



Circular 0067/2025

To Boards of Management and Principal Teachers, Teaching Staff of Primary Schools and Special Schools and CEOs of ETBs.

Primary Curriculum for primary and special schools

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1. Introduction

The approval by the Minister for Education and Youth of the five curriculum specifications marks the successful completion of the primary curriculum redevelopment. This achievement follows a huge amount of work by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the Department of Education and Youth and its support services in conjunction with school leaders, teachers, parents, children, researchers, and stakeholders across the education sector.

It represents a significant milestone, laying the foundation for 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. The redeveloped curriculum builds on the strengths of the 1999 Primary School Curriculum to provide a strong foundation for every child to thrive and flourish. Its enactment calls for renewed focus on the curriculum's vision, ensuring that learning, teaching and



assessment are intentionally shaped to support inclusion, engagement, progression, and holistic development.

2. Curriculum specifications

In 2019, the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* was introduced for all four stages (junior infants to sixth class). The *Primary Curriculum Framework* was published in March 2023 and was followed with the publication of the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* in September 2023.

The redeveloped curriculum specifications, available online at www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary, are fully aligned with the *Primary Curriculum Framework* (2023) and include:

Arts Education	This specification emphasises children's active engagement as creative, skilled and confident arts-makers. They take part in broad, balanced and playful learning experiences in Art, Drama and Music, with scope to explore other art forms such as dance and media arts. Through these experiences, children make connections between art forms, express themselves, engage artistically and explore arts works from local, national and international cultures.
Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile	This specification introduces the Modern Foreign Languages learning outcomes which focus on building an awareness of languages and cultures at stage 3 (3rd and 4th classes). This consolidates existing knowledge of language(s) and builds a solid foundation for learning a third language (L3). At stage 4 (5th and 6th classes), in addition to building awareness of languages and cultures, children will learn to communicate at a very basic to basic level in a third language.
Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Education	This specification is about understanding and appreciating our local environments and the wider world, and connects with children's experiences as investigators, designers and creators. This curriculum area has two specifications, one for Science, Technology and Engineering Education and another for the <i>Primary Mathematics Curriculum</i> (2023). To support connections between both, these have been incorporated into a single curriculum document for STEM Education.
Social and Environmental Education (SEE)	This specification enables children to see themselves as members of society with rights and responsibilities and empowers them to contribute to matters of local, regional, national, European and global priority. This curriculum area incorporates both Irish and international History and Geography and learning about religions, beliefs and worldviews.



Wellbeing	This specification emphasises the interconnected physical, social, relational, emotional and spiritual dimensions of wellbeing, focusing on developing knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes and values that are essential for children's overall growth and development. This curriculum area incorporates Physical Education (PE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
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3. Progression and alignment

A key focus of the redeveloped primary curriculum has been ensuring clear progression and alignment in children's learning. As the curriculum was developed, the NCCA also updated *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (2024). This created an opportunity to connect children's learning in early childhood settings with what they experience in primary and special schools. Play and playful learning are now included across the Primary School Curriculum to support this connection.

Similarly, alignment with the *Framework for Junior Cycle* has been considered in Stage 4. This is reflected in the inclusion of the Key Competencies, which link closely to the Key Skills of Junior Cycle, ensuring a smooth transition for children as they progress.

The redeveloped curriculum also builds on many positive aspects of current practice in primary and special schools. At the same time, it enhances children's learning through improved teaching methods and assessment approaches, supporting richer and more engaging learning experiences across all stages.

4. Coherence

Coherence ensures that all parts of the curriculum fit together in a meaningful way. Particular attention was given to maintaining a consistent structure across curriculum areas and stages.

The curriculum also identifies opportunities for integration, so children can make connections between different areas of learning. This supports deeper understanding while avoiding unnecessary repetition, ensuring learning experiences are logical, connected, and purposeful.

5. Time allocations

Suggested time allocations are set out under 2 categories, Minimum Curriculum Time (weekly and monthly allocations) and Flexible Time (monthly allocations) in the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#) (pages 38 and 39). The framework states 'they are intended to be used flexibly as teachers prepare rich learning experiences and respond to the learning needs of children over the course of a month (based on a period of four weeks)'.

Since the launch of the framework in 2023, schools have had the flexibility to enact the suggested time allocations if they wished.



Across a year, a school may decide to use Flexible Time for one, some or all of the following:

- Extended periods of in-depth learning in one or more of the five curriculum areas.
- Whole-school activities or participation in local, regional, and national initiatives and events.
- Planning and carrying out a project in the local area.
- Focusing on learning associated with the key competencies.
- Using particular pedagogical approaches that benefit from extended periods of time.
- Learning related to a particular aspect of the Patron's Programme.

6. Supporting the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum

The curriculum will be supported through development of online curriculum toolkits by the NCCA which will provide guidance to teachers and support progression in learning as children move across the various stages.

The toolkits will contain:

Guidance related to important aspects of primary education such as assessment, and school / classroom planning.

- **Examples** of children's learning across the curriculum areas and subjects.
- **Support materials** for teachers providing examples of effective pedagogical approaches, foster rich learning experiences and encourage connections with the home and community.

While initial material is currently available, the online toolkits will continue to be developed in the years ahead. You can access the online toolkits at www.curriculumonline.ie/primary

7. Enacting the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum

Enacting the redeveloped curriculum is a collective journey of learning and change for everyone. This journey builds on existing knowledge and practice, and through collaboration, sharing, and dialogue, deeper understandings of the curriculum will develop to support meaningful enactment. The introduction of the redeveloped primary curriculum will be a gradual and well supported process lasting at least 6 years. This acknowledges that time is essential to ensure that learning and change take place at a pace that allows sustainable transformation across the system.

Building on the extensive support provided to date by Oide and the NCSE for the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* and the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum*, support will commence from the 2025/2026 school year.



- The 2025/2026 school year will be an introductory year focusing on the *Primary Curriculum Framework*.
- From the 2026/2027 school year, schools can avail of focused support in one curriculum area each year, with each area taking two years to fully enact (see figure 1 below).
- From the second year onward, two areas will be in progress simultaneously - one in its first year and another in its second. Schools can choose the order of enactment, but the **Wellbeing** specification must be one of the first three areas selected.

School Year	Curriculum Area in Focus (Year 1 of Enactment)	Curriculum Area in Focus (Year 2 of Enactment)	Notes
2026/2027	Curriculum Area 1	-	First area selected and two-year enactment process begins
2027/2028	Curriculum Area 2	Curriculum Area 1	Schools select second area, working on two areas simultaneously
2028/2029	Curriculum Area 3	Curriculum Area 2	Ongoing annual cycle continues Enactment of Wellbeing specification must have commenced.
2029/2030	Curriculum Area 4	Curriculum Area 3	Ongoing annual cycle continues
2030/2031	Curriculum Area 5	Curriculum Area 4	Final area begins
2031/2032	-	Curriculum Area 5	All areas will be fully in place by 2031/2032. If schools opt to take a consolidation year, it will mean all curriculum areas will be fully in place by 2032/2033.

Figure 1

- From the 2025/2026 school year, schools that feel ready may choose to begin working with any of the new curriculum specifications at their own pace. This flexible approach recognises that each school is on its own journey and may be



at a different stage of readiness to engage with the redeveloped curriculum. However, schools should note that the supports and resources outlined below will not be available earlier.

- An optional consolidation year will be available to schools at any point during the enactment process. This allows schools to pause the enactment of a new curriculum area for one year in order to focus on strengthening and embedding the curriculum areas already in progress. The consolidation year is designed to give schools the flexibility to progress at a pace that suits their unique contexts, ensuring sustained quality and meaningful enactment.

8. Timeline of support

A range of supports will be provided to help schools enact the redeveloped curriculum. Details of the support timeline can be found in Appendix 1 below and were also outlined in the [April 2025](#) communication to schools.

At the start of each school year, the Department will issue a communication to all schools detailing the supports available for that year.

9. Guidance for Whole School Curriculum Planning and the updated Guidance on Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Guidance to support school leaders and teachers in planning the whole-school implementation of the redeveloped curriculum, as well as updating the Guidance on Preparation for Learning, Teaching, and Assessment, is being finalised. This work is being carried out by the Department of Education and Youth, NCCA, NCSE, and Oide.

Whole-school curriculum planning is a process that allows a school to capture key decisions and practices that reflect the way a particular curriculum area is enacted in their school, and to focus on areas that require improvement. Curriculum plans that support the enactment of the *Primary Curriculum Framework* and the new curriculum specifications will look different to existing plans and will evolve over time. The plans will be responsive to the changes in practice, guiding the enactment of each of the curriculum specifications in a way that suits the unique context of a school.

In 2021, the Department of Education published *Preparation for Teaching and Learning - Guidance for All Primary and Special Schools*. The guidance supports teachers in primary and special schools with their preparation for teaching and learning across the *Primary School Curriculum* 1999 and more recent curriculum specifications. These guidelines are being updated to support the fully redeveloped primary curriculum.



The key messages and approaches outlined in these guidance documents will be incorporated into the professional learning programme and supports.

10. Further Information

The redeveloped curriculum offers everyone an opportunity to embrace a renewed sense of agency and ownership of the curriculum's vision.

The Department is committed to providing the support schools need to fully enact the curriculum and realise its benefits for all children.

Support for the ongoing enactment of the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* and the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum* will continue to be provided by Oide for primary schools and by the NCSE for special schools. The development of online resources, such as the NCCA Online Toolkits, will also continue.

As we move forward, there will be regular/ongoing communication to support teachers and school leaders, along with communication for parents/guardians and children

Further information can be found via the following websites:

www.gov.ie

www.ncca.ie

www.curriculumonline.ie

www.oide.ie

www.ncse.ie

www.languagesconnect.ie

This Circular is available to download from the Department's website [New Primary Curriculum](#)

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22 September 2025



Appendix 1: Timeline of Supports

2024/2025		
<p>In Term 3 of the 2024/2025 school year, Oide and the NCSE circulated an interagency video to all primary and special schools.</p> <p>The video provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overview of the <i>Primary Curriculum Framework</i>. • Information on the support available for curriculum enactment in the 2025/2026 school year and beyond. <p>The video features contributions from the Department of Education and Youth Inspectorate, the NCCA, NCSE and Oide</p> <p>Accompanying the video is guidance titled 'How a School Leader Can Use This Video' to support its use in schools.</p>		
2025/2026		
<p>Professional learning will be facilitated by Oide for all primary schools and by NCSE for all special schools. The professional learning will support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers and school leaders to develop their understanding of the over-arching messages from the <i>Primary Curriculum Framework</i>. • Teachers and school leaders to develop their understanding and enactment of the new curriculum specifications. • School leaders and teachers to lead curriculum change in their own school contexts. <p>PPLI/Languages Connect will support the introduction of Modern Foreign Languages.</p>		
Area of focus	Mode of delivery	Target audience
Support for leading curriculum change Oide / NCSE	Online webinars and frequent online drop-in clinics	School leaders
Continuation of support for enactment of <i>Primary Mathematics Curriculum</i> Oide / NCSE	Bespoke In-school support (on request)	School leaders and teachers
Introduction to the foundational aspects of the curriculum specifications through the <i>Primary Curriculum Framework</i> for all primary / special schools Oide / NCSE	2 full day Professional Learning Experiences (PLE) (School closure)	School leaders and teachers



<p>Programme of language upskilling for a range of languages PPLI/Languages Connect</p>	<p>Online and in-person language upskilling courses delivered throughout the year in collaboration with providers including Education Support Centres, Cultural Institutes, Embassies and Higher Education Institutions.</p>	<p>School leaders and teachers</p>
<p>Support for teachers and schools who are participating in the Say Yes to Languages programme with a focus on children in 5th and 6th class. PPLI/Languages Connect</p>	<p>Ten week module delivered during the timetabled school day, complemented by online training sessions for teachers, school leaders and visiting tutors</p>	<p>School leaders and teachers</p>
<p>Development of resources to support the enactment of the language competency element of the specification PPLI/Languages Connect</p>	<p>Online and in person delivery throughout the year</p>	<p>School leaders and teachers</p>
<p>2026/2027 school year onwards</p>		
<p>Oide and the NCSE will continue to provide professional learning to primary and special schools, including on a whole-school basis, as schools continue to enact the curriculum specifications.</p> <p>PPLI/Languages Connect will continue to support language upskilling and the development of resources in relation to Modern Foreign Languages.</p> <p>At the start of each school year, the Department will issue a communication to all schools detailing the supports available for that year.</p>		