

09 March, 2006 - Hanafin launches DVD to give parents more information

‘Unique venture enhances partnerships between schools and families’

The Minister for Education and Science, Mary Hanafin T.D., today launched a DVD for Parents - *The what, why and how of children's learning in primary school* - in Scoil Ide and Scoil Fhursa in Kilmore West, Dublin. The DVD was developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment for parents in response to their desire for more information on the Primary School Curriculum so they can give greater support to their children's learning.

The new curriculum, which was introduced in all schools in 1999, teaches familiar subjects through a more innovative and modern approach with a new emphasis on skills. It also provides important new areas of study such as social, personal and health education (SPHE) and science for all.

Changes in how subjects are taught have been phased in to give teachers time to become comfortable with the new approach. This has been underpinned by a strong in-service training programme provided by the Department of Education and Science for all primary school teachers in each of the subject areas. To date over €25m has been spent providing this training on the new curriculum for teachers.

In the first phase of a review of the curriculum, the NCCA consulted parents on its impact and found that parents were extremely positive about the new curriculum and had lots of questions on what their children were learning in school. It also emerged in the review that schools, teachers, and principals wanted support in engaging parents more in the life of the school.

Speaking at the launch of the DVD today Minister Hanafin said “this DVD is the result of a unique process in which the Council asked parents about the challenges they faced supporting their child's education and what they needed to do this. The response was overwhelming – parents asked for more information on what their children were learning, how they were learning and on how best, they as parents could support their children's learning.

The result is the DVD - it tells us the learning stories of five individual children both at home and at school. Most importantly it tells us how best we can help our children make the most of their educational opportunities.”

The DVD begins by emphasising the role of parents in children's education. It explains how schools are structured, how the curriculum is organised and how children with special needs are supported. It also gives good advice on homework and information on assessment.

As well as Irish and English language versions the DVD menu also has Polish, French and Lithuanian language versions. It also contains the option to include sub-titles in English.

In the coming weeks the DVD will be made available to schools and homes. Schools are currently planning how they will distribute the DVD to each family – some may do so through parent teacher meetings, others may hold viewings and discussions with parent associations before doing so.

Minister Hanafin said “watching this DVD makes me proud of Irish children. It makes me especially proud of our schools, teachers and families who care so much about the education of their children. This will also be a useful resource for the many international families who now live here and contribute so much to our economic, social and cultural life.”

Paying tribute to the work of the NCCA in bringing the DVD to completion, Minister Hanafin said “this is a unique venture and one which I have no doubt will enhance the excellent partnerships that are developing between schools and families.”