



NCCA

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

Draft Social and Environmental Education Curriculum Specification

For all primary and special
schools

For consultation

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Contents

1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
2. RATIONALE.....	5
3. AIMS.....	7
4. STRANDS AND ELEMENTS	8
5. LEARNING OUTCOMES.....	10
6. THE PRIMARY SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN PRACTICE.....	18
7. OUTLINE OF THE ONLINE SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION ONLINE TOOLKIT	32
8. GLOSSARY.....	33
APPENDIX 1: CONCEPTS AND SKILLS OF SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION.....	35

1. Introduction

The primary curriculum supports high-quality learning, teaching, and assessment for all children attending primary and special schools. The *Primary Curriculum Framework*¹ recognises primary education as a time of ‘being’ and ‘becoming’ – highlighting the importance of interesting, relevant, and appropriately challenging experiences for children. It is important that children enjoy and feel empowered through their engagement with these experiences in the present, whilst simultaneously equipping them for learning in the years ahead.

Education, as noted in the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, plays a pivotal role in contributing to a democratic, equitable, and just Irish society. It aims to provide a strong foundation for every child to thrive and flourish, premised on a vision of children as unique, competent, and capable individuals and valued members of communities. Through their learning in Social and Environmental Education, 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. This is realised through high-quality learning, teaching, and assessment that is inclusive and responsive, with children at the centre of the educational experience.

The 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 engage in playful and engaging learning experiences that build upon the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they have acquired at home and in preschool settings through *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*.² As children progress 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 agency and choice to teachers and school leaders as they support children in their holistic development, ensuring equality of opportunity, participation, and outcome for all.

Principles of learning, teaching, and assessment

Eight overarching principles underpin and guide schools in pursuing the vision of the *Primary Curriculum Framework*. These principles convey what is valued in primary and special education and what lies at the heart of high-quality learning, teaching, and assessment in the primary curriculum. They are broad in nature to reflect varied school contexts and children’s different circumstances, experiences, and abilities. Table 1 presents a non-exhaustive set of examples of the principles in action within Social and Environmental Education.

¹ Department of Education (2023). *Primary Curriculum Framework*. Dublin: Department of Education. Accessed at <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/The-Primary-Curriculum-Framework/>

² National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (2009). *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. Accessed at <https://curriculumonline.ie/Early-Childhood/>

Table 1: Principles of learning, teaching, and assessment

Principles of learning, teaching, and assessment	Examples within Social and Environmental Education
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting members of the local community and/or local interest groups to contribute to learning in local case studies. • Working collaboratively with local historians and geographers. • Forging partnerships with the library, museum, heritage centre to access resources including books, articles, photographs, maps, artefacts, and collections.
Learning environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertaking learning in the school and local outdoor environment that includes purposeful fieldwork. • Exploring sites and buildings of interest within the local natural and built environment at appropriate times throughout the year. • Displaying and celebrating children’s learning, e.g. project work, through exhibitions, showcases, and digital media.
Inclusive education and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
Engagement and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting collaborative work as children engage in historical and geographical inquiries and investigations. • 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. • Drawing on a range of pedagogical practices and selecting child-centred methods, including digital technologies and applications as appropriate.
Assessment and progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at and using a variety of assessment materials to monitor children’s progress and inform future learning and teaching. • Using Social and Environmental Education curriculum profiles to assess and record achievement in working as historians and geographers. • Drawing on assessment data to inform, shape, and guide future learning experiences within Social and Environmental Education.
Transitions and continuity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Building on and extending prior learning of a curriculum topic(s) in meaningful ways to consolidate and reinforce learning. • Ensuring a broad and comprehensive range of curriculum topics are explored across Stages 1 – 4.

Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting children to share stories about aspects of their locality and community. • Co-operating with people within the locality to enhance learning about personal, family, and local history. • Fostering respectful and caring relationships towards people from different and diverse backgrounds, the natural world and other living things.
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilising a variety of pedagogical practices and promoting playfulness. • Providing opportunities for children to engage in rich learning experiences outdoors. • Integrating digital tools (for example virtual field trips, multimedia presentations or other online simulations) to enhance children’s understanding of historical events or geographical concepts.

Children’s learning experiences in Social and Environmental Education

Social and Environmental Education involves the study of social, environmental, cultural, religious, economic, and political contexts. This learning area has a historical, geographical, and contemporary focus, from personal to global contexts, and considers the challenges that may occur in the future. It plays an important role in supporting children to understand local and global issues, and building their capacity to be active, informed, empowered citizens who have an appreciation for the world around them. Through their learning in this curriculum area children develop an understanding of systems in the world they live in, recognise their roles and responsibilities as custodians of this planet, and are encouraged to participate in society in a just and compassionate manner.

Overview of the Social and Environmental Education curriculum

The opening chapters of the Social and Environmental Education curriculum present the Rationale, Aims, Strands and Elements, and Learning Outcomes. Chapter 6 provides guidance on the curriculum in practice, while the final chapters provide an overview of the Social and Environmental Education Online Toolkit and glossary of terms.

The curriculum area is supported by the Social and Environmental Education Online Toolkit. It contains a range of supports for enacting the curriculum such as support materials and examples of children’s learning.



Figure 1: Contents of the Primary Social and Environmental Education curriculum

2. Rationale

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.

This curriculum area promotes an understanding of the interdependence and interrelatedness of natural and human activities, systems, and environments throughout history, in the present, and for the future. It 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.

The Social and Environmental Education Curriculum:

- **Contributes to children's development as active citizens**

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.

- **Promotes children's critical thinking**

Social and Environmental Education encourages children to ask questions about the historical and geographical world around them. Learning in this curriculum area provides children with opportunities to analyse, interpret and critique a range of evidence in a variety of formats, engaging in reflection about human actions in the past and present, and examining the motivations for and implications of these actions.

- **Recognises and appreciates the rich diversity within the world**

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.

- **Engages children’s natural sense of curiosity and wonder**

Social and Environmental Education speaks directly to children’s curiosity, open-mindedness, wonder and awe, inspiring a fascination about the world they live in. Through exploration of the world, its people, and places, now and in the past, this curriculum area evokes a sense of intrigue that can remain with children for the rest of their lives. Through an integrated approach, with inquiry at its core, learning in this curriculum area provides opportunities for children to explore their environment by engaging in hands-on activities linked to authentic, real-world contexts and their own lived experience.

- **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. 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.

History within Social and Environmental Education

Within Social and Environmental Education, the role of History involves the exploration of human experience over time and how people, forces, developments in technology, and events have shaped the world we live in. Through inquiring, communicating and; understanding and connecting, children learn to think critically, ask authentic questions and examine historical evidence in a variety of formats. They come to appreciate historical context and to consider diverse perspectives, gaining a deeper understanding of past and present social, cultural, political, and economic interactions. ‘*Working as a Historian*’ promotes the development of historical skills, an understanding of historical concepts (See Appendix 1) and fosters a positive disposition towards History.

Geography within Social and Environmental Education

Within Social and Environmental Education, the role of Geography involves the study of the Earth and beyond, its inhabitants, and their interactions in the context of place, space, and environment. It delves into human and natural environments, their features, distribution, and the processes shaping them, both human and physical. Through inquiring, communicating and; understanding and connecting, learning in Geography helps children understand their surroundings, both local and global, cultivating an awareness of people, places, and their interconnections. ‘*Working as a Geographer*’ promotes the development of geographical skills and an understanding of geographical concepts (See Appendix 1) and fosters a positive disposition towards Geography.

3. Aims

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 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.

- **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.

- **To cultivate critical thinking and active engagement.**

Equip children with the skills to question and explore people, places, and systems around them and in the wider world, make informed judgements and actively participate in shaping a just and inclusive society.

- **To develop children's ability to analyse, interpret and critically evaluate.**

Present opportunities for children to analyse, interpret and critically evaluate evidence and sources to gain a deeper understanding of our world, past and present.

- **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.

- **To enhance problem-solving and analytical skills.**

Empower children to promote a more environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable present and future.

- **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.

4. Strands and Elements

Strands

Strands outline the main categories of learning in Social and Environmental Education across three domains or content areas:

- People, Place and Space
- Environment and Sustainable Living
- Exploration of Our World.




Figure 2: Strands of Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Elements

These elements are dynamic and complementary and are central to the development of children's appreciation and understanding of the world in which they live. The three elements in Social and Environmental Education are: inquiring; communicating; and understanding and connecting.

Table 2: Elements of Social and Environmental Education Curriculum

Element	Description
Inquiring 	<p>Within Social and Environmental Education, an essential element in the work of a historian and a geographer is inquiring. Through the element of inquiring children gather information, seek clarification, and investigate a curriculum topic or issue in depth.</p> <p>Learning through inquiring in Social and Environmental Education taps into children's innate sense of wonder and awe, encouraging them to ask questions about and reflect on the world around them. Children's engagement with sources in Social and Environmental Education deepens as they progress through primary school, and they consider evidence through a more critical lens, evaluating its reliability and relevance, and demonstrate an awareness of potential bias.</p> <p>Through inquiring, children are exposed to different viewpoints, cultures and contexts which helps to foster empathy, cultural understanding, and an appreciation for the diversity of human experiences. Children explore underlying causes and consequences of historic events or study the complexities of geographic patterns.</p>

Communicating



Within Social and Environmental Education, an essential element in the work of the historian and the geographer is communicating. As children engage in exploration and investigation, they share thoughts, ideas and findings with their peers, their teachers, and others within the school community through a variety of communication forms.

Building and maintaining caring relationships within the school community and beyond which support two-way communication provides opportunities for children to listen and respond to others' stories and perspectives. Purposeful engagement and communication with local historians and geographers (and others in the local area with knowledge and experience that can enhance learning) can impact positively on children's engagement, motivation, and learning.

Understanding and Connecting



Within Social and Environmental Education, an essential element in the work of the historian and the geographer is making connections between people and places in their local community and wider world, and between the past and present. During the process of understanding and connecting, children are encouraged to question, think critically, and reflect.

Building on learning experiences in preschool and in the home environment, playful and engaging learning in primary school can afford opportunities to connect understanding to real-life, familiar contexts and to make sense of events, systems, and processes in the world.

Direct experience with the natural environment through outdoor learning fosters a connection with nature and supports children in developing an understanding and awareness of their roles and responsibilities in enhancing and protecting the natural world.

5. Learning Outcomes

Learning Outcomes are used to describe the expected learning and development for all learners at the end of a two-year stage when due account is taken of individual abilities and varying circumstances. They articulate big ideas across different stages, and encompass the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that children develop within a particular curriculum area.

Learning Outcomes for Social and Environmental Education are broad in nature to support children's holistic learning and enable teachers to exercise agency, in preparing for and facilitating rich learning experiences through playful and engaging approaches. Learning Outcomes for Stages 1 and 2 are fully integrated, recognising younger children's ages and stages and providing important foundations for more subject-specific content in the senior classes. Table 7 (pages 14 and 15) outlines the Learning Outcomes in Stages 1 and 2.

Building on Stages 1 and 2, Learning Outcomes for Stages 3 and 4 outline specific historical and geographical attitudes, concepts, dispositions, skills, and values to reflect children's growing awareness of subjects as a way of organising the world, while continuing to provide important opportunities for learning and teaching in an integrated way. The Learning Outcomes for Stages 3 and 4 can be found in Table 8 (pages 16, 17 and 18).

The concepts of '*Working as a Historian*' and '*Working as a Geographer*' (See Appendix 1) underpin children's learning in this curriculum area and permeate all Learning Outcomes across Stages 1 to 4. The value of play and playfulness for all children in primary and special schools is underscored through the inclusion of the stem '*Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences children should be able to...*' across Stages 1 to 4.

Key Competencies

The primary curriculum has seven key competencies (see Figure 3) which overlap and combine to support the curriculum's vision. As outlined in the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, the competencies build on the capabilities children acquire through their early childhood education experiences with *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*; and are further strengthened in post-primary school in Junior Cycle. As children work towards the Learning Outcomes in the Social and Environmental Education curriculum and engage in rich learning experiences, they simultaneously build and develop the seven key competencies.

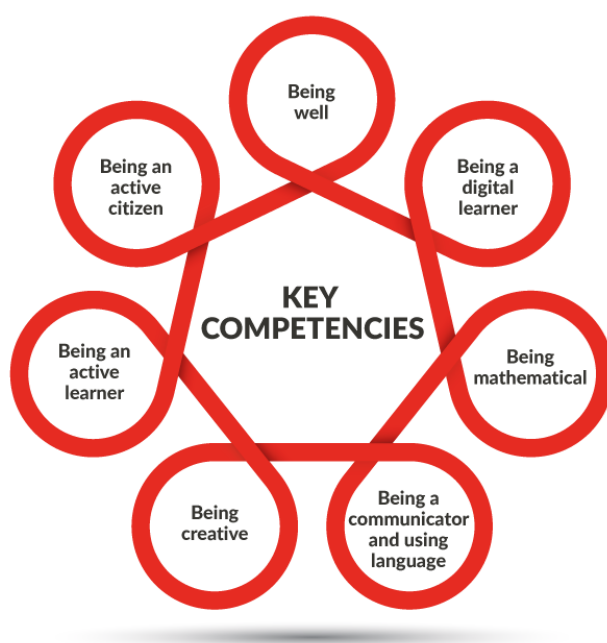


Figure 3: Key competencies

Table 3: Examples of attributes of each key competency developed through learning in Social and Environmental Education

Key Competency	Examples of attributes developed through learning in Social and Environmental Education
Being an active citizen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in inquiry to analyse and evaluate evidence, promoting critical understanding of the world we live in. Contributing to informed decision-making to address specific issues and/or opportunities in their community, empowering children to actively contribute to positive change at a local and global level.
Being creative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examining sources with curiosity and criticality, from multiple perspectives, tapping into their innate sense of wonder and awe. Engaging in participative and playful learning experiences, responding creatively to stories about historical events, geographical discoveries.

Being a digital learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Using a range of digital technologies to engage with evidence and data which provide insights into past and current events. Incorporating multimedia resources (such as videos, documentaries, interactive maps, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), and VR/AR) into learning experiences and producing visual/audio/virtual content relating to historical and geographical inquiry.
Being mathematical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sequencing and recording important milestones in their own lives and key historical events. Interpreting, processing and evaluating information and data from a variety of evidence sources and maps, and applying spatial awareness in engagement with fieldwork (e.g., measuring distances covered and identifying patterns and trends).
Being an active learner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taking action as custodians of this planet to fulfil responsibilities of caring for the environment and conserving the natural world. Demonstrating an awareness of different cultures, beliefs, traditions, and worldviews both past and present, promoting inclusivity and respect in interactions with others.
Being a communicator and using language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging in storytelling, listening to others' stories of events and experiences over time and making judgements based on the evidence considered. Reading and interpreting materials such as historical texts, maps, or cultural artefacts, drawing connections between different sources, and presenting findings in a range of formats.
Being well	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spending meaningful time outdoors, appreciating the beauty of the natural world and showing care towards people, places, and spaces in their environment. Sharing stories and articulating views and examples of customs and traditions in a safe space.

The key competencies embedded in each Learning Outcome are identified using initials directly under each Learning Outcome (See Table 4). In each instance, the three key competencies most relevant to the Learning Outcome are identified. It should be noted that in many instances other key competencies, outside of the three identified, are also embedded in the Learning Outcomes.

Table 4: Key competencies identified within Learning Outcomes

Key competency	Initials
Being well	W
Being a digital learner	DL
Being mathematical	M
Being a communicator and using language	CL
Being creative	C
Being an active learner	AL
Being an active citizen	AC

Concepts and skills

The concepts and skills of *Working as a Geographer* and *Working as a Historian* are the essential building blocks for Social and Environmental Education. Similar to the Key Competencies, they play a vital role in underpinning the Learning Outcomes across all stages of the curriculum. The 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.

Table 5 identifies the concepts and Table 6 identifies the skills of *Working as a Geographer* and *Working as a Historian* which are described in greater detail in Appendix 1.

Table 5: Concepts within Learning Outcomes

	Concepts
Common	Empathy
	Multi-perspectivity
Historical	Time and chronology
	Cause and effect
	Change and continuity
Geographical	Sense of place
	Sense of space
	Sense of environment and sustainability

Table 6: Skills within Learning Outcomes

	Skills
Common	Using evidence and sources
	Interpreting and analysing
	Evaluating and decision-making
Historical	Communicating
	Questioning
	Historical thinking
Geographical	Chronological thinking
	Using historical evidence

Table 7: Learning Outcomes for Stages 1 and 2

Strand	Stage 1: Junior and senior infants	Stage 2: First and second classes
<i>Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences children should be able to:</i>		
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>AC, W, AL</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>AL, C, M</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>AL, AC</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>AL, AC</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>AC, C, W</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>AC, W</p>
	<p>Observe and appreciate features of the local landscape and monitor changes that occur throughout the seasons.</p> <p>AC, C, M</p>	<p>Explore a variety of weather conditions and how they impact the local natural and built environments over time.</p> <p>AL, M, AC</p>
	<p>Identify and describe living things in the locality recognising the importance of protecting biodiversity for a sustainable future.</p> <p>AC, C, CL</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>AL, M</p>

Exploration of Our World	<p>Listen to, enjoy, and respond to stories from or about their locality.</p> <p>AC, AL, C</p>	<p>Engage with a wide range of stories, considering different perspectives, demonstrating an ability to order familiar events chronologically.</p> <p>C, CL, M</p>
	<p>Recognise ways in which technology has changed how people live and work at home and in their locality.</p> <p>C, CL, DL</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>AL, CL, DL.</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>CL, C, M</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>DL, CL, M</p>

Table 8: Learning Outcomes for Stages 3 and 4

Strand	Stage 3: Third and fourth classes	Stage 4: Fifth and sixth classes
<i>Through appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences children should be able to:</i>		
People, Place and Space	<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>AL, CL</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>AC, AL</p>
	<p>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.</p> <p>AC, CL, W</p>	<p>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.</p> <p>AC, CL, W</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>AC, CL, W</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>AC, CL, W</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>AC, M, DL</p>	<p>Geography Identify and examine the interrelationship between the human and natural environment on resource use, transport, infrastructure, employment, leisure, and trade.</p> <p>AC, CL, DL</p>
Environment and Sustainable Living	<p>Geography Identify and compare physical features and living systems of the natural environments in Ireland, Europe, and the wider world.</p> <p>AC, AL, CL</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>AC, AL, W</p>

	<p>Geography Explore weather events, identifying the causes and consequences of severe weather to human and natural environments.</p> <p><i>AL, DL, M</i></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><i>AL, DL, M</i></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><i>AL, C, M</i></p>	<p>Geography Examine aspects of the interrelationship between the Earth and other bodies in space on atmospheric conditions, climate change and weather patterns.</p> <p><i>C, DL, M</i></p>
Exploration of Our World	<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><i>C, M</i></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><i>AL, C, DL</i></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><i>AL, CL</i></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><i>AC, CL</i></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><i>C, CL</i></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><i>AC, C, CL</i></p>
	<p>History Consider and respond to stories of people who contributed to society through scientific, cultural, or artistic developments,</p> <p><i>C, CL</i></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> <p><i>C, CL</i></p>

6. The Primary Social and Environmental Education Curriculum in Practice

As outlined in chapters 2 and 3, the rationale and aims of the *Social and Environmental Education* curriculum describe the vision held for learning in this curriculum area. This chapter outlines the essential elements of children's learning within this curriculum area, the pedagogical practices that foster and enrich the learning process, and assessment approaches that are relevant to Social and Environmental Education.

6a. Learning in Social and Environmental Education

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 across Stages 1 to 4. As children engage in working as historians and geographers, they are encouraged to collaborate with others, share perspectives and express their thinking, ideas, and arguments, using appropriate language and/or means of communication. Through playful, engaging, inquiry-based learning and inclusive social environments, children improve and refine their historical and geographical thinking, understanding and communication.

Working as a Geographer

Within Social and Environmental Education, the concept of 'Working as a Geographer' promotes child agency and child-centred, constructivist pedagogy. It encompasses the development and application of key geographical knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes, and values, including geographical inquiry, which underpin children's learning in the curriculum area. 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. Building on prior knowledge and active exploration anchored in their locality, children develop environmental awareness, a sense of place, space, and scale, and identify connections between people and places in their local area, other communities, and the wider world.

Working as a Historian

Within Social and Environmental Education, the concept of 'Working as a Historian' promotes child agency and constructivist child-centred pedagogy, providing children with opportunities to develop the historical knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes, and values associated as they study the lives of people in the past through the process of historical inquiry. 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 to deconstruct and reconstruct historical narratives about the past. In working as historians children are enabled to explore the past in an active, participative way. They develop an understanding of cause and effect, continuity and change and time and chronology.

Elements within Social and Environmental Education

Inquiring

Learning in Social and Environmental Education provides children with opportunities to:

- pose questions rooted in real-life contexts
- engage in research and interpret a wide range of evidence in a variety of formats
- investigate and explore in their local area
- critically examine the world around them
- collaborate with others to gain a range of perspectives

Communicating

Learning in Social and Environmental Education provides children with opportunities to:

- express and share ideas with others, presenting their conclusions coherently for a variety of audiences
- collaborate meaningfully in solving problems
- listen to others' ideas, thoughts and views
- use appropriate language / means of communication to convey their thinking
- justify their thinking with reference to evidence

Understanding and connecting

Learning in Social and Environmental Education provides children with opportunities to:

- identify commonalities with other topics/subjects
- apply their knowledge and understanding to diverse contexts
- forge links between their immediate environment and wider world
- identify links between past and present
- develop an understanding and awareness of cause and effect

Supporting all children

Each child is an individual with a unique set of strengths that need to be nurtured. Learning Outcomes provide the opportunity for children to learn through multiple pathways supporting individualised and inclusive learning experiences, particularly for children with additional needs. Additional Support Pathways (ASP) help identify the most appropriate learning experiences for children as they engage with Learning Outcomes in the curriculum. Using the pathways teachers can consider the learning experience in greater detail and identify appropriate levels of challenge for children. In the course of their learning children can be experiencing, attending, responding, initiating, acquiring, becoming fluent and generalising. Table 9 describes these in more detail.

Table 9: Additional Support Pathways

Additional Support Pathways	The child...
Experiencing	is present during a learning activity. They are exposed to and/or aware of the learning environment. They are beginning to acclimatise to the learning environments such as objects, people, sounds and other sensory experiences.
Attending	becomes attentive to and/or engaged with the learning activities presented by changing gesture, posture, vocalisation, eye gaze, movement etc. They are acclimatised to the learning environment.
Responding	demonstrates capacity to actively or purposefully take an interest in the learning environment. They begin to indicate likes, dislikes, or preferences. They actively respond to a learning activity with or without support.
Initiating	shows curiosity about the learning environment. They actively and independently seek opportunities to engage with and/or influence that environment.
Acquiring	demonstrates that knowledge, a concept or a skill is being learned. They explore and participates in the learning.
Becoming Fluent	moves towards fluency and accuracy in familiar learning contexts. They independently and consistently demonstrate recall mastery of the skill/concept/knowledge learned.
Generalising	transfers and applies learned skills, knowledge, or concepts to familiar and unfamiliar contexts.

6b. Teaching in Social and Environmental Education

'How' children learn is just as important as the 'what' of their learning in Social and Environmental Education. The following pedagogical practices are anchored in research and are acknowledged as prerequisites for quality learning, teaching, and assessment in the curriculum area. Aligned with the principles of the *Primary Curriculum Framework* and reflecting the seven key competencies therein, these pedagogical practices foster an inclusive learning environment and culture where children engage in rich and meaningful learning experiences. Within the *Primary Curriculum Framework*, the centrality of relationships is foregrounded, and the pedagogical practices outlined below build on those advocated in *Aistear*, promoting collaboration as well as time and space for inquiring, listening, rethinking, reflecting, revisiting, and engaging with others and with the natural world.

The pedagogical practices included below are dynamic and naturally link with each other. For example, when teachers anchor learning experiences in real-life contexts and afford children the agency to collaborate and select an area of interest for a project or investigation, children are supported in engaging in meaningful inquiry, developing the key attitudes, concepts, dispositions, skills and values of geographers and historians. Similarly, by providing a range of evidence and resources for children to investigate and explore, including online databases, repositories and interactive programmes, teachers can open up rich opportunities for children to enhance their digital competency.

Global Learning themes

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.



Figure 4: Global learning themes

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 diversity and the human rights of all people.

Democracy

Learning in Social and Environmental Education provides opportunities to introduce the principles of democracy, including the importance of participation and representation.

Equity

Learning in Social and Environmental Education involves children's exploration of diverse voices, perspectives and experiences representing a range of social, cultural, 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.

Social and Environmental Justice

Learning in Social and Environmental Education provides opportunities for children to explore and think critically about social and environmental justice issues from different perspectives, broadening their understanding of the world and their role in it and encouraging them to question and to critically examine bias in sources.

Sustainable Development

Children are enabled to consider long-term goals which prioritise sustainability over short-term gains, striving for conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, responsible consumption, and production.

Pedagogical practices in Social and Environmental Education

In Social and Environmental Education teachers use appropriate, evidence-based pedagogical practices which connect with children's life experiences, circumstances, strengths and interests (See Figure 5). The classroom practices detailed here should not be considered exhaustive or hierarchical, but rather as a range of approaches that teachers can consider when preparing learning experiences for children in this curriculum area. All of these approaches are premised on the concepts of *Working as a Historian* and *Working as a Geographer*. There are practical supports available in the *Primary Social and Environmental Education Online Toolkit* to support teachers to enact these and other pedagogical practices.



Figure 5: Pedagogical approaches

Inquiry

Inquiry involves an approach to learning in a specific theme where learners are encouraged to pose questions, locate, critique, act on and use knowledge. Inquiry in Social and Environmental Education fosters deep learning as children analyse the relationships and patterns among different elements within communities and societies, enabling them to gain a more profound understanding of the interconnected historical, geographical, and societal dimensions of life, while also contributing to their holistic development.

Working as geographers, children engage in geographical inquiry, participating in collaborative investigations asking questions, generating ideas, creating and/or gathering data to develop understanding and drawing conclusions. Likewise, working as historians, engaging in historical inquiry, demands that children learn to pose authentic questions, select, and examine historical evidence, appreciate historical context, to evaluate divergent perspectives and to reach logical conclusions.

Teachers can help promote inquiry-based learning by:

- posing open-ended questions that stimulate curiosity and encourage children to think critically about historical events (for example “Why might this event have happened?” or “How might different people have experienced this event?”)
- providing opportunities for children to investigate geographical places and sites of interest in the locality
- exposing children to a wide range of primary sources (such as historical documents, maps, artefacts, photographs, music and other artforms) to provide first-hand accounts and evidence to be analysed
- promoting deep, sustained engagement and critical reflection with historical and geographical evidence from different perspectives
- 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
- assisting children to make connections with prior and new historical and geographical forms of knowledge and encouraging children to express and communicate their ideas frequently and openly
- assigning project-based work which incorporate hands-on activities, (such as creating historical reenactments, designing geographical maps or models), provide opportunities to visit sites of interest and promote the use of a variety of resources (including digital technologies)
- promoting and supporting thoughtful action arising from learning.

Story

Listening to and recounting stories is a natural part of every child's developmental journey. Stories activate children's imaginations, engage with curiosity and wonder, and as children grow, the diversity of stories they encounter expands, and narratives are explored in more depth.

The use of story in Social and Environmental Education contributes towards the development of children's historical knowledge of people in the past and their experiences. Working as historians, children examine stories about these people, exploring and developing an understanding of their emotions, intentions, behaviours, and motives. Meanwhile, working as geographers, children develop a sense of place and a sense of space for their locality, and consider stories of people in different places to connect their own experiences to that of others in the wider world. Engaging with stories of people in different places allows children to develop empathy with others.

Teachers can help promote the use of story by:

- ensuring that children encounter a wide range of stories from multiple perspectives and diverse backgrounds
- using oral History to provide a vivid source that shares with them a collection and analysis of historical information about individuals, families, events, or everyday experiences
- carefully selecting historical narratives that appeal to children's interests, following up with effective questioning strategies and allowing sufficient time for children to reflect
- introducing more complex myths and legends from different cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds (in Ireland and other countries) in an age-appropriate way
- discussing the chronology of events in stories
- promoting children's retelling of stories and recounting of past events
- encouraging creativity while ensuring that children's reconstructed narratives are grounded in historical evidence
- engaging children in storytelling activities where they reconstruct historical narratives from various perspectives, incorporating role-playing of different characters or creating alternative endings
- embracing whole-school approaches to engaging with stories.

Playful approaches

Throughout childhood, play is of value in and of itself and children have both a right and a desire to play. Play is an opportunity for teachers to engage with children in purposeful and sensitive ways. Learning in Social and Environmental Education can be greatly enhanced in a playful environment that is interactive, engaging, inclusive and supportive, providing opportunities for meaningful exploration of the world around them.

Through historical and geographical inquiry, working as historians and geographers, children investigate, examine, and explore, and as they progress through the stages, they engage in increasingly sophisticated and cognitively challenging playful approaches to learning.

Teachers can help promote playfulness by:

- creating playful, hands-on investigations and inspiring learning environments, both indoors and outdoors
- providing a wide range of tactile artefacts for children to engage with and examine
- allowing a safe space for spontaneity, creativity, and imaginative play
- encouraging children to record, retell and sequence historical events through various artforms, providing an array of materials such as modelling clay, paint or digital tools
- incorporate socio-dramatic play, role play and pretend play into storytelling
- using techniques such as freeze frames, mantle of the expert, thought tracking, teacher in role and hot seating to provide stimulating and experiential learning opportunities
- supporting risky play through the provision of opportunities to engage in physical, expressive play and place-based exploration in the local area which involves an element of challenge and adventure
- introducing geographical puzzles or challenges that require problem-solving skills
- creating scavenger hunts or trails where children explore the school grounds or local community to identify monuments, historical artefacts, geographical features, or landmarks.

Place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors

Place-based learning is a way of seeing, knowing, and understanding the world. It emphasises the connection between local heritage, cultures and landscapes and school life by bringing children's learning outdoors beyond the classroom. It provides opportunities for children to engage directly with the world around them, working as historians and geographers in real-life, relevant contexts.

Fieldwork and active learning experiences in the locality provide authentic contexts which deepen children's engagement in historical and geographical thinking and inquiry. Through fieldwork, children can investigate living things, features, and processes in the local outdoor environment. 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.

Teachers can help promote fieldwork and place-based learning by:

- allowing children to interact with nature directly through hands-on, practical activities observing and investigating changes in the natural world throughout the seasons to deepen children's understanding of, and connection to the natural world (for example field sketching, nature trails, scavenger hunts)
- promoting the use of nature journals or portfolios in which children record their place-based learning experiences and fieldwork across the school year
- providing children with opportunities to apply historical and geographical knowledge and skills such as map-reading and map-making in a real-life context
- inviting local experts or community members to share their knowledge and experiences with class groups or the whole-school community
- using educational apps or other online resources to enhance outdoor learning experiences
- providing opportunities for children to engage in inquiry-based project work, using a range of fieldwork techniques including observing, recording, analysing, and sharing/ presenting data with the school community and others in the local area through showcases or exhibitions.
- making cross curricular connections by using real world topics or themes for investigation, including local buildings and people in the past, cultural diversity, litter, parking, biodiversity and broader questions of environmental quality and sustainability
- incorporating the use of the senses as children are prompted to identify what they see, hear, touch, smell and taste when engaging in place-based learning and fieldwork outdoors

Dialogical pedagogy

Dialogical pedagogy emphasises open, interactive, and reciprocal communication, facilitating an active exchange of ideas and knowledge. The approach promotes empathy, respect, and multi-perspectivity, aiming to reduce stereotypes and misconceptions while cultivating informed awareness of theist, non-theist, and secular beliefs.

Dialogical pedagogy supports children's learning about religions, beliefs, and world views in Social and Environmental Education. Establishing nurturing relationships and a supportive environment creates a 'safe' space in which children feel respected, valued and are willing to share and listen to stories, experiences, perspectives, and opinions that may be different or similar to their own.

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.

Teachers can help promote dialogical pedagogy by:

- carefully selecting appropriate stories, texts, artefacts, visual images and videos to stimulate discussion on various curriculum topics
- 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
- establishing guidelines for respectful conversation within the classroom, emphasising the importance of listening, understanding, and expressing differing opinions in a compassionate manner
- using listening exercises to enhance children's listening skills and foster empathy (this can include activities where children actively listen to each other's perspectives without judgement)
- exploring artefacts from the major world religions, encouraging children to question and analyse sources critically, considering different interpretations and perspectives
- establishing partnerships with schools with greater levels of diversity
- 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.

Applying digital skills

Digital technologies afford access to a vast range of audio, visual and interactive sources and applications which can greatly enrich historical and geographical understanding. Digital archives and applications provide important primary and secondary sources of evidence that can be used to help children access data and records

Embedding digital technologies within Social and Environmental Education can enable children to draw informed conclusions about the past and present as they work as geographers and historians. Written, aural and visual accounts may be readily edited and modified, and children's work can be easily communicated both to others in the school community and to a wider audience, demonstrating the interconnectedness between people and places in our world.

The use of evolving technologies in this curriculum area also facilitates children's presentation of ideas and findings of their inquiries in a variety of ways, including modes that incorporate digital and non-digital representations and discipline-specific terms, and to wider and diverse audiences.

Teachers can help promote digital learning by:

- providing opportunities for children to engage with a variety of age-appropriate applications as they work as historians and as geographers
- using maps in a variety of formats (e.g., 3D maps, night satellites, aerial view photos) to teach about physical features and their impact on where/how people live
- using online databases such as census records as sources for historical inquiry
- using story maps which combine text, visuals and maps to communicate stories
- encouraging collaboration and partnerships with experts in the field of Social and Environmental Education (e.g., local, regional, and national organisations)
- use of communication and collaboration platforms in connecting and collaborating with other schools/experts/institutions on curriculum projects, topics, and themes of mutual interest
- using Virtual Reality and Augmented Reality in conducting virtual fieldwork and interactive experiences of the past
- creating digital books or e-books to share their learning or present project work.

6c. Assessing Social and Environmental Education

Assessment is an integral part of learning and teaching in Social and Environmental Education, enabling teachers to gather, record, interpret and use evidence which informs their preparation for future learning and teaching. It is an ongoing, continual, and collaborative process involving teachers and children and it is responsive to changes in context.

The *Primary Curriculum Framework* acknowledges that assessment exists along a continuum and advocates the use of a range of types of assessment. In Social and Environmental Education, where children's learning is premised on inquiry, communicating and understanding and connecting, a repertoire of approaches is necessary to gain a comprehensive understanding of children's progress in this curriculum area. Across the continuum of assessment, the child is viewed as an active agent who expresses opinions, shares views, and makes decisions, and the approaches outlined in this section support the learner in exercising agency, communicating ideas, and taking actions. These approaches recognise diversity by providing a range of ways for children to participate, express themselves and engage with learning in Social and Environmental Education.

In preparing learning opportunities in Social and Environmental Education, for all children in their school context, teachers' professional decisions are informed and shaped by:

- knowledge of the child and their prior learning
- knowledge of curriculum
- knowledge of pedagogy.

By using their knowledge of children, curriculum, and pedagogy to inform professional decisions, teachers can greatly enhance children's progression in learning in Social and Environmental Education.

The child and their prior learning

Teachers are attuned to the backgrounds, strengths, interests and needs of children and acknowledge the diverse ways that some children observe and interact with the world around them. Children's prior learning in Social and Environmental Education can be assessed through any activity that offers children opportunities to communicate their understanding, views, and reasoning (such as concept-mapping, brainstorming etc.)

The curriculum

Teachers' knowledge of the Social and Environmental Education curriculum as well as links that can be made with other curriculum areas enables them to prepare appropriate, authentic learning opportunities for historical and geographical inquiry. As children work towards Learning Outcomes through the three strands of Social and Environmental Education, developing and deepening their engagement as geographers and historians, assessment provides useful insights and information about their progress.

Pedagogy

Teachers draw on their professional judgement and reflection to refine and adjust both the pedagogical practices they choose and the learning environment they prepare to enrich children's

learning experiences in Social and Environmental Education. Professional conversations with colleagues, continuing professional development, use of the locality and access to rich indoor and outdoor learning environments help to provide appropriately playful and engaging learning experiences.

Opportunities for assessing learning in Social and Environmental Education

The ability to recognise social and environmental dimensions in children’s everyday activities and to extend the potential learning arising from these everyday activities is critical to planning for assessment. Children’s learning in this curriculum area can be assessed along the continuum of assessment presented in the *Primary Curriculum Framework* (as shown in the Figure 6 below).

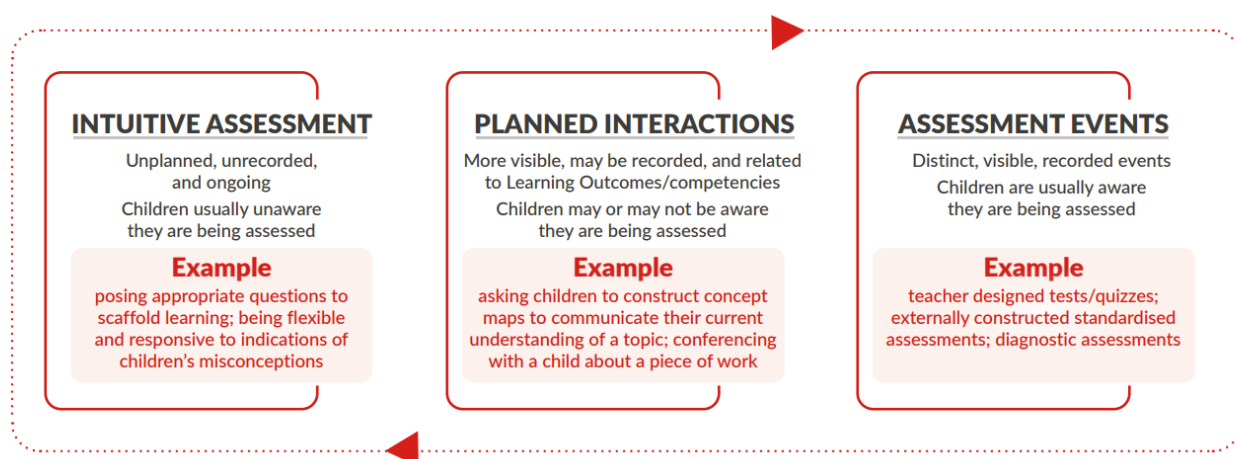


Figure 6: Types of assessment

During the learning process in Social and Environmental Education, assessment often happens incidentally, intuitively, and in response to unexpected moments. Embracing these unplanned opportunities for learning and seizing valuable insights from children's experiences, responses, questions, problems, and tasks, can yield rich assessment data.

Methods for assessing learning in Social and Environmental Education

Drawing on various methods of assessment in inter-changeable ways serves to build a rich picture of children’s learning. Below are some of the methods likely to be used by teachers in assessing children’s progress in Social and Environmental Education as they learn through the three elements of inquiring, communicating, and understanding and connecting.

Feedback: Feedback in Social and Environmental Education encourages children to think critically about historical events, social issues, and geographical phenomena. It can prompt them to analyse information, consider multiple perspectives and draw connections between different concepts. Furthermore, feedback can help illustrate the practical application of historical and geographical skills and concepts to real-world situations.

Observations: As children engage in working as historians and geographers, teachers actively monitor and observe the learning experiences, responding to opportune learning situations as they arise organically. Observing, listening to, and interacting with children at various stages of historical and geographical inquiry, including during outdoor learning activities, provides valuable insights for teachers.

Questioning: Questioning is an important facet of assessment in Social and Environmental Education. Encouraging children to ask questions develops their capacity as problem-posers and problem-solver and promotes deep geographical and historical thinking. Well-crafted, open, and probing questions from teachers can provide an insight into children's level of thinking and engagement within a particular inquiry.

Conferencing: Conferencing assesses children's communication skills including their ability to articulate ideas, express opinions and engage in constructive dialogue. For project-based assessments and inquiry-based learning, conferencing can be used to evaluate the process as well as the final product. Conferencing enables teachers to provide specific, targeted feedback tailored to individual children.

Tasks: Meaningful and relevant hands-on tasks and investigations can be extremely useful to provide an insight into children's level of understanding in Social and Environmental Education. Assessment tasks can be designed in numerous ways, including written, oral, practical or digital, and can take place indoors or outdoors to enable teachers to glean an in-depth understanding of children's learning.

Project-based learning: Providing opportunities for children to engage in investigative project-based learning in Social and Environmental Education offers a dynamic and effective approach to assessment. Children are required to applying their knowledge and understanding in an authentic, real-life context. Allocating time for children to display and showcase their work can prove valuable in enhancing teachers' assessment of children' engagement with their project.

Portfolios: The compilation of portfolios supports children in the development of historical and geographical thinking, and skills of analysing, evaluating, and recording which are crucial to the work of historians and geographers. Portfolios can be assembled, digitally or otherwise, to compile evidence of children's learning in Social and Environmental Education.

Teacher-designed tests: In conjunction with other forms of assessment, analyses from teacher-designed tests can provide an important source of detailed feedback on children's learning in Social and Environmental Education. Carefully designed assessments enable teachers to identify children's historical and geographical content knowledge in a particular curriculum topic or area of inquiry.

Peer and self-assessment: Teachers can implement strategies that encourage children to participate in peer and self-assessment as they reflect on and share feedback on learning in Social and Environmental Education. Cultivating an inclusive, respectful, and collaborative classroom atmosphere and learning setting is crucial for nurturing children's self-reflection and their consideration of their peers' learning as they engage in the work of historians and geographers.

Purposeful use of documentation supports good assessment practice. Documentation arises out of the process of gathering evidence, and includes the annotations and notes made by the teacher. Such documentation contributes to the rich, full picture that teachers need of each child as a learner in order to provide the support and experiences to support progression and development across the curriculum.

7. Outline of the Online Social and Environmental Education Online Toolkit

When developed, the Primary Social and Environmental Education Online Toolkit will provide practical support for teachers in building rich learning experiences for children. The components of the online toolkit will include support materials and examples of children's learning.

8. Glossary

Term	Description
Artefact	A human-made article of historical interest, including as a source of evidence.
Beliefs	Ideas and convictions that people hold to be true.
Biodiversity	The variety of living things, such as plants, animals, and insects, and how they all work together in different habitats and larger ecosystems
Civilisation	A people or nation in the past that was socially and politically organised.
Commemoration	Public act of remembrance of historically significant event or person.
Disposition	An enduring habit of mind and action. The tendency to respond to situations in characteristic ways.
Ecosystem	A community of living organisms, such as plants and animals, interacting with each other and their physical environment in a specific area.
Empathy	Understanding the motivations, actions, values, and beliefs of human beings.
Environment	<p><i>Human:</i> Areas which have been altered by the presence of people, farming activities, the extraction of resources, the provision of roads and other communication links and the construction of buildings.</p> <p><i>Natural:</i> Formed largely through the interaction of the Earth's physical features and processes, its flora and fauna, e.g., tropical rainforest, a peatland or a rocky seashore may be examples of natural environments.</p>
Environmental Justice	Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in the development and implementation of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. It aims to ensure that everyone has equal access to a healthy and safe environment.
Historical consciousness	Seeing the world historically, informed by an awareness of historical concepts, showing awareness of 'big picture' and of time and place.
Human rights	Basic entitlements that protect the dignity, equality, and freedoms of every person, regardless of cultural, social, or political differences.
Learning environment	Describes any space, indoor and outdoor, in which children learn or develop their understanding.
Locality	The local geographic area including people and places within the direct experiences of the child.
Migration	Movement of people from one place to another, either to or from a different country or within a country.

Multi-perspectivity	Multi-perspectivity refers to the consideration of various viewpoints, opinions, or perspectives when analysing or discussing a topic.
Risky play	Risky play can broadly be defined as physical, expressive, and exciting play, which involves an element of risk, challenge, and adventure.
Rituals	The traditions, habits and actions that are repeated in a family, community, or society.
Social justice	Social justice is the fair and equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within a society, ensuring that all individuals have equal access to basic needs and opportunities.
Social Systems	The ways in which people connect, communicate, and collaborate within large groups, communities, or populations.
Sustainability	Responsible use and preservation of resources to meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It involves considering the three pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic aspects, to ensure a balance that promotes a healthy planet, fair and just societies, and long-term economic wellbeing.
Worldview	A person's fundamental belief and perspective that shapes their understanding of the world.

Appendix 1: Concepts and Skills of Social and Environmental Education

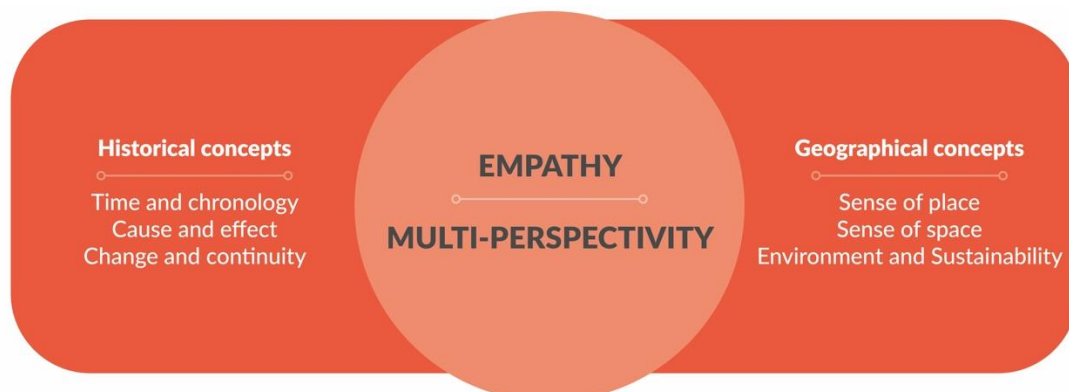
This appendix provides an overview of the concepts and skills of 'Working as a Historian' and 'Working as a Geographer' within Social and Environmental Education. This information is presented as an appendix to the draft specification for consultation in 2024. This information will be situated in the Social and Environmental Education Online Toolkit on curriculumonline.ie when finalised.

Social and Environmental Education provides opportunities for children to experience and engage in the work of historians and geographers to develop an understanding of the social, historical, and geographical dimensions of life and to investigate the world around them including the human experience of the past. By embedding the important concepts and skills of 'working as a historian' and 'working as a geographer', children will be equipped with valuable skills, knowledge, attitudes, and dispositions that will support them in realising their full potential as individuals, and as members of local, national, and global communities. 'Working as a Historian' and 'Working as a Geographer' seek to include a range of important historical and geographical concepts and skills that underpin the Learning Outcomes for Social and Environmental Education across stages 1–4. These important concepts and skills are developed within the context of carefully planned curriculum topics, themes, and case studies.

Concepts of Social and Environmental Education

Concepts refer to broad, overarching ideas or themes that children explore to develop a deeper understanding of the world around them. These concepts support teachers in planning for, organising and connecting content, fostering critical thinking, and helping children as they understand and make meaningful connections between curriculum topics. While there are concepts specific to History and concepts specific to Geography, they are complementary of each other. There are two important common concepts, (1) Empathy and; (2) Multi-perspectivity, that complement History and Geography within Social and Environmental Education.

Concepts of Social and Environmental Education



Common concepts

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. It also entails showing an interest in and care about people past and present, recognising and appreciating their human emotions and connecting the experiences of other people to their own. A sense of empathy is essential if a child is to become critically aware of their own attitudes and those of others, and foster mutual respect and tolerance, empowering children to make a valuable contribution as individuals and members of a diverse society.

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. A sense of multi-perspectivity equips children with crucial skills and attitudes, including critical thinking and cultural awareness. These qualities are valuable for children's personal growth and active participation in an interconnected and diverse world.

Geographical concepts

Sense of Place

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. 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.

Sense of Space

Sense of Space is an understanding of where places are and how they are interconnected. Sense of Space develops as children explore their surroundings and form a knowledge of where places and objects are located, as well as the respective geographical scale of these places and objects. Through developing children's spatial awareness, they can begin to recognise how and why places are related and interconnected and fit within other places.

Sense of Environment and Sustainability

Awareness of Environment and Sustainability is an understanding of the surroundings and conditions within which humans or other living things interact. Children's sense of the environment is developed through exploring and investigating human and natural environments and the interactions between them. Sustainability means living in a manner that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Children's sense of sustainability is developed through fostering an awareness and understanding of the environmental, social, and economic aspects of life.

Historical concepts

Time and chronology

Developing an understanding of time and chronology is considered a crucial aspect of learning History. The concept of 'time' in History is broader than objective mathematical time. Through an understanding of time and chronology, children are enabled to place historical people, and events in time, contributing to 'big picture' understanding.

Exploring and examining historical periods entails moving beyond a knowledge of dates and period labels to being able to visualise the period in question by recognising the aspects of culture and key characteristics of the time. A strong understanding of historical time also helps children to connect the past to the present supporting their sense of identity and belonging, and their ability to function as citizens in a democratic society.

Cause and effect

This concept involves children developing an understanding that events in the past can have multiple causes and effects. Moreover, children recognise that these causes and effects can be connected, and that the consequences of these events can range from the immediate to short and long term.

Change and continuity

This concept involves children developing an understanding of the extent, nature, direction and pace of change and continuity by examining and comparing similarities and differences between the past and present, as well as across various historical periods.

The concepts above are underpinned by the central idea of historical consciousness.

Historical consciousness refers to children's ability to see the world historically, informed by an awareness of historical concepts, demonstrating an understanding of 'big picture' and of time and place. Being historically conscious means that children are aware of how changes, whether short-term or long-term, affect people in different places and time. They recognise how the world around them has been shaped by people and events from the past and use this awareness to consider concepts from different points of view, being fair and unbiased. Children understand and respect why people in the past did what they did, considering the circumstances of their time.

Skills of Social and Environmental Education

Children’s learning in Social and Environmental Education involves engagement in historical and geographical inquiry. As historians and geographers, children work both independently and collaboratively, drawing on a range of common skills including:

- Using evidence and sources
- Interpreting and analysing
- Evaluating and decision-making
- Communicating
- Questioning / investigating

Through the development and application of these skills, across stages 1 – 4, children are enabled to develop an appreciation and understanding of the world, past and present, in which they live. They are empowered to become active, engaged, and empathetic members of their communities and society at large.

Skills of Social and Environmental Education



Common skills

Using evidence and sources

Children conduct active, hands-on collection and investigation of evidence and source materials in relation to inquiry, answering questions and solving problems. In working with evidence, children assess sources of information for validity and reliability.

Interpreting and analysing

Children examine an array of sources, in different formats, thinking critically and creatively about the evidence being analysed and considering multiple perspectives.

Evaluating and decision-making

Children evaluate data and investigate evidence to draw and justify conclusions. Through their engagement in historical and geographical inquiry, they develop hypotheses and make informed decisions.

Communicating

Children convey information, ideas and interpretations related to their investigations and inquiries as historians and geographers. They incorporate evidence from historical and geographical sources to create descriptions and develop responses using a variety of media.

Questioning / Investigating

Children develop and pose questions, make predictions, plan, and conduct inquiries through gathering, observing, measuring, recording, and evaluating evidence from a range of sources. This includes working with artefacts and engaging in purposeful fieldwork. Children record and represent their findings from these inquiries in a variety of formats.

Historical skills

Historical skills refer to the essential tools that empower children to understand stories of the past. Working as historians, children learn how to investigate, analyse, and interpret historical events and sources. Through critical examination of a wide range of evidence sources children develop an understanding of our shared past.

Historical thinking

Children, as historians, apply historical thinking to draw on the concepts of cause and effect, continuity and change, and historical significance to develop an understanding of the past. They observe patterns of continuity and change and the intended and unintended effects of those changes.

Chronological thinking

Children, as historians, employ chronological thinking skills in placing historical people, events, and periods within a broad historical sequence. The development of chronological thinking skills promotes children's understanding of the concepts of change and continuity and cause and effect. Children develop an awareness of how specific events are interconnected and influenced by what happened before and after.

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.

Geographical skills

Geographical skills refer to the tools that empower children to navigate and comprehend the world around them. Working as geographers, children learn how to observe, analyse, and interpret geographical information, developing an understanding of the Earth's dynamic features and diverse landscapes.

Mapping/Graphicacy Skills

Children, as geographers, engage in map-making and map-reading, applying the fundamentals of mapping – location, scale, symbols, perspective, and direction – to understand size and scale of places and location of places in both natural and built environments. Children use their geographical knowledge to identify and explain patterns and trends in data, making generalisations and predictions and observing connections and interrelationships.

Visual Interpretation and Communication Skills

Children, as geographers, engage in collecting, working with, and responding to pictorial and virtual representations of a place (e.g. photographs, videos, drawings, and maps); creating visual representations of features and places through drawings, maps, models, and digital technologies; creating and responding to pictorial and virtual representations of different environments (e.g. photographs, videos, drawings, sketches, maps, and Virtual Reality/Augmented Reality applications).



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