



Circular 0018/2022

Information in relation to Standardised Testing and Other Matters – Academic Year 2021/22 and Subsequent Years

To: Boards of Management, Principal Teachers and Teaching Staff of Primary Schools and Special Schools and Chief Executives of ETBs.

Sections 1 and 2 of this circular set out important information for schools regarding Standardised Testing returns in respect of the 2021/2022 academic year. Sections 3 to 13 provide updates on a number of curriculum and other matters which are relevant to primary schools and special schools.

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1. Standardised Testing in Primary Schools – Returns for 2021/22

Thank you for your continued co-operation in providing the results of your standardised testing via the Esinet online system. We fully acknowledge the work of school staff in this regard.

Assessment is an enabler of effective teaching and learning. This includes regularly evaluating pupils' work and periodically reporting results to pupils and parents/guardians. All forms of assessment, including standardised tests, can be used by teachers to inform teaching and learning so as to ensure that programmes of learning in literacy and numeracy are tailored to meet the needs of individual pupils/class groups.

Assessment Guidelines for Schools (<https://ncca.ie/media/1351/assessment-guidelines.pdf>) provide schools with information on a variety of assessment methods, advice to schools on developing, implementing and reviewing their policy on assessment and advice on the legislative requirements for schools in communicating information about children's progress and achievement. **Circular 56/11** (<https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/fb6452652f1d496996393ffef32b0c4c/>) provides information on assessing children's literacy and numeracy achievement.

The results of standardised testing can help schools to evaluate progress in literacy and numeracy, help to pinpoint areas for improvement and will support teachers in ensuring that literacy and numeracy learning experiences meet pupils' needs. Results of any one standardised test should not be used in isolation, nor used as baseline data for predicting future achievements, nor for solely informing decisions regarding the provision of interventions or targets within learning plans for pupils. Information from ability tests, teacher observations, parental reports, as well as the views of the pupils are also very important aspects of a thorough assessment. An information leaflet, published in 2021, available at <https://assets.gov.ie/134502/667013d3-f6fc-4bac-abc3-fa6cef4fe66c.pdf>, gives further advice on how standardised tests form part of a broad range of assessment methods to inform the teaching and learning process and how the data can be used and how best to ensure sensitive communication about testing.

Your school will shortly receive funding in respect of 2021/22 standardised testing. These funds should be used to purchase test instruments and materials such as teachers' manuals, test scoring services or test-related software offered by test providers. Tests are available as follows:

- The Educational Research Centre (ERC) provides standardised tests in both paper and online formats, i.e. Drumcondra Primary Reading Test (English) – revised, Drumcondra Primary Mathematics Test (in English and Irish) – revised and for Irish-medium schools, Irish reading - Triail Ghaeilge Dhroim Conrach do Bhunscoileanna Gaeltachta agus Lán-Ghaeilge. Information on these tests is available at www.tests.erc.ie



Both online and paper tests can be ordered on ERC DOTS (*Drumcondra Online Testing System*) <https://www.tests.erc.ie/>. Queries can be addressed regarding the online tests to dots@erc.ie, and queries on the ERC's paper-based tests to tests@erc.ie.

- Mary Immaculate College provides paper-based MICRA-T (Mary Immaculate College Reading Attainment Tests) and SIGMA-T (Standardised Irish Graded Mathematics Attainment Tests) tests. These tests are available to purchase from www.cjfallon.ie.

Any funds remaining after the standardised testing costs have been met may be spent on diagnostic tests, in accordance with a school's needs.

During May/early June 2022 the tests should be carried out, in accordance with circulars 0056/2011 and 0018/2012, available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/circulars/>. **The results of these tests must be uploaded onto the Esinet portal on or before Wednesday 22nd June 2022.**

Note that the administration of standardised tests to whole classes is inappropriate at infant class level. Standardised tests, if used before the end of first class, should be administered in small groups only. See www.ncca.ie for more information.

Return of data to the Department of Education

In order to enter and approve the data please log on to the Esinet portal, click on 'School Data Collection', and then 'Literacy and Numeracy, read the instructions before clicking 'Continue'. It is particularly important that all schools, including special or infant schools without a second class, read and follow the directions in the step-by-step guide to uploading the returns

<https://www.gov.ie/en/service/af92e8-standardised-testing-in-primary-schools/>.

Reporting and Using the Results of Assessments to Improve Pupil Learning

Schools are reminded of their reporting obligations as per Part 7 of Circular 0056/2011. These include:

- **Reporting to parents/guardians:** Schools should issue a written report, explaining the results to parents/guardians in sufficient time, before the closure of the school for the summer vacation, to allow parents/guardians a reasonable opportunity to seek meeting(s) with the teacher(s) and/or principal to discuss the written report, if necessary. Information for parents/guardians on understanding standardised test scores can be found on ncca.ie, https://ncca.ie/media/1429/understanding-standardscores_eng.pdf



- **Using report card templates:** All primary schools must use the standard report card template for reporting to parents/guardians on pupils' progress and achievement at school. Based on feedback from schools during the 2020/2021 school year, the number of reporting templates available has been extended. The additional templates are intended to support the inclusion of appropriate reporting information for children attending Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) classes in primary and special schools and special classes in primary schools. The Report Card Creator can be accessed here: <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/reporting-and-transfer/report-card-templatescreator/>
- **Reporting, analysing and using assessment information at school level;** Schools must report information from standardised tests to their board of management;
- **Reporting of data to the Department of Education;** Reporting standardised test results to the Department of Education should be done via Esinet portal: <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/af92e8-standardised-testing-in-primary-schools/>

2. National and International Testing

As per Circular 0056/2011 (see link above) the Department is requesting that schools do their utmost to participate in large-scale assessments conducted by the Educational Research Centre (ERC) on behalf of the Department of Education. The Department and the ERC greatly appreciates schools' continued participation in these studies.

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2023: Field Trial March 9th - April 8th 2022

TIMSS assesses the Mathematics and Science skills of students at fourth class in primary school and in second year at post-primary school level. TIMSS, first conducted in 1995 takes place every four years. Ireland has taken part in 1995, 2011 (at primary level only), 2015 and in 2019. Ireland will participate in TIMSS 2023 for which a field trial, in advance of the main study in 2023, is being held in forty primary schools and thirty post-primary schools from **March 9th - April 8th 2022**.

If you are a school selected to take part in the 2022 field trial or the main study in 2023, and have any questions or concerns, please contact the TIMSS team at timss.ireland@erc.ie.

3. Special Education

Schools will be aware that the Department of Education has introduced a new system of allocating Special Education teachers to mainstream schools. The new model of allocating resources came into effect from September 2017. Allocations for schools were updated in 2019 and are designed to be updated in future, at regular intervals, every two to three years.



Allocations are now based on a school's educational profile, which includes consideration of the percentage of students performing below a certain threshold on standardised test results. The position remains that standardised test data being returned will continue to be used in the future to inform the development of school profiles and to allocate special education teachers to schools.

For the profiled allocations, an aggregate of primary school standardised test results over a number of years will be used to develop the standardised test values for primary schools.

The use of an aggregate of more than one years' data is designed to provide the most accurate picture of a school's educational profile over a period of time, and also to ensure that schools are not penalised for improving performances generally, or over a shorter period of time. For future revisions of the Special Education Teacher model an aggregate of the most recent number of years standardised test data will continue to be used to develop school profiles, with the exclusion of the 2019/2020 school year data.

Additional information for the 2021/22 school year:

It is important to ensure that the Continuum of Support plans for individual pupils with special educational needs are reviewed by schools as soon as possible to ensure that they are up-to-date. This review should be done in collaboration with the relevant school staff, parents/guardians and the pupils themselves, where appropriate.

4. Transitions

Early learning and care settings to Primary school

As part of the actions arising from Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011–2020, the NCCA has developed *Mo Scéal* (<https://ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/mo-sc%C3%A9al/>), reporting templates to support the transition from early learning and care settings to primary school. The purpose of these templates is to improve arrangements for the transfer of information about the progress and achievement of children between all state-funded early learning and care settings¹ and primary schools. The templates and the support materials are a resource which early learning and care settings and schools can use as they work together to make young children's transition into primary school as positive as it can be.

In the case of Gaeltacht schools, a *Guide for Gaeltacht Primary Schools: Strengthening Links between Primary Schools and Early Learning and Care (ELC)*

¹ The early learning and care settings are participating in the state funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme providing two years of free preschool.



Settings (<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/15288-guide-for-gaeltacht-primary-schools-strengthening-links-between-primary-schools-and-early-learning-and-care-elc-settings/>) has been developed to help schools to create collaborative links with their local naíonraí that will support the transition of the children to the primary school and the promotion of the Irish language.

Primary school to Post Primary school

The successful transition of sixth class pupils to post-primary education in 2022 will require ongoing collaboration and careful planning between primary schools and post-primary schools. This may happen at a local level through transition programmes, open days/nights, including on-line events, meetings between teachers and families as well as through the transfer of key information to the post-primary schools. The NEPS Continuum of Support and the Home School Liaison Officers in DEIS schools can also be utilised to support the transition of pupils. Communication between the primary and post-primary schools and with the parents/guardians and pupils is of utmost importance in order to ensure progression is as seamless as possible. Sharing information about pupils' learning is a key way of supporting their transition from primary to post-primary school.

Since 2014/15, schools are **required** to use the Education Passport materials to support the reporting and transfer of pupil information at the end of sixth class. Schools should ensure that an Education Passport for each pupil is sent to the relevant post-primary school following confirmation of enrolment and ideally, by the end of June. All materials supporting this process are available at <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/reporting-and-transfer/>.

The transfer of children in need of additional support can be facilitated through the NEPS Student Transfer Form which should be completed and signed by parents/guardians before sending to the relevant post-primary school. To ensure the allocation of specialised resources, such as special needs assistants, assistive technology or school transport, in a timely manner NCSE application deadlines should be considered. All materials supporting this process are available at: <https://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/National-Educational-Psychological-Service-NEPS-/NEPS-Guides/Transfer-from-Primary-to-Post-primary/>

Transitions within primary schools

The *Primary School Curriculum* is designed as an eight year course with children progressing to the next class at the end of each school year. In line with the Department's policy (Circular 0032/2003) <https://www.gov.ie/en/circular/d25579844002483499950c4780baba87/>, children should only be allowed to repeat a year for educational reasons in exceptional circumstances. While the impact of COVID-19 continued to present challenges for many pupils during the 2021/22 school, it is not envisaged that pupils should be retained in the same



grade for another year as a result of this impact. The primary curriculum is flexible and child-centred, and can be adapted to meet children's needs. Class teachers and support teachers, where relevant, should facilitate sharing of appropriate information to ensure transitions to a new class level are as seamless as possible.

5. Primary Curriculum Developments

Consultation on the Draft Primary Curriculum Framework

The NCCA published the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* for consultation in February 2020. Drawing on work with the Schools' Forum², research, and work with education partners and wider stakeholders, the draft framework sets out proposals for the redevelopment of the primary curriculum. The impact of COVID-19 required changes to the consultation timeline with a revised two-phased approach put in place. Phase one closed at the end of January 2021 and phase 2 opened in October 2021 with a focus on re-engagement with teachers, school leaders, parents/guardians and children.

Since October last, teachers, school leaders and parents/guardians have engaged with and contributed to the consultation through:

- online focus groups
- online questionnaires (for educators and parents/guardians)
- written submissions
- consultation materials for school-based workshops.

In addition, a consultation with children has taken place, the findings from which will ensure that children's voices are represented in the finalisation of the framework. The consultation on the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* closed on February 28th, 2022.

Feedback from teachers, school leaders, parents/guardians, children and national stakeholder groups during the consultation will play an important role in finalising the details within the *Primary Curriculum Framework*. Upon completion in early 2023, this framework will then guide the NCCA's work in developing a specification for each curriculum area. A timeline for the introduction of the redeveloped curriculum will be set out by the Department of Education.

The NCCA will disseminate updates on the continuing work of primary curriculum redevelopment through e-bulletins and info@ncca.ie. You can sign up for these here:

² The NCCA established a Schools' Forum consisting of 43 primary schools, post-primary schools and preschools to support and shape the review and redevelopment of the primary curriculum. This has now been extended to 60 schools and together, these represent the rich diversity of school contexts in Ireland



<https://ncca.us18.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=3fd7ed695f4522f76fba99bcf&id=9e0cee1c22>

Consultation on the *Draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum*

During the school year 2017/2018 the NCCA published and consulted on the *Draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum* for stages 1 and 2 (junior infants to second class). This consultation, along with work with schools has informed the development of the *Draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum* for stages 1 – 4 which is being prepared for consultation. The draft curriculum is based on considerable research which can be accessed at: <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/maths-curriculum>. Like the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile*, the *Draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum* uses learning outcomes to describe children's mathematical learning during their time in primary school.

NCCA is now holding a consultation on the *Draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum* for stages 1 - 4. The consultation will include:

- work with a network of schools, reflective of all school types
- consultation with children
- questionnaires (for educators and parents/guardians)
- written submissions.

In addition, NCCA will be exploring the potential of the draft curriculum for stages 1 and 2 to connect with current practice in science and technology. Support materials for teachers have been developed to accompany the *Draft Primary Mathematics Curriculum* and will be subject to consultation also.

The consultation will take place on a phased basis, which began with work with schools and the consultation with children in late-March, followed by the publication of questionnaires and written submission templates in late-April. The consultation will close in June 2022. Further updates on the consultation can be found at:

<https://ncca.ie/en/primary/primary-developments/maths-curriculum/>

Primary Language Supports

The *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* for stages 1 – 4 (junior infants to sixth class) was published in September 2019.

The curriculum is supported by an online *Primary Language Toolkit/Uirlisí Úsáide Teanga na Bunscoile*. The toolkit includes:

- *Examples of Children's Learning/Samplaí d'Fhoghlaim Teanga na bPáistí* - Developed with teachers, these Examples give insights into how teachers work with learning outcomes to make decisions about what they teach, the types of activities, experiences and pedagogies they use, and the information they gather on how well children are doing in their language learning.



- *Support Materials for teachers/Ábhar Tacaíochta do Mhúinteoirí* – Developed with language experts these provide a range of research-based teaching strategies and methodologies to help children's language development in both English and Irish.
- *Progression Continua/Contanaim Dul chun Cinn* - The Continua provide practical support to teachers in building rich pictures of children's language learning and in using these pictures to support children's progression towards the Learning Outcomes in English and Irish.

You can access the online curriculum and toolkit by visiting

www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Primary-Language/.

To support the use of Irish at home a suite of supports for parents/guardians, *Gaeilge sa Bhaile*, have been published. These include:

- An Ghaeilge Mórthimpeall Orm / Irish All Around Me
- Mol an Óige agus Tiocfaidh Sí! / Praise, Praise, Praise!
- Ag Labhairt is ag Léamh as Gaeilge / Speaking and Reading in Irish
- Spreagadh agus Spraoi sa Bhaile / Fun at Home.

These can be shared with parents/guardians at different times of the year encouraging the use of Irish in the home, for instance at the start of the school year, during reporting, and throughout Seachtain na Gaeilge. You can access these at <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/resources-for-parents/>.

A revised programme of professional development support for the Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile was outlined in the communication to schools [Sustained Support for PLC/CTB and Guidelines on Preparation for Teaching and Learning](#) (April 2021). In view of the impact of covid and more recently PDST advisors acting as substitute teachers in schools an updated communication on sustained support will issue in the coming weeks.

Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning

Since the launch of the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* in 2019, teachers and school leaders have been planning with both content objectives from the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) along with broad learning outcomes from the new language curriculum.

To support all primary and special school teachers in their preparation for teaching and learning, guidance has been developed through a collaboration led by the Department of Education and involving the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), and the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).



This guidance, launched in 2021, describes a renewed understanding of ‘preparation for teaching and learning’. It presents preparation as a process involving three aspects – invisible, visible, and recorded preparation. It also provides details on ‘key pillars’ that support preparation including; knowledge of the children, knowledge of the curriculum, and knowledge of pedagogy. Importantly, it provides clarity on how to demonstrate preparation to school leaders and during inspections. Crucially the guidance attempts to provide clarity on the nature and volume of paperwork required when planning.

The Guidance is supported by an extensive set of support materials including:

- two recorded webinars
- recordings of teachers sharing their views on the guidance
- a Frequently Asked Questions document
- an inter-agency video supporting the key messages of the guidance
- a suite of videos presenting ‘preparation in action’ from a range of contexts.

All materials related to the guidance can be accessed on the NCCA website here <https://ncca.ie/en/primary/preparation/>.

6. Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) Supports

During the *Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) across Primary and Post-primary Schools* teachers requested greater guidance on the teaching of RSE across the primary years. In response, the NCCA have developed a resource toolkit to support teachers in RSE within *Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)*.

The toolkit provides a single access point for freely available materials developed by Irish state agencies and organisations with expertise in SPHE/RSE. The toolkit is organised by class level and linked directly to the SPHE Curriculum ensuring age-appropriate material is available for all primary schools.

The toolkit also hosts a range of support materials that offer guidance on preparing to teach and teaching SPHE/RSE. Examples include:

- Creating the conditions for positive classroom discussions
- Fostering partnerships with parents/guardians
- Fostering relationships, expectations, and boundaries
- Ongoing reflection to develop your professional practice
- Reflecting on my practice and exploring my experiences, attitudes, values and beliefs
- Responding to challenging discussions, topics and questions
- Using a wide variety of active methodologies to meet the needs of the children in your class
- Considering the use and role of guest speakers
- Choosing, creating and working with resources to teach SPHE/RSE



- Using inclusive and respectful language.

The SPHE/RSE resource portal and toolkit will continue to be added to over time and can be accessed here: www.curriculumonline.ie/Primary/Curriculum-Areas/Social,-Personal-and-Health-Education/SPHE-RSE-Toolkit/.

In tandem with the development of the online Toolkit, preparation for redeveloping and updating the SPHE curriculum has begun. Updated curricula will be developed for Primary, Junior Cycle and Senior Cycle. It is expected that a revised Junior Cycle specification will be completed by the end of 2022, following a period of public consultation. Updated specifications for primary and senior cycle will follow immediately afterwards.

7. Continuing Professional Development on Assessment

At present, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) incorporates assessment, both summative and formative, in all aspects of Continuous Professional Development (CPD), given that assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. Assessment as a central component of circular and pedagogical practice, features in PDST CPD provision during seminars, workshops, webinars and in particular within the context of school based support, where the PDST can work with teachers in exploring how standardised test results can meaningfully inform future teaching and learning in classrooms. With regard to the particular school context, the School Self Evaluation (SSE) process/ DEIS action planning, where relevant, is central to PDST's facilitation of professional reflection and dialogue in this regard given the inextricable link between school improvement and assessment.

- More information on the CPD available can be found at: <https://pdst.ie/primary>
- The NCCA Assessment Guidelines (2007) were developed to support teachers and assist schools in the development of assessment policy, it can be found online here: <https://www.ncca.ie/media/1351/assessment-guidelines.pdf>

8. Supporting Literacy and Numeracy

The Department of Education is committed to raising standards in literacy and numeracy in early years, primary and post primary settings. In 2011 the Department published the Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life: The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People 2011–2020. The Interim review of the strategy was published in 2017 with updated and new targets for literacy and numeracy, identifying the priority areas such as numeracy and DEIS.

Work has commenced on the development of a follow on Literacy and Numeracy strategy. The strategy will be informed by robust research to include consideration of national and international practice, by stakeholder engagement and public consultation. It is intended that the new strategy would be published by the end of 2022.



Resources

To support the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, the following resources have been developed by the Department's National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS):

- **The Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years (English & Gaeilge)**

The Balanced Approach to Literacy Development in the Early Years draws on international research, evidence based practice and samples of that practice in Irish primary schools to give a coherent and comprehensive guide to teachers. This is a resource that can be used by class teachers working with children from Junior Infants to First Class. It may also be helpful to schools who have identified the need to improve reading standards as part of the school-self-evaluation process.

<https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/97aa18-national-educational-psychological-service-neps-resources-and-public/>

- **Cur Chuige Cothromaithe i leith Fhorbairt na Litearthachta i**

mBunranganna na Bunscoile is the product of a collaborative project undertaken by NEPS along with An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta & Gaelscolaíochta (COGG). This resource is wholly tailored to the teaching of literacy in the Irish language, with a focus of those children who receive their education through the medium of Irish. It includes 16 short video clips of good practice in action. It is available at <https://www.gov.ie/ga/bailiuchan/8290e7-none/>

- **Effective Interventions for Struggling Readers**

This online resource is now in its second edition (2019). It is a guide for teachers, particularly special education teachers, which outlines evidence-based approaches to teaching reading to struggling readers. The guide covers the age range 6 to 18 years. It encompasses all students with reading difficulties. It includes:

- How best to organise learning support for struggling readers
- Information about interventions that have been found to be effective in Irish schools
- A range of resources to support literacy teaching

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/0053fd-effective-interventions-for-struggling-readers-a-good-practice-guide/>

9. Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017–2022 – Gaeltacht Areas

Following an extensive consultation process, the Department of Education published the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017–2022 (the Policy) in October 2016. The Policy



is a central commitment of the Government's 20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010–2030 and the 5-year Action Plan for Irish 2018-2022 and the Department of Education Statement of Strategy 2021-2023. The overarching goal of the Policy is to ensure the availability of high quality Irish-medium education in Gaeltacht schools and in this way to support and encourage the use of Irish in Gaeltacht communities.

A key action in the Policy is the implementation of the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme (the Scheme), which was launched in April 2017. Under the terms of the Scheme, schools in Gaeltacht language-planning areas are being provided with the opportunity to seek recognition as Gaeltacht Schools and have been provided with a range of resources to support their implementation of specified language-based criteria aimed at strengthening Irish-medium educational provision.

Circulars due to issue in the coming weeks will outline the next steps required to support the effective implementation of the Scheme. Schools participating in the Scheme must also demonstrate that they are participating in the language-planning processes provided for under the Gaeltacht Act 2012.

Schools Participating in the Gaeltacht Schools Recognition Scheme Evaluation (GSRS) Evaluation and Research Study

The ERC is working with the Department and Inspectorate in conducting an independent evaluation of the Scheme, which involves 105 primary and 29 post-primary schools in the Gaeltacht. Further information on the ERC's evaluation work is available on their [website](#).

Assessment and survey activities were carried out in schools participating in the Scheme in 2021 and are currently being collated and analysed. The ERC worked closely with schools to minimise disruption in the current challenging environment due to the pandemic. If you are a school taking part in the evaluation of this Scheme and have questions, please contact the GSRS team at sceim@erc.ie

Additional information and updates on the Gaeltacht School Recognition Scheme and on the Policy on Gaeltacht Education 2017–2022 are published regularly on gov.ie. Queries in relation to the operation of the Scheme and the Policy should be emailed to aog@education.gov.ie.

10. STEM Education Policy Statement 2017–2026

The Department's STEM Education Policy Statement 2017–2026, published in November 2017, sets out the ambitious goals and actions required to achieve and improve the STEM education experience and outcomes for all learners. The STEM implementation plan 2017-2019 built on a range of reforms and initiatives already underway in STEM, in areas such as curriculum and assessment reform, teacher



professional development, embedding digital learning and advances in initial teacher education while providing a roadmap to address the areas for development

The next phase of the STEM Education Implementation Plan 2022-2026 is currently under development which includes a number of STEM education consultations to gather the views and opinions of key stakeholders to include pupils/students, teachers and principals. Publication of the implementation plan is due before end of June 2022.

11. Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2025

The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice was published by the Department in 2018 and refreshed in 2019 and sets out the ambition and vision that the promotion of wellbeing will be at the core of the ethos of every school and centre for education in Ireland. The Policy included the intention that all schools should embark on their wellbeing promotion process by 2023. In view of the impact of Covid-19 on school activities, this date is now changed to 2025.

The policy can be accessed at

<https://assets.gov.ie/24725/07cc07626f6a426eb6eab4c523fb2ee2.pdf>

Following an action research project involving 30 schools the PDST has developed CPD to support schools as they engage in a wellbeing promotion process. The National rollout of the CPD has been delayed due to Covid 19. Information on the roll out of the CPD will be shared with schools by the PDST.

Wellbeing Supports and Resources

Advice and resources to support the wellbeing of all in the school community have been developed and are available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/aca1d-wellbeing-information-for-primary-schools/#advice-to-support-wellbeing>.

Stress Factor – Getting the Balance Right: As part of support and development work NEPS has developed a series of Wellbeing and Resilience in schools webinars, exploring the use of whole-school, compassionate and trauma-informed approaches to build safe and connected schools. Part 1, is called ‘The Stress factor - Getting the balance right’ a webinar for all school staff. This will be followed by a series of special interest modules using the Department’s e- learning platform. The focus of the workshops is on exploring and understanding the sources and impact of stress on children and young people including attachment, trauma and adverse childhood experiences. The workshops are for all staff with a focus on all students including those with SEN or those children impacted by trauma and adverse experiences. NEPS psychologists will be available to support implementation in schools. NEPS will communicate with all schools on the roll out of this training.

NEPS has also developed an eLearning course ‘Responding to Critical Incidents in Schools’ to accompany the NEPS Critical Incident Guidelines and Resources for



schools. This 3-4 hour eLearning course allows self-directed learning by school staff at a time that suits them. It is aimed specifically at the school's Critical Incident Management Team, but open to all interested staff. There will be an option of a follow-up live webinar with NEPS staff for schools who would like additional face to face input. NEPS will communicate with all schools on the roll out of this training.

Webinars on understanding bereavement and loss and supporting children are delivered by NEPS from time to time via certain Education centres. Schools can check with their local Education Centre for details.

12. Public Libraries Support for Schools

Membership of the public library is free, there are no fines for overdue books and there are no replacement charges for children's books which have been lost or damaged.

The growth and development of the collaborative approach for educational and leisure reading support and materials between schools and public libraries is an objective of the Public Library Strategy 2018–2022, *Our Public Libraries 2022*. All public libraries provide standard services to primary schools, as identified and agreed nationally. These services are outlined below. Public libraries are committed to delivering the services set out and will aim to take a hybrid approach to delivering the services in libraries and online. However individual library services' ability to deliver the services in 2022 to the extent set out will be impacted by the levels of COVID-19 restrictions in place at a given time. Where feasible, libraries, working with schools, will look to alternative methods of services delivery if required.

The public library provides access to a wide range of resources, facilities and activities that aim to support primary schools in developing children's literacy, numeracy, creativity and communication skills. Building upon existing partnerships between schools and libraries provides many benefits for both the public libraries and primary schools. A partner library branch has been identified for every primary school based on catchment area. This information is available on the public libraries' website at <https://www.librariesireland.ie/services/services-to-schools>

Each partner library branch will provide the services outlined below and will liaise directly with each primary school during the school year. In the case of certain schools, some of the services will be provided by the mobile library, school library van or through the library headquarters, to be determined at local discretion. Under the collaborative approach, each library service will make contact with the school principal over the year to provide information in relation to the library services and resources available to each school.

The range of library services offered to primary schools includes the following:

- Facilitating class visits from primary schools, arranged locally in advance



- Providing a dedicated teacher's card on request to every teacher in every primary school to enable each teacher to borrow items for his/her class
- Making presentations on the library services for each school, as requested by the school, at a time agreed with the principal, or as part of in-service training. The presentation may be facilitated at the school and can be made to teachers, pupils and/or parents/guardians. Schools may cluster together for this presentation, if desired. Online presentations may also be possible.
- Providing:
 - Reading and curriculum support materials
 - Online learning resources, including over 300 Irish and international newspapers, 250 different magazine titles, comprehensive collections of e-books and e-audio books, over 400 online learning courses and 110 language courses
 - Resources and reference materials to support school projects
- Providing a reading space for children and access to electronic resources in each partnered library service
- Providing reference resources and research assistance to pupils and teachers for school project work
- Providing information for parents/guardians about the range of library resources and the activities available to support the development of their children's literacy and numeracy skills
- Providing access to a wide range of historical material about the local area, including maps, photographs, documents and information and collections relating to 1916 and subsequent commemorations.
- Providing ongoing library programmes and initiatives throughout the year, including Ireland Reads, the national day for celebrating reading, the Spring into Storytime initiative, the national Summer Stars reading programme, the Children's Book Festival and Family Time at Your Library, all of which support the continuing development of children's literacy and numeracy skills (see www.librariesireland.ie). Spring into Storytime provides story time and reading activities in branches and online during April. The Summer Stars Reading Adventure runs throughout the summer and is a fun reading programme open to all children who register for it at their local library. The Children's Book Festival takes place in October in libraries and online and celebrates children's books and family reading and Family Time at Your Library offers fun events in local libraries and online in December.

13. Literacy Support for Parents/guardians - NALA

The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) offers help and advice for parents/guardians who have difficulty reading, writing, spelling or doing mathematics. They have a Freephone number parents/guardians can call **1800 20 20 65** or a website



www.learnwithnala.ie – parents/guardians can learn with their local ETB Adult Education Service or over the phone and online with NALA. All services are free.

NALA also has a website www.helpmykidlearn.ie that provides some suggestions for activities that parents/guardians can do with their children to develop their literacy and numeracy. It includes general information, fun activities and useful tips that can be integrated into any part of their day.

In addition, NALA has produced promotional posters and bookmarks with information about the website Help My Kid Learn, and how parents/guardians can support their children's learning over the summer. If you would like to order a free promotional pack for your school, please fill in this form

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdsyRxsRvN3iMu1JNeBPDFD2fxeVEKQB_aOjUmGRdxoh1XECyw/viewform?usp=sf_link

We encourage schools to:

- Add a link from the school website to www.helpmykidlearn.ie (many schools have done this already) and www.cogg.ie, particularly in Gaeltacht schools and in Gaelscoileanna;
- Mention the NALA Freephone and websites to new parents/guardians visiting the school in May/June;
- Recommend them to parents/guardians as a source of suggestions for enjoyable activities in which a parent and child can engage;
- Encourage staff to access the websites and mention them in parent/teacher meetings.

14. Funding to be provided to schools for the purchasing of books, audio books and other media

Funding of €20 million is being made available in 2022 so as to enable all schools (primary and post-primary) to purchase books, audio books and other media for the purposes of improving their existing literacy resource banks. This funding is additional to that already given for the school books rental scheme and book grants to all recognised primary and post primary schools within the Free Education Scheme in order to alleviate the cost of school books for parent. An announcement will be made in the coming weeks on when the grant monies will be paid to the schools.

Evelyn O'Connor

Evelyn O'Connor
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3rd April 2022