



Circular Letter 0017/2023

To Boards of Management and School Leaders, Teaching Staff of Primary Schools and Special Schools and CEs of ETBs

Launch of the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

1. Introduction

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) provided broad and enriching teaching and learning experiences for our children. In the quarter of a century since its development and launch, much has changed in our world and in our classrooms. There is greater recognition internationally for the need to support every child to thrive and flourish, supporting them in realising their full potential as individuals and as members of communities and society during childhood. This context provides the rationale for the ongoing review and redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum.

2. The *Primary Curriculum Framework*

The *Primary Curriculum Framework* was launched by the Minister on the 9th March 2023. This Framework is for all primary and special schools and will guide teachers and school leaders in their work to enhance learning, teaching and assessment for all children.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) has developed the *Primary Curriculum Framework* through a collaborative approach, informed by research, sustained work with school communities, wide consultation and extensive deliberation. The voices from the consultation on the Framework, in particular, the voices of children, indicate the need for a curriculum that supports all children, celebrating their current childhood experiences, and preparing them for their future experiences.

The Framework sets out the vision, principles and components of a redeveloped Primary School Curriculum. It reflects our shared understanding of the many positive features of education in our primary and special schools.

What are the key elements of the *Primary Curriculum Framework*?

The Framework:

- is for all primary and special schools
- sets the vision and principles for a redeveloped curriculum
- introduces key competencies for children's learning
- sets out the main features and components for the full redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum, detailing curriculum areas and subjects; and minimum time allocations
- introduces and expands aspects of learning including STEM Education, Modern Foreign Languages and a broader Arts Education



- places increased emphasis on existing areas such as Physical Education and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)
- promotes greater agency and flexibility for teachers and children.

The *Primary Curriculum Framework* links with learning experiences provided through the themes of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and connects with the *Framework for Junior Cycle*. It supports continuity of experiences for learners from early years to the start of senior cycle.

As the full redevelopment of the curriculum progresses, new curriculum specifications will be developed by the NCCA for the five curriculum areas, as set out below, and their associated subjects. These specifications will be available for the 2025/2026 school year:

- Language (updated to include Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) in stages 3 and 4)
- Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education
- Wellbeing
- Arts Education
- Social and Environmental Education (History and Geography)

Research to support each of the new curriculum specifications will be undertaken in the coming months and will be published on the NCCA website when completed. In addition, work will continue with schools to guide and shape ideas for the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum. Teachers', school leaders and children's voices continue to be central to the curriculum development process. Consultation will also be undertaken with all other education partners and stakeholders.

3. Supporting teachers and school leaders in their engagement with the *Primary Curriculum Framework*

The introduction of the *Primary Curriculum Framework* requires school leaders and teachers to engage and become familiar with the structure and content of the Framework at whole-school level. It is recognised that teachers and school leaders will require time and support to become familiar with the contents of the Framework. They are advised to read the Framework, discuss it with colleagues, avail of professional development opportunities, and engage with the support materials published.

In order to develop all teachers' and school leaders' understanding of the Framework, the Department of Education support services will continue to provide their suite of professional development opportunities at primary level, now drawing connection with the Framework content. Discrete professional development will also be provided for each of the forthcoming curriculum area specifications.

A hard copy of the Framework for each teacher and school leader will be in schools in the coming weeks. A half-day school closure is being provided to facilitate whole-school review of the Framework. This closure should be taken before the end of the 2022/2023 school year. Schools can decide on a half-day that suits their school calendar. Schools have the



option of combining this closure with a *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* webinar half-day closure in the school year 2022/23.

In order to support the half-day engagement the following resources are provided to schools:

- An interagency video to present the key messages of the *Primary Curriculum Framework* <http://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Primary-Curriculum-Framework/>
- A video on the *Primary Curriculum Framework*. The video is designed to be viewed in conjunction with the interagency video.

These resources will support teachers and school leaders in becoming familiar with the Framework and prompt whole-staff professional discussions as they work through the Framework document together.

Other resources, such as information to assist schools to communicate about curriculum changes with parents and the wider school community, are being developed.

Over the intervening period from the launch of the Framework to the introduction of the specifications in the 2025/2026 school year, schools are encouraged to engage with the Framework as best suits them. In becoming familiar with the Framework, schools may wish to:

- Implement the suggested time allocations which details minimum curriculum time and flexible time;
- Reflect on the principles of learning, teaching and assessment and how they might be reflected in school planning and practice;
- Consider the key competencies and opportunities to further enhance learning through them;
- Consider the statements on learning, teaching and assessment and how these build on and extend current practice.

4. Other primary curriculum developments

(i) Primary Mathematics Curriculum

The Primary Mathematics Curriculum will be launched in the coming months. A comprehensive programme of professional development to support the introduction of the Primary Mathematics Curriculum is in development.

(ii) Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile

In order to further embed and implement the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* in all primary and special schools, sustained support continues to be provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (becoming Oide from September 2023), in the case of primary schools or the National Council for Special Education in the case of special schools.

(iii) Preparation for Teaching and Learning

[Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning](#) supports all primary and special schools in their preparation for use of a learning outcome-based curriculum. It aims to



reduce the emphasis on paperwork, by capturing and valuing the broad range of activities teachers engage with before, during and after teaching. This guidance further supports *Rule 126* which sets out the expectations in terms of long-term planning (for example, termly or yearly), short-term planning (for example, weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and monthly progress records.

5. Further Information

To access the online version of the *Primary Curriculum Framework* and the related resources please visit:

<https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/>

To learn more about the development process for the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, please visit:

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

For more information on primary review and redevelopments, visit NCCA's [website](#).

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