

Aistear's 4 Themes, and what changed

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, updated by the NCCA in December 2024 and in use from September 2025.

THE FOUR THEMES

Kept and updated in 2024

- Wellbeing
- Identity and Belonging
- Communicating
- Exploring and Thinking

WHO IT IS FOR

- All children from birth to six, in every setting other than primary and special schools.

LINKING A STORY TO A THEME

A tip from StoryLoop, not framework text

- Name the one or two Themes the moment shows, and say why in a sentence about what the child did.
- Example: "This links with Exploring and Thinking, as Cian poured water through the funnel, saw it overflow and tried a smaller jug."

WHAT CHANGED IN THE UPDATE

From the DCEDIY briefing, December 2024

- Principles of early learning and development cut from twelve to nine.
- Fewer learning goals within each aim, and they are no longer numbered.
- Everyone using the framework, including parents and childminders, is called an educator.
- New concepts: agency, global citizenship, sustainability and slow relational pedagogy.
- A stronger focus on play, assessing and planning, transitions and outdoor learning.