Junior Cycle Curriculum Policy

St. Clare's School

2025/25

ST. CLARE'S SCHOOL

TEACHING, LEARNING & GROWING TOGETHER

Junior Cycle – Level 1 Learning Programmes Curriculum Policy

Introduction

Students are at the centre of teaching and learning, and will have an educational experience that addresses their individual needs and enables them to live, participate in, learn, work and contribute with the greatest degree of autonomy to the communities in which they belong.

Students partaking in the Level 1 Learning Programme (L1LP) have an identification of a learning disability which falls in the range of low moderate to severe and profound. (Level 1 Learning Programmes, Guidelines for teachers)

Aims

This policy will outline the aims of the Junior Cycle L1LP curriculum in St. Clare's School. The curriculum aims to:

- To provide an inclusive, accessible curriculum that meets the diverse learning needs of students with moderate to severe/profound needs, enabling them to participate meaningfully in school life.
- To promote the holistic development of each learner by supporting progress in communication, literacy, numeracy, personal care, wellbeing, social interaction, and life skills.
- To develop students' independence and autonomy, empowering them to engage actively in daily routines, make choices, and take increasing responsibility for their own learning and wellbeing.
- To ensure learning is practical, relevant, and connected to real-life experiences, helping students develop functional skills that transfer to home, community, and future adult life.
- To create rich, supportive learning environments where students can develop confidence, resilience, and a positive sense of self-worth.
- To support students in achieving the Priority Learning Units (PLUs) of the L1LP through carefully planned, differentiated, and evidence-based teaching approaches.
- To foster effective collaboration among teachers, support staff, parents/guardians, and external professionals to ensure consistent, person-centred support for each learner.
- To monitor, record, and celebrate student progress using appropriate assessment methods, ensuring that achievements are recognised and used to guide future planning.
- To prepare students for successful transitions—within school, between class groups, and to senior cycle or adult services—by building key competencies that support lifelong learning and participation in the community.

Organisation and Planning

Effective planning relies on a collaborative approach involving the student, their family, subject teachers, learning support or resource teachers, special needs assistants, and any other relevant professionals. Family insights are essential when developing SSP's and setting meaningful learning goals. Priority needs should be discussed in depth with parents or guardians to ensure consistency and shared understanding.

Teachers have standard planning templates both for long and short-term planning provided to them by the Junior Cycle Co-Ordinator.

Subjects

There are six Priority Learning Units (PLUs) at the heart of L1LP. These PLUs explicitly identify and develop the key areas of learning needed to prepare the students for their future lives. Though presented as self-contained units when used as part of a learning programme these PLUs interconnect and overlap. The PLU's are as follows:

- Communication, language and literacy
- Numeracy
- Personal care and wellbeing
- Being part of a community
- The arts
- Physical education

Each PLU is divided into elements and these elements have a number of associated learning outcomes which specify the knowledge, skills and attitudes students can demonstrate they have learned (see Appendix A for learning outcomes related to a PLU). The learning outcomes are presented in a sequence, reflecting cognitive demand, though not all students will progress in a linear fashion.

PLU 1 – Communication, Language and Literacy

Communication underpins all learning and is fundamental to the capacity to transfer learning. Communication and language form the foundation for all other PLUs. Learning in this unit covers both verbal and non-verbal ways of receiving and giving information. Language development requires social interaction between the student and a communication partner.

Communication for some students can be enabled and progressed with aids like augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), e.g. visual and object cues, verbal prompts, facial expressions, gestures, Lámh, electronic devices, and the written form.

Through developing communication skills students enhance their social interactions and improve their self-esteem. Students undertaking L1LPs should be exposed to a broad literacy experience. This definition of literacy includes multi-modal literacies encompassing spoken, printed, visual and digital literacies.

PLU 2 – Numeracy

Everyday activities provide genuine opportunities for mathematical discovery—from matching cutlery items to pouring drinks and from coordinating clothes to preparing ingredients for cooking. As with all learning, activities related to this PLU need to be varied to allow for multiple ways of

representing concepts, expressing understanding and engaging. The more practical and related to everyday actions or tasks the context is, the more enabling they are. Opportunities to use digital technologies in the classroom can further develop students' learning.

Numeracy is fundamental to daily living. The skills acquired through the Numeracy PLU translate across school, home and community life. Students undertaking L1LPs should be exposed to a broad numeracy experience. This unit is broken down into six elements; awareness of environment, pattern and sequence, developing number sense, shape and space, measures and data, and time.

PLU 3 – Personal Care and wellbeing

In undertaking this PLU, students become aware of their own bodies, develop an understanding of routine bodily functions and take as much control as possible of their personal care and wellbeing. Care is something that is done with students, not to them, thus every care routine is an opportunity for learning, for involvement, and ultimately, where possible, for the students own ondependence. Students come to understand that they are valued for who they are. They are provided with opportunities for empowerment through making choices, developing self-esteem, and gaining as much independence and autonomy as possible. Emotional and physical wellbeing are also enhanced through learning about food and nutrition as well as how to express feelings and stay safe in a range of contexts. Students identify and value their own skills and talents and learn to celebrate them.

PLU 4 – Being Part of a Community

This unit enables students to develop positive relationships with others in their community, whether that community be their family, school or the wider community in which they live. The core elements of socialising require a process-based way of teaching. In this context, this PLU offers opportunities for students to spend curriculum time learning outside of school and to further work on the processes of communication they develop in the PLU Communication, language and literacy. They have opportunities to contribute to and participate in their community, use the facilities within it safely and appropriately, and to take care of it

PLU 5 – The Arts

This unit covers the three areas of visual art, music and drama. Students are exposed to a rich and varied range of experiences using all of their senses. They are creatively engaged in learning and have opportunities to express their emotions, reactions and imaginations as an individual and as a member of a group. Due to the strong visual, auditory and tactile aspects of each of the three elements, students with visual and hearing impairments are included fully and successfully in learning.

The arts can support all students in making sense of the world around them. They learn about their own cultural heritage and traditions and that of others. Students are exposed to the work of artists, musicians and to the world of theatre and performance.

In all three elements an emphasis will be placed on experiencing, exploring and creating. It should be noted that the process and journey of creation is as important as the end product/performance.

PLU 6 – Physical Education

Physical exercise and movement improve concentration, mood, sleeping and eating patterns. The ability to work as an individual, to develop personal skills and to work as a member of a team, are important aspects of PE

The development of gross motor skills (the ability to control large muscles of the body for sitting, crawling, walking, running and other activities) and fine motor skills (smaller actions such as grasping

a ball, holding a bat, picking up a bean bag) are important because they underpin not only learning within the PE PLU but other Level 1 PLUs. It should be noted that no particular equipment is necessary for developing gross motor skills.

Fundamental movement skills (FMS) are the foundational movement patterns that involve various body parts. They can be broken down into three categories—locomotor skills (running, hopping, swimming); balance skills (keeping the body in one place but balancing in different ways); and object skills (kicking, throwing, pushing). FMS are developed as the student participates in the PE PLU.

Students working on L1LPs should be given many opportunities to experience the fun, enjoyment and social aspects of physical exercise. In this area their sense of team and their participation as team members are desirable outcomes.

Short Courses

Short courses are designed for students who would benefit from opportunities to improve learning and skills in areas such as elementary literacy and numeracy, language and communication, mobility and leisure skills, motor co-ordination, and social and personal development.

Time Allocation

The time required to achieve each PLU will be dependent on the student's strengths and needs. A guide for teachers is approximately 250 hours for each PLU and 100 hours for each short course.

Assessment and Accreditation

The evidence of learning gathered in the L1LP portfolio will be presented for the Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA). The learning recognised in the JCPA will be broadly aligned with Level 1 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). The JCPA will be issued by the school. Two curriculum components will feature in the award of the JCPA. They are the Priority Learning Units (PLUs) and short courses .

Monitoring and Review

The Junior Cycle co-ordinator (Bernadette McNamara) will be responsible for the monitoring and review of the L1LP programme in the school in consultation with class teachers, students and parents.

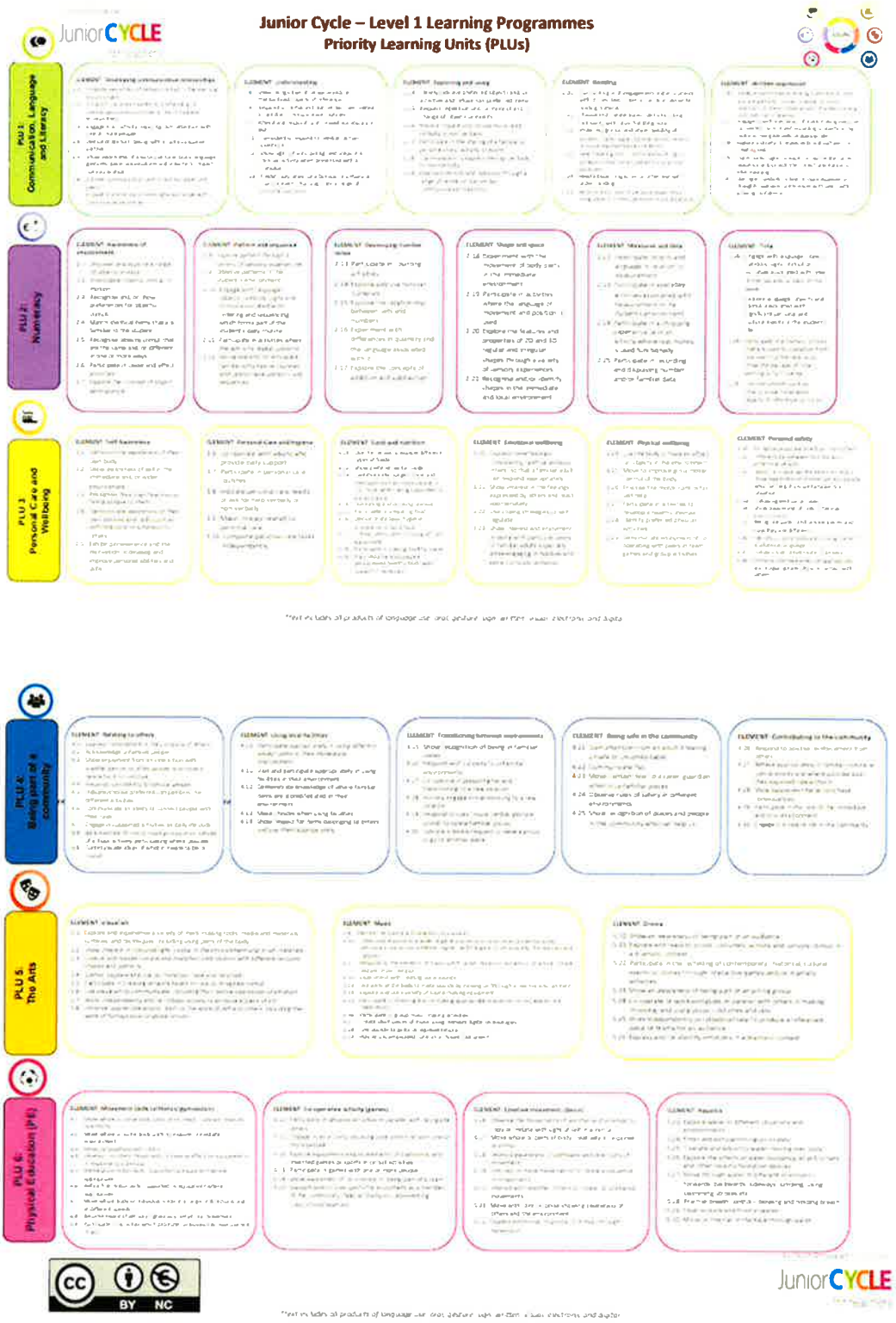
Ratification and review

Review date: to be reviewed annually

Ratification date: _____

Signed: _____

Appendix A


Junior Cycle – Level 1 Learning Programmes
Priority Learning Units (PLUs)
PLU 1: Communication, Language and Literacy
PLU 2: Numeracy
PLU 3: Personal Care and Wellbeing
PLU 4: Being part of a community
PLU 5: The Arts
PLU 6: Physical Education (PE)
JuniorCYCLE
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Bibliography

Junior Cylcle Level 1 Learning Programmes, Guidelines for teachers

https://curriculumonline.ie/getmedia/13b94835-df1b-4b4d-9b02-8c01f0f66dab/L1LPs-Guidelinesforteachers.pdf