

EDUCATION — NI CURRICULUM · P1–P7

# The Northern Ireland Curriculum

A Guide for P1–P7 Teachers

## The 6 Areas of Learning

1

### Language and Literacy

English language skills — reading, writing, talking and listening. Irish language is also taught in many schools (particularly Catholic-maintained schools and Irish-medium schools).

2

### Mathematics and Numeracy

Number, algebra, shape/space/measures, and handling data. Strong emphasis on mental maths and problem-solving.

3

### The Arts

Art and design, drama, and music — treated as a connected area. Strong emphasis on practical making and creative expression.

4

### The World Around Us

History, Geography, Science, and Technology combined into one integrated area — similar to SESE in the Republic. Local environment, local history, and the natural world.

5

### Personal Development & Mutual Understanding (PDMU)

NI's distinctive PSHE/citizenship subject. 'Mutual Understanding' specifically addresses relationships between communities — central to NI's social context.

6

### Physical Education

Gross motor skills, games, gymnastics, dance, swimming, and outdoor/adventurous activities.



# NI Curriculum differs

Key differences from other UK

- P1–P7 year groups (same as Scotland — very different from England's Year 1–6 numbering)
- THE WORLD AROUND US: combines History, Geography, Science, and Technology — no separate subjects until secondary (same philosophy as Irish SESE)
- PDMU (Personal Development & Mutual Understanding): unique to NI — addresses community relations, diversity, and respect between traditions
- 11+ TRANSFER TEST: grammar schools still exist in NI. Transfer tests (AQE and GL Assessment) taken in autumn of P7. About 40% of pupils sit them.
- CONTROLLED and MAINTAINED SCHOOLS: state-controlled schools are mainly attended by Protestant pupils; Catholic-maintained schools are mainly Catholic. Integrated schools (both traditions together) are a third type, growing in numbers.
- SHARED EDUCATION: a government programme bringing together pupils from controlled and maintained schools for joint activities and learning
- ETI INSPECTIONS: the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) inspects NI schools — different from Ofsted, HMIE, or Estyn
- ASSESSMENT: no SATs. Teacher assessment throughout. KS1 assessment tasks (P4) and transfer tests (P7) are the key assessment points.

