

18 May 2024

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 you 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 is 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.

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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

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“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