

The Junior Cycle and your child

Junior Cycle places students at the centre of the educational experience, enabling them to actively participate in their communities and in society and to be resourceful and confident learners in all aspects and stages of their lives.

The world is changing at a rapid rate and the curriculum must adapt in order to best prepare children for their future and to develop their ability to take on these challenges.

The Department of Education and Skills has responded to requests for change from students, teachers and parents and has created a curriculum that places the student at its core.

What a Junior Cycle class looks like

Students will:

- engage more actively with, and take greater ownership of, their learning, e.g., through oral language tasks, field studies and artistic performances
- engage with digital media to enhance their learning
- engage with the 8 Key Skills, e.g., problem solve and think critically



To view a Junior Cycle classroom in action visit <http://bit.ly/2m3xgfc>

What students will learn

During junior cycle, a student will learn through

- A number of subjects, or through a combination of **subjects and short courses**
- An area of learning called **Wellbeing**
- Priority Learning Units (PLUs)**; these will be included in level two learning programmes that provide for a small number of students with significant special educational needs
- Other learning experiences

Subjects

Subjects continue to play an important role as part of the new Junior cycle programme.

Most students will study between eight and ten subjects, or their equivalent.

Your child will experience new junior cycle subjects in the following order



Short Courses

Schools may also offer students the opportunity to take a small number of **Short Courses**.

The main purpose of short courses is to allow schools greater flexibility in the delivery of their junior cycle programme. The inclusion of short courses in a junior cycle programme will also allow schools to broaden the learning experiences for students, address their interests and encompass areas of learning not covered by the combination of curricular subjects available in the school.

Schools may offer short courses in Coding; Chinese Language and Culture; Digital Media Literacy; Philosophy; Artistic Performance; Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE); Physical Education (PE) and Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).

There are three Level 2 short courses available: Exploring Forensic Science, Enterprise in Animation and A Personal Project: Caring for Animals.

Alternatively, schools can also develop their own Short Course in accordance with national guidelines.



Wellbeing

As part of the new Junior Cycle students will experience a new area of learning called Wellbeing. This will build on the work schools are already doing in support of students' wellbeing and will make it more visible for students.

Through the Wellbeing programme students will gain the knowledge, attitudes and skills to enable them to protect and promote their own wellbeing and that of others.

The four main pillars of the Wellbeing programme are Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE), Physical Education (PE), Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Guidance education.

Level 2 Learning Programmes

For the first time in the history of education in Ireland there is a Junior Cycle pathway for students with particular special educational needs called Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs). An L2LP programme consists of five Priority Learning Units (PLUs) and will be recorded on a student's Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). These priority areas of learning include:

- Living in a Community
- Preparing for Work
- Personal Care
- Communicating and Literacy
- Numeracy

As part of an L2LP students must also complete two short courses.

Other areas of learning

Throughout junior cycle, your child will engage in other areas of learning such as social, cultural, sporting, pastoral, scientific, entrepreneurial and other activities.

Changing Approach to Assessment

The most significant change in the new Junior Cycle is in the area of assessment.

A dual approach to assessment, involving classroom-based assessment across the three years and a final externally-assessed, state-certified examination can enable the appropriate balance between preparing students for examinations and facilitating creative thinking, engaged learning and better outcomes for students.

This approach will recognise and value the different types of learning that take place in schools and will allow for a more rounded assessment of the educational achievements of each young person.

Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) will be completed by student's in each subject and short course. CBAs aim to create opportunities for students to demonstrate their learning in areas that are difficult to capture in a timed pen and paper exam. For example, the first CBA in English, which happens during 2nd year, is an oral communication task. It offers students the opportunity to research an area of their choice and communicate their findings through a range of communication formats.

Assessment Task (AT)

This is a written assessment that requires the students to reflect on the skills, knowledge and understanding that they developed throughout their experience of the second Classroom-Based Assessment. The assessment task will be completed during class time under the supervision of a teacher and will take place over two lesson periods.

State Certified Examination

At the end of third year, students will continue to undertake an examination in each subject (of no longer than two hours duration), externally set and corrected by the State Examinations Committee (SEC).

For more information on the Junior Cycle click on <http://bit.ly/2Hxcr7> for a short video that describes the Junior Cycle journey.

What will reporting look like?

During the three years of junior cycle, oral and written feedback to parents/guardians and students will be essential in supporting the student to build on strengths and address areas where learning can improve.

Linking classroom assessment and other assessment with a new system of reporting that culminates in the awarding of the **Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)** will offer parents/guardians a clear and broad picture of their child's learning journey over the three years of junior cycle.

The JCPA will record student's achievements in the following:

- the state-certified examinations, inclusive of the Assessment Tasks
- Classroom-Based Assessments,
- Level 2 Learning Programmes (L2LPs), where applicable
- Wellbeing
- Other Areas of Learning (such as social, cultural, pastoral, scientific, sporting, entrepreneurial and other skills)



Parents can also learn about the Junior Cycle from the following two websites:

www.curriculumonline.ie - for subject and short course specifications and information regarding assessment

A new support service for schools has been established to support schools in implementing their Junior Cycle programme. Visit www.jct.ie for information on teacher Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and for general information regarding the new junior cycle



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Junior Cycle Information for Parents of Primary Students

