shadow economy can inhibit legitimate businesses within a community. Educating children in relation to simple steps they can take, such as requesting receipts in shops, can help to tackle the shadow economy, and support local communities.

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Not in a position to respond.

Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

It is prudent given the passage of time since the last primary school curriculum was introduced and developments in the early childhood and Junior Cycle curriculum that an updated curriculum is developed and delivered.

The capabilities and key competencies presented in the Primary Curriculum Framework and reflected in the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum and the Draft Wellbeing Specification represent what is important in primary education today.

The bedrock of our taxation system which funds essential public services is voluntary compliance. Voluntary compliance can be increased through tax education in the form of teaching, communicating and providing practical assistance to current and future taxpayers. We see a unique opportunity to include elements of taxation education within the key competencies of *Being an Active Citizen*, *Being a Digital Learner* and *Being Mathematical* of the Primary Curriculum Framework. We believe that key messages around tax would complement the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum and the Draft Wellbeing Specification.

For example, in the aforementioned Financial Competence Framework for Children And Youth, there are two main competences under the 6 – 10 year old cohort. Both are highlighted under the Tax and Public spending subtopic namely:

Understands that there are taxes on different products, services, income and assets, etc

Understands why the state collects taxes (i.e. to spend on public services such as health and education, to provide support to people in difficulty, to protect the environment and facilitate the climate transition, etc.)

Incorporating the competencies above in the Primary school curriculum and the knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes that go along with them will ensure that we can fairly and efficiently collect taxes and duties and provide the necessary investment to fund vital public services and achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. (SDGs)

Safefood

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification. Consideration for including information on food allergy and intolerance (food hypersensitivity) to primary school children. This will allow the food hypersensitive child to develop the confidence they need to make positive food choices to protect their own health and wellbeing. This will also promote inclusivity and guard against marginalisation of the food hypersensitive child. It will also make children aware that for some people certain foods can make them sick. imes

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Pages 17 & 26 refer to the child nurturing their own wellbeing by considering positive choices in areas including food. For food hypersensitive children, a 'positive' food choice is one that helps them avoid the allergen(s) that make them sick, while still looking after their nutritional needs. This will stand to them throughout life. It is also important for their classmates to understand that not all foods are safe for everyone. This is critical for improving the food environment of those with food hypersensitivity now and later on in life.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

As part of their learning about food, curriculum supports should factor in simple information conveying that dietary differences exist among different people, including for health reasons.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Keep it simple. Children need to leave primary school confident to make positive food choices for nurturing their wellbeing regardless of whether or not they have food hypersensitivity. They should at least be aware of this as they will encounter it later in life, and it is important to protect the health of those with food hypersensitivity that there is a good level of awareness in the general population. This should begin in primary school.

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The Primary School Curriculum 1999 was innovative and put the child at the forefront in how the curriculum was to be taught. There were clear guidelines as to what was to be taught in each grouping and guidelines as to how to meet these learning objectives. Would it not be better to update the 1999 curriculum rather than replace it altogether. The PLC is already very difficult to implement within our schools. Teachers were not given adequate training in its implementation and the guidelines changed so often that everyone was confused which caused a lot of distress to teachers. The new subject specifications are in the same format as those of the PLC and we have huge concerns that the same issues will happen again. We as a staff are open to the flexibility within the curriculum but we feel that the learning outcomes are so broad and vague and lack detail. This will cause more confusion and distress on schools. We feel that the learning will be lost due to the insufficient progression continua. Publishing companies will decide on the course that schools will follow. How do we use playful learning throughout the curriculum for all 4 stages. Will there be sufficient funding given to schools for resources. Will teachers be given proper training in these practices and not have to do this training in their own time. Is Aistear going to be continued in the Infant classes- Is there proper structured guidance on the use of Aistear for schools? Will all teachers be adequately trained in the use of it and not be depending on an individual

teacher's CPD? The idea that the curriculum is to be inclusive and emphasis is put on diversity is great in theory. In reality this is not happening and is not possible as there are not enough supports. SNA's are so difficult to be assigned to schools with many schools losing positions. In order for education to be inclusive in Ireland extra supports, SNAs, SET allocations need to be put in place. There are massive issues in the system with regards to proper inclusion and until these issues are addressed and sorted then the new curriculum cannot be inclusive and it will all be just a facade to what schools can actually do.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

We are concerned as a staff at the broadness of the learning outcomes with the 3 subject areas. There is also a lack of detail within the learning outcomes. Detailed arts activities should be included in the guidelines as not all teachers are experts in these specified areas and teachers need structured guidance to implement these new activities. Will there be adequate further funding, training resources given to schools to implement and use for media arts? If not then schools will not be able to meet the needs of the curriculum

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

We have serious concerns in relation to the implementation of a modern foreign language into primary schools. The reduction in time allocations to the specific teaching of English and Irish is alarming. There is not enough time as is to fully cover the literacy in English and Irish as it is so wide an area. This is of huge concern to teachers at present. We cannot expect children to learn new languages when they have not got a grasp on the foundations of English and Irish. The teaching of MFL are also unclear. How are teachers expected to teach a language they have had no formal teaching/ training in. It is expected that the children will be using simple expressions, engaging with texts, reciting poems etc and this language is to be taught through the target language. This is an unrealistic expectation unless all teachers are trained in the target language. It is also unclear as to what happens children with Irish exemptions during the MFL. Are they going to learn another language when they were not able to learn their own native language? Again funding and proper resourcing of authentic texts will be essential.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

It is great that there is an prominent emphasis been put into the environment and sustainability.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

In our already overloaded curriculum we are now expected to undertake technology and engineering. Many teachers have no/ little expertise in these areas and we are being asked to teach programming etc in stages 3 and 4. Unless all teachers are given proper training. The time for these subjects to be taught has to be taken from other subject areas and this is not going to work. Ongoing supports would be needed in this area in schools to all teaching staff. What resources are going to be made available to schools?

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Where do the extra 1.5 hours per week come from in the senior classes? Again as stated earlier our curriculum is already overloaded and our time allocations are extremely stretched. Again the broadness and vague progression continua need to be more detailed and a proper structure put on these. Spiritual awareness needs to be clearly defined. The learning outcomes around Emotional & Relational learning is very vague also. Yes it's important for children to be moving more. It is also important to support the mental health of the students but a school day has an amount of time in it and all the world's problems can not be sorted with in primary schools.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Face to face training within the school day and school year are needed. Continuous support will be needed to meet the needs of all teachers. Resources for schools to implement the new ideas in the curriculum. This needs to be sufficient and not just a gesture. Adequate SET and SNA provision for all schools. We are all in need of extra help to support a more inclusive curriculum and to meet the needs of children with needs. This has been lacking over the last few years and the needs of our children are not being met as we are stretched to our limits.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Schools are not ready for a new curriculum as we are already overstretched as it is, introducing more subjects is not the way to help children in schools with their learning. The framework is far too broad and there's not enough detail in any of the areas. We feel that we are being asked to correct the wrongs of the world in schools. Whenever something is not working in society people say that it should be taught in schools. Teachers are not robots, we are all working so hard already in the overloaded curriculum we have. This new curriculum will not be able to meet the needs of the teachers or the children in the way it is framed

SEALBHÚ

Aighneacht ó SEALBHÚ: Lárionad Taighde DCU um Fhoghlaim agus Teagasc na Gaeilge

Tá an aighneacht seo réitithe ag baill SEALBHÚ:

An Dr Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin, An Dr Gearóidín Uí Laighléis, Pearse Ahern, An Dr Jacqueline de Brún, An Dr Mícheál J. Ó Meachair, An Dr Patrick Burke, An Dr Sinéad Nic Andriú, Máire Ní Láimhín & Pádraig Ó Duibhir (Ollamh Emeritus).

Cuireann SEALBHÚ fáilte roimh an deis aighneacht a chur isteach maidir leis an

Dréachtchuraclam Teanga na Bunscoile – lena n-áirítear na Nuatheangacha lasachta (NTI) Do Bhunscoileanna agus Scoileanna Speisialta. Cé go bhfáiltíonn muid roimh na féidearthachtaí a bhainfeadh leis an tríú teanga a theagasc ag leibhéal na bunscoile dar linne tá sé róluath an chéim seo a ghlacadh. Molann muid an cinneadh a chur siar go dtí go rachfaí i ngleic le cuid de na dúshláin aitheanta a bhaineann le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2 mar chéad chéim. Bronnann teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge iliomad buntáistí ar fhoghlaimoirí óga agus molann muid tacú leis an dara teanga (An Ghaeilge) i scoileanna T2 agus le gnéithe eile de chur i bhfeidhm Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile (CTB) (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna (ROS), 2019) ar an gcéad dul síos.

Leagtar amach an aighneacht faoi na mórphointí seo a leanas:

- Bearnaí sa Taighde ar CTB (ROS, 2019) & Bearnaí sna Tacaíochtaí Curaclaim atá curtha ar fáil
- Oideachas Múinteoirí
- Laghdú ama do Theagasc agus Foghlaim na Gaeilge i mbunscoileanna T2
- Foghlaim Teangacha Iasachta ag Leibhéal na Bunscoile
- An tOideachas Ionchuimsitheach
- Ceist an Leanúnachais sa Chóras Oideachais
- Torthaí Foghlama Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile agus Comhchreat Tagartha na hEorpa um Theangacha (CTET)
- An Ghaeilge mar mheán chun an t-ilteangachas agus an t-idirchultúrachas a chur chun cinn
- Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge
- Forbairt na Teanga agus na Litearthachta i gComhthéacs Ábharbhunaithe - Scoileanna T1 ach go háirithe
- Príomh-mholtaí na hAighneachta

Bearna sa Taighde ar CTB (An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna (ROS), 2019) agus sna

Tacaíochtaí Curaclaim atá Curtha ar fáil

Is cúis imní dúinn go bhfuiltear ag leanúint ar aghaidh le teanga bhreise i CTB gan athbhreithniú críochnúil déanta ar chur i bhfeidhm an churaclaim go dtí seo. Léiríonn an fhianaise atá againn (Cigireacht na Roinne Oideachais, 2022; Mac Domhnaill & Nic an Bhaird, 2022; McGarry, 2017; NCCA, 2018) go raibh an-chuid deacrachtaí ag múinteoirí agus CTB á chur chun gnímh sa seomra ranga. Léirigh an tuarascáil is déanaí ón bPríomhchigire (Cigireacht na Roinne Oideachais, 2022) go raibh deacrachtaí ar leith ag múinteoirí le cur i bhfeidhm an churaclaim sa Ghaeilge i gcomhthéacsanna T2 ach go háirithe:

Léirítear le fianaise ó chigireachtaí, nuair a bhíonn scoileanna ag streachailt leis an gcuraclam athbhreithnithe, go dtugann siad tosaíocht do theagasc an Bhéarla i scoileanna lán-Bhéarla agus do theagasc na Gaeilge i scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge. Mar thoradh air sin, ní fhacthas feabhsú suntasach go dtí seo ar theagasc na Gaeilge ag leibhéal na mbunscoileanna i scoileanna lán-Bhéarla (lch. 317).

Ní fios, go fóill, cén dul chun cinn atá déanta ag scoileanna le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i gcomhthéacs an CTB. Measann muid gur céim in easnamh atá ann tabhairt faoi theanga bhreise sa CTB gan tuiscint a bheith againn ar bhuntáistí agus ar dhúshláin an churaclaim mar atá. Teastaíonn taighde ach go háirithe ar na cleachtais teagaisc maidir le traschur scileanna idir Gaeilge agus Béarla atá mar bhunús do CTB. Aithnítear go bhfuil buninniúlachtaí sa litearthacht a thrasnaíonn teangacha ach, ag brath ar na teangacha atá i gceist, bíonn faid éagsúla ann idir teangacha ar leith, ag brath ar shaintréithe agus ortagrafaíochtaí na dteangacha. Is féidir go mbeadh gá le hidir 600 agus 2,200 uair an chloig, ag brath ar cé chomh cosúil

nó chomh difriúil agus atá na teangacha (National Virtual Translation Center, 2007, luaite i Collins & Muñoz, 2016). Níl an t-eolas seo againn ó thaobh na Gaeilge agus an Bhéarla de, mar sin ní mheastar gur chóir an tríú teanga a chur san áireamh go dtí go bhfuil cinnteacht ann le treoir a thabhairt do mhúinteoirí. Tá easpa taighde ar fhocail ghaolmhara (cognates) idir Ghaeilge agus Bhéarla. Mar sin tá gá le cúram le moltaí ginearálta a oibríonn le teangacha áirithe ach ní le gach teanga.

Tá gnéithe eile den churaclam cur i gcás, úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil agus an Fhoghlaim Chomhtháite Ábhar agus Teangacha (FCÁT) trí Ghaeilge i scoileanna T2 nach bhfuil curtha i bhfeidhm go rathúil go fóill agus tá easpa tacaíochtaí tugtha do mhúinteoirí lena gcur i bhfeidhm. Chuirfeadh na cuir chuige seo go mór le deiseanna foghlama na bpáistí sa Ghaeilge agus le húsáid chumarsáideach na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2. Moltar sa Dréachtchuraclam go gcuirfí FCÁT i bhfeidhm tríd an tríú teanga agus go n-úsáidfí an tríú teanga go neamhfhoirmiúil cé nach bhfuil na spriocanna seo bainte amach don dara teanga (An Ghaeilge) i scoileanna T2. Is údar mór imní é na deacrachtaí atá ag roinnt múinteoirí maidir le teagasc na Gaeilge agus maidir le difréalú i gcomhthéacs na Gaeilge. Ní dócha go bhfuil ciall le bogadh chuig an tríú teanga gan cuid de phríomhghnéithe CTB (T1 & T2) a bheith leabaithe sa chleachtas go rathúil mar chéad chéim agus na tacaíochtaí cuí a bheith curtha ar fáil do scoileanna. ‘Sé an cleachtas ag leibhéal na hiar-bhunscoile ná athbhreithniú luathchur-i-bhfeidhm a dhéanamh ar mhaithe leis an tuiscint seo a fháil; tá gá leis an gcóras céanna ag leibhéal na

bunscoile. Teastaíonn tacaíocht chuimsitheach ó mhúinteoirí CTB (ROS, 2019) a chur i bhfeidhm roimh mhórathrú ar bith eile.

Laghdú ama do Theagasc agus Foghlaim na Gaeilge i mbunscoileanna T2

Teastaíonn dóthain ama ó fhoghlaimoirí le scileanna teanga agus litearthachta a fhorbairt sa Ghaeilge. Má laghdaítear an t-am do theagasc na Gaeilge mar atá molta, laghdófar deiseanna foghlama na bpáistí dá bharr. Téann an cinneadh seo i gcoinne pholasaithe eile an Rialtais don Ghaeilge agus cearta teanga na bpáistí Gaeilge a fhoghlaim agus cumas dátheangach/ilteangach a bhaint amach. Teastaíonn leordhóthain ama d'fhoghlaim agus teagasc na Gaeilge mar is mionteanga í nach bhfuil teagmháil rialta ag formhór d'fhoghlaimoirí léi taobh amuigh den scoil. Molann muid go láidir don CNCM athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an dáileadh ama ar bhonn práinne. Tagann an laghdú ama don Ghaeilge salach ar an taighde agus na teoiricí taighde maidir le sealbhú mionteangacha go hidirnáisiúnta agus in Éirinn (Ó Duibhir, 2018, Dunne, 2020), a léiríonn gur gá do pháistí an oiread teagmhála agus is féidir a bheith acu leis an mhionteanga chun í a shealbhú go rathúil. Má tá infheistíocht mhór le déanamh, is gá a bheith ciallmhar agus breathnú ar na múnlaí ba mhó a chabhródh le foghlaimoirí na caighdeáin is rathúla dóibh féin a bhaint amach sa Ghaeilge, sa Bhéarla agus ina dteangacha baile ar dtús. Molann muid athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an uair an chloig atá leagtha síos do chlár feasachta teanga sa tríú teanga, is mór an méid ama é seo.

Má theastaíonn ó dhaltaí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu níos mó teagmhála le teanga le go mbeidh siad inniúil, cén fáth a bhfuil laghdú ar am teagaisc don Ghaeilge do gach dalta? Trí laghdú a dhéanamh ar an am teagaisc don Ghaeilge agus méid teoranta ama teagaisc a thabhairt isteach do nuatheanga iasachta, ní éireoidh le daltaí inniúlacht a bhaint amach sa dara teanga ná sa tríú teanga de bharr easpa múineadh ar ardchaighdeán.

Ciallaíonn sé seo nach dtarlóidh an dátheangachas ná an t-ilteangachas do go leor daltaí (Thordardottir, 2017). Laghdóidh úsáid na nuatheanga iasachta go neamhfhoirmiúil sa seomra ranga ionchur na ndaltaí ó thaobh úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil sa seomra ranga agus beidh tionchar diúltach aige seo freisin ar shealbhú teanga sa dara agus sa tríú teanga de bharr an easpa ionchur teanga ar ardchaighdeán (Thordardottir, 2017). Ní éireoidh le foghlaimoirí caighdeán sásúil a bhaint amach sa Ghaeilge mura mbíonn dóthain teagmhála acu leis an teanga.

Tá difríochtaí ar leith idir teangacha, a bhfuil aird faoi leith de dhíth orthu ó thaobh na gramadaí, na fónaice agus gnéithe eile nach iad. Leis na torthaí foghlama a bhaineann leis na gnéithe seo atá i CTB a bhaint amach bheadh sprioctheagasc agus am dírithe de dhíth go géar. Ní fios go dáta an bhfuil an cleachtas agus na torthaí foghlama atá i CTB á dteagasc go héifeachtach sa seomra ranga. Ní fheictear dúinne an chúis go mbeadh an t-am ag laghdú don Ghaeilge agus torthaí foghlama ag fanacht mar atá. Chuirfeadh FCÁT agus úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil le deiseanna idirghníomhaithe teanga sa Ghaeilge i scoileanna T2 ach mar atá meáite ní dócha go

bhfuil na cuir chuige seo curtha i bhfeidhm go fóill. Mar sin níl teagmháil bhreise á fáil ag páistí sa Ghaeilge i scoileanna T2 mar atá molta i CTB.

Oideachas Múinteoirí

Teastaíonn saineolas ar leith ó mhúinteoirí teanga a chuimsíonn inniúlacht ar an teanga chomh maith le heolas follasach ar struchtúir na teanga agus scileanna oideolaíochta teanga (Andrews, 2007; Ó Ceallaigh, Hourigan & Leavy, 2019; Wright & Bolitho, 1993). Bíonn saineolas sa bhreis arís de dhíth ar mhúinteoirí nuair a bhíonn trí theanga á dteagasc (Otwinoska, 2017). Má tá an tríú teanga le teagasc trí mheán an tríú teanga agus le húsáid go neamhfhoirmiúil i rith an lae ba ghá go mbeadh an saineolas ábhair agus an saineolas ábhair oideolaíoch cuí ag na múinteoirí. Tá sé léirithe sa taighde idirnáisiúnta le fada nach mbaineann fiúntas le hathruithe curaclaim ach amháin go mbíonn múinteoirí muiníneach agus cumasach lena gcur i bhfeidhm (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Ní léir go bhfuil inniúlacht ag bunmhúinteoirí i dteangacha Eorpacha ag an leibhéal a bheadh ag teastáil chun teagmhála ardchaighdeán, comhsheasmhach a sholáthar do nuatheangacha iasachta. Tá easpa soiléireachta maidir le soláthar an oideachais mhúinteoirí thar an gcontanam d'oideachas múinteoirí agus ní mholann muid an tsonraíocht seo a fhaomhadh gan cinnteacht faoi sholáthar múinteoirí agus acmhainní. Tá leibhéal cinnte inniúlachta ag gach bunmhúinteoir sa Ghaeilge agus mar sin molann muid tacú le múinteoirí sa Ghaeilge mar chéad chéim. Tá iliomad taighde déanta ar fhorbairt ghairmiúil do mhúinteoirí

(Darling-Hammond, Hylar & Gardner, 2017). Molann muid na tacaíochtaí fianaise bhunaithe a chur ar fáil do mhúinteoirí maidir le teagasc na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2 agus i scoileanna T1.

Foghlaim Teangacha Iasachta ag leibhéal na bunscoile

Tá an-chuid le foghlaim ón taithí i Sasana maidir le nuatheangacha sa bhunscoil. Tá nuatheangacha mar chuid den churaclam do phaistí 7-11 bliain d'aois ó 2014. In athbhreithniú a foilsíodh ar an taithí sin in 2017 (Myles, 2017) ba iad na príomhphointí a bhí le foghlaim ná:

- Tá páistí óga níos moille ná páistí níos sine ag foghlaim teangacha agus ní mór dóibh an-chuid ionchuir a fháil chun cúiteamh a dhéanamh air sin. Níor leor uair an chloig sa tseachtain leis an ionchur sin a sholáthar nó chun na spriocanna a bhí leagtha síos a bhaint amach. É sin ráite, bíonn níos mó fonn foghlama ar fhoghlaiméoirí óga agus is fiú teangacha a mhúineadh chun a suim i dteangacha eile a spreagadh. Mar is eol

dúinn ó mhúineadh an Gaeilge in Éirinn, tá buntáistí cognaíocha, cultúrtha, sóisialta agus litearthachta le gnóthú as teangacha eile a fhoghlaim ach gur ghá caighdeán réasúnta a bhaint amach.

- Chothaigh an t-aistriú go dtí an iar-bhunscoil deacrachtaí mar go raibh easpa leanúnachais ann do na páistí agus bhí leibhéal chumais difriúla acu.
- Theastódh feabhas ar oiliúint na múinteoirí agus acmhainní foghlama le rath a bheith ar an gcur chuige reatha.

- Ar an iomlán, ní raibh na spriocanna a leagadh síos réadúil. Ní mór spriocanna soiléire réadúla a leagadh síos ag cur san áireamh an tslí a fhoghlaimíonn páistí óga teangacha breise agus an chomhthéacs ina fheidhmíonn scoileanna. Is fearr an bhéim a bheith ar fhonn foghlama a chothú seachas ar chumas sa sprioctheanga.

In ainneoin na sprice, páistí a spreagadh le teangacha breise a fhoghlaim, faoin am a raibh an chéad chohórt ó 2014 i mBliain 10, bhí laghdú ar líon na scoláirí a bhí ag foghlaim an dara teanga le hais na bliana roimhe sin (Whiting & Marshall, 2023), ba iad sin, scoláirí nach raibh tús luath acu. Tarraingíonn Whiting & Marshall (2023) aird ar na dúshláin chéanna le Myles thuas, gan dóthain ama teagaisc, gan dóthain acmhainní foghlama, gan dóthain cumas teanga ag na múinteoirí, easpa leanúnachais ón mbunscoil go dtí an iarbhunscoil. Tá na fachtóirí céanna le sonrú i gcóras bunscolaíochta na hÉireann. Tá sé deacair aon toradh fóna a fheiceáil ar mhúineadh nuatheangacha sa bhunscoil in Éirinn gan infheistíocht an-mhór chun aghaidh a thabhairt ar na dúshláin atá i Sasana. An amhlaidh go bhfuil lucht pleanála oideachais in Éirinn ag súil le toradh difriúil ón gcur chuige céanna i Sasana?

Tá taighde ann maidir le ham agus aois na bhfoghlaimeoirí agus go bhfuil seans ann nach mbeadh gá leis an am céanna ag aoiseanna difriúla agus fianaise ann go mbíonn dianchúrsaí teanga éifeachtach ag aoiseanna áirithe (Collins & Muñoz,

2016). Is léir chomh maith go bhfuil an-tábhacht le caighdeán an ama a chaitear ar fhoghlaim teangacha (Lyster, 2007). D'fhéadfadh foghlaimeoirí a bheith níos rathúla ag foghlaim an tríú teanga agus iad ag aois níos sine agus an t-am agus na tacaíochtaí cuí tugtha do theagasc agus foghlaim na teanga sin. Ní léir ó aon phíosa taighde go mbainfeadh páistí inniúlacht teanga amach in aon uair an chloig sa tseachtain.

An tOideachas Ionchuimsitheach

Tá roinnt imní tagtha orainn mar ghrúpa agus athbhreithniú á dhéanamh againn ar an doiciméad comhairliúcháin i réimse an oideachais ionchuimsithigh. Deir an taighde idirnáisiúnta gur féidir le gach páiste, lena n-áirítear iad siúd a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu, an dátheangachas a bhaint amach ag leibhéal éigin, ach ag brath ar a chumas céad teanga (Kay-Raining Bird et al., 2016). Faoi láthair, tugtar díolúine do na daltaí atá cláraithe i ranganna agus scoileanna speisialta nó fághtar as an áireamh iad ó staidéar a dhéanamh ar an nGaeilge mar dhara teanga ar scoil, próiseas nach n-aontaímid leis ar an gcéad dul síos (Tynan, 2018). Ciallaíonn sé seo, go bhfuil páistí fágtha amach as iliomad buntáistí a bhaineann leis an dátheangachas go dtí seo. Tá fadhb leis seo mar go leagtar amach sa doiciméad comhairliúcháin aistriú scileanna ón gcéad teanga, go dtí an dara teanga, agus ansin go dtí an tríú teanga. Cén fáth a bhfuil na daltaí seo á gcur san áireamh sa churaclam ITM ach nach bhfuil an Ghaeilge á múineadh i ranganna agus i scoileanna speisialta faoi láthair? Cad é an réasúnaíocht atá leis na scoileanna a bheith san áireamh chun

teanga Eorpach a fhoghlaim, ach iad a eisiamh ó fhoghlaim na Gaeilge mar dhara teanga? An é go moltar deis a thabhairt do na daltaí seo teanga Eorpach a fhoghlaim ach gan an deis a thabhairt dóibh a dteanga náisiúnta féin a fhoghlaim nó teagmháil a bheith acu leis an nGaeilge? Más amhlaidh, d'fhéadfadh impleachtaí diúltacha a bheith aige seo ar na páistí ó thaobh féiniúlachta, cultúir agus muintearas i sochaí na hÉireann. Is gá dul i ngleic le córas na ndíolúintí go práinneach roimh an tríú teanga a chur ar chláir na bunscoile.

Tá gach dalta uathúil agus tá riachtanais bhreise oideachais ag cuid acu. Tugann an taighde le fios dúinn go bhfuil gá ag daltaí, go háirithe iad siúd a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu, teagmháil ardchaighdeáin agus comhsheasmhach le teanga chun sealbhú rathúil a dhéanamh (Kay-Raining Bird et al., 2016; Thordardottir, 2017). Chun go dtarlódh sé seo, ní mór múinteoir líofa a bheith ann chun an teanga a mhúineadh agus freisin ní mór go mbeadh tuiscint bhunúsach ag an múinteoir ar na nithe seo a leanas; coincheapa an dátheangachais, céimeanna foghlama an dara teanga, agus oideolaíocht ioncuimsitheacha don seomra ranga (Cammarata & Ó Ceallaigh, 2018, Nic Aindriú et al., 2022). Ar an drochuair, níl go leor múinteoirí ullmhaithe sna réimsí seo chun freastal ar riachtanais na ndaltaí ar fad (Barrio, 2021; Nic Aindriú et al., 2022; O’Gorman & Drudy, 2011).

Deir an taighde ar pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu go dteastaíonn níos mó teagmhála le teanga dóibh siúd a bhfuil deacrachtaí urlabhra agus teanga acu ná a bpiaraí gan na deacrachtaí seo (Kay-Raining Bird et al., 2016). Ní

mór freisin coincheapa a mhúineadh go follasach sa dá theanga, mar is minic nach n-aistrítear a scileanna thar theangacha. Níor bhreithnigh an CNCM air seo sa doiciméad comhairliúcháin. Ní thagann laghdú ama don Ghaeilge leis na fíricí seo. Ina theannta sin, níor bhreithnigh an CNCM sa pháipéar seo ar sheasamh na ndaltaí neamhlabhartha agus an taighde maidir le foghlaim an dara nó an tríú teanga. Chuirfeadh laghdú ama sa Ghaeilge isteach go mór ar na deiseanna atá ag páistí cumas dátheangach/ilteangach a bhaint amach. Tá cleachtais ionchuimsitheacha antábhachtach i ngach seomra ranga, go hidirnáisiúnta, aithníodh go dteastaíonn forbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach ar leith ó mhúinteoirí le múineadh i seomra ranga dátheangach, níl an tacar scileanna seo ag múinteoirí atá oilte go dtí seo mar atá fós le tairiscint i gcláir oideachais tosaigh mhúinteoirí. Is féidir go mbeidh dúshláin roimh pháistí a bhfuil riachtanais speisialta oideachais acu ó thaobh scileanna teanga agus cumarsáide a fhorbairt. Beidh pleanáil ag leibhéal indibhidiúil an mhúinteora agus ag leibhéal na scoile uile ag teastáil do chur chuige ionchuimsitheach a dhíríonn ar riachtanais, cumais agus spéiseanna an pháiste agus a chuireann san áireamh a aois agus a chéim forbartha. Molann muid aghaidh a thabhairt ar chur chuige ionchuimsitheach do theagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge mar chéad chéim a ba chóir a bheith ina ceart ag gach páiste.

Ceist an leanúnachais sa chóras oideachais

Déantar plé sa mhír seo ar an nasc idir Creachuraclam na Bunscoile (An Roinn Oideachais (RO), 2023a) agus an t-oideachas teanga ag an iar-bhunleibhéal le

tagairtí faoi leith ann do Shonraíocht na Gaeilge don tSraith Shóisearach (An Roinn Oideachais (RO), 2023b; An Roinn Oideachais (RO), 2023c). Ar an gcéad dul síos glactar anseo go bhfuil ról fiúntach ag an ilteangachas sa bhunscoil. Is féidir leis an ilteangachas tuiscint na ndaltaí ar an teangeolaíocht a fheabhsú ionas go mbeadh siad réidh níos mó chun tabhairt faoi staidéar ar theanga nua-iasachta (NTI) mar chuid den tSraith Shóisearach. Ach caithfear an ról seo a bhainistiú ar bhonn ina bhfuil an t-oideachas teanga ag an mbunleibhéal agus ag an iarbhunleibhéal ag teacht go néata lena chéile. Mar sin cuirfear síos go láidir anseo go mbeadh sé deacair ar mhúinteoirí an teanga a roghnú do na daltaí le linn céim 4 sa bhunscoil mar i bhformhór na gcomhthéacsanna beidh scataí acu ag freastal ar iar-bhunscoileanna éagsúla agus TNIanna difriúla á bhfoghlaim acu ansin. Samhlaítear freisin go mbeidh fadhbanna ann do scoileanna nuair atá múinteoir le teanga amháin ag imeacht agus múinteoir nua le teanga eile ag teacht ina áit sa scoil. Mar sin caithfear machnamh a dhéanamh ar ról an ilteangachais i CTB (ROS, 2019) faoi láthair. Caithfear maitheas an ilteangachais ghinearálta a mheá agus é sin a chur i gcomparáid leis an bhfócas ar thríú teanga amháin atá molta i gCreatchuraclam na Bunscoile (RO, 2023a). B'éigean cinneadh eolach a dhéanamh idir an dá rogha ansin.

Glactar anseo gur céim dhearfach iad *na contanaim dul chun cinn* atá ar fáil sa CTB (ROS, 2019). Ach maítear anseo gur féidir fráma níos fearr a bhunú don fhoghlaiméoir dá mbeadh na contanaim nasctha níos soiléire leis na Torthaí Foghlama (TFanna) atá lárnach sna Sonraíochtaí (RO, 2023b; RO, 2023c). Tugtar le fios ón *Athbhreithniú Luath* nach gceapann ach 1% (n = 721) de mhúinteoirí go bhfuil

an cúrsa don tSraith Shóisearach ag tógáil ar an nGaeilge atá foghlamtha ag daltaí sa bhunscoil. Is cosúil go bhfuil an dá chóras scartha óna chéile i meon na múinteoirí (Mac Gearailt & Ó Duibhir, 2023). Taispeánann an taighde reatha dúinn go bhfuil bearna idir an caighdeán teanga atá ag foghlaimeoirí (Mac Gearailt & Ó Duibhir, 2023) agus castacht na teanga sna háiseanna teagaisc (Ó Meachair, 2020) ag leibhéal na bunscoile agus ag leibhéal na hiar-bhunscoile. Moltar mar sin chun dul i ngleic leis an dícheangail bhraite seo agus coiste a bhunú le toscairí ó earnáil na bunscoile agus na hiar-bhunscoile. Bheadh an coiste seo in ann an nasc idir na contanaim ón CTB (ROS, 2019) agus na TFanna sna Sonraíochtaí (RO, 2023b; RO, 2023c) a phlé le húdarás ceart. Thar aon rud eile d'iarrfaí ar an rialtas léirbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar éifeacht an ilteangachais ón CTB (ROS, 2019) agus ar cheist an leanúnachais sula ndéantar aon chinneadh chun tríú teanga a ionphlandú mar chuid den chúrsa staidéir sa bhunscoil.

Torthaí Foghlama Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile agus An Chomhchreat Tagartha na hEorpa um Theangacha (CTET)

Molann muid na torthaí foghlama teanga a nascadh leis an CTET ionas go mbeidh cosán trédhearcach foghlama ann do gach páiste agus go bhfeicfí naisc idir teangacha chomh maith le naisc idir leibhéil éagsúla scoile. Mar atá ráite le fada teastaíonn pleanáil leanúnach don Ghaeilge ag gach leibhéal scoile. B'fhiú go mbeadh torthaí foghlama na dteangacha ar fad nasctha le CTET. Má tá an tríú teanga le bheith i gceist amach anseo molann muid go mbeadh contanam foghlama ann di.

An Ghaeilge mar mheán chun an t-ilteangachas agus an t-idirchultúrachas a spreagadh

Tá an bhéim a cuireadh ar fhorbairt an ilteangachais agus idirchultúrachais le moladh go mór agus ag teacht le dea-chleachtas oideachasúil in Éirinn (Little & Kirwan, 2019) agus go hidirnáisiúnta (Piccardo, 2013). Molann muid go neartófaí an ról atá ag teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i bhforbairt an ilteangachais agus an idirchultúrachais sa churaclam. Is é ceann de na mórbhuntaistí a bhaineann le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ná go mbronntar deis ar fhoghlaimoirí an dara teanga a fhoghlaim ag leibhéal na bunscoile agus scileanna agus straitéisí foghlama teanga a fhorbairt dá bharr. Tá mórchuid na bpáistí ag foghlaim na Gaeilge mar dhara teanga agus mar sin tosaíonn siad amach ar fhoghlaim na Gaeilge ón tús rud nach bhfuil amhlaidh faoin mBéarla atá ina mórtheanga ag mórchuid na bpáistí. Tá inniúlacht ag gach múinteoir sa Ghaeilge agus sa Bhéarla agus mar sin is féidir cur chuige feasachta teanga a fhorbairt trí staidéar a dhéanamh ar struchtúir sa Ghaeilge agus comparáid agus codarsnacht a dhéanamh ansin leis an mBéarla agus le teangacha éagsúla baile na bpáistí. Léiríonn taighde Ní Dhiorbháin, Concannon-Gibney & Ní Dhubhghaill atá le foilsiú ag COGG go luath rath an chur chuige ilteangaigh i gcomhthéacs theagasc ghramadach na Gaeilge. Molann muid na féidearthachtaí a bhaineann le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge le húsáid teangacha eile baile a spreagadh a láidriú sa tsonraíocht. Is féidir agus is ceart agus is cóir cur chuige feasachta teanga a chur chun cinn trí theagasc na Gaeilge.

Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge

Léiríonn Lynn (2023) nach bhfuil a dhóthain déanta ar son na Gaeilge ó thaobh chúrsaí teicneolaíochta. Maíonn Lynn (2023) go bhfuil an Ghaeilge i measc na dteangacha atá i mbaol díothú digiteach (*digital extinction*). Faightear cur síos sa *Phlean Digiteach don Ghaeilge* ar go leor uirlisí teicneolaíochta atá ar fáil anois nó atá á bhforbairt faoi láthair a chuireann go mór lenár gcumas chun acmhainní oscailte agus ilmheáin oideachasúla a shaothrú. Ba chóir na deiseanna seo a thapú chun an Fhoghlaim Ríomhchuidithe Teangacha (FRT/CALL) a bhunú i gceart mar chuid den chúrsa staidéir sa bhunscoil. Moltar anseo go mór closleabhair a bhaineann le hábhair dhílse a fhorbairt gan mhoill. Is fiú go mór freisin an teicneolaíocht a fhorbairt a chiallaíonn go bhfuil daltaí in ann an teanga labhartha a chleachtadh (Crowder, 2024; Koç & Savaş, 2024). Tuigtear le deich mbliana nach bhfuil leas ceart á mbaint as na deiseanna digiteacha ar son na Gaeilge sa bhunscoil (Ward, 2014). Áiríonn údair an doiciméid seo acmhainní ilmheáin foghlama leis seo, dála cluichí teanga, ina mbeadh deiseanna léitheoireachta, éisteachta, agus scríofa ag an bhfoghlaiméoir.

Ó thaobh na léitheoireachta de tagann na contanaim dul chun cinn ón CTB (ROS, 2019) go mór leis na Torthaí Foghlama sna Sonraíochtaí. Deirtear sa CTB gur chóir le Céim 3 agus Céim 4 “téacsanna teagaisc agus téacsanna ag leibhéal neamhspleách a léamh i réimse seánraí ag luas réasúnta agus le tuiscint, agus féin cheartú neamhspleách a dhéanamh” (CTB, lch 49). Leagtar amach go sonrath sa *Phlean Digiteach don Ghaeilge 2023-2027* na céimeanna móra chun tosaigh atá déanta ó thaobh na Gaeilge agus na teicneolaíochta (Rialtas na hÉireann, 2022).

Ba chóir úsáid a bhaint as na guthanna sintéiseacha (abair.ie) chun tacú leis an aistriú ó théacs go teanga agus le stór closleabhar a shaothrú a bheadh in oiriúint do Chéim 3 agus 4 ag an mbunleibhéal agus cinn eile a shaothrú ón liosta molta don chéad bhliain (RO, 2023a; RO, 2023b; RO, 2023c). Cruthóidh áiseanna mar seo deiseanna chun nósanna scíthléitheoireachta a fhorbairt i measc na ndaltaí, rud a chuireann le leibhéal litearthachta na bhfoghlaimoirí agus a éascaíonn an sealbhú teanga lasmuigh den seomra ranga. Cuireann an léitheoireacht spás ar fáil chun litriú agus foghraíocht na teanga a tharraingt le chéile in intinn an dalta freisin (Stenson & Hickey, 2018).

Is fiú go mór an tsuim san ábhar dílis agus sa scíthléitheoireacht i measc na ndaltaí ag leibhéal na bunscoile agus ag leibhéal na hiarbhunscoile á éascú le closleabhar. Sa treo seo moltar anseo cúrsa gearr ainmnithe d'ábhar léitheoireachta a chur le chéile atá feiliúnach do chéim 4 (Rang 5 agus Rang 6) den CTB. Ba chóir don liosta seo a bheith ina réamhtheachtaí don liosta molta de théacsanna cuí don chéad bhliain. Ansin ba chóir don Roinn Oideachais closleabhair a dhéanamh as an ábhar dílis ón dá leibhéal. Is iomaí deis atá ar fáil chuige seo (Marchetti & Valente, 2018). Tugann an scíthléitheoireacht tacaíocht do dhaltaí chun teacht isteach ar thuiscint a bhaineann le meicnic na litríochta ar bhonn atá bunaithe ar chur chuige céimnithe.

Is é ceann de na torthaí ba mhó a d'eascair as an léirmheas litríochta a rinne Concannon-Gibney et al. (2023) ar straitéisí teagaisc an dara teanga ná go mbaineann iliomad féidearthachtaí le húsáid na teicneolaíochta le sealbhú agus foghlaim an dara teanga a chur chun cinn taobh amuigh agus taobh istigh den rang,

go deimhin tá *An Ríomhacadamh*¹²⁵ ag logánú bogearraí agus cluichí don Ghaeilge ar mhaithe leis seo ar bhonn deonach agus d'fhéadfaí tógáil ar an iarracht seo. Molann muid do shainghrúpa ar leith díriú ar bhreis áiseanna teicneolaíochta a fhorbairt don Ghaeilge ag gach leibhéal oideachais.

Forbairt na Teanga agus na Litearthachta i gcomhthéacs ábharbhunaithe - Scoileanna

T1 ach go háirithe

Tá bunús an-láidir taighde a léiríonn gur gá cothromaíocht a bhaint amach idir foghlaim an ábhair agus foghlaim na teanga i suíomhanna tumoideachais le go sroichfidh foghlaimeoirí ardchaighdeán sa teanga agus san ábhar (Cammarata & Ó Ceallaigh, 2018; Lyster, 2017; Tedick & Lyster, 2020). Teastaíonn teagasc follasach ar struchtúir na teanga agus ar an teanga acadúil i scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge. Molann muid go mór go ndíreofaí aird sa tsonraíocht ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le teagasc na teanga mar chuid den teagasc ábharbhunaithe i scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge - ní leor curaclam a aistriú go Gaeilge, teastaíonn cur chuige cothromaithe mar atá léirithe ag an taighde ar an tumoideachas go hidirnáisiúnta.

Níl aitheantas tugtha do chur chuige cothromaithe (Tedick & Lyster, 2020) i CTB.

Príomhmholtaí na hAighneachta

- **Bearnaí sa Taighde ar CTB (ROS, 2019) & Bearnaí sna Tacaíochtaí**

¹²⁵ An Ríomhacadamh: URL: <https://riomhacadamh.wordpress.com/>

Curaclaim atá curtha ar fáil.

Moladh: Is gá tabhairt faoi thaighde cuimsitheach ar chur i bhfeidhm CTB (ROS, 2019) sula rachfaí i ngleic le hathrú eile curaclaim. Is gá na tacaíochtaí cuí a chur ar fáil do chur i bhfeidhm CTB ach go háirithe sna réimsí seo – cur chuige ionchuimsitheach do theagasc na Gaeilge, teagasc i treo traschur scileanna (Gaeilge, Béarla agus teangacha baile), úsáid na Gaeilge go neamhfhoirmiúil, FCÁT trí Ghaeilge i scoileanna T2 chomh maith le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge i scoileanna T2.

- **Oideachas Múinteoirí**

Moladh: Is gá aghaidh a thabhairt ar oideachas múinteoirí thar an gcontanam d'oideachas múinteoirí roimh an gcéim faoin tríú teanga a ghlacadh. Is gá oideachas múinteoirí a sholáthar a áiríonn múnlaí éagsúla den fhorbairt ghairmiúil leanúnach le tacú le cur i bhfeidhm CTB (ROS, 2019) agus le tacú le teagasc na Gaeilge mar dhara teanga ar an gcéad dul síos.

- **Laghdú ama do Theagasc agus Foghlaim na Gaeilge i mbunscoileanna T2**

Moladh: I bhfianaise gach taighde atá déanta ar theagasc agus foghlaim mionteangacha easaontaíonn muid leis an laghdú ama don Ghaeilge i scoileanna T2. Bhainfeadh an laghdú seo go mór ó dheiseanna foghlama na bpáistí sa Ghaeilge agus beidh impleachtaí tromchúiseacha aige ar thodhchaí na teanga. Molann muid don CNCM athbhreithniú a dhéanamh air seo ar bhonn práinne. Is gá a bheith ciallmhar

faoin méid ama atá ar fáil sa bhunscoil agus na deiseanna foghlama teanga is fearr a thabhairt do pháistí. Tá ionchur ama riachtanach don Ghaeilge.

- **Foghlaim Teangacha Iasachta ag leibhéal na Bunscoile**

Moladh: Ní mholtar an tríú teanga a ghlacadh isteach sa bhunscoil do gach scoil gan an soláthar cuí múinteoirí agus áiseanna agus pleanáil thrédhearcach chuimsitheach déanta. Moltar deiseanna a thabhairt do scoileanna páirt a ghlacadh i scéimeanna píolótacha mar chéad chéim sa phróiseas agus taighde a dhéanamh air sin chun na múnlaí ab éifeachtaí a aimsiú. Molann muid breathnú i ndlínsí eile ina bhfuil múinteoir ginearálaithe bunscoile ag teagasc gach ábhar bunscoile chomh maith le mórtheanga, mionteanga agus teanga Eorpach.

- **An tOideachas Ionchuimsitheach**

Moladh: Moltar athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar chóras na ndíolúintí agus ceist na ndíolúintí a iniúchadh i gcomhthéacs an tríú teanga. Moltar go láidir go mbeadh deis ag gach páiste a théann ar scoil in Éirinn teagmháil a bheith acu leis an nGaeilge de réir a gcumas féin. Moltar tosaíocht a dhéanamh as teagasc agus foghlaim ionchuimsitheach teanga thar an gcontanam d'oideachas múinteoirí. Molann muid go mbeadh an deis ag daltaí i ranganna agus scoileanna speisialta tabhairt faoi foghlaim na Gaeilge, an teanga náisiúnta, roimh thabhairt faoi foghlaim teanga Eorpach.

- **Ceist an Leanúnachais sa chóras oideachais**

Moladh: Tá gá le leanúnachas sa chóras oideachais maidir le teagasc agus foghlaim na

Gaeilge agus an tríú teanga agus ón réamhscoil, bunscoil, iar-bhunscoil agus tríú leibhéal.

Molann muid go mbeadh plean leanúnach don Ghaeilge agus d'fhoghlaim teangacha ag gach leibhéal oideachais.

- **Torthaí Foghlama Churaclam Teanga na Bunscoile agus An**

Chomhchreat Tagartha na hEorpa um Theangacha (CTET)

Moladh: Molann muid na torthaí foghlama teanga a nascadh leis an CTET ag gach leibhéal scoile do gach teanga. Cinnteoidh seo leanúnachas agus dul chun cinn céimnithe agus cur chuige ilteangach san oideachas teanga in Éirinn.

- **An Ghaeilge mar mheán chun an t-ilteangachas agus an tidirchultúrachas a spreagadh**

Moladh: Molann muid na buntáistí a bhaineann leis an nGaeilge le cur chuige ilteangach agus idirchultúrtha a chur chun cinn a láidriú sa churaclam.

- **Plean Digiteach don Ghaeilge**

Moladh: Is gá áiseanna cuimsitheacha digiteacha a fhorbairt do theagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge ag gach leibhéal oideachais.

- **Forbairt na Teanga agus na Litearthachta i gcomhthéacs ábharbhunaithe**

- Scoileanna T1 ach go háirithe

Moladh: Molann muid aird a thabhairt ar fhorbairt na teanga san foghlaim ábharbhunaithe i scoileanna T1 ach go háirithe agus na háiseanna agus tacaíochtaí cuí a chur ar fáil do mhúinteoirí a chabhróidh leo cothromaíocht a bhaint amach idir an teanga agus an t-ábhar.

- **Príomh-mholadh**

Moladh: Molann muid taighde a dhéanamh ar riachtanais scoileanna maidir leis an tríú teanga a theagasc, pleanáil chuimsitheach chéimiúil a dhéanamh agus na hacmhainní cuí a chur ar fáil. Molann muid go láidir tacú le teagasc agus foghlaim na Gaeilge mar T2 agus cur leis na deiseanna idirghníomhaithe teanga atá ag páistí sa Ghaeilge roimh dhul i ngleic leis an tríú teanga. Is gá an cur chuige theagasc an tríú teanga a bhunú ar dhea-chleachtas agus ar thaighde idirnáisiúnta i ndlínse a bheadh comhchosúil le cás na hÉireann. Ní léir dúinn go bhfuil an taighde seo déanta go fóill.

Tá an aighneacht seo réitithe ag baill SEALBHÚ:

An Dr Aisling Ní Dhiorbháin, An Dr Gearóidín Uí Laighléis, Pearse Ahern, An Dr Jacqueline de Brún, An Dr Mícheál J. Ó Meachair, An Dr Patrick Burke, An Dr Sinéad Nic Andriú, Máire Ní Láimhín & Pádraig Ó Duibhir (Ollamh Emeritus).

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ShoutOut

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications are designed to build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) while responding to evolving priorities. In evaluating these specifications, we believe the integration of LGBTQ+ inclusive content can significantly enhance the curriculum’s effectiveness in several key areas: Building on Strengths and Responding to Changing Priorities The draft specifications build on the inclusivity and holistic educational approach of the 1999 curriculum by addressing contemporary issues such as diversity and equality. Including LGBTQ+ perspectives will further this goal by ensuring all students see themselves and their families represented in their education. Promoting Agency and Flexibility By allowing schools the flexibility to adapt the curriculum to their specific contexts, the framework can support the inclusion of LGBTQ+ topics in a way that is meaningful and relevant to all students. This flexibility can empower teachers to introduce diverse family structures and gender identities in age-appropriate ways. Connecting with Learning Experiences from Aistear to Junior Cycle 12 years is the most common age people know they’re LGBTQ+. (Higgins et al., 2024, p. 32) 14 years is the most common age young trans people first start living openly as their gender. (Higgins et al., 2024, p. 19) Integrating LGBTQ+ themes from early childhood through to the Junior Cycle ensures a continuous and

coherent approach to understanding diversity. This alignment is crucial for fostering an environment of respect and inclusion from the earliest stages of education. Embedding Key Competencies The seven key competencies, such as being a confident and effective learner and connecting with others, are inherently supported by a curriculum that includes LGBTQ+ perspectives. Understanding and respecting diversity enhances social skills, empathy, and critical thinking. Focusing on Skills, Knowledge, Dispositions, Values, and Attitudes Including LGBTQ+ content helps develop positive values and attitudes towards diversity, equality, and inclusion. It also equips students with the knowledge and skills to navigate and appreciate a diverse world. Positioning Assessment as Central to Learning and Teaching Assessment practices that recognise and value diverse perspectives can help to reinforce inclusive learning. Teachers can use assessments to gauge understanding and acceptance of diversity, ensuring that inclusivity is a lived experience in the classroom. Promoting an Integrated Approach An integrated approach that includes LGBTQ+ content across various subjects ensures that diversity is not siloed but is part of the broader educational experience. This approach reinforces the interconnectedness of different aspects of identity and culture. Being for All Children A truly inclusive curriculum must reflect the experiences of all children, including those from LGBTQ+ families or those who may identify as LGBTQ+. This inclusion is essential for fostering a sense of belonging and validation for every student.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Response to Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum: Learning Outcomes The inclusion of diverse family structures and the contributions of LGBTQ+ individuals to society can enrich students' understanding of social dynamics and environmental stewardship. The curriculum could explicitly mention the importance of recognising and respecting all family types and social identities to foster a more inclusive understanding of community and social responsibility. Pedagogical Approaches Encouraging inquiry-based learning that includes questions about diverse identities and experiences can help students develop a deeper understanding of social justice and equality. Providing case studies and examples involving LGBTQ+ issues can enhance critical thinking and empathy. Specific Sections for Inclusion: Detailed examples of how LGBTQ+ historical figures and events can be included in the curriculum to highlight their contributions and struggles. Introduce different cultures that have/had varied gender norms and roles. Emphasise the change within Irish culture, such as Marriage Equality. Activities and projects that encourage students to explore and present on various family structures, including LGBTQ+ families. Foster a vision of children as unique, competent, and capable individuals and valued members of communities. History - Marriage Equality is an example of "Demonstrate an understanding of changes in Ireland's political system." (NCCA, 2024, p.18) Exploration of Our World - "Investigate aspects of the lives of early peoples and ancient societies" (NCCA, 2024, p.19) - Native American/Indigenous Tribes views of gender & society, the role of women in Irish society and how that has changed. How gender/sexual stereotypes have changed and how to question them. Being an Active Citizen (NCCA, 2024, p.19): Recognising children not as passive actors but as people within their community who have a voice and can engage with specific issues in their community. Emphasise the importance of Human Rights, Equity, and Social/Environmental Justice, noting that LGBTQ+ people's rights have often been denied both historically and presently, and emphasising the rights of children including equality, self-expression, and access to information.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Response to Draft Wellbeing Curriculum: Aims and Rationale The draft Wellbeing Curriculum rightly emphasises the holistic development of students. Including specific references to LGBTQ+ well-being, such as understanding gender identity and sexual orientation, can provide all students with the knowledge and tools to support their mental and emotional health. Learning Outcomes Learning outcomes should explicitly include understanding and respect for LGBTQ+ identities. This can help reduce stigma and discrimination, promoting a school environment where all students feel safe and valued. Specific Sections for Inclusion: Developing emotional literacy that includes discussions on diverse identities and experiences, helping students understand and articulate their feelings and those of others. Developing an understanding of personal identity, and peer identity which supports a range of gender expressions, and which challenges gendered stereotypes surrounding clothing, toys, hobbies, and behaviours. Health Education - developing sensitivity and awareness in school staff for gender-inclusive health education, recognising that for trans and intersex young people, gendering anatomical terms or parts of the body can cause discomfort. Strategies for creating a supportive and inclusive school climate that actively supports LGBTQ+ students. Partnerships with LGBTQ+ groups: ShoutOut, TENI, BelongTo. Local LGBTQ+ groups/organisations can provide LGBTQ+ children and children of LGBTQ+ parents opportunities to develop a sense of community and belonging. Introducing the concept of consent early on - mainly with friends and family. Encouraging children to understand they are in charge of their bodies and can express their discomfort to others. Critical thinking skills and allowing children to express their opinions and form their ideas. Classroom discussions, building empathy amongst diverse groups. Critical thinking about the use of digital technology, understanding that not everything they read/see online is real and how they can protect themselves/find support if they see something that distresses them. Media and Digital Wellbeing - Pointing students towards accurate information about gender and sexuality, fact-checking and how to identify credible sources of information. Not everything on the internet is real and helping students develop an awareness of why someone might spread misinformation about LGBTQ+ people. Recognise healthy and unhealthy behaviours in relationships, identify instances of bullying and abuse, including inappropriate touch, understand the wrongfulness of these behaviours, and know the appropriate safety-focused responses. Ensuring that LGBTQ+ identities are discussed alongside heterosexual/cisgender relationships, specifically naming anti-LGBTQ+ bullying and where students can report/find support. Community and Belonging - Specifically naming LGBTQ+ people/families alongside

cisgender/heterosexual people. Normalising it within the classroom through books, resources, media, etc. Allowing students to talk openly about LGBTQ+ people without fear they'll be told they're too young to understand. Relationships - Recognise the diverse relationships within which love occurs, such as friendship, siblings, family, and romantic relationships. Ensuring it is inclusive of LGBTQ+ identities, including asexuality and aromanticism.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Curriculum Support for Teachers and School Leaders The establishment of clear and direct guidelines ensures teachers aren't left confused or in the dark about whether or not they're allowed to talk about the LGBTQ+ community. Clear guidelines and support for teachers who might face resistance from within the faculty or Parents & Guardians. Access to training where they can gain the knowledge and confidence necessary to discuss LGBTQ+ issues in the school environment. Create spaces in training and continuously where they can discuss troubleshooting and issues that may come up. The Department of Education should support teachers in implementing LGBTQ+ inclusive education through the following; Professional Development Teachers and school leaders will require ongoing professional development to effectively implement LGBTQ+ inclusive education. Training should focus on: Understanding LGBTQ+ identities and issues Developing inclusive lesson plans and materials Creating supportive classroom environments Empowering teachers with the knowledge and skills to both teach LGBTQ+ inclusive education and how to support an LGBTQ+ child, especially if a child comes out as transgender or nonbinary. Resource Provision Providing high-quality, age-appropriate resources that reflect LGBTQ+ experiences is essential. These should include: Books, videos, and other materials that include LGBTQ+ characters and themes. Guidance documents on addressing LGBTQ+ topics in the classroom. Support Systems Establishing support systems such as networks of teachers experienced in LGBTQ+ education, as well as partnerships with LGBTQ+ organisations can provide additional support and resources.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

General Comments on Implementation Implementing an inclusive curriculum requires a whole-school approach. This includes: Engaging with parents and guardians to build understanding and support for LGBTQ+ inclusive education Ensuring that school policies and practices explicitly support LGBTQ+ inclusion and address discrimination and bullying Regularly reviewing and updating the curriculum to reflect ongoing social changes and the evolving understanding of LGBTQ+ issues Conclusion We commend the NCCA for its commitment to developing a modern, inclusive curriculum. By incorporating LGBTQ+ perspectives, the curriculum can better reflect the diverse society in which we live, promoting understanding, respect, and equality for all students. We look forward to continued collaboration to ensure that the Primary School Curriculum supports every child's right to a safe, inclusive, and affirming educational experience. Sincerely, Ruadhán Ó Críodáin, Elaine Murphy and Ollie Bell ShoutOut References NCCA, 2024. Draft Senior Cycle Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE) Specification. Dublin:

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**Submission from the Society for Music Education in Ireland (SMEI) in response to the
Draft Primary Curriculum Specification for Arts Education - June 2024**

Inaugurated in 2010, the Society for Music Education in Ireland represents music education and community music interests in Ireland. It is a member of the Council of Professional Associations of the International Society for Music Education. As an organisation concerned with the music education and overall cultural enrichment of young people, the Society for Music Education in Ireland (SMEI) notes the publication of the Draft Primary Curriculum Specification for Arts Education and welcomes the opportunity to respond to the report with particular reference to Music Education.

Introduction & General Observations

SMEI welcomes this opportunity to participate in the consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specification for Arts Education. We would like to commend the NCCA and all the Curriculum Development Group Members on their work in developing the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications. We commend the proposed curriculum's emphasis on inclusion and the enhancement of teachers' abilities to support all students. The document outlines comprehensive principles of teaching, learning and assessment with coherence across the strands of each arts subject. The concept of children as artmakers/music-makers is welcomed and the focus on process is to be highly commended.

Structure of the Arts Education Specification Document

The introductory section of the document, although well written, is quite lengthy before it reaches the core content, such as the strands, aims, and concepts. To enhance usability for teachers, it might

be beneficial to reorganise the document so that critical information is more accessible and prominently featured from the beginning. This would make the document more teacher-friendly by aligning its structure with the practical needs of its primary users.

We recommend that Appendices A, B, and C, which outline the key concepts and progression of the curriculum should be positioned earlier in the document for better accessibility.

Terminology

The Arts Education specification refers to ‘concepts’ in relation to art, music and drama. In contrast, STEM, Wellbeing, Social & Environmental specifications and the Primary Language Curriculum refer to ‘elements’. The structure of Strands/Strand units across the subjects in the 1999 Curriculum enabled teachers to plan coherently because of consistency and familiarity with the terminology. We do not recommend using different terminology in different subject areas as this will lead to confusion. Using strand/strand units or strand/elements or strand/concepts across all subject areas would avoid confusion and make the curriculum more accessible to teachers.

Integration

While arts integration is to be welcomed in principle, SMEI notes the risks of this not being meaningfully implemented without provision and planning for continuing professional development. Key stages 1 & 2 of the curriculum presents Arts Education in an integrated manner, aligning with how young children perceive and experience learning. However, designing and implementing an integrated arts curriculum requires careful planning to ensure that the connections between different arts are meaningful and beneficial rather than superficial. It is unclear from the new integrated arts approach, what exactly integrated arts entails and how it is expected to be taught. This needs to be explained, modelled and detailed further to give a coherent understanding of what is meant by integrated arts and how it is to be implemented meaningfully. One of the biggest challenges is balancing the depth of learning in each art form with the breadth required to cover multiple disciplines. Consequently, this could lead to teachers having less time to build advanced skills in any single art form. Furthermore, assessment of student progress in an integrated arts curriculum can be more complicated than in a single-subject curriculum. It requires assessment methods that accurately reflect the interdisciplinary learning outcomes. The assessment sections on page 31-33 do not clearly state how teachers should/could evaluate and assess the integrated arts. Furthermore, curricular integration needs to be considered across the entire curriculum and not just within Arts Education. Music, Visual Art

and Drama can also be integrated meaningfully with other subjects e.g. language, English, SPHE, STE(A)M. This needs to be explicitly stated in the curriculum.

Reduced Time Allocation - SMEI expresses grave concern regarding the reduced allocation of time for arts education in the overall curriculum document. SMEI calls for clarity on time allocation, ideally in alignment with the recommendations for time allocated to “wellbeing”. For example, we note the allocation of twelve hours per month to wellbeing (only 2 subjects), and eight hours to all arts subjects. This does not even equate with 3 hours per month for music.

Partnerships

While SMEI welcomes opportunities for external providers and community engagement for “inputs”, the need to explicitly delineate the “central role” of the teacher is crucial to ensure meaningful collaboration between all stakeholders and in turn, cohesion and sustainability of partnerships. Therefore, we call for stronger wording in the curriculum that recognises the central role of the teacher in discerning the extent to which the provision of external providers is appropriate and inclusive. Given the primacy of the classroom teacher’s role in successful arts partnerships, we suggest it should be “*compulsory*” for classroom teachers to be allocated sufficient time to actively engage in co-creation of the workings of the partnerships. For these to be successful, we recommend that a statement be inserted which states that the teacher as active partner in the co-construction of partnership activities must be present and actively participate throughout the process, to maintain oversight of the component of the curriculum which is facilitated by external providers. This is not only for Health and Safety reasons, but also to ensure that partnerships are meaningful for both the artist and teacher acknowledging the teachers’ agentic role in enacting the curriculum.

Toolkit

SMEI welcomes the proposal of a Toolkit for teachers. However, we also note the lack of this Toolkit and the current omission of curricular/pedagogical content (i.e. on each strand and details about repertoire). Given the absence of a **Toolkit** at the time of publication, SMEI is eager to view a robust and rich resource for teachers which could include audio-visual materials, exemplars of integrated arts projects, as well as a robust glossary across artistic domains (and reflective of developments in new and emerging digital art forms/media since the 1999 curriculum). While we

acknowledge that such a toolkit must be a separate document from the curriculum itself so that it can be revised and updated in light of contemporary developments over the coming years, we strongly recommend that a draft version should be provided for consultation before the curriculum itself is to be implemented within schools.



Submission by the SPHE Network to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on the Draft Curriculum Specification for Wellbeing

Section 1: Alignment of the draft curriculum specifications with the Primary Curriculum Framework

The SPHE Network welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this open consultation from the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA), on the draft curriculum specifications for the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum. The mission of the SPHE Network is to create an inclusive and collaborative community where the teaching and learning of SPHE is a shared interest among members, and is actively promoted and valued. The Network provides a national forum for teacher educators, student teachers, practicing teachers and leading organisations to share SPHE teaching and learning practices. It is in that context, that our submission to this consultation has been agreed by members and will focus predominantly on the draft specifications for Wellbeing. We look forward to supporting the implementation of the new curriculum and see an important role for our organisation in highlighting and establishing best practices in SPHE teaching, within the Wellbeing curriculum area.

The SPHE Network believes that the draft specification for each of the five curriculum areas align strongly with the Primary Curriculum Framework (PCF). There is coherence between and within curriculum areas and it is evident that the PCF has acted as the overall structural apparatus through which the curriculum areas are mediated. Providing examples of what the principles of the PCF look like in each of the curriculum areas is effective - although it should be noted in the relevant documents that these examples are non-exhaustive, so that they do not become unintended limiters for teachers, in terms of what to explore in the classroom.

Section 2: Response to the Draft Curriculum Specification for Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

The SPHE Network commends the NCCA for the work it has done in bringing the diverse areas of the Wellbeing curriculum area together, in a coherent manner. Overall, the Network agrees with placing SPHE and PE under a united 'Wellbeing' area, given the overlap between both of these subjects in promoting healthy living. The Network further agrees that wellbeing should be explored thematically from Junior Infants - Second Class, before being split into the two subjects of SPHE and PE from Third Class onwards. However, notwithstanding this, the SPHE Network is concerned that there is a possibility that with greater freedom to explore wellbeing through SPHE and PE, there is the risk that SPHE could lose its identity - as a possible focus on wellbeing through PE could leave other aspects of the Wellbeing curriculum susceptible to tokenistic approaches. We consider the sequence of presentation of the two Wellbeing subjects throughout the document, as 'PE and SPHE' (with SPHE always appearing second), to be problematic, because it implicitly places SPHE in a subordinate position. This heightens the risk of SPHE receiving superficial treatment. Clear guidance should be provided to mitigate this risk and ensure parity of esteem between both subjects across all stages of the curriculum. At a minimum, the SPHE Network believes that the sequence of presentation of the two Wellbeing subjects should be mixed, so that SPHE also appears first and is given the same standing as PE.

The SPHE Network would like to offer some further specific feedback below, in relation to particular points.

Defining Wellbeing

The section on 'Understanding Wellbeing' in the draft specification is a welcome addition and provides good context to the curriculum. However, the SPHE Network notes that the definition for wellbeing provided in the draft specification (top of p.3) differs in a subtle but significant way from the version contained in the 'Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice' (2019). We believe that the 2019 definition is a better one because it explicitly references the word 'resilient'. The SPHE Network recommends reverting to this 2019 definition in the Wellbeing curriculum, to ensure consistency across publications.

Rationale

The SPHE Network is in broad agreement with the rationale for Wellbeing and SPHE set forth on p.4 and p.5 respectively of the draft specification. The emphasis on healthy dispositions, attitudes, and values, to foster an ethical understanding of the world is commendable, and the introduction of the ‘concept of consent within relationships’ is a welcome addition. The SPHE Network believes that while the concept of belonging is dealt with in other parts of the draft specification, it is notably absent from the rationale. The feeling of ‘belonging’, is critical for resilience and has always been a core part of the teaching of SPHE. The Wellbeing Curriculum ought to be instrumental in cultivating a strong sense of belonging and connection among children to their school, community, and wider society and this should be explicitly included as part of the rationale.

Aims of the Wellbeing Curriculum

The SPHE Network is in broad agreement with the aims of the Wellbeing Curriculum. While the Network commends the focus on active citizenship, we believe that there should be specific mention of the advocacy role of SPHE, in promoting healthy living. A core part of SPHE teaching should involve developing skills in children on how to advocate for causes they are passionate about and which they believe will bring about a more equitable world. This is crucial to achieving the vision for social justice which the curriculum espouses. Including the concepts of consent and body autonomy in the ‘Aims’ section would also strengthen the draft specification overall.

Strands, Strand Units and Elements

The strands, strand units and elements in the curriculum are appropriate and comprehensive. The SPHE Network particularly welcomes the ‘Sense of Belonging’ strand unit. However, the Network believes this strand unit could be greatly enhanced by presenting it as two separate but connected points - one fostering a personal sense of belonging and another focusing on including others. The inclusion of the ‘Relationships’ strand unit is also a welcome addition; however, greater care needs to be taken so that every mention of touch in the curriculum is not qualified as “wrongful” or “inappropriate”. Of course, very strong emphasis should continue to be placed on highlighting that no

sexual or intimate interaction should be taking place between people until much later in life. A stronger connection between the 'Human Development' strand unit and the 'Relationships' strand unit, in relation to consent, should also be made. The SPHE Network also welcomes a standalone 'Resilience' strand unit. Within this strand unit, the Network believes that more focus needs to be placed on effort rather than outcome. Resilience is a complex area to support and develop, as it largely comes through experience and each time a child overcomes a problem, they develop skills and confidence to address the next issue that arises. Teaching the components of resilience should be a feature of this strand unit; it is insufficient to simply state that children will learn to 'embrace and persevere'.

Key Competencies

The key competencies of the PCF align well with the priorities for the Wellbeing curriculum area. However, in the draft specification for Wellbeing, there is a preoccupation with discussing the 'Being Well' competency. We can see the logic of providing some detail on the 'Being Well' competency, but the 'Being an Active Citizen' competency is just as important from an SPHE perspective. While we believe that other competencies could also be more strongly linked to

SPHE, at a minimum, we argue that the 'Being an Active Citizen' competency should have greater prominence and be discussed to the same level as the 'Being Well' competency in the discussion on competencies. This will send a clear message to schools around the importance of SPHE from an advocacy perspective.

Supporting All Learners

The inclusion of the Additional Support Pathways is a welcome development, and mirrors what has been proposed for other curriculum areas. However, as it stands, the pathways are too generic and they should be made more Wellbeing-specific, to support teachers in crafting material that is suitable for children with myriad needs. The SPHE Network believes that, while the presentation of the new curriculum from an inclusive perspective encapsulating special schools is commendable, more work is needed to ensure that it is truly inclusive. Overall,

Section 6 ('The Wellbeing Curriculum in Practice') is generally not neuroaffirmative and with the growing number of neurodivergent pupils in our schools, this section should be

reconsidered - perhaps including consultation with ‘actually autistic’ teachers or students to guide provision.

Playful Approaches

Overall, the way in which playfulness has been infused across the Wellbeing curriculum is commendable. Some exemplars of how playfulness can be promoted in the teaching of SPHE would be a welcome inclusion in the Wellbeing Toolkit.

Story

While the use of narrative and stories under the Playful Learning section is referenced, reading and imagination are not referred to at all throughout the draft. The SPHE Network believes that story (as an approach/methodology) should feature much more prominently in the new Wellbeing Curriculum. Story plays a vital role in mediating culture, in fostering a sense of belonging, in bringing visibility to marginalised groups and in developing selfhood / compassion / empathy. Fundamentally, story offers children a chance to imagine and experience a multiplicity of childhoods and we believe that it is not featured as prominently in the draft specification as it should be.

Diverse Families

The SPHE Network welcomes the acknowledgement of diverse family types in the new curriculum and commends the NCCA for celebrating this diversity. The use of terms such as mother, father, co-parent, same-sex parent and so on, is very welcome because language is important and these are words that children use to describe their lived reality. It is on this basis, we note with concern that the words ‘mother’ and ‘father’ are only used in the context of families headed by different-sex parents, in this draft specification. Single parents and same-sex parents are also mothers and fathers and they should be recognised as such in the curriculum. If the language of the curriculum is not reworked to reflect this, it will cause hurt to many families and will result in some children feeling that their experience of also having a mother/father is not acknowledged.

Wellbeing Toolkit

The SPHE Network believes that the following areas should be addressed in the Wellbeing Toolkit that accompanies this new curriculum, to ensure successful implementation in schools:

- There is an appetite from teachers for further training on playful pedagogies in SPHE and across the curriculum more generally. Guidance could be provided in the Toolkit on Playful Pedagogies for SPHE and this guidance could extend what is already in place in the early years sector for Aistear;
- There is a need for further guidance for teachers in promoting diversity and dealing with intersectionality. This is particularly the case where teachers are supporting children / families who are more susceptible to vulnerability and inequity. The Toolkit should be used to provide guidance on this;
- The draft specification does not refer to children who are experiencing trauma. In fact, it contains no reference to the word ‘trauma’, whatsoever. Given the nature of the Wellbeing domain, the SPHE Network believes that the SPHE Toolkit should contain detailed guidance on how teachers could support children in trauma;
- Specific guidance in the SPHE Toolkit on how to teach consent in the context of human development and relationships will be critical to effective provision in this space; ● It would also be helpful if the Toolkit included a document similar to ‘Making the Links’ (PDST / OIDE) to map the key learning back to some of the core programmes.

Organisational Imperatives for Successful Implementation

The SPHE Network believes that for this curriculum to be enacted successfully, some organisational issues need to be attended to. While teachers will welcome the increase in time allocation for PE, many schools will struggle for spaces and equipment to do it effectively. As aquatics is part of the curriculum, consideration should be given to funding it, as currently schools do not receive a grant to provide swimming lessons and rely on parents to pay for them. The SPHE Network also believes that sustained professional learning should be facilitated for teachers to ensure successful implementation. We believe that the NCCA should support the development of Professional Learning Communities so that teachers can support each other in enacting many of the Wellbeing themes.

Glossary of Terms

The SPHE Network welcomes the inclusion of a Glossary of Terms. However, some terms need further detail, as they do not wholly capture the meaning of the term. For example, 'social justice' is not adequately represented in the information provided on it.

The SPHE Network is grateful to the NCCA for affording us the opportunity to provide feedback on this draft specification for the Wellbeing Curriculum. The Network hopes that it will be carefully considered and factored in to the revised specification.

Star of the Sea Retirement Association

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment

18th June 2024

Dear Friends,

Thank you for inviting submissions on the draft curriculum for Primary schools.

So as not to stray outside my area of competence, I will restrict my comments to the area of "Wellbeing".

You will be aware that countries such as England and Sweden which embraced gender ideology in their educational systems, are making major changes in the light of the very negative effects of such ideology on many young people.

Last month for example, main stream media in the UK told us that all teachers were to refer to gender ideology as a "contested opinion" rather than a fact. Also all sex education to children of less than nine years of age is to be stopped.

Overemphasis on sexuality is not in the best long term interest of young people.

We do not fully understand the negative effects of encouraging young people to question their own objective gender.

The admonition to "Let the children be children" has stood the test of time.

Yours faithfully,

Eamon Fitzpatrick FCA,

Secretary - Star of the Sea, Strandhill Active Retirement Association.

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

With reference to key message 5, we feel that whilst the key message talks about developing skills, knowledge, values etc there is no explicit focus on the teaching of values, either discreetly or as an integrated piece of work. We feel there is a disconnect between the key messages and the draft wellbeing specifications. As the first values school in Ireland we are in a position to meaningfully speak about the impact of human values education in our school . We focus on a specific over-arching value each month and an associated sub-value each week. This explicit school-wide focus on human values allow the pupils to build on their own internal skill-set, to develop new dispositions and to re-think their attitudes . As a programme it is for all the children, irrespective of race, colour, creed, cognitive or physical ability and so addresses the final key message of the curriculum also. Both international research and our own local research as a school, highlights the positive impact of values education on the pupil - in terms of learner experiences and learner outcomes. Furthermore, the human values programme is not an appendage to the curriculum. It integrates seamlessly with other curriculum specifications including the Arts and SPHE.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8.Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9.Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

As a school we welcome the draft Wellbeing curriculum and applaud the focus on all aspects of wellbeing - including the physical, social, emotional and spiritual development. The online toolkit will serve as a very useful and hopefully user-friendly tool to support teachers as they teach a very broad and varied curriculum area of wellbeing. However, we feel that the spiritual aspect can be more purposefully developed by the use of the aforementioned human values programme (see Q4) or at the very least a more explicit focus on the teaching of values as a stand-alone piece or integrated with the teaching of other curriculum areas. As a starting point if we look at the aims of the curriculum (pg 7), at least half of those aims can be very meaningfully and purposefully addressed through the adoption of an Education in Human Values approach. As a school, we feel we are a testament to the success and positive impact of this approach, which we first introduced in 2016. In the rationale for the Wellbeing curriculum (pg 4), it is noted that 'children need to develop an ethical understanding of the world'. One way in which this can be enhanced and supported is via the Education in Human Values approach. Education in Human Values is an approach to developing and nurturing those innate values that we are all born with. They transcend beyond race, colour, creed, cognitive or physical disability. They are values for all in a curriculum that should be for all. The human values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Action and Non-violence are explored through this approach using the 5 methodologies of story, quote, meditation, song and activity. Each of the 5 over-arching values are addressed via a weekly sub-value focus. On p18 of the signed off Primary Curriculum Framework, it is noted that values education 'encourages reflection on choices, exploration of opportunities, and commitment to responsibilities'. This appears to be a strong endorsement of values education, yet values education is not reflected anywhere in the actual wellbeing specification. In our opinion this is a real oversight in terms of the disconnect between the rationale and aims of the curriculum and the draft wellbeing specification itself. Similarly on pg 32, the curriculum notes that the framework on inclusive education and diversity centres on values and practices.....so they....can reach their potential. This aspiration could become a reality if the framework had a solid structure or base within which to teach and nurture these values i.e. the Education in Human Values approach. We are heartened to see that a significant portion of the sub-values are addressed within the learning outcomes of the draft wellbeing specification. However, we feel that if there was an explicit connect between the sub-values and an overall Human Values in Education approach, it would allow for a more focused approach and a deeper understanding of values education which would in turn have a real and meaningful impact on pupils.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

The online toolkit will provide valuable support to teachers. Equally important is the face-to-face CPD model where main messages and practical suggestions on how to teach the wellbeing curriculum will be welcomed.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

We hope that a phased approach in relation to the introduction of each of the curriculum areas will be adopted. Allowing teachers to become familiar with each area and ensuring it is fully embedded is crucial to the successful implementation of the curriculum.

Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland

SEAI submission to NCCA for Primary School Curriculum

Social and Environmental Education specification

We are willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation and have our submission published.

SEAI welcomes the new Social and Environmental Education Curriculum draft specification. It is great to see a specific strand on Environment and Sustainable Living (p8) and to see the themes of sustainable development and environmental justice incorporated into the Principals of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (p6).

SEAI are partners in the JCT (now Oide) STE(A)M initiative which provides Teacher Professional Learning nationwide via in person and online workshops. We would welcome an initiative like this to support the roll out of the new primary curriculum. The benefits of this partnership have been many including an opportunity for teachers to have access to resources which provide for experiential learning with real-life examples and for organisations like SEAI to develop relationships with teachers.

It is hugely positive to see the focus on “the local outdoor environment” and “purposeful fieldwork in the outdoors” under Learning Environments as well as an overall emphasis on inquiry-based learning and the use of digital tools i.e. “using a range of digital technologies to engage with evidence and data” under the Key competency of Being a Digital Learner on page 12. SEAI’s primary school resources, which align with the existing curriculum, support an inquiry-based approach.

While the Principals of Learning, the Aims and Key Competencies are hugely important in underpinning the curriculum, we feel that it is the Learning Outcomes that will have the most impact in teaching and learning in the classroom and the wider local environment and we feel that some more detail in these Learning Outcomes would help to embed the aims and principals more firmly. Although the emphasis on local exploration and fieldwork are covered very well in Stages 1 and 2, there is no mention of local studies or outdoor fieldwork in the learning outcomes for stages 3 and 4. While a broadening out of learning to included “Ireland, Europe and the wider world” is necessary at this stage we feel that it would be important to provide learners with the “time and space to interact and engage with the natural world around them” (p6) at all stages. The description of Working as a Geographer (p18) refers to “active exploration anchored in their locality” and the Element of Understanding and Connecting (p19 refers to learners being able to “forge links between their immediate environment and the wider world”. The learning achieved from active

exploration in 6th class will be much greater than that achieved in 2nd class and learners at this stage will be better able to understand the links with the wider world.

We have provided some examples of amendments to the learning outcomes from Environment and Sustainable Living (p16 and 17) to illustrate this point. In each case we have chosen either the stage 3 or the stage 4 learning outcome but would suggest that similar changes be made to both stages.

“Explore and investigate the physical features and living systems of the natural environment in the school grounds or the local area and compare them to those in Ireland, Europe and the wider world.”

“Record and analyse weather data in the school grounds and compare to recorded weather data. Analyse weather patterns and climate, distinguishing between short-term weather events and long-term climate trends and identify factors that influence climate change and their impact on the human and natural environments and daily life.

Observe or research the timing of seasonal events such as leaf emergence and flowering and discuss how Climate change could impact on these events” (these could possibly be additional learning outcomes rather than an addition to the existing one).

The description of Working as a Historian (p 18) refers to an “understanding of cause and effect” To allow for this we would suggest the addition of an extra Learning Outcome in the Exploration of Our World strand, along the following lines.

“Explore how changes in industry and society in the past led to both positive and negative consequences for our society and our world and discuss this in terms of Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.”

Looking at the strands and Learning Outcomes, it appears that the topic of rocks and soils has been removed completely from the curriculum. The themes of sustainability, climate change and biodiversity loss are key to the SEE curriculum and should also be carried through all curriculum areas but in order to understand how human exploitation of the Earth’s resources has led to our environmental problems, a basic understanding of the origin of our fossil fuels and mineral resources and the soil which underpins our ecosystems, and our food production would be useful. A knowledge of the structure of the Earth and rock formation would help in this regard and could also form a component of local outdoor exploration.

SEAI have a suite of resources available, free of charge, for all teachers and schools to support the teaching and learning of the above topics www.seai.ie/schools

SEAI submission to NCCA for Primary School Curriculum
Science, Technology and Engineering specification

We are willing to be listed as a contributor to the consultation and have our submission published.

SEAI welcomes the new Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum draft specification. It is great to see the emphasis on inquiry and problem solving and the focus on design and computational thinking all of which will give children greater agency in their learning. It is good to see the addition of the new strand - the Nature of STEM which takes ideas from the old Science and the Environment strand, however, we believe it's a better fit within the curriculum structure. It is also good to see Technology and Engineering incorporated as strands.

SEAI are partners in the JCT (now Oide) STE(A)M initiative which provides Teacher Professional Learning nationwide via in person and online workshops. We would welcome an initiative like this to support the roll out of the new primary curriculum. The benefits of this partnership have been many including an opportunity for teachers to have access to resources which provide for experiential learning with real-life examples and for organisations like SEAI to develop relationships with teachers.

And in that same vein, the principals (p2) are very positive in promoting more experiential learning particularly the emphasis on “using the physical and immediate environment around the children to facilitate learning experiences” and “fostering learning environments that encourage exploration, investigation and creativity”. The emphasis on “pair work, group work” and “presenting projects and learning with others” help to further emphasise the focus on inquiry-based learning rather than book learning and recipe driven “experiments” as do the mentions of “child led learning” and “appropriately challenging tasks”.

While the Aims and Key Competencies (within Principals of Learning) are hugely important in underpinning the curriculum, it is the Learning Outcomes that will have the most impact in teaching and learning in the classroom and the wider local environment. We'd welcome some more detail which would help embed the aims and principals more firmly. While some of the Learning Outcomes from the old Environmental Awareness and Care strand have been incorporated into the Social and Environmental Education Specification, we feel that there needs to be greater links and emphasis on Environmental and Sustainability issues in the Science, Technology and Engineering specification and that some vital areas have been missed in the Learning Outcomes.

Living Things (P12)

Under the Living Things strand stage 1 (p12), there is a specific mention of the need to “explore the natural world outdoors”, this emphasis on outdoor exploration and investigation of the local, natural environment needs be more explicit throughout the 4 stages. We believe this is essential in realising the statement in the Rationale (p4) that “Learning about Science, Technology and Engineering empowers children to become responsible citizens who respect nature and value their local and wider environments”.

The Principals of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (p2) mention “Collaborating with scientists, engineers and people working with technology, locally or online”. Encouraging schools to record their local biodiversity and contribute to citizen science initiatives would help to further this sense of collaboration and give children an opportunity to contribute to real life scientific knowledge.

We suggest the following amendments to some of the Learning Outcomes under Living Things:

“Through exploration of the local natural environment outdoors, observe and identify a range of plants (from both the local and wider environment); design and conduct investigations into the conditions needed for plants to grow and develop an awareness of how an animal grows and changes over its life cycle.” (stage 2)

** Perhaps the toolkit in the case of Life Cycles could mention that while it is generally illegal to collect frogspawn, Primary Teachers are legally allowed to collect it for the purposes of education. Also, that butterfly life cycles can be studied through enhancement of biodiversity and outdoor observation of caterpillars and butterflies in the school grounds rather than the unethical and environmentally damaging practice of rearing and releasing imported butterflies into an environment where they may not have the correct foodplant or can negatively impact local populations.*

“Through exploration of the outdoor environment and the use of books and simple keys, classify groups of plants and animals in multiple ways with increasing detail” (stage 2)

“Explore and investigate the interdependence of living things within ecosystems, how they adapt so they can survive and thrive and how basic food chains operate within them. Construct some simple food chains involving plants and animals observed in the local environment”.

Suggested additional Learning Outcomes for Stages 3 and 4:

“Explore, identify and record a variety of plants and animals in a local habitat and contribute findings to National Citizen Science initiatives. Understand how Citizen Science can contribute to our understanding and protection of Biodiversity.”

“Explore the challenges for Biodiversity locally, nationally and globally. Investigate ways to enhance biodiversity in the school grounds with reference to Scientifically sound sources such as the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan”.

Materials (p13-14)

In the materials strand, there is a brief mention in stage 3 of classifying materials by “how environmentally friendly they are” but there is no other reference to the sustainability of materials. There is an opportunity in this strand to introduce the concept of waste and the importance of preserving the Earth’s resources. Expanding on this, links can be made with the energy used to produce single use materials which are then disposed of. Some suggested learning outcomes are as follows:

Stage 1

“Explore which waste materials should go into the compost, recycling and waste bins. Discuss the importance of reducing waste (and therefore reducing energy use), reusing materials and separating and cleaning materials for recycling”.

Stage 2

“Investigate why the materials in some commonly used items are not suitable for reuse or recycling and discuss ways in which they might be improved to make them more environmentally friendly. Explore ways to reduce waste in school”.

Stage 3

“Record and measure waste and materials used in school and explore ways to reduce waste through reduction, re-use, recycling and composting. Explore ways in which waste materials can be re-used for science investigations, engineering projects and art in school”

“Investigate composting and how natural materials can break down to enhance the soil. Understand why it is important to compost natural materials.”

Stage 4

“Investigate how our use of materials can have positive or negative effects on the environment by exploring themes such as food and packaging waste, fast fashion or microplastics (including glitter)” and the energy associated with these topics.

Energy and Forces (P15)

In the Energy and Forces strand, there is very little connection made between our use of energy and the environmental consequences of our energy use. While climate change is covered under the Social and Environmental Education specification, it would be good to make the connections between energy use and climate change more explicit. Some suggestions for amendments to Learning Outcomes are as follows:

Stage 2

“Explore the role that energy plays in everyday life and research how and why energy can be conserved for the good of the planet”.

From our experience of working with primary school children at all levels, we have found that children are well able to list ways that we can save energy, but the important lesson is why we need to save energy. Even infants can grasp the basic idea that fossil fuels are finite resources and that there are better ways to generate energy.

Stage 3

“Identify and distinguish between renewable and non-renewable sources of energy, and how sustainable these sources are. Explore how these energy sources can be stored, released and converted from one form to another and how the way we generate and use energy contributes to global climate change.”

Under light, it would be good to make a connection between light and light pollution. A suggested amendment to the Learning Outcome would be:

“Identify natural and artificial sources of light. Investigate core ideas related to light including light as energy, the spectrum of colours, reflection, refraction, and magnification. Research and investigate the negative consequences of light pollution on human health and biodiversity.”

A further suggested amendment on energy for stages 3 and 4 would be to encourage the measurement and recording of energy use in school and the adoption of measures to reduce energy use.

Technology

A suggestion would be to look at the consequences of our use of technology. A suggestion for an extra learning outcome for Stages 3 and 4 would be:

“Research and discuss the positive and negative aspects of our increased use of technology on resource and energy use as well as on human health and wellbeing.

SEAI have a suite of resources available, free of charge, for all teachers and schools to support the teaching and learning of the above topics www.seai.ie/schools

Technology Ireland

Technology Ireland response to NCCA consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications in Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE).

In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Technology Ireland along with its members welcomes this review of the primary school curriculum and the opportunity to deliver this submission to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) as part of the redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum, on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specification in Science, Technology and Engineering Education (STE). We welcome the inclusion of Technology as a key pillar of the curriculum along with the inclusion of "being a digital learner" as a key competency in the new Primary Framework, which encompasses all curriculum areas, and highlights the importance of digital skills across all areas of learning.

The curriculum should aim to provide a strong foundation for every child to thrive and flourish, supporting them in realising their full potential as individuals and as members of communities and society during childhood, as they progress through primary and into post-primary education.

It is important to focus on skills that are age-appropriate and mapping the journey of the student. Giving all young people the opportunity to learn digital and technology skills at primary level creates a foundation and pathway to further learning at 2nd level and beyond, to further education, apprenticeships, and throughout lifelong learning. Allowing self-paced learning for students and meeting students and teachers where they are is the future of education. Technology underpins all of this and can enhance and enrich learning in the classroom. Additionally, soft skills have an important role in ICT. Students should understand that through the everyday subjects and activities they are learning in the classroom, they are developing skillsets relevant to ICT and a future career in ICT. For example, through mathematics they are learning to problem solve, through sports they learn communication and collaboration, and creativity is learnt through arts and drama.

Incorporating digital learning resources will assist with the development of a constructive and inclusive learning environment. Most importantly, it will enable teachers to adapt teaching to diverse groups of students and students' individual needs. The so-called factory model of education – where each pupil advances at the same pace in every subject, regardless of ability and interest – should now be consigned to the past. Educators increasingly agree that personalised education, enabled by new technologies, yields much improved learning outcomes. Services offering a personalised learning assistant to students to remind them of their assignments and offer feedback on their learning experience are now available. Data analytics tools also now enable teachers to better understand how students are learning and to identify the interventions needed to better support them. Moreover, the use of Artificial Intelligence can ease teachers' workloads by offering automated feedback on



assignments. This helps teachers use their time more effectively and where they have the most impact, whether it is supporting those children with individual needs or preparing new content for the classroom. More broadly, the use of digital learning resources will help make studying more engaging and will expand opportunities in lifelong learning. The integration of digital learning resources is key to ensuring the achievement of digital skills and competencies. A key priority of this review must be to ensure that children are taught foundational skills and concepts of computing and technology that they are best equipped for the jobs of the future.

Technology Ireland and its members believe the Irish education system must be **Digital by Default**. The Department of Education must lead by example in this regard and fully embrace digitalisation as a means to enhance their operations. The use of technology in schools can no longer be seen as a luxury, but rather a necessity. To this end, continued multi-annual financial investment is required. Technology Ireland members and industry greatly assisted the Department of Education in overcoming the challenges presented by COVID-19. However, the onus is now on the Department to ensure schools, teachers, students, and parents are equipped to handle all future challenges, without reliance on donations from industry, or fundraising efforts from parents.

Resources - All educators must be equipped to deliver effective and authentic digitally-enabled teaching to the benefit of all children and students, keeping the learning relevant. This will allow the educator to be adaptable to different learners within the classroom setting – not every student will be interested so finding a common interest to deliver the subject. Schools should be provided with tools and equipment that will allow teachers to show how different types of technology can be used and to demonstrate their purpose in the real world.

Continuous professional development - This curriculum must be accompanied by strong investment in teachers and their professional development. Primary teachers will not be technology or computer science specialists, but they must be provided with adequate training in foundational digital and tech skills. The experience, knowledge and understanding that the teacher has with the subject being delivered adds to the value and interest towards the content that is being delivered to students making it more engaging overall. Teachers should be supported to deliver content through practical tasks to maintain engagement and allow students to gain hands-on experience and understanding of how technology functions.

Support - Teaching and learning resources must be provided for teachers to support them to bring this curriculum to life in the classroom. Create a teacher manual with guidelines on the programme, how to deliver it to students etc and equally a student manual, a guide for students to understand the work being delivered and include tasks for them to complete. Nominating a 'digital champions team' in each school, to encourage and champion knowledge and usage of technology amongst the entire school community. Support a framework for people from industry to visit schools, deliver talks, workshops etc., to help share an understanding of 'real world' applications of technology in industry. Review the impact of Computer Science Week and offer a tailored version to younger learners to spark interest.

Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Key areas to address to ensure any curriculum changes are successful.

Future proofing

Ensuring that the curriculum prioritises foundational skills and concepts of technology (including digital literacy skills, coding, typing) but is also reflective of the rapid changes and advancement in technology, not focused on just computers but emerging technologies too such as AI, Internet of Things 5.0, and Robotics to name a few. It is important that teachers and educators embrace AI as a



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complementary technology and are encouraged by curriculum policy to leverage AI as an instrument



to level the playing field for neurodiverse students by increasing access. Technology can be used as a tool for exploration, to make learning exciting.

- Careers of the future – demonstrate how subject taught in school relate to the skillsets required for careers in technology.
- Awareness of the pathways to a technology career other than traditional routes e.g. Pre-Tech Apprenticeships, Tech Apprenticeships which would be particularly relevant in upper primary classes (5th/6th class students).

Equity across schools

Funding is critical to ensure that the use of digital technology becomes a seamless part of the whole education experience.

Increased investment in Initial Teacher Education (ITE) -- the ITE providers need to revamp their curriculum to ensure that Computational Thinking, digital skills, and pedagogical practices should be a mandatory part of all ITE programmes (not as optional modules). Digital tools should be integrated throughout the ITE programmes, so that student teachers are engaging first-hand in technology-mediated and enhanced learning, which they can then put into practice in the classroom.

Technology Ireland and its members urge that all Initial Teacher Education providers instil the benefits of using digital technology to enhance learning and teaching in their students. This will enhance the use of digital technology across all curriculum areas to enrich both learning and teaching. Similarly, as part of the inspection process for these teachers, a digital assessment of their teaching practice must be incorporated into the inspection in the same way their literary and numeracy practices would be assessed. We further call for Initial Teacher Education providers to be issued with regulations/recommendations regarding how to structure their digital competence programmes, ensuring a high standard and mandatory digital teaching modules across all ITE programmes.

Need to ensure that as children progress through primary education and move beyond "unplugged" activities (where no devices are required) in early primary years, there should be adequate and distributed resourcing so that all students have equal access to devices and opportunities to use digital technology and advance their technical and digital skills. Curriculum content and learning resources should be culturally relevant and age appropriate; schools/teachers should be made aware of additional measures and research-informed practice to ensure that girls and minority groups typically underrepresented in the STEM fields are encouraged to persist with the subjects.

Under the Digital Learning Framework, there is already a model of having a 'digital learning team' (in large schools) or an individual teacher in smaller schools to monitor, support and advocate for digital learning. We recommend continuing this practice, and increased investment in training opportunities for these teams/individual champions, including building communities of practice to share learnings across schools.

Access to technology - Schools require technical support to enhance teaching, learning and assessment as well as the school's administration and planning systems. A comprehensive, efficient, and effective technical support solution for schools must now form part of the education system.

Policies should be implemented to enhance digital procurement capabilities. Schools need guidance when it comes to making the right choices on the purchase of technology products. However, knowing what technology to buy to address an education provider's needs is often a challenge. To assist with this, a service catalogue, or similar, should be developed, to provide schools with options and resources that best meet their digital needs. The catalogue should contain solutions and services to



uplift the digital maturity of the school. Services and solutions featured in the catalogue should be leading; pre-approved; compliant with standards, policies, and interoperability requirements; and include professional development, case studies, school feedback as well as technical advice. Helping education providers improve procurement practice and understand their procurement options, will also help aggregate demand, and cut the costs of sales for companies.

Guidance must also be provided with regards the maintenance of devices. For every new device added or application deployed, consideration needs to be given to how that device will be managed and maintained, what its life span will be, who will have responsibility, and what additional demands it will place on the existing school infrastructure.

Continuous Professional Development - teachers equipped to teach this.

Leadership at school level is an important lever for change. Leaders can motivate staff, set objectives, develop school digital plans, champion digital change, coordinate efforts, and more generally create a climate favourable to innovation and experimentation. There are two approaches towards developing digital leadership in schools: the training of school leaders and the appointment of digital coordinators.

In half of the European education systems, there are policies to support the appointment of digital coordinators in schools (Digital Education at School in Europe report, Chapter 4.2.3.). Digital coordinators, known also as ICT coordinators, may be assigned different tasks and responsibilities, but these usually cover both technical and pedagogical aspects. The digital coordinator role is usually assigned to ICT teachers or teachers specialising in digital education. Technology works best in education when strategically introduced by skilled, and confident staff. The best leaders place a strong focus on how technology can improve processes and teaching, they build digital capability amongst their staff and achieve good value for money through their procurement. Leaders must adopt a whole-school approach to the integration of digital technology. Digital teaching and learning tools cannot be seen as optional, they must become an integral part of classrooms and school systems. It is the responsibility of school leaders to drive this whole-school approach.

It is imperative teachers have professional development opportunities and access to resources to ensure the successful utilisation of technology in the school environment. To help teachers evaluate their level of digital competence and thereby define their development needs, the education system should implement and promote the use of self-assessment tools. This diagnosis will help uncover digital deficits which can subsequently be incorporated into initial teacher education programmes. Further, it is important for teachers to have the opportunity to feedback on and evaluate the CPD they have undertaken so amendments can be made, where necessary, to ensure the needs of teachers continue to be met.

Investment by the department in the roll out

Continued financial investment and support from Government through multi-annual funding will help to accelerate the attainment of digital skills and competencies amongst both teachers and students.

Schools require a robust, reliable ICT infrastructure to effectively integrate ICT into all aspects of school



life. There are three key cornerstones to schools' digital infrastructure:

1. Internet connectivity and wireless networks. Enhanced network connectivity is required to enable digital teaching and learning.
well as ensuring pupils can benefit from new cloud-based educational programmes.
3. Appropriate device ratios for students and teachers to ensure both have access to all the digital resources they need, and infrastructure is no longer a constraint.

The Department of Education should create a database populated with the existing rich content and resources provided by industry. Technology Ireland is willing to support this exercise. Lessons in a box allow teachers to build confidence and have capacity to teach. We encourage the Department to use these resources and share them with schools and teachers. Encourage industry to collaborate and partner with schools to support and enhance curriculum and help to bring these learnings to life.

Online safety and security

Industry understands the need to minimise risks of young people being online, and use of digital devices in a safe and responsible way, while also maximising opportunities to enhance and make learning exciting with technology.

To support this, we call for the continued support for Webwise Youth Ambassador Programme - a valuable peer to peer youth programme that gives students an opportunity to start an online safety campaign in their own school and be champions for safe and responsible digital learning. Encourage schools and teachers to incorporate online safety learning through real life scenarios. Industry is willing to work with the Minister of Education and the Department to showcase the supports for online safety and to instil confidence. Encouraging students to be safe online while taking advantage of the important learning opportunities.

Technology Ireland is an Association within Ibec, which represents the ICT, Digital and Software Technology Sector. The Association is a pro-active membership organisation with over 200-member companies located throughout Ireland. We advocate on behalf of Ireland's indigenous and foreign direct investment (FDI) technology companies to Government and policy makers.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit to this consultation and remain at your disposal with any further questions you may have.

The Countess



THE COUNTESS

My Name is Judith Murphy. I am contributing my views on behalf of The Countess Advocacy CLG as Schools & Safeguarding Lead.

Email address: hello@thecountess.ie

The Countess wishes to be listed as a contributor to this consultation on the NCCA website and to have this written submission published on the NCCA website.

The Countess is a non-profit, volunteer-led organisation formed to promote the rights and interests of women and children in Ireland. Inspired by her significant contribution to Irish public life, we take our lead and our name from Countess Constance Georgine Markiewicz who, as Minister for Labour in the First Dáil, was the first female cabinet minister in Europe. Countess Markiewicz was at the vanguard of a social revolution that envisioned an Ireland that cherished all her children equally, irrespective of socio-economic status, religion, sex, or other social markers used to limit life choices and opportunities.

OUR WORK

The Countess was established in 2019 to focus attention on the unintended consequences of the Gender Recognition Act 2015 on the rights of women, as well as the impact of the Act on all aspects of safeguarding. We have a broad interest in women's rights and child safeguarding and promote constructive, respectful and rights-focused dialogue on this issue.

At our core is the belief that by virtue of our common humanity, all groups in society must be afforded the ability to live with dignity, respect and safety.

MEMBERSHIP

Our members are drawn from a diverse cross-section of people concerned by the conflicts in relation to rights and child safeguarding issues arising out of gender self-ID. Our membership comprises a range of individuals, including doctors, lawyers, writers and IT specialists, as well as students, carers, full-time parents, and others willing to contribute their time and skills to further our mission. We are volunteer-led, self-funded, and not affiliated with any political party or religion.

DEFINITIONS

As an organisation, The Countess is concerned with preventing the erosion or erasure of clear, sex-based terms that are important to how most people describe and think of themselves. With that in mind, and for the avoidance of doubt, the following are the interpretations of those words applied in this submission and in all our work, which have become contested within debates around gender and sex. They are:

- Woman: Adult human female
- Man: Adult human male
- Girl: Female child or adolescent
- Boy: Male child or adolescent
- Sex: Either of the two categories (male and female) into which humans and most other living things are divided on the basis of their reproductive functions.

Any other interpretation of the terms listed above makes it impossible to guarantee clarity and consistency in the use and interpretation of the language used to craft law and state policy. This submission, therefore, applies these meanings to these words.

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1. Alignment of the Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum Specifications and Draft Primary Curriculum Framework

The two documents match closely with regard to language used, stated aims and rationale. The same overriding concepts run through both documents like a thread, most notably the concept of the curriculum as a means to address societal problems, the concept of an educational continuum, which includes teaching the concept of gender identity (the Draft Curriculum Framework uses the term “sexual identity”).

1.1 The Curriculum as a means to address societal problems

The Framework document states on page 3 paragraph 2, under the heading “The rationale for reviewing the primary curriculum”:

“As well as the need to respond to curriculum changes and to take account of new and emerging research findings, there have also been calls for the primary curriculum to do more! Schools and the curriculum together are often viewed as a critical site for responding to national priorities or needs and addressing societal problems.” Also on page 3 paragraph 2, under the same heading:

“On a more global level, challenges such as climate change, sustainability, human migration and geopolitical shifts illustrate the importance of dispositions and skills, such as resilience, creativity, innovation and critical thinking in the young and future generations.”

The Wellbeing Curriculum Specification document corresponds with this rationale, for example on page 3 first paragraph, last sentence under the heading “Understanding Wellbeing” when it says:

“By instilling a commitment to actively advocate for fairness and inclusivity, the curriculum recognises children as empowered citizens who play an active role in building equitable and inclusive classrooms, schools, communities and societies.”

On page 2 the commitment to strive to improve society through the curriculum is stated again in the table Principles of learning, teaching and assessment in the *Wellbeing Curriculum*, column Examples within Wellbeing, point Inclusive education and diversity:

“Fostering a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, equality, and social justice /

Challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, and promoting empathy, respect, and multiperspectivity / Recognising and celebrating the diversity present within the classroom and in wider society”



The above quotes are just a few examples from the Draft Primary Curriculum Specification in which instilling the need for inclusivity, diversity, human rights, equity, equality, sustainability and social justice is named as a desired learning outcome.

1.2 The Draft Wellbeing Specification on the education continuum. In its Introduction, page 1, paragraph 3, the Specification reads:

“The primary curriculum acknowledges that from birth, children begin their educational journey through interactions and experiences with the world around them. In primary and special schools, children have playful and engaging learning experiences that build upon the knowledge, skills, dispositions, attitudes and values they have acquired at home and in preschool settings through Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. As children move through primary and special school their learning connects with, and is further progressed through, the learning experiences provided in Junior Cycle. Each child’s learning journey is different, and so the curriculum provides flexibility and choice to teachers and school leaders as they support children in their holistic development.”

Page 2 paragraph 2 of the Framework confirms the commitment to linking the primary curriculum with the Early Years Education and the Junior Cycle curricula:

“The provision of the two years of universal preschool education [...] have led to changes in what children experience before beginning primary school and in what and how they learn on leaving primary school highlighting the importance of connections and continuity in curricula along the educational continuum.”

I agree that the Draft Primary Curriculum aligns with the Aistear Early Education Framework and the Junior Cycle Curriculum. Both curricula introduced the concept of “Wellbeing” into Irish schools. The Draft Primary Curriculum continues along this route. The same can be said for the use of the word “citizen” when referring to children. The Early Childhood Curriculum Aistear, 2009 names one of its principles “Children as Citizens”. On page 8 it says: **“Children are citizens with rights and responsibilities. They have opinions that are worth listening to and have the right to be involved in making decisions about matters which affect them. In this way, they have a right to experience democracy. From this experience they learn that, as well as having rights, they also have a responsibility to respect and help others, and to care for their environment.”**

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework names “Being an active citizen” as one of the key competencies’ children should acquire. These are examples of how the two draft curriculum documents follow the same themes.

1.3 Gender and Sexual Identity on the Educational Continuum



Given that the revised Junior and the Senior Cycle Curriculum teaches students that humans are born with a biological sex and an innate gender identity, and that the focus of the Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum is on fostering and celebrating inclusivity and diversity, it is reasonable to conclude that this will also be taught to primary school children, when "gender" and "sexual identities" are discussed, in line with the concept of an educational continuum. This is how the Junior Cycle SPHE Specifications 2023 define gender identity: **“A person’s felt internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond with the sex registered at birth.”**

2. Views on Headings 1.1 to 1.3.

Response to the three identified themes in the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework and aligned Draft Primary Curriculum Wellbeing Specifications:

I will outline my response to the three important concepts which guide the Draft Primary Curriculum.

2.1 The Curriculum as a means to address societal problems.

It makes sense that schools should deal with societal problems, as they present in classrooms all over the country and the curriculum needs to acknowledge and reflect this. However, the question of how best to adapt the curriculum to the challenges of our time is difficult and potentially controversial. Irish society, like many others in the developed world, is to a certain extent divided between two dominant world views, which can be roughly described as conservative and progressive.

The concepts and the language adopted in the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework and in the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications are widely associated with progressive thinking and a political view; for example, “inclusivity, diversity, human rights, equity, equality, sustainability and social justice”, which are frequently used throughout both documents.

Many parents of children who attend school in Ireland today do not ascribe to a progressive world view and therefore may not agree with some of the views and aims adopted by the curriculum. Those parents are not likely to agree that their child should adopt some of the attitudes, values and dispositions promoted by the curriculum.

How would the school respond to these families? How would the child be accommodated? How would school staff work in partnership with those parents, and how would they support and nurture their child?

Another difficulty with the concept of the curriculum as a means to address societal problems is that it puts too much on children’s shoulders. Young children need adults to explain the world to them. This draft curriculum does not just teach children how the world is; it also teaches them on how the world should be, and furthermore how children are



responsible for making the world as it should be, that they are obliged to take action to create this better world.

It is right and ethical for schools to teach children to be respectful of others, get along, sort out their conflicts peacefully, respect others and the environment and act decently, but how ethical it is to teach children that it is up to them to make the world a better place, one of the stated aims of the Draft Primary Curriculum?

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework, on page 8, first paragraph, under the heading “Key Competencies”, titled “Being an active citizen” explains the learning goal as follows:

“This competency fosters within children the knowledge, skills, concepts, attitudes, values and dispositions that motivate and empower them as citizens to take positive actions to live justly, sustainably and with regard for the rights of others. It helps children question, critique and understand what is happening in the world within a framework of human rights, equality and social justice. It places democratic practices at the centre of the learning process. This competency develops children’s capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national and global levels, and fosters their ability to contribute positively and compassionately towards the creation of a more sustainable and just world.”

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework’s intention is clearly to educate children to be activists for a just and sustainable world. This aspect of the curriculum raises the question of whether it is the role of school to do that. Until recently, it was generally understood that children should be educated, supported and nurtured to acquire the skills and knowledge to become productive, well adjusted, decent, law-abiding capable adults who participate in society. The responsibility for societal ills was placed firmly on the shoulders of the adults.

Another question is: Do schools have the right to instil one worldview in children? What are the boundaries between schools’ and parents’ rights and obligations regarding the education and welfare or wellbeing of children? Page 3 of the Draft Wellbeing Specifications states that, “the curriculum plays a central role in supporting children’s learning ‘about’ and ‘for’ wellbeing”. Does that mean that children will be assessed on not only what they have learned about “wellbeing” but also on the status of or progress in their “wellbeing”? What exactly is “wellbeing”? How does the Draft Primary Curriculum define it? Under the heading “Understanding wellbeing”, page 2 of the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications Document states:

“Wellbeing encompasses various aspects of learning crucial for children’s holistic development. Through PE and SPHE, this specification develops the physical, social, emotional and relational dimension of children’s wellbeing. Defined by factors such as being active, responsible, connected, resilient, appreciated, respected and aware, wellbeing requires ongoing attention and lifelong nurturing.”



On the top of page 3 of the same document it claims that
“Wellbeing is present when children realise their abilities, take care of their physical wellbeing, can cope with the normal stresses of life, and have a sense of purpose and belonging to a wider community.”

How can something as abstract and vague as “wellbeing” or the presence of wellbeing be assessed? This question arose in Scotland in 2014, when the Scottish government introduced the mandatory “Named persons policy”, which meant that every child in Scotland up to age 18 years was to have a professional named person allocated to him or her, - in most cases a public health visitor for preschool children and a nominated teacher for school-age children - who would check for the presence of the child’s “wellbeing indicators”. If the named person had concerns that any of the indicators was missing, he or she had powers to intervene. The “wheel of wellbeing” was created to assist in assessing the wellbeing of a child. The spokes of this wheel were eight wellbeing indicators. Wellbeing was present when the child was safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, responsible, respected, included. They became known as SHANARRI.

Every parent in Scotland had reason to worry about their child being found lacking in SHANARRI and the consequences that might follow. Parents’ rights were impacted by this. The policy had to be abandoned eventually after parents took legal action. A high court in London deemed this mandatory policy to be unconstitutional.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-49757890>

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/shanarri/>

What the Scottish experience teaches us about the introduction of “Wellbeing” by government children’s services teaches us is that: 1) The term “wellbeing” is extremely vague and the words used to describe what it means are arbitrary; 2) A logical consequence of the assumption that an organ of the state has the right to declare that children’s “wellbeing” is the measure by which their health, progress and welfare should be determined, and that the state has the right to define the meaning of this word, is that the state also has the right to assess whether children’s wellbeing indicators are present to a satisfactory degree. In that case, the state would take on the role of the child’s “first protector”. Any state acting that way would, as Scotland did, overstep its jurisdiction in regard to children’s welfare and violate the constitutional rights of parents.

2.2 The Draft Primary Curriculum on the education continuum

It makes perfect sense to devise a teaching plan which builds on what children already know and the skills they have already acquired. It is also pedagogically useful to revisit concepts and information to impart deeper and more complex factors in accordance with the child’s developmental stage. The approach of putting the whole child in the centre of the



curriculum through all stages of his or her school life is to be welcomed. However, some of the concepts, and approaches adopted in the Early Education Framework and the Junior Cycle SPHE are of concern. Two of these concerns are outlined above under 2.1 The Curriculum as a means to address societal problems, and below under 2.3 Gender and sexual identity on the education continuum

2.3 Gender and sexual identity on the educational curriculum

We do not know what the Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum is supposed to teach children about gender identity, or about the new term “sexual identity”. However, we may presume that the Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum will follow the Junior and Draft Senior Cycle SPHE curricula, in line with the education continuum

The Countess produced a submission for the consultation on the Draft Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum in 2022, which stated:” This **submission highlights the commitment the curriculum has made to teaching gender identity and identity theory as fact**. The redeveloped Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum makes explicit reference to gender identity and gender expression in Strand 1/1.4 and states that students should be able to:

“Appreciate that sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are core parts of human identity and that each is experienced along a spectrum”.

Many parents, teachers, and students don’t agree with the NCCA that gender identity and gender expression as core parts of human identity. They are not. They are part of a belief system (gender identity) not held by the silent majority, as demonstrated by our [RedC Gender Poll](#) conducted in July 2021.

The Countess’ submission to the Draft Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum 2023 quoted the Interim Review by Dr Hillary Cass into the care provided by the largest gender identity service in the UK, which stated that:

“There is lack of consensus and open discussion about the nature of gender dysphoria and therefore about the appropriate clinical response.” and about social transition:

“Social transition – this may not be thought of as an intervention or treatment, because it is not something that happens within health services. However, it is important to view it as an active intervention because it may have significant effects on the child or young person in terms of their psychological functioning.”

<https://cass.independent-review.uk/home/publications/interim-report/>

An article published by Genspect on the impact of teaching Gender Ideology in schools relied on research gathered from the My World Survey³: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland, conducted by UCD. They reported that the numbers of students in



Irish secondary schools who do not identify with their birth sex has been increasing steadily from 1% in 2012 to 6% in 2023.

genspect.org/gender-ideology-and-the-breakdown-of-the-chain-of-trust-in-irish-educationpart1

The My World Survey4: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland also reported that:

- In 2023, 94% of secondary school students who do not identify with their birth sex reported having some mental health difficulties, and 61% rated their mental health as “not good”.
- In 2023, 50% of secondary school students who do not identify with their birth sex identified [gender identity as one of their top stressors](#).
- There has been a dramatic increase in referrals of Irish children and young adults for treatment for gender dysphoria.
- The rate of LGBT+ youth feeling unsafe at school is increasing (in 2022 76% reported feeling unsafe, up from 73% in 2019)

There can be no doubt that Genspect is correct in that **teaching gender ideology is negatively impacting students’ mental health**.

“Since gender ideology was introduced into Irish schools, there has been an increase in gender questioning, confusion, and declining mental health among significant numbers of Irish school children.”

It is incumbent on the NCCA to address this issue of gender-identity confusion in a cautious manner that prioritises evidence-based approaches and the long-term wellbeing of all students.

The final Cass Report was published in April 2024. It is the most comprehensive research ever carried out on the care of gender questioning children and young people.

<https://cass.independent-review.uk/home/publications/final-report/> With regard to the social transitioning of children, Dr Cass finds:

“The systematic review showed no clear evidence that social transition in childhood has any positive or negative mental health outcomes, and relatively weak evidence for any effect in adolescence. However, those who had socially transitioned at an earlier age and/or prior to being seen in clinic were more likely to proceed to a medical pathway.” Dr Cass does not comment specifically on the role of schools in her report; however, she makes clear that there are a variety of factors at play when a child questions his or her gender.

The UK organisation Sex Matters summarises what the Cass Report can teach schools as follows:



“Schools have been a key factor in celebrating and promoting the idea of “trans children” and most children who transition do so in school long before they ever see a specialist clinician. Dr Cass’s review points out that for a child, living “in stealth” – trying to conceal the fact of their actual sex from everyone around them – increases stress anxiety and mental-health problems

Dr Cass does, however, say that what happens in school is important. This review is a landmark piece of work that gives education ministers all the ammunition it needs to drive gender-identity ideology out of the classroom. It gives the department and school leaders the evidence they need to remain focused on the wellbeing of children with gender distress and not get caught up in the fantasy that they are the opposite sex.

School leaders need to refocus on what the evidence says about supporting children with gender distress and stop selling the fantasy of “gender transition” when the plain truth is that everyone has an unchangeable sex, and children cannot be kept safe and well when adults lie about that”

The opportunity to critically assess treatments for gender-related distress will be significantly undermined in schools where:

- gender identity is taught as fact, rather than as a belief system
- students are “affirmed” through social transition
- mixed-sex toilet facilities have been introduced
- preferred pronoun use is encouraged and lack of pronoun use is deemed “hateful”.

The evidence shows that the assumption that a child’s wish to be a different gender is based on his or her innate gender identity is wrong and harmful. There can be many causes for a child or young person to struggle with their identity, such as mental health issues and other co-morbidities, which remain untreated when the response to the child’s distress is gender affirmation. Vulnerable children who struggle with developing a stable identity are most prone to seeking a solution to their distress by transitioning to another gender. They believe the adults who tell them that they have a gender identity, which might not match their sex, and that this is the reason for their distress.

This is confirmed by the Cass report’s findings:

“The gender clinic referred population has high rates of mental health diagnoses, neurodiversity and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). At the same time, young people now seem more likely to mention gender identity when they attend mental health services.”



Dr Paul Moran, a lead clinician in Ireland's National Gender Service, welcomes the Cass report and wrote an article published in The Journal in April 2024, with the title: The Cass Report is welcome – here's what it means for Ireland

<https://www.thejournal.ie/readme/tavistock-cass-report-ireland-6356357-Apr2024/>

In the article Dr Moran urges the HSE and the Department of Health to follow the recommendations of the Cass report regarding gender services in Ireland. He also emphasises that this is not just a medical issue but an issue for wider society and advises the Department of Health and Irish schools not to give activist organisations a prominent role in policy development and teacher training:

“The responsibility for supporting and keeping safe gender-incongruent children lies not just with the medical profession, but with all of society. We need all professionals and the public to be better informed. The Cass Review identifies a need for a separate pathway for pre-pubertal children and their families outside the gender healthcare system for adolescents and adults.

The Report recommends that when families/carers are making decisions about social transition of pre-pubertal children, they should be seen by a clinical professional with relevant experience. Dr Cass has identified that social transitioning is not a neutral action and is often the beginning of a clinical process.

Irish schools should not be taking the lead in the social transitioning of children. The Department of Health should reconsider some of the overly affirmative educational and training materials it is sending to schools and the prominent role it has given to activist organisations in policy development and teacher training.”

The findings of the Cass Review have already led to policy changes regarding gender incongruent children by the UK Department of Education, which has published non-statutory guidance for schools and colleges in England under the title Gender Questioning Children, where it states:

“The Cass Review is clear that social transition is not a neutral act, and that better information is needed about the outcomes for children who undertake degrees of social transition. This means that schools and colleges should take a cautious approach and that decisions should never be taken in haste or without the involvement of parents. Schools and colleges should consider how best to fulfil their safeguarding duties towards the child who is making such a request and their peers, ensuring that any agreed course of action is in all of their best interests. There will be some requests for a type of social transition that will not be compatible with a school's legal duties, schools must abide by this.”

<https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender><https://consult.education.gov.uk/equalities-political-impartiality-anti-bullying-team/gender-questioning-children-proposed->



[guidance/supporting_documents/Gender_Questioning_Children_nonstatutory_guidance.pdf](https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/05/16/new-rshe-guidance-what-it-means-for-sex-education-lessons-in-schools/)
[questioning-children-proposed-guidance/supporting_documents/Gender%20Questioning%20Children%20%20nonstatutory%20guidance.pdf](https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/05/16/new-rshe-guidance-what-it-means-for-sex-education-lessons-in-schools/)

On 16 May 2024 the UK Government Education Hub published an article advising that they are reviewing the RSHE curriculum and consultation is open. The main changes in the draft curriculum are outlined there. The Department of Education is now adopting a cautious approach towards gender questioning children, in keeping with the recommendations of the Cass Review. This is what it says about teaching children about gender identity:

“We are also making clear that the concept of gender identity – the sense a person may have of their own gender, whether male, female or a number of other categories – is highly contested and should not be taught. This is in line with the cautious approach taken in our guidance on gender questioning children.

Along with other factors, teaching this theory in the classroom could prompt some children to start to question their gender when they may not have done so otherwise, and is a complex theory for children to understand.”

<https://educationhub.blog.gov.uk/2024/05/16/new-rshe-guidance-what-it-means-for-sex-education-lessons-in-schools/>

The Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum does not say whether children are supposed to be taught about gender identity, but this is probably the intention.

If this is the case the NCCA must halt the Primary Curriculum implementation process. The findings of the Cass Review must be taken into account in the redevelopment of the Primary Curriculum.

The evidence and findings of the Cass Review cannot be ignored by the NCCA and the Department of Education. It would be advisable to also consider the evidence of a mounting number of de-transitioners coming forward to bear witness to the harm caused to them by gender ideology and the affirmation of this belief by professionals.

<https://genspect.org/tag/detransitioners/>

To ignore the mounting evidence of the harm caused to children who are taught that they have a gender identity and can change sex, would constitute serious failing by the NCCA in its duty to the children and families in this country.

3. NCCA Draft Curriculum Wellbeing Specifications

3.1. Chapters 1. Introduction, 2. Rationale, and 3. Aims

These chapters explain the concepts and principles on which the curriculum is based. Overall, the aim is to foster a supportive school environment where the children experience positive relationships with teachers and other staff, a holistic and relational approach is



taken, and partnerships and collaboration with parents and the local community are part of the learning and teaching strategy. These concepts and principles are positive and to be welcomed. However, the language used is highly aspirational, leaning towards a progressive world view, and emphasizes social-emotional learning. The following are some of the sentences containing the terminology to which I refer:

Page 2

Fostering a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, equality, and social justice. Challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, and promoting empathy, respect, and multiperspectivity.

Recognising and celebrating the diversity present within the classroom and in wider society. Principle Transitions and continuity: Building foundational knowledge, skills, dispositions, attitudes, and values to support children's transition to post-primary school.

Page 3

Within school communities the curriculum places a central role in supporting children's learning 'about' and 'for' wellbeing, fostering inclusive learning environments based on human rights, equality and anti-discrimination principles.

By instilling a commitment to actively advocate for fairness and inclusivity, the curriculum recognises children as empowered citizens who play an active role in building equitable and inclusive classrooms, schools, communities and societies.

Page 4:

It not only imparts a thorough understanding of personal and collective wellbeing, but also fosters qualities such as empathy, inclusivity, a sense of community, teamwork, fairness and social justice.

At its core, the Wellbeing Curriculum serves as a catalyst for lifelong wellbeing by integrating vital life skills as: self-awareness, personal safety, emotional regulation, resilience, empathy of movement, decision making and healthy relationship-building. It establishes a platform for children to develop as engaged citizens who recognise the importance of leading healthy, active and sustainable lifestyles.

To nurture these dispositions, attitudes, and values children need to develop their ethical understanding of the world. Children are encouraged to value active citizenship and comprehend their rights and responsibilities in school, local and broader contexts.

Additionally, it supports children in appreciating positive and healthy relationships, encompassing a balanced and inclusive understanding of human sexuality within the context of emotions and connections.

Page 5

Affective learning empowers children to develop motivation, confidence and resilience, emotional awareness, and self-identity in movement context.



SPHE nurtures emotional intelligence in children, equipping them with essential tools to comprehend, regulate and express their emotions and feelings, embracing the entire spectrum without categorising them as strictly positive or negative. In fostering resilience children learn to recognise, interpret, and respond empathically to their own and others' emotions and feelings. This strengthens their ability to cultivate and maintain supportive, connected and positive relationships and to navigate challenges such as disharmony and conflict in friendships respectfully.

Page 6:

Finally, by embracing democratic practices and exploring personal and societal values, rights and responsibilities, SPHE empowers children to balance personal motives with a sense of social responsibility. This prepares them to become active citizens connected to their community and broader society.

Page 7:

Taken together, these empower each child to thrive, now and in the future, fostering their wellbeing and providing them with the necessary knowledge, skills, dispositions, attitudes and values needed to make informed decisions, while positively impacting their communities and the world.

Enable children to develop a strong sense of personal safety in a variety of contexts, extending this awareness to the safety of others, and enhance their decision-making skills, including safeguarding against child abuse and bullying.

Support children's emotional wellbeing by nurturing their awareness, understanding, expression, and effective management of emotions and feelings.

Foster respect for diversity, championing active citizenship, human rights, fairness and social responsibility to create inclusive and compassionate learning environments, communities and societies.

Promote resilience-building-techniques to help children cope with stress, challenge <https://www.aei.org/research-products/testimony/the-trouble-with-social-emotional-learning-adversity-and-change>.

Encourage active participation in the community, emphasising the importance of a sense of belonging, giving back, and contributing to the wellbeing of others.

Provide children with a balanced, inclusive, age and developmentally appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality, fostering healthy attitudes and relationships while recognising the diversity of human experience. Page 10:

A collaborate learning environment underscores communication's role in fostering teamwork, social, and emotional skills.

As outlined above under 2.1 The curriculum as a means to address societal problems, the terminology expresses a progressive world view, which is problematic of itself, and also places a responsibility on children to be responsible for their own and the collective wellbeing and create a better world.



3.2 Social Emotional Learning

The emphasis on social -emotional learning in the curriculum turns school into the place in which children learn emotional intelligence, the ability to reflect on their emotions, and learn to regulate them. This is an extension of the role school plays in children’s lives. The question is whether the classroom is the right place for this, and whether teachers are equipped to fulfil this role.

The concept this kind of teaching is based on is known as SEL, Social-Emotional-Learning, and refers to students developing social and emotional skills (SEL) as set out in the CASEL Social and Emotional Skills Framework.

The Countess’ submission to the Draft Senior Cycle Curriculum Consultation in 2023 pointed to concerns regarding SEL:

“SEL is not defined or explained. CASEL stands for Collaborative for Social and Emotional Learning. CASEL.org produces and markets proprietary SEL resources and is described on its website as a ‘US-based nonprofit, nonpartisan leader in SEL. We are uniquely positioned to evaluate programming, curate research, inform legislation, and partner on implementation.’”

The Freedonia Group, a business market research company, states that estimated sales of social-emotional learning (SEL) instructional materials for the 2021–022 school year were \$1.725 billion, an increase of 25.9% over the previous year; it also estimates that the market will continue to grow.

Which version of SEL does the NCCA propose to promote to Irish schools? Researcher Max Eden addressed the US Senate on Appropriations (the US version of the Public Accounts Committee) in April 2022 and stated that CASEL redefined SEL as “Transformative SEL” in 2020.

In 2019 the “competencies” SEL taught were “self-awareness” and “self-management”. The new 2020 version of Transformative SEL encompasses: 1) “Identity”, defined now through the lens of “intersectionality”; 2) “Self-management” encompasses “agency”, defined now through “resistance” and “transformative/justice-oriented” citizenship; 3) Transformative SEL also embraces “culturally relevant/responsive” pedagogy.

Mr Eden commented, “Whether or not one chooses to call the set of related ideological impulses that CASEL has embraced ‘Critical Race Theory’, they are clearly not morally or politically neutral. Indeed, CASEL’s public documents and leadership statements suggest an open embrace of leveraging social and emotional learning toward political and ideological ends. In its ‘Roadmap to Re-Opening’, CASEL defines ‘self-awareness’ as ‘examining our implicit biases’ and defines ‘self-management’ as ‘practicing anti-racism’. CASEL’s former CEO, Karen Niemi, declared, ‘we believe that our work in Social and Emotional Learning must



actively contribute to anti racism’, and that SEL can ‘help people move from anger, to agency, and then to action.’” [emphasis added]

<https://www.aei.org/research-products/testimony/the-trouble-with-social-emotional><https://www.aei.org/research-products/testimony/the-trouble-with-social-emotional-learning/learning/>

Further reading: Robert Pondiscio. American Enterprise Institute. The Unexamined Rise of Therapeutic Education: How Social-emotional Learning Extends K–12 Education’s Reach into Students’ Lives and Expands Teachers’ Roles. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED616706>

We are deeply alarmed that the revised SPHE curriculum may leverage SEL to deliver political or ideological goals.

In the United States, CASEL is delivered via school surveys. These surveys ask students invasive questions about their “mood, their beliefs, their family and even their sexuality”. We have specific concerns about the information gathered by SEL processes, specifically:

- What right will parents have to refuse permission for their children to engage in such data mining exercises?
- Will schools be instructed to ensure all students require parental permission to opt in or will a de facto opt out system be introduced?
- Who will own the data gathered and how will it be used or monetised?

SEL demands that teachers seek out “trauma” and become therapist/social worker/chaplain with a keen interest in the students’ beliefs, attitudes, and values. And when those beliefs, attitudes, and values do not match those determined by SEL resources to be “correct”, what will teachers do?

The same questions apply in regard to the Draft Primary Curriculum.

3.3 Learning Outcomes

The Draft Wellbeing Specification lists the learning outcomes for the four strands of Movement Education, Emotional and Relational Education, Health Education, and Community and Belonging, as well as the areas to be covered, such as “Movement strategies” and “Personal relevance” under Movement Education, and “Identity” and “Emotional awareness and expression” under the Emotional and Relational Education. For example, in Strand 1, Emotional and Relational Education: **“Explore and practice strategies to self/co-regulate and effectively communicate emotions and feelings.”**

The learning outcomes are described in the language of SEL using the same terminology as outlined in previous chapters. Children are to demonstrate, develop, explore, understand, recognise and identify feelings, emotions, relationships, fairness, conflict, behaviour, etc. The exact content of the lessons is often not clear. The lines between children discussing issues



or learning about issues and demonstrating through examples in their lives, or demonstrating how they can regulate emotions, are also vague. For example, under “Emotional and Relational Education, Stage 1, Emotional awareness and expression”, children should **“Begin to demonstrate empathic skills in response to peers in a variety of contexts.”** And under the heading Community and Belonging, Stage 1, Strand Unit “Rights and fairness”: **“Begin to develop an understanding of rights, equity, fairness, fair play and their importance.”**

These two examples are learning outcomes for five-year-old children. The Curriculum Specification provides no information on how the child is to develop an understanding of equity or demonstrate empathic skills.

Parents, teachers and other interested persons rely on the Toolkit for the Draft Primary Wellbeing Curriculum to receive concrete information on what children will be taught if this draft curriculum is accepted. However, this is not possible because the Toolkit is not yet available.

Without more detailed information on the content of what the children are to be taught, it is not possible to form an informed view on the Draft Curriculum. This is one more reason why this consultation process should be halted.

4. Conclusions:

The Countess highlighted serious concerns about the teaching of gender identity as fact in the consultation on the re-developed Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum in 2022 and again in the consultation on the Draft Senior Cycle SPHE Curriculum in 2023.

On both occasions, the NCCA was made aware of the evidence of harm caused by this practice but decided not to act on this information. Following the recent publication of the final Cass Report, which corroborates the concerns we expressed, and the advice by Dr Paul Moran, the mounting evidence can no longer be ignored. The implementation process must be halted urgently so that the learning from the Cass Report can be incorporated in changes to the Primary Curriculum. Not to do so, would constitute gross negligence by the NCCA.

Deliberations on readjustments to the Draft Primary Curriculum offer an opportunity to also review the use of DEI (Diversity, Equality and Inclusion) and return the focus to supporting the child’s need to understand the world as it is and learn to grow into a capable, and welladjusted adult. Children should be free to develop their own world view, and free to choose whether they want to become activists for a better world. Parents and children of all kinds of differing views should feel welcome and respected in schools.



SEL is a teaching concept which is controversial because it expands the role of teachers to counsellors/therapists/and social workers and encroaches on the private sphere of child and family. Because Social/Emotional Learning and the teaching of “Wellbeing”, which is closely related to SEL, expand the role of the school in family life, it impinges on the role and rights of parents. The child’s emotional and physical wellbeing lie, in the first instance, in the parents’ jurisdiction. Parents are more than just “stakeholders”, they are the children’s primary educators and protectors.

The NCCA Draft Curriculum consultations need to contain clear and detailed information on what exactly children will be taught. The Draft Primary Curriculum must be halted and revised in this regard, otherwise it is a pointless exercise.





THE COUNTESS

The Christian Institute

The Christian Institute is a non-denominational Christian charity, established over 30 years ago. We have more than 60,000 supporters throughout the UK and Ireland, including more than 5,000 churches. Since our inception we have been working in the area of education. The Institute is a UK-registered charity but is currently in the process of incorporating in the Republic of Ireland, with a view to the new company applying for charitable status in Ireland.

We have focussed our response to this consultation on questions 11-13.

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

We welcome the principle of “multi-perspectivity” as integral to “inclusive education and diversity” (page 2). Truly inclusive education must allow for the expression of a wide range of views pupils and families hold on matters relating to relationships and sexual ethics.

Traditional views on marriage as a lifelong union between one man and one woman should be given due weight when considering “the diversity of family structures” under “community and belonging” (page 19). Pupils must not be marginalised for expressing socially conservative or religious beliefs about marriage and the family.

The evidence base for the benefits to children of being raised by married parents is substantial. The vast majority of marriages in Ireland are between a man and a woman.¹ Research suggests that children brought up by their married parents achieve more educationally, are healthier and are more economically productive.² Where the parents of a child are married, evidence demonstrates they are more likely to remain together as their child grows up, and beyond. That remains the case when adjusted for other factors, such as family income.³ Despite these benefits, and the fact that the Irish public recently voted to maintain the constitutional recognition of “the institution of marriage, on which the family is founded” (art. 41.3.1 Irish Constitution), there is no mention of marriage in the learning outcomes “family” unit, or indeed anywhere else. An understanding of the nature and distinctive characteristics of marriage and its significance for the upbringing of children and for society should be a learning outcome in its own right.

“Balanced” and “inclusive” teaching on “human development and sexuality” (page 7) must present pupils with a range of views on issues of controversy so that those who hold different views are not excluded or marginalised. Presenting only one view on human development and sexuality to pupils would be neither balanced nor inclusive. Teaching should be objective, critical and pluralistic (see our response to question 12).

Developing “respect and compassion towards diversity” (page 24) should be rooted in the equality of individuals, rather than in the issues that divide us, promoting respect for people. This is the context in which pupils should learn about “the nine grounds under which discrimination is prohibited in Ireland” (page 28). Schools with a Christian patronage and which deliver SPHE “having regard to the

characteristic spirit of the school” (Education Act 1998 s.9(d)) will be well equipped to teach in this way, following the fundamental Christian belief that God has created all people equal and in his image.

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Schools are required to consult with parents on teaching in SPHE under section 9(d) of the Education Act 1998, which states,

“A recognised school shall...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.”

The Irish Government has set out three principles for consultation by public bodies. These include,

“Consultation with the public must be genuine, meaningful, timely, balanced and with the ultimate objective of leading to better outcomes and greater understanding by all involved... Consultation should aim to achieve real engagement and ‘real listening’ rather than being a pro-forma exercise for bureaucratic purposes.”

“Consultation should be targeted at and easily accessible to those with a clear interest in the policy in question. There is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to consultation.”

Public bodies should make “systematic efforts to ensure that interested and affected parties have the opportunity to take part in open consultations at all stages of the policy process”. (*Consultation Principles and Guidance*, Department of Public Expenditure and Reform, November 2016, pages 6-7)

Providing guidance for schools on how to consult parents effectively based on the above principles would help schools to fulfil this legal requirement, empower parents and increase transparency and trust between schools and parents.

Online Toolkits made available for teachers can be a great help. Any resources or materials recommended by the Government for use as part of the new curriculum in any subject area should be made available to parents and the general public. It is fundamental to transparency that parents should have an absolute right to view these materials.

It is helpful that the Wellbeing specification states that materials available on the Online Toolkit “are not prescriptive” (page 46) and that schools need to take into account their own pupils’ needs and the interests of the school community. Schools must remain free to select and adapt any recommended materials to ensure that they are suitable for their own pupils and that they uphold “the characteristic spirit of the school”.

Schools would be further supported by additional guidance on how to teach about controversial issues in a way that is compatible with parents’ rights under Article 2, Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights (see question 13). Areas of the Wellbeing and Social and Environmental Education

curricula touch on political and ethical issues that engage parents' religious and philosophical convictions. Teachers may benefit from guidance about how to approach these matters of debate in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner so that teaching acknowledges the range of beliefs held and is appropriate to the religious and cultural backgrounds of pupils in the class.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make.

A number of the topics covered within Wellbeing and Social and Environmental Education touch on parents' deeply held beliefs. Topics over which parents hold a range of beliefs engage requirements under Article 2 Protocol 1 (A2P1) of the European Convention on Human Rights:

"In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions."

The European Court of Human Rights has noted:

1. *"the obligation on Contracting States to respect the religious and philosophical convictions of parents does not apply only to the content of teaching and the way it is provided; it binds them 'in the exercise' of all the 'functions'... which they assume in relation to education and teaching".*

2. *"its aim is to safeguard the possibility of pluralism in education, it requires the State, in exercising its functions with regard to education and teaching, to take care that information or knowledge included in the curriculum is conveyed in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner, enabling pupils to develop a critical mind particularly with regard to religion in a calm atmosphere free of any proselytism. The State [including state-funded schools] is forbidden to pursue an aim of indoctrination that might be considered as not respecting parents' religious and philosophical convictions." [Lautsi v Italy [2011] ECHR, Application No. 30814/06, paras 62-63]*

The Court's guide to A2P1 notes that it *"applies to all subjects and not only religious instruction. Sexual education and ethics thus fall within the scope of Article 2 of Protocol No. 1."* [Guide on Article 2 of Protocol No. 1 to the European Convention on Human Rights: Right to education, European Court of Human Rights, para. 62]

Teaching on contentious issues must be delivered in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner. The primary curriculum as a whole may support an integrated approach. However, we contend that teaching on sensitive issues, particularly within SPHE, would be better dealt with in discrete subjects to ensure maximum transparency between schools and parents. Where sensitive issues that form part of the SPHE curriculum are being taught in other areas, it is essential that parents are made aware of this.

Parents have a right to remove their child from "instruction in any subject which is contrary to the conscience of the parent" (Education Act 1998 s.30). For parents to make use of this right, it is necessary they know what is being taught, when and where.

Using clear language to explain learning intentions and content to parents is also essential to maintain transparency. Within Wellbeing, parents need to be given clear information about what is covered under the learning outcomes to guard against extreme content being brought in by stealth as has happened in cases in England.

Parents should have an absolute right to see all materials, including schemes of work, worksheets, text, visual content, video content and props used to deliver education, especially within sensitive areas. This includes materials outsourced from external facilitators. The inclusion of reference to circular 0042/2018 in the Wellbeing specification is useful here. The inclusion of further directions from the circular would be beneficial, including schools' duty to "protect students in their care at all times from any potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources", to make parents "aware in advance of the content of the programmes provided by the external facilitators" and to ensure the programme is "appropriate for the educational stage of the students", including "evidence informed content and methodology with clear educational outcomes".

The Iona Institute

Submission from The Iona Institute to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment concerning the draft Primary School curriculum specifications

June 2024

Introduction:

We have two concerns about the draft curriculum specifications for primary schools that we would briefly like to draw attention to in our submission. One is the treatment of religion and spirituality in the draft and the other is the increase in political content in the draft.

We believe the current curriculum treats religion in a fairer and more appropriate way than the draft curriculum, and we believe the proposed curriculum has given too much prominence to politics. We question the extent to which parents have been properly consulted about the changes.

Religion and Spirituality

The 1999 curriculum, in the chapter “Key issues in primary education”, includes a section on “the spiritual dimension” that states: “The curriculum takes cognisance of the affective, aesthetic, spiritual, moral and religious dimensions of the child’s experience and development. For most people in Ireland, the totality of the human condition cannot be understood or explained merely in terms of physical and social experience.”

It adds: “The spiritual dimension of life expresses itself in a search for truth and in the quest for a transcendent element within human experience. The importance that the curriculum attributes to the child’s spiritual development is expressed through the breadth of learning experiences the curriculum offers, through the inclusion of religious education as one of the

areas of the curriculum, and through the child's engagement with the aesthetic and affective domains of learning." (p. 27)

We believe this is an appropriate treatment of the subject and we note that in the draft new curriculum, the above section on the "spiritual dimension" has disappeared.

Instead, it is absorbed into "wellbeing" and minimised as follows: "This competency [wellbeing] develops children's understanding and appreciation of wellbeing and their ability to be as healthy as they can be – physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. ... It also recognises the spiritual dimension of living, which enables children to experience a sense of awe and wonder and to know that life has a meaning". (p. 11)

However, this general mention of spirituality in the framework disappears after a few pages. The seven key competencies in the draft curriculum, which are broad and general, are developed into different subjects.

In the new draft specification of the "Wellbeing" course there is no activity or learning experience linked to spiritual wellbeing.

This is despite all the evidence that religious practice contributes to wellbeing. (Professor Patricia Casey produced for the Iona Institute a paper on this topic, called "The Psycho-Social Benefits of Religious Practice.)

As Dr Amalee Meehan, a professor of education from DCU, says in a submission to the NCCA at an earlier stage in the process: "There is a difficulty with the conception of wellbeing as a distinct curricular area. The research shows that every aspect of education, at its best, can foster wellbeing. It is important to note the strong research base identifying a direct correlation between participating in a religious tradition and wellbeing."

The NCCA has proposed a reduction in time allocated for religious education while the allocated time for the "Wellbeing" subject has been doubled in comparison to the present curriculum,

and new areas of learning have been introduced, such as consent, diversity in family structures, and media/digital wellbeing.

(In respect of “family diversity”, we hope individual schools, depending on their patron, will still be able to teach the importance and benefits of marriage, albeit in a way that is sensitive to all pupils).

While schools can still develop their own religion and ethics education courses according to the ethos of their patron (for example, the local Catholic bishop or Educate Together), the positive effect that spirituality has on mental health and wellbeing should be taught in every school, in our view, as is the case in the current curriculum. This can be taught in a purely factual way.

Politics in the draft curriculum

Whilst greatly downplaying spirituality and religion, the new wellbeing curriculum includes far more on politics than the present curriculum, and seems to be encouraging political activism. Is it appropriate for primary schools to be doing this? We note the same tendency in the ‘Social and Environmental Education’ course.

A new strand of the 'Wellbeing' course is called “community and belonging”. Under the heading of “Inclusive education and diversity”, is included the aim of: “Fostering a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, equality, and social justice.”

Terms like "social justice" are obviously highly contested. For example, some people believe it must include respect for the right to life at all stages, while others think it must include a 'right' to abortion. It is impossible to teach about "human rights", "equity", "equality", "social justice" and "diversity" in a politically neutral way, so how will schools teach these concepts to children and will parents be properly informed?

It might be argued that the vast majority of schools are not religiously neutral in that almost all have a denominational ethos, so why shouldn't they politically educate children as well? But

the current make-up of the school system was agreed with parents many years ago, the denominational identity of a school is completely out in the open, and when parents are asked whether they wish to divest their school to another patron body, they generally prefer the status quo.

But if a school is going to start teaching political concepts, especially in primary schools, then parents must be fully consulted about this, especially given the impossibility of teaching concepts like “equality” in a value-neutral way.

We believe that political education should be reserved for secondary school and that when it is taught, the different views of what concepts like “justice” mean should be taught so that the curriculum cannot be accused of bias.

ENDS

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

OK

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

NA

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

NA

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

NA

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

As Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning for the College of Engineering and Architecture at University College Dublin, I'm deeply concerned at the lack of detail given on 'Engineering' in this draft curriculum. Nationally, and globally, society recognizes the importance of teaching STEM subjects to young people, and yet in this draft curriculum, 'engineering' as a subject has received only the briefest mention. It

appears that there has been very little thought given to the engineering learning outcomes, and there has been no elaboration given in Appendix 1 as there has been for Technology. So often, the term engineer is misunderstood, and many in society do not understand the work of an engineer. I'm deeply concerned that this is a missed opportunity to embed the term 'engineer' in the primary curriculum. If we can get this right, it will be such a strong foundation on which to build post-primary curricula into the future.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

NA

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

NA

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

no

Volunteer Ireland



Submission to the consultation on the draft primary curriculum specification on wellbeing

We are pleased to make this submission in response to the consultation on the draft primary curriculum specification on wellbeing.

Context

Volunteer Ireland is the national organisation that promotes, supports and advocates for volunteering in Ireland. We work with a range of stakeholders to make volunteering accessible, inclusive and of high quality. We build capacity in organisations and companies to create meaningful volunteering experiences. We celebrate volunteering and communicate its impact to Government and the wider public. We advocate for volunteering so that its value is recognised. We support the network of Volunteer Centres and work closely with them to ensure volunteering thrives at local and national level.

Volunteer Centres are at the hearts of communities across Ireland working to support, promote and celebrate volunteering. They help people who want to volunteer find suitable roles; and help organisations in need of volunteers to find suitable people to fill those roles. Volunteer Centres provide support and advice to volunteers and organisations; deliver training; process Garda vetting and run a range of other projects dedicated to facilitating and enhancing volunteering locally.

We are making this submission in the context of the *Community and Belonging Strand* and the intention for young people to engage with, and foster a sense of belonging to, their local community. In particular, we are focused on the learning outcomes under the units of *Sense of Belonging* and *Citizenship*.

The importance of volunteering

Ireland has a strong culture of volunteering with over 1 million people volunteering annually. Volunteering is at the heart of every community across Ireland and affects every member of the population either directly or indirectly. It provides a wealth of benefits to those that volunteer and to our communities. It is a positive action against many of the challenges we face as a country today including loneliness, social cohesion, integration and mental health.

With over 207 nationalities signed up on the national volunteering database, it is clear that volunteering offers a rich, multicultural experience for young people. Volunteering is an excellent tool for integration and inclusion with many people from new communities taking up volunteering as a way to learn more about their new home, make friends and learn new skills.

Volunteering also has significant benefits to wellbeing. In our most recent national survey of volunteers, 73% of respondents said their sense of belonging to their community increased after volunteering while 72% said their understanding of other people, communities and cultures increased. In terms of health, 69% felt their mental health and wellbeing had increased thanks to volunteering while just over 62% said their physical health had improved.

Volunteering on the curriculum

In an ever more divisive world, it is critical that we prepare young people to be inclusive, have empathy and understand the importance of being part of a community. Volunteering provides a unique opportunity to do this. When people volunteer, it fosters a greater sense of belonging to their community because they are actively participating in it and can see that they are making a tangible difference. It helps people broaden their horizons and gain new perspectives by interacting with, and volunteering alongside, people they may never meet in another context. It helps develop empathy by encouraging learning and understanding of other experiences and abilities. It allows people to take responsibility and demonstrates that everyone can contribute to a positive and inclusive community.

While we appreciate that it may not always be possible for students to volunteer at a young age, the curriculum provides an opportunity to create awareness around volunteering at an early age. This will increase the chances of students engaging with their community and becoming active citizens as they move through second and third level education. It has the potential to be the first stepping stone to young people becoming lifelong active citizens.

Recommendations

We recommend education on volunteering be included on the primary curriculum under wellbeing in the following ways:

- Ensure volunteering is specifically named as one of the most beneficial ways that people can engage with and contribute to their community.
- Invite local groups and volunteers to speak to classes about their experience and impact of volunteering.
- Showcase opportunities for young people to get involved in their community e.g.: through family volunteering.
- Demonstrate the impact of volunteering on the local community by encouraging students to identify the impact of volunteers e.g.: through local clean up groups, support for extracurricular activities, sporting organisations, etc.

Page 2 of 3

Conclusion

This submission outlines the importance of educating primary school students on the impact and value of volunteering to their lives and their communities. We are happy to discuss or clarify any of the matters above in more detail.

Water Safety Ireland

Dear Madam/Sir,

I am writing to follow up on our recent form submission with the request to consider the inclusion of a land-based water safety module in the Wellbeing specification for all primary and special schools.

Water Safety Ireland recommends consideration of the inclusion of a land-based water safety education module, similar to current programmes, Get WISE (www.getwise.ie) which aligns with Junior Cycle P.E Strand 2: Participation and Hold Hands (www.holdhands.ie) which aligns with the *Aistear* framework for Early Childhood. Please find attached further information on Get WISE units of learning.

This programme aims to provide integrated learning experiences across Wellbeing and P.E while engaging with all Elements of the specification. Similar to Get WISE, this programme aims to integrate fundamental movements through the exploration of non-contact rescue techniques and self-rescue skills. Through collaborative learning, children can engage in simulated rescue scenarios and group discussions relating to personal safety and decision-making. By incorporating a land-based water safety education programme, children gain essential knowledge and skills related to movement competency, decision-making and personal wellbeing, preparing them for safe interactions in various environments. In addition, a land-based water safety unit of learning will give all children the opportunity to engage in water safety education and learn lifelong skills, irrespective of restrictions such as access to a suitable aquatic environment, the provision of transport, availability of suitably qualified swimming teachers.

If you require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Thank you for the opportunity for consideration.

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
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- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

We are not commenting on this section

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

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8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Women's Aid agrees with the aims in Table 2. P 9, however we have the following suggestions to improve them as follows : Support children to nurture healthy relationships and the ability to work cooperatively with others. Recommendation: This point should also explicitly mention support children to identify healthy and unhealthy relationships as well as nurture them. Women's Aid agrees with the proposed learning outcomes, in particular the inclusion of consent and recognising healthy and unhealthy behaviours in relationships (page 27). However, we recommend: a) ensure that negative impacts of some sex/gender stereotypes and stereotypical gender roles are addressed in the curriculum (for example under Family, page 21 and 30) b) ensure that the learning outcome under Relationships for Stage 4 at least (page 25) includes identifying unhealthy and abusive behaviours in young people's dating/potential future dating relationships. c) Make clearer links with the Stay Safe Programme to ensure that safety from abuse at home from DV or CSA is included. While learning outcomes regarding digital wellbeing are included for all stages, Women's Aid believes they are not sufficient, in particular for older children in stages 3 and 4. The proposed learning outcomes are not specific enough and do not seem to provide sufficient attention to the harms of pornography, the risk of Intimate Image Abuse and the negative impact on children of widely available online 'manosphere' and 'toxic masculinity' content. While it may seem that primary school is too early to introduce these topics, the reality is that children are already impacted by them at a very young age. Recommendation 3: Women's Aid believes that pornography and intimate image abuse need to be mentioned specifically, including risk of online grooming and the risks of children eliciting intimate Recommendation 3: Women's Aid believes that pornography and intimate image abuse need to be mentioned specifically, including risk of online grooming and the risks of children eliciting intimate images between each other. Harmful and toxic sexist online 'influencers' messages need to be countered/addressed in age appropriate ways early on at least for stages 3 &4. Women's Aid can provide detailed referencing and research as the basis of these recommendations on request which space does not accommodate here.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

The successful delivery of SPHE and RSE depends on well trained teachers and relevant, appropriate, and engaging resources. Women's Aid recommends that specific training is provided to SPHE teachers, including on how to manage a safe space and respond to disclosures, and that specialist NGOs are consulted in the development of said training. We also agree with the Recommending Toxicity Report on the need for training for teachers in addressing the manosphere, and in teaching digital literacy . Finally we suggest that relevant NGOs are consulted in the development of the Wellbeing Online Toolkit in due time. We note that Culture Reframed further offers very useful resources to support healthy and age-appropriate engagement with children and young people of all ages on the topic of pornography <https://www.culturereframed.org/>

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Given the lifelong importance of the topics to be addressed in the revised curriculum, Women's Aid strongly believes that all students should have the opportunity to learn it, therefore we support the curriculum being mandatory for all schools. The course should be evidence based, inclusive and objective

and should not be influenced by the religious ethos of the school, so that all students have the opportunity to learn these important life lessons.

Women for Election

Women for Election Submission to the NCCA Consultation on the Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification for all primary and special schools

June 2024.

Ireland is currently 103rd in the world for the number of women in politics. It remains after the just completed Local Elections 22nd out of the EU27 for the number of women in local government.

Just over 1 in 5 of our TDs and 1 in 4 of our local councillors are women. There are no women in 37 of the 166 Local Electoral Areas that make up our city and county councils following the Local Elections in June 2024. Our local and national government are not representative of the society in which we live, for gender and for broader diversity.

It also means that our political systems are deeply challenged: when institutions are so unrepresentative of the population they serve, they will struggle to truly serve the population's interests. All of the research points to more women at decision-making tables making politics work better for everyone. More women mean women's lived experience is included in decisions. Ireland's local and national government will be stronger with better representation of the people it serves, and a balance of men and women involved

Women for Election encourages and supports women in Ireland to run for politics by providing training and mentoring support while also advocating for systemic change. We want to see a gender balanced politics, with a wide diversity of the population represented among decision makers. We are a not-for-profit, non-partisan organisation working with candidates from all parties and none to equip and inspire women to get involved in Irish political life.

Within the Social and Environmental Education Curriculum, one of the principles of learning, teaching and assessment is *Inclusive Education and Diversity*. This strand of teaching aims to foster 'a culture based on the global learning themes of human rights' and to challenge 'all stereotypes and misconceptions'.

Building on the work of the [Citizens Assembly on Gender Equality \(2021-2022\)](#) to 'seek to ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making in the workplace, politics and public life' and the work of the

Oireachtas Joint Committee on Gender Equality report '[Unfinished Democracy: Achieving Gender Equality](#), 2022 the proposed Draft Curriculum offers a unique chance to explore issues of leadership, participation, representation and inclusion of women and of people with diverse backgrounds in the political sphere, and to challenge prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions that politics is a role mainly for men.

Research nationally and internationally has identified five key barriers to women's participation in political life. Termed the 5C's, they include: confidence, cash, childcare, candidate selection and culture. The curriculum offers an opportunity to explore that 'cultural' barrier – for young boys as well as young girls. For centuries, politics has been a male dominated field. We believe that by fostering open conversations within the curriculum in an age-appropriate way about our political system, whether it adequately represents the diversity of our society and culture, and exploring what it may mean to have diverse gender balanced political chambers and political leadership, will contribute significantly to breaking the gender stereotypes that are prevalent within society.

In order to advance gender equality, human rights and foster the equal participation in society, including in politics, by women and underrepresented minorities, we recommend that the programme address the current status of the lack of equal representation in all areas of government while also encouraging and empowering young girls to partake in politics, leadership and in discussions on human rights and equality, how the absence of women impacts on the achievement of equality and human rights for all.

At junior level, showcasing and teaching children about women who have paved the way in both the political and human rights spheres highlights from that young age that politics isn't a man's job and will help to change attitudes surrounding the typical male dominated culture within politics.

At senior level, introducing discussions on how our political system works - having a broad understanding of our political system, how people are elected, how to vote and the importance of voting are crucial in understanding how democracy works. This will foster the attitude that politics is for everyone and introduce this thinking from a young age.

Given that primary schools are central to politics, in that many also serve as polling stations, age-appropriate discussions on politics and the place of women and underrepresented minorities could be easily integrated into school life.

It is in this context that Women for Election propose that the Social and Environmental Education Curriculum include consideration of politics; the political system; the current participation of women and underrepresented minorities in politics; and of the potential for

all students to be engaged with politics in its capacity to shape laws, culture and society, and, for some, the possibility that they too may consider entering political life in time.

Women for Election would be happy to provide any further information or assistance that may be required as the Curriculum develops.

More of our research on these issues can be found here –

- www.womenforelection.ie/wfe-news/research/

Our datahub on women's representation around the country –

- datahub.womenforelection.ie/ (good resource for teachers to showcase their County Council/Local Electoral Area)

For more on women in politics, see the Women for Election website:

www.womenforelection.ie

Women for Election
Coleraine House,
Carmichael Centre
Coleraine Street,
Dublin 7

www.womenforelection.ie hello@womenforelection.ie

Women in Agriculture Working Group

Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Specification

For primary and special schools (for consultation)

Background

The Programme for Government recognises the need to do more on gender equality. As well as being a priority for the Government, gender equality is a key objective of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals and a core principle of the European Union. The new Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) Regulations place particular focus on promoting the participation of women in the socio-economic development of rural areas, with special attention to farming.

The agri-food sector drives economic growth in Ireland and extends to global markets. It includes primary production in farming, fishing and forestry, and the processing and manufacture of food, beverages, and wood products. Agri-food is Ireland's oldest and largest indigenous exporting sector and accounts for almost 7% of Gross National Income (GNI) and 9.3% of exports in value terms. In 2023, agrifood exports were €18.3 billion, highlighting the global orientation and exceptional quality of Irish produce. With approximately 90% of our beef, sheep meat, and dairy products destined for international markets, the sector continues to thrive on the world stage.

The last few years have been challenging for the sector. Brexit, Covid-19, and the Ukraine Crisis have demonstrated how critical the agri-food sector is to maintaining food supply chains and future food security.

Women and Girls in Agriculture

The CSO's Census of Agriculture 2020 quantifies agricultural activity in Ireland with specific statistics on the structure of farming in Ireland. Results indicated women accounted for only 13% of the total 130,216 farm holders in Ireland at the time the census was conducted. Additionally, results showed only 27% of the total 278,600 farm workers in Ireland were women. The trend in the proportion of workers in the primary agriculture, forestry and fishing sector that are female has only increased very slightly. Women are therefore very under-represented in the sector.

This presents a significant challenge to achieving gender balance in agriculture. To meet and align with the gender equality expectations and commitments of the agriculture sector in Ireland and in Europe, the visibility, equality, and status of women in farming should be an integral part of the preparation, implementation and evaluation of future policy interventions and strategies. A co-ordinated approach is needed to ensure that barriers to female participation in agricultural education and employment are removed and participation is fostered and encouraged at an early age as part of existing STEM and policies and programmes. Agricultural science should be given equal prominence as the other sciences available for study within the primary and post-primary curriculum.

Food Vision 2030

Ireland's 10-year stakeholder strategy for the agri-food sector, recognises the importance of gender balance to the long-term sustainable future of the agri-food sector and includes actions to promote and improve gender balance at all levels, such as:

Promoting women's participation in farming through CAP Knowledge Transfer Groups.

Capturing and publishing gender data on policy implementation.

Represent the agri-food sector in the development of the National Women & Girl's Strategy

Promoting and improving gender balance at all levels in the agri-food sector, but particularly at senior management and board level.

Promoting and supporting women's networks and mentoring programmes

Hosting a National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture.

National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture

A National Dialogue on Women in Agriculture with the theme of ***"Improving Gender Balance in the Agri-Food Sector"*** took place on 1 February 2023 in Portlaoise, Co. Laois. The event examined "The Role of Women in the Agri-Food Sector" and "Women in Farming – Challenges and Opportunities" and workshops explored the experience of women and young girls in agriculture across:

Education and Awareness

Leadership and Visibility

Financial and Legal matters

Sustainability (Social, Economic and Environmental)

The dialogue provided an opportunity for stakeholders to examine gender equality through open and constructive discussion, inputting on how we can work to encourage increased participation of women in agriculture and the agri-food sector.

The outcomes of the dialogue were compiled into a Report and the recommendations have been consolidated into a 12-point Action Plan. The actions cover a wide range of areas, all of which are important to the successful achievement of gender balance within the agriculture sector in Ireland. The action plan can be viewed [here](#).

Women in Agriculture Working Group

In this context the Women in Agriculture Working Group have been tasked with overseeing the implementation of the action plan. Action 2 focuses on increasing promotion of agriculture as a viable career for women and young girls in primary and post-primary schools. The group have been exploring this area over the past few months and have met with several stakeholders to determine the current position and identify the barriers contributing to low participation levels of women and young girls in the sector.

Our research in this area has highlighted a steady decline in participation rates, by both male and female students, in Agricultural education including;

Agricultural Science for the Leaving Certificate Cycle

Agriculture/Horticulture Apprenticeships

Teagasc Agriculture education programmes

Agricultural & Food related third level education programmes

Primary Education

Education around agriculture and food at primary school level is currently limited to minor reference to food, its importance for health and energy and the nutritional value of food. The proposed new STE curriculum does not seek to build or expand on that for the coming primary educational programme period. While this is valuable information for children of primary school age the group believe that this is a missed opportunity to educate young boys and girls about agriculture and how it contributes to our lives and our economy.

There is currently a dependence on free online supports for any agriculture content provided by primary school teachers and this varies from school to school dependent on the teachers approach to its

inclusion in their class plans. Agri-Aware have designed several free agricultural educational programmes for use by primary teachers that offer fun, interactive agricultural themed lessons, and activities. Some of these programmes even offer prizes for participation to encourage and promote interaction. They cover topics including Incredible edibles, Dig In, Pasture to Plate, Branching Out, Farming through the seasons, Safe Farm Futures, Rambling with Irish Rare Breeds. More information and content is available at the following link [Programmes - Agri Aware](#). A similar approach could be taken to including agriculture topics under the proposed STE primary curriculum going forward in collaboration with agri-aware.

The group suggests that equal prominence should be given to agriculture within the STE curriculum going forward to ensure that children are provided with a basic understanding of how science, technology and engineering are integral to the successful and sustainable future of agriculture and food production in Ireland. This knowledge and understanding could form the basis for future uptake of Agricultural Science at post-primary or third level education and foster an interest in a career within agriculture and the wider agri-food industry.

Post-Primary Education

IASTA data on the numbers of students studying Leaving Certificate Agricultural Science over the past six years paints a grim picture of steady decline in participation rates as outlined in the below table.

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
Higher	6,132	6,218	7,553	7,371	6,605	6,543
Lower	1,328	1,195	915	1,130	1,140	1,235
Total	7,460	7,413	8,468	8,501	7,745	7,778

As can be seen from the data there has been a drop of over 1,000 in this number since its peak in 2020, when 8,501 students studied the subject.

The drop in numbers is cause for concern regarding the long-term sustainability of the Irish Agri-Food Sector. Another emerging issue is the lower percentage of students awarded a H1 or H2 in Agricultural Science compared to the other science subjects; Biology, Physics and Chemistry over the past six years.

	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019	2018
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Ag Science	12.4%	5.8%	11.3%	9.5%	4.8%	4.8%
Biology	18.8%	17.6%	17.5%	11.6%	7.7%	11.6%
Chemistry	22.8%	19.1%	23.5%	18.1%	13.2%	11.7%
Physics	20.8%	23.7%	21.1%	16.1%	10.8%	10.9%

Several articles have been presented by the media illustrating the barriers identified within the national curriculum at post-primary level which are impacting on uptake, by both male and female senior cycle students.

<https://www.irishtimes.com/ireland/education/2023/06/19/leaving-cert-agricultural-science-a-daunting-looking-paper/>

<https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/education/leaving-cert-agricultural-science-higher-level-attracts-different-opinions/a1549668135.html>

<https://www.agriland.ie/farming-news/leaving-cert-ag-science-syllabus-caused-great-distress/>

Irish Country Living magazine, published by the Irish Farmers Journal conducted a survey of agricultural science teachers in January 2024. **79%** confirmed that they have seen a decline in the number of students studying agricultural science as a subject for the Leaving Certificate since the introduction of the new syllabus in 2019.

Ag Science Teachers' cite the complexity of the new IIS investigation as a barrier to uptake. The project is considered by teachers to be too difficult for a student of the 16-18 years age bracket and stage of Ag Science education given the lack of introduction to the subject at both primary school level and the junior certificate cycle. Only **12.4%** of students received a H1 in Agricultural Science in the 2023 Leaving Certificate when compared to 18.8% in Biology, 22.8% in Chemistry and 20.8% in Physics.

Additional barriers put forward related to the broadness of the subject matter and the ambiguity of the exam questions with teachers never feeling assured that their efforts, and the efforts of their students, will secure the grades they deserve. **78%** of teachers surveyed stated the new Agricultural Science curriculum/specification and the significantly lower grades received by students compared to the other science subjects has discouraged students from selecting the subject for the Leaving Certificate.

A further fall in numbers is predicted in future years as science is no longer a core subject for Junior Certificate students in many post-primary schools across the country. To address the issue, IASTA have completed a review of the agricultural science syllabus and have made a submission to the Oireachtas in this regard. IASTA have advised the working group that they have also highlighted this issue to both the Department of Education and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) for consideration.

<https://iasta.ie/flawed-leaving-certificate-agricultural-science-syllabus-examined-for-the-first-time/>

Apprenticeships

While several new agriculture and horticulture apprenticeships have been introduced in 2023 the uptake of established apprenticeships such as arboriculture and agricultural mechanics have seen significant drop off from peak registration figures in 2021. This has been linked to a lack of knowledge and awareness of career opportunities available within the agriculture sector. Additionally, agriculture related courses and apprenticeships are traditionally more targeted towards young males with young females not being exposed to the potential opportunities the sector offers throughout their primary and post-primary education programmes.

Apprenticeships by Registrations 2019 – April 2024

Apprenticeship Family	Apprenticeship Description	Registrations							Age at Registration		
		2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024 (end of Apr 24)	Total	16-20	21-24	25+
Agriculture & Horticulture	Arboriculture		<5	31	13	12	8	67	24	16	27
	Sportsturf Management					27	5	32	5	8	19
	Farm Technician					14	<5	16	7	6	<5
	Farm Manager					11		11	<5	<5	<5
	Horticulture					16	7	23	5	5	13
Motor	Agricultural Mechanics	44	52	90	58	65	14	323	268	50	5

Apprenticeships by live population

Apprenticeship Family	Apprenticeship Description	Live Total Population (Apr 24)	Female population (rounded %)
Agriculture & Horticulture	Arboriculture	42	<5%
	Sportsturf Management	31	0%
	Farm Technician	15	13%
	Farm Manager	9	44%
	Horticulture	19	11%
Motor	Agricultural Mechanics	225	<5%

Teagasc Education

Teagasc is the main provider of full-time education courses in agriculture, horticulture and forestry and approved trained farmer qualifications. Course provided include further education, adult, and continuing education and Teagasc higher education apprenticeships, and higher-level courses all delivered in a Teagasc or private partner college.

Teagasc also provide free resources for schools at both primary and post-primary level which are available at [Resources for Schools - Teagasc | Agriculture and Food Development Authority](#).

In 2023 Teagasc recorded 6,073 education awards, down from a peak of 6,316 in 2018. The split of these 2023 education awards is 75% male students and 25% female students. 49% of all awards are undertaken by those aged between 15 and 30 years of age.

Third-level Education

The ICL survey asked teaches to indicate what percentage of their LC students chose to study agricultural science at third level. 60% of teachers indicated only 0-15% of students in their LC class chose to study agriculture science at third level. 44% of those surveyed felt there are barriers stopping students from studying ag science at third level, with a further 30% indicating they were unsure.

A total number of 195,168 educational awards issued in 2023. Of these 16,350 were in respect of Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Veterinary programmes, down from a peak of 36,730 awards for the sector in 2016. In addition, of the 16,350 awards to the sector 890 were for level 1-3 awards, 12,030 were for level 4 and 5 awards and only 3,430 were for level 6 awards.

The uptake on these awards was split 69% male 31% female with only 37% of those awards issued to those aged between 15 and 30 years of age.

The main barriers identified included;

a lack of knowledge and awareness of the opportunities in the sector,

CAO points being too high,

A perception that Ag science is only for students from farming backgrounds,

the exam being too long and

the lack of access to farms for IIS for urban students.

Agriculture Employment

The CSO 2020 Census of agriculture showed 278,600 people employed in the agriculture sector at that time. Of these 73% were male and only 27% female. While more than half (53.3%) of farm holders stated that farming was their sole occupation while over one quarter (26.2%) regarded it as a subsidiary occupation meaning they have off-farm income which they supplement by farming.

The numbers in employment in the sector have fallen in recent years. Additionally, those entering Agri-Food related education programmes has reduced and so too has the number of students choosing Agricultural Science for the leaving certificate. With less than half (46%) of existing farm holders having a succession plan in place for the future transfer of their farm upon their retirement the future of farming and agriculture in Ireland is looking bleak.

Women in Agriculture Working Group position

The women in agriculture working group believe that interest in, and knowledge of the integral role that agriculture plays in science, technology and engineering at primary school level could have a direct impact on uptake and participation levels at post-primary level.

Having considered all the above, the group considers that there is an opportunity to promote and encourage an interest in agriculture in the primary school curriculum by giving it equal prominence within the science, technology, and engineering elements of the curriculum.

STEM and Gender Balance

The recommendations on gender balance in STEM were informed by the Gender Balance in STEM Advisory Group to guide national actions that will ensure STEM education in Ireland is world class in improving gender balance, equity and inclusion effectively for our young people.

The Policy Statement acknowledges that there is a need to increase broader participation in STEM Education and to enhance STEM learning for learners of all backgrounds, abilities, and gender, with a particular focus on increasing participation in STEM by females. It identifies the importance of addressing any risks of disadvantage and underrepresentation in the implementation of the policy. The Policy Statement recognises that STEM education is multi-faceted and goes well beyond the main disciplines that constitute the acronym – **Science, Technology, Engineering** and Mathematics. Within these four STEM disciplines there are a wide range of STEM areas and subjects that learners can engage in during their school life. These can range from designing and making in early years and **primary school to Science, Technology, Engineering** and Mathematics at all levels.

While overall the group is of the opinion that the Draft Primary Curriculum Science Technology and Engineering Specifications adequately address the key messages outlined in the framework the working group has a concern regarding the lack of inclusion of/reference to Agriculture and Food production within the Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum as currently drafted. In the draft as it is currently presented, food is mentioned a total of six times.

Inclusion of agriculture and farming within the STE curriculum could be achieved by weaving agriculture into the existing proposed curriculum, encouraging equal prominence within the Science element of the curriculum and including dedicated learning outcomes that inform learners about agriculture and the agri-food sector.

This could be achieved by mapping food and food production directly to human consumption in Learning Outcomes, including farming, food production, farming technology and engineering in farming with equal prominence within the curriculum. It should also be considered in the context of technology learning outcomes which are currently focussed on digital and computer learning/understanding especially in the areas of coding and programming. Engineering learning outcomes also omit any reference to agriculture and farming engineering with outcomes primarily focused on design problems, building and testing prototypes, design process and the digital aspect again.

Specific areas of concern for the group that should be addressed include the following:

Living Things Strand:

*Stage 2: Understand the difference between living and non-living things. Develop an awareness of the main phases of the human life cycle and the **importance of food for energy and growth.***

The group proposes the inclusion of learning on where our food comes from, how it is grown and the science, technology and engineering elements that contribute to food production in Irish Farming.

Stage 3: Explore and investigate the interdependence of living things within ecosystems how they adapt so they can survive and thrive; and how basic food chains operate within them.

The group proposes the inclusion of learning on how Irish Farming and Agriculture sector is contributing to the mitigation of its climate impacts through advances in on-farm technologies, improved machinery, and science-based approaches to improve soil quality and crop yields. Explore the importance of science in ensuring the production of safe, high-quality food for human consumption and future food security.

*Stage 4: Develop an understanding of the **nutritional value of everyday foods** and the importance of good nutrition on the human body.*

The group proposes the inclusion of learnings on how scientific knowledge and research is contributing to better on-farm knowledge regarding water quality, soil quality and the use of fertilisers which is important in the context of human health and nutrition outcomes.

Materials Strand:

*Stage 3: Plan, conduct, record and evaluate open-ended inquiries into the effect of heating and cooling on common materials, **including foods**; experiment how some changes to materials can be permanent or reversible; and determine which materials are better conductors or insulators of heat.*

The group proposes inclusion of the effects of heating and cooling on soil quality for food production, on metals and construction materials for animal shelter and nutrient storage and other agriculture related experiments.

*Stage 4: Identify the properties of materials that need to be considered when constructing structures, fashion, and **food**.*

In this context the group proposes the inclusion of learnings on how the farming and forestry sectors generate many of the materials used in construction (wood), fashion (wool, leather) and food (crops, meat, fish).

The group believes that integration of Agriculture and Food into the strands and learning outcomes of the Science, Technology and Engineering curriculum will contribute to increased knowledge and awareness of the important role that Agriculture and Food plays in our lives and in turn contribute to:

Higher levels of participation in post-primary school students in agriculture related subjects

Higher levels of participation in Agriculture related further and higher education programmes (e.g. Agricultural Science at third level and Agriculture Apprenticeships)

Greater uptake of careers in the wider Agri-Food sector

by both male and female students which will increase overall knowledge and participation and ultimately work to promote and encourage more young females to consider agriculture as a viable subject choice and career opportunity.

Conclusion

Implementation or inclusion of the above proposals would go a long way towards increasing participation in agriculture related education programmes and careers for all young people, but especially for young girls. It is important that students, both male and female, are provided with information and clear pathways from primary level onwards. This can be achieved through existing and proposed curriculums and the working group seeks consideration of the inclusion of agriculture, food and farming within the Science Technology and Engineering curriculum going forward.

The working group would be happy to collaborate in creating resources and relevant classroom supports for teachers on agriculture, food and the role of women and young girls for the proposed new STE specification.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our submission.

Kind Regards

Women in Agriculture Working Group

womeninagworkinggroup@agriculture.gov.ie

Section 2: Individuals

Participants who identified themselves as 'individuals' were teachers, school leaders, parents / guardians and members of the public.

A. S. M Ziaul Haque

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Transgender

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Yes

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Not support

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Not accept

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Abdulahim Alhendi

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

STEAM

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant. .

I think Art education has been given much more focus than it should take, for instance, having 9 hours of arts is way too long. We should look at the gap in our current market and direct our focus towards filling these gaps. In Ireland, there is a huge gap in doctors, health care workers, Engineers, construction skills, IT professionals and teachers, however, there is a much lesser gap when it comes to Artists, musicians and actors, we should shave a couple of hours from Art and add them to STEAM subject.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Introducing primary language for primary school students is a very good and essential area, however there should be room for students in secondary schools for the students to continue learning the same language they will learn in primary schools.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

We should give more time and focus of Science, Math and technology. The hours allocated to this subject is too short, this is the heart of the academic learning. In relation to Engineering, schools should be equipped with a small laboratory for students to have the chances to apply some of the theoretical knowledge they gain.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Wellbeing is essential, however RSE should be completely avoided in primary schools. Sex education is very controversial subject which creates a lot of stress and ambiguity in the mind of children at this stage. Teaching LBPT and gender ideology and agenda should be completely banned in primary schools. Ireland is just a great country with a lot of cultures and backgrounds, people have different beliefs, values and cultures, the majority of them feels that this agenda is a threat to their values and beliefs, that is why this should be completely avoided.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

More focus on practical applications of STEAM required good equipment and laboratories

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Students in primary school should spend a lot of their time with physical and text book activities, using tablets and screen is very harmful for students in that early ages

Abhishek Sawant

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Related to promotion of Integrated approach - Highlighting the importance of failure and how experts have learnt from it to create something revolutionary. This will help in reducing science phobia amongst pupils

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13.Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Abigail Bryan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I have concerns about some changes on the draft curriculum. I am aware that our society is changing in areas such as the views on family units and the concept of marriage. However I don't not feel that this is reflective of society as a whole and it must be held that, while some people's views on traditional values have changed, there is a clear majority which still stands strongly on the importance of traditional marriage (man-woman) and the family unit. I agree that it is necessary to address the differences and teach acceptance and inclusion of everyone regardless of their beliefs or background, but the goodness of marriage and family should be celebrated and taught, not given as 'one option'. It is clear from extensive evidence that children are most likely to be more educated, more emotionally steadfast and more likely to go on to function appropriately in society if they are brought up in homes where there is a father and mother and a well-functioning family unit. (Of course there are exceptional circumstances in the loss of a parent for various reasons, but the principle is still central). I would be very concerned that the changes regarding family structure diversity and marriage diversity (same sex, transgender identification) would be taught with equal weight as traditional relationships. This will create considerable confusion for children and will give the impression that this is a common and perfectly acceptable option for marriage/family, where in reality only 3% of the marriages in Ireland are same-sex.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

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No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

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No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Page 7: the diversity of human experience in development and sexuality: I would be concerned as to how exactly this will be addressed and taught. These things have become very diverse in our society and things like masturbation and pornography can now be considered 'acceptable', not because they are healthy, but because they are understood to be widespread and can now come under the category of 'diversity'. However, this does not make these things healthy or beneficial. The curriculum should not be inappropriately explicit at primary school age, and should not teach acceptance of behaviour that are harmful, despite their prevalence in society. Page 26 I would also be concerned about the ages at which anatomical labels are taught...I think this is good to teach but they must be age appropriate.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Schools should have the freedom to teach this curriculum within the confines of the school belief system. Parents regularly choose the type of school they wish their children to attend based on the belief/ethos and practices of the school, and staff should not be forced to teach something that is not in line with their ethos. They can still teach things like inclusion, compassion and respect within these parameters.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Parents should have open access to what is being taught. They should be free to agree or disagree to their children being taught parts of the curriculum as they wish, according to their conscientious beliefs.

Abu Affan Khan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them

Adrian O'Boyle

Consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Dear Minister Foley,

We are writing to you as a deeply concerned parent of primary school children, urging you to reconsider the proposed Primary Draft Curriculum. Recent insights from the Cass Review necessitate a critical re-evaluation of the curriculum to ensure it aligns with the best interests and well-being of our children.

The Cass Review, published on April 9th, scrutinised the NHS Tavistock Gender Identity Development Service and highlighted significant concerns regarding the management of children presenting with gender distress. Given the substantial influence of transgender activism in educational settings, the findings from the Cass Review are highly relevant to the Irish primary school curriculum.

One of the Review's most alarming conclusions is the pipeline from social transition to medical transition for children. Social transition, which some Irish schools facilitate by allowing students to change their names, pronouns, clothing, and bathroom usage, has been identified as a precursor to medical interventions such as puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones. The Review found no good evidence supporting the use of these treatments in minors, emphasising that other evidence-based therapies may be more effective in addressing body-related distress.

Furthermore, the Review dispelled the myth that withholding puberty blockers increases the risk of suicide among youth. It stressed that medical professionals should apply the same rigorous clinical standards when assessing children with gender distress as they do with other conditions. This practice of unquestioningly affirming gender confusion in children was deemed medically unsound and potentially harmful.

As parents, We are profoundly concerned that these findings have not been adequately reflected in the proposed curriculum. It is crucial that we press pause on the development process until the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) can confirm that the Cass Review's insights have been incorporated. This step is essential to safeguard the well-being of our children and ensure their educational environment is supportive and appropriate.

Additionally, it is vital that the NCCA genuinely listens to and respects parents' opinions. In the past, there have been instances where parental concerns were dismissed. Moving forward, there must be a transparent and inclusive dialogue between the NCCA and parents to build a curriculum that truly reflects the community's values and priorities.

Here are the key reasons why the proposed curriculum must be reconsidered:

1. **Age-Inappropriate Content:** Introducing complex topics such as gender identity at a young age can be confusing and distressing for children. The curriculum should focus on foundational subjects and age-appropriate social skills.
2. **Disproportionate Emphasis on Inclusivity and Diversity:** While these values are important, they should not overshadow core academic subjects. A balanced education is essential for children's overall development and future success.
3. **Increased Burden on Teachers:** The new curriculum demands teachers to cover an extensive range of social issues, which can detract from their ability to deliver quality education in core subjects.
4. **Lack of Balanced Historical and Cultural Education:** It is crucial that children learn about their heritage and national history, fostering a sense of pride and identity.
5. **Insufficient Consultation with Parents and Educators:** Parents and educators must have a significant role in shaping the curriculum, ensuring it aligns with the community's values and needs.

In conclusion, we urge you to halt the implementation of the proposed Primary Draft Curriculum until a thorough review is conducted, incorporating the findings of the Cass Review. Our children's education should be grounded in evidence-based practices that prioritise their well-being and development.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We look forward to your response and hope we can work together to ensure a high-quality, balanced education for our children.

Yours sincerely,

Adrian & Mikal O'Boyle

Knock,

Claremorris,

Co. Mayo

Ahmad Farooqi

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
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- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

(As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, “gender as a social construct”, pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.)

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant

No answer.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

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Aidan Cronin

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I don't see a reason to change the reference in the current current document to, "developing a sense of Irish identity" to to developing a "sense of identity as global citizens". We should be promoting a sense of national identity, particularly at a time when he have a significant number of immigrants we are welcoming into our country who we want to integrate into our country/society. Additionally, there is reference to gender & sexual identity, neither of which are defined. In light of the recent WPATH files & the Cass report in England I fee, particularly, in relation to children of this age, the focus should on a clearly defined definition of whatever terms are included.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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No answer

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10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

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Encouraging MFL, while good in theory, is not practical from a resource standpoint. Many children struggle with Irish already, and perhaps more focus should be put into engaging children in the Irish language, rather than introducing more languages to learn. While I understand a lot of children pick up languages far easier than adults (particularly at primary school age), this may stress out other children. Also, there are many non-English speaking children in classrooms at present, and this is a huge strain on educational resources. Introducing additional languages to the classroom will only exacerbate this problem.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The online toolkit is not available, so it is difficult to give an opinion on the detail of the curriculum. In theory, the outline sounds good, but without any real detail on the material itself that will be covered, how can responders give any meaningful response?

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Again, very broad-based information, without any meaningful information to review

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Im not a teacher so I don't feel I can give a fair response on this. However, I do wish to note that teachers who are not good teachers stay teaching, while in the private sector, someone who is not good at their job will be let go. It is virtually for a teacher to lose their job - why is this?

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

There are so many children with additional needs in classrooms now, which creates a strain on teaching resources, even with SNAs in the classroom. Children with above average abilities are rarely being challenged, while children who need additional resources are taking the majority of supports. We have gone so far down the road of 'equality' that our education system now significantly favours disadvantaged children. While these children obviously need (& should get) additional support, it should not be at the expense of other children in the classroom.

Alan Quin

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Inclusiveness needs to include celebrating those who hold a different view point. Marriage is extremely important as a basis for a healthy functioning family. Studies show that children perform better when brought up in a home with married parents. Please remember that 97% of marriages in this country last year were between heterosexual couples. And 70% of people rejected the latest attempt by government to undermine marriage as we the people see it. It is not for a minority in the media and government to tell us the people what we should accept. Marriage between a man and a woman cannot be sidelined in order to push for inclusivity of the noisy minority.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

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No answer

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No answer

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Schools legally must engage with parents about the sphe teaching within the school, schools must have the right to adapt recommendations on the SPHE course dependent on the views of parents and the schools own characteristic spirit. Views should be put forwards in a balanced and objective way, making clear the right of the student to form thier own views with regards to marriage etc

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Parents need to know clearly and well in advance what the school/teacher will teach on with regards sphe, they need to have access to all images, text and the verbal plan before it is introduced to children , parents then must have the right to withdraw thier children from these lessons where they see fit. Parents are the primary educators

Ali Mohamed Omar

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

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No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

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As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.

Andrew Duffy

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

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No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Thank you for providing the opportunity to respond to the draft primary curriculum. As with many parents of young children my main concern is that they are not exposed to modern ideologies that are so often presented as fact. With that in mind I am only responding to the wellbeing area. I am relieved to see that gender ideology is not explicitly included in the draft curriculum, especially given its inclusion in the new junior cycle curriculum. In fact I would like to commend the authors on correctly using the terms "woman" with regard to changes during pregnancy, and "sex" when referring to same-sex relationships. However, I am left feeling unsure about the proposal due to a lack of detail throughout, and the resulting space left for ideology to creep in. For example, page 27, "recognise examples of stereotypes and bias", while benign on the surface, could easily be interpreted by an activist teacher as enabling the teaching of critical race theory. I hope it is redundant for me to state that young children should not be told that they

are privileged by virtue of characteristics of their birth, and particularly not by an adult in a position of authority. As another example, page 48, "identity bullying" and "perceived identity" in the glossary could also be taken by an activist as licence to teach about gender identity, or indeed to support social transition of a young child at school. However you may personally feel about that, please do not dismiss the circumstances and findings of the comprehensive Cass Review from the UK. I note in particular point 64 which highlights the importance of a distinct approach for pre-pubertal children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Ania Mikula Donnelly

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No answer

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No answer

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11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Absolutely oppose to gender ideology in primary and secondary school

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Absolutely opposing gender ideology

Ann Gilanders

I have serious concerns
about your proposed curriculum changes.

I propose that you define gender and sexual identity .Also I do not consent to gender identity
being taught as fact .

Regards,
Ann Gillanders

Ann Moran

Email Submission:

Subject: Written submission towards consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

I think that the content of the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications across all five curriculum areas address the key messages of the Primary Curriculum Framework well and will support the development of the seven key competencies laid out in the redeveloped curriculum's vision for empowering children.

However, I think it is a missed opportunity not to include an explicit focus on human values education throughout this new primary curriculum. This could be very easily done and in doing so would have extensive and lasting benefits for this generation of children in Ireland and consequently for Irish society in the future.

Much research has been carried out internationally finding wide-ranging benefits for children who have had an *explicit* focus put on values education within their schooling, showing improvements academically, socially, emotionally and in their overall general wellbeing. The benefits of values education are cited too in the NCCA's commissioned review *A Systemic Literature Review to Support the Curriculum Specification Development for the area of Wellbeing* carried out by Mary Immaculate College in April 2023. In chapter summary 4.4 on p96 of this report it states "it is clear that discrete teaching in the areas of SEL, health education, Values Education, and PE supports positive pupil outcomes".

Also in my own personal experience of working with Education in Human Values (EHV) with children in primary school for the past 20+ years I see evidence of these extensive benefits over and over again.

I think that the inclusion of Education in Human Values across the new redeveloped curriculum would enhance even further the curriculum's vision and would further support its principles and key competencies. From my own experience of integrating EHV across our current primary curriculum I know that values education integrates easily and smoothly across all subject areas and throughout the daily life of a school. I will expand on this in section 2(e).

I think that the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification document presents well and it is clear that a lot of thought, collaboration and hard work has gone into its creation.

I think that the learning outcomes are sufficiently clear and concise for teachers to follow and to know what their students should be able to do after their teaching of the Wellbeing curriculum. I think that the corresponding Online Toolkit will be crucial in supporting teachers to implement this curriculum. If this curriculum specification is the 'what' to teach for the teacher, the Online Toolkit will play a large part in the 'how' to teach this curriculum area.

As I mentioned above, I have 20+ years of experience of working with children with Education in Human Values (EHV), which is a values education approach to nurturing wellbeing and developing human potential. EHV very much aligns with the principles of the Primary Curriculum Framework and with the rationale, aims and intended learning outcomes of this Wellbeing curriculum specification.

As stated in the aims for the Wellbeing Curriculum on p7 of the specification, "the Wellbeing Curriculum aims to cultivate a positive sense of self...support children to nurture healthy relationships and the ability

to work cooperatively with others...foster respect for diversity, champion active citizenship,... fairness and social responsibility and compassionate learning environments...enable children to navigate the digital world safely and responsibly...and equip children with the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and resilience necessary to make informed and responsible decisions..."

This is precisely what Education in Human Values does, and from my personal experience I can see how EHV naturally goes hand-in-hand with this Wellbeing specification. I think that including a clear reference to, or space for, Education in Human Values in the Wellbeing Curriculum specification is necessary to further enhance the fostering of wellbeing in children through this curriculum.

One way that this could be done simply, for example, would be by including an additional strand or strand unit called Education in Human Values. The explicit focus would ensure that children's values are nurtured in a targeted and meaningful way. It would also support the Primary Curriculum Framework's stated intention to "equip children with the essential knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes and **values**, which enable them to adapt to and deal with a range of situations, challenges and contexts.." This sentence is quoted repeatedly in the Primary Curriculum Framework (on p7, p8, p9, p10, p11, p19, p30), yet there is actually no reference to values education at all within the draft Wellbeing specification. Values Education is also mentioned again on p18 of the Primary Curriculum Framework within the description of the Wellbeing area when it says "Values Education encourages reflection on choices, exploration of opportunities, and commitment to responsibilities". This would lead teachers to assume that values education will be included within the Wellbeing area, but no reference to values education is made anywhere in the draft specification.

Education in Human Values is an approach to nurturing children's own innate human values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Action and Non-Violence in order to support them in reaching their highest human potential. EHV was first integrated through our current primary curriculum in Ireland in [REDACTED] in [REDACTED] on a whole school basis in 2016. Training for teachers and school leaders began from there in 2018 and since then EHV has grown and spread organically across a wide range of school types in Ireland, including mainstream, DEIS, religious, non-religious, Educate Together, a range of special schools and hospital schools. These five universal human values that we all share bring unity in diversity in our schools.

EHV uses a simple but powerful approach to the nurturing of children's own innate human values. It is based around the five main universal human values and the five teaching methodologies of story, quote, meditation, activity and song.

Each of the five main human values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Action and Non-Violence has an endless number of related sub-values (see chart below for examples).

People sometimes ask *why* these particular five values are referred to as the five 'human' values. The answer is because these five values are **universal**, **eternal** and **inherent** in all of us as human beings. Universal because all of us embody these values regardless of age, race, culture, religion, nationality, cognitive ability, physical ability, gender and so on. Eternal because these five human values have been at the heart of human beings since the beginning of time, and inherent because we are born with an innate understanding of these five human values. We don't 'learn' them, we embody them. They are our essence as humans.

The related 'sub-values' below are values that may vary in importance within different cultures or times in history or indeed different school contexts, but the overriding five main human values always remain universal, eternal and inherent in all people.

TRUTH	LOVE	PEACE	RIGHT ACTION	NON-VIOLENCE
Being Trustworthy ✓	Acceptance ✓	Calmness	Accountability	Active Citizenship ✓
Being Yourself	Caring	Concentration	Being a Good Example	Appreciation ✓
Creativity	Compassion ✓	Contentment	Consideration	Care for the Environment
Curiosity ✓	Dedication	Endurance	Courage	Compassion ✓
Determination	Empathy ✓	Equality ✓	Dependability	Concern for Others
Discrimination	Forgiveness	Equanimity	Duty	Co-operation ✓
Fairness ✓	Friendship ✓	Focus ✓	Fairness ✓	Equality
Fearlessness	Generosity	Gratitude	Good Manners	Forgiveness
Honesty	Happiness	Humility	Gratitude	Gentleness
Integrity	Joy	Limiting Desires	Healthy Eating ✓	Global Awareness
Intuition	Kindness ✓	Mindfulness	Healthy Living ✓	Harmlessness
Reflection ✓	Non-Judgement	Patience	Helpfulness	Inclusiveness ✓
Self-Awareness ✓	Patience	Positivity ✓	Honesty	Loyalty
Self-Knowledge	Purity	Reflection ✓	Perseverance ✓	National Awareness
Self-Worth ✓	Selflessness	Self-Acceptance	Resourcefulness	Recycling
Sense Control	Sharing	Self-Confidence ✓	Respect ✓	Reflection ✓
Speaking-Up ✓	Showing Love	Self-Discipline	Responsibility ✓	Respect for Diversity ✓
Spirit of Enquiry	Thoughtfulness	Self-Respect	Sacrifice	Service
Truthfulness	Tolerance	Simplicity	Self-Control	Solidarity
Unity of Thought, Word and Deed	Understanding ✓	Understanding ✓	Self-Improvement ✓	Teamwork ✓
Wisdom	Wisdom	Wellbeing	Sincerity	Tolerance

The sub-values that are ticked on this chart are values that are addressed within the learning outcomes of the current Draft Wellbeing Specification. It is great to see that a focus on these sub-values is integrated through the Wellbeing specification, and this will no doubt benefit children in supporting and enhancing their wellbeing.

However, I think that it is also really important that the actual term 'human values education' should be used, so that an *explicit* focus can be put on the nurturing of human values with children.

If we can enable children to make the connection between these sub-values and the five overarching 'source' human values of Love, Truth, Peace, Right Action and Non-Violence, the children can better understand who they are and why and how they behave. Putting an explicit focus on each of the five main human values and their related sub-values, and enabling the children to reflect weekly upon a time that they showed each value, is the key to building and reinforcing a strong, positive, sense of self in each child, which in turn enhances all aspects of their lives and wellbeing.

The online toolkit for each curriculum area will be invaluable for teachers and school leaders. An easy-to-navigate menu of resources, from which a teacher or school can choose, using their own agency, will be very useful and utilised. Some curriculum supports that teachers and school leaders would require to best implement the curriculum are explanatory videos, examples of lessons, guidance manuals, teaching resources and templates.

A simple guidance manual explaining how Education in Human Values can be integrated throughout the redeveloped curriculum could be included in these Online Toolkits. A video of EHV in action in both a mainstream and a special school setting could also be included as a useful reference for teachers to have within the Online Toolkits of each subject area, especially within the Wellbeing area.

Should the department wish to include Education in Human Values resources such as these within the Wellbeing online toolkit, we would be delighted to support by facilitating and/or coordinating filming of human values education currently in practise in a variety of school contexts in Ireland (for example in mainstream schools, special schools, and/or schools of varying religious and non-religious ethos). To date we have trained 40+ schools of different contexts in the integration of EHV into their schools, through our summer course '**Integrating Education in Human Values Into Learning and Teaching**' running through Drumcondra Education Centre. I have written a simple manual that describes how a school or teacher can go about integrating values education into their school or classroom, which the department is welcome to use in the toolkit also if this may be useful for schools.

I think the steady pace of the roll out of the Maths curriculum is working well and that the supports provided are useful and valuable. I think that a similarly paced roll out of the remainder of the subject areas, along with a sufficiently stocked Online Toolkit for each curriculum area would be welcomed by teachers and school leaders.

Ann Reid

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Promoting agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum and promoting an integrated approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

A Cultural/Heritage/ Archaeological programme aligned to Geography/History/Art class for all students for visits to outdoor cultural areas, galleries and museums. Mandatory Art, Design and Creative Options; Such subjects should feature on all second level curriculum, even for academic /high achievers, as such creative skills often translate into useful life skills later in life or during major life changing experiences. All students' welcome opportunity to create, whether its art, music, literature, craft items, digital media, food and games and such classes always provide a welcome break from the more rigorous academic areas, are enjoyable, social and achieve kinaesthetic tangible outcomes.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

I think a guidance framework, with clear pointers/ roadmap and implementation timings are vital.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Well done to Well done to all. Here my input summary. Key aspects to enhance Ensure a universal, flexible, easy to implement and achieve maximum benefit. Disability focus – integrate options for physical/hobby and personal interest classes. To ensure a broad repertoire of skills to resort to and enjoy in times of boredom, health restrictions due to disability or other life changing events. But to also to engage socially, have useful skills to contribute and enhance, in their future life. Ideas and activities; All students should be exposed to nature and outdoor activities, e.g. Walking, hiking, biking, swimming or related activities, where possible during the academic calendar, especially coming close to pressured time/s approaching exams/ assessments, or when presenting complex learning activities, to enhance energy, focus and knowledge acquisition. And overall, ensure universal benefit, especially for those who don't participate or not interest in sporting activities, or have a physical disability. Such outdoor activities in nature engenders confidence, creativity, team building and communication skills, and research suggests, students' concentration and engagement is enhanced when back in the classroom. A Cultural/Heritage/ Archaeological programme aligned to Geography/History/Art class for all students for visits to outdoor cultural areas, galleries and museums. Mandatory Art, Design and Creative Options; Such subjects should feature on all second level curriculum, even for academic /high achievers, as such creative skills often translate into useful life skills later in life or during major life changing experiences. All students' welcome opportunity to create, whether its art, music, literature, craft items, digital media, food

and games and such classes always provide a welcome break from the more rigorous academic areas, are enjoyable, social and achieve kinaesthetic tangible outcomes. Resource allocation provided and increased if necessary to ensure all students can achieve positive outcomes, are resilient, resourceful, digitally savvy, communication and interpersonal skills to welcome challenges and create positive opportunities where learning never stops. How to integrate and implement; Schools should have the freedom to select activities that incorporate universal and inclusive, (for all students) outdoor activity options, physical activities, creative curriculum – (off and online creations), hobby weeks. With extended programme options for students with disability or health restrictions to ensure all can achieve maximum benefit in accordance with their abilities/disabilities. Same emphasis should be apportioned to these softer skill/subject areas as on the academic related areas. Very often, creative and outdoor activities will boost student engagement, social interaction and encourage and motivate weaker students which has got to be a positive academic, physical and mental health outcome.

Anne and Gerard O'Flynn

Primary Curriculum

To Whom It May Concern,

My Husband and I are writing in response to the Primary Curriculum Consultation. We recently had 4 children finish in primary school and had worked inside the primary schools as volunteers in the library and also as chess mentors for over 10 years, We are highly concerned about the text and pointed targeting of children with the focus of sexual content. We would Never read this type of material expressed in this curriculum ourselves it is grossly perverse and targets children to groom them into an area of sexuality that does not foster a loving relationship. Sex is an expression of love with another person it is NOT an act of innocuous consequences. Psychologically exposing children to the idea that sex is just an act will inevitably lead to child having no value in themselves, a high increase of being exploited and will foster poor social attachments. These books perturbed us to read even as far as an adult reading them, and they are even more disturbing if purporting to represent the wishes of the majority of parents at the school and to be used for children. They are explicit,demeaning, and would never be thought of by any child we have encountered in all our time in the school system. Children in primary school do not have these thoughts nor are they looking to explore content that is expressed in this curriculum, they go against the fostering of children into a healthy adults, and promote the futility of sex and the psychological implications of this exploitative grooming is known as a crime against the child. Ireland's school system is obliged to maintain human rights under international law. Ireland is required to provide effective protection for all children from all forms of sexual exploitation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), adopted in 1989, builds on the foundation of the International Bill of Rights. The CRC affirms the status of all children as equal holders of human rights and empowered actors in the realisation of their rights. It includes explicit rights to protection from all forms of violence and exploitation, including sexual exploitation.

While the Primary Curriculum Consultation website has been active for a number of months I note at the outset that there was no outreach to parents in relation to formulating the draft Primary School curriculum. Given parent's superior Constitutional

Rights and the obligation on schools to only provide education in consultation with parents, I question whether or not this consultation process is a legally sufficient consultation and as such a legitimate exercise. Nonetheless I respond herein reserving my rights to object further on this point at a later date and this submission is not to be construed as evidence of my acceptance of the consultation process, which I believe may be defective. I am aware this lack of parental consultation was the same for the recent Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Curriculum Consultations.

My feedback is captured in the sections below,

Section 1: Summary Feedback and Alignment with Curriculum Framework Document

The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include;

Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes (generic/ unspecified).

Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes.

Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.

The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education.

Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness (not starting from where the child is at)

More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child

Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what' - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts.

The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key

Competencies is 'Be an Activist' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education.

Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity. Focus should be on the subject matter.

Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in

their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.

Provide no visibility for parents: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

The Arts Curriculum uses the Arts as a vehicle for social change (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns.

P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.'

P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity'

Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language.

Section 2(c): Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses

of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is woke indoctrination, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (Be an Activist is a Key Competency)

This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development.

The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger.

SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear. Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.

This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as empathy, respect and challenging worldviews 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate?

Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer: "...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy" The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer" , seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of what the learning objectives should be. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination.

Page 21 Global Learning Themes Looks like a "woke" playbook. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using the curriculum to push political interests rather than service the educational needs of the child.

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education

Curriculum https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fncca.ie%2Fmedia%2F2vvcabyb%2Fdraft_ste_specification_2024.pdf&data=05%7C02%7Cpccrsubmissions%40ncca.ie%7Ca7bc8f73fe9147db2f9308dc89eaf1f9%7C6f5ce1b3d968468981a6dedaf13a5b11%7C0%7C0%7C638536889387704752%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljoIMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTiI6IjEhaWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C&sdata=qrsBqZTKLSfCJ44C433h59q%2BVgANX2XJxfKBriTGwJU%3D&reserve

d=0

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM?

Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge.

The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality.

Page 16: Learning Outcomes Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1

Page 31 "Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time."

This last paragraph implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst.

Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing

Curriculum https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fncca.ie%2Fmedia%2Fcsmh55u0%2Fdraft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf&data=05%7C02%7Cpcrrsubmissions%40ncca.ie%7Ca7bc8f73fe9147db2f9308dc89eaf1f9%7C6f5ce1b3d968468981a6dedaf13a5b11%7C0%7C0%7C638536889387713478%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWljojMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzliLCJBTil6lk1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=GILdFpScBD0d%2FJJJaJEzMlv5ZMxEBHBZyt93fGbDCn hk%3D&reserved=0

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but "spiritual" is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. Physical education (PE) has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)
1. '...inclusive understanding of human sexuality' (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools.

2. '...the concept of consent within relationships' (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed.

4. The terms 'diversity' and 'inclusion' have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory.

5. 'Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is an attack on 'heteronormativity' the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society.

6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.'(p.38) - Parents rights should supersede 'Childrens rights' at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact.

7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the "Education for Social Justice" woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include:

Parental Visibility and Transparency: There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard

classroom materials

Curriculum Definition and Clarity: Totally lacking.

Concern over the reduction in the literacy allocation to half of the 2012 guidance for the youngest learners. What has changed since 2012 to drive this?

Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:

Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final Cass report into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that gender ideology should not be taught in schools. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.

The introduction of Critical Social Justice and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable.

Any cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed:

This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,

Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs

Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism.

Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches: Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and

radical woke ideologies – indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable. They embed “Critical” Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society.

Alternative approaches need to be found.

Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticised and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.

General Comments related to Schools

Parental Consultation: The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered.

Ethos: It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos.

Social Transitioning: Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools.

Parental Knowledge, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy.

The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.

-

In closing, I again question the legitimacy of this consultation process in light of the lack of parental involvement in the development of the draft curricula. As well, the emergence of the Cass Report and the English draft Statutory Guidance all suggests that a halt should be put on this consultation process and a serious rethink occurs over what and how we teach our children.

As the above submission makes clear, the proposed draft primary curricula is not fit for purpose and will worsen children's experience in primary school. The NCCA are prioritising politics over child welfare with this proposed curricula. This is not acceptable to parents and the consultation must be halted immediately.

I would appreciate a confirmation email that this submission was received.

Yours Sincerely,

Anne and Gerard Flynn

Anne Doyle

I am writing to state my opposition to the following aspects of the proposed primary curriculum

- 1) Why is gender identity being stated as fact when it is not a biological reality?
- 2) Why is the current requirement to "foster a sense of Irish identity" being dropped?
2. Why is the new 'Social and Environmental Education' course so intent on "empowering" children to take what amounts to political action?
3. Why are the roles of religion and spirituality being diluted in the draft curriculum compared with the current one?

I am also writing to complain about the consultation process which is not inclusive.

There was one in person parent focus group for the entire country, hosted by @NPCpp held on May 11th in Dublin.

Less than 20 parents attended. This meeting was not advertised on @NPCpp or @NCCAie website.

An on line focus group had 23 attendees (over 180 registered). This is not representative.

As a parent of a primary school student I am entitled to have views included as a primary educator whose rights are endorsed by the constitution. Apparently parents , including myself, who criticised gender identity elements of the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum were described as engaged in 'petition- style communication'.

It is sad that we do have to petition for our rights as parents and can only do so when invited and only learn of the invitation via social media rather than being informed by the process by email invitation via the Minister of Education.

It would be interesting to know how many of those involved in the NCCA and the process actually are parents.

The recent referendums have undermined our trust in the democratic process in this country.

"There are profound ethical, accountability and constitutional issues in light of the belated discovery of documents demonstrating that the Irish people were victims of a campaign of sustained concealment by their own government in the course of the referendums on the family and care."
<https://www.michaelmcdowell.ie/irish-people-victims-of-campaign-of-concealment-by-government.html>

Please engage with the parents of the children of this country and pause the current process.

Yours faithfully,
Anne Doyle

Anthony Carmody Snr

To whom it may concern,

As a parent of eleven young grandchildren, I wish to highlight my concerns about the new primary curriculum framework.

The framework states that it is "concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity."

Can you please define gender and sexual identity? I do not consent to gender identity being taught as fact.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Carmody Snr.

Asif ahmed

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

(As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.)

Bernard Voortman

Dear NCCA,

I wish to submit my feedback in relation to the draft NCCA Primary School Curriculum.
Please publish this opinion following closure of the consultation process.

I have reflected on three points as follows:

1. Preface:

I do object to the omission of the premise that was part of the 1999 curriculum that read as follows:

"The spiritual dimension is a fundamental aspect of individual experience, and its religious and cultural expression is an inextricable part of Irish culture and history. Religious education specifically enables the child to develop spiritual and moral values and to come to a knowledge of God."

In my opinion this should be retained as this is an important reference to the Irish culture.

2. primary curriculum framework

The curriculum states:

"[the framework] is concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity."

I am worried about the extreme vagueness of the statement "*gender, and sexual identity*" as this is not clearly defined.

I do object to the teaching of sexual and gender identity to primary school aged children. According to the CAS report, this age cohort is too young to be taught confusing gender ideologies in the absence of risk assessments. It is premature for the NCCA to allow the introduction of gender ideology in the primary curriculum until the NCCA can confirm that the findings of the Cass Review are reflected in the curriculum framework.

3. Health education - SPHE

Page 26, human development under stage 4 it states "understanding sexual intercourse".

I object this to be taught to kids at 8-10y range as this will affect their innocence which is to be protected. I have no objection for this to be taught in 6th class only when kids usually enter puberty, like in other European countries.

I hope that the NCCA will take these opinions on board.

Kind regards,

Bernard Voortman

Binu Francis

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

While teaching about the " diversity of family structures " page 19, the traditional view of marriage of man and women should be the priority

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Schools curriculum should be accessible online and should be consulted with parents.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Parents should have the right to withdraw their child from teaching against their conscientious beliefs and teaching materials should be disclosed to Parents well in advance.

Bláthnat Corboy

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The well being curriculum specification must include training children to move away from the over use of screens at home. I'm a mum of three under 5 and a primary school teacher with experience in special education. I work with my own small children daily encouraging them to move away from screens at home. I teach them explicitly ways that they can occupy themselves at home. I display ideas for them on the wall to give them a visual. I find this works very well. I believe 3 years old, if not earlier, is an optimum time to train children that 'screen time' is one of many activities they can engage in at home. This is a preventative approach I would like to see department of education/government bodies targeting parents of young children and early childhood education facilities. To prevent, rather than react to the overuse of technology. We have to teach and train them young. I am designing a visual poster/print out that I would like to present to you to peruse.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Brendan McGowan

Subject: Submission re. SESE Curriculum

A Chara,

As a parent of three primary-aged school children and someone who has worked in education in Irish museums for more than two decades, I have grave concerns about the removal of the goal of ‘developing a sense of Irish identity’ from the SESE curriculum, which encompasses history and geography. The draft document appears to greatly elevate the position of the global citizen at the expense of the Irish citizen. Who or what is pushing this agenda?

It is, of course, important to teach our children about global citizenship values and to understand, value and respect other people and cultures, but to teach Irish children (those of Irish ancestry and those born here of newcomers) to be global rather than Irish citizens undermines our national identity and sovereignty. I feel that it is far more desirable and, indeed, achievable to develop a special affinity with and loyalty to your own community and country than it is to try to connect with places you will probably never see, people you will never truly know, and cultures you will never fully understand. I feel strongly that Irish education should continue to teach the historical and cultural roots of Irish society and explicitly foster a sense of Irish identity – more than that, it is the right of our children to receive an Irish-centred education in Irish schools funded by Irish citizens. Using the Irish education system to make global citizens of Irish children harks back to the British colonial system and its attempts to make ‘happy English children’ of Irish ones, something which failed and resulted in a backlash.

I hope that I am being too cynical, sensitive, or dramatic, and that the actual history and geography content will remain strongly focused on Ireland and Irishness (the meaning of which, of course, is ever evolving) but I fear that our identity will be greatly eroded by the exclusion of the words ‘developing a sense of Irish identity’ from the curriculum.

I will be raising these issues with local and national representatives in the hope that someone will seek further clarity on the issue.

Beir bua,

Brendan McGowan

Brian Gallagher

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Primary school children have a wide variety of needs in order to reach their potential. At times they have not reached a basic level of competence in reading, writing and maths upon leaving Primary school and entering secondary. Perhaps SMART targets need to be reached before making this transition so they may have a sound level of functioning in order to reach their full potential in 2ndry.. A type of 12 Plus scenario.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Key words and terms needed to prepare for basic learning skills.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Definitely a choice of languages needed in Primary. Makes perfect sense as foundation for future learning. Many European precedents and studies on this.


Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Important due to pending changes in the second level curriculum. Life skills and habits and awareness is needed in this developing subject area.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Common sense prevails here. Basic skills in maths and numeracy needed to help with all subject areas in .

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Again, for personal and social health and development. Will have huge knock-on implications.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Snas, training in areas and retrain e.g. languages.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Yes. Basic standards need to be attained if children to progress at a reasonable level and rate.

Buliyaminu Alimi

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I am against the draft curriculum on RSE. I want the Education Minister Norma Foley to halt the introduction of sex education for young pupils

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No comment

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I want the Education Minister Norma Foley to halt the introduction of sex education for young pupils

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No comment

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No comment

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No comment

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

I don't know

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

I want the Education Minister Norma Foley to halt the introduction of sex education for young pupils. I stand for parental rights and for protecting the childhood innocence

Carmel Mc Cormack

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Stick to academic subjects in Irish Schools. Ban indoctrination, propaganda and politics from Irish Schools. Move away from the learning of subjects by rote. Encourage critical thinking, independent thought, problem solving, creativity, teach students how to carry out comprehensive socioeconomic and environmental risk benefit analyses, encourage debating, encourage students to develop their unique talents and to reach for their human potential. Teach students how to do unbiased, non skewed Statistical Analysis. Encourage entrepreneurial pursuits, finance and self sufficiency. Include practical classes such as woodwork, cooking, arts and crafts, music, drama, dance etc. so as to expose students to future practical career path routes other than academia.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8.Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

So many Eastern European countries have a common language besides the native language. That language is Russian. It is almost a universal language. The teaching of the Russian language should be encouraged especially seeing as there are so many Eastern European's now living in Ireland. Also it would be good for developing trade relations into the future between Ireland and other Eastern European countries.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9.Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers,

where relevant.

Stick to academic subjects in Irish Schools. Ban indoctrination, propaganda and politics from Irish Schools. Move away from the learning of subjects by rote. Encourage critical thinking, independent thought, problem solving, creativity, teach students how to carry out comprehensive socioeconomic and environmental risk benefit analyses, encourage debating, encourage students to develop their unique talents and to reach for their human potential. Teach students how to do unbiased, non skewed Statistical Analysis. Encourage entrepreneurial pursuits, finance and self sufficiency. Include practical classes such as woodwork, cooking, arts and crafts, music, drama, dance etc. so as to expose students to future practical career path routes other than academia.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Ban any climate change indoctrination and ban the promotion of hazardous, destructive, high natural resources dependent and energy inefficient renewable junk technologies. Bring back the teaching of Real Science and Engineering without any of the unscientific, biased, skewed global warming, climate change, CO2 reduction, NetZero propaganda!

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Stick to academic subjects in Irish Schools. Ban indoctrination, propaganda and politics from Irish Schools. Stick to teaching of practical life skills, healthy lifestyles, positive thinking, the importance of having a good support system of friends, colleagues and family.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Stop wasting valuable resources. Stick to academic subjects in Irish Schools. Ban indoctrination, propaganda and politics from Irish Schools. Move away from the learning of subjects by rote. Encourage critical thinking, independent thought, problem solving, creativity, teach students how to carry out comprehensive socioeconomic and environmental risk benefit analyses, encourage debating, encourage students to develop their unique talents and to reach for their human potential. Teach students how to

do unbiased, non skewed Statistical Analysis. Encourage entrepreneurial pursuits, finance and self sufficiency. Include practical classes such as woodwork, cooking, arts and crafts, music, drama, dance etc. so as to expose students to future practical career path routes other than academia.

13.Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

For the sake of 'diversity' and to correct negative discrimination against 'the native indigenous people of Ireland then it is important to include Irish Cultural Studies in Irish Schools (language, music, art, dance, storytelling, history etc.)

Caroline Browne

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

What does being an "active citizen" have to do with education. This is indoctrination / politics. What does "equity of opportunity" mean? Why is so much time being spent on woke rubbish topics such as well being to the detriment of core subjects such as maths?

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

how about allowing people to comment without funneling them into specific areas? looks like you are trying to hide your intentions

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

na

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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If you try teaching my child about politics such as equity and diversity, climate change, gender ideology or any other woke topics I will report you to the Teaching Council.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

If you infiltrate subjects such as History and Geography with marxist lefty politics (such as immigration being a net positive) that is unacceptable.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Wellbeing education is directly correlated with children being more fragile and mentally unbalanced.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Just leave it alone. Clearly you are only making it worse.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Ireland has changed. You saw it in the results of the recent referendum and you will see in the upcoming elections. We are not happy with the take-over of education by social justice warriors and there will be huge resistance from parents.

Caroline Casey

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Are ye going to teach children about sex , masturbation etc ..could ye teach them to grow food , really run a household on pennies if their not mentally able to hold down a job ... children slip through the net being on the spectrum of autism,need to keep a closer eye on this ... Children don't need to be thought about sex on national school

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Art is great ,teaches History as long as it's true History.. teachers should never tell a student her art was not right .. happened to my child, she was bullied in every school for one reason or another..she said it was the teachers too who bullied, we now know she is on the spectrum of being autistic...more to life than what you want to call yourself..I'm aummmmm

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Make sure Irish language is number one , don't be ashamed of it ..leaning other languages is great of course..I take it modern languages are us leaning polish , etc , I see the children in the streets getting along fine

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I can't read these drafts I'm too far gone addicted to my phone no attention span ...I hear they are taking the phones off children in secondary schools...I was surprised that they were allowed to have them in classes in the first place, these children are addicted to screen time .. be gentañ and mindful taking the away Cold Turkey .. because this is your doing they shouldn't have been allowed in the first place

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Science is great not many lies can be told with practical evidence...like a hand blower that all toilets have more grems than a door handle!. Copper and brass handles good ..as I said I don't know if anyone is reading this , my attention span download s gone ,being a new granddaughter I'm quiet now and tired my biggest concern is the sex education of our children..

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I hope this is good ..a lot of smiling people out there me being one of them ...I don't have an onze of confidence for the work place, health is bad ,back ache ,brittle bones as they used to call it ... because my body didn't retain neutriants were not thought that in schools,it's not drumed into us how hughy important it is ..all minerals not just calcium ...old remedies like red clover can help , Celtic salt etc these things need to be thought in schools, properly about the menopause .. periods if ye can teach them about sex this can be thought too ..Art is very important to free the mind relax ..music

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

I was a teachers assistant back in the day in a national school.. I'll never forget on my first days in the playground a teacher pointing out to me all the trouble makers in her class ...I though that was so uncool , unprofessional that if this is how teachers think they shouldn't be teaching...that was my experience,they weren't trouble makers in my classes because I was one of them ...if this is all new for the students the teachers' leaders will have to change too ...I know things have changed..changing very TOO Fast ..it's a challenge to keep the phone away from the children... Remember they are Addicted! Keep sex away from national school or even 15 year old ..we have seen the books I AM GAY...most children growing up theses days probably have gay friends..etc drag queens, transgender friends,they don't care ..if it's always made

an issue like it will be with ye ..then they will always be thought of as different,. Have ye Ever Watched Twelve Monkeys ...ye might be past of the problem..it's too soon.. CHILDREN don't care what their friends are they sort it out ...I don't know maybe I'm being naive...I first hand second hand know what it's like to be bullied ... Alcoholism and drug use too another topic I hope is being addressed fully, it's concerns all Humans

13.Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Think I said enough up there , I really hope some reads this ...see I have no Fate in the system that's moving too fast since the World as we know it Died when the virus hit ...our Country is changing changing fast ,with refugees, immigration etc housing crisis UNFAIRness ..giving out tents for a couple of weeks then burning them ... invitation to come here with nothing...moving from living on England for years to here ..I've seen interviews.. Government needs to get a grip on this huge crisis... After COVID the world changing in more ways than one ...now sexualization of the Children

Caroline Moore

Subject: DCU Report on the Curriculum

Review of the DCU Report 1 & 2 Documents:

Dear NCCA,

It is with great concern that I have reviewed the Dublin City University Report 1 & 2 documents listed as underpinning the five Draft Curricula documents currently under consultation. These Reports have further increase my concerns about the following aspects of the Draft Curricula documents. In particular, I am concerned about:

- lack of clarity in content: vague unclear Learning Outcomes, undefined & underdeveloped. What will we actually be teaching?
- impact of emphasis on HOW to learn over WHAT to Learn: given that we are teaching Primary Children, there is need for basic knowledge input and exploration (the WHAT of learning) over HOW to learn and think.
- What is to prevent HOW we teach and influence children to learn going a step further into telling children HOW/ WHAT to think (ie indoctrination)? Young children are innocent, vulnerable and trusting. Teachers are in a position of power. We have a responsibility to be ethical and careful in what we teach and how we teach it, aware that what we express to children influences and impacts them. Will there be room in this type of HOW teaching for children to develop their own ideas? To hold & express the ideas held by their parents if not in accord with the majority/ their teacher/ their peers/ current ideologies?
- emphasis on integration over discrete subject knowledge dilutes subject specific knowledge (1999 Curriculum emphasised that integration must be valuable and meet the curriculum objectives of both subjects, not be integration for integration's sake – in contradiction, this Draft Curriculum espouses Integration across disciplines).
- potential for indoctrination: Page 16: "Haas and Laughlin (1999, p. 305) ruefully remarked that some instances of integration are "better described as invasion of social studies than integration with social studies." This evident throughout this curriculum and the developmental documents.
- Pedagogy: are Critical Pedagogy, Critical Constructivism, Social Justice Education valid pedagogical approaches to prioritise in Irish Primary Education? Where is the justification for this? No critique has been provided of flaws in the existing pedagogies most prominent in Irish Education. Are there studies to show the efficacy of these pedagogies? Is there evidence that such pedagogies are relevant/ appropriate in an Irish context? Is there demonstrable evidence of the success of these approaches in supporting learning and development of children? How successful are these approaches in promoting academic achievement?

· From my reading of the research provided in the DCU reports foundational to the Draft Curricula, it does not evidence support for a switch to Critical Pedagogies. Indeed the OECD review of the Scottish Curriculum referenced brings up many questions which have not been repaired in the Irish Draft Curriculum, and which should be of concern to teachers due to their potential to increase our workload and complexity of planning.

I will now examine the evidence provided in the two DCU Reports which were used as foundational documents to support the changes to the Curriculum as seen in these Draft Curricula. (For your convenience, I have copied quotes into this document).

Firstly, I must express concern that these foundational Reports were instigated after the Draft Curricula were in the process of development (Report 1, begun July 2022, published January 2023; Report 2, begun February 2023, published June 2023). How then could these reports be used to inform the Curriculum drafting process which began Pre-Covid? This is very concerning.

Review of DCU REPORT 1 (2023): Conceptualising Curriculum Integration: A Synthesis of Theory, Research and Practice <https://ncca.ie/media/6370/conceptualising-curriculum-integration.pdf>, (hereafter referred to as DCU Report 1).

RE: Integration and the Draft Curriculum’s emphasis on HOW to learn over WHAT to learn:

DCU research said the following, which highlights the importance of Domain specific knowledge and the challenges of effectively planning/ teaching in an integrated way, and the impact on training teacher:

P16 “It should be noted that curriculum integration is not without its detractors. Critics of integrated curriculum advance their argument on a number of fronts, including the ambiguity of what is meant by the term; the high levels of teacher knowledge and planning needed for its implementation; the challenge of assessment; its wide-ranging implications for teacher education; its potential disconnect with the disciplines that help us to learn and think about the world; and the smaller body of research evidence on integrated approaches when compared to disciplinary approaches (Badley, 2009) ”

and

“Integrated approaches to curriculum are sometimes lauded as an ideal vehicle for promoting “21st century skills” (Drake & Reid, 2020). However, others caution that this runs contrary to evidence pointing to the need for domain-specific knowledge for such

skills e.g. critical thinking, problem-solving (Willingham, 2019). Despite the popularity of the term 'integration' in educational circles, it is a curricular concept that requires testing and careful thought"

This DCU Report 1 document points out several further areas of concern regarding Integration:

Page 22: "Referred to as the 'knowledge turn', scholars have argued that curricula focusing excessively on social-constructivist underpinnings and local knowledge risk depriving children of the concepts associated with centuries of scholarly advancement in the disciplines"

Page 22: "Young and Muller distinguish between powerful knowledge and 'knowledge of the powerful' (i.e. fixed, traditional academic disciplines used primarily to reproduce social inequality through stratified school structures) and 'over-socialised' knowledge (i.e. knowledge drawn primarily from the everyday knowledge of learners, with blurred or unclear disciplinary boundaries). "

Page 28: (Beane, 1997) argues that 'integration is only integration if it is substantially grounded in learners' concerns and preferences. Curriculum integration is, in his view (emphasis added): ...concerned with enhancing the possibilities for personal and social integration through the organization of curriculum around significant problems and issues, collaboratively identified by educators and young people, without regard for subject-area boundaries (p. xi)

Despite identifying these concerns, the 5 Draft Curricula (2024) pursue Integration and a Curriculum underpinned by 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' (which are in themselves integrating 'pillars'), yet the actual content (the 'filling' or Learning Outcomes) are vague/ generic/ not clearly defined. Furthermore, the Progression Continua (which could flesh out an understanding of the content and Learning Outcomes), have not yet been developed to give any clarity. There is therefore no 'meat' in the sandwich, or in the terms of this curriculum, what passes for meat is synthetically created or a vegan imitation of curriculum content lacking substance. As a result, and in cognisance of the 3 quotes above;

- emphasis on integration in the Draft Curriculum could lead to dilution of subject discipline/ knowledge/ understanding
- lack of clarity in Draft Curriculum Learning Outcomes will lead to 'blurred or unclear disciplinary boundaries'
- the shift to 'personal and social integration' could further undermine subject-area boundaries

I also challenge the promotion of ‘*learner agency*’ (Manyukhina & Wyse, 2019) and how much “...we should respect children’s judgement and competence when it comes to shaping their own education (Ruscoe et al., 2018).” Page 32/33.

These terms have become educational buzzwords, and have been tried and tested in other countries, only to see a reversion to more traditional education styles. I spoke at length recently to two experienced New Zealand teachers, who reported that NZ has resumed a focus on the ‘3 Rs’ following modern approaches in the last decade which led to NZ’s standards plummeting according to OECD tables. It is also widely reported in the media how American Education systems are consistently failing, yet we are following these misguided approaches in the research referenced in the DCU reports!

The Scottish Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) was reviewed in the DCU report, and places great emphasis on a holistic approach (with 4, not 7 areas as Key Competencies). Scotland invited the OECD (2021) to review their CfE Curriculum, which led to the following experiences and implications of high levels of integration coming to light: (DCU, pp 61/62):

- *“Conceptual clarity on what curriculum integration means is crucial; in the absence of this clarity, varying (and competing) manifestations of integration may occur within and between schools, if at all (Harvie, 2018).*
- *Recent moves to further exemplify interdisciplinary learning have been spurred by a lack of implementation in the first decade of the CfE. This suggests that clear exemplars of curriculum integration in practice should be provided from early on in the roll-out of a curriculum; the complexity of curriculum integration is such that it requires high levels of support and demonstration (Humes, 2013; Thorburn, 2017)...*
- *The role of knowledge and skills, as represented in discrete subjects or in more integrated learning, needs to be well-balanced and explicitly elucidated; a perceived over-focus on skills over knowledge is now the focus of review in the Scottish context (OECD, 2021)*
- *Curriculum integration must be considered within the broader curricular and policy context in which it is emphasised. The proliferation of policy documentation in Scotland, noted in the OECD (2021) review, has created a complex landscape of paperwork through which teachers must sift. Arguably, a similar level of policy documentation and initiatives are also present in Irish schools. A vision for an integrated curriculum must bear this context in mind, including, in particular, its implications for teacher agency.*

- *The Scottish case highlights the importance of having a clear vision (and practical support) for how integrated learning will be assessed; in its absence, it is less likely to be valued and practised.* ”

The points above were reported by DCU (pp 61/62); indeed the DCU Report commented that ‘*limited guidance is provided in the curricular documentation for exactly how interdisciplinary learning should happen*’ . Yet despite awareness of this gap in Scottish Education, no attempt has been made in the Draft Irish Curriculum to address this concern or the above concerns about the challenges and implications of Integration. Indeed, bearing in mind that the Scottish CfE contained Learning Outcomes in clear, child-friendly language, and given the high-level unspecified Learning Outcomes of the Irish Draft Curriculum, any effort to address the Scottish concerns and implications has been further compounded through the lack of clarity, unelaborated content and transparency in the Curriculum content.

Furthermore, it is shocking that 58% of the studies chosen for systematic review were from the US (p68), given the low standards of educational attainment in American schools. Ireland is currently near the top of the PISA and PERLS assessments of pupil attainment in education, that despite having higher class sizes and consistently chronic underfunding compared to European counterparts. The question must then be asked “If it is not broken, why fix it?”. What is the purpose of the proposed changes, since we are already achieving some of the highest standards in Europe, and Irish students are well received in Universities internationally?

Irish Teachers have embedded many shifts in education since the turn of the century, not least the successful implementation of the 1999 Curriculum, shifting DE policies on SDP, embedding ICT and using new technologies, all while achieving internationally recognised high standards of Literacy and Numeracy; and all this despite austerity measures, reduced funding of school leadership and having some of the largest class sizes in Europe. We have already shifted from more teacher centric teaching, yet DCU itself admits that “*Teachers often reported feeling unsure how to manage this fundamental shift away from teacher-led to learner-led instruction and whether such a shift is always valuable ...*” p87. So before we make dramatic changes to what is already working, let’ s stop and ask Is it in the interests of our students? of Teachers? Of our Education system? Of our Country? I have seen nothing in the Draft Curriculum to inspire or provide hope of better outcomes. I am amazed that the INTO seems so dispassionate on this topic, and that prior to our seeing/ reviewing the Draft Curriculum, we were encouraged to sign up to such monumental changes in how we will work for the next two? decades to achieve the latest Pay Deal. There has

been little to no discussion of the Curriculum by the INTO, and an Emergency Motion at Congress to get the Curriculum on the Congress Agenda was rejected as ‘not urgent enough’ . This is what we will be teaching, planning, assessing for many years to come! How is that not important?

"Curriculum integration has also been characterised as a value-based, democratic activity which centres teaching on children's concerns rather than academic disciplines or curriculum handbooks..." (DCU, p103) - I don't believe this DCU document has made a strong enough case for the levels of and types of Integration promoted in the Draft Curriculum. Indeed, by their own research, they have highlighted:

- how integration can blur boundaries
- the importance of clarity and the challenge in developing a clear vision
- the need for high standards of teacher training and support
- The value of subject specific knowledge and avoiding overreliance on skills
- The complexity concurrent with high levels of integration and how to manage this
- The impact on teacher agency
- The challenges discovered in review of the Scottish CfE have not been resolved in the Irish Draft Curriculum
- An emphasis on American research, which is inappropriate in an Irish education setting, given our superior educational outcomes

Review of DCU REPORT 2: Weaving the Literature on Integration, Pedagogy and Assessment: Insights for Curriculum and Classrooms

<https://ncca.ie/media/6371/weaving-the-literature-on-integration-pedagogy-and-assessment.pdf>

"Curriculum integration is popular in policy and practice. Despite this, it is less commonly addressed in empirical research." (DCU2, p7)

"Individual studies on integration tend to be of relatively poor quality but signal the potential benefits for the affective dimensions of learning such as motivation, engagement and enjoyment... To summarise,

the previous studies appeared to find some evidence to demonstrate that curriculum integration can support learning. ” (DCU, p22)

“Conclusion... In deciding the degree to which integration is prioritised, curriculum design must balance the available evidence with wider priorities and values.” (DCU2, p26)

Are these statements really indicative of strong enough evidence to throw out the 1999 Curriculum which has resulted in such high PISA and PERLS standards for Irish students?

Pedagogy: are Critical Pedagogy, Critical Constructivism, Social Justice Education valid pedagogical approaches to prioritise in Irish Primary Education?

This review omits foundational child-based pedagogies which have underpinned Irish Education for decades - Cognitive Constructivism (Piaget) and Social Constructivism (Vygotsky) (and to a lesser extent Behaviorism) in favour of Critical Constructivism (Freire), where all learning and meaning is constructed through a lense of oppressed (victim)/ oppressor. So this draft curriculum is shifting pedagogy from tried and trusted sound principles based in child development to a political and ideological focus

“Critical pedagogy has a firm foundation in the values of social justice and equality and, in recognising that education is not neutral, encourages the questioning of norms and received wisdom (Kincheloe, 2008). Critical approaches challenge power dynamics, namely who is (and is not) represented, who is foregrounded (or marginalised) which ideas are given prominence (or ignored), and so on. Critical pedagogy has been significantly influenced by Freire (1970)... ” (DCU2, p28)

“Considered through the lens of a social justice orientation, global citizenship also requires that issues relating to sustainability (e.g. biodiversity loss, climate breakdown) are given clear attention (Mallon, 2021). Social justice education, is, itself, underpinned by three key principles (Ayers et al., 2009): equity, including equal access to high-quality education and equitable outcomes; activism, involving the development of children’s agency to make a difference to the world and; social literacy, including the development of deep understanding of issues of inequity, such as racism, and inter-relatedness” (DCU2, p39)

“Critical perspectives on pedagogy are grounded in the belief that children must be active agents who challenge received knowledge and act upon the world (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 2011); this is built upon in the literature on global citizenship education and related topics. Pedagogy that supports and sustains diversity is grounded in valuing and building on children’s out-of-school culture and experiences (Gay, 2013; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Paris, 2012), a practice that is seen to support learner agency. Thus, from a

conceptual perspective, foregrounding learner agency is in keeping with contemporary pedagogical thinking." (DCU2, p64)

Critical Constructivism underpins the new Draft Curriculum in many ways as seen in the above quotes, and it has been assumed as fundamental to this curriculum review. Critical Constructivism denies objective reality or foundational knowledge since all learning is constructed and is based on understandings of power dynamics and their influence on learning.

Where is the evidence that such Marxist ideas are relevant in an Irish context? This ideology was developed by Freire in the 1950s and 60s in the context of education in impoverished communities in Brazil, which was not a democratic country at that time, bearing in mind Freire's political beliefs in communism. Is it appropriate or relevant to Irish Education today? It is debatable whether this is an 'evidence-informed' review.

Critical Constructivist Pedagogy is seen throughout each of the Draft Curricula in the prioritisation of Social Justice issues and using Inclusion and Equality as code for oppressed/oppressor dynamics. It also underpins the Cineáltas Anti-Bullying Programme. The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is 'Be an Activist' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is indoctrination, not education.

The ideas of Freire and Kincheloe were informed by the work of Critical Theorists such as Herbert Marcuse, who said in 'Repressive Tolerance' (1965) that "*Liberating tolerance, then, would mean intolerance against movements from the Right and toleration of movements from the Left.*" This is a clearly Marxist ideology, which is at odds with Western democratic values, (espoused in the DCU reports as 'Irish values' (DCU1, p103)), and is a denial of the rights of some in society ('the Right') to promote the voices of others ('the Left'). We are seeing this Intolerance being enacted in Irish & Western society more broadly today, all in the name of Equality and Inclusion, while concurrently denying the rights of others to question these assumptions or to be heard & respected as equally valuable.

The ideologies of Kincheloe and Giroux are referenced throughout the two DCU reports. One must ask regarding Kincheloe's 2008 'Critical Pedagogy':

How useful is it for primary school children to be "perpetually searching for new and interconnected ways of understanding power and oppression and the ways they shape everyday life and human experience." (p. 49)

or to consider Western Countries as “*problematically democratic and free*” (p. 48).

Surely this in opposition to the values we hold for Irish Primary Education, in promoting democracy and autonomy, values also supposedly espoused by this Draft Curriculum? While it is arguably of benefit to have learning informed by Critical Theory at third level, such concepts seem wildly inappropriate and incongruous with primary level education. This is going beyond the ‘How’ of learning, beyond basic methodologies, to a form of indoctrination in ‘How to think’ about ‘How to learn’ before any learning has taken. Questions are being posed before any content is present.

Is this draft Curriculum age appropriate? Will it aid or cause Mental Health concerns?

How helpful is it for primary children to perceive the world through Critical Constructivist lens central to Freire’s ‘Pedagogy of the Oppressed (1968) where we should encourage children to constantly examine and reflect on their actions sounds exhausting and interminable.

DCU Report 1 (p38) “*Critical pedagogy has been significantly influenced by Freire (1970), ... he argued that “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other”* (p. 72). ”

Freire’s ‘Conscientisation’ involves examining dichotomies of victim/ oppressor in various forms, and exploring how the person themselves may be part of the problem. This could be very distressing for young people and make them feel they are constantly failing to achieve some elusive higher standard which will always be just out of reach, since this is an ongoing process. Creating such instability poses a potential risk to mental health which has not been addressed or assessed.

It is highly questionable whether the political themes included in this curriculum as part of the Key Competency ‘I am an activist’ are age appropriate (Climate Crisis, Critical Race Theory and potentially Queer Theory via SPHE & Cineáltas) being introduced at Stages 1 and 2 (5-8 and 9 - 12 year olds). Indeed the [Irish Times](#) (2/6/23) reported “*All research, all studies, all data tells us that young people are struggling to cope more with day-to-day struggles. They’ re looking at what’ s going on around them. They’ re looking at everything from a macro level: global conflict, climate change, there’ s a famine there,*” Considering increasing distress levels in young people, the dearth of Mental Health supports available, and recent revelations of how Gender Transition has been misshandled by the Tavistock Clinic (as released in the April 2024 ‘Cass Report’), it is reckless to consider placing greater

emphasis on matters which may lead to further degradation in mental health. Where is the evidence that these proposed changes could help young people and support positive mental health? When has creating instability through asking children to constantly examine their identity, and question it and their privilege ever aided mental health outcomes?

Worryingly, at no stage does the discussion on pedagogy discuss age appropriateness and how content should be appropriate for stages of Child Development. Outcomes in the Draft Curricula show a lack of age appropriateness and a lack of clarity between Educational/ Age Stages. There is also excessive focus in the SEE curriculum on global concerns over local tangible concerns of the child. I saw no evidence of this Curriculum starting where the child is at. Indeed, there is a strong shift in emphasis away from not just local, but also from National History and Geography to Global concerns. Local and National Identity are part of a child's heritage, culture and social structure, and therefore inherently important. Ireland is famous worldwide for its history, culture and heritage, for its beautiful countryside, its national sports. Surely these are things to be proud of and to teach our students? In an increasingly multicultural globally influenced world, it is important to celebrate what is unique about living in this part of the world. There is a disconnect here between focus on individualism in SPHE (celebrating Personal Identity), yet deferring to Global Multicultural Identity in our History and Geography Curriculum and neglecting family/ community/ local & national identity as part of who we are, whether Irish or Newcomer.

There is also an overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity, and these would seem to be prioritised over subject matter throughout the five Drafts. Empathy is emphasised as a Learning Outcome and competency for STEM - subject areas which require objectivity.

The appropriateness of Critical Constructivist pedagogies for an Irish context has not been evaluated, and could lead to importing problematic ideologies from other countries such as Critical Race Theory. It is highly inappropriate to be teaching ideas of 'white privilege' and 'decolonisation' in a country which never colonised other countries and whose people were themselves subject to oppression through colonisation. In no way is it therefore appropriate to bring in American concepts of guilt over how people are treated because of race into the Irish context.

Whether in the context of "Equity" or creating time for the "social and political agenda", this will necessitate a reduction in time spent on academic content, and it is questionable whether the shift in emphasis is evidenced as valuable for children's learning and development. This could therefore lead to a degradation of education standards which is not acceptable. As primary teachers, we have an obligation to protect childhood innocence and mental health, and I am

seriously concerned that this Draft Curriculum, underpinned as it is by Critical (Marxist) Constructivism, is not in alignment with such protection.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) are referenced repeatedly throughout the Draft Curricula and in the Report Documents. I am wondering where is the evidence of a lack of appreciation and understanding of DEI in Irish schools? Irish teachers have worked hard to make their classrooms safe tolerant spaces. Many teachers have adapted admirably to dramatic changes in the racial/ ethnic makeup of our classrooms in some areas in the last 2 years. The excessive focus on empathy and multiperspectivity in these Draft Curricula is therefore questionable. These terms have become buzzwords thrown about to justify all sorts of changes in society, and I fear that sometimes they are used as inversions of their real meaning - that instead of creating equality, we will begin to focus more on how, as Orwell put it in *Animal Farm*, some are 'more equal than others', and are given special privilege by dint of their difference - instead highlighting difference as a way to get privilege over the majority. In some cases, this can place people on pedestals to protect them, which can conversely cause 'victim/ oppressor' dynamic.

In conclusion, I call into question the validity of the approaches taken in the five Draft Curricula, given the flaws in the underpinning principles as outlined in the two DCU Reports evaluated above. In particular, the emphasis on Integration, Critical Constructivist Pedagogy and Social Justice Education have not been evidenced as valid with no justification given for their use, not= any consideration of their relevance in an Irish context:

- Evidence has not been provided in the two DCU Reports to justify a move away from traditional pedagogies already embedded in Irish education, or from an approach of WHAT children learn to HOW they learn.
- No research has been provided evidencing successful or improved educational outcomes for children using the methodologies and pedagogies proposed. Furthermore, the DCU Reports quoted research which in many cases undermines the case for the changes being proposed in these Draft Curricula.
- Focusing on Injustice and teaching through a lens of activism encourages a victim v oppressor mindset. This can lead to people adopting victim mentalities and emphasising their intersectionality.
- We are experiencing a Mental Health Crisis already in this country. No evidence has been provided for the safety of Critical Constructivist approaches. Indeed, it is possible that exposure to such challenging ideas, such as questioning one's identity and privilege, one's role in climate change etc, could increase psychological burdens for young people, by exposing them to big social problems over which they have no agency or control.
- These Draft Curricula seems more focused on social engineering than on education. This then becomes indoctrination into not just HOW to Learn, but HOW & WHAT to THINK - 'right thinking' according to the leading group of the day, ignoring the values and beliefs of many in society to justify its ends.

- I wonder how such changes can be implemented effectively in a system with some of the largest classes sizes in Europe, yet the lowest funding. Will we receive proper face to face training? Or the watered-down, devolved version we saw during the PLC? If teachers are unsure what they are supposed to do, and there is a lack of clarity, then they are likely to continue to do what they know works and defect back to the 1999 Curriculum, which on the whole, may be the solution to all my concerns!

Separate to the flimsy evidence in the Report, I am concerned that these Curricula are not fit for purpose:

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- Lack of clarity in content and Learning Outcomes, with more emphasis on Key Competencies
- than on actual educational content. (again an emphasis on social engineering)
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- The Learning Outcomes are vague, generic and unspecified, showing little or no progression
- from Stage to Stage - eg, in Art, the only difference in the first LO is the addition of one verb for each Stage.
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- These LOs are not age appropriate, and could not be presented to children with any expectation
- of them understanding what the intention of a lesson is.
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- This lack of clarity could mean very diverse applications of the Curriculum across the
- country and different educational settings, which could result in uneven educational experiences and standards from school to school.
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- Lack of clarity means lack of visibility for parents in what their children are being
- taught. Parents have a right to know what children will be taught as the primary educators.
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- The application of critical constructivist pedagogy has been challenging in other jurisdictions,
- especially when it comes to planning, which will place a burden on teachers.
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- Given the poor training provided for the Primary Language Curriculum and the mixed messages received, (eg the removal of Progression Continua from the curriculum manuals leading many to believe we no longer need to use these, yet they are still part of the PLC), it is hard to have faith that what will be forthcoming will be any clearer with the rest of this Curriculum roll out.
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- There is an absence of any mention of spiritual development or of accommodating the ethos of schools. This curriculum is a shift to the secular, and neglects the value of spiritual experience (including non-religious spiritual experiences such as awe & wonder)
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- How will we maintain the standards we have worked hard to achieve in PISA and PERLS if we shift to a HOW/ skills focused curriculum? How will/ can this be assessed?
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In conclusion, I have many concerns about the thrust and content of these proposed curricular changes. We as teachers hold a valued and respected role in society – I recently heard John Boyle quote a figure of I think it was 93% trust in Primary teachers. In my opinion, to undertake to comply with these Draft Curricula (and the Cineáltas Anti-Bullying plan) will erode that trust and see Primary teachers pitted against parents, who will see these changes as teachers overstepping the boundaries between school and home.

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Moore

Subject: curriculum concerns

NCCA DRAFT CURRICULUM REVIEW

Dear NCCA,

I am very concerned by what I see in the proposed Draft Curricula. They would seem to undermine the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum. The 1999 Curriculum had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The above 'Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications' are debatable considering the following points, as each of the 5 Draft Curricula show:

- **Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes** (generic/ unspecified) – the intent of each outcome is not clear from the language used;
- **Unclear, underdeveloped progression** across Learning Outcomes (little differentiation between 'Stages' (age groups) and across skills development); many learning outcomes specified for Stage 1 (Junior & Senior Infants) could be as easily applied in Stage 4 (5th and 6th classes). Many LOs are delineated by simply adding a verb for progression to the next stage (eg Arts Curriculum LOs). Why are these learning outcomes not child centred and using language understandable by a child at that Stage?
- **Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices** and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.
- **The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes** could lose the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have certain minimum standards in each subject for a balanced provision of education across schools (whether urban/ rural, large/ small, mostly Irish/ newcomer, advantaged/ disadvantaged status) across the country. Therefore, one must ask:
 - How will schools be able to ensure and maintain standards across the curriculum across the country?
 - How will schools be able to Assess unclear Outcomes?
- **The 'spiral' nature of the 1999 curriculum seems to have been lost** (where children would revisit a concept again later in their school lives at a greater level of challenge to develop and deepen understanding)
- **Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness** (not starting from where the child is at)

- **More focused on global concerns** than local tangible concerns of the child
- **Shift in focus to ‘how’ children learn over ‘what’** - could lead to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts. This is not appropriate or inclusive for all learners.
- **The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses** e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is **‘Be an Activist’** (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes, promoting particular positions and opinions): this follows Queer Theory and Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and foreign concepts of Race (such as ‘white privilege’). These approaches could trigger guilt, fear, anger, and existential anxiety, leading to a general decline in mental health and should not be used in the Curricula. Such strong political positions do not belong in education and are unfair to children who may come from families with differing values and political positions. This is not Inclusive.
- **Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity** could be challenging for children and not always age appropriate. If a Subject is being taught through a lens (e.g. of empathy/ activism/ of challenging stereotypes), where is learning for learning’s sake? The focus should be on the subject matter.
- **The deprecation of History as a subject at both Primary and Secondary level is a major concern.** A foundational knowledge of both the history of Ireland, the history of Europe and the World as a whole has been a basic ingredient of any Irish child’s education. Understanding the past helps guide decisions for the future and helps act as a warning against repeating errors and atrocities from the past. It also helps put current conflicts into context. We have a concern that the NCCA are succumbing to the current fashionable trend of curriculum “de-colonisation”, something that appears to be rampant in Western culture right now, driven by radical Post Colonial Theory with it’s destructive political motivations.

Arts Education Curriculum

- 1.
- 2.
3. Most concerning in the Arts Curriculum, is the highjacking of the Arts as a vehicle for
4. social change (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. Furthermore, the level of integration envisaged, means children do not get to enjoy and
5. experience the Arts as valuable in their own right.

6.

P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' *'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.'*

P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.' Is this an appropriate goal of an Arts Curriculum? This is using the Arts with an ulterior motive, which is not appropriate. It is in conflict with developing personal meaningful responses to the Arts?

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children:

P4&5 Rationale: very intellectual intentions around 'appreciation' and 'enhanced aesthetic and cultural understanding and begin cultivating their unique and collective ... identities' – is this age-appropriate? This type of teaching is not inclusive as it is not accessible for all children. There is over emphasis on Identity over Experiences and Skills development.

p6 Aims of Artistic Engagement, Aesthetic Appreciation, Cultural and Contextual Awareness – again these Aims are very high-level, intellectual concepts with little emphasis on skills development or enjoyment.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes. Eg Stage outcome could as easily be applied to Stage 1 pupils and vice versa. In some cases, all that changes is the addition of 1 verb for each Stage!

Language Curriculum

Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity'

Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This detracts from the value of learning the language. Does this suggest an agenda of teaching a foreign language as integration of newcomer migrants over preparing children for their futures? Will this realistically be feasible? Or will it build social cohesion to teach the language of newcomers,

rather than help them learn the language of the majority? What happens where there are multiple languages in a classroom? Is this realistic? Surely learning a language should be being able to communicate, as a priority over Inclusion ideologies?

Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

- I consider this SEE Curriculum to have a particularly indoctrinating agenda: how to be a good Global citizen, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (*Be an Activist* is a *Key Competency*). There is a Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI))
- This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. Ireland has historically had strong identities around parish/ county/ province/ nation. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. These are strengths of the country which should be embraced, not diluted or diminished.
- The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could all be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. All Children have a right to be proud of where they come from, including Irish born children.
- SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear around the dangers of the modern global world (war, famine, natural disasters...) Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.
- This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as *empathy*, *respect* and *challenging worldviews* 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate? Is this an appropriate burden to place on young people? Could Big questions like these lead to increased anxiety and disempowerment? What about learning History and Geography for the benefit and enjoyment of the subjects themselves without an agenda of moulding vulnerable young minds and hearts?

Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? An important aspect of STEM subjects is about problem solving and objectivity being prioritised over subjectivity.

The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality.

Wellbeing Curriculum Specification

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but "spiritual" is mentioned only 3 times (2 of those in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development.

Physical education (PE) has been co-opted to include more SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education)

content than “Physical” content in the learning outcomes. (e.g. at Stage 3 & 4: p20 PE Movement Education gets only 1 page, p21-23 show SPHE aspects of PE Emotional and Relational PE, Health Education PE, Community and Belonging PE. This is paying lip service to PE as a subject and introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the *PE Activity Areas* (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)

- ‘...**inclusive**
- **understanding of human sexuality’** (p.4) – what does
- **‘inclusive sexuality’**
- mean – gay or lesbian, non-binary, transgender etc? ‘Inclusive’ human sexuality is quite inappropriate for Primary School children and should not be included. The teaching of radical Gender Identity theory – that a child could become ‘a
- *boy or a girl, neither or both’* - as fact should be removed from the Primary
- curriculum in view of the recent findings of the **Cass report**
- into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria: **that gender**
- **identity ideology should not be taught in schools.** Also in view of the recent
- direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools.
-
-
-
- ‘...**the**
- **concept of consent within relationships’** (p.5) –
- Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is most unsuitable
- for Primary School children and should be removed.
-
-
-
- *‘Provide children with a balanced, inclusive,*
- **age and developmentally appropriate understanding**
- **of human development and sexuality ...’**(p.7)
- - in view of the references in NCCA and HSE documents in the school curriculum
- to the
- *WHO Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe*
- which indicate a highly sexualised approach to children (eg ‘0-4

- *years of age – teach masturbation; 9-12 years of age - teach first sexual encounter*),
- the age-appropriateness for sexuality and relationship education needs to be specified. It's important to safeguard children and their innocence.
-
-
-
- *“Foster*
- ***respect for***
- ***diversity***,
- *championing **active citizenship, human rights,***
- *fairness, and social responsibility to create*
- ***inclusive***
- *and compassionate learning environments’ (p.7) -*
- Schools should not be used to transform children into social activists, and
- **‘diversity’**
- and **‘inclusive’**
- are established terms for a pro-LGBTQ emphasis in SPHE material, which has led to an excessive emphasis on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- **Identity politics**
- has no place in the classroom - putting labels on children and notions of systemic racism, white privilege, oppression and intersectionality.
-
-
-
- *‘Recognise examples of*
- ***stereotypes***
- *(p.27)...*
- *explore ways family members can promote **gender***
- ***equality through roles and responsibilities’.***
- (p.28). ‘Stereotypes’ in this context is **an attack on ‘heteronormativity’**
- the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. This is confusing for young children and should not be depicted in the Primary School Curriculum.
-
-
-
- **Relational pedagogy -**

- 'children's
- **right to make decisions that impact their lives,**
- **empowering them to share their voice, engage**
- **in democratic practices.'**(p.38)
- **- Parents rights**
- should supersede 'Childrens
- *rights'* at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions
- that could have a life-long impact – e.g. transitioning to a different gender – and children should not be indoctrinated to become social activists.
-
-
-
- **'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators**
- **can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with**
- **teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45)** - External facilitators in the
- area of sexuality education who are pushing an agenda – e.g. BelongTo, TENI re LGBTQ content – should not be allowed to make presentations to children, especially in view of BelongTo's training manual which advised instructors to lie to parents. There should
- be **no**
- **secrecy pacts**
- between teachers or instructors and children to keep teaching material secret
- from parents – this breaches parents constitutional rights.
-

At this time, the overall curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the obvious "Education for Social Justice" agenda which is blatant attempt at political indoctrination which, if implemented, would represent a threat to the Irish state as well as a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children. I received the foolow

1. Over-reach: There would appear to be an over-reach in terms of combining an integrated curriculum across major subject groups along with new pedagogical approaches, and with an overlay on top of social engineering goals in terms of Social Justice, Sustainability etc – this is a recipe for failure.
2. Parental Visibility and Transparency

- a. There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts.
 - b. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials
3. Curriculum Definition and Clarity
 - a. Notions that “being a Geographer” or “being a Historian” alone can be the primary learning outcome are not acceptable.
4. Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Removal of all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:
 - a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization
 - b. Parents reject the WHO and UNESCO Sexuality Education Guidelines (which are referenced as influencing the development of this curriculum) – these are not age appropriate, they violate safeguarding and seek to problematise sex, gender and sexuality for very young children.
 - c. The introduction of Critical Social Justice and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism, either in terms of name or in terms of substance are not acceptable.
5. The teaching of radical Gender Identity Theory – that a child could transition their gender from boy to girl and vice-versa - should be removed from Primary curricula. The final Cass report into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that gender ideology should not be taught in schools. Also the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here. It is foolhardy to persist to introduce such an approach here given the results of the Cass report.
6. Cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed, be it in relation to themes of sex and gender or any other political themes, be it in terms of those in 3c. above, or themes such as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Climate or Sustainability.
 - a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,
 - b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs
7. Learning needs to be for knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism. In line with the above, all knowledge given to pupils must be factual, science based, age appropriate and not based on contested ideologies, e.g. Gender self-Identification Ideology cannot be taught in primary schools.

8. The “lived experience” of a 5-12 year old is very limited in the context of most of the themes being pushed in this curriculum, so the level of child agency and of a child-centred approach would appear to be inappropriate.

9. **Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches**

The focus on Social Justice is a huge concern. Education for Social Justice would point to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all of which would be heavily weighted in politics and radical postmodern ideologies – indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable. Unfortunately, most modern pedagogical scholarship intrinsically embeds “Critical” Marxist activism, which, based on the experience we see in other countries, is pitched at destroying Western Society. We’re not having that here so alternative approaches need to be found.

10. Fundamentally, the curriculum must be de-politicised and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.

In summary, these Draft Curricula are not fit for purpose as they:

- **Lack structure and clarity in the Learning Outcomes:** need to start where the child is at and have a clear progression of skills and concepts to scaffold learning. The content is driven by high-level ideals and are intangible and invisible.
- **Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound:** Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning ‘Key Competencies’ and ‘Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment’ promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.
- **Provide no visibility for parents in their unspecified nature:** ‘What’ children will be learning must be clear as well as ‘How’.
- **Lack consistency:** without a clear Curriculum (programme of work), how will the high standards of Irish Primary education be maintained across the country? From school to school?

Yours sincerely,

Caroline Moore

Dear NCCA,

I have attached 2 documents

1. My opinion on the Draft Curricula "NCCA Curriculum review", specific to what I have observed in the Drafts themselves.
2. DCU Reports Concerns: the two 2023 Reports issued by DCU supporting the approaches taken in the Draft Curricula.

I have also copied and pasted both documents in a separate email to ensure that the attachments do not lead to the content being blocked.

In my opinion, the drafts as envisaged are not fit for purpose and as a teacher, I am horrified at where this curriculum is envisaged to go.

Yours sincerely,
Caroline Moore

Cathy Eastman

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

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- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I believe the specifications address the key messages as required; they are able to be interpreted with flexibility and cover all types of learners (ref. Active learning STE p3 and SEE p3) and play based learning (STE p10 and SEE p11 and 12). All children are supported (STE p20, SEE p20, Wellbeing p2).

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I work with teachers and students to support outdoor learning in all areas of the curriculum. Overall, it is very encouraging to see so many references to 'learning in school and outdoor environments' (page 2 - under 'learning environments'). Clear emphasis could be placed on the planning, design and implementation of biodiverse growing habitats within the school grounds specifically as an important part of enriched learning experience – the Living Classroom. The reference to 'spending meaningful time outdoors' (page 12 under 'Being Well') and playful approaches including risky play (p25) are also excellent as long as they are to be backed up by practical support for teachers as this will be challenging in most current school situations. 'Place based learning' (page 26) and teachers helping to promote fieldwork could also include engaging in the school grounds as part of their learning environment. It should be possible to study and grow most habitats within the school grounds as part of the active outdoor curriculum.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I work with teachers and students to support outdoor learning and biodiversity study in all areas of the curriculum. The draft curriculum is positive and broad overall with good reference to learning outdoors. The 'learning environments' section (page 2) could emphasise the outdoor school environment. The 'pedagogy' section (page 3) should include practical fieldwork outdoors (under Biology and Physics especially) under the 'providing learning opportunities for inquiry focused active learning...' Table 5 of Learning Outcomes (Living Things – page 13) could include developing 'plant eyes' as part of observing and identifying a range of plants (similar to STEM eyes!).

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I work with teachers and students to support outdoor learning and biodiversity study in all areas of the curriculum. Under the 'aims' (page 7) there could be the addition of integration with meaningful time spent outdoors – nature literacy. The benefits of time spent in natural environments and the connections with community; gardening, growing and care of habitats connects with citizenship, healthy living (page 8), cooking and eating food grown in the school outdoor classroom and enhances wellbeing of the whole school community. Where the 'variety of outdoor settings...' is mentioned (page 37) the addition of 'such as enriched, biodiverse school grounds' would be beneficial. The list of 'alternative activities' (page 43 / top of page 44) could include growing and caring for habitats and growing food.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

All reference to outdoor learning and risky play based learning must be backed up by practical support for principals and teachers, such as in house CPD provided by professionals as this will be challenging in most current school situations. I work with teachers on a daily basis who find it incredibly difficult to bring their classes outdoors for a variety of reasons including large class sizes, behavioural needs, accountability and fulfilment of curriculum hours to name a few. There are a wide range of resources available for outdoor learning but putting them into practise is the area where teachers will need support. Online courses may help for certain areas of the curriculum but face to face CPD is invaluable for practical active outdoor learning so teachers will need support in the form of class cover or incentives to engage fully in this ambitious curriculum.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

The Inspectorate needs to ensure assessment of outdoor learning outcomes is included in Whole School Inspections. Outdoor Learning is often dismissed as 'just free play' or that there is no learning happening when time is spent outdoors, there needs to be the ability to prove learning is taking place through photographs, nature journals, anecdotal evidence of improved attention and behaviour inside and increased well being of the whole school community.

Cathy Fagan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I am concerned that Irish will lose out in order to allow hours for children to learn a MFL. While all learning is positive, I think it would be better to learn one language - Irish - properly, rather than a watered-down version of 2 or more languages.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Primary teachers can only do so much. They cannot take the place of and do the job of parents. I think that the more responsibility that is placed on schools to carry out this work, the less involved parents will be.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Cathy Finnegan

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, disposition, values and attitudes

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Arts and drama also wellbeing

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

French and Spanish

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Helping the environment recycling walking to school use of scooter or bicycle

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Wood work would be nice in primary level key skills on computer laptops exploring ideas with Science coming up with non invasive treatments natural.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Rainbows coping with grief loss separation. Speaking openly about situations that arise been awareness brought in school day . Every is equal with different strengths that makes young people exceed.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Knowledge of each child's attributes and resources to help teachers to work with different characteristics in children and different ways children learn .

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Providing more resources supports with Additional needs children learning difficulties

Charlotte King

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you in response to the proposed curriculum changes to the SPHE classes for junior cycle and primary school.

The information available was limited and involved a lot of generic buzzwords and phrases that are meaningless without any real context to them. I am not satisfied the teachings will not include sexuality and gender ideology.

I am a mother of four with one in secondary, two in primary and an infant. I am arguably the most valuable and invested stakeholder in my children's education.

I'm requesting the full and detailed curriculum be made accessible to parents so we have the chance to review it and decide whether we feel that the teachings align with our own core values.

As an experienced parent I am concerned that the material may be not be suitable for a child as young as four. I know that children at this age have short attention spans and often find sitting still for long periods of time difficult. Thus it would be beneficial for children of this age to focus on actual academic work such as learning to read.

I am protective of my children and I take their education very seriously. I ask that their studies be dedicated to academics only and their own religious studies where they wish. I do not want their education to suffer so the system can cater to a culture war based on ideology that is fantasy rather than factual.

Kind regards,
Charlotte King

Chulainn Noel Prendergast

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

As a progressive nation, it only makes sense that we have a progressive curriculum. Broadening the range of cultures and religions that these young students are exposed to will enable them to become more understanding, empathic and welcoming people. However, as a secondary school student who wishes to become a primary school teacher, I believe that the creation of a national, Irish identity within the young student is vital to the preservation of our culture, heritage, and way of life. National self identity starts on a small scale, then perhaps in second level education one can begin to form the basis of a more wider, international global identity.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

More emphasis needed on Irish culture (myths, legends, folk stories, traditional music and arts)

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

How are we to effectively preserve the Irish culture, if, after 14 years in state education of being taught Irish, most students cannot hold a conversation in the language? What is the point of having all EU documents available in Irish if only minuscule minority of the population can speak the language? The state preaches the need to preserve our language, yet there is serious fault in the way it is taught. How can we begin to teach our young students European languages, if there is an astronomical fault in the way Irish is taught. Why can we not focus on domestic language before dealing with foreign language?

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page

numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

The support of parents to help foster their child in an atmosphere of learning, and one that supports the curriculum's ideals.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Ciarán Farrell

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1. Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
2. Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

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8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Wellbeing

Inclusion and diversity

The focus on Inclusive education and diversity is welcomed, particularly fostering a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, equality, and social justice, challenging stereotypes and misconceptions, and promoting empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity, recognising and celebrating the diversity present within the classroom and in wider society and fostering inclusive learning environments based on human rights, equality and anti-discrimination principles, thus recognising the rich tapestry of cultures, identities, backgrounds, and families represented within Irish primary classrooms. This is the type of education I hope my daughter experiences when she starts school. SPHE places a strong emphasis on creating a positive, nurturing, and inclusive classroom culture. This climate enriches the lives and learning experiences of all children and enables them to recognise themselves and others as unique individuals who are valued, cared for, and have an important contribution to make in life.

School ethos, teacher's personal beliefs, and scaremongering

There are positive steps towards inclusivity and diversity in the strand units of Identity, Relationships, Belonging, Human Development, Sense of Belonging, Family, Rights and Fairness, but a lot seems dependent on how the teacher or school interprets the curriculum and how it is to be taught. The following statement within the curriculum describes teacher agency and a demonstration of confidence in the teacher's professionalism in the way they teach the curriculum

“The qualified classroom teacher is the best placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and she/he can have a powerful impact on

influencing students' attitudes, values, and behaviour in all aspects of wellbeing education. (Circular 0042/2018)".

There are some concerns that certain topics will not be taught, or taught from a heteronormative and gendernormative perspective. Teachers shouldn't cherry-pick what they teach children, when omitting it has been proven to damage children's wellbeing. You can't be concerned about children's wellbeing but only if it goes along with your own personal beliefs or ethos. Also, surprisingly, when you look at any religious school's ethos it is generally one based on inclusivity, diversity and respect. On curriculum focus groups I have heard teachers voice their concern about teaching against their own personal beliefs or ethos and teaching inappropriate content to children. The inappropriate content they generally seem to be worried about is about LGBT+ rights, trans visibility, pornography, relationship and sexuality education and consent. Often I have discovered that the teachers and parents and general public who have concerns about the content being taught are actually ill informed (or deliberately trying to incorrectly inform) and seem to believe that content more suitable to secondary school students is being taught in primary school. Examples of this are library books recommended for 13+, areas of RSE etc. There can be quite a bit of scaremongering among outside agencies that children will be taught about topics inappropriate to them. However what is being recommended is simple, factual, age appropriate explanations that affirm children in their own identities or their family's or protect them when they are exposed at an early age to certain things that would negatively affect them. Children as young as seven literally have the internet in their pocket with some children having unsupervised access to their own smartphone day and night. It is essential that children are given correct, factual, honest information so that they don't need to find out from a disreputable source and they know to speak to an adult if they come across something upsetting or confusing. To make it clear, and it's ridiculous that it has to be spelled out, children will **not** be shown pornography in school, teachers will **not** be encouraging everyone to become transgender or lesbian, gay, bisexual, they will **not** be telling children about how to perform sexual acts...this is all scaremongering and clickbait to try and stop our schools from best supporting our students and these lies unfortunately regularly get repeated and published in Irish newspapers, and on radio and television programmes.

Another concern would be without clear guidelines, teachers who are teaching about diversity could be left open to complaints from parents, management, patron body, and teaching council. 90% of primary schools in Ireland are religious-run and some schools cite their ethos as an excuse as to why they avoid teaching about certain topics such as family diversity even though students from

their school may come from same sex headed families or be LGBT+ themselves. Teachers need a clear, unambiguous statement that regardless of a school's ethos, children can be taught about diversity in its many forms, as many are getting a very unbalanced message from their patron body about these issues. This is why I feel it is important that the department's stance and message leaves no room for ambiguity. Teachers' professionalism, expertise and experience should be respected, for them to do what is best for all the students in their classroom in the way that they teach. Every teacher has the responsibility to support each child in their classroom equally so if that child comes from an LGBTQ+ headed family or if that child identifies as LGBTQ+, they will feel supported and seen. Having the class teacher affirm them could make all the difference in that child's life, particularly if they are coming from a family who does not support LGBT+ rights and/or are vocal about their homophobia/transphobia at home. Every child in Ireland should be getting the same education and the same supports to navigate their life, whatever comes their way, be that identifying as lesbian, gay or bisexual, realising they are transgender or non-binary, discovering their neurodivergence, family changes, dealing with their mental health and well being etc. One good adult who affirms them just the way they are could save their life.

Anti-Bullying

I have worked as a volunteer in an LGBTQ+ youth club and I have heard stories from these young people who were targeted because they identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, non-binary in primary and secondary school. The effect of this bullying differed for each young person but low self-esteem, depression, school reluctance and school refusal, self-harm, and thoughts of suicide were some of the outcomes. Teachers should try to do everything in their power to prevent this bullying from ever happening. This would make all the difference in these young people's lives in terms of their general mental health and

well being. One of the biggest obstacles for teachers and schools to fully implement the Anti Bullying Guidelines are the lack of clear guidelines and resources to prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying and differing advice coming from training and workshops. Preventative and education strategies and not just reactive strategies are essential. Making our curriculum less heteronormative and gendernormative will help to build an inclusive education for our students that is respectful of the diversity that exists currently in our schools and has existed for many years. Having a safe, supported, scaffolded space to discuss and reflect upon aspects of their identity and wellbeing in schools would be a transformational experience for some. It is essential that every child at primary school age gets the positive message from a teacher or principal they respect and trust that LGBT+ people exist, that they are successful, talented, happy, that they can be who they want to be, have jobs that they love and have families that love them. Some children go through all of primary school and never hear the words lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, non-binary used by their teachers and classmates in a positive way, who have to endure the bullying from children who know no better, and live their primary and secondary school lives hiding a big secret, whether that secret is about themselves or about their families. Bystanders are also unsure if they can report what they see and hear because of the silence that surrounds it. Every teacher in Ireland has a duty of care to each of their students and they should feel they have the support of their principal and their Board of Management to teach children in an age appropriate way that each person and each family is different, that they should be respected and valued, that bullying people because they are, or perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender is unacceptable, that standing up for your friends and reporting LGBT bullying is important.

LGBTQI+ rights and justice issues are usually, if at all, portrayed in the context of SPHE and anti-bullying (McBride and Neary, 2021). However, the individualised context of the anti-bullying lesson can serve to further other and ostracise LGBTQI+ people (Ullman, 2018). There is a danger of portraying a “single story” in which LGBTQI+ people are always victims (Adichie, 2009). This is why preventative and education strategies to prevent bullying are important, the focus is not on the bullying and victimisation of an LGBTQ+ person but rather on positive visibility, respect and celebration of LGBTQ+ people and their achievements. Positive messages they receive in their early years can help to battle all the negative messages

young people will encounter about LGBT+ people in their lives and hopefully help protect their mental health and well being when they experience minority stress (stigmatisation, discrimination, social exclusion and harassment) which can lead to low self-esteem, self-harm and suicidal behaviour. The Action Plan on Bullying (2013), the Anti-Bullying Guidelines (2013), Different Families Same Love poster (2014), the Respect Guidelines (2015), the revised Stay Safe curriculum (2016), Supporting LGBT lives (2009) and the LGBTIreland Report (2016) and 'Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland: The National Study on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of the LGBTQI+ Communities in Ireland' (2024) should inform new guidelines in this area.

RSE

As the new curriculum states, as an integrated aspect of SPHE, Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE), plays a crucial role in helping children establish and sustain healthy and supportive relationships with themselves and others. RSE supports children to acquire accurate and developmentally appropriate information about human development and sexuality that is evidence informed. In addition, children develop an understanding of the significance of effective communication, mutual respect, conflict resolution, boundaries, bodily autonomy, and the concept of consent within relationships. It is imperative for children to be equipped with the knowledge of appropriate safety responses as part of child protection measures. By fostering this understanding, children are empowered to recognise, respond and report instances of bullying and abuse, contributing to their overall wellbeing and safety and that of others.

Providing children with a balanced, inclusive, age and developmentally appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality, fostering healthy attitudes and relationships while recognising the diversity of human experience is essential and teachers should be provided with high quality, interactive and engaging resources to fulfil this. The updated RSE programme should be rolled out and teachers given training. When I was teaching 6th Class, I found the new Busy Bodies booklet for parents and workbook for students made teaching the sensitive areas of RSE much easier

and give students greater understanding. I had written to the writers of Busy Bodies at the time to request that the new items added to the Busy Bodies parents booklet to be included in the students workbook. These suggestions included

- New Busy Bodies videos that include the additional updates and information added to the new Busy Bodies workbook and the booklet for children and parents
- Include a labelled diagram of the female reproductive organs both internal and external (as it does for the male reproductive organ)
- Include a page in the workbook relating to sexual orientation and gender identity (including non-binary and transgender language)
- Include a page about consent to inspire a class discussion
- Include a page about menstrual products - pads, tampons, menstrual cups, period pants, etc.
- Include age appropriate information about child sex abuse material, pornography and responsible online behaviour, so that children become critical thinkers and realise that not everything in the online world is real, understand what is appropriate for their agegroup and be confident on where they can go to for support about what they have been exposed to

Resources

The Wellbeing Online Toolkit is welcome and hopefully there will be a range of suitable, age appropriate, engaging and worthwhile resources to access. It would be helpful if the Toolkit included recommended Department of Education resources that explicitly teach about family diversity, sexual orientation, gender identity and RSE. The PDST website had a wealth of resources and in recent years provided access links to many excellent inclusive resources, including INTO LGBT+ Teachers' Group resources e.g. Different Families Same Love poster. Within the curriculum Identity based bullying is only mentioned in the glossary and homophobic, transphobic and cyber bullying is not explicitly mentioned anywhere.

Teachers need appropriate resources that children growing up in the 2020s - 2040s can relate to. There are simple class appropriate ways teachers can prevent homophobic and transphobic bullying from Junior Infants up to 6th Class. Reading

picture books about different types of families including those headed by lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender parents, teaching lessons that challenge gender stereotypes, using the Different Families Same Love poster, teaching the All Together Now! programme and implementing the Respect Guidelines, Unveiling Our Past: The struggle for LGBT+ Rights in Ireland, etc. There are some excellent age appropriate books from infants to 6th about identity and diversity. Amaze.org has some good inclusive RSE videos that children can relate to.

Time

A ratio of 2:1 with more time given to PE than Wellbeing is not enough in my opinion to cover all that is expected. Continuing to allocate two hours to the patron's programme, which in 90% of Irish primary schools is a Catholic programme, children who are not of the patron's religion continue to be spotlighted, excluded and othered in their own classroom daily, which I believe negatively affects their self esteem.

Cindy Ross

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

As parents we oppose the early introduction of sex and sexual education to children. We oppose the 'vague' and 'open minded' approach to "spiritual development", "diversity in family", "consent in relationships", "embracing the entire spectrum". We feel that these changes open the door to children being sexualized (and groomed), at a very early age. It encourages the woke movement, that is very unnatural and confusing for children. As for the spiritual aspect, Ireland is a Christian and God fearing

country, as is the school we have selected for our children, and we expect God to be first and foremost, and that children should not be encouraged to be 'spiritual' but rather stay true to the teachings of the bible.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Teachers should teach true and honest and factual teachings, and not be conformed to new movements and woke ideals.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

We do not feel that the curriculums need altering.

Claire Gorman

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

To promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment and be for all children to Curriculum needs to adapt by using more visuals like pictures and the use of social stories. It should not be 2 Curriculums in one instead one Curriculum. All children will benefit theought this way of learning. SHPE needs move with the current language as the language is so out dated. To see improvement in the use of language in the curriculum it needs to start there.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)

- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

To allow all children to have the time in their school day to integrate well being through their way.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

The correct use of language. Training.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

To include all children they need to be considered when implementing the curriculum.

Clare Fitzgerald

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
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- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The Primary Curriculum Framework is a welcome document that highlights the importance of playful and engaging learning experiences for all learners. Consideration should be given to ensure this continues remains front and centre and maybe highlighted as a pedagogical approach across all subject areas and curricula. Having the learning outcomes broad in nature facilitates teacher autonomy. Acknowledging student voice and actively promoting it in education will ultimately lead to better educational outcomes for the learners.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Page 1 2nd paragraph: the curriculum presents for children across the eight years of primary school: there is no mention of special schools in this part of the document. Consideration should be given to include the child from a special school context from the beginning in order to get buy-in from all teachers in different school settings. Consideration should be given to starting MFL at stage 1 so it offers opportunities for all learner particularly those with SEN. We also need to consider learners who have come to Ireland from a different cultural background. This document suggests that teachers cannot teach / celebrate the language and culture of their native countries until stage 3 which excludes some learners with SEN who may never reach those developmental milestones. If we take the last two lines on page 15: they learn to understand, celebrate, compare and contrast their own and other cultures and approach children from other cultures with openness and respect' it is clear to see this could be included at stage 1 for all learners inc: children with SEN. This is further supported on page 58 with reference to the Transfer of skills for children who learn EAL 'For children who learn EAL, it is vitally important that the use of the child's home language(s) is supported in school. This statement suggests for all children of primary age and not starting from stage 3. Page 3. Consideration should be given to remove any reference to the progression continua where assessment is mentioned: this will create confusion for teachers as the support services have worked hard with teachers to resolve the misunderstanding that the PC can be used as a form of assessment. Page 8: Where does ISL (the third official language of our country) sit with regards to this revised document and the addition of the MFL. ISL is only mentioned once on page 8. Page 16: The preparation for teaching and learning guidance document has identified that we're replacing 'planning with preparing'. Consideration should be given to aligning the key messages from the

Preparation for teaching and learning guidance document to this revised language document. The following statement may cause confusion for teachers. ('they support teacher agency in making professional judgements when preparing, planning, teaching and assessing all children'. Consideration should be given to removing planning instead of just adding preparing. Page 47: Highlighting and suggesting 3 key competencies for each of the LOs is in conflict with the message of teacher agency. It also states that 'in many instances other key competencies outside the three identified, are also embedded in the LO'. Therefore, is this approach necessary? Pages 50 & 52: The beginning of this document highlights the focus of stage 3 should be on developing cultural awareness, however the layout of the LOs for the MFL are presented in contrast to this suggestion. Consideration should be given to rearrange the order and align them with how children learn language, by starting with culture: 1. Developing intercultural awareness, 2. Understanding 3. Exploring and using. On page 47 the MFL is introduced and the key competencies are being foregrounded. Not consistent in the english and irish Consideration should be given to removing the word PECs page 81 PLC Very general statement that is not always the case 'they will go through the stage 1 LO more quickly' p22 To assist with the reading of the document there should be consistency around the language used e.g.: • Language skills and strategies p7 • Knowledge skills and strategies p7 • Skills and concepts p7 • Skills knowledge and strategies p7 • Dispositions alongside concepts and skills p13 • Concepts, dispositions and skills p13 • Concepts dispositions and skills p14 • Knowledge, skills and strategies p15 • Concepts, skills and dispositions p16 • Constrained skills... unconstrained skills p16 • Concepts, dispositions and skills p18 • Concepts and s

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

In-service and sustained support.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

consideration should be given to aligning the messages for the ITE and support services for the initial development of curricula

Colm Greene

Dear Sir/Madam

I am the father of children in primary school at the moment. In relation to the proposed Irish primary school curriculum redraft - I see there is reference to the framework being 'concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity.' I also see that, in reference to the RSE component, the Draft Wellbeing Curriculum Specification states that 'RSE supports children to acquire accurate and developmentally appropriate information about human development and sexuality that is evidence informed' - given this important 'evidence' stipulation, I would request that gender and sexual identity be explicitly defined and that gender identity NOT be taught as fact.

Best Regards

Colm Greene

Conor O'Shea

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I don't want sex ed taught to my children at primary level because it undermines my right to introduce these concepts at a time that suits them as individuals.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

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7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

David Hegarty

NCCA Primary Curriculum Submission

Dear Sir/Madam,

I wish to make a submission to the NCCA Primary Curriculum evaluation team in this form. I have found the answer panel form provided by the NCCA to be totally inadequate as

1. it did not allow me as a the sender to retain a copy,

and

2. I was unable to go back over previous pages, thus the template was very unfriendly to an ordinary user/person.

My general observations are as follows:

Section 1, 5 of Alignment with Primary Curriculum Framework

"respond to changing priorities", what does this mean?

Developing children's' *"dispositions, values and attitudes"*

Response:

From observation of Government policies relating to the family, the person and society generally and the implementation of these policies over many years, the *"dispositions, values and attitudes"* referred to here would require detailed careful scrutiny to see if they align with Christian and common sense family values.

Section 2, 6, Art, Music and Drama etc.

No text panel has been given to enable comments to be inserted for these but the impossibility/impracticability of making any meaningful comment can be demonstrated from the

following example. The music curriculum runs to 103 pages and the Teachers' Guidelines amount to 164 pages. How could a person reasonably make detailed comments on these or any other of the massive amount of textual materials to be evaluated? I will however make one observation which sums up the evident ethos behind the entire new Primary School Curriculum as follows.

Rolf Harris's songs (no less) are given among the recommended music listening materials, see page 20.

Could no better or more edifying music source be found?

The Rolf Harris type is opposed to normal parent concerns and family values. The Harris type mindset seeks to;

play down indecency,

prevail over the right to personal privacy,

normalise the sexualisation of innocent children,

incite desensitisation and coarsening of unsuspecting young children,

promote incitement to sexual assault and personal sexual preoccupation and setting young people up for grooming,

brush parental concerns aside and

illegally endeavour to get children to enter into purported "confidentiality agreements" with the teacher in the classroom and concealing this from parents.

Music generally

Why did the NCCA music committee not seek specific submissions from, for examples, Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Na Píobairí Uilleann or any of the other organisations promoting Irish music and song, and those promoting basic proficiency in singing simple Irish songs in English and the Irish language. Are children not taught to sing the National Anthem? The curriculum music content as previously mentioned is veering away from baseline music and song content which form music appreciation from the standpoint of simple melodies helping the children to develop appreciation without drawing upon laboured theories and concepts far removed from ordinary people. For obvious reasons the focus should be on Irish music and song, not unfamiliar excerpts or clips from music of far away places. Songs with patriotic and historical themes should be presented in support of history as was the case in times past.

Equipping primary school children and supporting understanding of basic scales and simple tunes played on a comparatively cheap simple instrument is surely cost effective and helps in the formation of a simple school band or performing group for school concerts and St. Patrick's Day parades. Choral singing activities would entail no costs.

Matter in the SPHE/RSE curriculum content may be described as age in appropriate and group inappropriate. The right to personal privacy is primary and children of differing ages and developmental stages or conditions must not be coarsened or de sensitised. Any teacher doing this is in essence, grooming children. A perceptive parent can rightly say to a teacher, "what sexual matters would you be discussing with my child in my absence"? or to an inspector, "what sexual matters would you be questioning my child about in my absence"? Indecent and sexual topics incorporated in the curriculum drawn from the UN secular humanist mindset going all the way back to Brock Chisholm (WHO) and other discredited influences such as Wardell Pomeroy, Kinsey, Keynes the economist and Margaret Sanger, Mary Calderone and others. These influencers have no place in the Christian family or the Catholic school or any school where catholic children are being educated. Our Lord warned about those who scandalise the innocent and about "handing a serpent for a fish, a scorpion for an egg etc". The right to protect the children from scandal and defence against the destruction of innocence is primary and inalienable.

The notion that a teacher could teach "consent" to school pupils is outrageous and objectionable. Its inclusion conclusively demonstrates how far removed from normal parenting and family values, the compilers of this voluminous curriculum are positioned. **See section 2(e)**

Section 7 Arts Education Curriculum

Answer: Without hard copy, detailed response to chapters and page numbers is impractical.

Section 2 (b) Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

Answer: English and Irish are the essential languages required to interact fully in Irish society. Is it being inferred that other languages must be taught in schools?

Section 2 (c) Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Answer: Scope of material to be commented upon, is far too broad, pre set and developed, thus making specific comments is practically pointless. However, notions of "white privilege" etc. are utterly outrageous in contemporary Irish society with 14,000 homeless, the massive housing

shortage, lack of affordability, support of vulture fund purchasing and all the other health service and societal dis improvements which have accelerated in recent years. Irish taxpayers must ask who includes this half baked Marxist worldview in education policy development?

Section 2 (d) Science and Technology and Engineering Education

Answer: Scope of material to be commented upon, is far too broad, pre set and developed, thus making specific comments is practically pointless. However pushing strongly debatable climate issues is objectionable on very valid grounds. With politicians jetting here and there as well as squandering scarce resources, pushing "sustainability" is a bit much, to put it mildly.

Section 2 (e) Well-being Curriculum

Answer: Scope of material to be commented upon, is far too broad, pre set and developed, thus making specific comments is practically pointless.

Section 3 Implementing the Curriculum

Answer: Scope of material to be commented upon is far too broad, pre set and developed, thus making specific comments is practically pointless.

General comments question 13

The volume of textual material with vague, unclear aims, objectives and demonstrated philosophy are subversive of family and Christian values properly so called. The inbuilt pedagogical approaches serve to undermine legitimate parental rights. Adherence to this curriculum would not produce good Irish citizens imbued with a properly developed patriotic spirit and common sense.

The clear overall objective is attitude engineering or woke/pc. attitude conditioning which is repugnant to Christian family values. The embedded mindset has no legitimate place in Irish Catholic education practice or schooling. It is opposed to the characteristic spirit of Catholic schools and what is acceptable for Catholic school students.

Having the religious education devised by the religious authority is irrelevant when this kind of cross curricular Woke/Politically Correct value system is promoted across the curriculum subjects.

Concluding observations and questions:

(a) This entire curriculum was not merely developed by a group or committee of NCCA personnel and participants. It was obviously drawn from sources outside of Irish education practice. It does not support basic educational requirements for proficiency in English, Mathematics and Irish language topics. History and Geography are far removed from foundational knowledge in these subjects. The curriculum texts are politicised to develop Marxian social justice warriors wasting away precious classroom time and indoctrinating the pupils in leftist theories, far removed from essential successful education learning outcomes of literacy, numeracy basic artistic and other developed skills, not gender ideology or Queer Theory, stereotypes, heteronormativity etc. all to be found in this flawed curriculum draft.

(b) Who is going to be evaluating the submissions/responses on behalf of the citizens and taxpayers of Ireland? Considering the displayed mindset of those who compiled this entire curriculum and revealed underlying philosophy, such persons are in no legitimate or fit position to evaluate or adjudicate on the merits or the importance of the curriculum comments. The participating teams have adequately demonstrated their being unfit for this task. This concern may be compared to the observation that "there is little point in suing the devil if the court sits in hell". This developed grossly objectionable and unfit curriculum development process needs to be brought to a halt.

(c) The Woke/PC far left belief system is utterly opposed to Christian values. Woke-ism and political correctness are not State religions and have no legitimate status with powers or standing presented as superior to Christian values.

(d) The Woke/PC far left belief system of the Curriculum adopted by the teacher representatives and other was not done with the approval of teachers' unions' membership following Congress /Conference motions properly carried. This woke policy is sneaked in by small groups of far left trade union activists not publicly reporting to their union members through journals etc. In other words, the outcome from teachers' unions participation is essentially a sneak job, done under cover improperly using union standing pretending to have approval of the majority of all teacher union members when this is certainly not the case.

This entire process needs to be brought to an immediate halt.

Regards

David Hegarty

David Joyce

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

As a Christian parent I take issue that there are a few areas in this proposed curriculum. There is an agenda of liberal doctrine being forced upon my child in this proposal and I would like to raise two in particular. First, the notion that there is a such a thing as a same sex family is farcical. The development of a family requires two members of the opposite sex connect physically or by scientific methodology. Male and female is necessary for a family to be developed. It is wrong to presume two women or two men who somehow take possession of a child are a family, they are a same sex couple who have adopted a child, that is not a family. What is more, there is a wealth of research that shows families made up of Fathers and Mothers provide a holistically better environment for the fuller development of children as they grow up. I take serious issue with the liberal agenda this government is pushing in this latest proposal. Secondly, under the section Health Education - human development, the proposal expresses that children of primary age be taught about sexual intercourse, this is terrifying; it is one thing to explain the wonders of the body, but to explain sexual intercourse to children is to remove the parents right to educate their children, at an age they deem appropriate. I understand that yes there are young people having sex at younger ages, and therefore it seems to make sense to educate them, but sex for a minor on another minor is rape, so why are you even proposing to teach primary children about intercourse. I am further disturbed that under this term 'sexual intercourse' some teachers may decide to explain non heterosexual intercourse. And let's be honest, if the curriculum pushes LGBTQ, then what is to stop them? I have no desire for my child to partake in either of these sections of the curriculum, and believe that we as a household family have the duty and responsibility to educate our children on these matters at home and at an age we believe to be correct. Perhaps other parents don't care much for what their children are fed through social engineers messaging at school, but I most definitely do. Regards, Mr Joyce. response

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

There should be opt out exceptions for items where a parents religious conscience disagrees with liberal propaganda.

David Keenahan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I believe that the STE draft curriculum specifications, could address the key messages and thereby contribute to the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications, but only if it is substantially revised, in the areas of what teachers are expected to teach.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

0

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

0

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

0

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I welcome the new alignment of subjects that sees Science aligned with Technology and Engineering (STE) instead of Science aligned with History and Geography as in SESE (Social, Environmental and Scientific Education) in the 1999 curriculum. I also welcome the dedicated time allocated to STE in the Primary Curriculum Framework (page 38/39) but would strongly prefer that the allocation of time was specified on a weekly basis rather than a monthly basis as outlined below: Stage 1 – 3 hrs 20 min per month Stage 2: 4 hrs per month Stages 3 and 4: 5 hrs per month I believe that a weekly engagement with STE is in the best interests of all children. I believe that the 1999 SCIENCE curriculum was excellent. The only problem was that it was very rarely delivered. Widespread lack of teacher confidence in their knowledge of science was probably the most common reason for this. This probably stems from there being very little attention given to SCIENCE in Initial Teacher Education (ITE). While the draft STE specification has very many commendable features and aspirations that are praiseworthy, it is not a suitable document for teachers who rely on clear detailed instructions on what needs to be taught. The 1999 syllabus is excellent in that regard. The Draft STE specification is very lacking by comparison. Page 1 – refers to the STE specification sitting alongside the Maths curriculum (STEM). I would prefer a stronger statement to the effect that Mathematics is a language that enriches Science and that wherever possible the teaching of both should be well aligned and integrated. Pages 2/3 – I wish to see a much greater emphasis placed on practical work where children do science and are given plenty of “hands-on” opportunities. The section “Principles of learning, teaching and assessment” needs to explicitly address this. Page 3 – I recommend that the support materials (toolkit) include detailed lists of recommended scientific equipment that schools should have. Page 6 Aims: I recommend that the “scientific method” should manifest itself clearly in the aims, rationale, learning outcomes and skills development, but it is largely absent from the STE specification. Page 7 – Strands and elements The list of strands is helpful. However the description of the elements is very aspirational. Page 9 – Learning Outcomes I am surprised that only the learning outcomes for Technology merit elaboration in Appendix 1. The other strands are not elaborated and in particular, Engineering is very minimally outlined. Why are there no appendices for the other strands? Page 10 – Key Competencies One might have expected these to be tailored more to include recognition of safety considerations and the importance of accuracy in measurements, and recognition of what is a “fair test” etc. Pages 13 to 17 – Learning Outcomes (Nature of STEM, Living Things, Materials and Energy / Forces, etc) The learning outcomes are too vague, across all strands. My particular interest is in the strand called Energy and Forces. There is insufficient Physics covered in STE by comparison to what was outlined clearly and in detail in the 1999 syllabus. There should be far greater emphasis on proper experimentation, and the few references to “conduct inquiries” are unconvincing. The emphasis on “design and make” in the 1999 syllabus was commendable and appears to be largely absent from the STE draft specification.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

0

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

- Teachers will need high quality Teacher Professional Learning. - Teachers will welcome the availability of good textbooks. - Teachers will need ease of access to extensive libraries of digital resources to assist them in planning and delivering STE lessons. - They will need comprehensive Teacher Guidelines. - Teachers will need ongoing tutor/mentor support to build their confidence and competence. - School leaders would benefit from a recommended list of scientific equipment and grants for purchase of same.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Building teacher confidence and competence in the existing workforce will be a massive challenge. Substantial investment in people and resources will be needed. Working collaboratively with many excellent organizations who are continually contributing in this space would make good sense. The RDS and its ESBscienceBlast programme is one of many examples. A crucial need is to urgently require the Teacher Training Colleges to better equip future cohorts of teachers for teaching science than has happened in the past.

David King

Email Submission:

To whom it may concern,

As a parent of six, I am deeply worried about the curriculum that is currently being rolled out in your primary and secondary schools.

The issue of gender identity is not based in fact, it has become an ideology that is being forced onto the majority. There is no scientific evidence to back up this subject being taught to my children.

As a former student of anatomy in University, I know exactly why a man cannot give birth, or breastfeed his child. It is physically impossible.

I do not want my taxes being used to confuse children in a baseless subject that the majority of people do not believe.

Obesity rates in this country are increasing at an alarming rate. The taxpayers money would be better spent on teaching kids about nutrition and the importance of exercise. It is something that has been proven.

Regards,

David King

David O Neill

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Having read through some of the Curriculum, it covers a large scope. I would like to see it supporting traditional marriage values, and not be promoting alternative above them. I also feel that parents should have the right to have their children not participate in these classes if they were unhappy with the teaching. I feel parents should be fully aware of all that is being thought to their children. It would be good if schools could protect pupils from getting too much a distorted view if a teacher was favouring some particular aspect of life. I would also appreciate it is a very difficult subject matter for teachers and they would need help with all the diversity of views.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

David O'Neill

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I would be very unhappy with some of the sexual material being given to primary school children as it is very explicit, way too much for young children. The sexual subject matter is also way above what is required for their age. I would also feel that marginal relationships are being promoted again above our Irish normal standards, the proverb, "tail wagging the dog" I would rather my grandchildren learned some of this material in later secondary school where they would have the understanding to say "no" to ideas being given to them.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

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Declan O Neill

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The sexual exploitation of children by groups forcing an non factual agenda upon is causing considerable harm to children, please safe guard our children from this crazy ideology. They need to learn what's true and facts of nature, no some idea some adult has.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
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- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The sexual exploitation of children by groups forcing an non factual agenda upon is causing considerable harm to children, please safe guard our children from this crazy ideology. They need to learn what's true and facts of nature, no some idea some adult has.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

The sexual exploitation of children by groups forcing a non-factual agenda upon is causing considerable harm to children, please safeguard our children from this crazy ideology. They need to learn what's true and facts of nature, not some idea some adult has.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

The sexual exploitation of children by groups forcing a non-factual agenda upon is causing considerable harm to children, please safeguard our children from this crazy ideology. They need to learn what's true and facts of nature, not some idea some adult has.

Deirdre Maher

Consultation Comments - Deirdre Maher parent of primary school child.

Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, 7th of June 2024.

Once again I submit comments to another draft consultation knowing parents will be ignored regarding their preferences for what their child should learn in school. I will start by reminding you of the rights of mothers and fathers in the constitution and I suggest you consider those rights before continuing with this draft curriculum.

This is the text of Article 42 of the Constitution of Ireland:

"1: The State acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children.

2: Parents shall be free to provide this education in their homes or in private schools or in schools recognised or established by the State.

3.1°:The State shall not oblige parents in violation of their conscience and lawful preference to send their children to schools established by the State, or to any particular type of school designated by the State.

3.2°:The State shall, however, as guardian of the common good, require in view of actual conditions that the children receive a certain minimum education, moral, intellectual and social.

4:The State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative, and, when the public good requires it, provide other educational facilities or institutions with due regard, however, for the rights of parents, especially in the matter of religious and moral formation."

I have always removed my children from the harmful Well-being and SPHE components. If this draft is implemented the harmful content will be spread across all subjects through the day and cannot be avoided by parents who do not wish to have this imposed on their child.

I fully endorse the submission made by the Parents Rights Alliance so I will not repeat what they have already stated comprehensively.

But to recap:

It's a big **NO** to LGBTQTP+++ for children.

NO to Marxist Queer Theory.

NO to Critical Theory.

NO to indoctrination.

No to social literacy.

No to global citizenship.

No to climate fear/alarmism.

No to politics.

No to class contracts.

No to secrecy pacts.

No to radicalisation.

No to activism.

No to white privilege.

No to victimhood.

No to guilt.

No to racism/oppression theory.

No to social justice.

No to newly-invented rights.

No to equality of outcome.
No to wokeness.
No to liberal sexualisation.
No to post-colonial theory.
No to degradation of scholarship.
No to cross-curriculum contamination.

Yes to 123's and ABC's.
Yes to education.
Yes to tried and tested teaching methods.
Yes to parental awareness
Yes to transparency.
Yes to visibility of materials.
Yes to age-appropriateness.
Yes to critical thinking.
Yes to child welfare.
Yes to childhood innocence.
Yes to high standards.

The NCCA needs to be overhauled, with all extreme left-wing ideologues removed and replaced with normal parents and teachers who know how to help young children learn and flourish.

Please acknowledge receipt of my email.

Deirdre Maher

Deirdre O'Toole

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

4. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

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2. Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
3. Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
4. Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
5. Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
6. Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
7. Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
8. Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages.

1. Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities.

The draft PLC has not responded to recent research in the field of language instruction or language learning. More detail is provided in section 2(b).

2. Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum.

Agency and flexibility are clear in the draft PLC. In order to effectively enact the curriculum, teachers need considerable knowledge and expertise. More detail is provided in section 3.

3. Position assessment as a central part of learning.

The draft PLC gives very little information on assessment. It explicitly mentions 'unconstrained skills' but not 'constrained' or foundational skills, which are essential for learning to read in Stage 1 & 2. There is also no information on assessment for early identification of reading difficulties, which has been shown to be a highly reliable predictor of future problems (Francis et al. 1996; Torgesen & Burgess 1998). In fact, reading difficulties are not mentioned at all in the document.

4. Be for all children in primary and special schools.

The draft PLC does not consider how to support all learners. Dyslexia affects one in ten children, meaning that every class has children with reading difficulties (Dyslexia Ireland). Early identification of difficulties and early prevention measures are crucial.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages.

Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages.

As mentioned in section 1, the draft PLC is not fully in line with contemporary research and evidence on literacy instruction.

1. Instructional and Independent reading levels. Reading, Stages 1-4.

Learning Outcome 5: Phonics, word recognition and word study. Learning Outcome 10: Fluency and self-correction. “reading instructional and independent-level texts.”

Glossary p. 67 ‘Instructional reading level’ and ‘Independent reading level’.

The idea of giving children ‘instructional’ and ‘independent’ level texts to make progress in reading is not based on any evidence. In fact, many studies have disproven the theory (Dunkeld 1981; Jorgensen et al. 1977; Morgan et al. 2020; Brown et al. 2017; O’Connor et al. 2010; Kuhn et al. 2006; Homan et al. 2010; Lupo et al. 2019)

Children should have access to and practice with challenging text. This is important for growth in reading skills, vocabulary, syntax, background knowledge etc. Limiting children to instructional and independent texts limits their growth.

2. Word recognition strategies.

Reading, Stages 1-4.

Learning Outcome 5: Phonics, word recognition and word study. “Use phonic knowledge”

Phonics instruction needs to be systematic in nature (Adam 1990; Snow et al. 1998; National Reading Panel 2000; Rose 2006). The learning outcomes and progression steps are too vague and need more structure for phonics.

Learning Outcome 5: Phonics, word recognition and word study. “a range of word identification strategies”.

Glossary p. 73 ‘Word identification strategies’.

Glossary p.71 ‘Semantic cues’.

Glossary p.72 ‘Syntactic cues’.

The above are ambiguous and could be read to support the notion of three-cueing as a method for word reading. Three-cueing has been disproven by many scientists and researchers, and has even shown to be harmful to long-term reading development. The only ‘strategy’ that should be taught to children for word reading is decoding from left to right.

Semantics and syntax can be used to support mispronunciation correction AFTER a word has been decoded. (Stanovich 1980 ; Raynor, et al, 2001, 2002; Brem et al. 2010 ; Duke and Cartwright 2021; Dehaene 2011; Snow et al. 1998)

Using semantic, syntactic, and pictorial cues to read words is also mentioned in the progression continue, and this also needs to be updated.

3. Spelling.

Writing, Stages 1-4.

Learning Outcome 4: Spelling and word study.

“meaningful word parts and roots”

This is mentioned in Stage 3 & 4, but not in Stage 1 & 2. Morphology instruction can and should begin in Stage 1 with simple prefixes and suffixes such as -ed and -s, addressing how they impact on phonology and orthography.

Glossary p.72 ‘Spelling Strategies’

- “• using visual memory
- using common spelling strings and patterns.”

The strategies ‘visual memory’ and ‘spelling strings and patterns’ need to be removed.

Spelling is not a visual skill and spellings are not learned by memorisation.

(Johnston 2001; Cassar, Treiman, Moats, Pollo, & Kessler, 2005; Treiman & Bourassa, 2000; Schlagel, 2002; Treiman, 1993; Ganske, 2002; Henderson, 1990)

The four types of linguistic knowledge that are necessary to spell efficiently are phonology, orthography, morphology, and etymology. (Henry, 1997, 2003; Masterson & Apel, 2010)

Glossary p.68 ‘Invented spelling’.

“Invented or approximate spelling is a term used when a child uses his/her own combination of letters to make words when creating texts.”

This definition is not entirely accurate. It could be inferred that invented spelling only involves random strings of letter, whereas invented spelling can represent every phoneme in a word, using the phonics knowledge that the child has acquired up to that point. (Read 1975 ; Chomsky 1976; Ganske 2000; Bear et al. 2004) A more comprehensive description is needed here, including an explanation of the phases of reading development (Gentry 1982). The benefits of invented spelling could also be referenced.

4. Explicit instruction.

Explicit teaching is mentioned several times throughout the draft PLC. A description of what it means for literacy instruction in the form of an explanation in the document or definition in the glossary would be helpful for teachers.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

11. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages.

Teacher Linguistic Knowledge.

Teachers need knowledge of language in its spoken and written forms, whether that is English, Irish, or MFL. (Moats & Foorman, 2003; Cheesman et al., 2009; Ní Dhíorbháin & O’Duibhir 2021)

Linguistic knowledge in the form of phonology, orthography, morphology, etymology, semantics, syntax, and pragmatics has the potential to significantly improve teaching and learning. This is not just important for teaching L1 and L2, but will also facilitate the introduction of MFL in Stage 3. Professional development is needed for all teachers in this area.

Reading Difficulties.

Teachers need to have knowledge and understanding of the causes, symptoms of reading and writing difficulties. They need to learn how to identify difficulties and how to intervene, and provide structure and scaffolding for those who need it. Professional development is needed for all teachers in this area.

Modern Foreign Language p.52.

“the use of the L3 as the principal medium of learning and teaching the L3 and the informal use of the L3 throughout the school day is also encouraged.”

Teachers without proficiency in a school’s modern foreign language will not be able to teach it at Stage 4. In order to use a language as the medium of teaching it, a high level of competency is needed. Primary Teachers are required to have competency in the Irish language to degree level. MFL teachers at Second Level are required to have competency to degree level. The same should be required to teach the MFL in Primary Stage 4. Specialist teachers will be required.

12. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

High-quality, in-person training is essential for all curricular areas. The ‘Muintir’ workshops for the Mathematics Curriculum were welcome, but inadequate due to low numbers of places available.

Due to the ‘agentic’ and ‘flexible’ nature of all of the draft curricula, schools will need intensive, ongoing support in creating school plans for each curricular area.

Diana Abraham

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Hello, I am mother of 2 primary school girls 6 and 9 year olds. I appreciate the efforts taken by education department last few years to bring such a wonderful curriculum to the school. And I know Irish schools and curriculum are one of the best in the world. But I am bit concerned about description of family structure in the wellbeing. As we all know, family is the basic of society and nation . So I don't feel comfortable teaching very little kids that everything is good like same sex marriage or other extra martial relationships, especially in primary school age. This is the age they more listen to the teachers than parents and swallow whatever they get. Also this the age we can mould them what the way we want them as an adult. Definitely they can choose when they are adult, when they are mature enough. If they learn kindness and generosity in childhood they will be kind towards other people with sex difficulties in society. And I know, schools are very good in bringing up such all good qualities in kids. So my request is keep the old Irish values, please keep the Ireland as it is, such a beautiful country.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Wellbeing for primary school, description of family structure, page 49

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Hello, I am mother of 2 primary school girls 6 and 9 year olds. I appreciate the efforts taken by education department last few years to bring such a wonderful curriculum to the school. And I know Irish schools and curriculum are one of the best in the world. But I am bit concerned about description of family structure in the wellbeing. As we all know, family is the basic of society and nation . So I don't feel comfortable teaching very little kids that everything is good like same sex marriage or other extra martial relationships, especially in primary school age. This is the age they more listen to the teachers than parents and swallow whatever they get. Also this the age we can mould them what the way we want them as an adult. Definitely they can choose when they are adult, when they are mature enough. If they learn kindness and generosity in childhood they will be kind towards other people with sex difficulties in society. And I know, schools are very good in bringing up such all good qualities in kids. So my request is keep the old Irish values, please keep the Ireland as it is, such a beautiful country. Wellbeing for Primary school , description of family structure

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Please Don't get rid off Catholic values, especially from Catholic school

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Donna O'Sullivan

Dear Ncca

I am writing to you about the changes in the new curriculum. I have a lot of questions and concerns. I want you to please make public the details of the new curriculum. I want it to be transparent and we need to be informed about what it contains. Hopefully you will do the right thing and publish the new curriculum. Parents need to be informed.

Kind regards,

Donna O Sullivan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

In its overall vision, the curriculum aims to provide a strong foundation for every child to thrive and flourish, supporting them in realising their full potential as individuals and as members of communities and society during childhood, as they progress through primary and special education and into post-primary education. Building on their previous experiences, the curriculum views children as unique, competent, and caring individuals, and it views teachers as committed, skilful, and agentic professionals. It supports high-quality learning, teaching, and assessment that is inclusive and evidence-based, recognising the right of all children to make progress in all areas of their learning and development. While this is quite generic and all-encompassing, it is not clear through the specifications where quality learning is ensured. The focus is on a range of loosely defined approaches and issues but at no stage can a parent have a clear idea of what their children will be learning and what skills in relations to the specifications, they will develop and what quality will look like. Considering the Arts Education specification, at no stage is there any sense of assurance that a child will learn and develop skills in any of the areas specifically related to Art - the emphasis is on using art as a tool to develop in other areas. I do

not feel that this is what most parents expect from their child's education and the shaping of the curriculum leaves it open for future subjective interpretation of how the specific areas can be moulded and used as a means to other ends. Overall, the primary framework seems to extend its vision into areas of children's lives far beyond educating usurping the role of parents. It is very difficult for any parent to be able to see behind the written curriculum to understand what the real learning outcomes for their child will be, which leaves the curriculum extremely vulnerable to manipulation and used as a means rather than the end it would generally be expected to fulfil. In the languages specification the idea that languages are to be 'used' to create inclusivity is fundamentally altering the value of language and what parents will expect. It may be a perspective that this is what languages can do as a side-effect and benefit but manipulating the curriculum for this end is not the function of education or languages. There is some clarity of expectation in terms of what quality learning will look like. Through all the specifications, parents will be vulnerable to having their child's education under each area manipulated by others whose role it is not to engage in the moral formation of the child across all curricula. There are no subjects that will be 'safe' for a parent to know that 'well-meaning' or otherwise teachers and individuals will not seek to displace them in their role of providing values to their children.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specifications:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Page 11: Learning Outcomes- A playful and engaging approach to learning and teaching serves to present Arts Education as an open and accessible learning space.- This is indeed true but the curriculum

should also balance out that the Arts, like other skills, requires some discipline in the foundational skills development in different areas, that comes through repetition and practice. Page 11 _ Framework competencies: active citizenship through arts appears to be truncated to focus on global citizenship rather; under 'mathematical', the specification appears forced; Page 21-22 - arts is given a subjective and loaded value system that is not what parents may expect from an arts syllabus; Page 26 states that 'how children learn is as important as what children learn' - this is not true otherwise there would be no need for specific curricula. What is learned should not be demoted from its central place in allowing parents to know and understand 'what' their children will be taught. The curriculum gives very little indication of this throughout.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The focus on moving outside of discrete learning on languages is welcome as the previous silo'ed approach resulted in children not using Irish or other languages more frequently, limiting genuine and authentic uptake of languages. Page 15: building awareness of cultures- while nice, this is instrumentalising languages and will not be what parents expect when they are told their children are learning a language or languages. Overall, very little focus or emphasis on grammar and vocabulary aside from brief and oblique references that suggest it is being deprioritised and not acknowledged as fundamental building blocks of language use and development. The curriculum drifts into values development rather than language learning 'They learn to understand, celebrate, compare and contrast their own and other cultures and approach children from other cultures with openness and respect' which may be well meaning and the objective of respect is welcome it is not clear how this is done and may be done. A welcome side effect ought not become an objective that takes away from the core focus.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

This Specification has very expanded and slightly unfair expectations of primary students: 'Social and Environmental Education enhances children's comprehensive understanding of the interconnected historical, geographical, and societal aspects of life. It fosters their global awareness and cultural appreciation by facilitating the exploration of local, national, and global issues, promoting an understanding of the diverse experiences, cultures, traditions, values, religions, beliefs, worldviews, and environments across different times and places.' 'Social and Environmental Education helps to provide

children with knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes, dispositions, and values which enables them to actively participate in their communities and in the world as informed, empathetic, respectful, and caring members of a diverse and democratic society. It supports the development of an awareness and understanding of the key issues, past and present, affecting society. Learning in this curriculum area empowers children to act justly, sustainably, and with regard for the rights of others, responding meaningfully to these issues in a compassionate and positive manner.' It is not clear what children will actually learn; what information they will gain rather than subjectively value laden approaches to life, using very subjective adjectives of expectation. 'Social and Environmental Education helps children to discover and explore their own and others' heritage. It deepens children's understanding and awareness of human culture and identity through learning about other people and their beliefs, worldviews, cultures, systems, identities, and traditions in different times, places, and circumstances. Learning in this curriculum area supports children's interaction with peers and members of the school community to express their thoughts and ideas, enabling them to develop an awareness of how to observe, listen to and show respect for the perspectives of others.' It feels as if the weight of the world is being placed on children at primary level to ensure they are molded in a particular fashion for society at large but at the expense of their own learning and well-being 'Social and Environmental Education plays a pivotal role in realising a sustainable future through the development of children's individual and collective sense of environmental stewardship and responsibility. Children's capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national, and global levels is cultivated through learning experiences in this curriculum area, thus fostering their ability to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world. Learning in this curriculum area affords children the time and space to interact and engage meaningfully with the natural world around them and come to appreciate its value and their responsibilities as custodians of it.' More than any other area, this specification is subject to a personal and subjective worldview and provides parents with little to no insight into exactly what their children will be taught. The subjects appear to be instrumentalised to promote particular issues and areas rather than to provide information. 'To promote global citizenship. Help to foster a sense of interconnectedness with the world through exploration of diverse cultures, environments, and global issues. • To foster global and cultural awareness. Encourage children to explore diverse societies, cultures, and worldviews across different historical periods, cultivating an appreciation of the intricacies of human history.' This is an unfortunate misuse of education. Global citizenship may be perceived as a good worth pursuing but it is not certain that utilising a primary curriculum to do this is proper or fair on pupils. The use of value laden adjectives throughout - such as 'positive' are open to interpretation as to what is a 'positive change', for example.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

While this specification adheres more closely to specific learning than the others it omits any commitment or mention of developing numeracy among primary pupils. Numeracy and the basic mathematical competencies are foundational and fundamental to being able to make progress on STE subjects and a clear aim of a specific numeracy outcome ought to accompany this specification. While other specifications attempt to develop the learner beyond what would be reasonably attainable with very high level social change aspirations, the STE curriculum does not set a specific or clear aim for the learner that is tangible. Tangibility ought to be a key issue in STE subjects as it relates to the physical environment, logic, facts etc. While the curriculum sits beside the Primary Mathematical curriculum the opportunity to ensure that 'being mathematical' is embedded in STEM is being missed. It is not clear at all through the curriculum what children are expected to learn in relation to STE learning and approaches (the HOW) seem to supercede the what

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The new curriculum has seven key competencies, one of which is "being well", defined in the framework as: "This competency develops children's understanding and appreciation of wellbeing and their ability to be as healthy as they can be – physically, socially, emotionally, and spiritually. ... It also recognises the spiritual dimension of living, which enables children to experience a sense of awe and wonder and to know that life has a meaning". (p. 11) However, this general mention of spirituality in the framework disappears after a few pages. The seven key competencies, which are broad and general, are developed into different subjects. The "Wellbeing" subject includes Physical Education (PE) and also Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). As per the description above, spirituality should be included in the Wellbeing subject, and this was the case in the 1999 curriculum. But the new draft states: "Wellbeing supports children's social, emotional, and physical development now and into the future." (p. 17) Note the exclusion of spiritual development. In the new draft specification of the "Wellbeing" course there is no activity or learning experience linked to spiritual wellbeing. This is despite all the evidence that religious practice contributes to wellbeing. Page 6 states 'Additionally, it supports children in appreciating positive and healthy relationships, encompassing a balanced and inclusive understanding of human sexuality within the context of emotions and connections'. This is a primary school curriculum and this type of subject matter ought to be clearly consulted with parents so that they are aware what exactly is being taught in this regard and strong boundaries are required to avoid confusing and manipulating primary aged children in this area, if it is to be broached at all. Page 7 states: 'Provide children with a balanced, inclusive, age and developmentally appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality, fostering healthy attitudes and relationships while recognising the diversity of human experience.' This provides an extremely broad possibility of interpretation in area that ought to be primarily the responsibility of parents and again, clear boundaries are needed so that parents can be assured as to what - and who - is influencing the actual content of what their children are being taught. Overall, the specification is very broad and gives little certainty to parents as to what the content of the teaching in a very sensitive area will include. A new strand of the course is called "community and belonging". Under the heading of "Inclusive education and diversity", this is what is presented as examples of wellbeing: "Fostering a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, equality, and social justice. Challenging

stereotypes and misconceptions, and promoting empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity. Recognising and celebrating the diversity present within the classroom and in wider society". (p. 2) Besides the consideration whether this is appropriate for primary school students, this strand overlaps with another course called "Social and environmental education". The substitution of spirituality in the wellbeing course with political activism is an ideological shift that overlooks the substantial evidence demonstrating the importance of spiritual cultivation for overall wellbeing, both individually and collectively.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Clarity and boundaries.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

It needs to be clearly communicated to parents the content of what will be taught. Many parents will base their understanding of the curriculum on their own experiences, assuming that basic numeracy, literacy, facts, etc will be the focus of teaching at primary level where as the draft specifications move far beyond that to an activist approach, potentially undermining parents rights to having the final say on the moral, ethical, social and spiritual development of their children.

E.Burke

Dear Team,

I am writing to you following on from your email to me giving me this email address to write to you as opposed to the questionnaire option. Regarding the Social and Environmental strand I feel that your frequent use of words like respect/diversity/empathy does not take from the fact that this aspect to me is content that belongs to secondary schools where pupils are older and more mature and can deal with these topics better. Words like social justice/equity/human rights/sustainable development are all laudable ideals but not for kids younger than 12. Students at this age are too young and have not the ability to critically think about such topics and will merely be led by what their teacher teaches them. As regards critical thinking do you honestly believe that pupils between the ages of 5 and 12 can do this on such topics? What does critically think even mean when there is just one acceptable view of all topics? I myself am a secondary teacher and never once has the notion of "environmentally friendly" been anything other than fossil fuels bad/wind/solar energy good. Exams never ask what happens to disused windmills with a 30 year life span, or pupils opinion on the fact that the intermittent nature of producing energy from nature means that at all times a fossil fuel burning plant must be on stand by burning energy, if the ncca wanted critical thinkers then it must liaise with the SEC and ensure that that is the ultimate goal. If 12-18 year olds are not encouraged to do this I very much doubt that when the ncca speak of critical thinking regarding the environment this is what is meant. It seems more like a one-sided acceptance of "the facts/the science"

Regarding the Wellbeing option, am I right in my understanding that this will take 3 hours a week? Is Maths 4 hours? I see you write "age and development appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality". To unpack this: who decides whether a child is age appropriate? And development appropriate? As there never is a class where all pupils are equally developed will human development and sexuality be taught in groups at different stages or will some pupils in the class be taught this even though they are not as developed as their peers? Also what does the ncca mean by sexuality regarding its teaching? In another part you write of consent in healthy relationships, as these are primary school pupils to what exactly do you mean consent in a relationship? Also you speak of "trusted adult", would parents be informed in advance that their child's teacher will be teaching them about a "trusted adult", otherwise I could well imagine parents would be furious should it be mentioned at the dinner table that that is what was discussed by their primary school teacher that day. In another part you write that pupils will learn about the changes that happen to a woman's body during pregnancy, does

the ncca feel this is developmentally appropriate to children as young as 12? Are teachers suitably trained for such sensitive topics?(and I am not talking about a one day course in their nearest Education Centre or some teacher on secondment going from school to school training in a whole staff during their Croke Park hours) I could write a lot more about my objections to the wellbeing strand of this new curriculum and I believe that I am far from alone in my objections to it. I ask the ncca not to stray the curriculum into areas where both teachers and parents are uncomfortable Please pause, stop and take your responsibility of shaping the minds of our children deeply seriously, not every fad has to be followed, not every trend needs to be reflected in the classroom. Homes are where parents can decide when it is appropriate for their children to be taught about sex and sexuality education as well as empathy and environmental respect not paying lip to what is "green"

Éamonn MacCionnaith

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I completely disagree with the idea of replacing the fostering of an Irish identity with that of a "global citizen". Developing an Irish identity is fundamental to the education of our children. That identity is the one thing that unites all of the children in schools, regardless of what social, racial background they come from. A "global citizen" is meaningless jargon that will mean nothing to a child. Their Irish identity however, is something real, something that they can embrace and celebrate. I'm also against the issues of gender and sexual identity being brought into primary school curriculums. The children are too young for those types of issues. They are at an age where they could be easily influenced by such teachings. It's not appropriate for a primary school classroom.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Edel Cahill

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I think it doesn't address it at all it's only going to serve the purpose of overloading teachers and an already completely overloaded curriculum

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Unless it involves a complete overhaul of the support given to teachers it is completely completely unnecessary we are overloaded as it is

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant. Si

I think this is an absolute disgrace and COMPLETELY unnecessary we are already completely completely overloaded in ALL areas of literacy in Gaeilge and English I think this is another way to COMPLETELY overload schools it is actually comical to me to think that we are considering trying to squeeze in a modern language when we are already completely overwhelmed in all areas of literacy at the moment

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I think this is a good idea

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Again unless there is complete Support given to teacher this will not work

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

We do not need or areas to try and squeeze in at primary level

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

We do not need more curriculums to try and cover at primary school level

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

We do not need more curriculums to try and cover at primary level

Elaine Angland

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The Draft Curriculum is intended to be for all children in Primary and Special Schools. However the learning outcomes need to reflect the exemplars to incorporate all pupils including pupils with special needs. It is very unclear if the Special School Curriculum Guidelines are to form part of the planning and assessment process in line with the new curriculum or are they redundant? The incorporation of the Special School Curriculum linked to the learning outcomes of the Draft Curriculum would allow teachers the opportunity to plan across their cohort of pupils. If linked effectively to learning outcomes and exemplars would make the draft curriculum inclusive.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

1

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The Draft Curriculum is intended to be for all children in Primary and Special Schools. However the learning outcomes need to reflect the exemplars to incorporate all pupils including pupils with special needs. It is very unclear if the Special School Curriculum Guidelines are to form part of the planning and assessment process in line with the new curriculum or are they redundant? The incorporation of the Special School Curriculum linked to the learning outcomes of the Draft Curriculum would allow teachers the opportunity to plan across their cohort of pupils. If linked effectively to learning outcomes and exemplars would make the draft curriculum inclusive.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Learning outcomes reflecting the exemplars for Pupils with SEN

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

The inclusion of a MFL for pupils with SEN is problematic as it brings with it the fear that there will need to be exemptions granted. Rather than a compulsory inclusion should it not form part of the transition programme for 6th class? Is MFL relevant for Special Schools?

Professor Elaine Murtagh

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

It's clear that agency and flexibility to teachers is afforded in the Wellbeing Specification. It's welcome that the PE Activity Areas allow for a broad range of experiences for children.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The increased time allocation for PE is very welcome (p45). Ireland currently has one of the lowest time allocations for physical education in Europe (see Eurodyce Report). The increase to 2 hours per week for 1st - 6th class and 1 hour 40 minutes per week for junior & senior infants is needed to allow children to reap the benefits of a quality physical education programme. The time allocation and ratio between PE and SPHE should feature earlier in the specification and be highlighted strongly. It's important that the

new time allocation is absolutely clear to readers of the specification. Learning in and through movement is a fundamental component of physical education. While this component is acknowledged in the specification, 'movement' features on the last row of many of the tables through the document, e.g table 5 (p1), section 6a (p 31). Indeed the PE activity areas are not introduced until p45 of the specification. Early in the document , table 3 (p8) gives the misleading impression that physical education amounts to 25% of the wellbeing specification. The crucial role that movement plays in the physical education (wellbeing) curriculum should be forefronted and this should be reflected in how the documentation is presented. For generalist teachers, more detail in what is expected to be achieved through the psychomotor learning outcomes may be needed. In fact, it is notable that there are a relatively small number of psychomotor learning outcomes in the specification (p 14 – 29). For a practical subject like physical education, "doing" is central and this should be reflected in a greater number of psychomotor learning outcomes, alongside more detail on what is meant by the current learning outcomes.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Compulsory in-service for all teachers is absolutely essential to ensure that the revised curriculum is implemented to the benefit of all students.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

It's heartening to see these changes proposed for primary physical education. Congratulations to all those involved in the development group.

Elizabeth Maguire

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The Draft Primary Curriculum seeks to focus primary education on a different set of priorities than before, ostensibly in response to popular demand. But in so doing, it downplays the spiritual dimension of human beings and promotes a politicised and activist dimension in its place. But aspects of social justice and wellbeing are contested depending on one's moral perspective and, yes, spiritual beliefs. These values, if taught in school to children, may and often will conflict with the child's family values and even if a school otherwise continues to provide a religious or spiritual education programme, these mixed value will confuse the child and create conflict with their parents/guardians, which opposes the principle of collaboration between parents and school in the education of children. The Well-being curriculum downplays the benefits to the child, mentally and socially of religious faith and practice which is clear from many studies carried out by sociologists. Children benefit more from this than from political and social justice education for which they are too young to grasp. Therefore I oppose the Draft Primary Curriculum which in effect replaces one set of values and beliefs with another set, despite its claims to be of universal appeal and acceptance. This is simply not the case.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page

numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Emer Maguire

As a parent, teacher and guidance counsellor I have grave concerns about the direction that the SPHE specification has taken over the last number of years, in particular the RSE element. I voiced these concerns during the consultation on JC SPHE as did many other parents and teachers. However, it appears that government funded lobby groups such as TENI and BelongTo appear to have a louder voice than concerned parents and teachers in this area. With the new primary school curriculum coming, I ask you to take into account the findings of the recent Cass report in relation to gender identity..the report expresses serious caution over the affirming model of gender identity...the JC specification has gone too far in presenting this ideology as scientific fact and i am asking to please protect our primary school children from this indoctrination...at the very least, please pause the introduction of this new specification until there is further research in this area...let children be children without confusing them with labels.

Kind regards
Emer Maguire

Emma Griffin

Hi,

Gender Identity is a concept which not based on biological facts. As such it should not be taught to children in schools. The Cass Report reveals the irreversible damage done to children by well-meaning adults, who encourage vulnerable children to live out their 'gender identity'.

Children who feel profoundly sad, alienated, and/or lonely need love and care from adults , not to be encouraged to be guinea pigs for a social experiment which claims, without evidence, to end their suffering.

Please leave gender identity out of the school curriculum.

Kind regards,
Emma Griffin

Eoin Walsh

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

As a teacher, I want a more practical, easy-to-understand curriculum. I want it presented in clear, simple language that I can understand

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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 - Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)
- Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.*

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Erika Piazzoli,

Assistant Professor in Arts Education, Trinity College Dublin

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

No answer

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

On page 32, it states: "Questioning: Effective, well-crafted and probing questions that are open and accompanied by APPROPRIATE WAIT TIME can support teachers to gauge children's understanding." This is commendable, in principle, but seems hard to achieve given the short time slots available for the classes. How can the teachers balance the tension between questioning (as intended above – mindful of time) and the pressure of shorter hours? On p. 33, it states: "Although these may be designed by teachers, children can also play a key role in co-creating checklists, rubrics, and success criteria to guide and support their own learning." I was wondering whether and how teachers can be supported in creating these checklists, in ways that are non-judgmental and foster children's agency. In the Glossary, on page 35, I was wondering about the rationale for the term 'concept' replacing 'elements' of drama. These are defined, on the same page, as: "The key ingredients and essential building blocks for Art, Drama, and Music and learning in other art forms," thus, effectively, the term 'concept' is intended as a synonym for 'elements'. I believe that keeping to the term 'elements' would be important to align with the seminal international publications like 'Dramawise Reimagined: Learning to manage the elements of drama,' by Haseman and O'Toole (2017), which has profoundly influenced curricula in Australia and the UK for the last three decades. On page 40, 'Symbolic meaning-making' is not present in Appendix B (concepts), though it is listed on p. 35. This is defined as: "Using symbols such as words, gestures, and images, to convey information or express thoughts, feelings, or ideas to others." I believe this is hugely important to the form of drama, and I was wondering why this has gone from the Appendix? In the Appendix, I note that some of the elements of drama are missing and, in particular, LANGUAGE was classed as an element of drama in Haseman and O'Toole's (2017) seminal classification. I believe it is very important to keep 'language' in the curriculum. The element of 'Language' was intended not only as verbal but also as para-language and non-verbal language – a fundamental cornerstone to include children from backgrounds other than English, who can still express themselves in the drama (and music, visual arts) class through para and non-verbal language, especially as the focus of the new curriculum is on embodied pedagogy. In my recent work, I have developed a framework for creative processes for a trauma-informed approach to arts pedagogy – with particular attention to teaching English to refugee and migrant learners, through the arts (drama and music). This framework is called: 'Painting the Shades

Between Safety and Bravery'. Something which emerged strongly from this research-based framework is the role of languages for the creation of 'safe spaces' as 'brave spaces' with refugee and migrant learners engaged in creative arts. This includes 7 points, designed with a trauma-informed approach in mind: 1. Challenging by choice, by which participants are free to choose which activities to engage in. 2. Modelling vulnerability, by having facilitators, artists, and researchers participating alongside participants. 3. Reassuring participants that they can participate free of judgment or criticism. 4. Allowing time in the programme to build trust and rapport among participants. 5. Providing opportunities to extend their participation through improvisation and the sharing of their own writing, stories, or artistic creations. 6. Encouraging participants to share, show, or demonstrate in any language, or simply through gesture. 7. Encouraging participants to take risks by standing up, moving around, embodying emotions, improvising, and taking up new roles. (Piazzoli et al, 2023, p. 176) Given the high population of migrant children in our Irish schools, I think it is important, in the arts curriculum, to mention trauma-informed

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

In my recent work, I have developed a framework for creative processes for a trauma-informed approach to arts pedagogy – with particular attention to teaching English to refugee and migrant learners, through the arts (drama and music). This framework is called: 'Painting the Shades Between Safety and Bravery'. Something which emerged strongly from this research-based framework is the role of languages for the creation of 'safe spaces' as 'brave spaces' with refugee and migrant learners engaged in creative arts. This includes 7 points, designed with a trauma-informed approach in mind: 1. Challenging by choice, by which participants are free to choose which activities to engage in. 2. Modelling vulnerability, by having facilitators, artists, and researchers participating alongside participants. 3. Reassuring participants that they can participate free of judgment or criticism. 4. Allowing time in the programme to build trust and rapport among participants. 5. Providing opportunities to extend their participation through improvisation and the sharing of their own writing, stories, or artistic creations. 6. Encouraging participants to share, show, or demonstrate in any language, or simply through gesture. 7. Encouraging participants to take risks by standing up, moving around, embodying emotions, improvising, and taking up new roles. (Piazzoli et al, 2023, p. 176) Given the high population of migrant children in our Irish schools, I think it is important, in the arts curriculum, to mention trauma-informed strategies, especially as art forms like drama and music are powerful mediums through which teachers can connect with, but also unsettle, refugee and migrant children. For a full report of the trauma-informed strategy, see <https://www.tara.tcd.ie/handle/2262/103910> and <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/edit/10.4324/9781003093077/performative-language-learning-refugees-migrants-erika-piazzoli-fiona-dalziel>.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

As stated above, it is important for teachers to be aware of trauma-informed pedagogy, across the arts, languages, wellbeing and beyond.

Ethel Monahan

To whom it May Concern,

Please accept the following as a written submission of concerns in relation to the Primary Curriculum 2024. I write this letter on behalf of myself and my wife Ethel Monahan.

We currently have 3 children attending primary level education all under the age of 9. We are practicing Catholics and our children attend a Catholic school.

The following are my concerns that I feel obliged to raise in relation to the curriculum.

- The lack of full clarity in terms of the learning outcomes raises concerns in relation to what is actually being thought to our children. The learning outcomes documented are very vague and shows that they are not age appropriate. Children do not need to be subjected to inappropriate learning material that is beyond their age bracket. This has the potential to increase childrens anxieties and impact on their mental health. This approach of radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualisation has been apposed in the UK.
- We as parents do not see the content of what is being thought to our children or how it is being thought. This goes against the ethos of Catholic schools
- We have serious concerns in relation to the secrecy pact that is enforced for children to sign. This is unethical, and nothing short of grooming. Information is not age appropriate and children are then told not to discuss the information outside the classroom. This goes against the childrens first act where the childs safety and welfare is paramount.

As a father of 3 young boys attending primary school I feel i have a duty of care to advocate for the rights of my children. The examples above outlines omy some of the concerns that I have in relation to this curriculum. I am completely oposed to this curriculum being introduced. The fact that this programme has been apposed in the UK solidifies my comcerns that this is not appropriate within the Irish curriculum also.

I hope that concerns submitted will be taken seriously and acted upon.

Many thanks for you time.

Kind Regards

John and Ethel Monahan

Initial Comments

The proposed Draft Curricula would seem to undermine the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum. The 1999 Curriculum had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression.

The 2012 update to increase the focus on literacy and mathematics was also to be welcomed, particularly for early learners. The new Draft Primary Curriculum would appear to be moving away from that emphasis again in favour of political and global social justice themes. Before getting into each specific subject area, the following are some broad based concerns to start of with.

- **Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes** (generic/ unspecified) – the intent of each outcome is not clear from the language used.
- **Unclear, underdeveloped progression** across Learning Outcomes (little differentiation between different stages and across skills development); many learning outcomes specified for Stage 1 (Junior & Senior Infants) could be as easily applied in Stage 4 (5th and 6th classes).
- **The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes** could lose the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have certain minimum standards in each subject for a balanced provision of education across schools (whether urban/ rural, large/ small, mostly Irish/ newcomer, advantaged/ disadvantaged status) across the country. Therefore, one must ask:
 - How will schools be able to ensure and maintain standards across the curriculum across the country?
 - How will schools be able to Assess unclear Outcomes?
- **The ‘spiral’ nature of the 1999 curriculum seems to have been lost** (where children would revisit a concept again later in their school lives at a greater level of challenge to develop and deepen understanding)
- **Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness** (not starting from where the child is at, introducing themes (Social Justice and Climate related at a totally inappropriate time in a child’s development)
- **More focused on global and political concerns** than local tangible concerns of the child and in grounding them in the reality of their Irish citizenship first and foremost.
- **Shift in focus to ‘how’ children learn over ‘what’** - could lead to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts. This is not appropriate or inclusive for all learners.
- **The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses** e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is **‘Be an Activist’** (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes, promoting particular positions and opinions): this follows Queer Theory and Critical Marxist Theory of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and foreign concepts of Race (such as ‘white privilege’). These approaches could trigger guilt, fear, anger, and existential anxiety, moreover they are intended to do so by Queer Pedagogues such as Kevin Kumashiro whose practices are nothing short of psychological child abuse. There is an element of brain washing and trauma bonding here, guilt away all of a child’s existing beliefs and then replacing them with a new set of beliefs.

- **Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity** could be challenging for children and not always age appropriate. If a Subject is being taught through a lens (e.g. of empathy/ activism/ of challenging stereotypes), where is learning for learning's sake? The focus should be on the subject matter and taught through a politically neutral lens, not a postmodern Social Justice/Critical Marxist or Queer political lens for example.
- **The deprecation of History as a subject at both Primary and Secondary level is a major concern.** A foundational knowledge of both the history of Ireland, the history of Europe and the World as a whole has been a basic ingredient of any Irish child's education. Understanding the past helps guide decisions for the future and helps act as a warning against repeating errors and atrocities from the past. It also helps put current conflicts into context. We have a concern that the NCCA are succumbing to the current fashionable trend of curriculum "de-colonisation", something that appears to be rampant in Western culture right now, driven by radical Post Colonial Theory with its destructive political motivations.
- **No acknowledgement of recent developments such as the Cass Report, WPATH files and the UK turnaround in educational strategy.** The UK's decision to remove contested ideologies from the classroom is notable and the NCCA should be following suit along with revisions to assure age-appropriateness in sexuality education rather than following the approaches of Radical Feminist and Queer Theorists who have clearly run the rule over the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum. Just because something appears academically trendy doesn't mean it's grounded in reality. The musings of Judith Butler are an opinion, not a scientific reality, and to treat them as the latter with regards to childhood education is bordering on criminal negligence on the part of any educator. The fact that the terms Gender Dysphoria, Desistance and Detransition are missing from all of the SPHE material is proof, if proof was required, of ideological capture. There can be no room or tolerance for this within a state education system.

In summary, these Draft Curricula:

- **Lack structure and clarity in the Learning Outcomes:** need to start where the child is at and have a clear progression of skills and concepts to scaffold learning. The content is driven by high-level ideals and are intangible and invisible.
- **Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound:** Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.
- **Provide no visibility for parents in their unspecified nature:** 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'. Moreover, the NCCA would appear to be going out of their way to circumvent parental visibility by every means possible – books staying at school, whole school and cross curriculum approaches, class contracts. All of these are attempted violations of parental rights by the NCCA. There must be 100% transparency for parents.
- **Lack consistency:** without a clear Curriculum (programme of work), how will the high standards of Irish Primary education be maintained across the country? From school to school?

- **SPHE needs to be grounded in reality and age-appropriateness:** Postmodern Theory is not reality and moreover denies objective truth be it based in science or the natural world.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

1. This Curriculum uses **the Arts as a vehicle for social change** (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. Furthermore, this level of integration, means children do not get to enjoy and experience the Arts as valuable in their own right.

P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and

misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.'

P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'

Is this an appropriate goal of an Arts Curriculum? This is using the Arts with an ulterior motive, which is not appropriate? Is it in conflict with developing personal meaningful responses to the Arts?

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children:

P4&5 Rationale: very intellectual intentions around 'appreciation' and 'enhanced aesthetic and cultural understanding and begin cultivating their unique and collective ... identities' – is this age-appropriate? This type of teaching is not inclusive as it is not accessible for all children. There is over emphasis on Identity over Experiences and Skills development.

P6 Aims of Artistic Engagement, Aesthetic Appreciation, Cultural and Contextual Awareness – again these Aims are very high-level, intellectual concepts with little emphasis on skills development or enjoyment.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity'

This looks like a paragraph from a Culturally Relevant Teaching paper. Seriously, are we trying to learn another language here is this just another part of the Social Justice agenda. What does this actually mean in terms of learning French or German?

This **is the language of identity politics**. Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language. Does this suggest an agenda of teaching a foreign language as integration of newcomer migrants over preparing children for their futures? How could it be possible to create social cohesion? Surely learning a language should be being able to communicate, as a priority over Inclusion ideologies?

Section 2(c): Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/aqtb5phc/draft_primary_seeeducation_specification_2024.pdf

Overview Assessment

- The primary concern here is the age group being targeted here **5-8 year olds**. These are children that are only learning to read and do maths. Basic Geography and History is appropriate but a shift to a global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is an **indoctrinating agenda in how to be a good Global citizen**, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (*Be an Activist* is a *Key Competency*). What follows is some more detail, but in truth, we shouldn't be having this discussion at all. Apart from some Geography and History, the rest of the time should be contributing to the children's broader literacy skills and not instilling climate anxiety into young learners.
- **This is in opposition to child-centred teaching**, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. Ireland has historically had strong identities around parish/ county/ province/ nation. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. These are strengths of the country which should be embraced, not diluted or diminished.
- **The Global Learning Themes (p21-22)** could all be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. **Non-native children need to learn about Ireland, their new home.**
- **SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear** around the dangers of the modern global world (war, famine, natural disasters...) Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.
- **This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis** on lenses such as *empathy, respect* and *challenging worldviews* 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate? This is UNESCO SDG 2030 Speak. Is this an appropriate burden to place on young people? Could Big questions like these lead to increased anxiety and disempowerment? **What about learning History and Geography for the benefit and enjoyment of the subjects themselves without an agenda of moulding vulnerable young minds and hearts?**

Specific Review Notes and Comments

Page 18 / 23

Working as a Geographer:

"...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy"

This where the concerns go up a notch. The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer", seriously? We are already introducing a massive challenge with the integrated curriculum and in summary, this approach, while on the surface appearing as a progressive form of

pedagogy, becomes **too "loosely constructed"** for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of **what the learning objectives should be**. Yes, learn to be a Geographer and what are you going to learn "as a geographer". Perhaps starting with the topics of weather and climate for example? What about learning something about your local and national geography and where Ireland sits in a global context? At an age-appropriate level of course that can be built on at Secondary level.

Working as a Historian: The exact same points apply as above. A basic history of Ireland and Europe is essential for all learners and regardless of whether they are of Irish origin or not. Discussions in relation to climate change and sustainability are more appropriate for older children who have a knowledge baseline that can put these themes into context. Without a proper knowledge baseline, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination.

Page 21

Global Learning Themes

Quite frankly, this looks like a **Critical Social Justice / Climate Action playbook** and these themes would appear to be the real priority with respect to this particular aspect of the curriculum, over and above any learning objectives in history or geography. The fact that these same 5 themes are also likely to serve as "generative themes" across the entire Primary curriculum is also a concern, using **the entire curriculum to further political interests** rather than service the educational needs of the children involved. Cross curricular themes are an entry point for activist teachers to put an over emphasis on the politics they wish to instill on the children leading to indoctrination on the one hand and the degradation of scholarship on the other. I've seen this 40 years ago and it's potentially much worse now. Keep the subjects focused on the subject matter.

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge.

The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality. Similar commentary as per above on Geography.

Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum – Further Review Notes and Comments

Page 16

Learning Outcomes

Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centred, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1 (these are infants)!

Pages 16 & 17

Engineering

This is all very vague.

Pages 24 - 27

6c. Assessing Primary Science, Technology and Engineering

Further to concerns expressed above, the lack of specificity and clarity with respect to the curriculum content carries into assessment - without a clearly defined foundational core, the variation in learning experience and outcomes between different schools could become a major issue, particularly at the lower end of the scale.

Page 31

"Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting

children’s learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time.”

This last paragraph is worrying - it implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst, making any form of objective assessment an impossibility.

Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

Wellbeing Curriculum Specification – First Pass Assessment

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but “spiritual” is mentioned only 3 times (2 of those in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development.

Physical education (PE) has been co-opted to include more SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) content than “Physical” content in the learning outcomes. (e.g. at Stage 3 & 4: p20 PE Movement Education gets only 1 page, p21-23 show SPHE aspects of PE Emotional and Relational PE, Health Education PE, Community and Belonging PE. This is paying lip service to PE as a subject and introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the *PE Activity Areas* (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)

Additional Review Notes and Comments

1. ‘...***inclusive understanding of human sexuality***’ (p.4) – what does ‘***inclusive sexuality***’ mean – gay or lesbian, non-binary, transgender etc? ‘Inclusive’ human sexuality is quite inappropriate for Primary School children and should not be included. The teaching of radical Gender Identity theory – that a child could become ‘*a boy or a girl, neither or both*’ - as fact should be removed from the Primary curriculum in view of the recent findings of the **Cass report** into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria: **that gender identity ideology should not be taught in schools**. The NCCA would do well to follow the example of the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, and that sexuality education should be age-appropriate and not the nonsense outline in the activist influenced and ideologically compromised WHO and UNESCO sexuality guidelines.

2. ‘...***the concept of consent within relationships***’ (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is most unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed.

3. ‘Provide children with a balanced, inclusive, ***age and developmentally appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality*** ...’(p.7) - Again, basing any curriculum to the *WHO Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe* with it’s highly sexualised approach to children (eg ‘*0-4 years of age – teach masturbation; 9-12 years of age - teach first sexual encounter*’) is inappropriate. It’s important to safeguard children and their innocence. Yes, childhood innocence does still exist, despite the Alfred Kinsey and Queer activist views that it does not.

4. “Foster ***respect for diversity, championing active citizenship, human rights, fairness, and social responsibility to create inclusive and compassionate learning environments***’ (p.7) - Schools should not be used to transform children into social activists, and ‘***diversity***’ and ‘***inclusive***’ are established terms for a pro-LGBTQ emphasis in SPHE material, which has led to an excessive emphasis on sexual orientation and gender identity. **Identity politics** has no place in the

classroom - putting labels on children and notions of systemic racism, white privilege, oppression and intersectionality. The impact of Queer activism was clearly apparent in the Junior cycle. Queer is a political identity that is in opposition to the Norm –so by definition it is not politically neutral and **it is not inclusive** given it's very clear political stance. The adoption of Queer Pedagogical approaches by the NCCA is not acceptable. These are inherently political and not child friendly.

5. *'Recognise examples of **stereotypes** (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote **gender equality** through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is **an attack on 'heteronormativity'** the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. This is confusing for young children and should not be depicted in the Primary School Curriculum. Again, we're seeing Queer activist language here. Take it out.*

6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.'(p.38) - **Parents rights** should supersede '*Childrens rights*' at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact – e.g. transitioning to a different gender – and children should not be indoctrinated to become social activists.

7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) - External facilitators in the area of sexuality education who are pushing an agenda, a political agenda – e.g. BelongTo, ShoutOut, TENI re LGBTQ content – should not be allowed to make presentations to children, especially in view of BelongTo's training manual which advised instructors to lie to parents. There should be **no secrecy pacts** between teachers or instructors and children to keep teaching material secret from parents – this breaches parent's constitutional rights.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

I believe the overall curriculum is not fit to proceed as it is currently documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the obvious **"Education for Social Justice"** agenda which is blatant attempt at political indoctrination. We're seen the impact of this approach in other countries such as the USA and Canada and to a lesser extent the UK, who appear to have now made a course correction to address some of the most egregious issues they had. We appear to be obsessed with following suit. Unfortunately, the educational scholarship of the last 20 years is infected with destructive radical postmodern Theory (with a capital T). The related pedagogical approaches are all about politics and activism and not about learning and scholarship and hence inappropriate for adoption regardless of what their proponents might argue. Ireland is coming from a strong position in terms of educational standards so we have much to lose if we make the wrong decisions with respect to a revised Primary Curriculum. We have already executed a mis-step in the Junior Cycle

1. **Parental Visibility and Transparency**
 - a. There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts.
 - b. If the pedagogical approach requires the use of class contracts then it is unsuitable and needs to be replaced.
 - c. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials that children will be exposed to.
2. **Curriculum Definition and Clarity**

- a. Notions that “being a Geographer” or “being a Historian” alone can be the primary learning outcome are not acceptable and a gross over simplification.
 - b. The notion of broaching the topics of climate change and sustainability without children having the necessary foundational knowledge to properly contextualise these themes shows an emphasis on pushing a particular agenda rather than imparting factual knowledge.
3. **Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation:** Removal of all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:
 - a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization
 - b. Parents reject the WHO and UNESCO Sexuality Education Guidelines – these are not age appropriate and were clearly influenced by Queer activists who by definition, take oppositional positions on sex and gender to most “normative” parents. They violate safeguarding and deliberately seek to problematise sex, gender and sexuality for very young children. This is not education.
 - c. The introduction of **Critical Social Justice** and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism, either in terms of name or in terms of substance are not acceptable.
4. **The teaching of radical Gender Identity Theory** – that a child could transition their gender from boy to girl and vice-versa - should be removed from Primary curricula. The final **Cass report** into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that **gender ideology should not be taught in schools**. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.
5. **Cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed**, be it in relation to themes of sex and gender or any other political themes, be it in terms of those above, or themes such as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Climate or Sustainability.
 - a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,
 - b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs
6. **Learning needs to be for knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism.** In line with the above, all knowledge given to pupils must be factual, science based, age appropriate and not based on contested ideologies, e.g. **Gender self-Identification** Ideology cannot be taught in primary schools.
7. The “**lived experience**” of a 5-12 year old is very limited in the context of most of the themes being pushed in this curriculum, so the level of child agency and of a child-centred approach would appear to be inappropriate.
8. **Critical Thinking (Not Critical Marxist Thinking or any derivative of same)** needs to be taught as a politically neutral foundational analytical skill upon which the merits/demerits of any concept or assertion can be assessed. This would appear to be unpopular in the current politically charged culture which is precisely the reason it needs to be taught now more than ever. Irish children need to be able to think for themselves and view the world through a politically neutral lens and be capable of engaging in reasoned argument and debate regardless of the prevailing narratives in the culture.
9. **Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches**
The focus on Social Justice is a huge concern. Education for Social Justice would point to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all of which would be heavily weighted in politics and radical postmodern ideologies – **indoctrination in**

other words, and totally unacceptable. Unfortunately, most modern pedagogical scholarship from the last 20+ years intrinsically embed either “Critical” Marxist activism, Queer Theory, Post Colonial Theory or intersections and derivatives of same – all wholly inappropriate due to their political bias.

10. **Fundamentally, the curriculum must be de-politicised and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.**

12. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

1. **Collaboration with parents:** There will clearly be a level of teacher agency with respect to the curriculum implementation and this will introduce a level of a level of customization at a local school level. Historically, the engagement with parents and the visibility to parents of what is being taught has been worked in a very open and collaborative way at primary level. It is essential that this level of cooperation is maintained.
2. **Parental Consultation:** The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered.
3. **Social Transitioning:** Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools.
4. **Parental Knowledge,** consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy.
5. **Ethos:** It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos.
6. **For Catholic schools:** The “Dignitas Infinita” document issued by the Vatican in April 2024 is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools in accordance with Canon Law.

Concerns over any approaches adopting Critical Pedagogy or Postmodern Theory either at a curriculum or individual school level:

1. The emphasis on critical consciousness and social transformation may overlook the importance of foundational skills and knowledge acquisition. There is a need to balance critical inquiry with the development of basic literacy, numeracy, and other essential competencies.
2. Freire's work specifically, was deeply rooted in the context of Latin American liberation struggles and in adult literacy education. Application to young learners in a Western context is questionable at best.
3. Critical pedagogy often involves engaging students in complex discussions about power, privilege, and social justice issues. This approach may overwhelm students, particularly younger learners or those with limited background knowledge or cognitive development.
4. Freire emphasized the role of the teacher as a facilitator and co-learner rather than an authority figure. However, in modern educational systems characterized by large class sizes, standardized curricula, and accountability measures, teachers may struggle to adopt this more collaborative and student-centred approach. Teachers still need to provide guidance, structure, and expertise in facilitating learning effectively.
5. Critical pedagogy carries a very real risk of being used as a tool for ideological indoctrination or political activism in the classroom. There is a fine line between fostering critical thinking and imposing specific ideological perspectives on students.

6. Postmodernism emphasises the subjectivity of knowledge and challenges the idea of objective truth. This emphasis on relativism and scepticism will lead to confusion and uncertainty among students about what constitutes valid knowledge and understanding.
7. Postmodernism questions traditional sources of authority and expertise, including those within educational institutions. While this can encourage students to think critically and challenge authority, it may also erode trust in educators and undermine the role of teachers as facilitators of learning.
8. Postmodernism challenges the idea of a fixed, universal curriculum, advocating instead for a more flexible and inclusive approach to education. While this may allow for greater diversity and relevance in the curriculum, it could also lead to a loss of coherence and continuity in students' learning experiences, as well as gaps in essential knowledge and skills.
9. Postmodern approaches prioritize identity, diversity, and difference, encouraging students to explore and celebrate their identities and those of others. While promoting inclusivity and equity, this emphasis on identity could also reinforce divisions based on identity categories and undermine a sense of shared community and belonging.
10. While emphasising cultural diversity and relativism, as well as promoting tolerance and respect for diverse beliefs and values, it could also lead to moral relativism and a reluctance to make moral judgments about right and wrong, potentially undermining efforts to foster ethical behaviour and social responsibility.
11. Postmodern principles such as deconstruction, hybridity, and multiplicity are difficult to translate into concrete educational practices and policies. This creates a struggle to balance the need for critical inquiry and creativity with the requirements of standardized testing, accountability measures, and curriculum standards.
12. Postmodernism challenges traditional assessment based on standardised testing and objective measures of achievement. While advocating for more holistic and authentic forms of assessment, it may also raise concerns about accountability and evaluation, as well as the potential for bias and subjectivity in assessment processes.

We can see many of these concerns manifest in the proposed curriculum as it stands. We can see the creeping lack of academic rigor and the prioritization of social, political and cultural issues over core academic subjects. I believe the line between education and indoctrination has been crossed.

In Summary

We've seen how education has been destroyed in other countries through aggressive colonisation with so-called progressive postmodern politics and ideologies, to the detriment of scholarship and child welfare. We should be doing everything in our power to ensure that doesn't happen here, which is not the case right now.

Excellence, not Equity, needs to be the goal – everyone being the best they can be, fostering co-operation and a spirit of generosity between children to share and assist in each other's development, with appropriate accommodation for those with more challenging physical and psychological conditions. The alternative is a race to the bottom, the normalization of low standards so that no one feels left out, that no one feels "oppressed".

Objective critical thinking needs to be fostered in place of Freirean "Critical Thinking", the ability to rationally and objectively critique and assess, free from the destructive political and ideological bias that appears to be rampant in our current society. Debate must be fostered and children

encouraged to both consider and voice oppositional positions to any perceived orthodoxy without fear of any repercussion.

Ireland, and Irish Education should not be a slave to the academic tyranny (and resulting degradation in scholarship in favour of activism), that is raging through the Western World. We need to be brave enough to reject this, and find our own path to ensure that the new curriculum is an enhancement on it's predecessor and not a degradation, as we bow to the will of activists and politicians, be it in our own country, or to the will of external agencies. We need to be independent critical thinkers and makers of our own destiny, and not slaves willing to sacrifice all that we have that is good, for the sake of some sort of global conformance in a world of billionaire dominated philanthropy, and their associated agendas which they seek to impose on everyone. If a level of national autonomy was ever required, it is now.

Faisal Hassam

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Professor Fionnuala Waldron

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the draft curriculum from the perspective of history education. There are several aspects of this new draft that I welcome. Firstly, its identification of enquiry as the key pedagogy of history. This aligns the curriculum with research and the language of practice internationally. The focus on historical questions is particularly welcome and a core aspect of children's historical learning. While historical investigation was an important focus of the 1999 curriculum, the failure to include any focus on questions was identified as a deficit (McCully & Waldron, 2013). Secondly, the continuing recognition of the child as historian and on historical knowledge as constructed is important, both of which were key characteristics of the 1999 curriculum. I was also pleased to see the identification of historical concepts and skills named as key components of historical learning. I would like to address some areas, however, that you might reconsider. This personal submission is in addition to a group submission with my colleagues XXX.

Social purpose of history education:

History teaching at primary level is a pro-social practice rather than an academic exercise; therefore, it is essential to identify the aims and purposes that inform the curriculum, how they accord with the current and future needs of a society and contribute to the construction of a more peaceful, just and sustainable world. It is important, then, that it helps build children's capacities to critically examine current issues, understand their historical roots, and how they are linked to present and possible future outcomes. These might include, for example, instances of conflict, patterns of migration, climate change, global injustices such as slavery, poverty, famine and acts of genocide such as the Holocaust, along with understanding change, and the impact of human actions, individual and collective, on change. In addition, these need to be understood in the context of local, national and global histories, allowing children to see big pictures of the past and develop usable historical frameworks.

Therefore, I was pleased to see history, as part of SEE, linked to important social and political concepts such as global citizenship, human rights, democracy, equity, social, and environmental justice and sustainable development as principles of learning, teaching and assessment. Nonetheless, I feel that the draft curriculum lacks the kind of underpinning philosophy that made the 1999 curriculum recognised as an innovative and progressive curriculum, responding to the needs of a changing Ireland. A reading of the Broad Objectives of the 1999 curriculum, for example, will demonstrate that it responds to the needs of Ireland as a post-conflict society in the process of opening up to other cultures, other ways of seeing the world and sensitive to the existence, needs and histories of different communities and traditions on the island of Ireland. Because these ideas are considered through a historical lens, they permeate the objectives, providing a coherent and robust foundation for the curriculum that follows.

I understand that the requirements of integration make it difficult to be specific regarding historical context. However, the lack of context, along with the absence of guidelines on

content (commented on below), make the curriculum appear free-floating, rather than rooted. If you removed the few explicit references to Ireland, you would not be able to identify its national context. This contributes to the generic and ahistorical feel of the document. Given the role of history in the construction of identity, the need to interrogate such identities and the growing recognition of multiple and hybrid identities, a curriculum that fails to address its context needs some rethinking. Moreover, there are key and iconic events and periods in Irish history that should be covered if children are to understand the past, the present and how they are linked. The failure to name them risks that they will not be taught in all schools.

Structure:

The draft curriculum is structured through strands and elements. While I find the term 'element' very confusing and difficult to conceptualise in the context (something like 'practices' or 'processes' would be far more intuitive and dynamic), the elements themselves provide a foundational space for three key processes of enquiry, communication and connecting. However, as currently conceptualised within the framework, neither their role in the framework or how they connect to the overall structure is clear.

In the absence of an overview of the structure, and how each part contributes to and interacts with the whole, it is difficult to understand how the draft curriculum is structured. It seems to lack both coherence and clarity. For example, while I understand the role of key competencies in the curriculum overall and how they could play out across SEE, in the absence of an overarching framework, they simply add to the confusion.

Of most concern, however, is the naming of three strands, and how they are interpreted across SEE in the Learning Outcomes. This applies particularly to the strands 'Environment and Sustainable Living, and Exploration of Our World, which have been assigned respectively to geography and history. Firstly, as a title, 'Exploration of our World' has little or no resonance with history (even the addition of 'over Time' here would help). Because of its generality, it acts like a carpet bag which expands to hold as many disparate ideas as possible. While this might be useful in some cases, it will not be of any assistance in planning and will need a structure underneath it to support planning and progression.

Secondly, given the strands as they exist, it is difficult to justify the exclusion of geography here, and the exclusion of history from the 'Environmental and Sustainable Living' strand. Key to our understanding of the current existential crises of climate change and biodiversity loss is humanity's relationship with the environment and with other species over time. Climate change, for example, did not emerge from a vacuum; it has a history which is critical to understanding its causes and how it links to global justice. For example, consider the generative relationship between the Transatlantic Slave Trade and the Industrial Revolution, which is causatively linked to climate change through, among other things, the burning of fossil fuels, and to issues of global justice through human oppression and extractive capitalism. Primary history already encompasses many of the main themes

of climate history including, but not confined to, the agricultural revolution, the industrial revolution, urbanisation, mechanisation and changes in transport, energy and fuel etc. There is, then, a natural space for history in that strand and it is critical to the development of children's understanding in that area and to an understanding of the culpability and complicity of the Global North.

Finally, while on the surface, it might appear that moving away from the naming of content areas will allow teachers more freedom to plan and reduce curriculum overload, I believe its consequences will be different. Firstly, the 1999 curriculum was not prescriptive in terms of content and many schools took advantage of the freedom it gave to make choices and plan curricula of local interest. But it did provide a strong framework to scaffold children's developing understanding of their locality, their country and the world. In the absence of a guiding structure, I think there is a risk that textbooks rather than the curriculum will determine the content of the history curriculum. Secondly, one of the progressive features of Irish primary education since the advent of child centred education has been the adoption of the spiral approach to curriculum which honoured children's capacities to engage with complex ideas in ways that are age appropriate and supported planning for progression. This is less visible in this rendition of the curriculum, which I believe is a loss to children's learning. In conclusion, the identification of content areas from which schools and teachers can choose and add to, will enable children in building a usable historical framework. Content knowledge matters and works dynamically with skills and concept development to support and build children's capacities to think historically about the world around them. It matters also what content is taught to support children as historians, critical thinkers and active local, Irish, European and global citizens. Thank you for taking the time to read this submission and for the opportunity to comment.

Good luck with this important work.

Prof. Fionnuala Waldron

Francis Ward

Response to NCCA Primary Curriculum Framework: Arts Education (Music)

Submitted by Dr Francis Ward, Lecturer in Music Education, DCU Institute of Education

Specific curriculum extracts referenced in the document are included at the end.

Diversity, Identity, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

I welcome the multiple references throughout the Primary Curriculum Framework Arts specification to diversity, identity, local and global perspectives, empathy, cultural context/appreciation, global citizenship, effecting positive change etc.¹²⁶

However, for teachers to realise this, we suggest that they will need a considerable amount of guidance and resources. These might include:

- A list of recommended listening pieces, songs and resources (e.g. an update to the 1999 lists of listening pieces and songs, which a focus on including more diverse repertoire in terms of culture, language, gender of composers, etc.). For example, see the extensive recommended music listed in the [Model Music Curriculum](#) (UK) (which includes both recommended singing repertoire and music for L&R by class level).
- Specifically commissioned music/arts education exemplars illustrating and engaging with the diversity of children in Irish primary schools, to **illustrate** bespoke culturally responsive pedagogy, as well as the development of a resource bank to assist in the delivery of diverse arts curriculum *relevant for Ireland*. For example, in the US context, see the online digital classroom resources Carnegie Hall's [Musical Explorers](#).
- While the curriculum states that 'Children are encouraged to make connections between the arts and geographical, historical, contemporary social and cultural contexts', it would be very valuable for any training and support materials to assist teachers in making connections between these areas and across cultures. I suggest that connections should also be made with literacy, as in particular stories from other cultures can provide age-appropriate and accessible narratives for children to explore these connections. There are many examples of stories from other cultures which also provide rich stimuli for creating in the arts, including musical compositions, while also showcasing diversity, presenting rich opportunities for integrating within and beyond the arts.
- Both of these could form part of any online toolkit provided to support the delivery of the new arts curriculum.
- As part of the delivery of a diverse music curriculum, I believe it is important that Irish traditional music and the music of Irish artists continue to hold a special place in the curriculum, as in the 1999 curriculum. This emphasis should also be extended to include the many artists living in Ireland who create music and identify with Irish, hybrid, and other identities.

Introduction of Modern Foreign Languages/Reduction of Arts Time

- With the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages, and a reduction in arts contact time, I encourage the explicit reference to plurilingual approaches to linguistic awareness and learning, from junior classes upwards, which incorporate musical experiences such as

¹²⁶ Principles of learning, teaching and assessment (Inclusive education and diversity); Rationale; Aims; Strands (Creating); Key Competencies (Being an Active Citizen); Learning Outcomes; Teaching Arts Education (Culturally responsive pedagogy). See end of document.

singing, moving, and listening and responding. For the formal introduction of a modern foreign language in senior classes, we advocate for the utilisation of specific language pedagogies such as CLIL which would enable the integration of music and language learning, somewhat compensating for the loss of arts curricular time, while complementing and enhancing (creative, engaging, joyful, playful) children's language learning.

Technology

- I welcome the reference to 'Becoming a digital learner' within the context of art education. However, I would like to see the integration of technology in music to extend beyond 'the use of technology for recording', which is a passive, non-integrative, practice that does not develop digital literacy or competency. While I advocate for the retention (and explicit reference to) the use of digital recording as a tool for children to share their work, review it, and provide a stimulus for discussion, I also suggest that the integration of technology in music learning goes further.
- In line with historical conceptions of musical composition, I advocate for the use of apps such as Chrome Music Lab to enable children's exploration of creating music, using the fundamental concepts articulated in the curriculum, including pulse, pitch, duration, and structure. This app also presents alternative formats for 'music notation' and as a multiple means of representation, can develop children's understanding of the connection between sound and symbol further.
- In connecting with more contemporary music creation practices and musical genres, I advocate for children's guided engagement with apps such as [Incredibox](#), which illustrate the various possibilities of timbre, texture, structure, etc., within the genre of beatboxing. Engaging with this genre, and the pedagogy of how the music is created, might present opportunities to implement culturally responsive pedagogy.
- While 'digital sounds' are mentioned in the appendices, we advocate for the expansion of categories of 'sounds' from the 1999 curriculum - environmental sounds, vocal percussion, body percussion, and instrumental sounds - to include electronic sounds (electronic/virtual instruments, synthesised sounds, user-generated and manipulated sounds). This reflects the fundamental building blocks of music in the current era, which is no longer restricted to voice and instruments. Originality in the production and manipulation of unique sounds is valued as much as the creation of 'music', and arguably, children as digital learners can learn to create or source sounds and manipulate them using technology, all whilst appreciating their sonic and musical properties. They can use these sounds in musical creations more easily than developing the skills for mastery of musical instruments (and having access to these in the first place). Therefore, this specific consideration of sound creation and manipulation in music composing/creating may arguably present a more inclusive practice.
- To develop this as a compositional practice, we advocate for children's guided engagement with basic sampler apps such as [Koala Sampler](#), which focuses on sampling, manipulating, layering, remixing, and organising/structuring sounds created by the children themselves. Encouraging this variety would reflect the diverse processes by which sound and music are created today.
- Finally, while the specifications mention working collaboratively in creating, children also need to be able to listen to and appraise their own and other children's work, ask questions, think critically, and reflect and act upon feedback to develop their work further. Therefore, it would be richer to see this process of sharing, and self, teacher, and peer review in creating music explicitly outlined in the learning outcomes.

Developmental Approach to Music Education

- While a section 6b does explicitly mention the ‘the sequencing, structuring, and scaffolding of learning’, it is vital that this is emphasised in the delivery of the curriculum, and development of support materials. It is important that arts education, and music education, are not reduced to a series of ‘one-off experiences’ which happen infrequently. While such experiences, perhaps provided in partnership with external artists, can be hugely rich experiences for children, skills such as singing, listening, instrumental performance, composing, etc. require regular practice to build confidence and make progress.

Guidance for External Arts Education Providers and Artists-Teacher/School Partnerships

While it may be beyond the remit of the NCCA and the current project of finalising the Primary Framework Curriculum, I believe it is imperative that guidelines are developed and issued to schools which can inform how external provision is made for music education in schools. Many schools now employ external staff to deliver the music curriculum. I would suggest including the following statements:

- All involved with the teaching of music in schools should be familiar with the content of the music curriculum and *should emphasise breadth of experience for the children over depth*. For example, while providing instrumental instruction can be a valuable experience for children, this should not be at the expense of engaging with the broader arts curriculum e.g. providing experiences in responding and connecting to music and in creating music.
- In selecting content and pedagogical approaches, all involved should be cognisant of the emphasis on culturally responsive pedagogy in the arts curriculum. This involves getting to know the children and the school community, and developing appropriate material and experiences and an approach to teaching which takes account of the children’s backgrounds/communities/identities, their musical interests, and the variety of transmission methods associated with a diversity of music genres.
- Teacher agency should be emphasised with teachers becoming *familiar and confident* with the curriculum, be able to direct the content and pedagogy of any externally delivered arts programme, and learn and develop as teachers of the arts.

Contribution of Initial Teacher Education

Of course, I will continue to emphasise all of the above with our students in initial teacher education. Culturally responsive education is something I cover in depth with all my students who take the Music Education specialism in DCU IoE (approximately 25 students per year on the BEd programme), but I will endeavour to emphasise this pedagogical approach with all students. I believe it may be seen as somewhat specialist, particularly within the area of arts education, and therefore should be emphasised with all external stakeholders who provide arts education in primary schools, as recommended above.

Specific Extracts from Curriculum

Key Competencies (Table 3)

Being a digital learner

- Exploring the use of different media for arts-based creations, such as digital software, graphic design tools, and multimedia platforms.

- Communicating and collaborating with others through digital technology, including the use of technology for recording.

Being an active citizen

- Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.
- Encouraging the generation of new ideas and novel approaches to address challenges and effect positive change.

Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment (Table 1)

Inclusive Education and Diversity

- Making connections between and appreciating various art forms, music genres, and dramatic traditions from different cultures.
- Using varying art forms for children to express their unique identities and experiences.
- Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.

Rationale

Arts Education helps children to make sense of the world around them

In Arts Education, children learn to explore and appreciate multiple interpretations of the world and develop respect and empathy for multiple viewpoints. They develop cultural appreciation that enhances their understanding of their local community, Ireland, and the wider world, and how others use their skills, thoughts and ideas to express themselves artistically. With this, children can come to realise how their work in the arts could positively contribute to the world around them.

Aims

Cultural and contextual awareness

- The ability to understand the context in which the arts are created and to respond to, appreciate, participate in and value the arts in local, Irish, and diverse cultures and settings.

Strands

Responding and Creating

‘They should experience a range of styles and genres in Art, Drama and Music as well as dance and other integrated art forms. They learn to construct meaning, explore, and connect their experiences to broader cultures and contexts and the wider world of the arts.’

Learning Outcomes

Share and discuss arts connected to their lives, and traditions from home, school, local and global communities and cultures with sensitivity to and increased understanding of the context.

6a Learning in Arts Education

Recognise identities and diversity in the arts of local, Irish, and wider cultures and Communities.

6b. Teaching Arts Education

‘How’ children learn is as important as ‘what’ children learn. When teaching in Arts Education attention is given to:

...

‘the sequencing, structuring, and scaffolding of learning’.

...

Culturally responsive pedagogy

Culturally responsive pedagogy recognises and values children's unique capabilities, interests, diverse backgrounds, languages, and cultures. It seeks to foster an inclusive learning environment for all. Where it celebrates the rich tapestry of cultural diversity, including local, national, Irish and international traditions and heritages, Arts Education helps children to appreciate and value different identities.

Children bring a wealth of understanding, knowledge and experience of the arts into the classroom. Teachers should promote genuine intercultural, Irish and international understanding and appreciation by:

- fostering relationships through collaborative ways of working encouraging children to share examples of the arts from their own families and communities
- incorporating diverse cultural perspectives in the teaching of Arts Education
- ensuring children's learning in the arts has meaningful links to local and broader communities and contexts
- providing opportunities for children to experience dance, music and arts works associated with local, national, Irish and international traditions, cultures and heritages
- supporting children to consider artist intentionality, viewer interpretation, and how these are informed by different contexts and cultures.

Connecting to broader cultures should be carried out with sensitivity. Children are encouraged to make connections between the arts and geographical, historical, contemporary social and cultural contexts. This integrates with and complements learning and teaching in SEE.

G Grattan

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the Primary Curriculum Consultation. I am a concerned parent of our beautiful daughter who means the world to us, She is a very happy bright child, most recently we have become very concerned and not very happy about the changes to the new Curriculum. We are very concerned about what is proposed in the Primary School Curriculum and would like very much to see schools get back to basics and focus less on social justice issues and the like,

While the Primary Curriculum Consultation website has been active for a number of months I note at the outset that there was no outreach to parents in relation to formulating the draft Primary School curriculum. Given parent's superior Constitutional Rights and the obligation on schools to only provide education in consultation with parents, I question whether or not this consultation process is a legally sufficient consultation and as such a legitimate exercise. Nonetheless I respond herein reserving my rights to object further on this point at a later date and this submission is not to be construed as evidence of my acceptance of the consultation process, which I believe may be defective. I am aware this lack of parental consultation was the same for the recent Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Curriculum Consultations. My feedback is captured in the sections below, Section 1: Summary Feedback and Alignment with Curriculum Framework Document The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include;

- Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes (generic/ unspecified).
- Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes.
- Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.
- The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education.
- Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness (not starting from where the child is at)
- More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child
- Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what' - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts.
- The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is 'Be an Activist' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education.
- Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity. Focus should be on the subject matter.
- Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.
- Provide no visibility for parents: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum The Arts Curriculum uses the Arts as a vehicle for social change (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.' P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.' 2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children. 3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils: P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music

except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes. Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity' Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language. Section 2(c): Social and Environmental Education Curriculum - Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is woke indoctrination, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (Be an Activist is a Key Competency) - This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. - The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. - SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear. Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety. - This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as empathy, respect and challenging worldviews 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate? Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer: "...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy" The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer" , seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of what the learning objectives should be. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination. Page 21 Global Learning Themes Looks like a "woke" playbook. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using the curriculum to push political interests rather than service the educational needs of the child. Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum https://ncca.ie/media/2vvcabyb/draft_ste_specification_2024.pdf Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge. The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety, fear and a shortage mentality. Page 16: Learning Outcomes Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1 Page 31 "Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time." This last paragraph implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst. Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but "spiritual" is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. Physical education (PE) has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.) 1. '...inclusive understanding of human sexuality' (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools. 2. '...the concept of consent within relationships' (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed. 4. The terms 'diversity' and 'inclusion' have been weaponized as an excuse to introduce inappropriate

sex education and gender theory. 5. 'Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is an attack on 'heteronormativity' the normal roles that men and women typically assume in society. 6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.' (p.38) - Parents rights should supersede 'Childrens rights' at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact. 7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children. Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the "Education for Social Justice" woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include: 1. Parental Visibility and Transparency: There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials 2. Curriculum Definition and Clarity: Totally lacking. 3. Concern over the reduction in the literacy allocation to half of the 2012 guidance for the youngest learners. What has changed since 2012 to drive this? 4. Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to: a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final Cass report into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that gender ideology should not be taught in schools. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here. b. The introduction of Critical Social Justice and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable. 5. Any cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed: a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and, b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs 6. Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism. 7. Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches: Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable. They embed "Critical" Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found. 8. Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding. General Comments related to Schools 1. Parental Consultation: The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered. 2. Ethos: It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos. 3. Social Transitioning: Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools. 4. Parental Knowledge, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy. 5. The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools. - In closing, I again question the legitimacy of this consultation process in light of the lack of parental involvement in the development of the draft curricula. As well, the emergence of the Cass Report and the English draft Statutory Guidance all suggests that a halt should be put on this consultation process and a serious rethink occurs over what and how we teach our children. As the above submission makes clear, the proposed draft primary curriculum is not fit for purpose and will worsen children's experience in primary school. The NCCA are prioritising politics over child welfare with this proposed curriculum. This is not acceptable to parents and the consultation must be halted immediately. I would appreciate a confirmation email that this submission was received.

Gavin O'Leary

Dear NCCA,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the current consultation process on the Draft Primary Curriculum being conducted by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). As a parent, I believe it is crucial for us to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of what our children will be taught before any curriculum changes are implemented.

The Consultation on the Curriculum Specification Document is scheduled to close on 7 June 2024. However, The Countess Advocacy has informed parents that this document primarily focuses on aims, goals, processes, aspirations, principles, diversity, inclusion, equity, citizenship, and social justice, with little detailed information about the actual content that will be taught to our children, particularly in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

The Curriculum Specifications Document is only one component of the curriculum open to consultation. The other two components—the Curriculum Framework and the Toolkit—are not currently part of this consultation. The Toolkit, which is supposed to contain the relevant information about the lessons, is not yet available for most subjects.

Without this information, parents are unable to form an informed opinion on the proposed curriculum changes. Therefore, I urge the NCCA to halt the current consultation process until clear and detailed information about the curriculum content is made available. This will ensure that proper consultation can take place and that parents can effectively contribute to the discussion about their children's education.

Please consider my request and provide the necessary information to allow for an informed consultation process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Gavin O'Leary

Gearóid Duffy

Primary school curriculum consultation on wellbeing.

1. There is a need to emphasise and give children a vision of what a healthy societal sustainable family life looks like, rather than all the various permutations that arise from the heartbreak of relationship breakdowns.
2. Consent is a mirage. It gives a false impression that one is in charge of one's decision making. What is needed is Commitment to something worthy, e.g. an exclusive, life-long, freely entered into, unconditional relationship where the conjugal act is open to the Transmission of life (Marriage). Anything else is a consumerist approach to our sexuality and relationships. A consent approach leaves one open to being pressurised as it relies upon personal boundaries being established and adhered to, in the absence of a clearly understood Moral code.
3. In a holistic approach, Catholic students ought to be enabled to see their wellbeing as arising from each being a child of God, invested with an immense Dignity from womb to tomb.

Please feel free to publish any or all of this submission with or without my name attached.

Gearoid Duffy

Geoffrey Porter

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

General Points The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. • Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes (generic/ unspecified). • Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes. • Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills. • The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education. • Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness (not starting from where the child is at) • More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child • Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what' - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts. • The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is 'Be an Activist' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes,

and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education. • Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity. Focus should be on the subject matter. • Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important. • Provide no visibility for parents: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

1. This Curriculum uses the Arts as a vehicle for social change (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.' P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.' 2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children. 3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils: P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Language Curriculum – First Pass Assessment Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity' Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Social and Environmental Education Curriculum – First Pass Assessment - Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is woke indoctrination, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (Be an Activist is a Key Competency) - This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. - The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. - SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear. Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety. - This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as empathy, respect and challenging worldviews 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate? Social and Environmental Curriculum – Further Review Notes and Comments Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer: "...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy" The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer", seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of what the learning objectives should be. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination. Page 21 Global Learning Themes Looks like a "woke" playbook. These themes would appear to be the real priority,

above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using the curriculum to push political interests rather than service the educational needs of the child.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum – First Pass Assessment Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge. The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality. Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum – Further Review Notes and Comments Page 16: Learning Outcomes Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centred, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1 Page 31 "Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time." This last paragraph implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Wellbeing Curriculum Specification – First Pass Assessment SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but "spiritual" is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. Physical education (PE) has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.) 1. '...inclusive understanding of human sexuality' (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. 2. '...the concept of consent within relationships' (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed. 4. The terms 'diversity' and 'inclusion' have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory. 5. 'Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is an attack on 'heteronormativity' the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. 6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.' (p.38) - Parents rights should supersede 'Childrens rights' at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-

long impact. 7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the "Education for Social Justice" woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include: 1. Parental Visibility and Transparency: There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials 2. Curriculum Definition and Clarity: Totally lacking. 3. Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to: a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization b. The introduction of Critical Social Justice and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable. 4. Cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed: a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and, b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs 5. Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism. 6. Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches: Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable. They embed "Critical" Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found. 7. Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

1. Parental Consultation: The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered. 2. Ethos: It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos. 3. Social Transitioning: Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools. 4. Parental Knowledge, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy. 5. The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.

Gerard Hurley

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Supports to up skill qualified secondary school teachers with expertise in Physical Education, Wellbeing and Foreign languages to become Primary School Teachers.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

The revised Primary School will provide Primary School teachers with the opportunity to demonstrate the extent of their pedagogical skills and flexibility. That being said, there is now an opportunity to attract additional highly skilled teachers to the Primary sector. It would be prudent to allow qualified secondary school teachers with expertise in areas that will be incorporated in this revised Primary School Curriculum to teach at Primary School. For example a qualified (B.Ed) teacher of Physical Education agis Gaeilge who also has a BA in French, as well as being a fluent speaker of French could be a significant asset to a Primary School.

Glen Quin

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I do not agree that the new curriculum is for all children as it sidelines any traditional views on marriage and relationships in order to teach about a very small minority. Children will not be provided with a fair or accurate view of relationships in the new curriculum.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

N/a

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

N/A

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

N/a

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

N/a

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Teaching about the “diversity of family structures” (page 19) must not cause traditional views on man-woman marriage to be put aside. The new curriculum has a strong inclination to teach about a very small minority while it does not encourage or put emphasis on marriage even though marriage is held in high esteem by over 70 percent of the population (shown in March referendum) as they did not want marriage downgraded to show equal status with 'durable relationships'. “Respecting and celebrating differences” (Glossary) should include respecting people who hold different views and allowing them to express those views respectfully.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Schools should have the freedom to adapt recommended resources to meet the needs of pupils and parents and uphold the characteristic spirit of the school. It should not be a 'one size fits all' curriculum.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Pupils must be protected from potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources in SPHE, like some that have been used in England and Scotland. Children should not be exposed to divisive teaching that is beyond their level of maturity and comprehension and is aimed to skew the view of what is normal or common.

Gloria Emmanuel

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am a mom of two young and bright little girls ages 3 and 7. I am very concerned about what is proposed in the Primary School Curriculum and would like schools to get back to basics and focus less on issues of social justice and like.

While the Primary Curriculum Consultation website has been active for a number of months I note at the outset that there was no outreach to parents in relation to formulating the draft Primary School curriculum. Given parent's superior Constitutional Rights and the obligation on schools to only provide education in consultation with parents, I question whether or not this consultation process is a legally sufficient consultation and as such a legitimate exercise. Nonetheless I respond herein reserving my rights to object further on this point at a later date and this submission is not to be construed as evidence of my acceptance of the consultation process, which I believe may be defective. I am aware this lack of parental consultation was the same for the recent Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Curriculum Consultations. My feedback is captured in the sections below:

Section 1: Summary Feedback and Alignment with Curriculum Framework Document The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include; • Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes (generic/ unspecified). • Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes. • Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills. • The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education. • Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness (not starting from where the child is at) • More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child • Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what' - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts. • The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is 'Be an Activist' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education. • Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity. Focus should be on the subject matter. • Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important. • Provide no visibility for parents: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'. Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum The Arts Curriculum uses the Arts as a vehicle for social change (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.' P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and

perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.’ 2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children. 3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils: P13 ‘Learning Outcomes’ It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome’s content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes. Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages Under ‘Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions’ & ‘foster inclusivity and social cohesion’ & ‘celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity’ ‘promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity’ Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language. Section 2(c): Social and Environmental Education Curriculum - Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is woke indoctrination, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (Be an Activist is a Key Competency) - This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children’s cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. - The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of ‘white privilege’ and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. - SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear. Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety. - This curriculum’s Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as empathy, respect and challenging worldviews ‘to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world’ > again, is this age appropriate? Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer: "...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy" The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to “work as a Geographer” , seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of what the learning objectives should be. The same applies to “Working as a Historian”. Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination. Page 21 Global Learning Themes Looks like a "woke" playbook. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using the curriculum to push political interests rather than service the educational needs of the child. Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum https://ncca.ie/media/2vvcabyb/draft_ste_specification_2024.pdf Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge. The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality. Page 16: Learning Outcomes Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, ‘Algorithm’ and ‘Plugged’ / ‘Unplugged’ at Stage 1 Page 31 “Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher’s role in supporting children’s learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time.” This last paragraph implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst. Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but “spiritual” is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. Physical education (PE) has been

demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.) 1. ‘...inclusive understanding of human sexuality’ (p.4) – we’ve seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools. 2. ‘...the concept of consent within relationships’ (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed. 4. The terms ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory. 5. ‘Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities’. (p.28). ‘Stereotypes’ in this context is an attack on ‘heteronormativity’ the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. 6. Relational pedagogy - ‘children’s right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.’(p.38) - Parents rights should supersede ‘Childrens rights’ at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact. 7. ‘Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum’ (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children. Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the “Education for Social Justice” woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include: 1. Parental Visibility and Transparency: There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials 2. Curriculum Definition and Clarity: Totally lacking. 3. Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to: a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final Cass report into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that gender ideology should not be taught in schools. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here. b. The introduction of Critical Social Justice and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable. 4. Cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed: a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and, b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs 5. Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism. 6. Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches: Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable. They embed “Critical” Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found. 7. Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding. General Comments related to Schools 1. Parental Consultation: The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered. 2. Ethos: It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos. 3. Social Transitioning: Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition

in Primary Schools. 4. Parental Knowledge, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy. 5. The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools. - In closing, I again question the legitimacy of this consultation process in light of the lack of parental involvement in the development of the draft curricula. As well, the emergence of the Cass Report and the English draft Statutory Guidance all suggests that a halt should be put on this consultation process and a serious rethink occurs over what and how we teach our children. As the above submission makes clear, the proposed draft primary curricula is not fit for purpose and will worsen children's experience in primary school. The NCCA are prioritising politics over child welfare with this proposed curricula. This is not acceptable to parents and the consultation must be halted immediately. I would appreciate a confirmation email that this submission was received .

Thanks very much.

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Thanks,
Gloria Emmanuel.

Hamza Fahey

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I write this submission before the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) as a part of its consultation on the redevelopment of the Primary School curriculum on *WELLBEING* 1. In its description of FAMILY STRUCTURE given in the glossary, pg 49, as a reference to its mentioning at various places in the draft, includes SAME-SEX PARENT FAMILIES. I appreciate the efforts of the Irish government in fostering values of inclusiveness with all respect. On the contrary, I also expect the council to acknowledge the existence of various sects in society, like us, who are against this idea. Children should be aware of this diversity and the need to treat all of them with respect. They should be informed of their rights to follow their religious and traditional values if they wish to without fear of discrimination. Parents from conventional sects who oppose same-sex marriages should feel reassured that their children do not get inclined into such choices at an age inappropriate for decision making, when their children also learn lessons of other's rights for respect. 2. Gender identity and orientation should come to a child naturally through instincts. I do not believe it as a choice. As a parent who expects my child to have a definite gender identity and a straight sexual orientation, I oppose teaching children that sexual orientation is a conscious choice. I am worried that my child informed about such a choice at an inappropriate age would be eager to experiment or test his/her sexual orientation to identify their inclination, which might result in serious psychosexual disability. Children often take classroom teachings as directional. Offering sexual

orientation as a choice might lead them in a completely wrong direction. It would be such a trauma for every parent like me. I recommend the council to reconsider describing sexual orientation as a natural instinct rather than a conscious choice. Thanks for your consideration in advance.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

0

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8.Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

0

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

0

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

0

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

0

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Several.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Not at this time.

Helena Byrne

To whom it concerns,

As an Irish primary teacher in a Catholic school and parent, I object to the teaching of Gender Ideology and concepts such as "white privilege" and "oppressor/ oppressed (victim)" in Irish Primary Schools.

The Curriculum objectives for each subject are unclear and I am concerned by a shift away from clear transparent outcomes which means no visibility for parents on what will be taught and confusion for teachers in planning and implementation.

I have heard the draft NCCA proposals referred to as the 'dumbing down' of our primary education, and I couldn't agree more. PE content is unrecognisable as skills and sports seem to have been kicked to touch! History and Geography have been diluted by Diversity, Inclusion and Equity (DIE), as have STEM, the Arts and the new additional Languages curriculum. There is too much concentration on the intercultural and social aspect of learning an additional language, rather than the mechanics of actually learning to speak and understand the language.

I do not think it is appropriate to teach phrases such as "I am an activist" as a Key Competency to children. I believe such an approach will further impact the mental health crisis being seen in young people, by potentially overwhelming them to feel responsible for issues over which they have little or no control (such as Climate Change, Social Justice issues etc).

There is also the serious matter of the the downgrading of the spiritual element in life compared with the present curriculum; the elevation of political education; ditching the aim of "fostering a sense of Irish identity" (which is needed more than ever as we become more multi-ethnic).

Please, also amend all references to language development starting at birth; it starts in the womb.

Yours sincerely,

Helena Byrne

Helena Walsh

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I wish to respond to the Draft Primary Wellbeing Specification. I don't believe it adequately address' Identity, Emotional Awareness & Expression, Relationships, Resilience or Decision Making.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)

- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific

chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

'Emotional & Relational Education' (pg. 15-16) and 'Community and Belonging' (pg. 19). I believe that these strands are missing the critical element of child-play. 'Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences' doesn't explicitly highlight the value of child-led play in supporting these strands. As an accredited child and adolescent psychotherapist, I understand wellbeing to be experiential, wellbeing is a way of being and the clearest path to wellbeing for a child is through relationships and play. I refer to the work of Dr. Bruce Perry, Dr. Stephen Porges, Dr. Stuart Brown, Dr. Gabor Maté, Dr. Tina Payne Bryson, Siobhán Prendiville; who highlight the importance of play and relationships. They do not refer to the value of teaching and learning about relationships; this is secondary to a child experiencing positive relationships and sharing joy to enhance those relationships. I refer to the work of Dr. Dan Siegel, who stresses that we cannot teach empathy, it needs to be experienced. Play is the most natural medium for this to happen. I refer to the well-researched 'Therapeutic Powers of Play' by Dr. Charles Schaefer and Dr. Athena Drewes (Schaefer and Drewes, 2014); They are founded on theory, research and neuroscience and prove that play 'Fosters Emotional Wellness' (Chapter 2), 'Enhances Social Relationships' (Chapter 3) and 'Increases Personal Strengths' (Chapter 4). The UN states that 'Play is a fundamental right that fosters resilience, boosts confidence and supports child's development. Play promotes healing through learning, the development of life skills and psychosocial wellbeing.' Play facilitates inclusion and differs very much from teaching and learning about inclusion. Both are necessary, however when it comes to wellbeing; we need to give children opportunities to experience feeling well, included and connected. I refer to the work of Dr. Teresa Kestly who wrote 'The Interpersonal Neurobiology of Play-Brain Building Interventions for Emotional Well-Being' states "The play circuitry evolved, no doubt, because it gives us an important tool for helping to create the joy of social relationships. (Kestly, 2014, p. 188). Finally, in the words of Dr. Gareth Landreth 'Play is children's language and toys are their words'.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

CPD around the value of child-led play in supporting relational and emotional wellbeing, particularly in older classes. Open-ended play resources that will last; will support creativity and innovation. Resources that can be used across the curriculum for STEM, Literacy and Numeracy. Define play and differentiate it from 'playful learning experiences.'

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

I appreciate the research is scant around the benefits of child-led play in older classes. I only have my own experience and engagement with the pupils through the years to go on. I introduced child-led play to 5th and 6th class and I saw the difference it made to them in terms of their relationships with one another and the self-esteem of individual pupils. They loved it and looked forward to it over anything else that would happen across the school week. The classroom was a buzz on a Friday afternoon as they engaged in and led their own learning. We live in a world where 1 in 14 people die from loneliness annually, friendships matters; relationships matter; learning how to navigate conflict within those relationships matters. There is no better medium to do that than through play, we are biologically wired to do this. The 'Child Friendly Report' published on the NCCA website asked the children about SPHE and PE; not necessarily about wellbeing and what they do that makes them feel happy or alive or engaged. We are born to play and the classroom or outdoor learning environment provides such a unique context for social, emotional and relational skill development.

Ian Sexton

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

All curriculum specifications

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The curriculum is framed using the so-called 'singular they'. This is poor in terms of correct grammar, but 'they' has also been associated with gender ideology, which has no place here. I respectfully suggest that this language be reframed to read 'he/she' or else framed in the plural, to eradicate both of these problems. E.g., instead of 'The child and their prior learning Teachers' substitute 'Children and their prior learning Teachers' Also, common nouns should not be capitalised.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The curriculum is framed using the so-called 'singular they'. This is poor in terms of correct grammar, but 'they' has also been associated with gender ideology. I respectfully suggest that it is reframed to read 'he/she' or else framed in the plural, to eradicate both of these problems. E.g., instead of 'The child and their prior learning Teachers' substitute 'Children and their prior learning Teachers' Also, common nouns should not be capitalised.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The curriculum is framed using the so-called 'singular they'. This is poor in terms of correct grammar, but 'they' has also been associated with gender ideology. I respectfully suggest that it is reframed to read 'he/she' or else framed in the plural, to eradicate both of these problems. E.g., instead of 'The child and

their prior learning Teachers' substitute 'Children and their prior learning Teachers' Also, common nouns should not be capitalised.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The curriculum is framed using the so-called 'singular they'. This is poor in terms of correct grammar, but 'they' has also been associated with gender ideology. I respectfully suggest that it is reframed to read 'he/she' or else framed in the plural, to eradicate both of these problems. E.g., instead of 'The child and their prior learning Teachers' substitute 'Children and their prior learning Teachers' Also, common nouns should not be capitalised.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The curriculum is framed using the so-called 'singular they'. This is poor in terms of correct grammar, but 'they' has also been associated with gender ideology. I respectfully suggest that it is reframed to read 'he/she' or else framed in the plural, to eradicate both of these problems. E.g., instead of 'The child and their prior learning Teachers' substitute 'Children and their prior learning Teachers' Also, common nouns should not be capitalised.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Ideally, local autonomy and simplicity

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

As detailed in the response

Jacinta Kinkade

To whom it may concern, I am a parent of three young children of preschool and primary school age. I am writing to request that gender and sexual identity be defined, and I do not consent to gender identity being taught as fact.

Thank you
Jacinta Kinkade

Jana Lunden

PRIMARY SCHOOL CONSULTATION SUBMISSION

I request that you publish my response below:

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the Primary Curriculum Consultation.

As a mother of two primary school children (Junior Infants and Second Class), I strongly oppose the proposed changes you have planned for Primary School children. The lack of parent engagement is appalling; this consultation opened up in March 2024, yet parents were not invited to attend the consultation until the end of May 2024. No doubt you are aware that under the EDUCATION ACT 1998, in accordance with Section 9(d) of the Education Act 1998, it is the school's function to: (d) 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. The lack of proper consultation with parents is in violation of the Education Act 1998 and Freedom of Information Requests will be completed to show this lack of transparency.

I am fully aware of the changes that the NCCA implemented to the Junior Cycle and am disgusted to see this level of indoctrination and such a highly sexualised curriculum being pushed onto vulnerable children. To push this on to our youngest and most innocent age cohort is reprehensible. The Irish Independent published an article on the 9th of June "*Teachers say school curriculums are being dumbed-down*" and I could not agree with this headline more. Schools must return to being a place where children can learn free from ideologies, politics and social justice issues. Gender ideology is already in Primary School content such as "Busy Bodies. Gender ideology should be immediately removed for all ages given the findings of the Cass Report, WPATH files, American Academy of Pediatrics, and England's turnaround on teaching gender theory. Transitioning children down a dangerous and irreversible path will be the biggest child abuse scandal that Ireland has ever seen. The NCCA must take a stand against this and put child safeguarding at the forefront. The wellbeing of all children is paramount.

There is a growing mental health crisis among the children and young people in Ireland. Children are waiting up to two years for an appointment and the number of children waiting to access mental health services is over 4,000. The NCCA's proposed

changes will add to the already high level of fear and anxiety many of Ireland's young people are suffering from.

While the Primary Curriculum Consultation website has been active for a number of months I note at the outset that there was no outreach to parents in relation to formulating the draft Primary School curriculum. Given parent's superior Constitutional Rights and the obligation on schools to only provide education in consultation with parents, I question whether or not this consultation process is a legally sufficient consultation and as such a legitimate exercise. Nonetheless, I respond herein reserving my rights to object further on this point at a later date and this submission is not to be construed as evidence of my acceptance of the consultation process, which I believe may be defective. I am aware this lack of parental consultation was the same for the recent Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Curriculum Consultations.

My feedback is captured in the sections below:

Section 1: Summary Feedback and Alignment with Curriculum Framework Document

The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include;

- **Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes** (generic/ unspecified).
- **Unclear, underdeveloped progression** across Learning Outcomes.
- **Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices** and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.
- **The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes** loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education.
- **Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness** (not starting from where the child is at)
- **More focused on global concerns** than local tangible concerns of the child

- **Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what'** - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts.
- **The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses** e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is **'Be an Activist'** (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education.
- **Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity.** Focus should be on the subject matter.
- **Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound:** Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.
- **Provide no visibility for parents:** 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

The Arts Curriculum uses **the Arts as a vehicle for social change** (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns.

*P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to **challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.**'*

P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

Under '*Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions*' & '**foster inclusivity and social cohesion**' & '*celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity*' '*promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity*'

Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language.

Section 2(c): Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

- Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): **this is woke indoctrination**, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (*Be an Activist* is a Key Competency)
- **This is in opposition to child-centred teaching**, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development.
- **The Global Learning Themes (p21-22)** could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger.
- **SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear.** Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.
- **This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis** on lenses such as *empathy, respect* and *challenging worldviews* 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate?

Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer:

"...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy"

The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer" , seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography,

potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of **what the learning objectives should be**. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination.

Page 21

Global Learning Themes

Looks like a "**woke**" **playbook**. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using **the curriculum to push political interests** rather than service the educational needs of the child.

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/2vvcabyb/draft_ste_specification_2024.pdf

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM?

Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge.

The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality.

Page 16: Learning Outcomes

Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1

Page 31

"Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time."

This last paragraph implies a **lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained**. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst.

Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but "spiritual" is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. **Physical education (PE)** has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the *PE Activity Areas* (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)

1. **'...inclusive understanding of human sexuality'** (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools.

2. **'...the concept of consent within relationships'** (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed.

4. The terms **'diversity'** and **'inclusion'** have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory.

5. **'Recognise examples of stereotypes'** (p.27)... *explore ways family members can promote gender equality*

through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is **an attack on 'heteronormativity'** the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society.

6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.' (p.38) - **Parents rights** should supersede *'Childrens rights'* at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact.

7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) – *Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts* between teachers and children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the **"Education for Social Justice" woke** agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of **psychological and emotional harm** to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include:

1. **Parental Visibility and Transparency:** There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials
2. **Curriculum Definition and Clarity:** Totally lacking.
3. **Concern over the reduction in the literacy allocation** to half of the 2012 guidance for the youngest learners. What has changed since 2012 to drive this?
4. **Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation:** Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:
 - a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final **Cass report** into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that **gender ideology should not be taught in schools**. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.
 - b. The introduction of **Critical Social Justice** and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable.
5. **Any cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed:**
 - a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,
 - b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs
6. **Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism.**
7. **Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches:** Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – **indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable**. They embed **“Critical” Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found.**
8. **Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.**

General Comments related to Schools

1. **Parental Consultation:** The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered.
2. **Ethos:** It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos.
3. **Social Transitioning:** Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools.
4. **Parental Knowledge,** consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy.
5. **The Infinite Dignity document** issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.

In closing, I again question the legitimacy of this consultation process in light of the lack of parental involvement in the development of the draft curricula. As well, the emergence of the Cass Report and the English draft Statutory Guidance all suggests that a halt should be put on this consultation process and a serious rethink occurs over what and how we teach our children.

As the above submission makes clear, the proposed draft primary curricula is not fit for purpose and will worsen children's experience in primary school. The NCCA are prioritising politics over child welfare with this proposed curricula. This is not acceptable to parents and the consultation must be halted immediately.

I would appreciate a confirmation email that this submission was received.

Yours Sincerely,

Jeanne Kelly

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I don't want any critical race theory or trans ideology taught. I have mixed race children and that nonsense will put ideas into their minds about their own ability to succeed, it's a victim mentality that should be nowhere near their curriculum

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)

- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Schools should be teaching children about our constitution

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The Irish language should be more focussed on

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I don't want any critical race theory or trans ideology taught. I have mixed race children and that nonsense will put ideas into their minds about their own ability to succeed, it's a victim mentality that should be nowhere near their curriculum

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I have no comment

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I don't want any critical race theory or trans ideology taught. I have mixed race children and that nonsense will put ideas into their minds about their own ability to succeed, it's a victim mentality that should be nowhere near their curriculum

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Zero input from non governmental organisations that have a politically motivated agenda please

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

I don't want any critical race theory or trans ideology taught. I have mixed race children and that nonsense will put ideas into their minds about their own ability to succeed, it's a victim mentality that should be nowhere near their curriculum

Jewel Ahammed

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them

Joan Dooley

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Religion must not be removed. Statistics have shown having religious beliefs lessen the incidence of suicide

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

As a grandmother my comment concerned religious education

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Modern languages are useful to have

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I am not aware of this curric

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I am not aware of these curricula

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Wellbeing cannot replace religious instruction

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Parental interest

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

My only comment is relating to the necessity of proper religious instruction

John-Mark Vintern

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The learning outcomes should include teaching about marriage and its importance for family life. Evidence demonstrates that children brought up by their married parents achieve more educationally, are healthier and are more economically productive. Pupils should learn about its benefits. Teaching about the "diversity of family structures" (page 19) must not cause traditional views on man-woman marriage to be side-lined. Official statistics show that only about 3% of marriages conducted in Ireland last year were

same-sex couples. Marriage is still held in high esteem by the public. In March, nearly 70% of voters rejected a constitutional amendment downgrading marriage to share equal status with “durable relationships”. This democratic decision about the unique constitutional status of marriage should be reflected in what is taught in schools. “Respecting and celebrating differences” (Glossary) should include respecting people who hold different views and allowing them to express those views respectfully. Teaching about “respect and compassion towards diversity in others” (page 24) should be based on respecting individuals and should not stoke division between pupils based on their differences.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

There is a strong public interest in government endorsed curriculum supports for schools being accessible online. Schools should have the freedom to adapt recommended resources to meet the needs of pupils and parents and uphold the characteristic spirit of the school. Schools have a legal duty to consult with parents on SPHE. They would benefit from guidance on how to do so effectively. Schools may need support in how to teach about issues on which parents hold different views in a way that respects parents’ beliefs. This involves fairly presenting a balanced range of views in an objective way.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Schools should inform parents of their right to withdraw their children from teaching that runs counter to their conscientious beliefs. This may be particularly relevant to sensitive topics covered within the Wellbeing curriculum. Parents must be able to see all teaching and curriculum materials used to deliver teaching well in advance of lessons. The duty to disclose material to parents should include all text, visual or graphic materials presented to pupils, as well as schemes of work and lesson plans, including those provided by external facilitators. Pupils must be protected from potentially harmful, inappropriate or misguided resources in SPHE, like some that have been used in England and Scotland. Parents cannot exercise their right for their child to be excused from teaching without clear information on what is to be taught and when

John Walsh

In regards to the Arts syllabus, the terms "playful approaches", "sensory and embodied approaches", and "culturally sensitive pedagogy" need to be further defined.

In relation to the Social and Environmental education syllabus, the need for "to foster a culture based on global learning themes" needs to be justified. Furthermore the syllabus should not promote "global citizenship" which is a nebulous concept which is not taught in most of the world. Irish schoolchildren should be taught to respect Irish citizenship instead.

The attempt to "foster an appreciation of the richness of cultural, ethnic, and religious expressions and traditions" should be more clearly defined; as many parts of the world have cultures which don't respect personal rights.

The terms "working as a geographer" and "working as an historian" need to be explained and justified. It is wholly inappropriate for this subject to attempt to "empower [children] to be...active citizens who can contribute to a more equitable...future"; given that the concept of "equity" is a contentious political one and whose meaning is debatable, this element of the syllabus is inappropriate and should be removed.

As this syllabus is for primary school children, all content pertaining to "human development and sexuality" is age-inappropriate and should be removed.

The elements of Health Education which involve naming or identifying body parts are age-inappropriate and should be removed. This is properly a family matter.

The Community and Belonging syllabus seeks to "appreciate diversity"; this term needs further defining or removal.

The entire "Human Development" strand of the SPHE Health syllabus is entirely age-inappropriate and should be removed. Pre-pubescent children do not need to be taught about changes which occur during puberty, nor about the life-cycle, while it is highly age-inappropriate for Stage 4 children to be taught about sexual organs and sexual reproduction. In any case these are matters which are more appropriately taught in the home given the diversity of cultural attitudes to these matters.

The Family strand seeks to promote "gender equality", this is not something which needs to be taught to schoolchildren and should be removed; while teaching children that families are structured in different ways is something that should be taught by parents given the diversity of cultural attitudes toward this matter.

The "rights and fairness" strand of the "community and belonging" syllabus seeks to promote the "importance of rights, fairness, equity, and equality"; these are nebulous and contentious terms and therefore are not appropriate to be promoted in schools. The entire Family syllabus is not a necessary part of formal education, and is appropriately taught within the family, and should be removed from the proposed syllabus.

Yours sincerely,
John Walsh

Jonathan Scales

To Whom it May Concern,

As a parent of a child in Primary Education I'm asking that you define gender and sexual identity.

I do not consent to gender identity being taught as fact and strongly believe that what you're looking to introduce into the Irish primary school curriculum is wrong as they are too young. Introduce it into second level school curriculums but not primary.

Thank you.

With Regards,
Jonathan Scales.

Joseph George

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

5

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Teaching outcome should include marriage of man and women and importance of family life.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

School may need support in how to teach about issues on which parents hold views in a way that respect parents beliefs. This involves fairly presenting a balanced range of view.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Parents must be able to see all the curriculum materials used, well in advance before the commencement of the lessons.

Joseph Thiel

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Children's values, dispositions and attitudes should be taught by the parents not the school curriculum. Stick to the things that matter in school and don't try to shape children in your image!

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The focus should be on Irish and English. With additional classes for this that show an aptitude for being multilingual. We don't have enough people learning our own language and you want to waste time trying to teach another!?!?

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

"Global Citizen" stick to the basics and if you must teach about citizenships and identities then encourage the national identity above all else!

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The SPHE section sounds an awful lot like wokeism and the teaching of different genders etc. let's be clear, there are 2 genders, and that's all that should ever be mentioned in classrooms. "Teaching" anything other than this should not be permitted in the classroom, in fact, how does this tie in with school education at all! It's not that long ago I was in school myself and none of this nonsense was being taught to us and we turned out fine. I do agree with keeping the kids safe and ensuring they know what's right and wrong when it comes to relationships, but remove this wokeism from the curriculum. Teach real science facts!

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Julia Anderson

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the current consultation process on the Draft Primary Curriculum being conducted by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). As a parent, I believe it is crucial for us to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of what our children will be taught before any curriculum changes are implemented.

The Consultation on the Curriculum Specification Document is scheduled to close on 7 June 2024. However, The Countess Advocacy has informed parents that this document primarily focuses on aims, goals, processes, aspirations, principles, diversity, inclusion, equity, citizenship, and social justice, with little detailed information about the actual content that will be taught to our children, particularly in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

The Curriculum Specifications Document is only one component of the curriculum open to consultation. The other two components—the Curriculum Framework and the Toolkit—are not currently part of this consultation. The Toolkit, which is supposed to contain the relevant information about the lessons, is not yet available for most subjects.

Without this information, parents are unable to form an informed opinion on the proposed curriculum changes. Therefore, I urge the NCCA to halt the current consultation process until clear and detailed information about the curriculum content is made available. This will ensure that proper consultation can take place and that parents can effectively contribute to the discussion about their children's education.

Please consider my request and provide the necessary information to allow for an informed consultation process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,
Julia Anderson

Juliet Reynolds

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I am a Primary School teacher and a parent. Some of the proposed changes will be good. I stand opposed to any sexual content being taught to younger children than now happens. I also oppose teaching non biological confused gender ideology. The children in my school are generally very happy with the current status quo. If anything more Bible teaching would be beneficial for guidance in life and for wellbeing, finding peace and strength to cope with real life.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Please see previous statement regarding inappropriate sexual information for young children and no need to confuse children with non scientific gender ideology.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Keith Armstrong

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The most glaring omission from the Specification is references to marriage. Sociological studies show that children in married father & mother families do best, in many facets of life. Include teaching on the value of marriage to individuals, families, and society as a whole. Include teaching on the reality of biological sex differences. Do not teach harmful unscientific gender theories. Add a section on the responsibility of each school to teach wellbeing in a moral framework according to the ethos of the school. Provide guidance to schools on how to fulfil their legal obligations to consult parents on SPHE. Include a section on the duty of schools to provide parents with teaching material in advance, and the right of parents to

withdraw their children from teaching contrary to their beliefs. Do not integrate SPHE into the school day in a manner that makes withdrawal impractical.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Keith Neary

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Please keep the catholic religion in our schools

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Should really concentrate more on maths and reading writing

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Should only include European languages and the one outside euro language should be Chinese

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

This does not need so much emphasis and should be secondary to other subjects like maths

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

This is good

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

This should not be included in the curriculum

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Better wages, school day could be a little longer for kids

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

We need to keep Christian religion in our schools

Keith Young

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Wellbeing: Replacing "spirituality" with "political activism" in the wellbeing course marks an ideological paradigm shift that ignores considerable evidence showing the significance of spiritual development for overall wellbeing, both personally and communally. Given the vast multicultural and multi-faith society that we now reside in, might it be opportune to include the spiritual and the religious and not to minimise or degrade this?

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Wellbeing: Replacing "spirituality" with "political activism" in the wellbeing course marks an ideological paradigm shift that ignores considerable evidence showing the significance of spiritual development for overall wellbeing, both personally and communally. Given the vast multicultural and multi-faith society that we now reside in, might it be opportune to include the spiritual and the religious and not to minimise or degrade this?

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Kelly Bernie

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

he proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. · Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes (generic/ unspecified). · Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes. · Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills. · The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education. · Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness (not starting from where the child is at) · More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child · Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what' - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts. · The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is 'Be an Activist' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education. · Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity.

Focus should be on the subject matter. · Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important. · Provide no visibility for parents: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

This curriculum uses the arts as a vehicle for social change and Indoctrination. P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.' P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship. This curriculum is not child centered, it is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children. There is lack of visibility and transparency for parents and lack of clarity in progression and age appropriate for pupils. P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity' Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer: "...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy" The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer", seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of what the learning objectives should be. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination. Page 21 Global Learning Themes Looks like a "woke" playbook. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using the curriculum to push political interests rather than service the educational needs of the child.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

what has challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy got to do with STEM. Outcomes are not clearly defined and are not child centered. pg31 "aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning" this

implies a lack of definition of the level of standards of education being attained. children are not able to lead and direct their own learning particularly younger children. They need to be taught and need direction. This is very concerning.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Physical education (PE) has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.) 1. '...inclusive understanding of human sexuality' (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools. 2. '...the concept of consent within relationships' (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed. 4. The terms 'diversity' and 'inclusion' have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory. 5. 'Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is an attack on 'heteronormativity' the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. 6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.'(p.38) - Parents rights should supersede 'Childrens rights' at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact. 7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the "Education for Social Justice" woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include: 1. Parental visibility and transparency, 2 Curriculum definition and clarity, 3. Age appropriateness and Radicalisation, 4 Cross curriculum contamination needs to be removed. 5 Learning need to be for fact based knowledge and related skills 6. Appropriate pedagogical approaches, 7 Fundamentally the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with the child safeguarding and parents must be made aware of what is being taught to their children.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, learning outcomes, resource material and understand the knowledge base of material before it is taught to their children. All material that is being taught to children must be age appropriate and parents need to be informed.. The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.

Dr Kevin Gormley

Response to PSC Draft Curriculum, Arts Education (with particular focus on Music Education)

Dr Kevin Gormley, School of Arts Education and Movement, Institute of Education, DCU.

I welcome the approach taken to help children and teachers see the interconnection between subject areas in the new Primary School Arts Education Curriculum and see great potential for integration through the approach of shared strands and aims. I have listed response points below in relation to strand names, timeframes, the absence of the toolkit at the time of requests for responses, the discourse of creativity, clarity of outcomes, alignment between outcomes and wider curriculum elements to support agentic teaching, and provisions for partnerships.

I see how the strands broadly align with those of the 1999 curriculum. The ideas of evaluating the composing process, talking about children's own composed music and comparing ideas to the ideas used by other composers, which sat under composing in the 1999 curriculum in its own discrete strand unit, 'Talking about and recording compositions', seems removed now from composing. 'Talking about' likely fits within 'responding and connecting' but still seems a step removed from 'creating' whereas the previous curriculum brought these together within the same strand. While the new draft specifies it is natural to move from one to the other within the strands in a given lesson/series of lessons, there is a risk that the important response and evaluation element of composing will be underplayed. I believe that the strand name 'creating' should also incorporate some element of 'talking about'.

I am concerned about the amount of time made available for arts education, and by extension for music education as one area within this. Under both time allocation options presented in the document, 'wellbeing' is afforded more time per week, even though it appears that this area only incorporates two subject areas. Within option one for Stage 3 and 4, sixteen hours per month are allocated to mathematics, twelve hours to wellbeing, and eight hours to all the arts subjects. This does not even equate with 3 hours per month for music.

I wish to emphasise that the toolkit is missing at the time of consultation and so a comprehensive review of the draft document is not possible. I am concerned that the depth of content in the 1999 curriculum, through suggestions of detailed outcomes under distinct strand and strand units will not be available. In various places, such as in italicised outcomes and in the teacher guidelines, the 1999 curriculum contained a wealth of content in terms of details on pedagogies for each strand and details about repertoire. Exemplars were provided to show how recommended pedagogies were implemented. We hope that the toolkit will give the level of detail.

I welcome the focus on creativity, creative teaching and playfulness in the draft curriculum. It is noteworthy that 'being creative' is placed first in the lists of skills and competencies for the arts curriculum and that this competency, abbreviated as 'C', is listed alongside virtually every outcome. Creativity is listed as the first aim of the draft arts education curriculum. Creative approaches come first in the listing of teaching and learning approaches. Related to the call for further contextual information and expansive material as presented in the 1999 curriculum, and as identified as a necessary component of the curriculum, I hope the toolkit will provide great clarification on specific creative practices and approaches. Such clarification could extend to the theory or conceptualisation of creativity that informs the curriculum and to where creativity fits in the theory or ideology informing this new curriculum (Apple, 2001).

Since there are fewer outcomes, each of which are wide-ranging in nature, there is strong potential for multiple and varied learning experiences within each one. There is however the risk that a vacuum is created around activities that had a more 'protected status' in the 1999 curriculum through subdivided and more explicit outcomes. Schools might elect to provide a small range of experiences such as instrumental tuition and this essentially becomes the curriculum in that school. The outcomes are arguably broad enough that all activities fit. Such activities might however be geared towards final products or performances rather than improvisational and playful in nature. They might not be sufficiently playful or creative but if

they loosely fit within the broad frame of something like “sing and play chants, songs and musical pieces across a range of styles and genres (by ear, from memory and notation, with/without movement” (stage 3 performing and presenting), I see a danger that other possible elements within that descriptor become neglected.

I do not associate any decrease or removal of information found in the 1999 curriculum teacher guidelines and in italicised detail in outcomes, with any impact on agentic teaching. Agency is an emergent phenomenon (rather than simply something that teachers ‘do’ or ‘have’) and is influenced by material and social conditions (Priestly, 2015). I call for the rich tapestry of detail that was available in the 1999 curriculum to be retained, in principle, while recognising it might be updated with repertoire suggestions or more recent research. Specifically, I ask for more detail around how such constructs as digital learning, cultural awareness and kinaesthetic approaches will feature in the three strands. ‘Cultural and contextual awareness’ is referenced as an aim but this requires detail under a range of other curriculum elements for music education such as updated repertoire list and culturally diverse pedagogies. More detail is necessary to make digital learning ‘operable’ in the music classroom e.g. around specific approaches and applications, specific resources linked to specific strands to inform and guide the teacher. Sensory and embodied approaches are listed as an overall ‘key area for consideration’ but in the specific outcomes for music, there is no reference to movement to respond to music within. Specific text around movement or other kinaesthetic approaches is not presented within the broad outcomes under ‘responding and connecting’ for all four stages and so, despite the broad mention of kinaesthetic approaches, it seems outcomes could be achieved in theory without movement. The 1999 curriculum explicitly incorporated active approaches into the outcomes.

I have questions around the provisions for partnerships. While I welcome the space for community involvement and external providers, I think the curriculum for music education should go further to define partnerships, and in particular, the meaning of teacher agency in the partnership. I acknowledge the wording that the teacher maintains a ‘central role’ and that ‘input’ from external providers must be balanced with ‘input from teachers’ but believe this needs to be stronger and more explicit. I call for wording that commits external providers and teachers to dialogue on the structures of the curriculum, that recognises the teacher agency in discerning the

extent to which the provision of external providers is creative or playful, and wording like ‘mandatory’ for teachers to be physically present and maintain oversight of and discern the component of the curriculum which is facilitated by the external provider. This is for reasons of Physical Health and Safety but also to balance other priorities of the curriculum like diversity and playfulness in honouring the teachers’ decision-making and overall role in enacting the curriculum.

In summary key actions points under each of the areas identified above are as follows:

strand names: to name these in such a way as to incorporate all dimensions of processes like the ‘creating’ process.

timeframes: to maximise the time allocation for music and all arts education areas

toolkit: to provide a robust and rich resource for teachers largely modelled on the resource material available for the 1999 curriculum

creativity: to delineate the views and theories of creativity that informs the multiple references to creativity throughout the curriculum and to offer relevant illustrations of creative work throughout support materials

outcomes: to further subdivide outcomes or otherwise make clear that elements of each outcome descriptor are equally important and not optional. e.g. the descriptors within ‘with or without’ movement or ‘learning by ear or by notation’

agentic teaching: to support teacher knowledge by providing guidance on how broad aims, competencies, approaches, methodologies and principles can be reflected in particular activities that in turn address the stated outcomes

partnerships: to ensure that partnerships like those between external providers and schools clearly recognise and describe the always-partial nature of external provision and the agentic teachers’ ultimate role in enacting the curriculum.

Lisa Ruytenburg

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, “gender as a social construct”, pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

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Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

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Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

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Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.

Lorcan Mac Fadden

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The Primary Curriculum Framework states the following: "Inclusive education provides for **equity of opportunity** and participation in children's learning" (emphasis added).. The phrase highlighted is nonsensical. There is only equality of opportunity (i.e. meritocracy) and equality of outcome (i.e. equity). The latter inevitably leads to socialism and eventually totalitarianism as seen the world over in failed communist states. Please remove all references to equity from both the curriculum framework and the specifications.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

N/A

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

N/A

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

All references to equity (e.g. Section 3, Section 6b) should be deleted or replaced with references to equality

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

N/A

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

All references to equity (e.g. page 19) should be deleted or replaced with references to equality

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Lucy Hunt

To whom it may concern,

As someone who has worked in ocean education for over 15 years and also currently undertaking my PhD on ocean literacy please accept my feedback on the new draft curriculum in particular for the areas of SEE (geography) and STEM (science). As an Island nation, Ireland's territory consists of more than 880,000km² of land under the sea. Our coastline stretches for more than 7,500 km and we share this unique marine space with millions of other living creatures.

In line with **IOC Circular Letter No 2951, dated July 2023 attached below**, the Irish Ocean Literacy Network would like to highlight the Call to include Ocean Literacy in school curricula by 2025 as a part of the Education for Sustainable Development. Also in line with the Governments Blue Economy Report " Harnessing Our Oceans Wealth" and the countries climate action plan - as the ocean is the biggest climate regulator we have on our planet, we need to teach about the ocean in our national curriculum.

Ocean Literacy (ocean education) is a major opportunity to highlight the importance of the ocean to the general public, and inspire a new generation of ocean scientists and marine practitioners. At the One Ocean Summit 2022 in Brest, the UNESCO Director-General of UNESCO, Ms Audrey Azoulay stated that:

"the international community must make education one of the pillars of its action for the ocean. Because if we want to protect it better, we must teach it better. On the occasion of the One Ocean Summit, I am setting a common goal for our 193 Member States: to include ocean education in school curricula by 2025."

With this in mind we would like to note that under Draft Curriculum Specification: Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities, Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum

- The need to provide students and teachers with more information and awareness of the Ocean, and the impacts of human actions on ocean health and functions. In Stage 3&4 Develop an understanding of borders of places (such as counties, regions/countries) we feel Marine territories, and Ireland Marine Spaces should be added to learning objectives and outcomes. As an island nation our marine environment is what defines us. Exploring the 'real map of Ireland' is something that is vital to our pupils and teachers, without which our citizens have little or no understanding of the geographical reach and expense of the country they are part of. See - <https://www.marine.ie/site-area/irelands-marine-resource/real-map-ireland-0> . We cannot talk about how we manage and protect our shared spaces without a knowledge of marine territory at stage 3.
- The links between the natural world and our life support systems and human health. In the learning outcomes for natural environments, marine environments should be noted. If it's not specifically stated on the learning outcomes there will be a tendency to stick with what's familiar land based approach, and miss the opportunity for students to develop a good basic understanding of the role of the ocean in our everyday lives (food/ oxygen/ water).
- Ireland's role in creating positive change for caring for and protecting the natural world. Examples of Irish Conservation Projects and the role of Irish Scientists and

Environmentalists. IOLN members include over 140 individuals and organisations working in the marine sector. Many are linked to formal education programmes, such as the Marine Institute Explorers Education Programme. As part of the Ocean Decade (2020-2030) members are coming together to explore marine education in Ireland and its role in the wider global context, including the EU BLUE Schools, All Atlantic Blue Schools and the UNESCO Global Blue School Initiative (currently in development). While our Ocean and marine spaces are made up of many different biological, physical and chemical elements, humans, and human actions are at the forefront of the challenges it faces. As an island of people who have spent centuries leaving our shores to explore what is beyond, we now must look to our own ocean and what's below, to celebrate and connect people to the marine world. We must move from considering just knowledge, awareness, communication, to how we adapt to a changing world, how we access and disseminate data and information, how our emotions are linked to the ocean and nature, and most importantly how we can create a bridge between the diverse range of stakeholders and community members that share our marine spaces. We have the opportunity to help our pupils and teachers to be part of this movement and create a wave of active citizens.

IOLN Members provide a range of Marine educational Materials

<https://irishoceanliteracy.ie/blue-schools/>

Beach School has developed the first Ocean Literacy Learning Platform for Early Years Educators

<https://www.galwaychildcare.com/childcare/e-learning-programmes.php>

This year Ireland's first marine national park was announced:

<https://www.npws.ie/news/ministers-announce-ireland%E2%80%99s-first-marine-national-park>

Twelve months ago Ireland's first Hope Spot was announced:

<https://missionblue.org/2023/01/greater-skellig-coast-recognized-as-irelands-first-hope-spot/>

UNESCO Blue Curriculum Toolkit

<https://repository.oceanbestpractices.org/handle/11329/2137>

Curious Minds (formerly the Discover Primary Science and Maths Programme) Ocean Literacy Video for Schools on RTE Learn

<https://www.rte.ie/learn/home-school-hub/2021/0114/1189761-science-ocean-literacy/>

In our view, we must also supply good quality CPD training and resources to support teachers and school leaders in implementing the curriculum changes. It is extremely important that the Irish Government have a joined up approach to the sustainability and resilience of our nation. Putting in a climate action plan without ensuring educating the next generation on the planets thermostat (the ocean) is disjointed and irrational. We need to give our planet a chance and relevant and effective education about the ocean is one way we can give generations information and actions to help protect the ocean and the planet. As Baba Dioum said

"If we do not know it, we cannot understand it, if we do not understand it we cannot love it, if we do not love it we will not protect it"

Please review the NCCA plans to include ocean literacy, I am co-chair of the Irish Ocean Literacy Network Working Group on Education and happy to advise on this matter.

**Yours sincerely,
Lucy**

--

Lucy

[Lucy Hunt MSc.](#)

Skellig Coast SMARTLab PhD Candidate

Email 2

I think it will be important to also review this new report released this week when thinking about our new curriculum and the lack of ocean in school curriculum world wide, let's make ireland an island nation leaders when it comes to ocean in the curriculum!

Lynda Finneran

Firstly, the State ought not to be determining in any way the content of a child's education, physical, intellectual, moral or social. This is not the legal, constitutional or moral province of the state or its agencies.

The state necessarily does not and cannot ever possess lawful authority or competence or power in this matter.

The same objective and eternally-true principles apply to the methods of teaching of a child (or children, as by a school or any educational organisation, group) or by whom it is delivered.

The mother and father primarily, assisted by others with natural rights, duties, interests in respect of a child's education, rearing, such as grandparents, other family members, religious leaders, etc., are the sole arbiters of their child's education and every aspect thereof, until responsibility naturally passes to the child, fully on attainment of the objective status of the age of majority.

In particular, a child's education and formation in respect of the most fundamental matters and objective truths, moral, spiritual religious, etc., are necessarily for the mother, father and their proper agents to determine, in content, scope, etc., over the course of the child's passage to adulthood (the child gradually and naturally gaining more input as they develop in moral, intellectual maturity under the guidance of their mother, father and others properly in loco parentis).

The family based on marriage of a man and woman has inalienable rights, authority and duties in respect of its children and this is an unalterable eternal truth, that cannot be ignored or flouted or interfered with by the State or anyone else, regardless of what any invalid laws or deemed changes to unchangeable constitutional truths may purport to claim at any point in time.

Knowledge and understanding regarding the moral and factual truths concerning the two sexes and sexual, conjugal relations (properly concerning a man and woman in natural marriage until death (sacred matrimony for adherents to God's laws)) is the responsibility of the child's mother and father, and moral, spiritual leaders, etc., properly in loco parentis. It is an attack on a child and his family (and vicariously on the people as a whole) for anyone to invade this sacred area and purport to communicate or dictate or indoctrinate the child in sexual matters, to say nothing of the egregious abuse of a child, naturally innocent, by the propounding immoral, perverse, false, harmful ideas relating to the sexual aspects of our God given human nature.

The state is bound necessarily to respect, protect and safeguard against all attack, and unwarranted interference, the innocent child and his right to be reared and educated by his

mother and father and their lawful proxies. A State which purports to interfere in the lawful province of parents, especially the family based on marriage between a man and woman for life, necessarily acts unlawfully and without lawful effect. This is always and everywhere true, no less in a time where a State or international organisation(s) abuses temporal power to deny or oppose these eternal truths, thereby enforcing unlawful tyranny.

"In the Name of the Most Holy Trinity, from Whom is all authority and to Whom, as our final end, all actions of both men and States must be referred ... "

Madeleine Fox

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

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- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Maeve Collins

Dear NCCA,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the current consultation process on the Draft Primary Curriculum being conducted by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). As a parent, I believe it is crucial for us to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of what our children will be taught before any curriculum changes are implemented.

The Consultation on the Curriculum Specification Document is scheduled to close on 7 June 2024. However, The Countess Advocacy has informed parents that this document primarily focuses on aims, goals, processes, aspirations, principles, diversity, inclusion, equity, citizenship, and social justice, with little detailed information about the actual content that will be taught to our children, particularly in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

The Curriculum Specifications Document is only one component of the curriculum open to consultation. The other component, the Toolkit—is not currently part of this consultation. The Toolkit, which is supposed to contain the relevant information about the lessons, is not yet available for most subjects.

Without this information, parents are unable to form an informed opinion on the proposed curriculum changes. Therefore, I urge the NCCA to halt the current consultation process until clear and detailed information about the curriculum content is made available. This will ensure that proper consultation can take place and that parents can effectively contribute to the discussion about their children's education.

Please consider my request and provide the necessary information to allow for an informed consultation process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Maeve Collins

Concerned Parent and Teacher

Máire O'Brien

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Firstly the introduction of a modern foreign language while seemingly a good idea however my concern would be at the expense of time spent on English and Irish. My sixth child is almost completed primary school and in comparison to my grandchild who is in Junior infants of a Gaelscoil, I would think that a 5th class child should have a much higher level of spoken Irish than his nephew. I would propose that more time should be spent on oral Irish throughout primary school and maybe introduce a modern language as a taster in the last two years, 5th and 6th class. Our children should be able to speak Irish on completion of primary school, we live in Ireland and should have at the least a working ability to speak Irish. With regard to the proposed changes in Social and Environmental education I noticed an absence of activity or learning experience linked to spiritual well-being. I know from studies and personal experience how important this is for the health and well-being of school children. It would be a mistake to exclude this. A new strand of the 'Wellbeing' course is called "community and belonging". Under the heading of "Inclusive education and diversity", is included the aim of: "Fostering a culture based on human rights, democracy, equity, equality, and social justice." Similar aims are contained in the draft of a new subject called 'Social and Environmental Education'. Terms like "social justice" are obviously highly contested. For example, some people believe it must include respect for the right to life at all stages, while others think it must include a 'right' to abortion. It is impossible to teach about "human rights", "equity", "equality", "social justice" and "diversity" in a politically neutral way, so how will schools teach these concepts to children and will parents be properly informed?

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Included in section 1

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Included in section 1

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Included in section 1

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Included in section 1

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Mandy Kelly

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I would like us to retain the aim of developing a sense of Irish identity from our 1999 curriculum. I would also demand that proper scientific education regarding sex education and how babies are naturally conceived is the only part covered in primary school. I do not want my young child learning about loads of different made up genders and how some unwell people are identifying as whatever they feel like. I have issue with someone being gay but at primary level kids only need to be learning the birds and the bees as scientifically as possible between the two genders. Male and female. Anything else needs to be thought at home by parents if they feel it necessary. I believe teaching children to be kind and live and let live lesson with empathy is enough to make sure anyone who feels a bit different can still be happy and accepted. More emphasis should be on reading and writing and maths..and also a new approach to teaching Irish that makes it fun. I will remove my children from school if any filth is brought in.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Irish and english to the forefront

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No filthy books or more than two genders (male and female) or identity ideology nonsense.. parents will teach anything more.. keep sex education to reproductive facts for the two only genders male and female.. again parents will teach anything else they deem relevant

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Marcus O'Dalaigh

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the public consultation process for the proposed primary curriculum changes.

I am a parent of two primary school children and am very concerned by what I have read on the Dept website regarding the changes.

Firstly, I did not see in any document, an acknowledgement that under the Irish Constitution the parents are the primary educators of their children. The NCCA should, as servants of the State, be obliged to consult meaningfully with parents on changes to public education. Unfortunately, this consultation process seems like a box ticking exercise, since there is little concrete detail behind the proposals.

It is disappointing that, in some respects, the cart is before the horse. Specifically on 'Wellbeing', some critical aspects of the changes are extremely vague and open to interpretation and there is no clarity when p.33 states that the 'Wellbeing Online Toolkit' is 'currently in development'. The consultation process should be after the toolkit is available for review.

Again in 'wellbeing', I was disturbed to see on p.25 'recognise the importance of aspects such as consent'. There is no such 'choice' open to primary school children. The law is clear and unambiguous, what the document is 'recognising' is child abuse. A minor is legally recognised as not having the mental capacity or maturity to 'consent' to any sexual interaction. The Department of Education should be making the law crystal clear to primary school children and their educators. Anything less from a Government Department is breaking the law. A Government Department cannot deceive, condone or encourage citizens to break or subvert the law, especially around child welfare. This is deeply damaging and confusing to children.

I notice a lack of accountability in the documents, there is no reference to parental rights but there seems to be a push on creating 'active citizens' and 'making informed choices'. Who decides on the relevant information and 'active' about what? Again there is no detail as to what this means, and no mention of parental involvement. The vast majority of parents do not wish to see their children being led by activist teachers crusading outside the Dail about the current 'issue of the day', as evidenced by the last poorly attended Climate Change Childrens march, they would prefer their children get solid evidence based education with proven pedagogy and develop their critical thinking skills.

What I see in these documents is an overemphasis on 'diversity', 'inclusion', 'empathy' and 'how' children learn as opposed to the 'what' children learn. These are all buzzwords that lack meaningful substance. For example, 'inclusion' is to 'challenge stereotypes and misconceptions', this begs the obvious question: what stereotypes and by whom? Again there is no answer. Do parents get an opportunity to input?

It is noticeable that there is no mention of the spiritual dimension to children's life in any of the proposals. It is name checked in 'wellbeing' but there is no further reference to it. The last census indicates that the majority of parents are people of faith. The NCCA seems to shy away from a pluralist vision of inclusion, incorporating and learning from the faith experiences of children, and opts for a narrow secular understanding which excludes faith from the conversation. This is wrong headed and the opposite of diverse.

There is no mention of how 'age appropriate' is defined. Children mature at very different rates, there is no one size fits all. Who gets to decide what I think is appropriate for my children?

At the end of Primary School parents want their children to have a positive minimum stress educational experience and to be proficient in English, Irish, Maths, having engaged in a broad range of subjects to equip them for future learning in post primary. The new curriculum seems intent on indoctrinating young children in the cares of the world and shouldering them with the burden of finding solutions. Children should not be leaving schools fearful for their environment or feeling guilty that somehow they are a privileged caste. I don't think the NCCA appreciates the decline in mental health that will result from fear mongering over world events.

There is an underlying thread running through these documents that there is no truth and that children will be enabled to seek their own truth paradigms through child-centred exploration. 'The aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning', is frankly nonsense. This attitude betrays a complete disregard for the influential child-teacher relationship. The teacher is not an enabler, she is a teacher and most kids need focused direction to learn.

Can we not let children be kids in primary school, in the same way most of us experienced our primary school days?

Regards,

Mark Daly

Marie Costello

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The changes suggested to the primary school curriculum are concerning to the point that we are now considering homeschooling. The maths curriculum has been ‘dumbed down’, critical race theory is being introduced under the term privilege and there is an absence of Irish culture and identity.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

See earlier response. Very concerning and regressive changes to the curriculum

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I do not want my children learning about climate change theory. It is a fear based and unsuitable. I support ecological education

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Very concerning and regressive

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

You are diluting reading, writing, maths and bringing in aspects of critical race theory etc. Educational standards can only decline.

Marie Morel

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I do not believe, as a parent of 4 children, that teaching children about new and very subjective concepts such as gender and sexual identity. This concerns me a great deal as I would strongly prefer that my children know that people are either born male or female and (unfortunately for some) no one gets to change their gender by just telling people that they don't feel like it. I also believe that is highly inappropriate to let them know about adolescent and adult sexual preferences. It is not important for their academic future or for their personal development. School is for academia and social development. Home is for personal development. I will not have the department of education force my child to listen to things that are nothing but a waste of time for the few hours they have each day to progress and develop educationally. I implore the ncca to redact all mention of anything related to sexual and gender identity from the proposed new curriculum. Regards, Marie.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

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No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9.Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

This should be a much more generalised curriculum as their personal development should not be the concern of the school and it's teachers. Situations that a teacher is trying to prevent or create through education should be approached in a more individual way citing any concerns of a students apparent/obvious behaviour with their parents and not directly with a whole class room of children. I feel the ncca is over stepping the mark when it comes to much of the content they are proposing to teach, especially so with regard to sexual and gender identity.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I feel the source of their sense of wellbeing comes from their life at home which, in turn, effects their life outside home but I still feel the ncca is stepping on parents toes with this new subject. And again, eating into valuable school time where they could be learning and developing core skills such as mathematics, language and reading/writing.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

A lot more resources and staff which most schools simply don't have and it is only the kids who will be effected by the complete lack of balance between the lack of resources and a bulked up curriculum Full of information completely irrelevant to the development of a child's brain with regard to academic achievement.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

As you might have noticed, my biggest concern is the emphasis the ncca are putting on matters of sexual and gender identity. This concerns both me and my husband and most parents I know. We feel it is nothing but a distraction to the much more important aspects of school life and learning. It is something

which should be talked about at home and not in a classroom setting due to the very personal nature of these topics. So please, for the sake of the academic and professional future of this next generation, do not implement the topics of sexual and gender identity into the new 2025 curriculum.

Margaret Mc Geehan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Parents need face to face consultation

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

No answer

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

In consultation with parents

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific

chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

In consultation with parents

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Religious ethos of school and attendees must be adhered to. Gender ideologies must not be taught or promoted. Children are not mature enough to deal with these topics. Parents must have the final say.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Religious Ed books.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Parents are the primary educators and must have a say in what their children must not be exposed to. Parents must see the content and be able to object.

Mark Loughridge

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I am delighted to see specific emphasis given to Digital well being (p18, 22, 27 etc). But it would need to cover the impact our hyperconnected age has on our emotional and mental well-being, how it leads to fragmentation of thought, and decreased attention spans. The issue is not simply being aware of the content of the internet, but about the impact of smartphone usage on the neural pathways of the brain, and the increase in anxiety. See Johann Hari's book "Stolen Focus" and Jonathan Haidt's "The Anxious

Generation” among many others. I am concerned about the lack of mention of the promotion of marriage as a key foundational building block for society. The statistics show a deep correlation between educational performance, emotional and social stability and coming from a family where mother and father are married. Obviously this does not need to be put in such terms to children, but amidst the clamour for the recognition of diversity of family structure (p19), there must be a recognition that some structures have a richer heritage and track record. I am concerned too about the use of the word ‘celebrating’ on page 2. This is in the context of celebrating diversity. Not all pupils, not their primary educators (ie their parents), will believe that all forms of diversity are to be celebrated—in particular the issue of sexual morality. Neither will the ethos of all schools agree with it. There is a difference between anti-discrimination, i.e being against something, and celebrating something. A child should be taught that discrimination is wrong, but to require them to celebrate something they believe is wrong is coercion. Teaching to respect diversity (24, 48) must also include teachers respecting the opinions of pupils who disagree with current views on morality, especially for religious reasons. A teacher has no right to undermine a child’s faith, or to push them towards something which causes an internal conflict. The diversity card has to work both ways. I am also concerned about the wider issue of identity, and also tying it to self-esteem. The self-esteem project has been found to have been a catastrophic failure. Studies and reports, in particular by Roy Baumeister and others, have shown this, and that the opposite attitudes of humility and having a willingness to serve are better values to cultivate, and better indicators of healthy individuals than promoting self-esteem. Self-esteem is to turn people inwards instead of outwards. I find it tell that virtues such as humility and service do not appear in the well-being syllabus. Children need to be taught not to get their identity from what they achieve, or how they feel about themselves. These things are far too fragile—we need to instil in them a sense of identity and meaning, purpose and dignity from a more robust source. The proper teaching of Christian values which have shaped the West for millennia is a necessary component for this. It is a sad reflection that the issue of spiritual well-being receives the scantest mention in the syllabus. And this is at a time when many leading thinkers in the West are rediscovering the foundational character of Christianity in shaping the West.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Schools may need support in teaching about issues where parental views diverge to ensure an inclusive and respectful learning environment for all pupils, particularly those from a Christian (or other faith) background who often feel isolated and under pressure to conform. Schools should be encouraged to connect with those in their community who hold differing viewpoints so that they can present materials in the best way.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Schools should inform parents of their right to withdraw their child/children from teaching that runs counter to their conscientious beliefs. That means that parents need to have clear knowledge of what is being taught, and this readily available. Schools should have a briefing letter for parents at the start of each school year outlining what will be covered, and access to whatever resources (these should be

online where possible) so that parents can have a clear idea of what their child will be taught with regard to well-being

Marta Kalupeteka

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I believe that, overall, the DPCS is valuable, but I'm concerned with the fact that schools are addressing children dispositions and values beyond what should be their scope, not taking into account what the majority of parents' beliefs or points of view are. I'm talking particularly in reference to the Wellbeing Curriculum Specification. Values and dispositions, while they can and should be reinforced in school in the context of what might be called "universal principles", are issues that must be primarily taught at home. In no way should the school teach specific/particular values to the children, not having into account if these are contrary to the child's family values.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I'm concerned that teaching about "diversity of family structures" (page 19) will put a bigger emphasis on same-sex marriage than what it should have (only about 3% of marriages in Ireland last year were same-sex marriages), while side-lining traditional views of man-woman marriage. Not to mention that, as showed with the referendum held in March, nearly 70% of voters rejected a constitutional amendment downgrading marriage to share equal status with durable relationships. I believe this decision should be reflected in what is taught in schools, and not the opinions and ideas of minorities (though these must be respected, they cannot become the norm of a country if contrary to the beliefs and values of the people of that country). Also, what I don't see happening in society and worries me that it won't happen in the school context is that the "Respecting and celebrating differences" does not apply to those who hold different views, allowing them to express those views respectfully.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Schools should have complete freedom to adapt recommended resources to their pupils' and parents' needs and uphold the characteristic spirit of the school. Schools may need support in how to teach about issues on which parents hold different views in a way that respects parents' beliefs, presenting them in a balanced range of views and in an objective way.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Schools should inform parents of their right to withdraw their children from teaching that runs contrary to their conscientious beliefs. Parents cannot exercise this right if they don't have clear information about all teaching and curriculum materials (including texts, visual materials and lesson plans) well in advance of lessons.

Martin Crossin

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

It is a good thing to build upon any strengths of the previous Curriculum Framework from 24 years ago with respect to the recent research into how children learn and develop.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

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8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Key Outcomes - Community and Belonging (Strand Unit - Family) Page 19. Footnote 10 acknowledges the fact that different family structures exist, however, it should be noted that evidence demonstrates that Marriage continues to be the best environment in which to raise children and as an institution is still held in the highest esteem . If you want to reflect modern Ireland, almost 70% of voters rejected the idea that

'Durable relationships' share equal status with Marriage. An awareness of the diversity of family structures should not come at the expense of suggesting that this diversity reflects an equality of outcomes.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

School leaders will need the freedom to use recommended resources in a way that reflects the character and beliefs of their school.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Parents need clear information on what is to be taught and when. In relation to sensitive topics covered in the Wellbeing curriculum, schools should inform parents of their right to withdraw their child from education that runs contrary to their conscience. As the Curriculum seeks to introduce controversial and sensitive topics it should be the Curriculum's endeavour to treat students in this 'withdrawal' scenario with a degree of sensitivity and understanding.

Maricruz McNulty

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I agree with the prospect changes. I think it is very important to engage the children with a foreign language. We are part of Europe and other countries are making so much efforts to make their kids bilingual to provide better opportunities in the future. Having Irish from primary is absolutely nice for the heritage but they need the tools for the future Spanish, French or German is a must. Lucan needs more Spanish teachers the secondary schools only provide French and German the three language should be on the menu. It is important to extend the curriculum I am agree

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Very important I am agree with this

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

We are getting behind other countries spanish, french or germán is a must we should offer this since primary for the ske of ireland the kids are the future

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Totally necessary at the moment is opcional and in realito it is totally necessary to create an awareness

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

It is very important hard to believe that in some secondary school science is opcional and religion is a.must

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Agree

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Mary Creedon

To whom it Concerns

I am a mother of 5 children and a secondary school teacher for over 30 years. I am very concerned over the proposed changes to the primary school curriculums.

The proposed Draft Curricula would seem to undermine the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum. The 1999 Curriculum had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The 2012 update to increase the focus on literacy and mathematics was also to be welcomed, particularly for early learners. The new Draft Primary Curriculum would appear to be moving away from that emphasis again in favour of political and global social justice themes. Before getting into each specific subject area, the following are some broad based concerns I have.

- **Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes** (generic/ unspecified) – the intent of each outcome is not clear from the language used.
- **Unclear, underdeveloped progression** across Learning Outcomes (little differentiation between different stages and across skills development); many learning outcomes specified for Stage 1 (Junior & Senior Infants) could be as easily applied in Stage 4 (5th and 6th classes).
- **The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes** could lose the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have certain minimum standards in each subject for a balanced provision of education across schools (whether urban/ rural, large/ small, mostly Irish/ newcomer, advantaged/ disadvantaged status) across the country. Therefore, one must ask:
 - How will schools be able to ensure and maintain standards across the curriculum across the country?
 - How will schools be able to Assess unclear Outcomes?
- **The ‘spiral’ nature of the 1999 curriculum seems to have been lost** (where children would revisit a concept again later in their school lives at a greater level of challenge to develop and deepen understanding)
- **Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness** (not starting from where the child is at, introducing themes (Social Justice and Climate related at a totally inappropriate time in a child’s development)
- **More focused on global and political concerns** than local tangible concerns of the child and in grounding them in the reality of their Irish citizenship first and foremost.
- **Shift in focus to ‘how’ children learn over ‘what’** - could lead to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts. This is not appropriate or inclusive for all learners.
- **The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses** e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is **‘Be an Activist’** (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes, promoting particular positions and opinions): this follows Queer Theory and Critical Marxist Theory of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and foreign concepts of Race (such as ‘white privilege’). These approaches could trigger guilt, fear, anger, and existential anxiety, moreover they are intended to do so by Queer Pedagogues. There is an element of brain washing and trauma bonding here, guilting away all of a child’s existing beliefs and then replacing them with a new set of beliefs.
- **Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multiperspectivity** could be challenging for children and not always age appropriate. If a Subject is being taught through a lens (e.g. of

empathy/ activism/ of challenging stereotypes), where is learning for learning's sake? The focus should be on the subject matter and taught through a politically neutral lens, not a postmodern Social Justice/Critical Marxist or Queer political lens for example.

- **The deprecation of History as a subject at both Primary and Secondary level is a major concern.** A foundational knowledge of both the history of Ireland, the history of Europe and the World as a whole has been a basic ingredient of any Irish child's education. Understanding the past helps guide decisions for the future and helps act as a warning against repeating errors and atrocities from the past. It also helps put current conflicts into context.
- **No acknowledgement of recent developments such as the Cass Report, WPATH files and the UK turnaround in educational strategy.** The UK's decision to remove contested ideologies from the classroom is notable and the NCCA should be following suit along with revisions to assure age-appropriateness in sexuality education rather than following the approaches of Radical Feminist and Queer Theorists who have clearly run the rule over the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum. Just because something appears academically trendy doesn't mean it's grounded in reality. The fact that the terms Gender Dysphoria, Desistance and Detransition are missing from SPHE material is proof of ideological capture. .

In summary, these Draft Curricula:

- **Lack structure and clarity in the Learning Outcomes:** need to start where the child is at and have a clear progression of skills and concepts to scaffold learning. The content is driven by high-level ideals and are intangible and invisible.
- **Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound:** Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.
- **Provide no visibility for parents in their unspecified nature:** 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'. Moreover, the NCCA would appear to be going out of their way to circumvent parental visibility by every means possible – books staying at school, whole school and cross curriculum approaches, class contracts. All of these are attempted violations of parental rights by the NCCA. There must be 100% transparency for parents.
- **Lack of consistency:** without a clear Curriculum (programme of work), how will the high standards of Irish Primary education be maintained across the country? From school to school?
- **SPHE needs to be grounded in reality and age-appropriateness:** Postmodern Theory is not reality and moreover denies objective truth be it based in science or the natural world.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

1. This Curriculum uses **the Arts as a vehicle for social change** (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. Furthermore, this level of integration, means children do not get to enjoy and experience the Arts as valuable in their own right.

*P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to **challenge stereotypes and***

misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multiperspectivity.'

P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'

Is this an appropriate goal of an Arts Curriculum? This is using the Arts with an ulterior motive, which is not appropriate? Is it in conflict with developing personal meaningful responses to the Arts?

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children:

P4&5 Rationale: **very intellectual intentions** around ‘*appreciation*’ and ‘*enhanced aesthetic and cultural understanding and begin cultivating their unique and collective ... identities*’ – is this age-appropriate? **This type of teaching is not inclusive as it is not accessible for all children.** There is over emphasis on Identity over Experiences and Skills development.

p6 Aims of *Artistic Engagement, Aesthetic Appreciation, Cultural and Contextual Awareness* – again these Aims are very high-level, intellectual concepts with little emphasis on skills development or enjoyment.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 ‘*Learning Outcomes*’ It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome’s content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

Under ‘*Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions*’ & ‘**foster inclusivity and social cohesion**’ & ‘*celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity*’ ‘*promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity*’

Is this another part of the Social Justice agenda? What does this actually mean in terms of learning French or German?

This is the language of identity politics. Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language. Does this suggest an agenda of teaching a foreign language as integration of newcomer migrants over preparing children for their futures? How could it be possible to create social cohesion? Teach the language of newcomers? Surely learning a language should be being able to communicate, as a priority over Inclusion ideologies?

Section 2(c): Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Overview Assessment

- The primary concern here is the age group being targeted here **5-8 year olds**. These are children that are only learning to read and do maths. Basic Geography and History is appropriate but a shift to a global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is an **indoctrinating agenda in how to be a good Global citizen**, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (*Be an Activist* is a Key Competency). What follows is some more detail, but in truth, we shouldn’t be having this discussion at all. Apart from some Geography and History, the rest of the time should be contributing to the children’s broader literacy skills and not instilling climate anxiety into young learners.
- **This is in opposition to child-centred teaching**, which starts from where the child is at home learning about their local communities , then progressing onto their national identity

before understanding the global perspective . Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. Ireland historically has had strong identities around parish/ county/ province/ nation. This is part of children’s cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. These are strengths of the country which should be embraced and celebrated not diluted .

- **The Global Learning Themes (p21-22)** could all be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of ‘white privilege’ and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. **Non-native children need to learn about Ireland, their new home.**

- **SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear** around the dangers of the modern global world (war, famine, natural disasters...) Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.

- **This curriculum’s Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis** on lenses such as *empathy, respect* and *challenging worldviews* ‘to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world’ again, is this age appropriate? This is UNESCO SDG 2030 Speak. Is this an appropriate burden to place on young people? Could questions like these lead to increased anxiety and disempowerment? **What about learning History and Geography for the benefit and enjoyment of the subjects themselves without an agenda of moulding vulnerable young minds and hearts? As a geography teacher placing the burden of climate change on children is not appropriate and not all people believe in climate change . Many scientists are debunking this myth . Climate change is being used as a tool to control food production and hence populations .**

Specific Review Notes and Comments

Page 18 / 23

Working as a Geographer:

"...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy"

Learn to be a Geographer stating clearly topics that will be taught - weather and climate for example? What about learning something about the child's local and national geography and where Ireland sits in a global context? At an age-appropriate level of course that can be built on at Secondary level.

Working as a Historian: The exact same points apply as above. A basic history of Ireland and Europe is essential for all learners and regardless of whether they are of Irish origin or not.

Discussions in relation to sustainability are more appropriate for older children who have a knowledge baseline that can put this theme into context.

Page 21

Global Learning Themes

Quite frankly, this looks like a **Critical Social Justice / Climate Action playbook** and these themes would appear to be the real priority with respect to this particular aspect of the curriculum, over and above any learning objectives in history or geography. The fact that these same 5 themes are also likely to serve as "generative themes" across the entire Primary curriculum is also a concern, using **the entire curriculum to further political interests** rather than service the educational needs of the children involved. Cross curricular themes are an entry point for activist teachers to put an over emphasis on the politics they wish to instill on the children leading to indoctrination on the one hand and the degradation of scholarship on the other. Keep the subjects focused on the subject matter.

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety, fear and a shortage mentality. Similar commentary as per above on Geography.

Science, Technology and Engineering Curriculum – Further Review Notes and Comments

Page 16

Learning Outcomes

Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centred, ‘Algorithm’ and ‘Plugged’ / ‘Unplugged’ at Stage 1 (these are infants)!

Pages 16 & 17

Engineering

This is all very vague.

Pages 24 - 27

6c. Assessing Primary Science, Technology and Engineering

Further to concerns expressed above, the lack of specificity and clarity with respect to the curriculum content carries into assessment - without a clearly defined foundational core, the variation in learning experience and outcomes between different schools could become a major issue, particularly at the lower end of the scale.

Page 31

“Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and support to enable them to do this over time.”

This last paragraph is worrying - it implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst, making any form of objective assessment an impossibility. Learning should be child centred but adult led

Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

Wellbeing Curriculum Specification – First Pass Assessment

SPHE is about development of the child – but “spiritual” is mentioned only 3 times (2 of those in the glossary) Spiritual well being is neglected. There needs to be a far greater emphasis on spiritual wellbeing as research has shown that "the totality of the human condition cannot be understood or explained merely in terms of physical and social change" .

Physical education (PE) has been co-opted to include more SPHE (Social, Personal and Health Education) content than “Physical” content in the learning outcomes. (e.g. at Stage 3 & 4: p20 PE Movement Education gets only 1 page, p21-23 show SPHE aspects of PE Emotional and Relational PE, Health Education PE, Community and Belonging PE. This is paying lip service to PE as a subject and introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the *PE Activity Areas* (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)

Additional Review Notes and Comments

1. ‘...***inclusive understanding of human sexuality***’ (p.4) – what does ‘***inclusive sexuality***’ mean – gay or lesbian, non-binary, transgender etc? ‘Inclusive’ human sexuality is quite inappropriate for Primary School children and should not be included. The teaching of radical Gender Identity theory – that a child could become ‘*a boy or a girl, neither or both*’ - as fact should be removed from the Primary curriculum in view of the recent findings of the **Cass report** into the treatment of children

with gender dysphoria: **that gender identity ideology should not be taught in schools.** The NCCA would do well to follow the example of the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, and that sexuality education should be age-appropriate and not the nonsense outlined in the activist influenced and ideologically compromised WHO and UNESCO sexuality guidelines.

2. **'...the concept of consent within relationships'** (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is most unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed.

3. **'Provide children with a balanced, inclusive, age and developmentally appropriate understanding of human development and sexuality ...'**(p.7) - Again, basing any curriculum to the *WHO Standards for Sexuality Education in Europe* with its highly sexualised approach to children (eg '0-4 years of age – teach masturbation; 9-12 years of age - teach first sexual encounter') is inappropriate. It's important to safeguard children and their innocence. Yes, childhood innocence does still exist, and should not be destroyed .

4. **"Foster respect for diversity, championing active citizenship, human rights, fairness, and social responsibility to create inclusive and compassionate learning environments'** (p.7) - Schools should not be used to transform children into social activists, and **'diversity'** and **'inclusive'** are established terms for a pro-LGBTQ emphasis in SPHE material, which has led to an excessive emphasis on sexual orientation and gender identity. **Identity politics** has no place in the classroom - putting labels on children and notions of systemic racism, white privilege, oppression and intersectionality. The impact of Queer activism was clearly apparent in the Junior cycle. Queer is a political identity that is in opposition to the Norm –so by definition it is not politically neutral and **it is not inclusive** given its very clear political stance. The adoption of Queer Pedagogical approaches by the NCCA is not acceptable. These are inherently political and not child friendly.

5. **'Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities'**. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is **an attack on 'heteronormativity'** the normal roles that men and women typically assume in society. This is confusing for young children and should not be depicted in the Primary School Curriculum. Again, we're seeing Queer activist language here. **Take it out .**

In fact this statement is very old fashioned .The status of women has improved so much in the last 50 years .This statement is creating hatred in women for their gender and against men . Men and women are unique both in their physical attributes and in the roles that they assume in families and in society . Why do NCCA want to de-hinge children in their perception of men and women?

6. **Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.'**(p.38) - **Parents rights** should supersede *'Childrens rights'* at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact – e.g. transitioning to a different gender – and children should not be indoctrinated to become social activists.

7. **'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum'** (p.45) - External facilitators in the area of sexuality education who are pushing an agenda, a political agenda – e.g. *BelongTo*,

ShoutOut, TENI re LGBTQ content – should not be allowed to make presentations to children, especially in view of BelongTo’s training manual which advised instructors to lie to parents. There should be **no secrecy pacts** between teachers or instructors and children to keep teaching material secret from parents – this breaches parent’s constitutional rights.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

I believe the overall curriculum is not fit to proceed as it is currently documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the obvious “**Education for Social Justice**” agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination. We’ve seen the impact of this approach in other countries such as the USA and Canada and to a lesser extent the UK, who appear to have now made a course correction to address some of the most egregious issues they had. We appear to be obsessed with following suit. Unfortunately, the educational scholarship of the last 20 years is infected with destructive radical postmodern Theory.. The related pedagogical approaches are all about politics and activism and not about learning and scholarship and hence inappropriate for adoption regardless of what their proponents might argue. Ireland is coming from a strong position in terms of educational standard so we have much to lose if we make the wrong decisions with respect to a revised Primary Curriculum. We have already executed on a mis-step in the Junior Cycle

1. Parental Visibility and Transparency

- a. There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts.
- b. If the pedagogical approach requires the use of class contracts then it is unsuitable and needs to be replaced.
- c. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials that children will be exposed to.

2. Curriculum Definition and Clarity

- a. Notions that “being a Geographer” or “being a Historian” alone can be the primary learning outcome are not acceptable and a gross oversimplification.
- b. The notion of broaching the topics of climate change and sustainability without children having the necessary foundational knowledge to properly contextualise these themes shows an emphasis on pushing a particular agenda rather than imparting factual knowledge.

3. Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Removal of all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:

- a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization
- b. Parents reject the WHO and UNESCO Sexuality Education Guidelines – these are not age appropriate and were clearly influenced by Queer activists who by definition, take oppositional positions on sex and gender to most “normative” parents. They violate safeguarding and deliberately seek to problematise sex, gender and sexuality for very young children. This is not education.
- c. The introduction of **Critical Social Justice** and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism, either in terms of name or in terms of substance are not acceptable.

4. The teaching of radical Gender Identity Theory – that a child could transition their gender from boy to girl and vice-versa - should be removed from Primary curricula. The final **Cass report** into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that **gender ideology should not be taught in schools**. Also, the recent direction by the UK

Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.

5. Cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed, be it in relation to themes of sex and gender or any other political themes, be it in terms of those above, or themes such as Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Climate or Sustainability.

- a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,
- b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs

6. Learning needs to be for knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism. In line with the above, all knowledge given to pupils must be factual, science based, age appropriate and not based on contested ideologies, e.g. **Gender self-Identification** Ideology cannot be taught in primary schools.

7. The “**lived experience**” of a 5-12 year old is very limited in the context of most of the themes being pushed in this curriculum, so the level of child agency and of a child-centred approach would appear to be inappropriate.

8. Critical Thinking (Not Critical Marxist Thinking or any derivative of same) needs to be taught as a politically neutral foundational analytical skill upon which the merits/demerits of any concept or assertion can be assessed. This would appear to be unpopular in the current politically charged culture which is precisely the reason it needs to be taught now more than ever. Irish children need to be able to think for themselves and view the world through a politically neutral lens and be capable of engaging in reasoned argument and debate regardless of the prevailing narratives in the culture.

9. Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches

The focus on Social Justice is a huge concern. Education for Social Justice would point to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, whose teaching is heavily weighted in politics and radical postmodern ideologies – **indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable.** Unfortunately, most modern pedagogical scholarship from the last 20+ years intrinsically embed either “Critical” Marxist activism, Queer Theory, Post Colonial Theory– all wholly inappropriate due to their political bias.

10. Fundamentally, the curriculum must be de-politicised and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.

12. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

1. **Collaboration with parents:** There will clearly be a level of teacher agency with respect to the curriculum implementation and this will introduce a level of customization at local school level. Historically, the engagement with parents and the visibility to parents of what is being taught has been worked in a very open and collaborative way at primary level. It is essential that this level of cooperation is maintained.
2. **Parental Consultation:** The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered.
3. **Ethos:** It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos.
4. **Social Transitioning:** Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools.
5. **Parental Knowledge,** consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy.

6. **The “Dignitas Infinita” document** issued by the Vatican in April 2024 is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools in accordance with Canon Law.

Conclusion Ireland, and Irish Education should not be a slave to the academic tyranny (and resulting degradation in scholarship in favour of activism), that is raging through the Western World. We need to be brave enough to find our own path to ensure that the new curriculum is an enhancement on it's predecessor and not a degradation.

We need to be independent critical thinkers and makers of our own curriculum for the sake of the children, the future of Ireland .

Kind regards

Mary Creedon

Mary F Keane

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

With regard to changing priorities, It is important our children retain our national identity...our Irish Culture, beliefs, traditions. WE are not global citizens...we are Irish citizens. There is no problem educating children about different culture but not at the expense of their Irish Identity..

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Mary Foy

Hi,

Could you please define for me gender and sexual identity?

I do not agree with gender identity being taught as fact in our schools

We should stick to science based facts and not get drawn into ideology based theories which only lead to confusion for our young people who are going through a very difficult time. Biological sex is a fact and gender identity is a fiction. Every other day there are inventing new genders. Schools should stay far away from promoting such an ideology which in the long run may only be harming young people. In years to come this may be seen as another form of child abuse and the resulting claims against schools for promoting this ideology could be huge.

Yours sincerely,

Mary Foy

Mary Quinn

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No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Religion is important. Changing our identity to be a 'global citizen' must come after being an Irish citizen. It is important for humans to have a sense of belonging. Are you not proud to be Irish? Why are you doing this. It is a basic human need to belong 🙏. I'm not talking about the Irish language as its not well taught. It's the 'who we are, and where we come from' that we can not loose

Matt O' Brien

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The new curriculum framework is broadly similar to the 1999 curriculum with some titles moved around and a new set of awful infographics. Flexibility and agency are excellent features of the curriculum, although in some areas (e.g. language) the framework is too vague to follow. The key competencies are the biggest update but unfortunately are pure nonsense. I'm not sure who's idea they were but it's obvious from reading the curriculum documents they were included purely as a box-ticking exercise. The curriculum is great for the holistic development of the child including skills, knowledge and attitudes. Assessment is and always will be a central part of teaching and learning, I don't think these documents focus on it in a particularly concrete manner, but it's comparable to the previous. Integrated learning is well supported and a strong feature of the curriculum. Learning outcomes do a good job of allowing for different levels of ability across the curriculum, but special schools would likely benefit from more detailed guidance.

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

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7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

7

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8.Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Learning outcomes like 'Use language flexibly and with empathy while initiating, sustaining and engaging in conversations on personal and curriculum-based topics' are of no use to anyone. Like most learning outcomes in this document it is so vague and broad that it's impossible to assess or teach directly. There is a huge amount of filler text in this document and it's a challenge to find any useful guidance in it.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9.Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Learning outcomes in this document are well laid out and organised on pages 14-17. Key competencies have again been stapled on for no benefit.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Learning outcomes are generally well presented and clear. Some of the new objectives could do with more detail on the depth of knowledge required. For example "Understand and describe how a digital system operates, for example a computer or a tablet" and "Explore and use their understanding of algorithms or programs to create a representation (computer model) of something from the real-world" could both be university level learning outcomes.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The PE curriculum might be better subdivided into events like gymnastics, dance, field games, athletics etc. to reflect how it is taught in school. The strand units and learning outcomes are fine, but it's obvious they were drawn from particular activity areas, not the other way around. The SPHE curriculum has a few nebulous learning outcomes like "Demonstrate a growing ability to cope with changing relationships, including friendships, practising strategies to navigate peer influence, both positive and negative, disharmony, and conflict" and "Demonstrate the ability to manage changing relationships in various social situations, including friendships, by adopting strategies to navigate social influence and respond to interpersonal conflicts constructively". Overall though they are clear, well thought out and actionable. Fig 6 on page 43 is incomprehensible. None of the infographics in these documents convey any information more than text, but this one is actively confusing

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Textbooks

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

It would be easier to implement the new elements of the curriculum if they were presented succinctly.

Maureen Sherlock

The proposed new curriculum recognises the child as a standalone citizen of the State. It does not therefore comply with the Irish Constitution which states that parents are the primary educators of their children. The Introduction states “It enables children to see themselves as individuals, with rights and responsibilities, and as part of social groups, including in the classroom and school, the local community”

The failure to include parents in its Introduction and Vision statements is not only disrespectful to parents but it also fails to respect the child and empathize with its vulnerability and dependency on the loving bond with its family. Primary Education is not only tasked with introducing children to the world of knowledge but it is also the custodian of their childhood and innocence. This is not reflected in the new Curriculum.

Being’ and ‘Become’ are trending promotional words used by Advertising Consultants. Standing alone they are meaningless and have no place in a Government document, least of all by the Department of Education.

The proposed new Curriculum goes too far too fast and would be more suitable for Secondary Level Students. By the age of 12, most children have left the cocoon of childhood behind them and are starting to recognise that they have a role and purpose in the wider world. The journey through Secondary School will transform them from being a child in a family to a citizen in a State. In getting the Right to Vote, they then acquire the Right to public protest.

The new curriculum lists 7 Key Competences

Being well, Being a digital learner, Being mathematical, Being a Communicator,
Being creative, Being an active Learner and Being an Active Citizen.

It then expands on what these Key Competences are and provides a further list of the means by which they can be achieved. Early childhood is where character is formed but there is only minimal reference to the desired qualities a child needs to develop and no guidelines are given on how to acquire them. What’s missing is a parallel list of the virtues needed for character formation such as

Being Kind, Being Caring, Being Respectful, Being Courageous, Being Tolerant,
and to integrate these along with the 7 Key Competences into all areas of learning. These will provide a positive focus on how to become better active citizens.

BEING AN ACTIVE CITIZEN

This competency develops children’s capacity and motivation for active and meaningful participation in society at local, national, and global levels..... It also raises awareness of global challenges such as climate change, conflict and growing inequalities.

It’s difficult to see how it could be deemed virtuous to impose such weighty responsibilities on children that are beyond their means and capabilities to control. If they have been taught to see the beauty in nature, they do not need to be chastised into ‘taking action in favour of a sustainable future’, likewise if they have developed empathy then they have learnt to consider how their own actions might be harmful to others.

In Table 1, the Attributes for being a digital learner would be more suitable to any 3rd Level College. No mention is made of the dangers posed by new technology which is now recognised as being a major contributor to the loneliness and isolation of young people. The more time a person spends on technology the less friends they have.

Building and maintaining friendships are core skills that need to be formed in childhood. For this reason, those concerned with youth mental health promote limiting the availability of technology to young people.

The new curriculum seeks to empower children by listening to them and responding to their choices.

Decision making is an important skill that needs to be learnt during childhood. It is not based on feelings because feelings change and the consequences of a decision don’t. Making choices is how a child interacts with the world and at junior level should begin small to build confidence rather than bring stress. Failure to provide proper guidelines to decision making can result in tragic consequences such as in drug taking or driving too fast.

Fear is ever pervasive in our Society today. Media stretches into every home bringing its tales of war, climate change and destruction of the environment. Mental health problems in children have reached crisis levels and are without adequate resources to treat them. Many children don't want to grow up. Their lives are full of fear. Primary schools must be maintained as a safe place for children to be happy and free from the burdens and fears of the adult world.

MD Yusuf

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

who decides what is priority? is it the parents or those who are sitting at the top of govt?

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No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them

Md Arifur Rahman

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No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

(As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.)

Mehenaj Akter

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

(As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.)

Michael Kenny

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Assessment is key to knowing the level of pupil's learning and is a central plank of this framework.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The integration of the arts namely Drama, Visual Art and Music pupils learn to be creative using a multiplicity of talent and skills that can further inspire others and engage the senses. - p18

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

We are still falling behind in our ability to engage pupils at a young age which is key to opening up the linguistic pathways and showing an appreciation for language learning which the framework does. In doing so this opens up language and 'text' as a new world of learning and then the world is indeed your oyster.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Glad to see History is not getting a bad press here as it appears to be in secondary schools.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The integration of Science with STEM makes total sense

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Relationships, resilience, rights and responsibilities come into their own in this subject area. It speaks to and engages with the whole person: body/mind/spirit.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Education centres face to face, webinars and exemplars

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

This framework is like our curriculum constitution as it frames the key competencies, principles of teaching, learning and assessment while at the same time acknowledging the professionalism of teachers and with the added bonus of being adaptable and flexible that allows teachers to go deep into learning but broad when appropriate to do so.

Michael Leahy

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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I object to the removal of developing a sense of Irish identity, we are proud of our Irish uniqueness, culture and traditions. I also object to the teaching of the anti humanity woke gobalist agenda. The concept of "Gender" should not be thought in school. The Cass report and The American College of Pediatricians and other groups argue evidence does not support transgender medical procedures are best for gender dysphoric children and adolescents. I personally believe gender dysphoria is a mental illness. A coping mechanism to cope with severe childhood trauma.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Engaging with parents

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Schools are for education not indoctrination

Michael Wilkinson

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The changes to the curriculum are not required as Ireland has one of the best educational curriculums already in place and should not be interfered with by temporary woke administrators.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

It's clear that the information provided by this questionnaire does not fully cover the actual in classroom changes that will be taught to children and is intentionally vague. The Irish education system is world renown for being one of the best. It should not be changed or interfered with by temporary woke administrators.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

These updates should not be introduced as they will destroy an already excellent education curriculum. The function of primary education is to teach children literacy, mathematics, religion and national heritage. Nothing more!

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The function of primary education is to teach children literacy, mathematics, religion and national heritage. All other specifics outside of these are the responsibility of the child's parents, not the primary education system.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific

chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

The Irish education system is already world renown as one of the best in the world. Any attempt to alter this by temporary woke administrators will only result in the loss of other more important lessons that the children require. "if it ain't broke, don't fix it"

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Intentionally vague. Stick to teaching them mathematics, literacy and the fundamentals. Keep ideology out of the classroom.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

None, they should focus on teaching the basics better.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Our education system is already one of the finest in the world. These proposed changes will not improve that system, they will make it less functional. More focus should be put on teaching children literacy, mathematics and other basic life skills. All other matters are the responsibility of the individual child's parents. Stick with the basics and do them better.

Misirya Asif

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

***** I write this submission before the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) as a part of its consultation on the redevelopment of the Primary School curriculum on *WELLBEING* 1. In its description of FAMILY STRUCTURE given in the glossary, pg 49, as a reference to its mentioning at various places in the draft, includes SAME-SEX PARENT FAMILIES. I appreciate the efforts of the Irish government in fostering values of inclusiveness with all respect. On the contrary, I also expect the council to acknowledge the existence of various sects in society, like us, who are against this idea. Children should be aware of this diversity and the need to treat all of them with respect. They should be informed of their rights to follow their religious and traditional values if they wish to without fear of discrimination. Parents from conventional sects who oppose same-sex marriages should feel reassured that their children do not get inclined into such choices at an age inappropriate for decision making, when their children also learn lessons of other's rights for respect. 2. Gender identity and orientation should come to a child naturally through instincts. I do not believe it as a choice. As a parent who expects my child to have a definite gender identity and a straight sexual orientation, I oppose teaching children that sexual orientation is a conscious choice. I am worried that my child informed about such a choice at an inappropriate age would be eager to experiment or test his/her sexual orientation to identify their inclination, which might result in serious psychosexual disability. Children often take

classroom teachings as directional. Offering sexual orientation as a choice might lead them in a completely wrong direction. It would be such a trauma for every parent like me. I recommend the council to reconsider describing sexual orientation as a natural instinct rather than a conscious choice. Thanks for your consideration in advance

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

49

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8.Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

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Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

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Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

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No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

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No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

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No answer

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Mohammed Ahmed Ali

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orientation as a choice might lead them in a completely wrong direction. It would be such a trauma for every parent like me. I recommend the council to reconsider describing sexual orientation as a natural instinct rather than a conscious choice. Thanks for your consideration in advance _____Pg49

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

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No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Mohamed Anisur Rahman

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

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49

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Na

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Na

Mufijur Rahman

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No answer

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আস-সালামুআলাইকুম সম্মানিত ভাই ও বোনেরা- আপনারা হয়তো ইতিমধ্যে অবগত হয়েছেন যে- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) বর্তমানে প্রাথমিক বিদ্যালয় পাঠ্যক্রমের পুনঃউন্নয়নের অংশ হিসাবে, NCCA কলা শিক্ষার খসড়া প্রাথমিক পাঠ্যক্রমের স্পেসিফিকেশন নিয়ে পরামর্শ করছে; প্রাথমিক ভাষার পাঠ্যক্রমের মধ্যে আধুনিক বিদেশী ভাষা (MFL); সামাজিক ও পরিবেশ As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.

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Nalia Begum

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Kind regards
Naila Begum

Niamh Browne

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

I have no problem in the updating of the primary curriculum. But I have a huge problem with what context is proposed for the sex education. It is nothing short of grooming! And as a parent of four children, I am very concerned about this. To talk about masturbation in senior infant stage and that children are sexual beings is just off the radar! Children of that age do not need to be taught this nonsense. And as a parent we will fight this all the way. I don't know who comes up with the content they hope to bring in on this matter but not one parent I have spoken to could believe their ears. So hopefully by the time September comes, they will have changed the sex education they have planned already because if they don't, they will have a fight on their hands. Let children be children and keep their innocence. Not have them being bombarded with ridiculous sexual context that is nowhere near age appropriate.

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Niamh Harkin

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

As a parent of four children, I am not happy with the proposed changes. Parents are the primary educators of our children and I only per chance came across this article. Needless to say, parents are not informed about this. This needs to be halted today.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I object to a lot on this well-being Curriculum. Why don't you send a survey to parents and actually inform them of what you are proposing to do?!

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Dr Niamh McGuirk and Dr Anne Marie Kavanagh

NCCA Primary Curriculum Review and Redevelopment- Consultation 2024

Re: Social and Environmental Education Draft Specification Date:

Congratulations to the NCCA executives, directors, education officers and to the curriculum development team on the development and publication of the Social and Environmental Education (SEE) Draft Specification. We recognise that a lot of work goes into this process before the draft is released. We welcome the opportunity to provide a response to the NCCA on the draft through the consultation process.

The following response is primarily focused on the inclusion of Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) within the draft specifications provided for the SEE curriculum at stages one and two, and for the History and Geography curricula at stages three and four. The response below also contains broader feedback in relation to additional aspects of the draft specification. The latest Census shows that while the largest religious group in Ireland is Christian, it also shows that “No Religion” is the second most commonly selected category (CSO 2022). Additionally, there is an increasing range of religious, belief and worldview identities represented in Irish primary classrooms and within this group, there are many atheist, agnostic, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Jewish, and Sikh children for example. Therefore, when we refer below to teaching and talking about the religious and non-religious identities represented within Irish society and in the wider world, we are referring to a broad range. We acknowledge the potential of appropriate ERB in the SEE curriculum as a step towards recognising, representing and respecting children’s right to freedom from discrimination, and their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Council of Europe). We advocate the inclusion of formal curricular content that directly names and engages with the religions, beliefs and worldviews of people living in Ireland and in the wider world.

Prior to the publication of the SEE draft specification, the NCCA stated that “learning in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) should be incorporated into Social and Environmental Education in stages 1 and 2 - junior infants to second class, and History and Geography in stages 3 and 4 - third class to sixth class” (2022, p. 16) The NCCA Primary Curriculum Framework (PCF) states that the SEE curriculum “supports children’s awareness, appreciation, and understanding of the world through learning about the rich diversity of peoples: their experiences, cultures, religions, beliefs, and environments in different times, places, and circumstances (NCCA, 2023, p. 19). Despite this, in the introductory chapters of the SEE draft specification, this is not named or discussed; the first mention of the place of ERB in relation to SEE, History and Geography comes in Chapter 6 (NCCA, 2024, p. 27) in relation to

what the curriculum looks like in practice. We strongly recommend that the specification make earlier reference to this significant change and that it outlines how ERB is conceptualised within the curriculum. This would provide clarity for schools and teachers in relation to how ERB is to be understood and practised within the SEE curriculum at stages 1 and 2, and in the History and Geography curricula at stages 3 and 4. Further discussion of this point will take place later in our response.

The following sections provide comments, feedback and recommendations on the SEE draft specification document in sequential chapter order.

Response to Chapter 1. Introduction

The draft specification outlines eight principles of learning, teaching and assessment and provides a selection of examples within SEE. There are no direct references made to ERB (see Table 1 p. 2-3). We recommend that examples that relate to ERB are included throughout and we provide sample suggestions here:

Principles of learning, teaching, and assessment	Examples within Social and Environmental Education
Partnerships	<p>Inviting members of the local community and/or local interest groups (including a range of religious and non-religious groups) to contribute to learning in local case studies.</p> <p>Forging partnerships with the library, museum, heritage centre, and religious and non-religious places of importance, to access resources including books, articles, photographs, maps, artefacts, and collections</p>
Learning environments	Exploring sites and buildings of interest (including religious and non-religious places of importance) within the local natural and built environment at appropriate times throughout the year

Engagement and participation	Providing opportunities for children to select curriculum topics for inquiry based on their interests and religious and non-religious identities, and preparing rich, playful, and engaging learning experiences which expose children to new interests and to peers’ beliefs and worldviews.
Relationships	Inviting children to share stories about aspects of their locality and community (include links to a range of religious and non-religious community actors). Fostering respectful and caring relationships towards people from different and diverse backgrounds (including religious and non-religious identities), the natural world and other living things.
Pedagogy	Utilising a variety of pedagogical practices and promoting playfulness and dialogue

Please note that the above suggestions include the term ‘non-religious’ as an example term only. The same is the case for the inclusion of this phrasing during the rest of our written response. We are conscious that this term positions people who identify as agnostic, atheist or who have secular or philosophical beliefs and worldviews in relation to those who identify as religious. The term “non-religious” has the potential to other. Careful consideration should be given to the term that will be included in the final draft in order to respect belief/worldview identities and so that people are not positioned as ‘non’s.

We have a minor query about terminology used in the Relationships principle of learning (p.3). Is there an intended difference between ‘living things’ and the ‘natural world’? In what way do they differ? The natural world includes plants, animals, soil, rocks, water, air etc. Additionally, is there an intended distinction between “people from different and diverse backgrounds’? What is the difference between ‘different’ and ‘diverse’ backgrounds? (p. 3).

Response to Chapter 2. Rationale

This chapter outlines the rationale behind the SEE curriculum. In keeping with prior concerns outlined above, there appears to be minimal reference to ERB. The initial paragraphs state that the SEE curriculum “equips children with a critical perspective, enabling them to

interpret, comprehend, and engage with the people and places in their immediate surroundings and the broader global context” (NCCA, 2024, p. 5), and goes on to list five bullet points. We argue that it is not possible to achieve the rationale of the curriculum stated above in relation to ERB when it is not regularly and explicitly named or included. Beliefs and worldviews are named once, in a bullet point stating that the SEE curriculum ‘recognises and appreciates the rich diversity of the world’. In order to avoid a tokenist and superficial engagement with ERB, we recommend a review of the content under each bullet point to determine wherein explicit mention can be made to religions, beliefs and worldviews.

Additionally, similar concerns relate to the absence of religions, beliefs and worldviews as aspects to be considered when naming the rationale for History and Geography within SEE outlined on p.6 (NCCA, 2024). Research supports its inclusion, as outlined below;

.... naming the religious dimensions and contexts to historical conflicts is necessary to understand them in a comprehensive way (Marks et al. 2014). How some world history has transpired and how certain aspects of human life and culture manifests currently cannot be fully comprehended without considering the role and impact of religions, beliefs and worldviews on social, cultural, and political discourses and developments (Cush, 2007; Jensen, 2008; Moore, 2005).

Pike et al., 2023, p. 117

We recommend including explicit references to religions, beliefs and worldviews in the two sections about History and Geography within SEE. Possible wording includes, History:the role of History involves the exploration of human experience over time and how people, forces, religions and beliefs, developments in technology, and events have shaped the world we live in..... They come to appreciate historical context and to consider diverse perspectives, gaining a deeper understanding of past and present social, cultural, religious, political, and economic interactions.

Geography Through inquiring, communicating and; understanding and connecting, learning in Geography helps children understand their surroundings, both local and global, cultivating an awareness of people (including their religious, beliefs and worldviews identities), places, and their interconnections.

More generally, we have concerns about the narrow conceptualisation of ‘Geography Education’ (p. 6). There does not appear to be any references to the social and political dimensions of geography that are cited elsewhere. Where does this understanding of Geography Education sit with an articulated focus on global citizenship? ‘Critical thinking’ which is named as a key aim of the curriculum (p. 7) does not feature in this section. The

impression given on page six is that criticality is a feature of History Education only. We recommend that this section is revised to reflect the content of the SEE rationale that states the curriculum “promotes children’s critical thinking” and “encourages children to ask questions about the historical and geographical world around them” (p. 5). This recommendation is also supported by critical thinking being named within one of the common concepts that underpins the SEE curriculum; multiperspectivity (p. 36).

We also have concerns about the content within the ‘Espouses a sustainable future’ section (p. 6). We are unaware of research that suggests that nurturing children’s ‘positivity’ and ‘compassion’ will lead to a more just and sustainable world. Neither ‘positivity’ nor ‘compassion’ in isolation will bring about the change necessary to create ‘a more positive and sustainable world’. Research names critical literacy and political agency as key features of this work with children. Additionally, we recommend further clarification is provided to teachers on what is to be considered as ‘meaningful participation’.

Response to Chapter 3. Aims

We commend the framing and underpinning of the eight named SEE aims with concepts such as human rights, democracy, equity, social justice and sustainable development. We also commend the inclusion of the aim related to children’s own and others’ lived experiences that states that children are enabled to “develop an understanding of different traditions, cultures, religions, beliefs, worldviews, and heritage” (NCCA, 2024, p. 7). We note that this aim is also intrinsically connected to a number of the other listed aims, in particular; global citizenship, global and cultural awareness, and critical thinking and active engagement. We recommend that this is made clear and that the aim of learning about lived experiences is not considered in isolation by teachers, rather it is connected to the other aforementioned aims.

We have particular queries relating to conceptual and language inconsistencies:

- Aim 3- Is it global citizenship or ‘global awareness’ that the SEE curriculum seeks to promote? (p.7)
- How does Aim 3 which is about critical thinking relate to Aim 8 which encourages students to ‘appreciate’ others’ traditions, cultures, religions, beliefs, worldviews? What happens if another’s worldview is undemocratic, discriminatory, prejudicial or offensive? (p. 7)
- Aim 8- “To learn about, explore and appreciate children’s own and others’ lived experiences.” Is there an intended difference between ‘learn about’ and ‘explore’? Often, during the process of exploring, the students will also ‘learn about’ their own and others’ experiences? (p. 8)

Response to Chapter 4. Strands and Elements

This chapter names the three strands and the three elements of the SEE curriculum. The NCCA note, “what is absent can be just as important as what is present” (NCCA, 2005, p. 4) and in this case, we note the absence of any reference to ERB. This sends a message to teachers and schools about what is valued and important when considering the implementation and operationalisation of the SEE curriculum. We recognise that it may be possible to interpret some of the descriptions listed on pages 8 and 9 as inclusive of religions, beliefs and worldviews, for example:

“different viewpoints, cultures and contexts which helps to foster empathy, cultural understanding, and an appreciation for the diversity of human experiences.” (p.8)

“listen and respond to others’ stories and perspectives” (p.9)

“connections between people and places in their local community and wider world”

“real-life, familiar contexts and to make sense of events, systems, and processes in the world.”

Perhaps the intention is that teachers might include religions, beliefs and worldviews under the umbrella of viewpoints/culture/community/contexts/perspectives/systems/processes. However, it is necessary to be explicit about intentions in an SEE curriculum that includes ERB-related outcomes, as if not, what is not present may remain absent in classrooms and schools. We recommend including ERB specific vocabulary to support an understanding of how ERB relates to the three strands and the three elements. Representing children’s (religious and non-religious) identities in formal and informal lessons communicates messages of recognition and representation to children and fosters a sense of belonging.

Response to Chapter 5. Learning Outcomes

Chapter five starts by naming the seven key competencies of the primary school curriculum and provides examples of attributes developed through learning in SEE. We note the very limited ERB-related references. There is one specific mention of beliefs and worldviews in the Being an Active Learner key competency: “Demonstrating an awareness of different cultures, beliefs, traditions, and worldviews both past and present, promoting inclusivity and respect in interactions with others” (p. 12). However, alongside this statement, there is a bullet point about “taking action as custodians of the planet...” that does not correspond with the premise of that particular key competency (see NCCA, 2022, p. 11). Again, we acknowledge the potential for some examples in Table 3 (pp. 11-12) to be interpreted and understood to include religions, beliefs and worldviews, e.g., cultural artefacts, customs and traditions (p.12). However, it is important not to assume that interpretation and understanding. Rather, we recommend that the content in Table 3 also includes ERB-related terminology (e.g. religions, beliefs and worldviews) in the context of the following key competencies in particular: i) being an active citizen ii) being well iii) being a

communicator and using language.

Chapter five then names the concepts and skills of Working as a Geographer and Working as a Historian as being the essential building blocks of SEE (p. 36). We note that ERB skills and concepts are not named or referred to here. The document states that “skills and concepts may provide useful entry and reference points in relation to preparation, teaching and assessment and may serve to remind teachers of important knowledge at each stage” (p. 13). Therefore, it is a missed opportunity that ERB is not referred to here.

Appendix 1 Concepts and Skills of Social and Environmental Education (pp. 35-40) provides details about the concepts and skills that are intended to be included in an online toolkit for SEE. In the first section on concepts, we commend the inclusion of ERB-related content under the common concepts of empathy and multi-perspectivity (p. 36). We note the omission of any further ERB-related content under the more specific Geographical concepts and Historical concepts. We also note the omission of any further ERB-related content in the second section on Skills of Social and Environmental Education (pp. 38-40). This omission could infer that ERB is not “important knowledge” within the curriculum “in relation to preparation, teaching and assessment”(p. 13). We recommend that the appendix is revised in a way that would include ERB-specific concepts and skills. Additionally, when teachers are reviewing this content, are they to consider ERB concepts and skills to be the same as or subsumed under Historical and Geographical concepts skills? Do the aforementioned concepts and skills all relate to ERB?

Lastly in chapter 5, the SEE, History and Geography learning outcomes for stages 1-4 are detailed in tables 7 and 8 (pp. 14-17). While it was never intended that ERB would hold a dedicated space as a subject; it was indeed intended and stated that the ERB would be incorporated in the SEE curriculum at stages 1 and 2, and in the History and Geography curricula at stages 3 and 4 (NCCA, 2022; 2023). However, there are a minimal number of ERB-related learning outcomes. There are four out of a total of 22 learning outcomes with the following breakdown; 1 out of 8 in stage 1, 1 out of 8 in stage 2, 1 out of 11 at stage 3 and 1 out of 11 at stage 4. We note that ERB content is only listed in one of the three strands, People Place and Space.

Stage	Strand	Learning outcome
1	People, Place and Space	Become familiar with aspects of their local heritage, and the cultural practices, customs, traditions, religions, beliefs and worldviews and celebrations /events in their immediate locality.

2	People, Place and Space	Reflect on and examine aspects of their local heritage and how they preserve connections to the past, exploring customs, traditions, religions, beliefs, and worldviews in their locality.
3	People, Place and Space	Integrated Develop an awareness and foster an appreciation of the richness of cultural, ethnic, and religious expressions and traditions, becoming familiar with a diverse array of festivals, ceremonies, and celebrations.
4	People, Place and Space	Integrated Examine different cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions and develop an understanding of how diverse religions, beliefs and worldviews have contributed to and influenced communities, culture, and heritage over time.

We consider it a missed opportunity to only include ERB-related content in one strand and recommend that content be integrated into the other two strands. While it is clear that it is possible for some of the other learning outcomes to be related to ERB, or to potentially include ERB-specific content, we recommend that this is made more explicit for primary teachers so that it informs their implementation of the curriculum.

Response to Chapter 6: The Primary Social and Environmental Education Curriculum in Practice

Chapter six focuses on learning and essential elements (section 6a), teaching and pedagogical practices (section 6b) and assessment approaches (section 6c). We note that there is no explicit mention of ERB-related content in section 6a. As before, we recognise that it may be possible to interpret some of the wording in section 6a (pp. 18-19) as inclusive of religions, beliefs and worldviews, for example:

“collaborate with others, share perspectives and express their thinking”

“Through playful, engaging, inquiry-based learning and inclusive social environments,”

“...children actively explore their diverse environments, pose questions, interpret, and analyse a wide range of evidence in various formats and engage in investigations of their local area and the wider world.”

“...identify connections between people and places in their local area, other communities, and the wider world.”

“interpreting historical evidence from multiple perspectives to deconstruct and reconstruct historical narratives about the past.”

“pose questions rooted in real-life contexts” “investigate and explore in their local area”

“collaborate with others to gain a range of perspectives”

“listen to others’ ideas, thoughts and views”

“apply their knowledge and understanding to diverse contexts”

“forge links between their immediate environment and wider world”

However, as before, it is necessary to be explicit about learning and essential elements wherein it is intended that teachers include some ERB specific content. In particular, we note that under the element Inquiring (p. 19), it states that SEE provides children with opportunities to “critically examine the world around them”. We question whether it is possible for children and teachers to engage with and to critically examine the world around them if ERB-related content is excluded from the curriculum. Research argues that ERB can equip learners with the knowledge, critical thinking skills, and rights-respecting dispositions that are necessary for their life in the ‘real world’ (McGuirk, 2023; Freathy et al., 2019).

We commend the inclusion of Global Learning Themes in section 6b. It is clear that specific reference is made to beliefs and worldviews under Human Rights (p.22). We recommend adding additional information into the Human Rights section and being more explicit in relation to the content under Equity. We offer the following suggestions:

Human Rights

Learning in Social and Environmental Education supports the development of intercultural understanding as children explore the diversity of the world’s places and peoples, cultural traditions, beliefs, and worldviews. They learn the importance of understanding their own and others’ heritage, demonstrating respect for cultural and religion/belief diversity and the human rights of all people.

Equity

Learning in Social and Environmental Education involves children’s exploration of diverse voices, perspectives and experiences representing a range of social, cultural, religious, belief/worldview and socio-economic backgrounds. Children develop an understanding of the importance of fairness, recognising that some people require more help than others, and showing empathy towards them.

Pedagogical practices in SEE are then listed in section 6b (p. 24). For Inquiry, a

selection of bullet points are listed under the heading “teachers can help promote inquiry-based learning by...” and we commend the inclusion of content that is directly linked to ERB i.e. “using artefacts (e.g. objects, photos, statues, important/ sacred/ holy texts etc.) to explore and understand beliefs, rituals, guiding principles, rites of passage, and practices” (p. 23). We also note content that *could be* linked to ERB i.e sites of interest and as before, we recommend that this link is made more specifically for teachers.

For Story, it is worth bearing in mind that stories are always told from a particular perspective. In relation to ERB, we question from whose perspectives are stories from a range of religions, beliefs and worldviews shared and explored. We recommend that this is named and reflected upon when supporting teachers to teach the curriculum. In bulleted- content in the Story section (p 24), we recommend a broadening of what is listed, for example:

- ensuring that children encounter a wide range of stories from multiple perspectives and diverse backgrounds, including stories from a range of religions, belief and worldviews
- introducing more complex myths and legends from different cultural, ethnic, and religious and non-religious backgrounds (in Ireland and other countries) in an age-appropriate way
- promoting children’s retelling of stories and recounting of past events (including reference to religions, beliefs and worldviews)

For Playful Approaches, we recommend the inclusion of ERB-related content, e.g.

- creating scavenger hunts or trails where children explore the school grounds or local community to identify monuments, historical artefacts, geographical features, or landmarks (including those from a variety of religions, beliefs and worldviews).

For Place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors, we recommend the inclusion of ERB-related content (see examples in Pike et al., 2023, p. 203, 211). In the same vein, we recommend the inclusion of ERB-related content in the section relating to Applying Digital Skills (NCCA, 2024, p. 28).

Dialogical Pedagogy

We note and commend the inclusion of Dialogical Pedagogy (p. 27) as a recommended practice within SEE, History and Geography. This pedagogy lends itself to ERB in particular (McGuirk, 2023). This section includes the terms ‘theist, non-theist, and secular beliefs’ for the first and only time in the SEE draft specification (p. 27). Clarity and consistency are needed in relation to the terminology that the NCCA is recommending that teachers use. For the first time, the draft specification names the connections between History, Geography and ERB in this section. It states that “Working as a geographer... provides opportunities for children to consider and learn from the lives of others, their differing

religions, beliefs, and worldviews, whether in their own community or more distant places” (p. 27). As mentioned earlier, we strongly recommend the connections are named much sooner in the document, potentially in the introduction chapter.

The above statement highlighting the connections between SEE and ERB includes the first statement that suggests children will learn from the lives of others, in keeping with constructivism. This is in contrast to a later reference which infers a world religions approach, in keeping with phenomenology. The term ‘major world religions’ is used for the first time in the SEE draft specification document on page 27. This term is contested and questions arise around what is included under this umbrella and who decides that. Our concern is that it could lead to the exclusion of some children’s religions, beliefs and worldviews. “An agentic teacher makes professional and informed decisions in response to the children’s learning needs” (NCCA, 2023, p. 5). As such, is it the case that teachers and schools can respond to the various belief systems that may be represented within the school community but that may not be considered a ‘major world religion’? A ‘world religions’ approach was discussed in a recent NCCA commissioned literature review (see McGuirk, 2023, pp 86-88). Research highlights that this approach can oversimplify people’s deeply held beliefs, can be reductive, can result in mis- and non-representation and recognition, and in othering (McGuirk, 2023). Rather, there is a call for breadth, depth and balance in relation to what is presented to children in curricula so that it reflects local and global, historical and contemporary, and religious and secular worldviews” (McGuirk, 2023, p. 95).

We note that clarity may also be needed on how some of the items listed in the bullet points (p. 27) may lend themselves to dialogical pedagogy e.g. reflective journaling, fieldtrips etc. We also recommend that direction be provided for teachers in relation to a) how it is envisioned that children might and b) to what extent the children are encouraged to “explore their own beliefs, values and worldviews.”

More generally in the section on pedagogical practices in SEE (pp. 22-28), the headings to the bulleted lists for each of the pedagogical practices reads ‘teachers can help...’ and as such, the items in the list read as suggestions rather than as recommendations. Is it optional for teachers to include ERB specific content in their inquiry (and other) work with children?

The final section of chapter six focuses on assessment. This section makes no reference to ERB. Is ERB an aspect of how SEE, History and Geography is assessed? We refer back to the learning outcomes that are clearly ERB-specific (detailed in Table 7, pp. 14-17).

Stage	Strand	Learning outcome
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1	People, Place and Space	Become familiar with aspects of their local heritage, and the cultural practices, customs, traditions, religions, beliefs and worldviews and celebrations /events in their immediate locality.
2	People, Place and Space	Reflect on and examine aspects of their local heritage and how they preserve connections to the past, exploring customs, traditions, religions, beliefs, and worldviews in their locality.
3	People, Place and Space	Integrated Develop an awareness and foster an appreciation of the richness of cultural, ethnic, and religious expressions and traditions, becoming familiar with a diverse array of festivals, ceremonies, and celebrations.
4	People, Place and Space	Integrated Examine different cultural, ethnic, and religious traditions and develop an understanding of how diverse religions, beliefs and worldviews have contributed to and influenced communities, culture, and heritage over time.

The recent NCCA SEE literature review provides guidance on what assessment and progression might look like in ERB:

In ERB, progression involves increasing levels of detail and understanding (from simple to complex topics), expanding awareness from individual to group, community, national and global contexts, and recognising links and connections across religions, beliefs and worldviews. Throughout primary school, children are developing and progressing their capacity to express and communicate stories, ideas and perspectives relating to religions, beliefs and worldviews. (McGuirk, 2023, p. 100)

We have concerns that the ERB-related learning outcomes listed above do not clearly show progression in knowledge, skills and attitudes. We have questions about how the above

learning outcomes relate to the other 18 learning outcomes when it comes to assessment. We recommend that the NCCA provide more detailed direction for teachers in relation to linkage. Teachers need clarity on how ERB-related content is to be considered in relation to intuitive assessment, planned interactions, and assessment events.

Response to Chapter 7: Outline of the Online Social and Environmental Education Online Toolkit

We support the development of the Primary Social and Environmental Education Online Toolkit and recommend the inclusion of guidance relating to the role of the teacher when engaging in formal and informal ERB-related teaching and learning activities. We echo our recommendations outlined in submission to the NCCA during a previous consultation on the proposals for a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics (Kavanagh & McGuirk, 2016). We strongly recommend that in-service and CPD is available to teachers in the following areas; teacher reflexivity, teaching approaches, methodologies, ethical tensions and appropriate terminology.

Response to Chapter 8: Glossary

We welcome the inclusion of a glossary in the curriculum to support and guide teachers in their understandings of SEE terminology and concepts. We advocate a broader definition of ‘artefact’ as it is not only considered an item of ‘historical interest’; artefacts also have significance in Geography and in ERB. We recommend a broader definition of ‘empathy’. We recommend the inclusion of a definition of ‘critical thinking’.

Concluding Comments

In our response, We have not addressed issues that may arise due to school patronage or ethos. We would like to reiterate the same concerns that we raised in our submission to the NCCA during the previous ERB and Ethics consultation (see Kavanagh & McGuirk in NCCA, 2016 p. 47-52). For patrons, principals, teachers, children and parents, clarity on the conceptualisation of ERB in SEE is required in this regard.

Our main responses to the SEE draft specification as outlined above relate to the minimal inclusion of ERB-related content. ERB is included in the SEE draft specification in a superficial and light-touch manner. If it remains as it currently appears, it may result in tokenism, oversimplification and generalisation and as such, runs the risk of reinforcing stereotypes. Robertson et al. (2017) argues that there are two central issues to be considered when ERB is being integrated with other subject areas; that ERB “may become, in some contexts, too

compartmentalised, so that it becomes isolated from wider learning; or in other contexts not compartmentalised enough, so that its uniqueness is lost” (p. 327). In the case of the current SEE draft specification, we are concerned that the uniqueness of learning in the area of ERB has been lost. We call for a revision of the SEE curriculum so that breadth, depth and balance is applied to how ERB is conceptualised and included.

We hope that you find our response constructive and we wish the NCCA well with the work ahead.

Kind regards,

Dr Niamh McGuirk and Dr Anne Marie Kavanagh. Assistant
Professors in Ethical and Intercultural Education DCU
Institute of Education

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Noelle Tobin

To whom it may concern - NCCA,

I wish to add my voice to these discussions. As a primary school teacher of over thirty years experience it is very important to remember that parents are the primary educators of their children.

Primary schools are currently being over loaded with new initiatives and have been working their way through these for years.

We have always fostered a sense of Irish identity and I totally disagree with abandoning this ideal. It is very important that we hold on to this ideal as the country becomes more diverse. I'm not in favour of the idea of children becoming 'global citizens' and at the same time losing what is part of their DNA. To become part of a fully functioning cohesive society in this country we have to know who we are. Our sense of Irish identity is fundamental to this. It comes first. Yes, we are citizens of the world but who we are in this world is intrinsic to our development.

The current curriculum is already over-crowded .The children in our schools need to learn English first, then Irish. There is no room left in an already over crowded day to start learning new languages. This was piloted in our school and it has now been dropped at the behest of the teachers concerned.

Digital learning is important. When children go to secondary school they can learn to critically engage and contribute in a digitally connected and interdependent world. Children in primary schools are too young to go on digital platforms and also too innocent and are not ready socially and emotionally for the fallout that these interactions bring. Leave this for secondary school.

Children should not be pitted against each other discussing politics of the day and large progressive ideas of social justice. They are too young.

Religion is also very important for the well being of children and should not be pushed aside or dismissed as irrelevant.

Kind regards,

Noelle Tobin.

Nollaig M. Malone

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I simply wish to reject the sexual components of your programmes on the minds and hearts of young children.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

A serious objection to the sexual components of your programmes on the minds and hearts of young children.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No problem with modern languages once Gaeilge retains its cultural role,

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I believe in civics training. for the children. To respect our country and environment.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No problem here.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

This depends on your definition of wellbeing. Religion, culture and family as well as society have roles in this,

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Good grounding in Religion, Ethics and a grounding in history, world and local.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Sex education has its place along with civics in Secondary schools and definitely not Primary schools. I do object to the latter. Children have a right to grow without their beautiful innocence being disturbed..

Nour Saleh

To whom it may concern,

As a concerned parent with three children, two in national school and one in preschool, I have taken the opportunity to review the proposed changes to the primary school curriculum and this is my submission to the public consultation:

Firstly, the curriculum specifications provided are overly verbose without offering clear content outlines. As a parent, I need to know what my children will be learning. The lack of transparency on specific content raises significant concerns about what is actually going to be taught.

Secondly, there appears to be an overemphasis on themes like active citizenship and inclusion at the expense of academic development. My expectation from the school system is to focus on foundational academic skills – reading, writing, and arithmetic – along with subjects like PE, art, religion, history, and geography. Imposing concepts such as active citizenship on young children, who are not developmentally ready for critical thinking in this context, seems more like indoctrination than education.

Furthermore, the consultation process itself was inadequately communicated to parents. Many parents, including myself, were unaware of this consultation until very recently. The links were difficult to find, and there was little time provided to review the specifications and offer feedback. This lack of adequate notice and accessible information undermines the transparency and inclusivity of the consultation process.

The NCCA's consultation should have clearly outlined the planned curriculum content. Instead, it seems that critical information is contained within toolkits that are not publicly accessible. This approach is neither fair nor transparent. Parents have a fundamental right to be fully informed about their children's education. The omission of detailed content in the consultation documents suggests an intention to sideline parental input, particularly on contentious issues like gender ideology.

My concerns are heightened by the way parental feedback on gender ideology in the Junior Cycle SPHE program was previously handled. The NCCA appeared to ignore substantial parental opposition. Now, by not releasing specific curriculum content upfront, it seems the NCCA is attempting to avoid addressing parental concerns altogether. This lack of transparency and responsiveness to parental input is deeply troubling.

Previous criticism of Junior Cycle SPHE framed the practice of many parents expressing the same view as petition-style, claiming it undermined the consultation process. This is not the case. The NCCA doesn't seem to accept the high level of consensus among

parents about what should and, more importantly, what should not be taught to our children. Parents talk to each other every day. We naturally share language and collaborate especially on significant matters, like the new curriculum, due to time constraints and shared views. If this collaboration delegitimizes our input, how can we engage effectively? Parents are the authority for their own children and each parent has the right to make a submission to this process. Dismissing our views hinders engagement, erodes trust and it must stop.

Parents must be allowed to give informed consent regarding their children's education. Keeping the content of the curriculum hidden in unpublished toolkits until after the curriculum rollout is unacceptable. So, allow me to be clear I do not consent to my children being taught any of the ideals of gender ideology or gender identity through Wellbeing/SPHE or through any other subject.

Parents are the leaders, the primary educators in their children's education. Yet, current practices seem to be pushing us further away from the decision-making process and day-to-day school life. Our involvement is crucial, not just for our children's academic success but also for maintaining trust in the educational system.

To conclude, the NCCA need to prioritise transparency and parental involvement by providing clear, detailed curriculum content for review and by genuinely listening to the parental feedback you receive. Only through an open and inclusive process can we ensure that our children receive an education that aligns with both academic goals and parental values.

Thank you,

Nora S.

Owen McCarthy

Dear Council Member,

I would like to make the following observations which are fact based, and referenced back to specific parts of the new/original draft curriculum documents with page number and paragraph noted for ease of reference - where relevant to draft curriculum.

To close i will submit an opinion piece based on my findings.

I urge you to carefully re-consider the following points in your draft documents.

1) '*Draft primary Wellbeing Specification*' - End of Page 19, under the use of the term "*and more*". This term "*and more*" is open ended and i suggest this ambiguous wording is removed as it could be interpreted by anyone nationwide as meaning potentially anything in todays liberal world which may include an adults personal preference which may include immoral definitions which are unsuitable for children in this country. For the definition of the term "*Diversity*" it does not clearly state what it does not mean, hence the ambiguity.

2) '*Draft primary Wellbeing Specification*' - Page 2, which makes reference to "*United Nations*" policy. It should be duly noted that i am aware of the indirect affiliation that the ncca has with the united nations through our national government. I need to highlight to you, that the long term educational goals of the united nations, have become highly questionable. As a result of international pressure on the united nations, there has been new developments since a meeting of the ('CSW') - '*Commission on the status of women*' which took place on the 17/03/2023 in the United States, New York. At this meeting, the CSW adopted agreed conclusions on the "*Innovation and technological change, and education in the digital age for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls,*" which concluded on the 17/03/2023 at U.N. offices in New York. It must be noted to all educators in Ireland that since this meeting, the most dangerous references that sought to promote the sexualisation of children, sexual orientation and gender identity, and the LGBT agenda, have been erased from the Agreed Conclusions of the 67th UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in June 2024.

This information was recently obtained through a legitimate subscription based service called 'citizengo' which has 18,280,706 active citizens worldwide.

3) The current primary level curriculum contains the term "*developing a sense of Irish identity*" which has been removed from the new curriculum. Omitting this clear 'Ireland centric' terminology in Ireland, I believe does not sit well with our indigenous Irish population or to international onlookers. It has not been explained publicly and in writing why this term has been removed, after having been in the curriculum for so long. I strongly object.

4) '*Draft primary Wellbeing Specification*' - Page 50 - subheading - '*Spiritual Wellbeing*'. Before this new draft, religious education was in the 1999 curriculum premised with, "*The spiritual dimension is a fundamental aspect of individual experience, and its religious and cultural expression is an inextricable part of Irish culture and history. Religious education specifically enables the child to develop spiritual and moral values and to come to a knowledge of God.*"

In contrast the new draft on 'social and environmental education' does not contain the words "God" or "Irish culture". This would suggest it is somehow offensive to new integrating cultures when it is clearly not intended to cause offence. The word 'God' has also been removed from other literature connected to the 'Grow' organisation in Ireland in 2016.

5) The draft of Geography for third and fourth class emphasises allowing children to cultivate a "*sense of identity as global citizens*" which instructs them to, "*Compare and contrast aspects of children's lives in Ireland with children's lives in other regional, national, European, and global contexts.*" While yes this is a good thing to lightly educate children on and make them aware of their global surroundings, both socially and geographically, it is not necessary to intensely cultivate a "*sense of identity as a global citizen.*"? They're Irish citizens. A 'citizen' is a legal entity and not an abstract idea with no meaning. Encouraging such a mindset would be in direct contravention of the Irish Constitution [Article 9, Section 3], and I would strongly discourage any educators in Ireland from nurturing a "global citizen" mindset into such a young and impressionable age group. You can still achieve the same pragmatic educational results for life learning without having to "cultivate sense's." in geography.

6) 'Draft primary Wellbeing Specification' - Pages 22,27,49. - Makes reference to the use of 'Social Media' & 'Digital Media' to educate children. I object to this proposal for the following reasons.

- It is the first time this has been mentioned publicly in an educational curriculum in Ireland in any official capacity.
- The death of a 17 year old did occur in 2015 in Ireland, as a direct result of social media use. The following link to the Irish Independent is secure. <https://www.independent.ie/irish-news/teen-tricked-into-posting-net-images-kills-himself/31287889.html>
- Online gambling is a huge issue amongst the youth in Ireland today. Ref; Tony O' Rielly - Co. Carlow. Reformed gambler who has been giving very informative lectures on the problem of online gambling. He has toured Irish in schools nationwide, for the past several years.
- Excellent educational results can still be achieved offline. This has already proven itself.
- It is unknown if the use of social media forms part of a risk assessment in all classrooms nationwide? This is a legal requirement for all workplaces under the relevant health and safety legislation. Any safety statements/risk assessments should be revised within the context of primary school education & social media use.
- Will the NCCA be liable for children been exposed to any inappropriate material that primary school children may see online during school hours?
- Is the online dynamic secure enough to expose children to online social media platforms? Can the NCCA provide that security guarantee? If not, it should not be allowed.

Closing statement.

To further reinforce this pro christian view, need I remind you of the foundations of our excellent education system that we have today. This was exclusively founded and successfully built upon with huge financial investment nationally by the roman catholic church. This has always been maintained by the Christian Brothers and sisters who administered education here to an extremely high standard in both primary and secondary schools over the last c.200 years. This has produced many great results as well as many fine students.

Our Prayer 'Hail Mary' also contains the word 'God'. Will this then by default imply that primary school children will no longer be able to say this prayer in school? Removal of the word God

from literature would suggest that there is somehow a continuous combined effort nationally of 'word removal'. This appears to be based on the 'politically correct' ideologies of a influential few who are intent on pursuing a fixed pre determined ethnic agenda. This also opposes and actively suppresses a key part of our longstanding precious and indigenous Irish culture. To deliberately suppress an indigenous group based on thier religious beliefs, is an illegal act under the 'International Charter of Human rights'. This in a country which still has a predominantly devout catholic population nationwide, and shall remain so permanently. If the word 'God' is to be removed, will the word 'Allah' be removed also in time, given the ethnic diversity in schools today?

The 'dumbing down' of our catholic faith will not be accepted in any circumstances. No assurances have been given that this will not be allowed to happen. It must also be highlighted that, our Irish Constitution also contains the word 'God' and mentions it several times throughout. This word must not be removed from our educational system at all, as i fear, that in time, this may contribute to its total eradication from Irish literature. No written assurances have been given that this will not happen. I deem it wiser to air on the side of caution and respect the indigenous Irish beliefs and traditions rather than make hasty mistakes. Therefore, I strongly object to the removal of the word 'God'.

To further support this statement i will also highlight to you that i am also aware of the legally binding document; "The child wellbeing and safety act 2005", the Irish legal framework to protect children in this country indefinitely, which is in support of their superior constitutional rights which they already have as Irish citizens. I now believe a line has to be drawn with regard to state control/interference into the sanctity of the private and personal family affairs of Irish citizens, and the innocence of childhood be protected.

Most Irish adults today would have grown up in a time where geography involved the study of the physical landscape only. The only sense's that should be cultivated to primary school children in Ireland is a "sense of identity as an Irish citizen." Studying the physical features of the Irish landscape, place names, etc. already achieves this desired outcome and was always considered normal. I do not believe 'new normals' need to be created in primary schools. As the saying goes... If somethings not broken you don't need to keep on trying to fix it.

One should also bare in mind that these are just primary school children too. If there is any other long term nefarious agenda at play here behind the scenes, which may negatively indoctrinate children into one singular politically motivated point of view it may stop now. I'm sure that you are already of the view that it is wrong to manipulate the education system, to exploit children's naivety in order to shape their opinion/view on larger global issues that they may not necessarily truly understand in this age group either. Any larger global issues at play here are something that normally only adults would be able to understand and critically question and analyse. Knowingly facilitating any political action/agenda covertly against children, without their full understanding as to why, is completely and utterly immoral and unacceptable at any time. Keep 'pressure politics' out of the classroom.

The underlying aim of these observations is to protect the wellbeing of all the children of Ireland from politically motivated interference, which may produce negative results in the long term. This has not been ruled out therefore, i believe caution must be exercised as a top priority, and i recommend further un biased independent research is carried out before final decisions are made on the curriculum of our primary school children for the next twenty five years.

I trust you and your administration team will assess these points fairly and act on them without prejudice.

Kind Regards,
Owen Mc Carthy

Padraig Lenihan

A Chara,

I am taking advantage of the NCCA public consultation to express my views on the proposed new curriculum especially as it relates to 'Social and Environmental Education'. I am doing so primarily as an individual and an educator with an interest in education: I am a member of a primary school board (Scoil Iognáid in Galway) but I am not purporting to represent the board's views and there is no time to seek this in light of tomorrow's deadline.

The overarching purpose is that 'children are enabled to see themselves as members of society with rights and responsibilities, and are empowered to contribute to matters of local, national, and global priority'. One of the aims is to 'promote global citizenship' while the aim of 'developing a sense of Irish identity' in the existing curriculum will be removed.

Articles 5 of the Bunreacht asserts 'Ireland is a sovereign, independent, democratic state'. It would be good to know about the struggle to bring that about. It was not granted by a benign globe. The term 'global citizenship' is an example of a vacuous rhetorical and aspirational cliché that is best avoided by educators committed to intellectual rigour. Citizens are citizens of a *state*, an Irish state, with the rights and duties pertaining thereto, which is why citizenship conferring is such a solemn and serious business not to be devalued by over use of the term. We do not pay taxes to the globe, we are not policed by the globe and there is no global government. The state pays teacher's salaries, not the globe. As voters we can hope to have our say in how the state, our piece of the globe, is run. We are powerless to influence global events. If global warming is to be slowed it will require cooperative action by states. Globalization is not necessarily an altogether positive, necessary and unavoidable process and I fear that the new curriculum would not encourage educators to engage with the fears and aspirations of those who are concerned about the bewildering speed, scale and intensity of cultural and social change that follows the unchecked movement of capital, jobs and people across the world.

In light of the much greater ethnic diversity of pupils now as compared to 1999 it is *more*, not less important to develop an Irish identity for social cohesion. My own speciality is history and I find that section a thematic mishmash. At primary school level history should be presented as 'our' story, with a story arc, a beginning, middle and an open-ended work in progress with due attention to interesting and significant men and women. It is a gripping story of violence, resilience, cultural loss, collective action, famine, with the underlying dynamic of successive groups adopting and developing (or rejecting) a specifically Irish identity.

Is Mise
Dr. Pádraig Lenihan

Pat Furlong

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the Primary Curriculum Consultation.

I note at the outset that there was no outreach to parents in relation to formulating the draft Primary School curriculum.

I also note that it is quite easy for schools to send information leaflets home in children's schoolbags, while this would also be an appropriate and easy way to highlight to parents the Department's intention to change the Curriculum and the parents' right to complete a submission.

Given parent's superior Constitutional Rights and the obligation on schools to only provide education in consultation with parents, I question whether or not this consultation process is a legally sufficient consultation and as such a legitimate exercise. Nonetheless, I respond herein reserving my right to object further on this point at a later date and this submission is not to be construed as evidence of my acceptance of the consultation process, which I believe may be defective. I am aware this lack of parental consultation was the same for the recent Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Curriculum Consultations.

My feedback is captured in the sections below, much of which contains the views of hundreds of similarly minded parents and teachers whose common sense and rational views on these issues I wholly support, as well as specific observations, where I feel necessary.

I am a father to a six-year-old child who attends National School. I have been extremely concerned for quite some time now regarding changes proposed to the Primary School Curriculum, childhood education in general, and I would implore schools and teachers to get back to basics, focus less on imported social justice ideologies and other activist lead policies, which are radical and controversial in nature.

There are a number of concerning items contained within the Consultation, notably; 'Social Justice', 'Privilege', 'Diversity', 'Global Citizenship', 'Identity', etc. This all seems inline with a 'woke' set of values which is increasingly pervading every aspect of society and academia, e.g. the Athena Swan Charter - courtesy of a British 'leftist' NGO, which threatens academic freedom in Ireland.

It should go without saying that none of these ideologies are suitable for a Primary Curriculum and in particular, I oppose the imported notion that we are all 'Global Citizens', the very idea being contrary to a Sovereign State and Sovereign Citizen of which we should be proud, without eroding our heritage and culture which our children should also grow to cherish.

There are many articles authored by those highly informed of leftist ideologies and I refer to a selection below as to why I feel that Social Justice, DEI policies have no place in childhood education. Common sense alone, increasingly lacking in modern Ireland, should be sufficient as a guide to the appropriateness of same. <https://www.spiked-online.com/2024/06/16/the-truth-about-woke/>

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Counterweight-Handbook-Principled-Strategies-Surviving/dp/1800751087>

The Counterweight Handbook: Principled Strategies for Surviving and Defeating Critical Social Justice Ideology - at Work, in Schools and Beyond

Author: Helen Pluckrose

In my view, the following passage from the aforementioned book gives a good description of DEI policy in practice.

“Diversity, equity and inclusion programmes have the admirable goal of creating a welcoming environment for everyone. Increasingly, however, people are realising that the way they are commonly practised isn’t simply an extension of past civil rights movements. Instead, they’re often intertwined with Critical Social Justice ideology, which imposes its principles and punishes any disagreement.

Mild questions about Critical Social Justice claims – like all white people being racists or all minorities being oppressed, or sex differences having no biological basis – are met with curt commands by DEI trainers and HR officers: ‘Educate yourself,’ ‘Do the work,’ ‘Listen and learn.’ Advancements at work and school often depend on agreeing with these beliefs. Critical Social Justice ideology poses a real threat to rights and democracy, yet speaking out risks social backlash.”

Section 1: Summary Feedback and Alignment with Curriculum Framework Document

The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include;

- Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes
- Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes.
- Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.
- The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education.
- Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness
- More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child
- Shift in focus to ‘how’ children learn over ‘what’ - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts.
- The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is ‘Be an Activist’ (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows “Critical” Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is ‘woke’ indoctrination, not education.

Generally, in today's society, activists tend to have biases – often based on misinformation, oppose different opinions and often refute accepted facts, refuse to engage with informed and evidence-based debate and suffer from cognitive dissonance.

- Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity. Focus should be on the subject matter.
- Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.
- Provide no visibility for parents: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

The Arts Curriculum uses the Arts as a vehicle for social change (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns.

P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.'

P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children.
3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity'

Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language.

Section 2(c): Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

- Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is 'woke' indoctrination, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (Be an Activist is a Key Competency)
- This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development.
- The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger.
- SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear. Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.
- This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as empathy, respect and challenging worldviews 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate?

Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer:

"...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy"

The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer", seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of what the learning objectives should be. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination.

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Global Learning Themes

Looks like a "woke" playbook. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using the curriculum to push political interests rather than service the educational needs of the child.

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/2vvcabyb/draft_ste_specification_2024.pdf

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge.

The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality.

Page 16: Learning Outcomes

Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, ‘Algorithm’ and ‘Plugged’ / ‘Unplugged’ at Stage 1

Page 31

“Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children’s learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time.”

This last paragraph implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst.

Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but “spiritual” is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. Physical education (PE) has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)

1. ‘...inclusive understanding of human sexuality’ (p.4) – we’ve seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools.

2. ‘...the concept of consent within relationships’ (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed.

4. The terms ‘diversity’ and ‘inclusion’ have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory.

5. ‘Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities’. (p.28). ‘Stereotypes’ in this context is an attack on ‘heteronormativity’ the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society.

6. Relational pedagogy - ‘children’s right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.’(p.38) - Parents rights should supersede ‘Children’s rights’ at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact.

7. ‘Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum’ (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children.

I would like to raise a query regarding the specifics of the section below.

Discrimination: Includes policies, practices or behaviours that lead to unfair treatment of individuals or groups on the basis of their identity or perceived identity. It can be intentional or unintentional and may be direct or indirect.

To what exactly does the term ‘perceived identity’ refer to in this section? Can you give an example? As part of the consultation, I wish to state my complete opposition to any efforts to include within the Curriculum the scientifically unsupported belief of Gender Identity Ideology, not least in light of recent Tavistock (Cass Report) and WPATH scandals along with the alarming explosion in the numbers of Paediatric Gender Clinics and social contagion in the USA, despite a growing number of Western European Countries taking a more conservative and, thankfully, evidence based approach to such a complex issue. There are also a number of activist-lead NGO’s in Ireland posing as ‘experts’ - who contribute to educational matters, development of Curricula, etc. – that hold anti-scientific views regarding human biology, Gender Healthcare, puberty blockers, etc.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the “Education for Social Justice” woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include:

1. Parental Visibility and Transparency: There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials
2. Curriculum Definition and Clarity: Totally lacking.
3. Concern over the reduction in the literacy allocation to half of the 2012 guidance for the youngest learners. What has changed since 2012 to drive this?
4. Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:
 - a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final Cass report into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that gender ideology should not be taught in schools. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.
 - b. The introduction of Critical Social Justice and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable.
5. Any cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed:
 - a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,

- b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs
- 6. Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism.
- 7. Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches: Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable. They embed “Critical” Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found.
- 8. Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.

General Comments related to Schools

1. Parental Consultation: The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered.
2. Ethos: It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos.
3. Social Transitioning: Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools.
4. Parental Knowledge, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy.
5. The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.

In closing, I again question the legitimacy of this consultation process in light of the lack of parental involvement in the development of the draft curricula. As well, the emergence of the Cass Report and the English draft Statutory Guidance all suggests that a halt should be put on this consultation process and a serious rethink occurs over what and how we teach our children.

Throughout the Curriculum Specifications, the terms; ‘Social Justice’, ‘Diversity’, ‘Privilege’ and ‘Identity’ appear regularly. It would almost appear as if indoctrination, rather than education, is the aim of these changes, particularly given the amount of time proposed to be allocated to these topics. The terms; Social Justice-, or Climate-, ‘Warriors’ are terms we hear frequently nowadays on mainstream and social media. Unfortunately, many of these so-called warriors are incapable of critical thinking and often misinformation is at the heart of many grievances. One example would be Greenhouse Gas emissions and Livestock, e.g. a propaganda film ‘Cowspiracy’ claimed a number of years ago that livestock were responsible for 51% of global GHG emissions. By the time that this ludicrous claim was corrected, how many ‘Climate Warriors’ held steadfast such a false belief. I’m sure that there were many ‘vegans’ and ‘climate activists’ born out of this baseless claim. Meanwhile, the most recent data show that the actual figure is a mere 12% of GHG emissions attributable to livestock.

While there are many NGO’s with their own agenda’s contributing to Curriculum development, particularly in relation to - Climate, Green Initiatives, LGBTQ or perhaps, to be more exact, LGBTQIP2SAA ‘rights’ - there are also many biases and contested opinions present, not to mention, in some cases, complete absence of evidence. Being an activist does not make one an expert, nor do I wish my child to be indoctrinated by the principles set out by such activists.

Imported and controversial ideologies such as DEI (Diversity, Equality, Inclusion) have no place in the Primary School Curriculum. I oppose 'DEI' as, rather than being diverse, inclusive, etc., it is actually exclusionary and intolerant, e.g. in terms of perceived 'wrong-think' or 'cancel-culture', in opposition to a merit-based workforce. DEI is showing itself to be a faulty ideology, which promotes nonsense rather than common sense. Despite initial concerns that the unscientific belief of 'Gender Identity Ideology' would be present on the Consultation, I tentatively welcome the fact that it appears that it is not. The UK Education Secretary has recently announced that pupils must be taught about the reality of biological sex and that 'Gender Ideology' should not be taught. Finally, common sense and logic prevails, at least in the UK.

Lastly, as the above submission makes clear, the proposed draft primary curriculum is not fit for purpose and will worsen children's experience in primary school. The NCCA are prioritising politics over child welfare with this proposed curriculum. This is not acceptable to parents and the consultation must be halted immediately.

I would appreciate a confirmation email that this submission was received.

Pat Murphy

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Why is the current requirement to 'foster a sense of Irish identity' being removed? Why is the new 'Social and Environmental Education' course encouraging children to take political action? Why has religion been greatly diminished in the draft curriculum compared with the current one?

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Why is the current requirement to 'foster a sense of Irish identity' being removed? Why is the new 'Social and Environmental Education' course encouraging children to take political action? Why has religion been greatly diminished in the draft curriculum compared with the current one?

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Why is the current requirement to 'foster a sense of Irish identity' being removed? Why is the new 'Social and Environmental Education' course encouraging children to take political action? Why has religion been greatly diminished in the draft curriculum compared with the current one?

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Why is the current requirement to 'foster a sense of Irish identity' being removed? Why is the new 'Social and Environmental Education' course encouraging children to take political action? Why has religion been greatly diminished in the draft curriculum compared with the current one?

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Why is the current requirement to 'foster a sense of Irish identity' being removed? Why is the new 'Social and Environmental Education' course encouraging children to take political action? Why has religion been greatly diminished in the draft curriculum compared with the current one?

Patrick Murphy

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Lack of consistency in language in structure and layout and emphasis across every subject and subject area is evident. In contrast to the 1999 curriculum where “Each curriculum statement has a similar structure and similar components [...including] overview tables” (Primary School Curriculum Introduction 1999 p41). Teacher agency and flexibility is difficult when there are no learning outcome titles/strand units across stages. This will cause challenges for multi-grade classes. Finally the number of Learning outcomes in total: 290 PLC Learning outcomes across the 4 stages in PLC (Oral 44+57, Read 41 + 45, Writing 39+45 and MFL 9+10), 72 PMC, 35 STEE, 38 SEE, 73 Arts and 147 Wellbeing may feel overwhelming for teachers and consequently create an over-reliance on publisher books.

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I think that the conflicting co-existence of a UDL PLC curriculum for all and the exercising of exemptions from Irish (1/2 of the curriculum) and now the MFL starting at stage 3 may limit UDL. Consideration should be given to ensuring that all learning outcome titles/strand units should start at stage 1 and progress through to stage 3. I think that all schools have children with additional needs, including gaelscoileanna and the line: Very general statement that is not always the case 'they will go through the stage 1 LO more quickly' p22 will not always be the case. To assist with the reading of the document there should be consistency around the language used e.g.:

- Language skills and strategies p7
- Knowledge skills and strategies p7
- Skills and concepts p7
- Skills knowledge and strategies p7
- Dispositions alongside concepts and skills p13
- Concepts, dispositions and skills p13
- Concepts dispositions and skills p14
- Knowledge, skills and strategies p15
- Concepts, skills and dispositions p16
- Constrained skills... unconstrained skills p16
- Concepts, dispositions and skills p18
- Concepts and skills p20
- Formal literacy skills p21
- Concepts, dispositions and skills p55
- Skills, strategies and knowledge p57
- Concepts, literacy skills, and learning strategies p57

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I think that an explanation is needed clarifying why Maths (within STEM) starts at junior infants yet history and geography do not start until stage 3 in SEE. Page 13 and page 35/38 seem to demonstrate the same skills and concepts. Why are they separated? What are the 'working as a geographer' and 'working as a historian'? Are they concepts, skills dispositions? They do not seem to be visible in the graphics.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Explanation is needed to clarify why maths starts at junior infants yet (e.g use of number is stage 1) yet history and geography do not start until stage 3. As STEE and Maths are part of STEM consideration should be given to the reasoning for using: • Curious disposition (STEE) versus Productive Disposition (PMC) • Conceptual and Procedural Understanding (STEE) versus conceptual understanding (PMC) • Conceptual and Procedural Understanding (STEE) versus Procedural Fluency (PMC) As STEE and Maths are part of STEM consideration should be given to the reasoning for using: The 4 elements in STEE and PMC should be the same rather than... • Exploring and understanding (STEE) versus Understanding and connecting (PMC) • Evaluating and Communicating (STEE) versus Communicating (PMC) • Problem solving and Applying (STEE) versus Applying and problem solving (PMC) • Creative and critical thinking (STEE) versus Reasoning (PMC). Lack of consistency in language, in structure, in layout and emphasis across every subject and subject area is evident. In contrast to the 1999 curriculum where "Each curriculum statement has a similar structure and similar components [...including] overview tables" (Primary School Curriculum Introduction 1999 p41). This will have an impact on successful embedding of the new curriculum framework. The curriculum should look like it was written by the same team of people. One simple example: learning outcome labels (PLC), strand units (PMC), and no equivalent (SEE). Time may be needed to ensure that unlike the PLC (2015), early a (2017), PLC (2018) and PLC (draft 2025) the 1999 curriculum did not necessitate immediate revision. The line 'once finalised the STEE specification will sit alongside the PMC in one curriculum document' (p.8 FAQ Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications) is very worrying and suggests that a new revision is already expected.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

I believe that the curriculum should be laid out with learning outcome titles/strand units that go across all stages- similar to PMC and PLC. Then Progression continua should be developed for each learning outcome.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

I think that the lack of strand units/learning outcome titles will make multi-grade classes very difficult to plan for. I think that this will create a particular teachers in multigrade special classes and schools.

Paul de Lacy

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

In the 1999 curriculum there are three references to the ethos of the school: - Introduction: Page 2: Since SPHE has a moral and a spiritual dimension, its development and implementation are influenced significantly by the ethos or characteristic spirit of the school. - Introduction: Planning: Page 12: Planning for SPHE will always be informed by the ethos of the school and developed within the context of the school plan. - Strand Unit: Growing & Changing: Page 41: *Developed and implemented in the context of the school ethos and school plan. Looking at the draft Wellbeing Curriculum there is no reference at all to ethos. This omission be reversed in recognition of the ever broadening choice of school ethos that parents have and their constitutional place as primary educators.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Consistent, high quality in-service training.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Let us cherish and respect the ethos of each of our school patronages.

Paul O' Sullivan

Good afternoon,

My name is and I write this submission to you today as a concerned parent who will in the coming years send his precious daughter, and indeed any future children, through the State's primary school system. After many years, I understand that the primary school curriculum is up for a number of changes to bring it up to date with the present day, and to equip young children with the tools they will need to successfully navigate their childhood years, as indeed it should. Ireland is changing and it is important that our children's schooling reflects modern realities.

However, I do have serious misgivings and concerns about the possible inclusion of issues surrounding so-called "gender identity". I have long since disengaged from the toxic, online culture wars that have come to define our times, but I did read with great interest The Sunday Times' coverage of the revelations from the Tavistock clinic in the UK. I have since sought out other credible and impartial observers of these developments and have come to believe that between the initial coverage, and the subsequent, searing indictment contained within the Cass report, there is simply no earthly justification for inclusion of topics related to gender identity in our primary schools.

I will not rehash the long list of concerns that have been raised around puberty blockers, gender affirmative care, early-age social transitioning and the simple, but unpopular, fact that many who present with gender dysphoria have comorbidities including autism. While many trans lobby groups have sought to ringfence these issues from any real scrutiny, the truth is that, at best, the jury is simply out on all of these issues and thus should not be taught as accepted fact in our schools. At worst, it represents an egregious assault on Enlightenment ideals where truth can be supplanted so easily by vocal lobby groups in spite of mounting evidential challenges.

So I put it to the NCCA to stand up to those who cynically wish to force their flawed narratives into existence via our school system. I expect the NCCA to closely consider the aforementioned revelations and to reach the only reasonable conclusion: ideas such as these are not only inappropriate in a primary school setting, they are patently false and will leave our children confused as to the fundamentals of who they are. They are beautifully innocent children that must be protected from these dangerous ideas until they are old enough to reach that conclusion for themselves.

Thank you for reviewing my submission. I sincerely hope you take it under advisement.

Paul Waits

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

The education system has gone mad. There's no place for far left ideology in primary schools. Children are there to learn not to be confused by leftist nonsense. Further more myself and my children are IRISH not European. Pushing european anti nationalist agenda. We should be teaching our children to be proud of where we come from not ashamed of it. God help the future generations of children if this leftist , EU, WEF, UN agenda is allowed to be pushed in our schools

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Not happy with any of it to be honest

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Not happy with any of it

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Not happy with any of it

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Not happy with any of it

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Not happy with any of it

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

I don't think it should be taught. So no supports

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Don't implement it.

Paula Fyans

Dear NCCA,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding the current consultation process on the Draft Primary Curriculum being conducted by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

As a parent, I believe it is crucial for us to have a clear and comprehensive understanding of what our children will be taught before any curriculum changes are implemented.

The Consultation on the Curriculum Specification Document is scheduled to close on 7 June 2024. However, this document primarily focuses on aims, goals, processes, aspirations, principles, diversity, inclusion, equity, citizenship, and social justice, with little detailed information about the actual content that will be taught to our children, particularly in Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

The Curriculum Specifications Document is only one component of the curriculum open to consultation. The other component, the Toolkit—is not currently part of this consultation. The Toolkit, which is supposed to contain the relevant information about the lessons, is not yet available for most subjects.

Without this information, parents are unable to form an informed opinion on the proposed curriculum changes. Therefore, I urge the NCCA to halt the current consultation process until clear and detailed information about the curriculum content is made available. This will ensure that proper consultation can take place and that parents can effectively contribute to the discussion about their children's education. Specifically I am very concerned in light of previous workbooks and material used in schools that are misleading and confusing when it comes to differentiating between sex and gender.

Please consider my request and provide the necessary information to allow for an informed consultation process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

Rabeya Sultana

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

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7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Ok

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Ok

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Ok

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Ok

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No

Rafiqul Islam

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant

Science curriculum

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Science

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

I Don't want that curriculum in School

Renault Karim

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No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

(As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.)

Ria Evert

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Primary school children are not mentally ready to have sex education. You are giving children information that they can not handle. If you keep on squeezing fruit it goes off and never gets ripe. Leave the sex education to prents instead of ruining childrens lives.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

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No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Teach children to think for themselves instead of being parrots to just repeat what they hear without having a notion what it means. Build children up instead of suppressing their development.

Ríona Horton

Dear Sir/Madam

Please find below my comments on the proposed changes to the primary curriculum

Primary Language Curriculum – including draft Modern Foreign Languages (MFL)

Firstly, I would like to concur that there is a need for improvement in the ability of Irish citizens to speak other foreign languages. However, I do not concur that this initiative should start in primary school. While it is the European Commission's long-term objective that every young European school leaver can speak two European languages in addition to his or her mother tongue, an adequate literacy foundation in the two official languages of the Irish state is more important than starting to learn modern languages at primary school.

While we can rightly be proud that Ireland is currently among the top performing countries in literacy at primary school level, we are not adequately supporting the 10% of children with dyslexia, many with a significant degree of learning challenges. Adding the learning of modern languages at primary school level is questionable for those children with numeracy and literacy challenges in English. There are children leaving the primary school system who can read phonetically but still struggle with reading and therefore cannot equitably access the post primary education system, which is primarily based on reading educational material. This is resulting in discrimination on the grounds of disability. More resources are required to support this group of students before we start learning additional languages at primary school level. Completion of the review of the EPSEN Act and implementation of the recommendations from the review would seem warranted before additional requirements are introduced.

While an exemption from the learning of Irish is an option for some children with dyslexia, parents are encouraged not to pursue this. This is understandable in terms of our heritage and desire to improve fluency in Irish, however significant scaffolding is then required to continue supporting children in the learning of Irish and this is not being done. There is currently inadequate teaching of Irish in our primary schools and many children are leaving primary school with only rudimentary Irish and a poor attitude to the learning of Irish. Learning a third language could detract from the efforts to improve standards of Irish.

Furthermore, our schools do not have the resources to adequately assess and then support children with learning difficulties to enable them to derive maximum benefit during their education journey to independent adulthood. The Department of Education is currently failing in its stated policy that the "curriculum is developed for all learners from all backgrounds.."

Despite the stated reduction in average teacher pupil ratios, many teachers are still dealing with large class sizes and are overworked- according to a report by the INTO 90% of

primary teachers are struggling with workload. Adding the learning of an additional language to this load seems unwarranted.

There are alternative ways of achieving this goal, including DuLingo clubs, after school language clubs and language taster programmes at secondary school before choosing subjects for Junior Cert.

In a country where over 200 languages are spoken by children, learning an additional two European languages is unlikely to improve social adhesion and inclusion. Ensuring everyone can speak English adequately and general education in multiculturalism and different faiths are more likely to achieve this outcome.

Wellbeing Curriculum

There needs to be education in the area of neurodiversity to improve awareness, understanding and inclusion of all children. In addition, physical education of children should have more time allocated than 1 hour a week and not at the expense of other areas of the curriculum. General education in multiculturalism and different faiths could be included in this area of the curriculum.

Sincerely

Riona Horton

Rory Geoghegan

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

A key strength of Science in the Primary School Curriculum (1999) was the introduction of Designing & Making ("the technology component") through which pupils would develop hands-on practical skills. It exemplified what STEM education should involve. The new Draft specification seems to dilute this development and replace it with IT skills that might be more appropriate for older students.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

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No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

In the Draft specification the meaning of 'technology' seems to be completely different from what is described in the 1999 primary science curriculum and guidelines. In the current eight-year programme (from Infants to Sixth Class), the curriculum is described in terms of Skills and Strands. The Skills are: • Working scientifically (Observing, hypothesising, experimenting,...) • Designing and Making The Strands are • Living things, • Energy and forces • Materials. The 1999 curriculum makes it abundantly clear that

pupils would be facilitated in developing the skills of both making and designing. "Approaches to designing and making The technology component of the SESE curriculum, as outlined in the science skills section, is entitled Designing and making. Designing and making will involve children in making small-scale objects such as toys or larger things such as lighthouses or trucks." Science Teacher Guidelines 1999 (p. 133) In the new draft specification, the phrase 'designing and making' does not appear; in fact the word 'making' (in the sense of making some artefact) does not appear. The term 'design and create' does occur but seems most often to refer to some digital artefact. Although there is reference to 'non-digital technology' most references to technology seem to imply digital technology. The current (1999) curriculum has a clear emphasis on the development of hands-on practical skills in designing and making functional artefacts. It provides a good foundation for a range of technology subjects at second level and beyond. Such an emphasis is missing in the new draft specification.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

The DRaft STE specification is very ambitious and it is hard to see how it might be realised without substantial changes to the development of the relevant skills by existing teachers and also by prospective teachers. The content, methodology and time allocation of Initial Teacher Education will need to be appropriately adjusted. A B.Ed. should not be awarded unless the recipients have demonstrated that they have the necessary subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Language and Clarity. /p There seems to be a high level of expectation in the new Draft specification, for teachers as well as for pupils. Here are some examples: 1 • Research and investigate environmental and social aspects of energy, including the role that society can play in reducing energy consumption and promoting clean energy. (p. 15) 2 • Explore and use their understanding of algorithms or programs to create a representation (computer model) of something from the real-world; test and adjust (simulate) these representations to make them more effective. (p. 16) 3 • Collaborate with others to define and refine design problems and solutions; use sketching, traditional or digital tools to create plans and represent prototypes; test and evaluate the impact of the design solution; draw conclusions and present an analysis of the design. (pp. 16-17) /p Were these written with primary school pupils in mind? They seem more appropriate for second or third level.

Rozz Lewis

Email Submission:

Educate Together and ERB

Educate Together schools have been working in the area of good practice in ERB since its conception in 1984. In 2023 a Revised Ethical Education curriculum was launched in all ET schools.

This includes a Belief Systems strand which relies on the Conceptual Enquiry Approach or a Constructivist approach, or what the literature refers to as learning about and from religions, beliefs and worldviews. The strand is clearly laid out with details of the religious concept to be taught along with the 7 Belief Systems/World Views being outlined. There is equal weighting to non-religious or secular world views and religious ones.

Educate Together have already invested huge research and funding into implementing a ERB under their own distinctive and very special equality-based ethos which enshrines the Toledo Guiding Principles when teaching about Ethics, Religions and Beliefs. Therefore, Educate Together schools are already teaching an ethical education curriculum and its outcomes as per best practice in ERB as per all NCCA reports.

Ethos

If Educate Together schools were to take on the Draft SEE curriculum, it would completely go against their equality-based ethos and the Patron's revised Ethical Education curriculum and all of its outcomes. The Draft SEE is not compatible with the ethos of equality-based schools. ERB and Ethics needs to remain as part of our patron's programme and to do otherwise would contradict the Educate Together Charter and Ethos Quality Framework. The NCCA/the state has a duty to take the identity of Educate Together schools fully into account when deciding on policy that affects the establishment and development of schools. This includes our ethos and our patron's programme.

Main points of concern

The draft SEE curriculum proposes to slot bad practice ERB outcomes into History and Geography. The draft neglects to detail the following information despite the NCCA, itself, reporting the need for below:

NCCA's reports:

In the references,

I detail the various Literature Reviews, consultations and reports from the NCCA into how an ERB curriculum would work in an Irish education system. The draft SEE curriculum specifications are now omitting most, if not all, of the recommendations and expert

views that the NCCA commissioned or wrote themselves.

Patron and Ethos-How

the ERB will practically work with the various contrasting ethos and patronages of our schools in Ireland.

Pluralist approach-The

rationale for the draft SEE to abandon the “pluralist” approach to ERB and completely ignoring the expert research in the ERB area that the NCCA actually commissioned.

Lacking-The

complete **lack**

of reference to

the Philosophies of Education

in terms of ERB

the distinct ERB Pedagogies

The skills, values and dispositions

that are unique to ERB yet naming those instead that which are aligned with History and Geography.

Opting Out-The

inevitable Opting out of ERB outcomes and the practical implications for all patrons and schools for this on top of opting out of RSE/SPHE that schools have to work with.

ITE/CPD-The

absolute need for appropriately trained and experienced teachers in the area of ERB to work in ITE/CPD.

Teacher Values and Bias-This

is not referenced and in fact they state that this can be simply left to “teacher professional judgement” or teacher agency in the draft documents.

Other-Other

areas that need to be looked at but have detailed in my [lengthy document](#) are:

vague/loose curriculum outcomes, lack of named content, textbook companies potentially writing the ERB curriculum, teacher and school overload due to lack of direction in curriculum for outcomes and content and taking into account the sensitivities from the

different patron bodies.

The below options were put forward in the NCCA Consultation report:

*ERB and Ethics as part of
the patron’s programme*

*ERB and Ethics integrated
across curriculum areas*

*ERB and Ethics as a discrete
curriculum*

Why is ERB now being moved into SEE? The process behind this needs to be transparent as to how and why one option was chosen over the other two.

My full response to the Draft SEE curriculum with all references can be found [here](#).

NCCA and their Reports and Reviews being omitted from the Draft SEE Curriculum

After examining the 4 documents

from the NCCA, my burning question is why are the NCCA ignoring almost all of their own reports and Lit Review into good practice in ERB.

Draft SEE specifications

NCCA

Education about Religions

and Beliefs (ERB) NCCA

Ethics in the Primary

School: Consultation Paper, 2015 NCCA

Social and Environmental

Education: A Review of Research and Scholarship in Geography, History and Education about Religions and Beliefs in the Context of the Redeveloped Irish Primary School Curriculum , August 2023, DCU/Trinity and commissioned by the NCCA

In the ERB review paper, the

NCCA say:

Teaching about religions and beliefs from a faith perspective is not a recommended approach for a national curriculum in ERB and developing a curriculum in ERB within this perspective is not appropriate for a national curriculum body to undertake.

Teaching Ethics through a faith lens is not a recommended approach for a national curriculum in Ethics.

In teacher education, in some colleges, the Ethics and Education (also involving ERB) curriculum for student teachers has been developed as a result of the recommendations of the Forum's Report (Coolahan et al, 2012). Here, the curriculum in ethical and comparative religious education was developed as an independent curriculum, clearly distinct from existing religious, faith-based teacher education curricula. This would seem to set a useful precedent for the development of an independent ERB and Ethics curriculum for primary school children.

In Mc Guirk's Lit Review commissioned

by NCCA, she references the following:

The Toledo Guiding Principles on Teaching about Religions in Public Schools provides a comprehensive set of ten principles to be considered when developing an ERB curriculum in public schools.

The Toledo Guiding Principles remind us that 'teaching about religions and beliefs should be sensitive, balanced, inclusive, non-doctrinal, impartial, and based on human rights principles relating to freedom of religion or belief. (Anne Marie Kavanagh and Niamh McGuirk Lecturers in Ethical and Intercultural Education, ERB Ethics Submission to NCCA)

History and Geography are, as are all curriculum subjects, distinct subjects with distinct pedagogical methods. ERB is the same. Is this right to shoehorn another distinct subject into two others and call them SEE? “*It would seem to have its own distinct content and approaches.*”(NCCA)

Pluralist approach to ERB and Ireland's best research being ignored.

There are many recommendations and concerns laid out from experts in the area of ERB in Irish third-level institutions such as Dr Anne-Marie Kavanagh and Dr Niamh Mc Guirk. I do think that this needs to be probed and looked as to why these are being fundamentally ignored and silenced. Two examples below but there are many

We advocate an ERB and Ethics curriculum ‘grounded in a pluralist and values education perspective’ . We have concerns about the practical implementation of the curriculum for teachers and schools in multi-denominational, equality-based and denominational contexts. (ERB Ethics Submission-Niamh Nc Guirk and AnnMarie Kavanagh)

For denominational schools, we recognise the difficulty that may arise for some teachers as they aim to shift their position from a teacher of faith formation to a teacher of ERB from a pluralist perspective.

The Toledo Guiding Principles remind us that ‘teaching about religions and beliefs should be sensitive, balanced, inclusive, non-doctrinal, impartial, and based on human rights principles relating to freedom of religion or belief’.

It is relevant to consider how inadvertently teaching ERB and Ethics content from a particular faith perspective could result in the mis-recognition and/or non-recognition of the belief systems and worldviews of some children and parents in a school community. It could also result in the ‘othering’ of minority belief systems within schools.

Consideration needs to be given to the language used to teach and discuss ERB and to how ERB is presented in discrete lessons and in the class in general. (ERB Ethics Submission-Niamh Nc Guirk and AnnMarie Kavanagh)

There are also many other references to this approach from the actual NCCA in all of the referenced reports and reviews. One telling one is below.

While the majority of patrons’

programmes are conceived through a ‘faith lens’, a national curriculum in ERB and Ethics may be based on a

more pluralist

epistemology which

explores different faiths and beliefs

without promoting

one faith perspective above another. (NCCA)

Philosophies of Education and Ethos

Currently the Draft SEE specifications do not mention or allude to the educational philosophies or ethos a school or teacher will maintain. The educational philosophy the teacher works under is integral to effective teaching and learning of ERB.

In the NCCA Literature Review, it states that

“pertinent educational philosophies and approaches to be considered when engaging in teaching relating to Education about Religions and Beliefs”

The main two it looks at are

Phenomenological or a “World

Religions” approach-Learning about religions

Constructivism: Learning about

and from religions, beliefs and worldviews. Endorsed by the Council of Europe and adopted in many contexts such as England, Scotland and Multi-denominational schools in Ireland.

Conceptual Enquiry Approach-Currently

used in Ethical Education Curriculum-Educate Together Schools

Pedagogies

The NCCA commissioned a lit review into SEE draft curriculum and it details the exact educational philosophies and approaches best used when teaching ERB. These are completely neglected in the Draft SEE specifications. These are the conceptual enquiry approach and the Interpretive approach.

Incorrect labelling of pedagogical approaches as strategies

The Lit review also details

approaches such as experiential learning, culturally responsive teaching, dialogical and participative pedagogies. While the draft SEE mentions 6 main pedagogical approaches, these are in fact teaching strategies and methodologies and the heading needs to

be changed to reflect this. Only one strategy is aligned with good practice in pedagogy of ERB. This is dialogical pedagogy. The six strategies the NCCA SEE draft details are story, inquiry, playful learning, place-based learning and fieldwork, applying digital

skills and dialogical pedagogy. When the SEE draft goes into detail on this, the dialogical pedagogy is completely connected to history and geography pedagogies not ERB ones.

Bias

There is a short paragraph

on pedagogy in the Draft SEE curriculum, it says that “*Teachers*

draw on their professional judgement and reflection to refine and adjust both the pedagogical practices they choose.”

This is unattainable

without the pedagogies, educational philosophies and ethos being very clear. A teacher’s own bias and experience would enable them to choose and refine the approach they think is correct despite no guidance from NCCA in this document. This needs to be reworded.

Strategies and Methodologies-Lit

Review

The Lit Review details a long

list of appropriate strategies and methodologies for ERB. Please, add these to the draft curriculum and focus cpd from appropriately qualified and experienced teachers in these areas.

Skills, Values and Dispositions

The Lit Review details the

skills, values and dispositions that should be utilised when teaching ERB. These include:

Valuing human rights, religious

literacy skills, multiperspectivity, the role of the teacher and a safe(r) space. While there is a reference to human rights in the draft SEE, it is vitally important to note that Ireland is currently in breach of Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention

Ireland in terms of religious instruction in schools. Therefore, these skills cannot apply to every patron or school.

In the SEE

draft curriculum the

skills associated with a historian and a geographer are noted. ERB skills and disposition need to be mentioned clearly as separate but integrated. Currently, they are not.

The connections between History,

Geography, and learning about religions, beliefs and worldviews are intricate and significant. Developing an understanding of these connections provides valuable insights into the cultural, social, and political aspects of societies throughout different times

and places. Working as a geographer, through the development of the essential geographical skills, knowledge, dispositions, and values, provides opportunities for children to consider and learn from the lives of others, their differing religions, beliefs,

and worldviews, whether in their own community or more distant places. Likewise, working as a historian provides children with the historical context through which the development, evolution and influence of religions, beliefs and worldviews can be explored.

Draft SEE curriculum page 27

Page 38-historical and geographical

skills The reference

to the historical and geographical skills are here but it seems to imply we use those unique skills for ERB too when the NCCA report and Lit Review says otherwise

Opt-out

This needs to be practically looked at for SEE subjects. How many hours a week plus RSE opt out for parents would this add up to?

“There is also particular

concern for children who ‘opt out’ of the patron’s programme on the grounds of conscience. The integration of ERB and Ethics content into the patron’s programme of the school may result in these children continuing to miss out on this valuable teaching and

learning. For this reason it would seem ineffective

to integrate ERB and

Ethics into these programmes.”(NCCA)

Niamh Mc Guirk references

“opting out” in the NCCA commissioned paper on the SEE curriculum-She references the recommendations from the Council of Europe and from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR)

advocate teaching religious education in public schools in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner and

if this approach does not underpin the curriculum, that an opt-out must be available

for parents, guardians and caregivers.

In the NCCA paper on SEE curriculum,

it points out that *“research*

in Irish and Northern Irish schools outline that the process(Opting out) can prove problematic and at times, ineffective.”

ITE/CPD

Training from appropriately

qualified and experienced teachers in Multi-D settings for Oide is not only integral but respectful. Educate Together schools have a unique ethos and cannot be fully understood until you teach in it. We need full details on this.

Teacher approach, teaching

approach, methodologies, ethical tensions/controversial issues and appropriate language need to be clear and named in training and curriculum specifications.(ERB Ethics Submission-Niamh Nc Guirk and AnnMarie Kavanagh)

“The development of a curriculum

in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics breaks new ground in the Irish education system” (NCCA)

“This

places great demands on teacher’s self-efficacy, professional ethics, knowledge and skills. There is also the challenge for teachers who will be engaged in teaching denominational programmes and faith forming on the one hand; and teaching about religions and

beliefs from a pluralist perspective on the other. There is no doubt that it also brings into sharp relief the need for teacher education and continual support for professionals in meeting these challenges.”(NCCA)

Teacher Values and Bias

The current draft ERB strands and outcomes are as loose as they can be. There is no evidence of the *pedagogical* or *epistemological* approach to the teaching and learning of ERB. This leaves the door wide open for a teacher to interpret their own and others’ beliefs without engaging with evidenced based work on teaching religions and beliefs and will cause potential bias, misrecognition, non recognition and othering.

There is a short reference to the problems of teacher bias in the Draft SEE curriculum, it says that:

“Teachers draw on their professional judgement and reflection to refine and adjust both the pedagogical practices they choose.”

This is unattainable and unacceptable for a state curriculum in ERB without the pedagogies, educational philosophies and ethos being very clear. A teacher’s own bias and experience would enable them to choose and refine the approach they think is correct based on bias or ethos of their school, despite no guidance from NCCA in this document.

“It is important that teachers are aware of their own value base. No subject or teaching is value-free. Therefore, teachers need to be conscious of their own convictions and beliefs and how these influence their approach to the teaching of the proposed curriculum in ERB and Ethics.”

References

An Overview of Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics content in Patrons'

Programme (NCCA), November

2015 https://ncca.ie/media/4602/overview_of_patrons_programmes.pdf

Written Submission, Consultation on the proposals for a curriculum in Education about

ERB (NCCA) https://ncca.ie/media/4584/erb_ethics_submissions.pdf

March 2016

Draft SEE curriculum specification, March 2024 (NCCA)

https://ncca.ie/media/aqtb5phc/draft_primary_seeeducation_specification_2024.pdf

Social and Environmental Education: A Review of Research and Scholarship in Geography,

History and Education about Religions and Beliefs in the Context of the Redeveloped Irish Primary School Curriculum , August 2023, DCU/Trinity and commissioned by the NCCA

<https://doras.dcu.ie/29182/1/McGuirk%202023%20Education%20about%20Religions%20and%20Beliefs.pdf>

Submission: Rozz Lewis, teacher in an Educate Together School-This submission is a personal submission and does not represent any organisation's views.

Google Doc Submission:

*“The development of a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics breaks new ground in the Irish education system”
(NCCA)*

This curriculum is an important step towards respecting children’s right to freedom from discrimination, and their right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion . An ERB and Ethics curriculum underpinned by critical, pluralist and inquiry based epistemology has the potential to have a transformative effect(Anne Marie Kavanagh and Niamh McGuirk Lecturers in Ethical and Intercultural Education, ERB Ethics Submission to NCCA)

The Toledo Guiding Principles remind us that ‘teaching about religions and beliefs should be sensitive, balanced, inclusive, non-doctrinal, impartial, and based on human rights principles relating to freedom of religion or belief. (Anne Marie Kavanagh and Niamh McGuirk Lecturers in Ethical and Intercultural Education, ERB Ethics Submission to NCCA)

Consultation on SEE Draft framework with NCCA on 24th April 2024

I attended the above consultation in the evening which was facilitated by NCCA. I was part of a breakout group. In that breakout group I noted I was the only teacher there from a multi-D and Educate school. The rest were all teachers from Catholic denominational schools. I was the only one to bring up the concerns I have about the ERB learning outcomes as detailed below as well as other concerns. These concerns and questions were noted by an NCCA staff member as well as others having their observations noted. Although it was an open forum I did not have the opportunity to list all my concerns. This is not the fault of the NCCA as there were 7 other teachers there who wanted to give input as well. It was a time issue and my concerns were written down. I listed my concerns as:

Language-The problem with the word “*Appreciate*” in the learning outcomes. I made the point that we cannot compel students, staff or parents to *appreciate* a belief system or a world view. This would contradict the Toledo Principles in which the SEE draft curriculum says it is bound to. It is an infringement of human rights.

Broad and vague-I brought up, as did the other teachers, the issue around the outcomes being so *broad* as to a teacher or school could not see what they were meant to be teaching. I made the point that the actual worldviews/belief systems needed to be listed and that Non-Theistic worldview was not listed and would need to be.

Pedagogy, CPD and skills/content

I made the point that the draft SEE is not currently working under any pedagogical approach when it comes to the specific ERB outcomes. Throughout the draft SEE, the skills and pedagogy are listed as being relevant to working as a historian or as a geographer. I made the point that if religion, ethics and belief systems are to be taught under the

umbrella of history and geography it would go against the NCCA report on ERB which advocates for an “interpretative” approach to teaching ERB. I asserted that the current draft does not have any reference to the approaches, skills etc to be taken by the teacher and learner with regards to the specific and unique subject that is ERB.

Educational Philosophies

- Currently the Draft SEE specifications do not mention or allude to the educational philosophies or ethos a school or teacher will maintain. See research compiled by NCCA Lit review. The educational philosophy the teacher works under is integral to effective teaching and learning of ERB.
- In the NCCA commissioned Literature Review conducted by DCU and Trinity College, it states that “*pertinent educational philosophies and approaches to be considered when engaging in teaching relating to Education about Religions and Beliefs*” the main two it looks at are:
 - Phenomenological or a “World Religions” approach-Learning about religions
 - The NCCA commissioned report points out that this approach has a number of concerning issues:
 - The potentially reductive impact of teaching in this way without first interrogating understandings and conceptualisations of religion(s).
 - Unable to truly offer an insiders’ perspective, for failing to convey depth of religious commitment, for essentialising religious (and non-religious) beliefs and practices and for resulting in the potential to “other”
 - In the classroom, this can lead to misrepresentation and to incorrect and ill-informed assumptions and discussions about religions, beliefs and worldviews and the role they play in peoples’ lives and in society.
 - Constructivism: Learning about and from religions, beliefs and worldviews. Endorsed by the Council of Europe and adopted in many contexts such as England, Scotland and Multi-denominational schools in Ireland.
 - Currently used in Ethical Education Curriculum-Educate Together Schools
 - This is an “*objective and descriptive way, for children to derive personal understanding and meaning from learning about the beliefs and worldviews of others.*” “*This involves learners being presented with (primarily) religious material and artefacts, hearing about their significance for particular individuals and groups, and then engaging in personal*

reflection on the material itself and how it relates to their own experience(s).”

- It points out that “*Critiques of this particular form of learning from religions, beliefs and worldviews relate to the supposed inherent spirituality, sacredness or positive attribute(s) of the material, and to discrepancies in interpretations of the purpose of reflection; that is to say, whether it is to have a (spiritually) nurturing function for the learner or whether it is solely to enrich understanding of others’ religions, beliefs and worldviews”*
- **Opt out-**I made the point that if ERB were to be taught under the lens of history/geography that a religious parent/child such as one from a Muslim or Catholic background could absolutely feel their beliefs were not being respected and may look to opt out. We already have parents who are opted out in terms of RSE for some religious families. SEE is to be taught for 2 hours a week. How would these learning outcomes work if certain families want to opt out as is their constitutional right and how might schools manage this on top of opt outs already happening? Is it not much easier and practical to design a curriculum that enables all, regardless of belief systems, to take part in the entire school day as much as is possible and it is possible in the case of the SEE curriculum?
- **Multi-Denominational schools-**I made the point that the Ethical Education curriculum given from the two patrons, ETB and Educate Together, is already in use in multi-denominational schools. Within this the strand “Belief Systems” utilises the *interpretative* approach, specifically the *conceptual enquiry based* approach. This needs to be noted as Multi-D schools are already carrying out the best, evidenced based approach to ERB in curriculum. Otherwise it would become burdensome and overwhelming to multi-d schools. Two teachers from CATHOLIC schools made the point that they also are “teaching about Eid” and “other festivals and feasts” such as “Chinese New Year” and that they have diverse children in their class who are allowed to “talk about their religion” The teacher went on to say that “they are already teaching ERB as outlined (sic)” and “that they were wondering “how much more depth” the NCCA would expect religious schools to cover with regards to the ERB outcomes. These comments are what reinforce my concerns about the ERB as religious schools think they are already doing the ERB outcomes. I made the point clarity needs to be there for all patrons and schools.
- To no fault of John, the Education Officer from the NCCA who facilitated this consultation, I went away from this meeting feeling confused, despondent and more concerned that the SEE draft curriculum still needs huge work and clarification with Patron input needed at this point. I outline my concerns below which were put together before the consultation. The ERB components of the draft need to be a discrete subject or a Patron’s programme. I am still totally unsure as to why the third option below of shoehorning it into the History and Geography curriculum has happened and

an evidence based, well-thought out rationale needs to be given to patrons, schools, parents and students.

Reexamining the SEE draft

Huge Concerns

After examining the Draft SEE specifications NCCA and the Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics in the Primary School: Consultation Paper, 2015 conducted by the NCCA, I have huge concerns about many aspects of the SEE curriculum, especially the ERB content proposed.

I urge NCCA to go back and look at making ERB and Ethics as either a *discrete* curriculum subject or as part of the *patron's* programme. CNS and ET already have an ERB so it would be up to each Patron to develop their own ERB. The current draft ERB strands and outcomes are as loose as they can be. There is no evidence of the *pedagogical* or *epistemological* approach to the teaching and learning of ERB. This leaves the door wide open for a teacher to interpret their own and others' beliefs without engaging with evidenced based work on teaching religions and beliefs and will cause potential bias, misrecognition, non recognition and othering.

In the original NCCA consultation report into ERB it stated the points below but the draft SEE seems to be ignoring their own NCCA report and research/best practice into ERB as a curriculum area.

Separate ERB subject

"should be seen as a distinct area of curriculum within the State curriculum."(NCCA)

Why is this now being moved into SEE? I would like to see the meetings, conversations about this decision, please, who made this decision and based on the NCCA review of ERB or another piece of research I am not aware of?

History and Geography are, as are all curriculum subjects, distinct subjects with distinct pedagogical methods. ERB is the same. Is this right to shoehorn another distinct subject

into two others and call them SEE? “ *It would seem to have its own distinct content and approaches.*”(NCCA)

The below options were put forward in the NCCA Consultation report:

ERB and Ethics as part of the patron’s programme

ERB and Ethics integrated across curriculum areas

ERB and Ethics as a discrete curriculum

NCCA review of ERB

Teaching about religions and beliefs from a faith perspective is not a recommended approach for a national curriculum in ERB and developing a curriculum in ERB within this perspective is not appropriate for a national curriculum body to undertake.

Teaching Ethics through a faith lens is not a recommended approach for a national curriculum in Ethics.

*The integration of the Ethics component may enhance the opportunities for such teaching to be highlighted as important to all curriculum areas and not only during specific strands and units. Ethics teaching in curriculum areas will emphasise the need to foster ethical attitudes at all times during the school day. This approach may impact on **teacher overload** and also on the time needed to teach the new curriculum.*

In teacher education, in some colleges, the Ethics and Education (also involving ERB) curriculum for student teachers has been developed as a result of the recommendations of the Forum’s Report (Coolahan et al, 2012). Here, the curriculum in ethical and comparative religious education was developed as an independent curriculum, clearly distinct from existing religious, faith-based teacher education curricula. This would seem to set a useful precedent for the development of an independent ERB and Ethics curriculum for primary school children.

There is a danger that as integrated content alone it might prove difficult for ERB and Ethics to have the impact to have an impact on children’s learning. (NCCA-all above)

Pedagogy-ERB

- The NCCA commissioned a lit review into SEE draft curriculum and it details the exact educational philosophies and approaches best used when teaching ERB. These are completely neglected in the Draft SEE specifications. These are the conceptual enquiry approach and the Interpretive approach.
- The Lit review also details approaches such as experiential learning, culturally responsive teaching, dialogical and participative pedagogies. While the draft SEE mentions 6 main pedagogical approaches, these are in fact teaching strategies and methodologies and the heading needs to be changed to reflect this. Only one strategy is aligned with good practice in pedagogy of ERB. This is dialogical pedagogy. The six strategies the NCCA SEE draft details are story, inquiry, playful learning, place-based learning and fieldwork, applying digital skills and dialogical pedagogy. When the SEE draft goes into detail on this, the dialogical pedagogy is completely connected to history and geography pedagogies not ERB ones.
- There is a short paragraph on pedagogy in the Draft SEE curriculum, it says that *“Teachers draw on their professional judgement and reflection to refine and adjust both the pedagogical practices they choose.”* This is unattainable without the pedagogies, educational philosophies and ethos being very clear. A teacher’s own bias and experience would enable them to choose and refine the approach they think is correct despite no guidance from NCCA in this document. This needs to be re worded.
- The Lit Review details a long list of appropriate strategies and ,methodologies for ERB. Please, add these to the draft curriculum and focus cpd from appropriately qualified and experienced teachers in these areas.

Sensitivities

Additional sensitivities over and above the general discussions about curriculum change in Ireland(NCCA)-Patrons will have their own concerns and sensitivities about SEE. Are these available in writing?

Opt out

This needs to be practically looked at for SEE subjects. How many hours a week plus RSE opt out for parents would this add up to?

“There is also particular concern for children who ‘opt out’ of the patron’s programme on the grounds of conscience. The integration of ERB and Ethics content into the patron’s programme of the school may result in these children continuing to miss out on this valuable teaching and learning. For this reason it would seem ineffective to integrate ERB and Ethics into these programmes.”(NCCA)

Niamh Mc Guirk references “opting out” in the NCCA commissioned paper on the SEE curriculum-She references the recommendations from the Council of Europe and from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)/ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) advocate teaching religious education in public schools in an objective, critical and pluralistic manner and if this approach does not underpin the curriculum, that an opt-out must be available for parents, guardians and caregivers.

In the NCCA paper on SEE curriculum, it points out that *“research in Irish and Northern Irish schools outline that the process(Opting out) can prove problematic and at times, ineffective.”*

Training-ITE and ongoing CPD

Teacher approach, teaching approach, methodologies, ethical tensions/controversial issues and appropriate language need to be clear and named in training and curriculum specifications.(ERB Ethics Submission-Niamh Nc Guirk and AnnMarie Kavanagh)

Training from appropriately qualified and experienced teachers in Multi-D settings for Oide is not only integral but respectful. We need full details on this.

“This places great demands on teacher’s self-efficacy, professional ethics, knowledge and skills. There is also the challenge for teachers who will be engaged in teaching denominational programmes and faith forming on the one hand; and teaching about religions and beliefs from a pluralist perspective on the other. There is no doubt that it also brings into sharp relief the need for teacher education and continual support for professionals in meeting these challenges.”(NCCA)

“The development of a curriculum in Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics breaks new ground in the Irish education system” (NCCA)

“Care needs to be taken to prevent oversimplification of the complexities of people’s belief systems and experiences.” (ERB Ethics Submission-Niamh Nc Guirk and AnnMarie Kavanagh)

Teacher values and bias

“It is important that teachers are aware of their own value base. No subject or teaching is value-free. Therefore, teachers need to be conscious of their own convictions and beliefs and how these influence their approach to the teaching of the proposed curriculum in ERB and Ethics. “

Approaches to ERB

It is apparent that the draft curriculum is endorsing a **social-cultural** approach to the teaching of ERB and Ethics through the lens of SEE. Within the NCCA report on consultation, the inquiry and interpretative approach(Jackson, 97) is named. Why is it not mentioned in the Draft SEE curriculum with reference to the ERB strands as it needs to be transparent and clear in terms of human rights, pedagogy of teachers and patrons the exact approach that is to be used or chosen from.

“It may be grounded in an inquiry-based epistemology, exploring different religions, beliefs and worldviews without promoting one faith perspective over another. For the majority of primary schools, this involves a new way of approaching religion, belief and ethics from anything developed previously.”(NCCA)

Pluralist approach

This approach is utterly clear in NCCA Consultation docs but deleted in the Draft SSE?

This needs to be referenced and named-“*objective, critical and pluralist*” (NCCA, Jackson et al)

Toledo Guidelines on Teaching Religion and Beliefs (ODIHR, 2007) and the increased recent emphasis on ‘religious literacy’ and the concept of ‘learning from religion’ (as distinct from simply ‘learning about religion’). We need to be very clear on the approach the ERB components in the SEE draft curriculum is using-A LFR or a LAR or both? I don’t see this stated in the draft docs.

Denominational and Multi-D schools already have ERB as a part of their ethos and Ethical Education Curriculum. ET schools use an interpretative(Jackson, 97) or a conceptual approach to ERB. This needs to be named and the approach of LAR and LFR needs to be referenced. Denominational schools used a different approach of faith formation or indoctrination.

While the majority of patrons’ programmes are conceived through a ‘faith lens’, a national curriculum in ERB and Ethics may be based on a more pluralist epistemology which explores different faiths and beliefs without promoting one faith perspective above another. (NCCA)

We advocate an ERB and Ethics curriculum ‘grounded in a pluralist and values education perspective’ . We have concerns about the practical implementation of the curriculum for teachers and schools in multi-denominational, equality-based and denominational contexts. (ERB Ethics Submission-Niamh Nc Guirk and AnnMarie Kavanagh)

For denominational schools, we recognise the difficulty that may arise for some teachers as they aim to shift their position from a teacher of faith formation to a teacher of ERB from a pluralist perspective. The Toledo Guiding Principles remind us that ‘teaching about religions and beliefs should be sensitive, balanced, inclusive, non-doctrinal, impartial, and based on human rights principles relating to freedom of religion or belief’ . It is relevant to consider how inadvertently teaching ERB and Ethics content from a particular faith perspective could result in the mis-recognition and/or non-recognition of the belief systems and worldviews of some children and parents in a school community. It could also result in the ‘othering’ of minority belief systems within schools. Consideration needs to be given to the language used to teach and discuss ERB and to how ERB is presented in discrete lessons and in the class in general. (ERB Ethics Submission-Niamh Nc Guirk and AnnMarie Kavanagh)

Curriculum content

Textbook companies-Companies will now start to add chapters on islam, Hinduism,etc to SEE books. Unless the teachers writing this understand best practice in teaching ERB, these chapters will follow similar worksheets on websites such as Twinkl or teacher influencers (without a prerequisite understanding and training in ERB) where belief systems are reduced to a list of stereotypical facts.

Clarity is needed in areas such as the naming of world religions to be learned about in the ERB content in SEE. Or is it up to Patrons and if so this makes ERB content non-pluralistic which is the aim of effective ERB accounting to the NCCA themselves?

Skills, Values and Dispositions

The Lit Review details the skills, values and dispositions best utilised when teaching ERB. These include:

Valuing human rights, religious literacy skills, multiperspectivity, the role of the teacher and a safe(r) space. While there is a reference to human rights in the draft SEE, it is vitally important to note that Ireland is currently in breach of Article 2 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention Ireland in terms of religious instruction in schools. Therefore, these skills cannot apply to every patron or school.

In the SEE draft curriculum the skills associated with a historian and a geographer are noted. ERB skills and disposition need to be mentioned clearly as separate but integrated. Currently, they are not. *The connections between History, Geography, and learning about religions, beliefs and worldviews are intricate and significant. Developing an understanding of these connections provides valuable insights into the cultural, social, and political aspects of societies throughout different times and places. Working as a geographer, through the development of the essential geographical skills, knowledge, dispositions, and values, provides opportunities for children to consider and learn from the lives of others, their differing religions, beliefs, and worldviews, whether in their own community or more distant places. Likewise, working as a historian provides children with the historical context through which the development, evolution and influence of religions, beliefs and worldviews can be explored. Draft SEE curriculum page 27*

Page 38-historical and geographical skills The reference to the historical and geographical skills are here but it seems to imply we use those unique skills for ERB too when the NCCA report says otherwise.

Curriculum learning outcomes/objectives

All of the SEE outcomes are far too broad for history, geography and ERB. There is no content specified so schools and teachers will either have to take time to write their own curriculum content effectively or rely on textbook companies and/or social media influencer teachers to fill the gap that the NCCA should fill. Outcomes need to lay out what schools are to cover in the same way the 1999 primary curriculum did. There was flexibility there but also room for “teacher agency” within different schools and patrons.

To learn about, explore and appreciate children’s own and others’ lived experiences.”(Draft Curriculum SEE) Appreciate? Human rights? Children should be invited to engage and we cannot force any child to appreciate a religious or indeed a non religious perspective. See bias above.

Non-theist-There is no reference to non-theist worldviews/belief systems. Why is there only emphasis on World religions as this is not compatible with effective ERB curriculum teachings? In the NCCA commissioned Lit Review on page 95 it refers to this by saying *“There is consensus on the need for breadth, depth and balance in relation to what is presented to children in curricula so that it reflects...religious and secular worldviews. There is agreement that it must include...sensitive and controversial issues and also, that it allows for progression in learning.* Currently the vague learning outcomes do not allow for progression in learning or reference to secular worldviews

- **Other countries who have been successful-***“Quebec, Queensland and New Zealand are examples of jurisdictions that have taken significant steps in the development of ERB curricula and may have useful learning for NCCA.” (NCCA)* What learning did NCCA discover from these countries?

References

- An Overview of Education about Religions and Beliefs (ERB) and Ethics content in Patrons’ Programme (NCCA), November 2015 https://ncca.ie/media/4602/overview_of_patrons_programmes.pdf
- Written Submission, Consultation on the proposals for a curriculum in Education about ERB (NCCA) https://ncca.ie/media/4584/erb_ethics_submissions.pdf March 2016

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Sadeed Khan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them

Sah Shamsuddin

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Sandra Adams

Submission to the Primary draft specification consultation.

I am a parent of a child entering class in primary school in September 2024. This is my submission to the current primary draft specification consultation. I wish to address significant concerns regarding the NCCA's consultation process and the content of the Primary Curriculum Framework, specifications, and toolkits.

Framework

Firstly, I reject any possible assertion that the Primary Framework is beyond the scope of this consultation. The Framework is a deeply flawed document that assumed parental authority in its creation without ever asking for it. A new framework, not bound to the principles and values of a collection of NGOs and special interest groups, needs to be produced.

My primary issues with the new curriculum include the lack of transparency, the assumption that the NCCA and schools are 'co-parents' and the overemphasis on certain ideological themes.

'Petition style communication'

When parents expressed concerns about the content of the proposed Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum their feedback was labelled 'petition style communications'. This was a cynical attempt by the NCCA to undermine parental input by branding it as conspiratorial in nature. This was a profoundly insulting act on the part of the NCCA. That parents share the same concerns and express those concerns in similar ways speaks more to the common fears parents have than to an orchestrated campaign to undermine the process. If parents avail of template letters provided by grassroots organisations to make their concerns known it speaks more to their incredibly busy and demanding lives of most families than any nefarious attempt to derail the process. I trust that the NCCA will not dismiss the genuine concerns of parents during this consultation process.

Constitutional Rights and Parental Authority

Article 42 of the Irish Constitution states that parents have the inalienable right and duty to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical, and social education of their children. However, the NCCA's vision for primary education clearly diminishes this role. The absence of explicit mention of parents and families in the NCCA's vision on page 5 of the Primary Curriculum Framework is concerning, particularly when it mentions the children's communities, society, primary education, teachers, and themselves as individuals, but not their families. Moreover, the framework locks in "gender and sexual identity" on page 32, intruding upon areas that fall within the moral, social, physical, and religious education of children—domains where parents have inalienable rights. Parents rights are greater than the demands of NGOs who through the NCCA and the Department of Education seek to influence the all aspects of Irish education.

Lack of Transparency and Clear Content – The Specifications

The draft curriculum specifications lack specificity, presenting vague descriptions that fail to inform parents about what their children will be taught in class. While the documents are filled with buzzwords like inclusivity, equity (this is not equality), goals, principles, diversity, identity, and social justice, there's a notable absence of specifics. There is a focus on respect for others and validation from others over self. Irish identity and culture are removed with a new intense focus on global and active citizenship. There is no clarity about the parameters and limits of these topics in

the classroom. This consultation appears to be more of a fudging exercise than genuine engagement.

This learning objective illustrates my concerns;

"Students should be able to understand that families are structured in diverse ways, demonstrate an awareness of the variety of influences that can affect families, such as change, loss, bereavement, illness, and stereotypes, and explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities."

What "diverse ways" are going to be covered in class? Are we talking about surrogacy, children living with grandparents due to parental death, or foster families resulting from issues like drugs and alcohol? What are the parameters and limits of this objective for primary school-aged children? As for stereotypes, what stereotypes are being addressed? No toolkit was provided to assess the content of this part of the curriculum.

The sub-objective to "explore ways family members can promote gender equality" is extraordinarily arrogant. Family members won't be in class, and in my case, they will reject such overreach. Why would they discuss their family members in class? This intrusion is unacceptable and every instance of it needs to be deleted.

Many of these learning objectives suffer from similar issues. These specifications and toolkits were not ready for a consultative phase. The competencies are also problematic. The concept of "being well" as a competency is flawed since it is intrinsic to human nature and not a testable skill. Teaching empathy through the curriculum is misguided, unattainable, and not measurable, as empathy naturally develops through life experiences and the human condition.

Critical information contained within toolkits that are not publicly accessible is underhanded. This lack of transparency is unfair. Parents have a fundamental right to be informed about their children's education. By not releasing specific curriculum content upfront, the NCCA seems to be avoiding addressing parental concerns, particularly on contentious issues like gender ideology and the politicisation of children.

Overemphasis on Ideological Themes

The proposed curriculum places an overemphasis on themes like active citizenship and inclusion at the expense of academic development. My expectation from the primary school system is to focus on foundational academic skills—reading, writing, and arithmetic—along with subjects like PE, art, religion, history, and geography. Imposing concepts such as active citizenship on young children, who are not developmentally ready for critical thinking in this context, seems more like indoctrination than education.

Inclusion of Gender Ideology

The inclusion of "gender and sexual identity" in any school-related document is contentious. It assumes parental consent that was neither sought nor granted. The NCCA's reliance on special interest groups and NGOs has skewed the curriculum framework. **No child must be taught that they can be born in the wrong body. To do so is child abuse.** I unequivocally reject my child being taught gender ideology, gender identity, or queer theory through Wellbeing/SPHE or any other subject.

Consultation Process and Communication Style

The NCCA's consultation process was inadequately communicated to parents. Many parents were unaware of this consultation until very recently, and some still don't know. The links to relevant documents were difficult to find. This lack of accessibility to the required information undermines the transparency and inclusivity of the consultation process.

My interactions with the NCCA during this time are included below. I made several requests to see the toolkits. The excuse that the toolkits are not yet prepared is understandable, but then labelling this process a consultation is misleading. While access to Mathematics and Languages toolkits was eventually granted, crucial toolkits related to SPHE and Social and Environmental subjects are still to be released.

I, along with a small group of mothers, received a response from the NCCA regarding our query regarding the inclusion of the phrase "gender, and sexual identity" in the framework (full correspondence attached). Their response to us stated:

"The extract in your email taken from the Primary Curriculum Framework (2023) is adapted from text included in the Equal Status Act (2000-2018) which protects all citizens from discrimination based on nine grounds - gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the Traveller community. The inclusion of this statement in the Primary Curriculum Framework aligns with a school's legislative responsibilities and has been included within a section on Inclusive Education and Diversity to ensure all children have opportunities to thrive and flourish in our schools."

However, it's important to note that nothing in this statement explicitly covers sexual identity, which itself encompasses gender identity/ideology. Despite our requests for clarification of the NCCA's definitions of gender (sex – male and female?) and sexual identity, we received extensive reading materials and links but no direct answers. What are the NCCA's definitions of these terms and how did sexual identity in particular end up secured in the primary framework as though parents wouldn't notice? All of this suggests that primary children are certain to be exposed to gender ideology without explicit parental consent.

The NCCA must assure parents that it has not misinterpreted the Equal Status Act (2000- 2018) that protects all citizens from discrimination based on nine grounds - gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community. Has the NCCA erroneously expanded the gender ground to include 'gender identity' and/or 'gender expression'? If so the NCCA misunderstands the scope of the legislation. This point must be clarified.

Maintaining Parental Rights and School Attendance

How will schools accommodate parents like me who do not want their child taught gender identity or queer theory. Because wellbeing is integrated into all subjects, my ability to 'opt out' could only be achieved by excluding my child from mainstream school. Parents are the primary educators, and any attempt to diminish this role or assume parental consent is unacceptable.

The Cass Review

The Cass Review is the most comprehensive investigation in to the treatment of children experiencing distress related to their sexed bodies every conducted. It's impact on education policy in the UK should prompt the NCCA to pause this primary redevelopment process entirely.

Has the NCCA reviewed the Cass Review and does it accept its findings? It is crucial to reconsider the direction of this curriculum considering this review's findings. Parents have expressed concerns about social transition and the promotion of the 'affirmative' model of care in the Junior Cycle SPHE curriculum. This review provides irrefutable evidence that their concerns are well founded. Parents' voices must be genuinely heard and respected in shaping our children's education.

Conclusion

The NCCA must prioritise transparency and parental involvement by providing clear, detailed curriculum content for review and genuinely listening to feedback. Sidelining parents, overemphasis on ideological themes, and prioritising niche interests over foundational educational outcomes is unacceptable. Only through an open, inclusive process can we ensure our children receive an education aligned with academic goals and parental values. Why has the NCCA committed to these skewed priorities, disregarding parents' concerns? The Junior Cycle SPHE consultation ignored significant parental input, leading to an ideologically driven curriculum.

Sincerely,
Sandra Adams

Sarah Caraher

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include; • Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes (generic/ unspecified). • Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes. • Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills. • The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education. • Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness (not starting from where the child is at) • More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child • Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what' - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts. • The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is 'Be an Activist' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is

woke indoctrination, not education. • Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity. Focus should be on the subject matter. • Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important. • Provide no visibility for parents: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

The Arts Curriculum uses the Arts as a vehicle for social change (and influencing one sided views). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.' P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity' Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value and joy of learning a language and celebrating the distinct cultural values of that language.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

This has shifted to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is woke indoctrination, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (Be an Activist is a Key Competency) • This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. • The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. • SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear. Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety. • This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as empathy, respect and challenging worldviews 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate? Feel it distracts from the principal of learning about the unique benefits of individual cultures.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge. The

emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality. Page 16: Learning Outcomes Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1 Page 31 "Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time." This last paragraph implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst. Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but "spiritual" is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. Physical education (PE) has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.) 1. '...inclusive understanding of human sexuality' (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools. 2. '...the concept of consent within relationships' (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed. 4. The terms 'diversity' and 'inclusion' have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory. 5. 'Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is an attack on 'heteronormativity' the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. 6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.' (p.38) - Parents rights should supersede 'Childrens rights' at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact. 7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children. As an engineer who has worked in STEM for 20 years I am confused about how something as black and white as science needs to include consent. A word associated with sex.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but "spiritual" is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. Physical education (PE) has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.) 1. '...inclusive understanding of human sexuality' (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young

children in Primary Schools. 2. '...the concept of consent within relationships' (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed. 4. The terms 'diversity' and 'inclusion' have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory. 5. 'Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is an attack on 'heteronormativity' the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. 6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.' (p.38) - Parents rights should supersede 'Childrens rights' at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact. 7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the "Education for Social Justice" woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include:

- Parental Visibility and Transparency: There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials
- Curriculum Definition and Clarity: Totally lacking.
- Concern over the reduction in the literacy allocation to half of the 2012 guidance for the youngest learners. What has changed since 2012 to drive this?
- Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:
 - Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final Cass report into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that gender ideology should not be taught in schools. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.
 - The introduction of Critical Social Justice and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable.
 - Any cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed:
 - This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,
 - Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs
 - Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism.
- Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches: Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable. They embed "Critical" Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found.
- Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

General Comments related to Schools • Parental Consultation: The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered. • Ethos: It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos. • Social Transitioning: Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools. • Parental Knowledge, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy. • The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in alleged Catholic Schools.

Sarah Lallaway

I as a mother of 2 young children one starting primary school this year am asking for gender and sexual identity to be defined and I do not consent to gender identity to be taught as fact.

Sarah Mehmood

To Whom it concerns,

I am a parent of three children in primary school. This is my submission to the current Primary Consultation. It addresses significant concerns regarding the NCCA's consultation process and the content of the Primary Curriculum Framework, the specifications, and the toolkits.

Firstly, I reject any possible assertion that the framework is beyond the scope of this consultation. It is a deeply flawed document that assumed parental authority in its creation without ever asking for it. A new framework, not bound to the principles and values of a collection of NGOs and special interest groups, needs to be produced.

My primary issues with the new curriculum include the lack of transparency, the assumption of parental authority, and the overemphasis on certain ideological themes.

Constitutional Rights and Parental Authority

Article 42 of the Irish Constitution states that parents have the inalienable right and duty to provide for the religious, moral, intellectual, physical, and social education of their children. However, the NCCA's vision for primary education clearly diminishes this role. The absence of explicit mention of parents and families in the NCCA's vision on page 5 of the Primary Curriculum Framework is concerning, particularly when it mentions the children's communities, society, primary education, teachers and themselves as individuals, but not their families. Moreover, the framework locks in "gender and sexual identity" on page 32, intruding upon areas that fall within the moral, social, physical, and religious education of children—domains where parents have inalienable rights. Parents are not subject to the demands of NGOs through the NCCA and the Department of Education. I do not value their input and question how they have so much influence on our school system when I am the one with the inalienable rights.

Lack of Transparency and Clear Content – the specifications

The draft curriculum specifications lack specificity, presenting vague descriptions that fail to inform parents about what their children will be taught in class. While the documents are filled with buzzwords like inclusivity, equity (not equality), goals, principles, diversity, identity, and social justice, there's a notable absence of specifics. There is a focus on respect for others and validation from others over self. Irish identity and culture is removed with a new intense focus on global and active citizenship. There is no clarity about the parameters and limits of these topics in the classroom. This consultation appears to be more of a fudging exercise than genuine engagement.

This learning objective is a typical of the documents:

“Students should be able to understand that families are structured in diverse ways, demonstrate an awareness of the variety of influences that can affect families, such as change, loss, bereavement, illness, and stereotypes, and explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities.”

What “diverse ways” are going to be covered in class? Are we talking about surrogacy, children living with grandparents due to parental death, or foster families resulting from issues like drugs and alcohol? What are the parameters and limits of this objective for primary school-aged children?

As for stereotypes, what stereotypes are being addressed? Are they influenced by the aforementioned NGOs? Allocating valuable class time to this is self-indulgent, anxiety inducing, and counterproductive. It borders on promoting a victimhood mentality and aims to control thoughts, which is inappropriate. Spending time focusing on others' views and seeking evidence of stereotypical characteristics is not beneficial. What exactly are you teaching on this? If I had access to the toolkit, I could check myself.

The sub-objective to “explore ways family members can promote gender equality” is extraordinarily arrogant. Family members won't be in class, and in my case, they will reject such overreach. Why would they discuss their family members in class? This intrusion is unacceptable and every instance of it needs to be deleted.

Many of these learning objectives suffer from similar issues. These specifications and toolkits were not ready for a consultative phase.

The competencies are also problematic. The concept of "being well" as a competency is flawed since it is intrinsic to human nature and not a testable skill. Teaching empathy through the curriculum is misguided, unattainable and not measurable, as empathy naturally develops through life experiences and the human condition.

Critical information contained within toolkits that are not publicly accessible is underhanded. This lack of transparency is unfair. Parents have a fundamental right to be informed about their children's education. By not releasing specific curriculum content upfront, the NCCA seems to be avoiding addressing parental concerns, particularly on contentious issues like gender ideology and the politicisation of children.

Overemphasis on Ideological Themes

The proposed curriculum places an overemphasis on themes like active citizenship and inclusion at the expense of academic development. My expectation from the primary school system is to focus on foundational academic skills—reading, writing, and arithmetic—along with subjects like PE, art, religion, history, and geography. Imposing concepts such as active citizenship on young children, who are not developmentally ready for critical thinking in this context, seems more like indoctrination than education.

Inclusion of Gender Ideology

The inclusion of “gender and sexual identity” in any school-related document is contentious. It assumes parental consent that was neither sought nor granted. The NCCA’s reliance on special interest groups and NGOs has skewed the curriculum framework. The framework’s development requires proper parental involvement and our informed consent not prioritisation of third-party agendas.

I unequivocally reject my children being taught gender ideology, gender identity, or queer theory through Wellbeing/SPHE or any other subject. The foundation of this framework is shaky, and refusing to correct these errors is unacceptable. My children and I are not subject to NGO demands.

Consultation Process and Communication Style

The NCCA’s consultation process was inadequately communicated to parents. Many parents were unaware of this consultation until very recently, and some still don’t know. The links to relevant documents were difficult to find. This lack of accessibility to the required information undermines the transparency and inclusivity of the consultation process.

Maintaining Parental Rights and School Attendance

I, along with other parents in my school, have asked our school board to seek clarity from the NCCA and the Department of Education on how families like ours can attend school under the new curriculum. I will be opting out of SPHE due to its overreach into the parental role and will not ever consent to material sympathetic to gender ideology or queer theory. If wellbeing is integrated into all subjects, we may need to opt out entirely, excluding our children from mainstream school. Parents are the primary educators, and any attempt to diminish this role or assume parental consent is unacceptable.

Conclusion

The NCCA must prioritise transparency and parental involvement by providing clear, detailed curriculum content for review and genuinely listening to feedback. Sidelining parents, overemphasis on ideological themes, and prioritising niche interests over foundational educational outcomes is unacceptable. Only through an open, inclusive process can we ensure our children receive an education aligned with academic goals and parental values. NGOs listed in your framework consultation report should not have all that influence on my child’s curriculum. Why has the NCCA committed to these skewed priorities, disregarding parents’ concerns? The Junior Cycle SPHE consultation ignored significant parental input, leading to an ideologically driven curriculum. Extending this to primary education is a negative move.

The Cass Review in the UK and the swift policy changes there regarding children’s education should prompt the NCCA to pause this process entirely. It is crucial to reconsider the direction

you are taking in light of this report's findings and the concerns many parents have already expressed in this and in previous consultations. Parents' voices must be genuinely heard and respected in shaping our children's education.

Could you please confirm receipt of this mail?

--

Kind regards

Sarah Mehmood

Sarah Riberio

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
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- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I didn't know about this process and I want to submit a written contribution, there is why I'm filling out this form. I also would love to be included in eventual focus groups that will work on this. Looking at the statements above, one caught my attention: the assessment is a core part of curriculum, but it shouldn't be our priority, not the goal, just a monitoring tool.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

No answer

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I don't know the answer to this question yet.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I don't know the answer to this question yet.

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I don't know the answer to this question yet.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

I don't know the answer to this question yet.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

I don't know the answer to this question yet.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Training, collaborative working within school and between schools, close monitoring and constant feedback.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Teachers should have a proper training that should take place in one of the 9 or more paid weeks of leave that they have. No other worker as that many paid holidays and teachers should take part of the schools out to attend mandatory training.

Sayyed hassan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

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- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

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7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

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8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

(As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.)

Seamus Giblin

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Knowledge focus

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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Please teach children the correct seasons as per met eireann. Why children are been thought the incorrect season months is beyond bemusing.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

No answer

Seán O Cluaid

CONSULTATION ON PRIMARY SCHOOL CURRICULUM

The whole thing seems very verbose with repetition, repetition and repetition which leaves it very difficult to make a response.

Finding the items doesn't seem to be as straight forward as they should be or maybe as you see them, you being familiar with them, e.g., I found the questionnaire once, but can't find it again.

I see things as going around and around in circles just back to the beginning instead of going on to more information.

Having seen some of the secondary school things under SPHE I have a fear of what is going to be put into the Primary Curriculum.

Things may look innocent but the secondary curriculum shows what can be put in there.

Remember, the recent referendums showed that traditional marriage must be held by about 70% of our population so over emphasises or even equal emphasises of other marriages and sexual aspects is out of place.

Terminology like "equality", "identity" can be used to bring in all sorts of assumed sexual identities. Why do six or seven year olds need to know about these fancies of other people. Such notions should not be put into their heads.

We have heard that some things are not being put into books that children will take home and we understand that teachers have been instructed not to discuss these things with parents. This attitude is totally unconstitutional as parents are the primary educators and need to know what their children are being taught.

As it is stated that parents have the right to withdraw their children from SPHE classes, then that is acknowledging that there is something doggy in the content. But to do that the parents' need to know the content of what is being taught.

Consider the psychological effect on children who are taken out of class and the reaction of those who stay in class.

Because some things could not be found on the web, apologies that there are no reference numbers to the various sections.

This comes from a non-catholic parents who sent their children to the local National School rather than separate them from the community in which they lived and, rather than make them stand out, went into the school each year and spoke with the teachers about religion, that we wouldn't take them out of class but, they were not to be asked questions on religion as if they had to believe it, and would not be made to do home work on religion. We have highest praise for the school in that regard.

I looked into the conditions and found that the Catholic Church had control of the schools by paying a "local subsidy". I paid that for my children so they had the right to be in the school and hence I considered I had as much authority as the bishop. I got on well with the priest managers. My wife was instrumental in starting a "Parents' Association" and I was chair from the second year throughout the whole time we had children in the school.

Our boys told us that at some stage there was a religious ceremony for which the other boys were all dressed up (maybe communion or confirmation) . Our boys weren't dressed up so were asked why they were not dressed up. They said, "We are not Catholics." The other lads said, "Why didn't we think of that one."

Seán Ó Cluaid

MAINLY SPHE.

I sent in a submission for the 7th June and have been thinking again.

One point made then was that having seen some of the secondary school things under SPHE, I had a fear of what may be put into the Primary Curriculum.

I said that things may look innocent but the secondary curriculum shows what can be put in there under terminology like "equality", "identity". They can be used to bring in all sorts of assumed sexual identities. Why do five, six or seven year olds need to know about these fancies of other people. Such notions should not be put into their heads.

Having come across submissions by the INTO-LGBT+ group and the Transgender Equality Network of Ireland (TENI) my initial fear is reinforced. But if LGBT+ has to be mentioned then the full story has to be known, not just one side. The moral side and the health aspects should also be made known as health and moral aspects are part of the programme.

In a radio programme on Monday 6th November 2023, there was an interview with a doctor dealing with Sexually Transmitted Diseases who said there had been a lull in the numbers having treatment during the Covid period but the numbers are on the increase again. Also, I understand that there has been an increase in those needing treatment since the Marriage Equality Legislation was implemented. The term “equality” was used, but that meant same sex marriages. Why wasn’t it called what it is, why “equality”?

The word Homosexual is a recent development but the activity is mentioned in the Old Testament part of the Bible in the Laws given via Moses about 4000 years ago. There is a whole list of “don’ts” for men, and then in Leviticus chapter 18 verse 22,
**“You shall not lie with a male as with
a woman; it is an abomination.”**

Then in chapter twenty the penalties are given for the “don’ts” of chapter eighteen. In most of the cases the punishment for sexual misbehaviour is the death penalty. Leviticus chapter 20 verse 13 :-

**“If a man lies with a male as with a woman, both of them have committed an
abomination;
they shall be put to death;
their blood will be upon them.”**

That may seem very harsh, but that is what Scripture says, hence, God’s attitude, so if LGBT+ is going to be mentioned, that is connected with it, so that has to be part of the curriculum if it is to be balanced; if it is to give the full picture; if the picture has to give equality.

The Bible (the Scriptures) is in two parts, generally known to us as the Old and New Testaments. The above were part of the commands of the Old Testament, also called the Old Covenant.

Now part of the message of the Old Covenant was that there was to be a New Covenant and this is also referred to as a “better” covenant. A covenant is like a promise, and that word promise is also used.

With that history in mind it is worth taking up something in the New Testament. Paul, the apostle, wrote much of the New Testament and in, what is called the Book to the Romans, he goes back over history tracing how things developed from the Old to the New Covenant.

Romans chapter 1, verses 24 to 27

“Therefore God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts to

3.

impurity, to the degrading of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever!

Amen.

For this reason God gave them up to degrading passions. Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”

In **the new situation**, the apostle, wrote about the then current situation and this was in 1st Corinthians chapter 6 verse 9 : -

“Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites. - - - none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.”

So under the New Covenant, things have changed somewhat. God does not now demand the death penalty for such behaviour. From that, in the modern age, sexual sin may not be specifically any worse than any other sin in God’s sight. The apostle put it this way, Romans 3 : 23

“- - since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; - -“

However, from the earlier quote, above

“received in their own persons the due penalty for their error”, this may indicate the health aspect of sexual sin. All fall short of God’s glorious standard, simply some fall short in ways that have physical consequences. Is that not borne out by the increase in sexually transmitted diseases?

This may be seen by some as “hate”. There is a common saying, “Jesus hates the sin but loves the sinner”. This is not a hate of anyone, it is pointing out the serious situation with LGBT+ and the situation that we are all in unless we turn to God.

So, again, if LGBT+ has to be mentioned in the children's curriculum, let the full story be told.

Remember, the recent referendums showed that traditional marriage must be held by about 70% of our population so, over emphasises or even equal emphasises of other marriages and sexual aspects is out of place. Only about 3% of marriages are same sex.

We have heard that, in the secondary school system, some things are not being put into books that children will take home and we understand that teachers have been instructed not to discuss these things with parents. This attitude is totally unconstitutional as parents are the primary educators and need to know what their children are being taught.

As it is stated that parents have the right to withdraw their children from SPHE classes, then that is acknowledging that there is something doggy in the content. But to do that the parents' need to know the content of what is being taught. But also, consider the psychological effect on children who are taken out of class and the reaction of those who stay in class.

The comment of one priest was that, this aspect of the curriculum should be taught at the end of the day so that pupils, who may be taken out of the class, can do so with little disruption. That would be the next best thing to each religious group doing their own teaching within their own premises and time as has been the practice of some groups for many, many years.

It was mentioned to me that "empathy" is used in several places but maybe it is meant to be sympathy.

Seán Ó Cluaid

Sean Myler

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, disposition, values and attitudes.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Art Music and Drama.

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Irish History

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Emigration being a major problem.

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

More housing options.

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Better options for Health Care

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Let children be children. No more DEI in schools.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

School Choice.

Shahla Shirin

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer


Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

********** I write this submission before the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) as a part of its consultation on the redevelopment of the Primary School curriculum on *WELLBEING* 1. In its description of FAMILY STRUCTURE given in the glossary, pg 49, as a reference to its mentioning at various places in the draft, includes SAME-SEX PARENT FAMILIES. I appreciate the efforts of the Irish government in fostering values of inclusiveness with all respect. On the contrary, I also expect the council to acknowledge the existence of various sects in society, like us, who are against this idea. Children should be aware of this diversity and the need to treat all of them with respect. They

should be informed of their rights to follow their religious and traditional values if they wish to without fear of discrimination. Parents from conventional sects who oppose same-sex marriages should feel reassured that their children do not get inclined into such choices at an age inappropriate for decision making, when their children also learn lessons of other's rights for respect. 2. Gender identity and orientation should come to a child naturally through instincts. I do not believe it as a choice. As a parent who expects my child to have a definite gender identity and a straight sexual orientation, I oppose teaching children that sexual orientation is a conscious choice. I am worried that my child informed about such a choice at an inappropriate age would be eager to experiment or test his/her sexual orientation to identify their inclination, which might result in serious psychosexual disability. Children often take classroom teachings as directional. Offering sexual orientation as a choice might lead them in a completely wrong direction. It would be such a trauma for every parent like me. I recommend the council to reconsider describing sexual orientation as a natural instinct rather than a conscious choice. Thanks for your consideration in advance _____

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Shamima Siddiqua

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

(As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.)

Siobhan Boylan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Focus on developing children’s skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Catholic Religion

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Catholic Religion

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Catholic Religion

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Catholic Religion

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

Catholic Religion

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Full Knowledge Of Catholic Religion.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Teachers having full Knowledge of the Catholic Religion. Love of God the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. The Sacraments of the Church and why God gave them to us. For what purpose? Love

Sinead Boland

Dear NCCA,

As a former Primary teacher, a parent and recently a grandparent, I am not at all happy with the document in relation to the Draft Primary Curriculum.

It seems to be very vague treating aims, goals, social justice, diversity, inclusion, equity etc. However parents need to know far more detail eg what exactly will the lessons for the pupils look like, how will they be presented, what will the children be taught or encouraged to do/explore.

The area is SPHE is particularly important as it has broadened so much in the past 20 years.

I would also have serious concerns about the spiritual content or lack thereof in the plans, despite Spirituality being recognised broadly as very important to mental health.

I would respectfully ask the NCCA to extend the consultation process until there is much more detail provided on exactly what pupils will be taught in this new Curriculum. After all, as a former teacher and a parent and grandparent, that is of huge interest to me and is very important for all parents to have access to.

It is after all our right to know exactly what children will be learning in the future when this curriculum is implemented in our schools.

Thank you

Sinéad Boland

Sonya Murphy

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Why has the draft curriculum has removed reference to the aim of “developing a sense of Irish identity” from the original 1999 curriculum, instead urging them to develop a “sense of identity as global citizens” when the current curriculum allows for both? The framework also says it is “concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity.” Why are the terms ‘gender and sexual identity’ not defined here?

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Why has the draft curriculum has removed reference to the aim of “developing a sense of Irish identity” from the original 1999 curriculum, instead urging them to develop a “sense of identity as global citizens” when the current curriculum allows for both? The framework also says it is “concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity.” Why are the terms ‘gender and sexual identity’ not defined here?

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Why has the draft curriculum has removed reference to the aim of “developing a sense of Irish identity” from the original 1999 curriculum, instead urging them to develop a “sense of identity as global citizens” when the current curriculum allows for both? The framework also says it is “concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity.” Why are the terms ‘gender and sexual identity’ not defined here?

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers,

where relevant.

Why has the draft curriculum has removed reference to the aim of “developing a sense of Irish identity” from the original 1999 curriculum, instead urging them to develop a “sense of identity as global citizens” when the current curriculum allows for both? The framework also says it is “concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity.” Why are the terms ‘gender and sexual identity’ not defined here?

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Why has the draft curriculum has removed reference to the aim of “developing a sense of Irish identity” from the original 1999 curriculum, instead urging them to develop a “sense of identity as global citizens” when the current curriculum allows for both? The framework also says it is “concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity.” Why are the terms ‘gender and sexual identity’ not defined here?

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Why has the draft curriculum has removed reference to the aim of “developing a sense of Irish identity” from the original 1999 curriculum, instead urging them to develop a “sense of identity as global citizens” when the current curriculum allows for both? The framework also says it is “concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity.” Why are the terms ‘gender and sexual identity’ not defined here?

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

The curriculum never needed to be changed or updated. It was a complete waste of money. The money that has been used to do this should have always been spent on training teachers.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Why has the draft curriculum removed reference to the aim of "developing a sense of Irish identity" from the original 1999 curriculum, instead urging them to develop a "sense of identity as global citizens" when the current curriculum allows for both? The framework also says it is "concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity." Why are the terms 'gender and sexual identity' not defined here?

Stephen Carmody

To whom it may concern,

As a parent of a young child, I wish to highlight my concerns about the new primary curriculum framework.

The framework states that it is "concerned with the best interest of every child, considering that they vary in their competence, language, family background, age, culture, ethnic status, religion, gender, and sexual identity."

Can you please define gender and sexual identity? I do not consent to gender identity being taught as fact.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Carmody

Steve Cooney

A cháirde;

I am making a submission concerning the Music component of the Arts element of the Primary Curriculum.

The file size is large, over 40mb, as a consequence of the number of diagrams contained in the submission. I am including a link here to GoogleDrive and another link to a WeTransfer download. A covering letter is attached.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1kJLXd9aK91KI1uYqmk650oE2uqDLzgmK?usp=drive_link

<https://stevecooney.wetransfer.com/downloads/e22a94793d3dd6df89f8606b3f2fa5d220240616175705/804c75f2196d882fd13b702d4feda77b20240616175705/4f59c5>

maith sibh

Steve Cooney



An Dr Stiofán Ó Cunaigh
An Dún, Slí na Gaeltachta
Teileann, Co. Dhún na nGall F94 A7Y8

A cháirde;

mo bhuíochas libh as an deis mo choras ceoil a chuir romhabh. Creidim go bhfuil an córas seo ábalta eolas a thabhairt don scoláirí óga faoin gceol – an teoiric a thuiscint gan stró agus ceol muiníneach a dhéanamh.

Thank you for this opportunity to present this system for comprehension of music for your consideration. It is called ‘Geometric Visualisation of Music’, or gV for short. I believe that it provides clear pathways for early learners to discover the rich complexity of music in a direct and simple way through game play. It is highly visual, relying on pattern recognition. Students learn at their own pace within the coherent group environment. The submission consists of four parts:

- a rationale in which I put a case for the potential advantages of introducing the gV system as a component of the Arts framework in the Irish Primary School Curriculum,
- a summary of the process of learning the different aspects of the gV system,
- examples from textbooks,
- letters of support from teachers who have used the system and ‘demo’ animations.

I have developed this system over a period of more than forty years and have used it continuously throughout that time in all my professional work in the field of music. It has been my aim for many years to promote the introduction of this system into primary schools as I believe that it would be very helpful for early learners. With a view to this I began the process of academic 'ratification' of gV, firstly with an M.Litt.Ed. at UCD (2011), to assess the reasons why new models are needed in early music education, and then a Ph.D. at NCAD (2018) to research the gV system as a suitable solution to many of the prevailing literacy issues in early learning of music. By securing the affirmation of the Ph.D. examiners I no longer felt pressure to convince people of the worth of the system, and I present it to you knowing that it has been rigorously examined and approved by experts in the field.

This review of the Primary School Curriculum has created the opportunity for me to present the gV system of music theory and notation to the NCCA to test in a structured and systematic manner. I believe it offers teachers who are currently lacking in confidence a viable pathway to success. I am happy to meet both NCCA officials and Oide music specialists at any stage to discuss any points or conduct a workshop.

le mórmheas



Steve Cooney

15.06.24

Steve Cooney is best known for his development of an influential style of guitar accompaniment to the traditional dance music of West Kerry, for which he won the National Entertainment Award in 1997. Born in Australia, he came to Ireland in 1980. He has participated in making more than 250 CD's, either as a guitar or bass player or as producer and engineer. A poet and songwriter, he has worked with many iconic international artists in rock and country music but his primary focus is Irish traditional music, and fusions of that genre. He has been particularly influenced by the music of Sliabh Luachra. In 2020 his CD release of solo guitar interpretations of ancient harp tunes was voted the Irish Times top traditional record and it won in three categories at the RTÉ Folk Awards, where he was also given a Lifetime Achievement award. He was named TG4 *Cumadóir na Bliana* (Composer of the Year)

in 2021. He was awarded a Ph.D. in 2018 for an intuitive musical notation system that he invented for early learners and for those with difficulties reading staff notation.

'Master Cooney restores the ancient link between lyre and lyric, between poetry and performance, the rhapsody and rascality' –Séamus Heaney, Fiddler's Green awards, Rostrevor



Submission to the NCCA on Geometric Visualisation of Music (gV) (2)

Rationale

The process of developing this system originated in my 5th class of primary school, when staff notation was taught. I was unable to comprehend it, and since I had been playing the guitar from a young age — and felt that I had an understanding of what music was — this was disconcerting. I couldn't understand the written language of something that I intuitively understood, particularly the notation of duration values. I subsequently became a professional musician and, needing a methodology for reading and writing, I developed and refined the principles of gV during my professional life over the course of more than forty years.

Key points of the gV system:

— Rhythmic duration values are in whole numbers, with three basic symbols:

a dot indicating 1 unit of time, a small circle indicating 2 units of time, a large circle indicating 4 units of time. Other duration values are made up of combinations of those symbols, e.g., 1 inside 2 = 3, 2 inside 4 = 6 etc. They are arranged in strings and rings. There is a phonetic code *as Gaeilge* for the duration values, with the corresponding number of syllables for each value, e.g., 2 = *fada*, 3 = *fada 'gus*, 4 = *ana-fhada*. By repeating “fada ‘gus, fada” students are generating the time signature of 5/8, something it is unlikely they will ever encounter in the Irish educational system, unless they are of Balkan or Turkish ethnicity, where it is very common. I cite this example merely to show that ‘advanced’ musical concepts are easily accessed in the gV method.

— The twelve chromatic notes are assigned to positions on a clockface, with 12 o'clock representing 'do', and the major scale reading 12 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, 7 o'clock, 9 o'clock, 11 o'clock. A coloured mandala, a 12 pointed star (at the top of this document) indicates the notes in the various systems, orange for diatonic, yellow for pentatonic, red for major, purple for minor etc. This mandala is placed inside a circular chromatic scale (a chroma wheel) in order to compute the various scales, modes and chords in a 'modal calculator' (attached). This is a handy colourful tool for the students to keep and calculate exercises as needs be.

— The melodic notation consists of symbols of the appropriate duration placed at the appropriate clock position of the notes in the melody. This means that as soon as a child can read the time on a circular clockface, they have a 'mental grid' of a circle divided into twelve, and can begin to compute the melodic notation.

— Musical performance pieces have are arranged with a number of parts that range from simple to complex, these are performed simultaneously. Students progress through the parts as time goes by, as they go from class to class, and at their own rate. They develop a familiarity with the pieces by playing simple parts, facilitating the learning of the more complex parts in later years. Different classes can play these ensemble pieces together in concert situations.

I was surprised to find that literacy was not one of the key 'three strands' of the Irish Primary music curriculum, given that it is essential to two of the three strands, performance and composition. Staff notation, a key component of literacy is a wonderful thing, but many students have great difficulty in comprehending it, teachers can have difficulty explaining it, and as a consequence the current curriculum presents it in a series of micro steps in order that the students are not alienated and are all brought along the path of understanding together. The staff notation model contains many arcane challenges, and as a result it is approached with great care. Although this is understandable, an adverse consequence of this policy is that simple fundamental theoretical concepts such as scales and harmonic construction — usually communicated through the medium of staff notation — are neglected. Linking these basic musical tools to a knowledge of staff notation is regretful because subjects such as chord construction are a vital aspect of composition, a subject that is promoted in the curriculum. It is akin to saying to a child "you can't play football until you've first memorised the rule book". A similar analogy would be not teaching young children how words fit together in speech

construction until they have first learned the alphabet by rote. Music students will miss intuitively gaining knowledge of scales, modes, chords, harmonic construction etc. because they have no knowledge of staff notation, which – although related – is a separate subject altogether.

The Music component of the Arts Programme shows wonderful insight in relating to the children with its many different subtle lines of approach. However in my view, it does not show ambition in conveying the fundamentals of some of the most basic aspects of music theory to the students. Appendix C pp.43-7 lists specific aspects of music making, well formulated and graded in four stages. However I find an inconsistency there. On p.46 'Structure', form is discussed in some detail (A-B-A etc) but yet the most basic building blocks – scales – from which the form of the melody is constructed are not mentioned at all. In my view that is like teaching poetic rhyming structures before the student understands the alphabet. I realise that it has been less stressful to discuss overarching concepts of form than the nitty-gritty of calculating scale formulae, however I would argue that this is a consequence of not having had – up to this point – a teaching methodology that explains how notes fit together in a coherent way, capable of being intuitively understood by children. This is why I am proposing the adoption of the gV method, and as such I do not fault the designers of the curriculum as they have not had these intuitive tools available to them, until now.

In support of this argument, I refer to p.28 of the Draft Primary Curriculum '*when engaging children in sensory and embodied learning in Arts Education, teachers encourage... meaningful exploration, discovery, identification and consolidation of key concepts in Art, Drama and Music*'. I would maintain that basic major scale theory, and knowledge of the major and minor chords in a key are without doubt 'key concepts' in music. This statement on p.28 is a directive to implement these 'key concepts' in the classroom. I would argue that 'Structure' 'Timbre' and 'Texture' as listed in Appendix C pp.46-7 are important concepts aesthetically, but are not nearly as fundamental as basic scales and chords in terms of being 'key concepts'. I believe that the music curriculum could be greatly enhanced by utilising a methodology which explains the basic relationships between notes, and from there an intuitive understanding can grow which will feed into all aspects of music making.

The gV system provides an alternative solution to these issues by 'bridging the gap' to convey essentials of music theory in an intuitive way, enabling the children to use these tools in their compositions and performances, gaining valuable experience. The theoretical subjects just mentioned can be taught independently of staff notation, and gV is ideally suited for this task: part 2 of the 'Overview' section of this submission shows the gV approach to simple harmonic calculation.

I propose that the concept of ‘literacy’ be re-examined. In my view literacy isn’t only about being able to decipher symbols of notation and convert them into musical notes, it includes the holistic concept of ‘why’ we play those notes. It incorporates concepts such as the process of notes fitting together in scales and modes, in harmonies and in progressions of chords. It is perfectly possible to teach primary school children a full range of these important theoretical aspects, and to have them enjoy playing practical examples, without any reference to staff notation at all, as the gV method demonstrates. This enables the students to enjoy and understand the creative process and to create works of lasting beauty. They can then engage with staff notation at a later stage of their development should they wish to, and will then engage more fully as they will understand the theoretical basis of it. They can become ‘literate’ through acquiring a knowledge of the theoretical mechanics of music making, as opposed to having to learn to read staff notation in order to acquire that same knowledge. The curriculum encourages composition, but how does one teach the tools of composition? The different scales and modes have different emotional colours, and calculation of harmonies and understanding the emotions of different chords is fundamental to the compositional process. Unfortunately, these important subjects of scales, chords etc don’t seem to be addressed at all in the curriculum as it stands, but they could easily be communicated with a gV component in the curriculum.

Staff notation has allowed millions of people to create beautiful music. However the education system fails to convey the skills of reading staff notation to the mass of students: only those undertaking private tuition will be assured of developing those skills. As part of my M.Litt. research I conducted a small pilot study of first year secondary school students in the Waterford Gaeltacht (a place where music is commonly played) in order to ascertain what level of musical literacy the students had attained in primary school. The results were that:

— two-thirds of the pupils were unable to identify the names of the lines and spaces on the staff,

— the concept of ‘key signatures’ had been virtually absent in their music education, — three quarters of the pupils did not understand the 4/4 time signature, and none understood 9/8, even though rhythm itself was not unfamiliar,

— only one pupil out of twenty-five could identify two well-known tunes written in solfa,

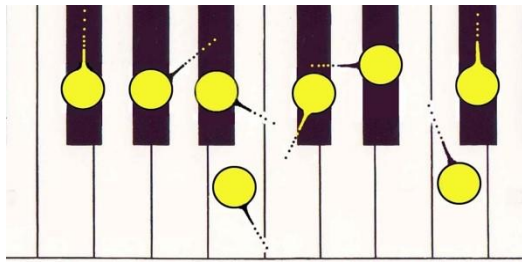
— more than half of the pupils did not know what a scale was,

- only one pupil out of twenty-five was able to give an example of a major scale,
- no pupil was able to give an example of a minor scale,
- none knew of the existence of the pentatonic scale,
- none knew of the existence of the chromatic scale,
- one pupil out of twenty-five was able to identify the notes in a major chord,
- none could identify the notes in a minor chord,
- three quarters of the pupils were not able to give a loose or acceptable definition of melody.

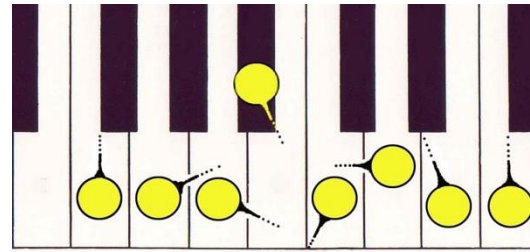
A study of only 25 students is not at all definitive, but it was indicative of a lack of education in musical literacy in the primary schools of the catchment area.

Why were these results so poor? Not only were these results poor regarding elements of notation, but they were poor regarding fundamental concepts of scales, the knowledge of which should be independent of notation. It became apparent that morale is low among many teachers, who lack confidence in their skills to teach fundamental musical concepts. The 1976 INTO survey found that although 79% of those who responded taught music, 50% of those felt that they were dissatisfied with their performance. In the U.K. Stunell (2010) suggests that many primary teachers had a limited musical education in their own schooldays, and this process intensifies feelings of failure, weakens musical self-esteem and self-perceptions of musical identity..

One striking example of how staff notation influences practical music making is the key of F#. It has 6 sharps and so it is difficult to read: consequently is rarely taught. The Irish Leaving Certificate does not require knowledge of more than four sharps or flats. However there is no inherent difficulty in actually playing the key of F#, the difficulty lies in reading the notation. In practical terms — on the piano — it is simple to play: it has all the black notes with two white notes. Here it is compared with the key of F natural (with one flat). The yellow discs indicate the notes in the scale, and it can be seen that neither is more difficult to play or comprehend than the other.



F# major scale (six sharps)



F major scale (one flat)

Irving Berlin, the popular American composer (*White Christmas*, *There's No Business Like Show Business*, etc.) could not read or write staff notation and played only in the key of F#, using both a mechanical transposing device and the services of a 'transcriber' who notated his compositions. Bergreen (1990) [pp.56-7] describes his *modus operandi*: *'Like many self-taught musicians, he hit only the black keys, which were easier for his untrained hands to control...playing on the black keys alone restricted him to the key of F-sharp major, but Berlin refused to change his habits. "The black keys are right there under your fingers," he explained in his defence ... the key of C is for people who study music.'*

I cite this example only as a reminder that, if one approaches music solely through the medium of staff notation, intuitive opportunities such as knowledge of playing in the key of F# will be missed.

Regarding rhythm, the exemplars of rhythm notation in the Teachers Guidelines pp. 9395 are all simplistic 'square' rhythms that are not representative of the music the students will be singing and dancing in their lives outside the classroom. In the 'Overview' section of this submission it will be apparent that there is a great variety of rhythms available there, from simple to complex, with many syncopations in notation that is easily decipherable. It may be seen there in the analysis of the Vinden flashcards how the square rhythms that are commonly taught need only the change of perspective that gV supplies in order to shift the emphasis to the 'groovy' syncopated rhythms of the childrens' daily lives. In the existing Teachers Guidelines *'Composing with rhythmic elements'* p.116 clever use is made of mnemonics like 'Boyle, Tubbercurry, Castlebar, Sligo' to indicate different rhythms, but again they are all square, none are syncopated. This is a product of a notation system where rhythms will not start before the bar line, whereas syncopated rhythms that children are naturally familiar with move across the bar lines and use anacrusis, 'pickup' bars.

These were some of the conclusions of my research:

- *A child intuitively comprehends melodic and rhythmic complexity, and may be assisted to learn this by intuitive means, requiring only a basic visual and phonetic code to become cognisant of musical relationships.*
- *Music may be conceived of as language, language comprehension skills are at their peak in early childhood, therefore the grammar of musical relationships is best taught at an early age, contrary to current practice.*
- *Theoretical terms used to describe music are unnecessarily complex for children, staff notation is not suitable for very early learning, and is not culturally neutral as it contains an inherent bias for western classical music.*
- *Musical literacy is low, both among students and within the broader community, and also among professional and amateur musicians, with the exception of classical and jazz musicians.*
- *Primary school music curricula deliver a meagre educational result after eight years tuition, with many teachers lacking the confidence to teach music.*
- *Levels of musical literacy in children may be increased through the use of holistic, intuitive and culturally-neutral educational models.*

I believe that primary school is the ideal time for children to get a grounding in music: *“Francis (1987) observed that, at age eight, music was the second favourite subject of the children (after games) but by age fourteen it was the least favourite...his study ... indicated that children are more engaged with music in primary school than in secondary school. This is supported by Ruismaki and Tereska (2008) who analysed the retrospective assessments by Finnish trainee teachers of their musical experiences in kindergarten, primary, secondary school and teacher training. They concluded that kindergarten was the most positive of the age groups for musical activities” — Cooney (2011)*

“Educators wait until secondary school to teach these theoretical concepts on the basis that the arcane terminology of western music theory needs to be comprehended linguistically, a challenge beyond primary school children... [I] propose the contrary position, that if language is removed from the cognitive process and replaced with a visual and geometric code embedded in attractive simple tools... the natural self learning skills of the child intuitively guide them to comprehend the innate theoretical structures of music. [I] propose that primary school is the most efficient place to begin lessons in music theory. With core melodic and harmonic principles encoded at an early age advancement to greater practical and theoretical achievements in secondary school is facilitated.” — Cooney (2011)

In summary:

— the gV system is an approach that can provide teachers with a realistic means of providing their pupils with a rounded musical education despite not having a complete music education themselves.

— if teachers in training colleges are taught a short module of gV, they will acquire the tools to confidently convey advanced concepts of music making to their students, overcoming the issue of morale associated with staff notation.

— a holistic understanding of the various elements of music is important for the development of musical sensibilities in children, and the earlier it is gained the better.

— the acquisition of theoretical musical knowledge and practical musical skill should not be made dependent on a knowledge of staff notation. Children can easily acquire a practical knowledge of the various theoretical aspects of music through the intuitive methodology of gV. Having acquired confidence in performing pieces they can go on to explore staff notation in their own way: staff should not a pre-requisite for developing basic musical knowledge.

We expect Primary School children to learn that there are 26 letters in the alphabet and to be able to recite their names by rote. It is not too much then to expect the children to know that there are 12 different notes in music, and to know their names. This proposal is for a limited project to test out an alternative approach that can fulfill the overall goal of the primary music curriculum in a more holistic, intuitive and rewarding manner.

I believe both teachers and students can benefit from such an approach, which if successful could be disseminated further. I would be pleased to support any such initiative and to offer my professional advice as appropriate.
mo bhuíochas libh



Steve Cooney

15.06.24

Suhail Hussain

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

I write this submission before the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) as a part of its consultation on the redevelopment of the Primary School curriculum on *WELLBEING* 1. In its description of FAMILY STRUCTURE given in the glossary, pg 49, as a reference to its mentioning at various places in the draft, includes SAME-SEX PARENT FAMILIES. I appreciate the efforts of the Irish government in fostering values of inclusiveness with all respect. On the contrary, I also expect the council to acknowledge the existence of various sects in society, like us, who are against this idea. Children should be aware of this diversity and the need to treat all of them with respect. They should be informed of their rights to follow their religious and traditional values if they wish to without fear of discrimination. Parents from conventional sects who oppose same-sex marriages should feel reassured that their children do not get inclined into such choices at an age inappropriate for decision making, when their children also learn lessons of other's rights for respect. 2. Gender identity and orientation should come to a child naturally through instincts. I do not believe it as a choice. As a parent who expects my child to have a definite gender identity and a straight sexual orientation, I oppose teaching children that sexual orientation is a conscious choice. I am worried that my child informed about such a choice at an inappropriate age would be eager to experiment or test his/her sexual orientation to identify their inclination, which might result in serious psychosexual disability. Children often take classroom teachings as directional. Offering sexual orientation as a choice might lead them in a completely wrong direction. It would be such a trauma for

every parent like me. I recommend the council to reconsider describing sexual orientation as a natural instinct rather than a conscious choice. Thanks for your consideration in advance

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

49

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

No answer

Sultana Begum

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No answer

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No answer

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11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.

Sujan Hossain

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- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

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7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

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No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

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No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

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Susan Callinan

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- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Please remove all mention of sexual preference and gender identity from primary curriculum, base education on fact of 2 genders.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

None

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

None

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Please remove the reference to gender identity from primary curriculum, base education at primary level on the fact of 2 genders. Sexual identity should be taught only in terms of human reproduction based on fact of human sexual reproduction. .

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

None

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

None

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Support of parents and community

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Take out any mention of sexual identity and gender preference out of primary school curriculum, base education on fact of 2 genders and sexual reference based on human reproduction for primary school level of education.

Syfuzzaman Khan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
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- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
- Science, Technology and Engineering Education

- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

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No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.

Tadhg Horgan

Dear Sir/Madam,

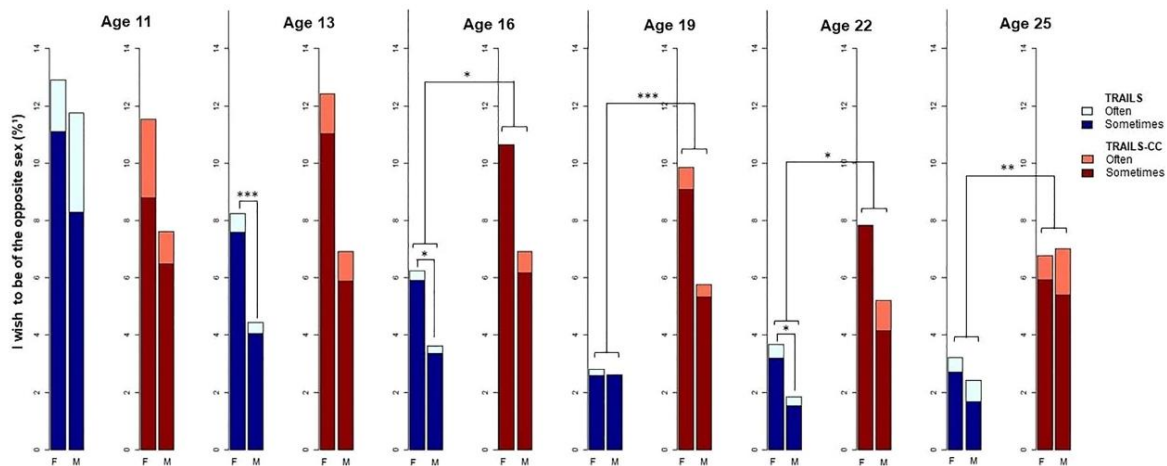
I am writing in response to the Primary Curriculum Consultation.

I am a father for 2 young girls and am very worried about the corrupt ideologies being thought to young children. Their minds are not fully formed and they are too suggestible until at least the age of 16 to introduce any kind of queer theory, climate frightening or political ideologies. I suspect this is well known, and that's exactly why there is such a push to indoctrinate children as young as possible. This is very very wrong. This is corrupting childrens minds.

In almost every class (of 6-8 kids) now there is at least 1 child identifying as trans/non-binary/gay. In all these cases a seed has been planted in a young child (many with mild undiagnosed autism) and they run with it, thinking this is why they are 'different'. A major 15-year study was published recently from the University of Groningen called 'Development of Gender Non-Contentedness During Adolescence and Early Adulthood'.

Fig. 1

From: Development of Gender Non-Contentedness During Adolescence and Early Adulthood



Prevalence of gender non-contentedness in both cohorts over time, distributed by sex assigned at birth.¹Percentages refer to the percentage of females or males reporting gender non-contentedness of the total female or male sample of TRAILS (n = 2229) or TRAILS-CC (n = 543). Age refers to the mean age of the assessment wave. F = Female sex. M = Male sex. *p < .05 of the chi-square testing if a relationship exists between sex (male or female) and gender non-contentedness (dichotomized for the chi-square test as No (never) or Yes (sometimes or often)).*** p < .001 of the chi-square test of sex and gender non-contentedness

It proves without doubt that this 'seed' is not a legitimate issue and it abates as a child matures in most cases. Circa 12% of 11 year old's wanted to be the opposite sex. However, this dropped to just 4% by the time they were 16. The danger is that further fueling the discussion around queer thoery in young minds will plant far more 'seeds'. Also the adult-endorsement of such gender concerns at this young age risks not allowing children the space and time to work these things out in their heads. Before they know it or really have time to process it, they will be on a non-reversible path of 'gender affirmation'. The Cass Report has comprehensively outlined the failings of 'gender

affirmation' in young adolescence. Many detransitioners are coming out and slating an education and health system that totally left them down – huge legal cases are in their infancy.

Can we learn from ours and other country's failings and let kids be kids. 'Leave the kids Alone' is a strong message that you don't want to be on the wrong side of. And for the record I am not homophobic or anti-trans, I just strongly believe this ideologies have no place in children's classrooms. No young adults are going to wake up wishing there was more gender ideology in the classroom when they were young, sadly however many young adults will wake up gravely wishing gender ideology was nowhere near their tender years when they were young. This is the sad reality. Please put our children's well-being first, ahead of those who profit from corrupting their minds.

While the Primary Curriculum Consultation website has been active for a number of months I note at the outset that there was no outreach to parents in relation to formulating the draft Primary School curriculum. Given parent's superior Constitutional Rights and the obligation on schools to only provide education in consultation with parents, I question whether or not this consultation process is a legally sufficient consultation and as such a legitimate exercise. Nonetheless I respond herein reserving my rights to object further on this point at a later date and this submission is not to be construed as evidence of my acceptance of the consultation process, which I believe may be defective. I am aware this lack of parental consultation was the same for the recent Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Curriculum Consultations.

My feedback is captured in the sections below,

Section 1: Summary Feedback and Alignment with Curriculum Framework Document

The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include;

- **Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes** (generic/ unspecified).
- **Unclear, underdeveloped progression** across Learning Outcomes.
- **Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices** and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.
- **The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes** loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education.
- **Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness** (not starting from where the child is at)
- **More focused on global concerns** than local tangible concerns of the child
- **Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what'** - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts.

- **The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses** e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is **'Be an Activist'** (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education.
- **Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity.** Focus should be on the subject matter.
- **Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound:** Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important.
- **Provide no visibility for parents:** 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

The Arts Curriculum uses **the Arts as a vehicle for social change** (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns.

*P4 'Pedagogy: **Fostering empathy** and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to **challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.**'*

*P10 'Key Competency... **Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.**'*

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils:

P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages

*Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & '**foster inclusivity and social cohesion**' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity'*

Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language.

Section 2(c): Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

- Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): **this is woke indoctrination**, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (*Be an Activist* is a *Key Competency*)
- **This is in opposition to child-centred teaching**, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development.
- **The Global Learning Themes (p21-22)** could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger.
- **SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear.** Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety.
- **This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis** on lenses such as *empathy, respect* and *challenging worldviews* 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate?

Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer:

"...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy"

The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer", seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of **what the learning objectives should be**. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination.

Page 21

Global Learning Themes

Looks like a "**woke**" **playbook**. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using **the curriculum to push political interests** rather than service the educational needs of the child.

Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/2vvcabyb/draft_ste_specification_2024.pdf

Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM?

Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge.

The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality.

Page 16: Learning Outcomes

Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1

Page 31

“Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time.”

This last paragraph implies a **lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained**. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst.

Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum

https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf

SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but “spiritual” is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. **Physical education (PE)** has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the *PE Activity Areas* (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.)

1. *‘...**inclusive understanding of human sexuality**’* (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools.

2. *‘...**the concept of consent within relationships**’* (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed.

4. The terms **‘diversity’** and **‘inclusion’** have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory.

5. *‘Recognise examples of **stereotypes** (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote **gender equality** through roles and responsibilities’*. (p.28). ‘Stereotypes’ in this context is **an attack on ‘heteronormativity’** the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society.

6. **Relational pedagogy - ‘children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.’**(p.38) - **Parents rights** should supersede **‘Childrens rights’** at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact.

7. **‘Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the**

curriculum’ (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the **“Education for Social Justice” woke** agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of **psychological and emotional harm** to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include:

1. **Parental Visibility and Transparency:** There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials
2. **Curriculum Definition and Clarity:** Totally lacking.
3. **Concern over the reduction in the literacy allocation** to half of the 2012 guidance for the youngest learners. What has changed since 2012 to drive this?
4. **Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation:** Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to:
 - a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final **Cass report** into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that **gender ideology should not be taught in schools**. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here.
 - b. The introduction of **Critical Social Justice** and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable.
5. **Any cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed:**
 - a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and,
 - b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs
6. **Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism.**
7. **Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches:** Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – **indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable**. They embed **“Critical” Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found.**

8. **Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in line with child safeguarding.**

General Comments related to Schools

1. **Parental Consultation:** The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered.
2. **Ethos:** It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos.
3. **Social Transitioning:** Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools.
4. **Parental Knowledge,** consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy.
5. **The Infinite Dignity document** issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.

-

In closing, I again question the legitimacy of this consultation process in light of the lack of parental involvement in the development of the draft curricula. As well, the emergence of the Cass Report and the English draft Statutory Guidance all suggests that a halt should be put on this consultation process and a serious rethink occurs over what and how we teach our children.

As the above submission makes clear, the proposed draft primary curricula is not fit for purpose and will worsen children's experience in primary school. The NCCA are prioritising politics over child welfare with this proposed curricula. This is not acceptable to parents and the consultation must be halted immediately.

I would appreciate a confirmation email that this submission was received.

Yours Sincerely,
Tadhg Horgan

Tangina Akter Rahman

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5.The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

(As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden them.)

Tara Sherry

To whom it may concern,

I write with serious concerns regarding the Draft Primary Curriculum. I must ask that NCCA pause or halt the implementation process of the revised primary curriculum.

The Consultation Process lacks information about the specifics of the content that will be taught to children. It refers to vague aims, goals, processes, aspirations, principles, diversity, inclusion, equity, citizenship, and social justice, but little about what exactly the children will be taught, particularly in SPHE.

The consultation process needs to be stopped until clear information is provided about what specific content will be taught to children. This will ensure that appropriate consultation can then take place.

The Curriculum Specifications Document is only one component of the curriculum open to consultation. The other two components—the Curriculum Framework and the Toolkit—are not currently part of this consultation. The Toolkit, which is supposed to contain the relevant information about the lessons, is not yet available for most subjects.

The Countess Advocacy has noted that, without this information, parents are unable to form an informed opinion on the proposed curriculum changes. Therefore, I urge the NCCA to halt the current consultation process until clear and detailed information about the curriculum content is made available. This will ensure that proper consultation can take place and that parents can effectively contribute to the discussion about their children's education.

Please consider my request and provide the necessary information to allow for an informed consultation process.

Thank you for your attention to this important matt

Kind regards,
Tara Sherry

Taslima Ali

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

No answer

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

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- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

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No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

No answer

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

As a religious parent, I disagree with all the 5 drafts for primary level education. I do not want my children to be taught to appreciate, to accept, promote, and advocate for ideologies that are contrary to my Islamic beliefs and culture. These include; same-sex/lgbt+ relationships, sex before marriage, sexual content/consent, abortion/contraception, sex identity ideology, transgenderism ideology, "gender as a social construct", pornography, feminism, and anti-religious liberal content. I believe that the draft contents will erode children's innocence and overburden

Tina Byrne

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

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- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

So far I'm more than alarmed by the difficulty in knowing about this survey and the use of technical language. It's quite shocking really at the lack of plain English. Is this deliberate?

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

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- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Again the complexity of this form is staggering. Is this deliberate?

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Same as before

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Same as before. This form and its complexity for every day parents to complete beggars belief. Or is excluding parents with literacy issues a deliberate Lou. Shame on you

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

My answer is the same as before. And can I ask why this consultation is not made more public

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

Oh my dear God please stop

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

This is absolutely shocking

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

This form in its complexity and difficulty to complete is absolutely shocking. Shame on you all. This is not a meaningful constitutional

Toni Brennan

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

- Build on the strengths of the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and respond to changing priorities
- Promote agency and flexibility to schools in enacting the curriculum
- Connect with learning experiences provided through *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and the *Framework for Junior Cycle*
- Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class
- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications.

Embed the seven key competencies in learning outcomes from junior infants to sixth class

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6. You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)

- Science, Technology and Engineering Education
- Wellbeing (Physical Education and; Social, Personal and Health Education)

Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7. Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(b): the *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages

8. Please outline your response on the draft updates to the *Primary Language Curriculum* to include Modern Foreign Languages, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

2

Section 2(c): draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?

Just educate children!

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?

Education not indoctrination

Patricia Maloney

I am writing this email as a very concerned parent regarding the new curriculum in schools that is to come into action. I would like for gender and sexual identity to be defined and I do not consent to gender identity being taught as fact.

Many thanks

Patricia Maloney

Una Hartnett

Email Submission:

Subject: SPHE part of proposed curriculum problematic

I reviewed the proposed primary school curriculum as a mother of four primary school children and as a teacher and found in particular the 'SPHE' Well Being strands the most concerning. It reads like a textbook on how to make mini model citizens of Europe focusing primarily on aspects more fitting and certainly more age appropriate in a secondary school book.

It's been drafted by a generation of teachers who perhaps have suffered themselves stereotyping, a lack of diversity perhaps bullying within a classroom and seem to be pushing in a radical and unnecessary way a forced ideology of what is well being on impressionable minds.

The children and pre - adolescents of 2024 are in learning environments in schools that are diverse, accepting and open by nature. Forcing ideologies is suffocating them and worrying them. They deserve better than this and shouldn't be burdened with the problems of a previous generation that are drafting this curriculum 'well being' in particular.

There seems to be no space for discussion as there would be in a post primary school, this is clearly a teacher-pupil learning strategy..." and they are non debatable issues because of the ages that this info is being delivered to .

Definitely not age appropriate and the irony being that the lessons are ' well being' ...primary school children will be suffering more than ever unprecedented anxiety, stress and panic attacks because of lessons that are beyond their scope of understanding.

It's also noteworthy that it says 'online toolkits' will be available for teachers in the "months /years to come". So the proposed curriculum is extremely open given that over the coming 'years" material will be provided to teachers that may not be acceptable to parents but parents yey again won't know unless they are teachers themselves. In April of last year I saw videos AKA 'toolkits' designec for teachers to help them 'help' a primary school child transition. This is not the role of a teacher and it is insulting that something so important for the well being of a child should be dealt with by a teacher in a classroom in such a blazè manner So when I saw 'identity' as a strand it reminded me of these very unhelpful toolkits that were shocking.

What gave me grave cause for concern was the Well Being part regarding the human life cycle, starting at birth! An understanding of human birth is outlined in Strand 1 without teaching that life begins at conception;when does a baby's heart start beating within the womb etc.

It barely mentions the importance of nuturing friendships instead it prioritises talk of consent full stop, Also there is no mention of spirituality being something that gives inner peace and a sense of purpose to life. It is so intrinsically connected to 'well being' in all cultures how is it possible me that its been left out? Its not even slightly mentioned but it's a gaping hole in the SPHE part of the proposed curriculum.

Very disillusioned but unsurprised. I sincerely hope you do better than this.

Úna Marie Hartnett

Veronica Hale

Section 1: Alignment with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

5. The Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications work together, as set out in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* to:

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- Focus on developing children's skills, knowledge, dispositions, values and attitudes
- Position assessment as a central part of learning and teaching
- Promote an integrated approach to learning, teaching and assessment
- Be for all children in primary and special schools

Please outline your response on the extent to which the Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications address the key messages, making reference to one or more of the draft curriculum specifications..

Sports have always played an important part in our family's life, we encourage our children to participate in sports not only outside school but also inside school. We have been battling the issue of inclusion in sports in our daughters school for the last year. Despite our efforts to inform the BOM about inclusion in sports through our national policies our daughters national school doesn't believe children with less ability have a place when competing in competitive sport. Eg athletics or cumann na mbunscol league. Nor do they believe they must follow national policy regarding the inclusiveness in sports. Creating such barriers will not encourage children with less ability to engage in sport it will only contribute to more children in particular girls to disengage from sports altogether. Teachers/ principals/ BOM need to start allowing and encouraging all children irrespective of their ability to engage in sport. The first thing the department of education needs to put in place is legislation surrounding the mandatory implementation of an inclusion policy in sports. They also need to train teachers on how inclusion can be incorporated in competitive sports. Otherwise this new curriculum is a pointless exercise. And children at risk ie those with less ability will never be encouraged to participate in sports. I have exhausted my efforts in advocating for this cause but if you are in a position to make change please get the relevant legislation in place to

protect our children from exclusion in sport. Children in national schools are repeatedly being excluded from playing in competitive games.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications

6.You are invited to provide your response on one or more draft curriculum specification:

- Arts Education (Art, Music and Drama)
- *Primary Language Curriculum* including Modern Foreign Languages
- Social and Environmental Education (Geography and History)
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Please include the page number(s) relevant to your comments. Single choice.

Section 2(a): draft Arts Education Curriculum

7.Please outline your response on the draft Arts Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

No answer

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No answer

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9. Please outline your response on the draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(d): draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum

10. Please outline your response on the draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant.

No answer

Section 2(e): draft Wellbeing Curriculum

11. Please outline your response on the draft Wellbeing Curriculum specification, with reference to specific chapters and page numbers, where relevant..

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Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

12. In your view, what curriculum supports will teachers and school leaders require in implementing the curriculum?.

Training on inclusion in sports and policy for the inclusion in sports

13. Are there any general comments in relation to implementing the curriculum in schools that you wish to make?.

Sports have always played an important part in our family's life, we encourage our children to participate in sports not only outside school but also inside school. We have been battling the issue of inclusion in sports in our daughters school for the last year. Despite our efforts to inform the BOM about inclusion in sports through our national policies our daughters national school doesn't believe children with less ability have a place when competing in competitive sport. Eg athletics or cumann na mbunscol league. Nor do they believe they must follow national policy regarding the inclusiveness in sports. Creating such barriers will not encourage children with less ability to engage in sport it will only contribute to more children in particular girls to disengage from sports altogether. Teachers/ principals/ BOM need to start allowing and encouraging all children irrespective of their ability to engage in sport. The first thing the department of education needs to put in place is legislation surrounding the mandatory implementation of an inclusion policy in sports. They also need to train teachers on how inclusion can be incorporated in competitive sports. Otherwise this new curriculum is a pointless exercise. And children at risk ie those with less ability will never be encouraged to participate in sports. I have exhausted my efforts in advocating for this cause but if you are in a position to make change please get the relevant legislation in place to protect our children from exclusion in sport. Children in national schools are repeatedly being excluded from playing in competitive games.

Veronica Ward

Observations on Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specifications

Veronica Ward B.A. (Hons.) P.G.C.E. (Primary) M.Ed

17 June 2024

As a practicing primary school teacher with more than 20 years teaching experience within the Irish education system, I see the value in reforming the Primary Curriculum to meet the needs of the everchanging society we live in. I welcome the opportunity to submit my observations in relation to the Draft Arts Education Curriculum Specifications.

Introduction

The curriculum development process is inherently cyclical, necessitating continuous creation, instruction, review, and modification to ensure its relevance. In the context of a rapidly evolving environment, it is imperative to systematically review and adjust curricula. In recent years, the educational framework in Ireland has undergone significant changes, with the introduction of the Early Years framework (Aistear) and the initiation of reform of second level education. Evolution of the Primary Curriculum has begun with the review of Literacy and Maths already completed, the focus now turns to other areas of the curriculum.

Irish educators play a pivotal role in curriculum design. When the 1999 curriculum emerged the collaborative effort involving teachers, parents, school management, and the Department of Education led to the success of a curriculum that lasted over 20 years. The contributions of teachers, based on their real-life experiences were invaluable as Sugrue (2004) noted in reference to the INTO's involvement with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) in the 1999 curriculum process, "the level of ownership afforded to our teachers resulted in professional buy-in."

Since the publication of the curriculum in 1999, Irish society has experienced profound changes. The children undertaking the curriculum are now shaped by diverse experiences, including varying family dynamics, cultures, beliefs, viewpoints, abilities, and needs. Teachers and schools are increasingly challenged to recognise and address this diversity in order for all children to learn, progress and reach their individual potential.

The Primary Curriculum Framework plays a pivotal role in fostering high-quality learning, teaching, and assessment for all children in primary and special schools. The draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications highlight the necessity of providing engaging, relevant, and suitably challenging experiences for learners. These experiences are designed not only to be enjoyable and empowering in the present but also to equip children with the skills and knowledge essential for their future educational pursuits.

The draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications highlight the central position that arts education has in the holistic educational approach presented by the curriculum. The curriculum's emphasis on artistic and creative development facilitates children's ability to express themselves, explore emotions and ideas, and understand diverse perspectives and worldviews. Within the primary curriculum, Arts Education spans the subjects of Art, Drama, and Music, while also encompassing broader artistic experiences such as dance and media arts. These disciplines collectively enrich children's childhood experiences by promoting creativity and self-expression. It is stated that for the younger age groups in Stages 1 and 2, Arts Education is delivered as an integrated curriculum area, reflecting the way children perceive and learn about the world in a holistic manner. As children progress to Stages 3 and 4, the curriculum shifts towards a more subject-specific approach in Art, Drama, and Music, allowing for deeper engagement and specialization in these areas.

The curriculum acknowledges that children's educational journeys commence from birth, through interactions and experiences with their immediate environment. In primary and special schools, learning experiences are designed to be playful and engaging, building on the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values that children have already acquired at home and in preschool settings, as outlined in Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. This seamless transition from early childhood to primary education ensures that learning is continuous and cumulative.

Moreover, as children progress through primary and special schools, the shift to subject specific learning is intended to connect with and extend into the Junior Cycle, ensuring a coherent and comprehensive educational trajectory. The draft framework's design allows for individual learning journeys, granting teachers the flexibility to tailor activities to the unique needs of each child. This adaptability ensures that all children, regardless of their

starting points, have equal opportunities for participation and achievement, thereby promoting holistic development and inclusive education.

In summary, the Primary Curriculum Framework is an encompassing and dynamic blueprint for primary education. By integrating Arts Education and recognising the importance of early childhood experiences, the framework not only supports but also enhances children's holistic development, preparing them for lifelong learning and success.

Draft Arts Education Specifications

The Draft Arts Education specifications were issued by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment in March 2024. The following review will address each section of the document in turn.

Principles of Learning, teaching and assessment

This section of chapter 1 provides a glimpse into the foundational principles guiding the Primary Curriculum Framework and their application within Arts Education. While the principles are a comprehensive list, many are already in existence within schools, but the formalisation of these principles is welcomed. The examples of each principle within Arts education provides guidance for all stakeholders. When reflecting on these principles and examples within Arts Education especially the “Inclusive education and diversity” and “Partnerships” the main questions that arise are:

How adaptable are these principles to the unique contexts of different schools, such as urban vs. rural settings or schools with varying resources?

What support will be provided to schools to tailor the principles to their specific environments and student populations?

Overview of the Primary Arts Education Curriculum

On reading the overview section found in chapter 1, the blueprint of the draft specifications is presented. The overview suggests the document will outline a comprehensive structure of the Primary Arts Education Curriculum, which is well-organized, with clear sections dedicated to its rationale, aims, strands, and learning

outcomes. This structure will help educators understand the purpose and goals of the curriculum and how to achieve them.

Chapter 6 is clearly stated as the area of the document focusing on curriculum practice that will provide teachers with concrete guidance on how to implement the curriculum, bridging the gap between theory and practice. There is also mention of an online toolkit containing a range of support materials and examples of children's learning. The overview also suggests the appendices will provide an overview of progression in Art, Drama, and Music helping teachers understand how students' skills and knowledge should develop over time, ensuring a coherent and sequential learning experience.

However, some of the content highlighted in the overview was not adequately covered in the body of the document.

Rationale

The rationale presented in Chapter 2 is extremely comprehensive and captures the essence of why Arts Education is not just beneficial but essential for children's holistic development. It emphasises how Arts Education fosters a comprehensive range of developmental areas including cognitive, emotional, social, and physical aspects of the learner. It also shows how engaging in art, drama, music, and dance not only stimulates creativity but also enhances problem-solving skills and emotional intelligence. These are crucial skills in today's rapidly changing world, where adaptability and empathy are as valuable as technical skills.

When considering the development of life-long skills the rationale addresses the development of expressiveness and communication. By providing various modes of expression—visual, auditory, and kinaesthetic—Arts Education allows children to explore and develop their unique voice. Through engagement with the curriculum the children will acquire the ability to communicate one's thoughts and feelings in a multitude of ways, a fundamental life skill that transcends academic environments and supports personal and professional success.

The rationale promotes cultural and empathetic understanding. Through the arts, children gain insights into different cultures and perspectives, fostering a global understanding and respect for diversity. This aspect of Arts Education is vital in nurturing empathy, as students learn to view the world through multiple lenses and appreciate diverse human experiences.

While interdisciplinary learning is discussed this approach is focused only within Stages 1 and 2. Arts Education naturally integrates with other subjects, enhancing learning across the curriculum. For example, learning about historical events through drama, exploring mathematical concepts through dance, or understanding scientific principles through music. This connectivity not only enriches learning but also helps students see the relevance of what they learn in broader contexts. When considering the benefits of interdisciplinary learning, the extensions of this to Stages 3 and 4 should be considered and the pivotal role arts education has in assisting in the learning in a playful and engaging way at all stages of the curriculum.

The rationale promotes personal identity and agency. Engaging in arts education allows children to explore their identity and develop a sense of self. Arts Education supports students in becoming more reflective about their learning and encourages them to take initiative, which is fundamental in developing agency and self-efficacy. Collaborative projects in art, music, and drama require students to work together, often leading to a stronger sense of community and improved social skills. Through these collaborative endeavours, children learn about responsibility, sharing, negotiation, and conflict resolution.

In conclusion, Arts Education is not merely an enrichment activity but a vital component of education that equips children with the skills and dispositions needed to navigate and contribute to the world effectively. By fostering creativity, empathy, and critical thinking, Arts Education prepares children for a future where these skills will be increasingly important.

Aims

The ambitions of the draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications are admirably broad and interconnected, aiming to develop a variety of skills and dispositions in students that are crucial for personal and intellectual growth. These aims are not only foundational for cultivating a well-rounded individual but also crucial for fostering societal progress.

Creativity is often seen as the cornerstone of Arts Education. It involves being imaginative and inquisitive, qualities that are increasingly recognised as essential in a variety of professional fields beyond the arts, including science and business. Creativity in the arts fosters the ability to think flexibly, embrace diversity, and collaborate effectively.

The ability to express one's thoughts and emotions is fundamental to human interaction. In Arts Education, students learn to convey complex ideas and emotions through various

media, which can lead to improved communication skills and emotional intelligence. The current draft specifications discuss how these skills translate into better interpersonal relationships and more effective communication in other areas of life reinforcing the concept of holistic development.

Engaging with the arts promotes personal development and leads to total fulfilment. This can include therapeutic benefits for some children, such as reduced anxiety and increased self-esteem. Artistic engagement also encourages a lifelong appreciation of the arts, enriching individuals' lives and fostering a more culturally aware society. Increased engagement in community and civic activities among those involved in the arts could bolster the principle of partnership discussed in chapter 1.

Understanding the underlying concepts and techniques of various art forms equips students with a deeper appreciation and ability to critically engage with the arts. The aim of conceptual understanding supports not just artistic development but enhances analytical skills. This highlights how transferable skills learned through arts integration can improve performance in other academic areas.

The arts engage all the senses, facilitating a holistic learning experience that can enhance perceptual abilities and awareness of the environment. Multi-sensory engagement helps students learn more effectively by using different modalities, which can aid in accommodating diverse learning styles and needs.

The ability to create and recognise aesthetic qualities are refined through Arts Education. This aim supports not only the ability to appreciate art but also fosters a general appreciation for the aesthetic aspects of everyday life, potentially leading to a higher quality of education and life in general.

Understanding the cultural and contextual dimensions of art forms enables students to connect with different histories, cultures, and perspectives. This aim is particularly valuable in an increasingly globalized world, as it fosters respect and empathy across cultural divides.

A crucial point to emphasise is the interconnectivity and interdependence of these aims. They are not isolated benefits but are deeply woven into the fabric of educational experiences in the arts. This integration enhances the impact of each aim, contributing to the development of pupils who are not only knowledgeable about the arts but are also empathetic, culturally aware, creative, and expressive individuals.

However, in today's digital age, the integration of technology in Arts Education is a significant area. Becoming a digital learner is one of the key competencies identified in the proposed Primary Curriculum Frameworks and so these draft Arts Education specifications would have benefited from a more focused section on the integration of technology. Exploring how digital tools and media can be used to enhance artistic creativity and expression might be valuable, as well as discussing the challenges and opportunities presented by these technologies specifically in the realm of Arts education. This would also address the importance of interdisciplinary connections. The draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications could have elaborated on how Arts Education not only complements but enhances learning in other subjects. Specific examples of interdisciplinary projects or approaches could have been illustrated to highlight the practical applications of the aims identified in the document and supporting the thematic approach also being endorsed.

In conclusion, each of the aims mentioned in chapter 3 of the draft specifications contributes to a robust Arts Education, which in turn supports broader educational goals including the development of critical thinking, social skills, and personal resilience. When the curriculum comes to fruition, exploring these connections in detail will provide a comprehensive view of the multifaceted value of Arts Education, reinforcing its essential role in contemporary curricula.

Strands

The conceptual framework outlined in the draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications emphasises an integrated approach that is vital for fostering holistic development in primary school children. This framework is well structured around three interrelated processes: Creating, Performing and Presenting, and Responding and Connecting. Each of these strands not only serves as a pedagogical vehicle for artistic engagement but also mirrors cognitive and social processes crucial for child development.

Creating is the foundational process in Arts Education and involves imagination and innovation. Children are encouraged to generate original ideas and tangible artistic outputs, which is critical for cognitive development and creative thinking. This process nurtures problem-solving skills and often requires students to engage in risk-taking and critical thinking—skills that are transferable across educational domains and vital in adult life.

Performing and presenting extend beyond the mere act of showcasing artistic work. This process aids children in developing their communication skills, self-expression, and

confidence. In the context of music, drama, and dance, performing can be particularly transformative, offering opportunities for children to collaborate, listen actively, and engage empathetically with others. Presenting their artwork fosters a sense of accomplishment and pride, enhancing their self-esteem and motivation.

Responding to and connecting with arts involves interpretive and evaluative skills. Children learn to articulate their thoughts and feelings about their own works and the works of others. This process is crucial for developing aesthetic sensitivity and cultural awareness. By making connections between different artistic expressions and broader life contexts, children enhance their ability to relate to and understand diverse perspectives, fostering global citizenship.

The dynamic interaction between creating, performing and presenting, and responding and connecting reflects a robust educational model that recognises learning as a cyclical and interconnected process. This approach aligns with constructivist educational theories which advocate for experiential learning through which students construct knowledge actively, rather than passively receiving information.

Practically, these processes suggest a fluid and flexible approach to lesson planning in Arts Education. Teachers are afforded autonomy to design activities that seamlessly integrate all three strands, facilitating a learning environment that adapts to the natural flow of children's curiosity and creativity. Using the overview on page 8 of the document as inspiration, a lesson might begin with pupils responding to a professional piece of art or a peer's project, proceed with creating their own artworks inspired by what they observed, and culminate in a presentation or performance of their creations. Importantly, the draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications highlight the community aspect of Arts Education. By participating in these processes, children become members of a community of practice, where learning is a shared activity that fosters belonging and collective growth. This community aspect helps instil social values such as respect, cooperation, and appreciation for diversity.

The interrelated strands of Creating, Performing and Presenting, and Responding and Connecting offer a framework through which children not only learn about the arts but also develop personal and interpersonal skills crucial for their overall education. Emphasising these processes in the draft document ensures that Arts Education remains a dynamic and integral part of primary education, capable of nurturing well-rounded individuals equipped with the skills necessary for the challenges of the 21st century. This comprehensive approach not only enhances individual student growth but also contributes to building a more empathetic, creative, and culturally aware society in the future.

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes exhibit considerable variation across different schools and class contexts and teachers are uniquely positioned to exercise their professional judgement in making informed decisions about teaching and learning strategies that suit the needs of their pupils. This framework delineates the anticipated learning and development milestones for children at each stage. They also accommodate the diverse abilities and circumstances of students.

Learning outcomes are frequently portrayed as tools to enhance transparency, quality, accountability, and efficiency by providing clarity and reducing redundancy in learning processes (Souto-Otero, 2012). They promote educational equity by shifting the focus from equal access to equal outcomes, foster learner-centred education, and assist teachers in structuring curriculum content more effectively.

The draft specifications rightly recognises that Learning Outcomes in Arts Education extend beyond traditional academic achievements. By encompassing not only knowledge and skills but also dispositions, attitudes, and values, the framework acknowledges the multifaceted nature of learning in the arts. This comprehensive approach aligns with contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize the holistic development of learners.

The incorporation of the Learning Outcome stem "Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences" reflects a pedagogical commitment to fostering a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. This stem not only sets the tone for Arts Education as a vibrant and accessible domain but also underscores the importance of playful exploration and creativity in the learning process. By aligning with the principles outlined in the Primary Curriculum Framework, the Learning Outcome stem ensures coherence and consistency in educational practice across all subject areas of the curriculum.

The emphasis on creating a learning environment that motivates children to engage actively, playfully, and creatively in Arts Education is commendable. This approach recognises that children learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process, rather than passive recipients of information. By promoting active engagement, the Learning Outcome stem encourages students to take ownership of their learning, fostering a sense of agency and empowerment.

By prioritizing playful and engaging learning experiences, educators can design activities that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences, fostering a more inclusive and effective learning environment. Moreover, by explicitly stating the desired outcomes of

Arts Education, the framework provides educators with clear benchmarks for assessing student progress and achievement.

In conclusion, the section underscores the importance of Learning Outcomes in Arts Education and their alignment with pedagogical principles and best practices. By prioritizing holistic development and active engagement, the framework lays the groundwork for meaningful and impactful learning experiences in the arts. Moving forward, further research and evaluation will be needed in the coming years to assess the effectiveness of the Learning Outcomes framework in promoting student learning and achievement in Arts Education.

Key Competencies

The draft specifications underscore the interconnectedness between the primary curriculum's key competencies and Arts Education, highlighting how the two domains mutually reinforce each other.

The seven key competencies within the primary curriculum reflects a holistic approach to education that extends beyond academic achievement. By recognising competencies such as communication, teamwork, and creativity, the curriculum aims to prepare students for success in various aspects of life, including personal, social, and professional domains. This aligns with contemporary educational paradigms that prioritize the development of transferable skills alongside subject-specific knowledge.

The reference to Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and the Junior Cycle in post-primary school highlights the continuity and progression in educational experiences across different stages of schooling. This continuity ensures a seamless transition for students as they move through the education system, building on the foundational competencies acquired in early childhood and further developing them in later years. Such continuity fosters a coherent and integrated approach to curriculum design and implementation.

As children work towards achieving Learning Outcomes in Arts Education, they concurrently develop and strengthen the key competencies outlined in the primary curriculum. This integration highlights the value of Arts Education as a vehicle for holistic development, offering rich learning experiences that extend beyond the confines of traditional academic subjects. By engaging in creative expression, collaboration, critical

thinking, and communication within the arts, students naturally cultivate the competencies necessary for success in various domains of life.

The reciprocal relationship between Arts Education and the development of key competencies is significant. While Arts Education provides a context for pupils to practice and apply these competencies, the competencies, in turn, enhance pupils' engagement and achievement in Arts Education. This mutual reinforcement underscores the interconnectedness of different facets of education and highlights the role of Arts Education as a catalyst for holistic development throughout the entire Primary Curriculum.

The recognition of the interplay between Arts Education and key competencies has implications for curriculum design and implementation. Teachers can leverage Arts Education as a platform for explicitly addressing and reinforcing key competencies, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of the curriculum. By integrating arts-based activities and experiences into various subject areas, educators can provide pupils with opportunities to develop and demonstrate key competencies in authentic and meaningful contexts, showing the value of interdisciplinary and thematic activities.

In conclusion, the draft specifications emphasise the symbiotic relationship between Arts Education and the development of key competencies within the primary curriculum. By recognising the inherent value of arts-based learning experiences in fostering holistic development, teachers can optimize the curriculum to meet the diverse needs and aspirations of pupils.

Concepts

The draft specifications highlight the nuanced differences between Art, Drama, and Music while acknowledging their shared creative processes and transferable skills. Recognising that each art form has its own knowledge, concepts, skills, and intrinsic value is essential for understanding the depth and complexity of Arts Education. Art, Drama, and Music are distinct disciplines, each with its own rich history, techniques, and cultural significance. This acknowledgement underscores the importance of honouring the unique attributes of each art form while also fostering interdisciplinary connections.

The emphasis on concepts as key ingredients in Art, Drama, and Music underscores their centrality to the learning process. By mastering fundamental concepts such as composition, rhythm, and characterization, students develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of each art form. Moreover, the alignment of concepts with Learning

Outcomes highlights their role in guiding and assessing student progress across different stages of the curriculum.

Engaging with a diverse range of stimuli, including images, sounds, and artworks, facilitates conceptual learning and development in Art, Drama, and Music. Exposure to various contexts and environments broadens pupils' perspectives and encourages critical thinking and interpretation. This experiential approach to learning fosters creativity and innovation, enabling pupils to make meaningful connections between different art forms and cultural contexts.

The inherent connection between Music and Drama, particularly in relation to movement and dance, underscores the interdisciplinary nature of Arts Education. By integrating movement and dance into Music and Drama lessons, teachers can provide pupils with holistic learning experiences that encompass multiple art forms. This approach not only enhances pupils' understanding of concepts but also promotes collaboration and creativity across disciplines.

The suggestion that concepts can serve as useful entry and reference points in preparation, teaching, and assessment highlights their practical utility for educators. By anchoring lesson planning and assessment around key concepts, teachers can ensure coherence and alignment with curriculum outcomes. Moreover, concepts can serve as scaffolds for pupil learning, providing a framework for organizing and synthesizing new information.

While an individual subject approach is to be employed at stage 3 and 4, close examination of the learning outcomes table on pages 13 - 19 of the document will identify that many of the learning outcomes in Stage 1 and 2 are still very subject specific although not given the official heading of Art, Music or Drama.

Discussing assessment strategies tailored to conceptual learning in Arts Education would enhance the practical applicability of the draft specifications. It would have been beneficial to provide accompanying examples of formative assessment techniques, such as concept mapping, portfolio assessment, and peer evaluation. They could have provided valuable insights into ways students' conceptual understanding and artistic growth can be assessed.

In conclusion, the draft specifications address the importance of recognising the unique characteristics of Art, Drama, and Music while also acknowledging their interconnectedness. By emphasising the role of concepts in learning outcomes and highlighting the practical implications for teaching and assessment, the draft document offers valuable insights into effective pedagogical practices in Arts Education.

Arts Education Curriculum in Practice

The draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications emphasise the integral role of Arts Education within the broader framework of the Primary Curriculum, highlighting the centrality of the relationship between child and teacher in realizing educational goals.

The assertion that Arts Education is underpinned by the vision, principles, key competencies, and statements on learning, teaching, and assessment in the Primary Curriculum Framework underscores the interconnectedness of arts instruction with broader educational objectives. This alignment ensures that Arts Education is integrated into the overarching educational philosophy and goals of the curriculum, emphasising its importance in fostering well-rounded development in pupils.

The recognition of the central, reciprocal, and responsive relationship between child and teacher as foundational to realizing the curriculum's vision and highlights the significance of interpersonal dynamics in the educational process. This perspective emphasises the importance of nurturing supportive and collaborative teacher-pupil relationships, which serve as the cornerstone for effective teaching and learning experiences in Arts Education.

The emphasis on skilfully designing a broad range of learning experiences with a clear focus on new learning and ways for children to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding reflects a pedagogical commitment to student-centred instruction. By tailoring learning experiences to meet diverse learning needs and preferences, teachers can enhance student engagement, motivation, and achievement in Arts Education.

The mention of fundamental features of children's learning within Arts Education suggests a focus on essential pedagogical principles and practices that underpin effective instruction in the arts. This may include fostering creativity, critical thinking, collaboration, and self-expression, as well as providing opportunities for exploration, experimentation, and reflection in artistic processes.

The reference to corresponding pedagogical practices that support and enhance learning in Arts Education implies a commitment to evidence-based instructional strategies informed by educational research and best practices. This may involve active learning approaches, differentiated instruction, formative assessment techniques, and the integration of technology to enrich teaching and learning experiences in the arts. Teachers would benefit from clear concrete examples of this as the document provides very little guidance and examples of good practice.

Learning in Arts Education - Being an arts-maker

The draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications reinforce the integral role of the arts throughout primary school, highlighting how artistic experiences extend children's understanding and enrich their imagination and creativity. By providing a broad range of arts experiences, including Art, Drama, Music, media arts, and dance, educators ensure that students have ample opportunities to explore and engage with various artistic forms, fostering a holistic approach to arts education.

The concept of being an "arts-maker" emphasises children's active participation and engagement in the arts. Through hands-on experiences in Art, Drama, and Music, children experiment, create, and express themselves, developing confidence and competence in artistic processes. This active involvement not only enhances pupils' artistic skills but also promotes their agency and autonomy as learners.

The integration of multiple art forms in meaningful ways reflects the interconnectedness of arts disciplines and supports children's flexible use of knowledge and skills. Integrated learning experiences provide a context for cross-disciplinary exploration and allow students to deepen their understanding of artistic concepts while fostering purposeful and agentic arts-making.

The role of teachers in scaffolding and supporting deep engagement in challenging arts-making experiences is vital. By providing guidance, encouragement, and instructional scaffolds, teachers help pupils develop confidence and competence in creating, performing, presenting, responding, and connecting in the arts. This supportive environment nurtures children's agency and fosters a sense of belonging within the arts community.

Experiences of observing, listening, responding, and reflecting on a broad range of arts works from Ireland and the wider world are highlighted as essential for enriching and enhancing children's ability to engage as active arts-makers. Exposure to diverse artistic expressions broadens pupils' cultural awareness, fosters empathy and appreciation for different perspectives, and deepens their understanding of the relevance, beauty, and value of the arts.

The draft specifications have significant implications for Arts Education practice, emphasising the importance of providing diverse, hands-on arts experiences, integrating arts learning across disciplines, and fostering a supportive learning environment guided by knowledgeable and caring teachers. By implementing these principles, teachers can create enriching and meaningful arts experiences that empower students to become creative and expressive individuals.

In conclusion, the draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications highlight the transformative potential of Arts Education in primary schools, advocating for a comprehensive approach that nurtures children's creativity, imagination, and artistic skills. By prioritizing active participation, integration, teacher support, and exposure to diverse arts works, teachers can cultivate a lifelong appreciation for the arts and empower students to realize their full artistic potential. Also integrating technology into Arts Education can provide students with new avenues for artistic expression and exploration. Utilising digital tools for creating multimedia artworks, exploring virtual galleries, or collaborating with artists online enhances pupils' digital literacy skills and expands their artistic repertoire in the digital age. Encouraging pupils to ask questions, explore artistic concepts independently, and investigate their own interests can deepen their engagement with the arts and promote lifelong learning. However, the document would benefit from considering ways in which incorporating inquiry-based learning approaches within Arts Education can foster curiosity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills.

Supporting all learners

The importance of recognising and accommodating the diverse needs of individual learners within the educational context is recognised. The acknowledgment that each child is unique and possesses a distinct set of strengths highlights the importance of individualized instruction and inclusive practices in education. By tailoring learning experiences to meet the specific needs, interests, and abilities of each pupil, teachers create an environment that promotes equity, diversity, and student success. This can be achieved through inquiry-based learning activities allowing the pupils take ownership of their learning within an assigned theme.

Learning Outcomes serve as a framework for guiding pupil learning and development, providing flexibility for children to engage with curriculum content through various pathways.

By offering multiple entry points and approaches to achieving learning objectives, teachers can accommodate diverse learning styles, preferences, and abilities, fostering a more inclusive and accessible learning environment for all students.

The provision of Additional Support Pathways (ASP) reflects a commitment to identifying and addressing the unique needs of children with additional learning needs. These pathways offer a structured framework for teachers to assess individual pupils' strengths and challenges, tailor instructional strategies, and provide targeted support to ensure their full participation and engagement in the curriculum.

By using ASP, teachers can carefully evaluate the learning experiences of children with additional needs, considering factors such as their readiness, interests, and learning preferences. This personalized approach enables teachers to differentiate instruction, modify curriculum content, and scaffold learning activities to meet the specific needs of each child, ensuring that they are appropriately challenged and supported in their educational journey.

The description of learning experiences as progressing through various stages, such as experiencing, attending, responding, and acquiring, provides a nuanced understanding of the developmental continuum of student learning. Recognising the different stages of learning allows teachers to assess pupils' progress, track their growth over time, and adjust instructional practices accordingly to facilitate deeper understanding and mastery of learning outcomes.

The inclusion of Table 6, which elaborates on the different stages of learning experiences, offers teachers guidance on how children engage with curriculum content and acquire new knowledge and skills. This resource equips teachers with a common language and framework for understanding and assessing pupil progress, facilitating collaborative planning and professional dialogue among teachers.

The importance of recognising and accommodating the diverse needs of individual learners within the educational context is addressed within the document. By offering multiple pathways to learning, providing additional support for children with special needs, and tailoring learning experiences to meet the unique strengths and challenges of each pupil, teachers create an inclusive and supportive learning environment that fosters success for all learners.

Teaching Arts Education

Throughout the draft Arts Education Curriculum specifications, the significance of pedagogical approaches in Arts Education, highlights the importance of not only what children learn but also how they learn. The recognition that the "how" of learning is as important as the "what" underscores the significance of pedagogical approaches in Arts Education. By attending to various factors such as children's prior knowledge, curriculum objectives, and learning styles, teachers can create rich and meaningful learning experiences that cater to the diverse needs of students.

The document outlines several key areas of attention when teaching in Arts Education, including understanding children's prior learning, structuring learning experiences, and

promoting active engagement. By considering these factors, educators can effectively scaffold learning, provide appropriate support, and foster a conducive learning environment where pupils can thrive.

The focus on ensuring active engagement and meaningful interactions highlights the importance of student-centred approaches in Arts Education. By encouraging children to actively participate in artistic processes, explore their creativity, and interact with peers and teachers, educators facilitate deeper learning experiences that promote skill development and self-expression. Acknowledging children's learning variability and maintaining high expectations for all pupils is crucial for promoting equity and inclusivity in Arts Education. By recognising and valuing each child's unique strengths and abilities, teachers can create an environment where all pupils feel empowered to succeed and achieve their full potential.

The emphasis on balancing teacher-led, teacher-guided, and child-led approaches reflects a pedagogical commitment to fostering autonomy and agency in pupils while providing necessary support and guidance mirroring the process in the continuum of inquiry. By striking this balance, teachers encourage student ownership of learning while ensuring that instructional objectives are effectively addressed.

The inclusion of key areas for consideration in the teaching of Arts Education, such as creative approaches, playful approaches, sensory and embodied approaches, integration, culturally responsive pedagogy, and collaboration and partnerships, highlights the multifaceted nature of effective arts instruction. By incorporating these elements into their teaching practices, teachers can create dynamic and enriching learning experiences that promote creativity, cultural understanding, and collaboration among pupils.

In conclusion, the draft arts education specifications focus on the importance of pedagogical considerations in Arts Education, emphasising the need for intentional and student-centred approaches that promote active engagement, address learning variability, and foster creativity and collaboration. By attending to these key areas of consideration, teachers can create vibrant and inclusive learning environments where pupils can thrive and develop a lifelong appreciation for the arts.

The crucial role of teachers in fostering creativity in pupils within the framework of the Primary Curriculum is explored. The draft specifications emphasise the importance of teachers' creativity in responding to children's choices and needs. By making professional decisions based on children's interests, prior learning, and curiosities, teachers demonstrate adaptability and responsiveness, ensuring that learning experiences are relevant and engaging for pupils. Additionally, the collaborative work with colleagues and other professionals underscores the value of collective expertise and shared practices in promoting creativity across educational contexts.

Acknowledging creativity as a key competency in the Primary Curriculum Framework highlights its significance in children's holistic development. By encompassing attributes such as imagination, discipline, collaboration, persistence, and inquisitiveness, the competency recognises creativity as an essential aspect of children's innate abilities and underscores the importance of providing opportunities for creative expression and exploration.

The document emphasises the positive impact of promoting children's creative potential on their motivation, self-esteem, and overall development. By nurturing creativity, teachers empower pupils to express themselves authentically, take risks, and explore new possibilities, fostering a sense of agency and self-efficacy in their learning journeys.

Various strategies that teachers can employ to promote creativity in students are outlined. By valuing deep creative engagement, fostering a playful and supportive atmosphere, providing diverse stimuli and cultural experiences, encouraging imagination and individuality, and offering collaborative and meaningful creative opportunities, teachers create conducive learning environments that inspire innovation and self-expression.

Encouraging children to engage with various art forms and reflecting on the qualities of artists' work fosters an appreciation for the arts and cultivates aesthetic awareness and cultural understanding. By exposing pupils to diverse artistic expressions and encouraging critical reflection, teachers broaden the pupils' perspectives and enrich creative experiences.

The draft specifications for Arts education identifies the vital role teachers play in promoting creativity in pupils and provides practical strategies for fostering a culture of creativity in educational settings. By valuing children's innate creativity, nurturing their imaginations, and providing meaningful opportunities for creative expression and exploration, teachers empower students to become confident, innovative, and self-directed learners.

Playful Approaches

The significance of playful approaches in Arts Education is highlighted and practical strategies for teachers to incorporate playfulness into their teaching practices is emphasised. Playful approaches to learning and teaching in Arts Education is seen as central to the success of the curriculum. By cultivating a safe and supportive environment that encourages active engagement, self-expression, and creative risk-taking, teachers create opportunities for students to naturally and joyfully explore and learn across all stages of primary school.

It is commendable that the draft specifications emphasise the importance of aligning playful learning experiences with learning outcomes and considering children's abilities and interests. This approach ensures that playful activities are purposeful, meaningful, and relevant to pupils' learning objectives, promoting deeper understanding and skill development. By integrating art, drama, and music games, encouraging playful exploration and experimentation, fostering collaboration and co-creation, and facilitating playful responses to arts works, teachers create dynamic and engaging learning experiences that cater to diverse learning styles and preferences.

Acknowledging the teacher's role as a co-player, observer, and facilitator in the classroom highlights the importance of adaptability and flexibility in supporting pupils' playful learning experiences. By actively engaging with pupils, modelling behaviours, providing guidance and scaffolding, teachers create a supportive learning environment that encourages curiosity, creativity, and exploration. Striving for a balance between different playful approaches and ensuring that playful learning is purposeful and connected to learning outcomes and concepts in Art, Drama, and Music is essential. This approach promotes coherence and alignment in instructional practices, ensuring that playful activities contribute meaningfully to pupils' overall learning and development.

The transformative potential of playful approaches in Arts Education is discussed and the document provides some practical guidance for teachers to integrate playfulness into their instructional practices. By embracing playfulness, teachers create dynamic and engaging learning environments that inspire creativity, curiosity, and joy in students' artistic exploration and expression.

Sensory and embodied approaches

It is noted the importance of sensory and embodied engagement in Arts Education and an overview of strategies for incorporating visual, aural, and kinaesthetic learning experiences

is provided. The interconnectedness of the body and mind in children's learning experiences, highlight the significance of active, sensory, and embodied engagement in Arts Education. By immersing pupils in multisensory experiences, teachers foster holistic learning that integrates cognitive, emotional, and physical dimensions. By providing a diverse range of stimuli and materials, teachers cater to different learning preferences and promote exploration, discovery, and creative expression.

Promoting sensory and aesthetic awareness is paramount in Arts Education. By encouraging pupils to engage with and manipulate various materials, images, and sounds, teachers foster appreciation for different artistic forms and styles while developing pupils' ability to perceive and interpret sensory stimuli. Sensory and embodied engagement facilitate meaningful exploration and consolidation of key concepts in Art, Drama, and Music. By linking sensory experiences with conceptual learning, teachers help students develop a deeper understanding of artistic techniques, genres, and themes. Engaging in hands-on activities and creative movement not only enhances pupils' fine and gross motor skills but also fosters creative decision-making and problem-solving abilities. Through reflection and response to sensory stimuli, pupils develop critical thinking skills and learn to make informed artistic choices.

The draft specifications address the importance of integrating multi-modal and multi-sensory engagement to connect pupils' body, mind, senses, and emotions to their learning. By immersing pupils in rich sensory experiences, teachers create dynamic learning environments that promote deep engagement and emotional connection to the arts.

The transformative potential of sensory and embodied engagement in Arts Education can be achieved by incorporating diverse sensory experiences and providing opportunities for active exploration and creative expression. Teachers inspire students to develop a lifelong appreciation for the arts while fostering holistic development across cognitive, emotional, and physical domains.

Integration

Integration within and through the arts offers opportunities for dynamic pedagogy by blending interdisciplinary knowledge and creative processes. This approach encourages teachers to make connections across art forms and other subject areas, fostering full learning experiences that engage pupils in multimodal forms of expression.

Integration within the arts involves exploring connections across different art forms, such as Art, Music, and Drama. By integrating common artistic concepts and processes, teachers can encourage students to explore two or more arts disciplines together, reinforcing ideas and extending learning. For example, creating a short film provides an opportunity to explore visual, dramatic, and musical elements simultaneously, enriching the artistic experience.

Integration through the arts involves connecting ideas across curricular areas, using art forms to deepen learning in other subjects. This approach recognises the potential for the arts to enhance understanding in diverse areas, such as using song to teach language or drama to explore historical events. By engaging in such integrated learning experiences, pupils develop flexible skills and dispositions that promote problem-solving, creativity, and collaboration.

The draft specifications highlight dance as an art form that integrates within and through the arts, aligning with learning outcomes in Arts Education. Through dance, children explore movement as a means of expression, incorporating concepts from Drama and Music to deepen their understanding. Additionally, dance provides opportunities for exploring body awareness, space, and cultural diversity, linking with learning in other curricular areas such as cultural studies and physical education.

In conclusion, integration within and through the arts offers a rich framework for facilitating engaging and purposeful learning experiences. By leveraging connections across different art forms and subject areas, teachers can create dynamic pedagogical approaches that foster creativity, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary understanding among pupils.

Culturally responsive pedagogy

Incorporating diverse cultural perspectives into the Arts Education curriculum enriches pupils' learning experiences and fosters empathy and understanding. By exposing pupils to a variety of cultural traditions and heritages, teachers broaden the pupils' horizons and promote cultural appreciation. By valuing and celebrating this diversity, teachers can create a more inclusive learning environment where every pupil feels seen, heard, and respected. Encouraging collaborative ways of working fosters a sense of community and belonging among pupils. By inviting pupils to share examples of arts from their own families and communities, teachers empower pupils to contribute their unique perspectives to the learning process.

Linking children's learning in the arts to local and broader communities ensures that education is relevant and meaningful. By providing opportunities for pupils to engage with local artistic traditions and cultural practices, teachers deepen pupils' connections to their communities. Encouraging pupils to explore dance, music, and arts works associated with various traditions and cultures, teachers foster intercultural understanding and appreciation among pupils. This exposure helps pupils develop a broader perspective and a deeper appreciation for cultural diversity. It is essential to approach the integration of broader cultural contexts with sensitivity and respect. Teachers should be mindful of cultural differences and nuances, ensuring that cultural connections are made in a respectful and meaningful manner.

Connecting arts education with geographical, historical, social, and cultural contexts enhances interdisciplinary learning experiences. By encouraging pupils to make connections between the arts and other subjects, teachers promote holistic learning and deeper understanding.

Collaboration and partnerships

The draft specifications provide valuable insights into the collaborative nature of arts education and emphasises the importance of partnerships between teachers, artists, and external facilitators. While collaboration can enrich children's learning experiences, it is crucial to ensure alignment between external inputs and the Primary Arts Education Curriculum Framework. This includes not only content but also pedagogical approaches to teaching and assessment. Teachers should assess whether the external facilitator's methods are consistent with the curriculum's principles and objectives. Despite external collaborations, teachers should maintain a central and active role in delivering the curriculum. They possess intimate knowledge of their pupils' needs, abilities, and learning styles, allowing them to tailor instruction accordingly. Teachers should effectively integrate external input into their teaching while ensuring coherence and continuity in children's learning journeys.

It is essential to strike a balance between external inputs and the teacher's expertise. While external facilitators bring unique perspectives and expertise, teachers play a vital role in contextualizing and integrating these experiences into the broader curriculum. Collaboration should enhance, rather than overshadow, the teacher's role in guiding pupils' learning. Providing opportunities for reflection and feedback after collaborative experiences is crucial for continuous improvement. Teachers should gather insights on the effectiveness of external inputs, identify areas for improvement, and make informed decisions about future partnerships. This reflective practice contributes to ongoing

professional growth and enhances the quality of arts education delivery. Collaborative partnerships should aim to enrich children's holistic arts education experiences. This involves not only exposing pupils to diverse arts experiences but also fostering their creativity, critical thinking, and appreciation for the arts. Teachers should consider how external inputs contribute to the broader goals of arts education, including promoting self-expression, cultural understanding, and aesthetic appreciation.

Assessing Arts Education

Assessment is not merely an adjunct to learning and teaching in Arts Education; it is a fundamental component that involves a continuous, inclusive, and collaborative process. In this dynamic context, both teachers and children engage in a shared journey to inform and enhance the educational experience. The assessment process in Arts Education is built on the foundation of teachers' professionalism, their deep understanding of the curriculum, and their pedagogical expertise. Teachers in Arts Education are more than facilitators; they are committed, skilled, and agentic professionals. This means they possess the autonomy and capability to make informed decisions that best suit the unique contexts of their classrooms. The effectiveness of assessment in Arts Education hinges on three core areas of knowledge that teachers draw upon:

Knowledge of the Children and Their Prior Learning

Understanding the individual backgrounds, strengths, and learning histories of each child is crucial. This personalized knowledge allows teachers to tailor assessment strategies that are meaningful and relevant to each learner's journey. Recognising where each child starts helps in setting realistic and aspirational goals, ensuring that every child's progress is acknowledged and valued.

Knowledge of the Curriculum

A thorough understanding of the Arts Education curriculum enables teachers to align assessment practices with the expected learning outcomes. This alignment ensures that assessments are purposeful and directly related to the educational objectives. It also helps in identifying the key areas where children need support or further challenge, fostering a holistic development in the arts.

Knowledge of Pedagogy

Effective assessment is deeply intertwined with pedagogical strategies. Teachers must be adept at utilising various pedagogical approaches that cater to diverse learning styles and needs. By integrating assessment with pedagogy, teachers can create a learning environment that is both supportive and challenging, encouraging children to reach their full potential.

Assessment in Arts Education is inherently collaborative. It involves continuous interactions between teachers and pupils, creating a feedback loop that benefits both parties. By involving children in the assessment process, teachers can foster an inclusive atmosphere where every pupil feels valued and heard. This participatory approach helps in building confidence and encourages pupils to take ownership of their learning. Assessment should not be seen as a one-time event but as an ongoing process. Regular feedback and reflection are crucial for sustained improvement. Teachers and pupils work together to identify strengths, address weaknesses, and set new learning targets. This ongoing dialogue supports continuous development and adaptation to meet evolving educational needs. Both teachers and pupils share the responsibility for learning outcomes. This collective approach ensures that assessment is a supportive tool rather than a punitive measure. It emphasises growth and development, recognising that learning is a journey with multiple pathways.

The evidence gathered through assessment helps teachers make informed decisions about teaching and learning in Arts Education. This evidence can come from various sources, including observations, pupil reflections, peer assessments, and performance tasks. By evaluating this evidence, teachers can adjust instructional strategies to better meet the needs of their students. They can provide targeted support to individual learners or groups, celebrating achievements and milestones, and reinforcing positive learning behaviours. They can also identify areas for professional development and collaborative planning with colleagues.

Assessment in Arts Education is a multifaceted and collaborative endeavour that plays a pivotal role in the educational process. It requires teachers to be knowledgeable, reflective, and responsive to their unique classroom contexts. By integrating assessment with teaching and learning, teachers can create a rich and supportive environment that nurtures the artistic and personal growth of every child. The collective and ongoing nature of assessment ensures that it is a tool for empowerment, helping both teachers and pupils to achieve their fullest potential in the arts.

Knowledge of the children and their prior learning

The draft specifications emphasise the critical role of differentiated and responsive teaching strategies in Arts Education, highlighting the importance of understanding and leveraging children's prior learning and current knowledge to optimize their learning experiences. The key concepts presented are foundational to effective pedagogical approaches and align with contemporary educational theories that advocate for learner-centred, inclusive education.

Understanding each child's previous learning achievements and their current level of understanding is fundamental to effective teaching. This knowledge acts as a scaffold that informs the sequence of learning activities and supports provided, ensuring that these are both accessible and challenging. This approach recognises that learning is a cumulative process, where new information is best understood when it connects to what is already known. It also underscores the necessity for teachers to engage in continuous assessment and adaptation of their teaching strategies. There is also the importance of tailoring learning environments and experiences to meet the diverse needs and interests of pupils. This personalization is crucial in fostering an inclusive classroom where every child feels valued and motivated. Tailored learning experiences are more likely to be meaningful and enjoyable for pupils, thereby increasing engagement and the effectiveness of the learning process. This approach not only accommodates varied learning styles and preferences but also encourages the development of individual strengths and talents. By starting from each child's current level of understanding and interests, teachers can create a learning environment that is genuinely inclusive. This method ensures that all children, regardless of their abilities or backgrounds, have equal opportunities to participate and succeed. Such inclusivity is essential not just for educational equity but also for building a classroom culture that values diversity and mutual respect.

Encouraging children to express their ideas, thoughts, and preferences in the learning process is vital for fostering agency in Arts Education. When pupils are invited to share their perspectives and take part in directing their learning journeys, they develop a sense of ownership over their education. This empowerment can lead to increased motivation, engagement, and ultimately, deeper learning. Additionally, this approach provides teachers with insights into their pupils' experiences and preferences, which can inform further instructional decisions. The iterative process of learning about pupils' needs and preferences also serves as a professional development opportunity for teachers. Through this reflective practice, teachers can continually improve their instructional strategies, ensuring that their teaching remains relevant and responsive to the evolving dynamics of their classrooms.

The draft specifications effectively outline a pedagogical framework that prioritizes understanding individual learners' backgrounds, abilities, and interests. This approach is essential for the delivery of a high-quality, equitable Arts Education that adapts to the needs of all pupils, thereby enhancing their educational outcomes and experiences. This learnercentred paradigm not only aligns with best practices in educational theory but also reflects a progressive vision for future educational endeavours.

Knowledge of the curriculum

The draft specifications outline a progressive view of assessment in Arts Education, emphasising its role as a continuous and formative process that benefits both learners and teachers. This perspective is increasingly vital in educational discourse, as it challenges traditional notions of assessment as merely summative and places it firmly within the learning process itself. The use of assessment as a formative tool facilitates a responsive educational environment where assessments are not endpoints but are integrated into the learning process to continuously inform teaching strategies and pupil understanding. This kind of assessment helps in identifying not just what pupils learn but how they learn, enabling more personalized and effective teaching approaches.

Highlighting that assessment can be "used by teachers or children" suggests a pedagogical shift towards greater pupil agency. This approach empowers pupils by involving them in their own learning assessment. It encourages self-reflection and critical thinking, skills that are particularly important in the arts, where personal interpretation and emotional engagement play significant roles. The inclusion of dispositions, attitudes, and values along with traditional cognitive achievements (knowledge and skills) points towards a holistic approach to education. In Arts Education, this is crucial because the arts often involve personal expression, ethical considerations, and emotional development. Assessments that recognise these elements can provide a more complete understanding of a child's educational growth. The use of assessment to support ongoing decision-making emphasises the adaptive nature of effective teaching. It suggests that teaching in Arts Education should be dynamic, responding to the assessed needs and progress of the pupils rather than adhering strictly to predetermined lesson plans. This responsiveness is particularly important in the arts, where pupil engagement and interest can significantly influence learning outcomes.

While the draft specifications articulate a clear philosophy, it could benefit from more detailed examples of how such assessments are conducted and used in real classroom settings. For instance, details on specific strategies for observing and interpreting pupil

progress, or examples of adjustments made in response to assessment findings, would provide practical guidance to teachers reading the draft specifications. In summary, the specifications offer a progressive and student-centred perspective on assessment in Arts Education, aligning with contemporary educational values that favour growth and inclusivity over mere performance measurement. Further discussion could enhance understanding of how these principles can be practically implemented and what challenges might arise, thereby providing a more rounded insight into the transformation of assessment practices in Arts Education today.

Knowledge of pedagogy

The draft specifications emphasise the reflective and adaptive nature of teaching in Arts Education. It highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and the use of resources to continually improve teaching practices. The emphasis on reflection is significant because it aligns with contemporary educational theories that advocate for teachers as learners who continually assess and adapt their teaching strategies. This reflective practice is crucial in Arts Education, where the subjective nature of the arts and the individual differences among learners require teachers to be particularly sensitive and responsive. There is a progressive approach to defining success in arts education which moves away from traditional notions of artistic perfection and replication towards a more inclusive understanding that values personal expression and creativity. This redefinition helps foster an environment where all pupils can see themselves as successful artists, which is essential for their engagement and self-esteem.

Highlighting the role of professional development and resource access, such as the online Arts Education Toolkit, is critical. These resources should enable teachers to stay informed about the latest educational strategies and arts practices, which can enhance their teaching effectiveness. Continuous professional development is particularly important in a field as dynamic as the arts, where pedagogical practices and artistic trends continually evolve. The mention of professional conversations with colleagues suggests a collaborative approach to professional development. Collaboration among teachers can lead to a richer understanding of effective practices as teachers exchange ideas, experiences, and strategies. This collaborative learning environment can also provide emotional and professional support, which is essential in the demanding field of education.

The ability to refine and adjust teaching methods and the learning environment based on reflective practices is a cornerstone of effective teaching. In Arts Education, where the

impact of teaching can be very visible in the pupils' artistic outputs, the capacity to adapt and respond to pupil needs and feedback is particularly valuable.

The specifications imply supportive infrastructure for teachers but could expand on specific types of support mechanisms that might be included in the toolkit or offered through professional development. For instance, case studies, video tutorials, and forums for discussing pedagogical challenges could be valuable additions.

In conclusion, this section of the specifications presents a thoughtful and sophisticated approach to teaching Arts Education, which recognises the complex, fluid nature of artmaking and the diverse needs of learners. It advocates for a reflective, continually evolving pedagogical strategy that supports teachers through resources and professional community engagement. This approach not only enhances the learning experience for pupils but also contributes to the professional fulfilment and growth of teachers.

Opportunities for assessing learning in Arts Education

The specifications (page 32) discuss the concept of utilising everyday activities in Arts Education as opportunities for assessment, emphasising an approach that blends incidental and intuitive learning with structured assessment frameworks. This approach is crucial for fostering a comprehensive and dynamic learning environment in which pupils' spontaneous engagements with the arts can inform their educational assessments and outcomes. The mention of assessment happening "incidentally and intuitively" suggests a seamless integration of assessment into everyday learning rather than treating it as a separate, formal event. This method could reduce the pressure associated with traditional assessments, potentially yielding a more accurate representation of a child's capabilities and understanding. By focusing on children's responses, experiences, and questions during Arts Education activities, teachers can gather rich, qualitative data. This approach recognises the value of informal assessment methods, which can sometimes capture nuances of learning and creativity that more structured forms might miss. It highlights the dynamic nature of arts education, where spontaneous and organic interactions can provide deep insights into a child's learning process.

This intuitive approach raises interesting questions about how teachers can prepare to recognise and capture valuable assessment opportunities without stifling the spontaneous nature of artistic expression. This balance between preparedness and flexibility could be a significant point of discussion in understanding effective Arts Education practices that could be explored further within the draft specifications. Embracing unplanned learning opportunities requires a high level of pedagogical skill and

intuition. It could be suggested that teacher training should include developing these intuitive skills to recognise and utilise unplanned opportunities for assessment. Discussion on the specific types of training or professional development that can enhance teachers' abilities in this area would be beneficial.

Methods for assessing Arts Education

The draft specifications provide a comprehensive overview of the multifaceted approach to assessment in Arts Education, emphasising the importance of active and agentic participation by children in their learning processes. The integration of various assessment methods— observation, feedback, questioning, checklists, rubrics, performance-based assessments, portfolios, and self- and peer-assessment—is commendable. This diversity allows for a holistic view of a child's learning journey in Arts Education, capturing different dimensions of learning from skills acquisition to emotional and social development. The focus on engaging children as active participants in the assessment process, particularly through self-assessment and peer-assessment, supports the development of critical thinking and self-reflection skills. This empowerment is crucial for fostering independent learners who can assess their own work and understand the process of artistic creation.

The use of structured tools like checklists and rubrics ensures that assessments are transparent and aligned with learning objectives. The involvement of children in co-creating these tools is particularly noteworthy as it enhances their understanding of the assessment criteria and makes the learning targets clear and achievable. Highlighting performance-based assessments acknowledges the importance of practical demonstrations in Arts Education. This method respects the nature of the arts as interactive and performative, allowing children to showcase their learning in dynamic and contextual settings. The use of portfolios as a form of performance-based assessment that captures ongoing learning is an excellent practice. Portfolios not only serve as a repository of work but also as a reflective tool for students to witness and evaluate their own growth over time.

The emphasis on timely and constructive feedback and the strategic use of questioning to enhance understanding are vital for effective learning. These approaches help pupils identify their strengths and areas for improvement, fostering a responsive learning environment. The role of documentation in creating a comprehensive record of learning trajectories is critical. It supports teachers in making informed decisions and provides a detailed account of each child's progress, catering to individual needs and preferences.

While the document mentions digital portfolios, expanding on the use of digital tools and technology in assessment could provide additional benefits, such as increased accessibility, ease of tracking progress, and the ability to share learning outcomes with a broader community, including parents and other teachers. While the methods discussed are robust, further elaboration on how these assessments cater to children with different learning needs and abilities would strengthen the inclusivity of the Arts Education framework. As these assessment methods are diverse and complex, ongoing professional development for teachers to effectively implement these strategies would be essential. Ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to handle varied assessment tools and techniques is crucial for the success of this holistic approach.

Overall, the draft specifications outline a thoughtful and innovative approach to assessment in Arts Education, with a strong emphasis on pupil participation and continuous learning. By addressing the above aspects, the Arts education curriculum can further enhance its effectiveness and inclusivity.

Outline of the Arts Education Toolkit

The mention of an online Arts Education Toolkit is an important addition to the discussion, particularly in the context of modern education where digital resources play a significant role in supporting teaching and learning. It is impossible to comment on this chapter as no examples of toolkit content has been provided. It will be beneficial to the education community if the toolkit resources (when completed) are provided online, which educators will be able to access at their convenience, catering to different learning styles and schedules. The inclusion of examples of children's learning in the toolkit would be invaluable for teachers. Real-world examples help illustrate abstract concepts and provide practical insights into how the Primary Arts Education Curriculum could be implemented effectively in the classroom. These examples could serve as models for teachers to adapt and tailor to their specific teaching contexts.

The provision of support materials specifically designed for teachers would enhance the toolkit's utility. These materials may include lesson plans, activity ideas, assessment tools, and professional development resources. By offering comprehensive support materials, the toolkit could empower teachers to implement the curriculum with confidence and competence. It is essential that the resources included in the toolkit align closely with the strands, learning outcomes and concepts specific to the Irish Primary Arts Education Curriculum. Ensuring alignment ensures coherence and consistency in teaching practices and helps teachers deliver high-quality arts education experiences that

meet curriculum standards. To maximize the effectiveness of the toolkit, incorporating interactive and engaging content could enhance teacher engagement and learning outcomes. Interactive elements such as videos, quizzes, discussion forums, and multimedia resources could make the toolkit more dynamic and immersive, catering to diverse learning preferences.

As educational practices evolve, it is crucial to update the toolkit regularly to reflect current research, good practices, and feedback from teachers. Establishing opportunities for teacher collaboration and community engagement within the toolkit platform, such as discussion forums, sharing functionalities, or collaborative project spaces, as well as feedback mechanisms allows educators to provide input on the toolkit's effectiveness and suggest improvements, fostering a collaborative and iterative approach to resource development.

Overall, the introduction of an online Arts Education Toolkit represents a significant step towards supporting teachers in delivering high-quality arts education experiences. By providing accessible, practical, and curriculum-aligned resources, the toolkit has the potential to enhance teaching practices and enrich pupils' learning outcomes in the arts.

Next Steps

Time for implementation

The necessity for teachers to engage with a new curriculum requires a suitable implementation phase. This phase would provide schools with ample time to familiarize themselves with new content, objectives, and pedagogies, thereby ensuring these methods are effectively integrated across Arts Education and interdisciplinary approaches to the curriculum as a whole. In-service training is essential to help teachers build their confidence and fully grasp the new curriculum structure. An adequate adaptation period should be provided, allowing schools to explore and trial new planning and preparation methods tailored to their unique contexts for effective teaching and learning in Arts Education.

Digital Learning

As we consider the future trajectory of our society and the growing impact of technology on our daily lives, digital learning emerges as a crucial component in the restructured primary

curriculum. However, to adequately address the digital learning needs of our pupils, several foundational elements must be established within the education system.

The overarching objective of incorporating digital technology in education is to ensure that Technology becomes an integral aspect of the teaching, learning, and assessment processes in every classroom, embedded across all areas of the curriculum. Teachers have broadly welcomed the inclusion of 'being a digital learner' as one of the seven key competencies within the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework, aligning with approaches adopted in numerous other European countries, as detailed in Education International's report 'A Review of Technology in Teaching and Learning' (2020). To achieve the critical aim of considering technology as "integral to the process of teaching and learning" (Egan, 2020, p.15), schools must possess the capacity to provide such learning opportunities within well-equipped and fully resourced learning environments, staffed by digitally competent and confident teachers. Without these foundational elements, the development of digital knowledge and skills cannot be effectively realized. The necessity for increased investment in technology at the primary school level to ensure that all schools are equipped with the requisite infrastructure with a focus on use in Arts education. Ensuring these measures are in place will enable the effective integration of digital technology in primary education, fostering a generation of digitally proficient learners equipped to navigate an increasingly technological world.

Broad Subject Areas

The proposed restructuring of the primary curriculum into broad thematic areas, as outlined in the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework, is anticipated to enhance curricular integration. This restructuring aims to build upon children's prior learning experiences in preschool through the Aistear framework, progressively transitioning to more distinct and differentiated subjects in the stages 3 and 4. Specifically, the arrangement of subject matter in the initial stages (junior infants to second class) is designed to extend the continuum of learning, reflecting the children's expanding cognitive and perceptual awareness.

The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework suggests that the pedagogical strategies employed in Aistear should form the foundational educational approach for infant classes. The benefits of these approaches should be continued as the emphasis on playful, inquiry-based learning strategies are alluded to beyond the early years, advocating for their application throughout the primary education stages.

Creativity is an integral part of the curriculum aimed at the holistic development of the child. The curriculum's expansion to include dance, film, and digital media is a positive change, reinforcing the necessity of maintaining a robust presence of the Arts in an evolving educational framework. While dance is currently included within the Physical Education curriculum; enhancing teacher confidence and expertise in this field with the development of professional development courses and opportunities for communities of practice to share knowledge among educators would be advantageous. The incorporation of digital media and filmmaking into arts education is welcomed but there is a need for ongoing professional development and support systems for educators to keep pace with the dynamic technological landscape pupils are familiar with using to create content. The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework proposes strategies intended to equip children to navigate the digital world effectively, designating them as 'digital natives.' In such a swiftly changing environment, it is crucial that teachers are provided with adequate resources and support to ensure their proficiency in leveraging new technologies within the educational context. This approach is vital for maintaining the relevance and efficacy of teaching methodologies in the digital age.

Resources

The Department of Education must provide appropriate school facilities, including teaching materials and physical space, to enable pupils to engage in effective, active learning. Currently, many classrooms are not conducive to hands-on, activity-based approaches. Some classrooms are overcrowded and inadequately equipped to support the use of practical resources necessary for Arts education. Investment in support materials for teachers and adequate resources for schools is imperative to ensure that teachers can meet curriculum standards.

Conclusion

Implementing a robust Arts Education program can be resource intensive. Schools may face challenges related to funding, obtaining appropriate materials, and hiring trained specialists to work in partnership with teachers to bring the full extent of the curriculum to fruition. Integrating Arts Education thoroughly within the school curriculum can lead to time constraints for other subjects. Balancing time across various disciplines remains a challenge for educators. These restraints will become more prevalent in Stage 3 and 4 with the shift to individual subject focus. Effective Arts Education requires teachers who are not

only skilled in their art forms but also in pedagogy. Continuous professional development is needed, which can be a logistical and financial challenge.

There could be significant disparities in access to quality Arts Education depending on geographic location, socioeconomic status, and school funding. This could lead to inequities in educational outcomes. Initiatives similar to the Digital Schools Excellence Fund and STEM Learning Funds rolled out in recent years may help schools focus on Arts Education and acquire the necessary resources.

While the positives highlight the transformative potential of Arts Education in developing well-rounded, creative, and emotionally intelligent individuals, the negatives underscore the practical challenges of implementation. Addressing these challenges involves strategic planning, advocacy for arts education, equitable funding, and ongoing professional development for educators. With careful attention to these areas, the full benefits of Arts Education can be realized for all students. I welcome the new Draft Arts Education Specifications and look forward to the finalised document in the future.

Veronica Ward B.A. (Hons) P.G.C.E. (Primary) M.Ed

17 June 2024

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Zinka Akalovic

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing in response to the Primary Curriculum Consultation.

My name is Zinka Akalovic, I'm a mother of 8 year old girl attending Primary school.

While the Primary Curriculum Consultation website has been active for a number of months I note at the outset that there was no outreach to parents in relation to formulating the draft Primary School curriculum. Given parent's superior Constitutional Rights and the obligation on schools to only provide education in consultation with parents, I question whether or not this consultation process is a legally sufficient consultation and as such a legitimate exercise. Nonetheless I respond herein reserving my rights to object further on this point at a later date and this submission is not to be construed as evidence of my acceptance of the consultation process, which I believe may be defective. I am aware this lack of parental consultation was the same for the recent Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle Curriculum Consultations. My feedback is captured in the sections below,

Section 1: Summary Feedback and Alignment with Curriculum Framework Document

The proposed Draft Curricula undermines the strengths of the 1999 Curriculum, which had clear, pragmatic, specified content/ what was appropriate at different ages and was pedagogically sound in its progression. The highlights of the problems with the proposed Draft Curricula include;

- Lack of clarity and vague learning outcomes (generic/ unspecified).

- Unclear, underdeveloped progression across Learning Outcomes.
- Core content of skills/ concept development have been banished to the Appendices and are no longer part of the Learning Outcomes with no clear Progression of skills.
- The unspecified nature of Draft Curricular Learning Outcomes loses the strength of the 1999 Curriculum, no longer ensuring we have minimum standards for a balanced and consistent provision of education.
- Outcomes show a lack of age appropriateness (not starting from where the child is at)
- More focused on global concerns than local tangible concerns of the child
- Shift in focus to 'how' children learn over 'what' - leads to children not having basic foundational knowledge, and a shift in emphasis to intellectual engagement over practical understanding and having core concepts.
- The Draft Curriculum is taught through various lenses e.g. one of the 7 Key Competencies is 'Be an Activist' (social justice activism, environmental activism, empathy aimed at challenging stereotypes): this follows "Critical" Marxist ideologies of questioning everything. Continued references to Inclusion, challenging stereotypes, and empathy show a bias towards teaching ideas around Gender Identity and Critical Race Theory. This is woke indoctrination, not education.
- Overemphasis on skills such as Empathy and Multi-perspectivity. Focus should be on the subject matter.
- Are not age appropriate or pedagogically sound: Include Marxist & Queer ideologies in their underpinning 'Key Competencies' and 'Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment' promoting inverted

versions of diversity, equity and inclusion. Protecting childhood innocence and mental health are important. • Provide no visibility for parents: 'What' children will be learning must be clear as well as 'How'.

Section 2: Individual Draft Primary Curriculum Specifications Section 2(a): Draft Arts Education Curriculum

The Arts Curriculum uses the Arts as a vehicle for social change (and indoctrination). Including Social Justice, Activism and Global issues across the Curriculum could induce greater anxiety and mental health concerns. P4 'Pedagogy: Fostering empathy and a broader worldview through a broad range of artistic experiences...' 'Inclusion: Using artistic expression to challenge stereotypes and misconceptions and promote inclusivity, empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity.' P10 'Key Competency... Being an Active Citizen: Exploring different cultures and perspectives, developing empathy and understanding towards others and fostering a sense of global citizenship.'

2. This Curriculum is not child-centred, is overly intellectual and hence not inclusive for all children.

3. Curriculum is undefined, leading to lack of Visibility and Transparency for Parents and lack of Clarity in Progression and age-appropriateness for pupils: P13 'Learning Outcomes' It is unclear whether outcomes apply to Art/ Drama/ Music except by analysing each Outcome's content. There is a distinct lack of clear progression and no elaboration of the Outcomes.

Section 2(b): Draft Primary Language Curriculum including Modern Foreign Languages Under 'Inclusive education and diversity: fostering a learning culture which celebrates and values differences in languages and which challenges all stereotypes and misconceptions' & 'foster inclusivity and social cohesion' & 'celebrating linguistic & cultural diversity' 'promote mutual understanding, tolerance and respect for identities and cultural diversity' Is this appropriate as a principle underpinning the teaching of a foreign language? This is an agenda which detracts from the value of learning the language.

Section 2(c): Social and Environmental Education Curriculum - - - - Shift to global focus (and looking at History and Geography through the biased lenses of Sustainable Development Goals, Global issues, Diversity/ Equity & Inclusion (DEI)): this is woke indoctrination, encouraging children to be social justice warriors and climate activists (Be an Activist is a Key Competency) This is in opposition to child-centred teaching, which starts from where the child is at (home > local > national before global). Regional and National content is barely mentioned and is left vague and unspecified. This is part of children's cultural identity and as such is an important aspect of their development. The Global Learning Themes (p21-22) could be taught based on Irish History and Geography. They should not be used in any way which could instil ideas of 'white privilege' and the potential ensuing of guilt/ fear/ anger. SEE must not be taught in ways which could lead to climate anxiety and fear. Such topics must be taught carefully to remain age appropriate and

prevent overwhelm and a sense of loss of control and safety. This curriculum's Rationale (p5-6) places overemphasis on lenses such as empathy, respect and challenging worldviews 'to contribute positively and compassionately to create a more just and sustainable world' > again, is this age appropriate? Page 18 / 23: Working as a Geographer: "...promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy" The notion of teaching a six-year-old child to "work as a Geographer", seriously? This approach is too ambiguously defined for such a foundational subject as geography, potentially ticking all of the "political" objectives but falling short in terms of what the learning objectives should be. The same applies to "Working as a Historian". Without appropriate baseline knowledge, any discussion on climate change and sustainability becomes little more than climate indoctrination. Page 21 Global Learning Themes Looks like a "woke" playbook. These themes would appear to be the real priority, above any learning objectives. The NCCA are using the curriculum to push political interests rather than service the educational needs of the child. Section 2(d): Draft Science, Technology and Engineering Education Curriculum https://ncca.ie/media/2vvcabyb/draft_ste_specification_2024.pdf Inclusive: Challenging stereotypes and nurturing empathy (P2) – what has this got to do with STEM? Again – limited life experiences and a focus on how over what is problematic for foundational knowledge. The emphasis on sustainability has the potential to create climate anxiety fear and a shortage mentality. Page 16: Learning Outcomes Poor Layout, unclear, no clear progression, not child centered, 'Algorithm' and 'Plugged' / 'Unplugged' at Stage 1

Page 31 "Depending on the strengths, needs and interests of the children, the teacher's role in supporting children's learning will differ. While the aim is for children to lead and direct their own learning, children may require some scaffolds and supports to enable them to do this over time." This last paragraph implies a lack of definition on the level and standard of education to be attained. The notion of children leading and directing their own learning, particularly the younger ones, is fanciful at best and a cause for genuine concern at worst. Section 2(e): Draft Wellbeing Curriculum https://ncca.ie/media/csmh55u0/draft_primary_wellbeing_specification_2024.pdf SPHE is about holistic development of the child – but "spiritual" is mentioned only 3 times (2 in the glossary) – neglected compared to physical, social and emotional development. Physical education (PE) has been demoted in favour of introducing more time for questionable unspecified SPHE content. Furthermore, no elaboration is given to the Progression of standards in the PE Activity Areas (p43-44; Athletics, Aquatics etc.) 1. '...inclusive understanding of human sexuality' (p.4) – we've seen from the Junior cycle that this is used to teach an oversexualised curriculum and radical Gender Theory as fact/. Both are totally inappropriate. Also in view of the recent direction by the UK Government that sexuality education should not be taught to children under 9 years old, sexuality education should not be taught to young children in Primary Schools. 2. '...the concept of consent within relationships' (p.5) – Consent here refers to sexual interaction within relationships: this is totally unsuitable for Primary School children and should be removed. 4. The terms

'diversity' and 'inclusion' have been weaponised as an excuse to introduce inappropriate sex education and gender theory. 5. 'Recognise examples of stereotypes (p.27)... explore ways family members can promote gender equality through roles and responsibilities'. (p.28). 'Stereotypes' in this context is an attack on 'heteronormativity' the normal roles and that men and women typically assume in society. 6. Relational pedagogy - 'children's right to make decisions that impact their lives, empowering them to share their voice, engage in democratic practices.'(p.38) - Parents rights should supersede 'Childrens rights' at this age - they are too young to understand the implications of decisions that could have a life-long impact. 7. 'Where a specific need is identified, external facilitators can play a complementary role in collaborative partnership with teachers for aspects of the curriculum' (p.45) – Only trusted adults (parent or their teacher) should be covering any content in this area and there should be no secrecy pacts between teachers and children.

Section 3: Implementing the Curriculum

This curriculum is not fit to proceed as documented either in terms of content, desired outcomes, age appropriateness, pedagogical approach, parental visibility, not to mention, feasibility. Significant changes are required including stepping back from the "Education for Social Justice" woke agenda which is a blatant attempt at political indoctrination, a source of psychological and emotional harm to the affected children as well as stealing from them the proper education they are entitled to. Other major issues include: 1. Parental Visibility and Transparency: There can be no secrets hence no class contracts or secrecy pacts. Parents must have unfettered access to all textbooks and standard classroom materials 2. Curriculum Definition and Clarity: Totally lacking. 3. Concern over the reduction in the literacy allocation to half of the 2012 guidance for the youngest learners. What has changed since 2012 to drive this? 4. Age-Appropriateness and Radicalisation: Need to remove all curriculum elements that are likely to induce emotional stress, depression or result in sexualization or radicalisation of children including but not limited to: a. Radical gender theory and inappropriate sexualization. The final Cass report into the treatment of children with gender dysphoria in the UK concluded definitively that gender ideology should not be taught in schools. Also, the recent direction by the UK Government that Sexuality Education should not be taught to children under 9 years old should be followed here. b. The introduction of Critical Social Justice and related radical postmodern theories such as Queer Theory, Critical Race Theory, Post Colonial Theory and Climate Alarmism are not acceptable. 5. Any cross-curriculum contamination needs to be removed: a. This will preserve the integrity of the otherwise impacted subject areas and, b. Will preserve parental rights with respect to opt-outs 6. Learning needs to be for fact-based knowledge and related skills, not politics and activism. 7. Appropriate Pedagogical Approaches: Education for Social Justice points to adopting the approaches of people such as Freire, Kincheloe or Kumashiro, all heavily weighted in politics and radical woke ideologies – indoctrination in other words, and totally unacceptable. They embed "Critical" Marxist activism, which is pitched at destroying Western Society. Alternative approaches need to be found. 8. Fundamentally, the curriculum must be depoliticized and any sexuality education must be made age appropriate and in

line with child safeguarding. General Comments related to Schools 1. Parental Consultation: The core aspects of RSE in SPHE must be taught in consultation with parents. Parents must see the content objectives, resource material and understand the knowledge base of content to be taught in advance of any lessons being delivered. 2. Ethos: It is a safeguarding issue to teach children anything sexual that is in contradiction to school Ethos. 3. Social Transitioning: Per the Cass report conclusions, pupils should not socially transition in Primary Schools. 4. Parental Knowledge, consent and appropriate medical help must be sought in any and all cases of sexual distress, disclosures and abuse as determined by school policy. 5. The Infinite Dignity document issued by the Vatican is now part of the school Ethos in the context of Catholic Primary Schools and must be respected in Catholic Schools.

In closing, I again question the legitimacy of this consultation process in light of the lack of parental involvement in the development of the draft curricula. As well, the emergence of the Cass Report and the English draft Statutory Guidance all suggests that a halt should be put on this consultation process and a serious rethink occurs over what and how we teach our children. As the above submission makes clear, the proposed draft primary curricula is not fit for purpose and will worsen children's experience in primary school. The NCCA are prioritising politics over child welfare with this proposed curricula. This is not acceptable to parents and the consultation must be halted immediately. I would appreciate a confirmation email that this submission was received.

Yours Sincerely,
Zinka Akalovic



NCCA

An Chomhairle Náisiúnta
Conradtaí agus Measúnaithe
National Council for
Curriculum and Assessment