

Proposals for structure and time in a redeveloped primary curriculum: For consultation

The NCCA has published proposals related to structure and time in the primary curriculum. This is the first time, in almost twenty years, that those working in primary education have had an opportunity to consider the structure of the curriculum, what it should comprise and how time should be allocated within it.

Since its launch in 1999, the curriculum in our primary schools has helped over one million children to learn and develop. It was a curriculum of its time but these are different and changing times. Through research, we now know more about how children learn and the childhoods they have here in Ireland. Society has changing expectations of a primary education; there are calls for more time in school to be given to children's physical and mental wellbeing, and requests for new areas of learning to be introduced. We also now have two years of universal pre-school provision. So, it is timely to ask *what type of curriculum do we want for our children in primary schools into the next decade?*

The first set of proposals looks at curriculum structure. This includes the possibility of moving away from subjects in early primary and making stronger links with what children do and learn in pre-school. Subjects could be replaced with themes such as those in *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* (2009) or with curriculum areas. We know that subjects support children in deepening their knowledge and in developing skills in specific disciplines, so an important question to pose is *from what point in the curriculum should we hold onto subjects?*

The second set of proposals considers a different way to think about, and use time in the school day. These proposals are designed to offer more flexibility to schools in deciding how best to use time to support children in their learning. Using time more flexibly could enable schools to use particular teaching methodologies such as child-led play in the early years of primary school, and extended projects in the later years.

Both sets of proposals are informed by national and international research, curriculum reviews and evaluations, and work with settings and schools. The proposals are intended to begin a discussion about the redevelopment of the primary curriculum. This initial consultation will run through spring 2017 and include a conference on March 28th in Dublin Castle. The NCCA will use the findings to draft an overview of a redeveloped primary curriculum which will be the focus of further consultation in late 2017 and into 2018. Join this important conversation on primary education. See www.ncca.ie/timeandstructure in the new year for details of how to get involved.

The proposals are set out in detail in the document, *Proposals for structure and time allocation in a redeveloped primary curriculum: For consultation* which is found at www.ncca.ie/timeandstructure.