



JCSP Policy

What is the JCSP?

The Junior Certificate School Programme is based on the concept that all young people are capable of real success in school and that they can have a positive experience of school if the conditions are favourable. The Programme is a national Department of Education and Science Programme within the Junior Certificate aimed at students who may leave school early. Every year a small group of students leave school, some of them without attempting any of the State examinations. For many of these young people, their experience of school has been one of failure and alienation. The Junior Certificate School Programme has been designed to ensure that these young people can benefit from their time in school and enjoy the experience of improvement and success.

The Junior Certificate School Programme is a national programme sponsored by the Department of Education and Science and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. It originated in the early school leavers' programmes initiated by the Curriculum Development Unit. Currently (2011), the programme is operating in over 240 schools throughout the country.

The Junior Certificate School Programme aims to provide a curriculum framework that assists schools and teachers in making the Junior Certificate more accessible to those young people who may leave school without formal qualifications. It attempts to help young people experience success and develop a positive self-image by providing a curriculum and assessment framework suitable to their needs. On completion of the programme students receive a profile which is an official record of their achievements from the Department of Education and Science. It is an intervention for these students based on the concept that all young people are capable of achieving real success in school.

Is this an alternative to the Junior Certificate?

No, the Junior Certificate School Programme is not an alternative to the Junior Certificate. It is a framework that is designed to help schools and teachers develop an imaginative approach to the Junior Certificate course. All the students in the Programme must be entered for the Junior Certificate examination.

What is the difference between the JCSP and the Junior Certificate?

The Junior Certificate School Programme is a way of working within the Junior Certificate. It is designed especially to help young people who have had a difficult experience of school and may be potential early leavers. Through a system of profiling a student's work in Junior Cycle classes, students are provided with opportunities to engage with the curriculum and to achieve success at school. They get an official certificate of their achievements, validated by the Department of Education and Science, in addition to their Junior Certificate Examination Certificate.



IMPLEMENTATION OF JCSP IN ST. PAUL'S

Do students sit the Junior Certificate examination?

Absolutely! The whole point of participating in the Junior Certificate School Programme is to stay at school, experience success in school and become more confident about sitting the Junior Certificate Exam.

Do many students fail JCSP?

Students cannot fail JCSP. The Programme is about success. Achievable statements are carefully chosen. Students get an opportunity to complete a series of statements and build their own success profile – a profile listing all the things they can do.

Which students should do the JCSP?

The JCSP Programme is aimed at 12–16 year olds who are potential early school leavers. In St. Paul's the programme includes all pupils and the aim is that any work completed by the pupils can be recorded, profiled and relates to the awarding of a JCSP statement or a School Based Statement.

What are the core subjects?

There are no core subjects as such. However, all students must be entered in English and Maths in the Junior Certificate Exam. In St. Paul's assessment and planning for entrance to the Junior Certificate Exams generally occurs in Group 3 in consultation with the pupil, parents/guardians and staff.

Do parents have a role in JCSP?

Parental involvement is encouraged and welcomed in JCSP. In St Paul's a Parents' Day is held to exhibit work done, award certificates of achievement and generally celebrate with parents their children's successes. Parents are invited to become actively involved in their children's education by working with the school in encouraging good attendance, punctuality and by praising progress made.

What resources are available to schools?

Individual schools participating in JCSP receive an improved teacher allocation. The allocation is at the rate of 0.25 whole-time teacher equivalent (WTE) per group of 45 pupils participating in the Programme. Some of this time is used by the co-ordinator to co-ordinate the Programme. The rest is made available to the JCSP team of teachers to plan and evaluate their work and to profile students.

Who looks after the Programme?

Each school has a co-ordinator for the Programme. This role is rotated amongst the teaching staff. It is the co-ordinator's job to look after teachers' and students' needs arising from participation in the Programme. In general they support teachers informally, with photocopying and resources. They also arrange team meetings for planning and evaluation, which take place the last Friday of each month. Co-ordinators are a source of information for the principal and the entire school staff and liaise with the JCSP Support Service.



How many teachers are involved on the JCSP team?

All teachers in St. Paul's. Any teacher with teaching contact time with pupils: class teachers, learning support, part-time teachers, principal.

How often does the JCSP team meet?

The team has a planning meeting on the last Friday of each month. At least three of which are profile meetings held towards the end of each term.

How are meetings facilitated?

In St. Paul's there is a collective and collaborative responsibility for facilitating the JCSP meetings. The chair is rotated between each teacher and carries the responsibility for preparing agendas, running the meeting and recording action plans and minutes.

Further Curriculum Development takes place during time agreed under Public Service Agreement 2010-2014, (Croke Park Agreement). In St. Paul's the time agreed is each Tuesday 2.30pm-3.30pm.

What help do teachers involved in the Programme get?

- Support in planning a suitable curriculum
- Time for meetings
- A handbook of statements
- School visits from the support service
- Resources from the support service
- In-service on topics such as: methodologies, subject areas, literacy, numeracy
- Access to website www.jcsp.ie

What is cross-curricular work?

Cross-curricular work is a linking of subjects. It is an approach to methodology which fosters learning by first-hand experience and the active participation of students in planning, decision-making and in evaluation. The aim of cross-curricular work is to provide students with an active, enquiring education which is grounded in the issues of everyday life so that they may become flexible and adaptable members of society. There are a whole series of cross-curricular statements that teachers can choose from.

Who records the students' progress?

Each teacher records the progress of their own students and finds time to give them feedback on their performance. Some teachers work collaboratively with students to record progress made.

Who keeps the records?

Teachers keep their own records of students' progress through targets and statements. At the same time each student records their progress in each statement in their JCSP folder. The co-ordinator has the official master record of progress. This is updated at profile meetings held once per term.



Where are the records kept?

Teachers keep their own records. Student folders are kept in their classrooms/ the learning support room. The master record cards are kept by the co-ordinator and may also be stored in the school office.

How is students' participation in the Programme explained to them?

Students are told that they are doing the Junior Certificate Course. Instead of waiting to do an exam to get a certificate after three years, they can begin to work towards their exams immediately. Teachers will take a chunk of their subject, called a statement, which 'states' that they can do something. This statement will be put on their certificate as soon as they have achieved the required number of learning targets.

e.g. 'The student can apply the basic knowledge and skills necessary to produce artefacts using engineering materials.'

Students can build up their own JCSP Profile throughout Junior Cycle by completing targets and statements with their teachers. By the time they come to sit their exams they will realise that they have been successful learners and will feel much more confident about doing the Junior Certificate exam.

What do students gain from being in the Programme?

Students get an opportunity to become more involved in their own learning, discussing statements and meeting targets. Through engagement with this learning process, students begin to succeed and go on to build on this success. Throughout their time on the Programme the JCSP team seeks out opportunities to reward and praise students and to give them useful feedback on their performance. When the students sit their Junior Certificate exam they also get a certificate from the Department of Education and Science and a profile listing all they have achieved while on the Programme.

Should the learning targets in the statements be explained to the students?

It is important that students are aware of the learning targets that are ahead of them. It is important to emphasise that these targets are part of the Junior Certificate examination syllabus and that success in them is a stepping-stone to success in the Junior Certificate examination itself.

Is it necessary to involve the students in tracking their own progress?

JCSP teachers have found that involving students in monitoring their own progress gives them an increased sense of control over their own learning and leads to greater motivation in achieving learning targets. Experienced JCSP teachers report that this involvement is an important aspect of the delivery of the Programme. It lets the students know how they are getting on regularly and rewards their success with encouragement and praise.

How long does a student need to be in the Programme to receive a Final Profile?

A student has to complete one year working on the Programme in order to receive a Final Profile.



Can a student be profiled if they have left the school?

Yes, any student who has completed one full year in the Programme is entitled to a profile and certification. However, the profile and certification can only be awarded at the end of third year.

What is a statement?

A statement describes an area of knowledge, a concept or a skill. It states that a student knows, understands or can do something e.g. *'The student can carry out a simple research project and display the results appropriately.'* Statements are divided up into learning targets.

All JCSP statements have been written by practising teachers. A statement is a general description of a particular area of knowledge, ability or skill. Essentially a statement affirms that a student knows, understands or can do something. Each statement is defined or described by a series of learning targets. Learning targets are specific, short-term goals that lead to a statement. These outline the steps that are followed and the material that should be covered if the student is to achieve competence in the long-term target, the statement.

What is a School Based statement?

In St. Paul's agreement has been reached with JCSP National Co-ordinators that statements devised by teachers in St. Paul's to identify particular learning targets specific to the individual pupils and programme in St. Paul's may be included in the profile system. All school based statements must be approved by JCSP Support Service Co-ordinators.

How do the statements relate to the Junior Certificate syllabus?

The subject statements reflect areas of the Junior Certificate syllabus while explicitly stating the basic skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the examination. The syllabus is divided into short-term achievable goals.

What are learning targets?

Learning targets are specific short-term goals which, when combined, lead to the successful completion of a statement. They outline the steps to be followed and the material to be covered if the student is to achieve competence in the more long-term goal: the statement.

Do all students do the same learning targets at the same time?

It varies. It depends on the class, the subject and the teaching style of the teacher.

Is there a set time for completing a statement?

No, not at all; some statements such as those related to projects may be achieved in a relatively short time, while others may be worked on over the three years.

Is there a maximum or a minimum number of statements that can be chosen?

No, there is no set number of statements. Students can work on any number of statements. Ideally, at any one time the total number of statements each student is working on should be small. If these are achieved or are going well, additional statements can then be selected.



How many statements should teachers begin with?

Choose a small number of statements to work towards. Only achievable statements should be chosen.

How do teachers decide which statements to work on?

First establish the abilities and needs of the individual or class group and then set realistic and achievable targets. Take into account the necessity to get a good grounding in the basic skills and knowledge needed for progress in subject areas. Choosing statements based on those needs will help build the Programme. It is important that only achievable statements are chosen. Remember, the statements chosen are not additional to the Junior Certificate course; rather they will form a framework for planning and teaching a syllabus. All statements chosen by the teacher are indicated in their Yearly Schemes of work and a copy of same is submitted to the office at the beginning of each school year.

What is the best way to record student progress?

Each class has their own version of student folders with copies of the statement and learning targets. These are kept in school and reviewed regularly in class so that the students can keep track of their own progress using the three-box system to record progress.

Who awards the statements?

Any teacher who has worked through a statement with a student can recommend awarding that statement to the student. The recommendation is considered at a profile meeting and a decision as made to award the statement.

When is a statement awarded?

In general students can be awarded a statement when they are competent in at least 80 per cent of the learning targets in the following four areas:

- Frequency – almost always carries out task: 80 per cent plus of times
- Accuracy – accurate enough for a given purpose
- Independence – almost totally independent
- Sustainability – retains the knowledge or skill for about a month

An important element in awarding statements is the **teacher's professional judgement.**



What is profiling?

Profiling is the process of gathering positive information about what the student has achieved and recording what the student can do. Through profiling a student can gain recognition for subject work completed in preparation for the Junior Certificate exam and also for skills and abilities which they may have developed and which may not be directly examinable in that exam. The Student Profile Handbook contains a bank of learning targets arranged into statements that reflect areas of the syllabi of the Junior Certificate. The profile system consists of over 100 statements. There are two types of statements: subject-based statements and cross-curricular statements. Subject-based statements reflect many of the aims and objectives of the Junior Certificate subject syllabi. Cross-curricular statements usually refer to knowledge, ability or skills required by students to be successful learners but not directly examined in the Junior Certificate Examinations. Through cross-curricular statements students receive certification for a wide range of their achievements at Junior Cycle in addition to certification for their academic success.

What is a profile meeting?

A profile meeting is a meeting of the JCSP teaching team. It is usually organised by the co-ordinator with the objective of updating the records for a particular group of students. Teachers discuss the progress of each student to date and recommend which students have completed enough work to be awarded statements. Timing and frequency of meetings may vary, however these meetings should occur at least once a term.

What is a student profile?

A student profile is a positive record of statements that a student is working on or has achieved. This profile is compiled throughout Junior Cycle.

What is final profiling?

Final profiling occurs at the end of 3rd year, just before the Junior Certificate exam. Its purpose is to record, for the last time, the progress made by students about to sit the exam. The team of teachers agree on the total list of statements to be awarded to each student. Subsequent to the Final Profile meeting the co-ordinator sends this information to the JCSP office. Here a presentation folder is compiled for each student which includes:

1. A certificate of participation validated by the Department of Education and Science
2. A list of statements completed by that particular student

The presentation folders are returned to the schools where the co-ordinator and principal add in a reference for the student. The students are then presented with their Final Profile at a graduation or award ceremony in their school which is usually attended by staff and parents.

At what stage are the statements for the Final Profile decided upon?

The final decision as to which statements are to be awarded is made at the Final Profile meeting in the last term of third year.



Initiatives

Since 1997 the JCSP Support Service have run initiatives where teachers are facilitated in introducing new and creative ways of working with the students. The purpose is to provide opportunities for teachers to develop and explore new strategies, methodologies and interventions to support student learning. Many of the initiatives are an extension of the sharing of best practice at in-service. Strategies and interventions that have proven to be successful are further developed and explored by teachers involved in the JCSP.

The initiatives provide teachers with a small subvention to facilitate them in investigating and evaluating a specific strategy or intervention. Other initiatives are developments of successful interventions which are supported by the provision of guidelines and materials at in-service. As part of the Student Profile System many statements have been designed that describe the skills and knowledge attained by student involved in specific initiatives.

In St. Paul's initiatives have been implemented and teachers are encouraged to run initiatives which enhance the JCSP programme. The list of main initiatives available are below:

Literacy Initiatives

- Author in Residence
- Book Review
- Calligraphy/Penmanship Initiative:
- Debating
- Dictionary Work
- Digital Storytelling
- Oral Language Development
- eBooks
- JCSP Newsletter / Yearbook
- Literacy in your classroom
- Primary Picture Books
- Reading Corner
- Reading Corner Top Up
- Reading Programme in the English Classroom
- School Based Literacy Initiative
- Spelling Challenge
- Storytelling
- Keyword



Numeracy Initiatives

- Primary Paired Maths
- Flashmaster Maths
- Handheld Gaming Device
- ICT to support Numeracy
- Maths Games
- Maths Laboratory
- Number Millionaire
- Paired Maths
- School Based Numeracy Initiative

General JCSP Initiatives

- Arts and Crafts Initiative:
- Chess Initiative:
- Christmas Celebration
- Film Making Initiative
- Guidance
- Homework
- JCSP Student Folder Photographs
- Outdoor Education
- Study Skills
- Summer Celebration
- Twinning with Another School
- Community Service

Developing the Arts Initiatives

- Artist in the Classroom Initiative:
- Dance
- Drama
- Music
- Trip to an Art Gallery



Reading Initiatives

- ICT to support Reading
- Corrective Reader Programme
- Paired Reading
- Paired Reading Top Up
- Readalong
- Readalong Top Up
- Reading Aloud
- Reading Challenge
- Reading Challenge Top Up
- Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire?
- Who Wants to be a Word Millionaire? Top Up
- Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)
- Drop Everything and Read Top-up
- The Literacy Medley

English Initiatives

- Camera (English)
- English Pen Pal

Other Subject Initiatives

- Home Economics
- Home Economics: Celebrity Chef
- Materials Technology Metal
- Materials Technology Wood
- Environmental and Social Studies
- Field Trip
- Geography
- History
- Humanities
- Physical Education
- Science
- Technical Graphics
- Subject Topic Boxes

Further details available @ www.jcsp.ie