



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment Updated Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools

2026

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1. Introduction

This document was first published in 2021 to support the enactment of the *Primary Language Curriculum/Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile* (PLC/CTB) (2019). It provided guidance to teachers and school leaders in all school contexts outlining a renewed understanding of ‘preparation for teaching and learning’ as schools transitioned from the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) to the PLC/CTB. In particular, it supported teachers in adopting the Learning Outcomes-based approach central to the PLC/CTB.

Since then, the curriculum has continued to evolve. The [Primary Curriculum Framework](#), launched in 2023, establishes the foundation for high-quality learning, teaching and assessment for all children in primary and special schools. It reflects a shared societal vision of what a curriculum and education should provide for children in the 21st century and underpins both the redeveloped *Primary School Curriculum* (2025) and its associated [online toolkits](#)¹. Guidance on assessment further strengthens this foundation by ensuring that assessment supports learning and progression, promotes empowerment and inclusion, and affirms the central role of teachers’ professional judgement.

Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment; Updated Guidance for all Primary and Special Schools reflects and responds to this renewed curriculum context.

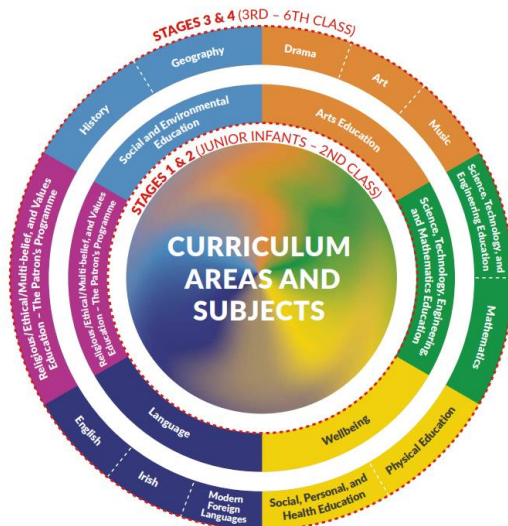


Figure 1 Curriculum Areas and Subjects, *The Primary Curriculum Framework*, pg.15

¹ The glossary in [Appendix 1](#) provides definitions of key terms used throughout this document to support clarity and shared understanding around the enactment of the redeveloped Primary Curriculum.

2. Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

What is the purpose of preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment?

Preparation enables teachers to be **intentional, responsive, and flexible** in supporting pupil engagement and progression, while ensuring that each learning experience builds meaningfully to longer-term Learning Outcomes. Teachers exercise agency in their professional judgement to design and adapt Learning Experiences that meet the needs of their children. At the same time, preparation ensures alignment between the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#), the [curriculum specifications](#), the associated [online Toolkits](#) and the school-specific approaches **set out in the whole-school curriculum plans**.

Preparation provides clarity and focus. It helps teachers to identify the clear **Focus(es) of Learning** so that Learning Experiences are purposeful and coherent. Drawing on assessment information, teachers can respond to the children's, strengths, needs, interests and individuality, adjusting teaching to support and challenge all learners and ensure progression.

Effective preparation enables a teacher to organise the use of time, resources and learning environments to maximise learning. Teachers can select appropriate experiences and activities to promote active engagement and anticipate where support or challenge may be required, based on the children's current understanding. Teachers monitor learning to inform next steps, using assessment data formatively to guide future preparation. Preparation should be meaningful by recognising and valuing the broad range of activities teachers engage with before, during and after teaching, but also ensuring that the emphasis is on progression and on enhancing Learning Experiences for all children.

This guidance is aligned with [Looking at our School 2022 – A Quality Framework for Primary Schools and Special Schools \(2022\)](#) and further supports Rule 126² in Rules for National Schools³ which sets out the expectations in terms of long-term preparation (for example, termly or yearly), short-term preparation (for example, weekly⁴, fortnightly or monthly⁵) and monthly progress records⁶ (Cuntas Míósúil).

In the special school context, the intended learning for children should continue to be drawn from an age-appropriate primary or post-primary curriculum to ensure children

² The original rules on short-term and long-term preparation were outlined in the Rules for National Schools (Department of Education, 1965)

³ Rules for National Schools (Department of Education, 1965)

⁴ [Circular 64/2024](#): The operation/application and deployment of Special Education Teacher Resources

⁵ [Circular 0017/2023](#) - *Preparation for Teaching and Learning Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning* supports all primary and special schools in their preparation for use of a learning outcome-based curriculum. It aims to reduce the emphasis on paperwork, by capturing and valuing the broad range of activities teachers engage with before, during and after teaching. This guidance further supports Rule 126 which sets out the expectations in terms of long-term preparation (for example, termly or yearly), short-term preparation (for example, weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and monthly progress records.

⁶ Specific requirements for teachers in relation to the induction period are outlined at: [Droichead: The Integrated Professional Induction Framework | Professional Learning | The Teaching Council](#) and at [Oide](#).

have access to, participate in and benefit from an education that is inclusive and appropriate to their strengths, needs, interests and individuality.

For teachers of students at post-primary level in a special school, it may be appropriate to draw upon and use their content knowledge of curriculum areas of the redeveloped Primary Curriculum. This will help to inform and support preparation for continuity of learning, teaching and assessment using rich and authentic Learning Experiences, while also ensuring the provision of a broad and balanced curricular experience.

Preparation for learning, teaching and assessment is an **ongoing**, dynamic process. It **evolves** as we gain insight into children’s strengths, needs, interests and individuality. Accordingly, preparation for learning, teaching and assessment should be understood as continuous and responsive, rather than fixed or one-off.

Preparation for learning, teaching and assessment involves **invisible, visible and recorded** preparation which can take place at the same time as well as before, during and after the learning, teaching and assessment (Figure.1). All three components of preparation are complementary and essential in supporting the provision of appropriate Learning Experiences for all children. While invisible and visible preparation may not be recorded, it is important to acknowledge that all three components are equally valued. **Teachers should be able to demonstrate that this professional work is taking place and informing the recorded preparation, learning, teaching and assessment in meaningful ways.**

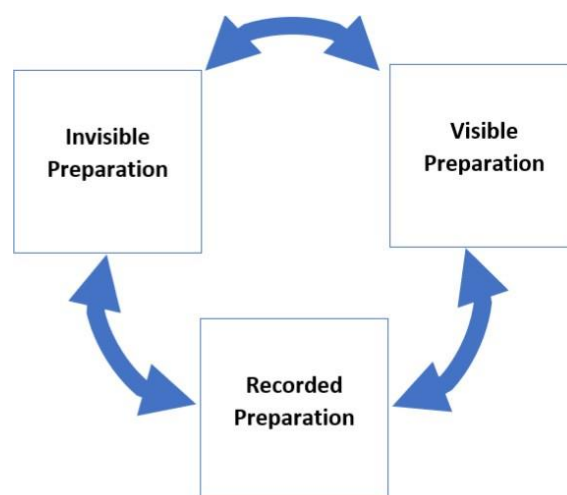


Figure 2: Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Invisible Preparation and Reflection

Invisible preparation is **continuous and unrecorded**; whereby teachers draw on their professional experience, their knowledge of the children, the learning culture, and whole-school curriculum plans and policies in their setting, as well as their beliefs

about learning, teaching and assessment in making decisions about their practice.

Invisible preparation involves purposeful **engagement with the curriculum and its supports, as well as whole-school curriculum plans and whole-school agreed approaches** to ensure high quality Learning Experiences are provided for the children.

Ongoing reflection about children's learning and development frequently takes place intuitively before, during and after the learning takes place. This often occurs through **collaboration** and professional conversations with colleagues, parents or other relevant professionals or outside agencies, and the children.

Visible Preparation

Visible preparation is **learning, teaching and assessment in action**. It involves the provision of appropriate Learning Experiences to support the intended learning of all children. These Learning Experiences, informed by the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#), the curriculum, the [relevant online Toolkits](#), and whole-school curriculum plans are adapted to support the strengths, needs, interests and individuality of all children. Visible preparation considers a **learning environment** where playful and engaging experiences can take place and where meaningful interactions are facilitated. It also considers the **use of appropriate resources** to support the intended learning for the children. Learning, teaching and assessment in action is fluid and flexible and teachers often embrace unexpected and emerging learning opportunities that arise.

Recorded Preparation and Reflection

Recorded preparation refers to any documentation that **supports individual teachers' ongoing practice and reflection as they enact the curriculum**. This includes the required short-term and long-term documentation, children's support plans, assessment data, monthly reports/cuntais mhíosúla, end of year reports, professional notes, observations, and reports from other professionals or external agencies relevant to the children's learning needs. Teachers should also **adhere to guidance provided in whole-school curriculum plans in relation to specific whole-school approaches**.

Teachers are best placed to understand the strengths, needs, interests and individuality of all children within their classes and this understanding should be evident in their preparation. Drawing on their knowledge of the children and their prior learning, teachers prioritise the Learning Outcomes that will best support next steps in learning and select appropriate Learning Experiences accordingly. The [NCCA Toolkits](#) provide useful guidance relating to learning, teaching and assessment. Teachers' preparation should reflect the **Learning Outcomes** being addressed, **Focus(es) of Learning** identified and the planned **Learning Experiences** and take

account of both visible and invisible preparation. Preparation should also be underpinned by meaningful assessment, which is empowering, purposeful, inclusive and collaborative.

A whole-school approach to short-term preparation strengthens coherence, consistency and progression across classes. Agreed approaches and shared expectations reduce unnecessary duplication, support professional dialogue, and ensure alignment with whole-school priorities, while still allowing flexibility for teacher judgement.

Collaboration among teachers, particularly those teaching the same class levels, enriches the preparation process. However, each teacher's preparation must remain responsive to the specific strengths, needs, interests and individuality of the children in their class. The adaptations and decisions that reflect this responsiveness should be clear in recorded preparation.

Whole-school Curriculum Planning

The *Guidance on Whole-school Curriculum Planning* supports all teachers and school leaders in the development of whole-school curriculum plans. These plans outline decisions around the use of particular approaches in the enactment of each curriculum area in a way that reflects each, individual, unique school context, leading to improved Learning Experiences and outcomes for all children.

The broad Learning Outcomes, pedagogical approaches and assessment guidance for each curriculum area give teachers and school leaders increased scope to make 'decisions about what to teach, when to teach it, and how to sequence and pace learning' ([Primary Curriculum Framework](#), p20). This capacity to make choices and decisions or 'agency' supports curriculum provision that is responsive to the unique context of each school. The redeveloped Primary Curriculum envisages teachers and school leaders as active agents who interpret and mediate the curriculum framework and the curriculum into learner experiences that are responsive to the context of the child, classroom and school. The *Guidance on Whole-school Curriculum Planning* describes the need to balance agency with accountability in ensuring breadth, balance, continuity and progression in children's learning in the enactment of the curriculum and the guidance in the school's whole-school curriculum plan. In the special school context, teachers should draw upon the redeveloped *Primary School Curriculum*, or Post-Primary Curriculum Programmes, as appropriate.

3. The Key Pillars of Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Teachers are recognised as **committed, skilled and agentic professionals** and they facilitate children to be active and demonstrate agency in acting independently and making choices about and in their learning.

Teachers make key decisions every day about learning, teaching and assessment in their school, including decisions about what children learn, the sequence in which they learn, the pace at which they learn, and the activities and experiences through which they learn. These decisions are shaped by key pillars which, as figure 2 below illustrates, include: the teacher’s **knowledge of the children and their prior learning; knowledge of the curriculum; knowledge of pedagogy**. They are also shaped by the guidance and direction provided in the **whole-school curriculum plans** that have been developed for their school to support enactment in the unique school context.

The key pillars are interlinked and jointly support all aspects of teachers’ preparation - invisible, visible and recorded - as well as the learning environment and school culture.

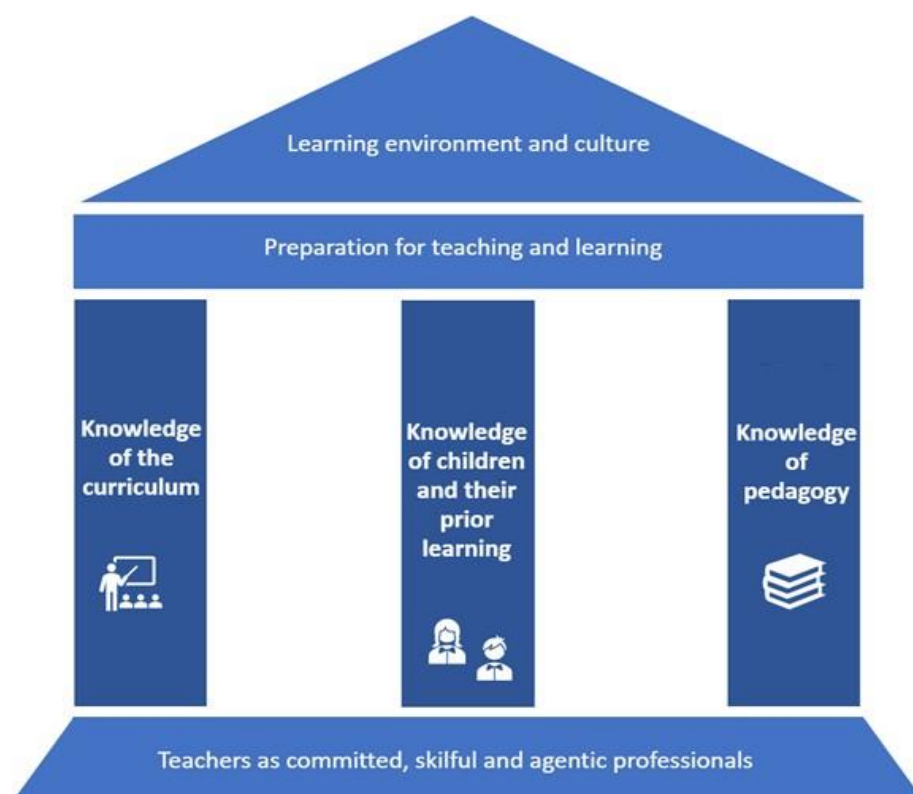


Figure 3. The Key Pillars of Preparation for Learning and Teaching and Assessment

Knowledge of the Children and their Prior Learning

The more that we understand about children’s lives, the more that we can support them as learners. We learn about children by:

- listening to the child and their parents
- consulting with the child’s previous and current teacher(s), special education teacher and special needs assistants
- engaging with other professionals and outside agencies, where relevant
- linking with educators in early years settings to gain insights into the child’s development and learning experiences prior to commencing in the school
- reviewing documentation such as student support files
- , school progress reports, [NCCA Mo Scéal documents](#), assessment records, reports from external agencies, etc.
- using the continuum of assessment appropriately ([Primary Curriculum Framework](#), pg.22)

These sources of information become an integral part of preparation for learning, teaching and assessment when they support decision making around the next steps for children’s learning.

The [Primary Curriculum Framework](#) describes **assessment as integral to teaching and learning**. It is a shared endeavour in which teachers and children **work together** to use information to inform learning and teaching. This involves ongoing dialogue with children to communicate about their learning and to identify and reflect on their next steps. This supports their self-identity as learners, while collaborative learning enables children to support and extend each other’s learning. In the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#), assessment **provides information for a range of stakeholders**, with **children positioned as the central stakeholders**. Assessment **exists along a continuum** ranging from ‘**intuitive**’ to ‘**planned interactions**’ to ‘**assessment events**’. The three types are **complementary and necessary** to gain a comprehensive picture of a child’s progress and achievement.

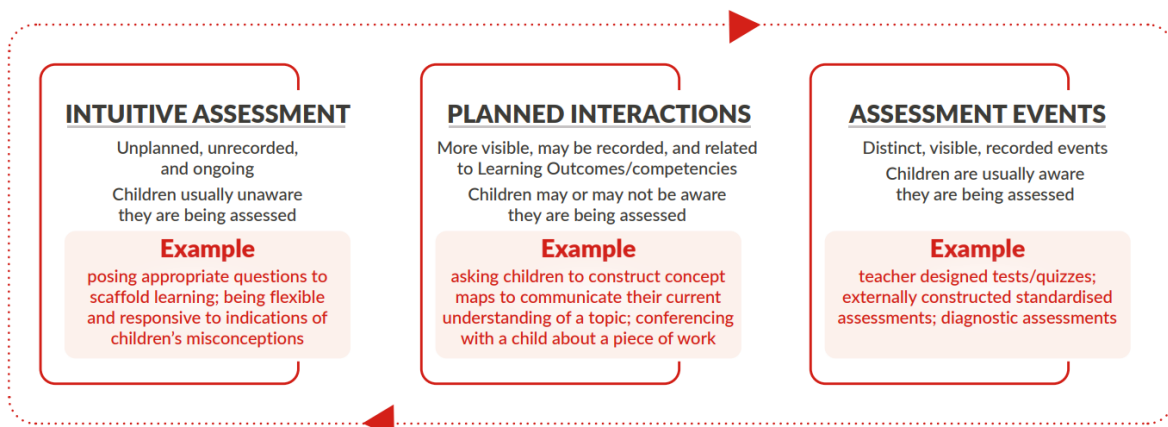


Figure 4 The Continuum of Assessment (The Primary Curriculum Framework)

Knowledge of the Curriculum

Taking time to read and to become familiar with the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#) and the curriculum is an important step in a teacher’s preparation for learning, teaching and assessment. A teacher’s curricular knowledge (including the vision, principles, key competencies, curriculum areas, and learning, teaching, and assessment approaches) **enables high-quality Learning Experiences for all children in primary and special schools.**

Knowledge of Pedagogy

Pedagogy is how we teach. It shapes **teachers’ actions, words and judgements.** It is not static; it is responsive. The [Primary Curriculum Framework](#) describes teachers using appropriate and **evidence-based pedagogical approaches and strategies** to foster children’s engagement, ownership, and challenge. An understanding of pedagogical approaches is important in choosing appropriately playful and engaging Learning Experiences.

What is pedagogy?

The practice of teaching. It includes the techniques and strategies teachers use to help children learn. Pedagogy is about the interaction between teacher and learner and, also includes elements of the learning environment that support this process. It considers how teachers' actions, language, and decisions affect what children learn, how they learn it, and why particular experiences are important for learning.

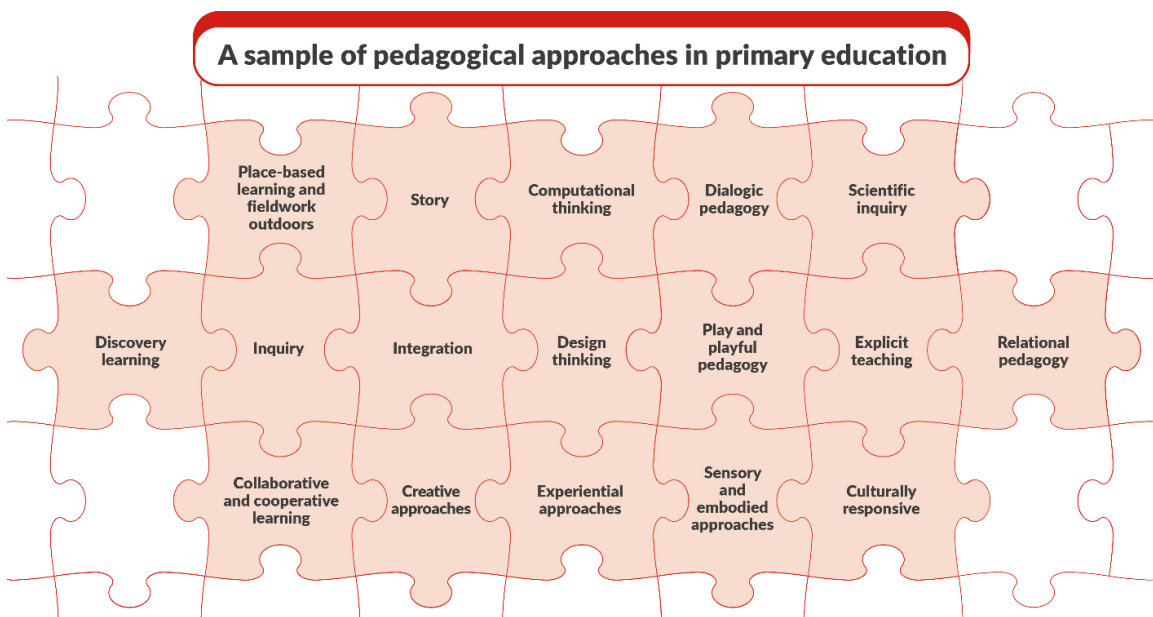


Figure 5, From the NCCA primary curriculum specifications, Primary Curriculum, 2025

Chapter Six of each curriculum specification focuses on the curriculum “in practice”. It outlines the main features of children’s learning in each curriculum area, the pedagogical approaches that support and enhance it and guidance in assessing children’s learning and progression. [Enactment guides](#) for each curriculum area further support teachers in making decisions about next steps in learning.

Teachers use appropriate and evidence-based pedagogical approaches and strategies to foster children’s engagement, ownership, and challenge. Such pedagogical approaches and strategies connect with children’s life experience, circumstances, strengths, and interests.

([Primary Curriculum Framework](#), p.6)

4. Evidence of preparation in Practice

The concept of preparation for learning, teaching and assessment provides a **way to consider how all teachers demonstrate their preparation** during the school year. It can also be used to support professional conversations in relation to learning, teaching and assessment during inspections. Evidence of preparation for learning, teaching and assessment takes many forms.

The Child(ren)

The [Primary Curriculum Framework](#) articulates a clear commitment to the right of every child to experience a curriculum that is well-structured, inclusive, meaningful and responsive to their needs. The children and their learning provide insights into a teacher's preparation. Supporting children to **describe or demonstrate/show their learning and progression** provides insight into the culture of the learning environment and the interactions between teacher and child. This approach values the use of a broad range of appropriate approaches to assessment and informs the **next steps in their learning**.

The Teacher

A teachers' preparation is an evolving record that reflects the decisions that they make about progressing learning. Considerations should include their knowledge of the child(ren), the curriculum and pedagogy. Teachers choose specific Learning Experiences, which are shaped by the strengths, needs, interests and individuality of the child(ren) with whom they work.

Based on the teacher's knowledge of the children and what their next steps in learning should be, teachers will then identify the **Focus(es) of Learning** (new or consolidation of knowledge concepts, skills or dispositions) and select appropriately playful and engaging **Learning Experiences** through which to realise this learning. It may be specific or broad, and may be drawn **from one Learning Outcome, or a number of Learning Outcomes**, from one curriculum area, or more than one, to progress the child's learning.

They will also need to consider **how children will demonstrate** their learning during and after this period of time and how that will inform next steps in the children's learning.

Department of Education and Youth [Circular 0064/2024](#) outlines the core role of the Class Teacher in relation to supporting children, including those with diverse learning needs. It states that class teachers adapt their pedagogical approaches and methodologies, and make specific accommodations for children within the class, in response to concerns arising in relation to an individual child's progress, communication, emotional regulation, or interaction with peers. Class teachers have

primary responsibility for the progress and care of all children in their classrooms, including children with special educational needs. Class teachers adapt their learning, teaching, and assessment approaches for all children. This can be achieved by, for example:

- Varying the structure, content, mode of instruction and pace of lessons to ensure the meaningful participation and engagement of all children
- Adapting lessons to take account of a child's interests
- Matching tasks to the child's strengths, needs, interests and individuality
- Adapting and utilising resources, including the use of visual supports, and technology.

The Learning Environment

The cultural and physical context in which learning occurs provide insight into the nature of learning, teaching and assessment. The principle of Learning Environments in the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#) describes how children's learning is shaped and nurtured by the physical environment, indoors and outdoors. In preparing Learning Experiences, consideration should be given to the opportunities presented by the school building, the school grounds and the local area. The classroom, the school grounds and local environment are viewed as an active teaching resource that supports engagement, collaboration and inclusive practice.

Supportive **teacher-child and child-child interactions** during which ideas, thoughts, views and opinions of all children are actively listened to and valued, foster positive relationships. High expectations of all children are also an important feature of an effective learning environment. Flexible access to appropriate learning resources promotes interest and accessibility for learners.

Even more important than the physical learning environment is the creation of a respectful, caring, and secure atmosphere that nurtures learning and development.
(Primary Curriculum Framework, p23)

Recorded Preparation in Practice

When considered in a broad understanding of preparation for learning, teaching and assessment, recorded preparation is an important and required aspect which is **complementary** to the processes of invisible and visible preparation. Recorded preparation **is first and foremost for the teacher**, and therefore should be **useful, purposeful and practical**.

All recorded preparation, signalling the **broad direction and Focus(es) of Learning for the children**, needs to be understood as **tentative and dynamic**. It does not need to over-elaborate on what may occur in the learning environment.

Recorded preparation **evolves** in response to emerging opportunities and needs of the children. It **may** include teacher's annotations and amendments, as appropriate.

In the special school context, recorded preparation should refer to the age-appropriate primary or post-primary curriculum that supports the strengths, needs, interests and individuality of the children.

5. Supporting Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

Questions to support teachers to reflect on their preparation for learning, teaching and assessment:

1. How do I **gather and use information** about the child(ren), their prior learning, progression to date, strengths, needs, interests and individuality ? How can I incorporate the voice of the child?
2. Am I drawing the **Focus(es) of Learning** from appropriate **Learning Outcomes**?
3. Are the preparatory activities I undertake **useful, purposeful and practical** for learning, teaching and assessment?
4. Are there a breadth and balance of pedagogical approaches that reflect the nature of the subjects/curriculum area and ensure variance in the child's day? How have the **pedagogical approaches** I employ been chosen or adapted to meet the strengths, needs, interests and individuality of all children?
5. How does my preparation respond to unexpected and emerging learning opportunities that may arise?
6. How does my recorded preparation **identify the specific learning** taking place, **the Learning Experiences** supporting the learning and how **all** children in my context will **demonstrate this learning**?
7. How can I use different types of assessment (intuitive, planned, events) to provide information that is most useful to inform the next steps in children's learning?
8. How can I plan to maximise the immediate and local **learning environment** to support the strengths, needs, interests and individuality of all children, as well as the provision of appropriate Learning Experiences?

6. Supporting Preparation for Learning, Teaching and Assessment

The following guidance is intended to support teachers recorded preparation across the redeveloped *Primary School Curriculum* (2025).

Guidance for Teachers <i>Recorded Preparation to Support Learning, Teaching & Assessment across all Curricula</i>
What may be helpful to consider:
<p>1. Remember, first and foremost, that documentation should be a guide for you as the teacher. It should be a useful, purposeful and practical support, which is one aspect of preparation for learning, teaching and assessment. Consider your documentation as evolving before, during and after teaching and in line with the children's learning. If you find it helpful, add notes, amendments and annotations to your documentation to support your preparation for learning and teaching.</p> <p>Your recorded preparation is not the only aspect of preparation for learning and teaching. Your invisible and visible preparation are of equal value to your recorded preparation.</p>
<p>2. A whole-school approach can agree on the common features to be included in documentation. These features can be recorded in a way that is practical and useful to support your preparation. The detail contained in documentation may vary from teacher to teacher, depending on their individual preference, their professional judgement and the context in which they are teaching.</p> <p>While generic templates may be useful to some, they will not always capture priorities in a meaningful way. Across a school, teachers may include common features in their preparation, and these should be presented or recorded in a way which is most helpful for the individual teacher.</p>
<p>3. A teacher may prefer to demonstrate how they prepare in a purposefully integrated manner that demonstrates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The Learning Outcomes being addressed• the clear Focus(es) of Learning for all children for each of the curriculum areas, with reference to the curriculum• the range of appropriate Learning Experiences chosen to support all children in progressing their learning and• how the learning will be demonstrated by all children and how it will be monitored and assessed.

Recorded Preparation – Long-Term

Be **flexible** with your long-term preparation. It may need to be **amended** as you learn more about the children in your context or as unexpected learning opportunities arise. Allow sufficient time before completing your recorded long-term preparation so that it meaningfully reflects the learning strengths and needs of all children in your context. Long-term preparation will be informed by the [Primary Curriculum Framework](#), the curriculum and the whole-school curriculum plan. In the special school context, long-term preparation should refer to the age-appropriate primary or post-primary curriculum that supports the strengths, needs, interests and individuality of the children.

You may consider including:

- the **expected learning** in broad terms that is informed and guided by the **Learning Outcomes** of the curriculum
- the **sequencing and pacing** of children's learning (guided by the whole-school curriculum plan)
- the range of **Learning Experiences**.
- the range of **assessment practices**.
- the **integration** of the learning with other curriculum areas/subjects, whole-school practices/events.
- how the classroom routines, classroom culture and longer-term interventions and practices **support** the intended learning.

Your long-term plan should be flexible to respond to the children's strengths, needs, interests and individuality. Remember that the document may be amended or adjusted as the year progresses.

Recorded Preparation – Short-Term

1. Through your knowledge of the children and their prior learning and grounded in the curriculum, identify the **Focus(es) of Learning**. Identify the **Learning Experiences** chosen to support **all children** in progressing this learning. Identify the ways in which their progress will be **assessed and monitored**.

Consider how you will know if the Focus(es) of Learning has progressed and how this is reflected in your Cuntas Míosúil.

It should contain:

- The clear **Focus(es) of Learning** for all children informed and guided by the **Learning Outcome(s)** from a curriculum area or number of curriculum areas.
- The range of **appropriately playful and engaging Learning Experiences** chosen to support **all children** in progressing their learning.
- **How the learning** in relation to each Learning Outcome **will be demonstrated** by **all children** and how it will be **monitored and assessed**.

2. Keep your recorded preparation concise. The length of a document is not an indication of its quality. The detail within recorded preparation may vary from teacher to teacher, and the approach taken should support teachers to embrace unexpected and emerging learning opportunities that arise. There may not be a benefit in spending excessive time writing detailed descriptions of activities.

3. There are specific preparation requirements for newly qualified teachers and for teachers in special education roles. The specific requirements for these teachers should be established from up-to-date Circulars⁷ and Guidelines.

Cuntas Míosúil

Ensure that your Cuntas Míosúil records **the learning that the children have progressed** over the month, and the **Learning Experiences** used to support their progress. Where short-term documentation has clearly outlined the learning and the Learning Experiences, it may also be used for the purpose of your Cuntas Míosúil. In this case, whole-school decisions should be made around the most appropriate structure for these plans/ Cuntais Mhíosúla to ensure that relevant information is recorded in a useful and appropriate manner.

Remember that a lengthy account of content taught may not be an indicator of effectiveness. Consider your Cuntas Míosúil as a record of the children's learning which can be used to support continuity and progression in their learning.

If you find it helpful, include a **brief reflection** in your Cuntas Míosúil where you have the option to comment on learning and teaching over the course of the month.

⁷ **Circular 0017/2023** - *Preparation for Teaching and Learning Guidance on Preparation for Teaching and Learning* supports all primary and special schools in their preparation for use of a learning outcome-based curriculum. It aims to reduce the emphasis on paperwork, by capturing and valuing the broad range of activities teachers engage with before, during and after teaching. This guidance further supports Rule 126 which sets out the expectations in terms of long-term preparation (for example, termly or yearly), short-term preparation (for example, weekly, fortnightly or monthly) and monthly progress records.

[SET Guidelines and supporting documentation to aid schools in supporting Children/Young people with Special Education Needs](#)

Appendix 1

Glossary of Terms

Primary Curriculum Framework (PCF): The PCF refers to the framework of the redeveloped curriculum published in March 2023. The PCF sets out the purpose, structure and content for the redeveloped curriculum in primary and special schools. It highlights what is important in primary education and why; and provides a description of what should be prioritised in children’s learning. The framework underpins the individual curriculum specifications. Understanding the PCF, in the first instance, is critical before detailed exploration of the individual specifications.

Curriculum areas: The redeveloped curriculum is presented in five broad curriculum areas informed by the curriculum framework (PCF). The curriculum areas are outlined on page 14 of the PCF document and include:

1. Language
2. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) Education
3. Wellbeing
4. Arts Education
5. Social and Environmental Education

Specification: The curriculum area specification is the document which refers to the specific detail for each curriculum area of the redeveloped curriculum. The specification is distinct from the online toolkit. The specification outlines the link to the vision and principles of learning, teaching and assessment of the framework as well as the rationale, aims, strands, strand units, elements, learning outcomes, and guidance on the curriculum in practice.

Toolkit: The curriculum area toolkit is a set of supports developed and maintained by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). A toolkit is available for all five curriculum areas and will be added to by the NCCA in time. Each toolkit offers practical support for teachers in building rich learning experiences for children. The components of the toolkit are support materials, examples of children’s learning and progression supports.

Vision for the Redeveloped Primary School Curriculum: The vision is a broad statement of purpose intended to inform all parts of the curriculum and ultimately the experiences of all children and teachers in primary and special schools.

Principles of Learning, Teaching and Assessment: The 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 redeveloped primary curriculum. They are broad in nature to reflect varied school contexts and children’s different circumstances, experiences, and abilities.

Key competencies: The redeveloped primary curriculum builds on and further develops children’s early learning experiences in the home and preschool. It seeks to equip children with the essential knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes, and values which enable them to adapt to and deal with a range of situations, challenges, and contexts in support of broader Learning Outcomes. These capabilities are presented as seven inextricably linked key competencies that are relevant from stages 1 to 4.

Attributes: The attributes of the Key Competencies presented in the PCF are not intended as an exhaustive list but instead describe characteristic learning and development opportunities for children within each key competency which will be embedded through Learning Outcomes in the curriculum specifications.

Teacher Agency: Agency is the capacity to make choices and decisions about what to teach, when to teach it, and how to sequence and pace learning. This includes decisions about the specific learning experiences to be provided.

Child Agency: Children are active in their own learning and can display their agency by taking the initiative in learning situations, by observing and becoming involved in ongoing events, or by initiating conversations with others.

Enactment: Enactment refers to the process of bringing the redeveloped curriculum into practice in schools. The introduction and enactment of the primary school curriculum requires a highly dynamic set of sustained conditions. Enactment requires reflection to move forward with both clarity and purpose and places confidence in teacher's professional judgements. The enactment of the curriculum recognises that teachers are bringing the curriculum to life in their classrooms, is intended to be used flexibly and can take account of each school's unique context.

Implementation: A term commonly used in educational policy and research to describe the process of putting curriculum design into practice. In the PCF, the term enactment rather than implementation is used, reflecting the view that curriculum change involves ongoing professional judgement, contextual adaptation, and dynamic conditions within schools.

Learning Outcome: A learning outcome describes the expected learning and development for children at the end of a period of time.