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# Transform**ED**

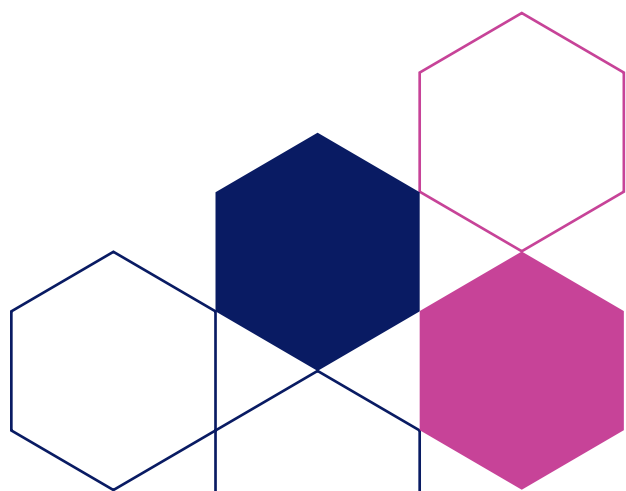
**Northern Ireland Curriculum 2028**

An entitlement to excellence and equity

## Home economics

Draft curriculum framework for Public Consultation

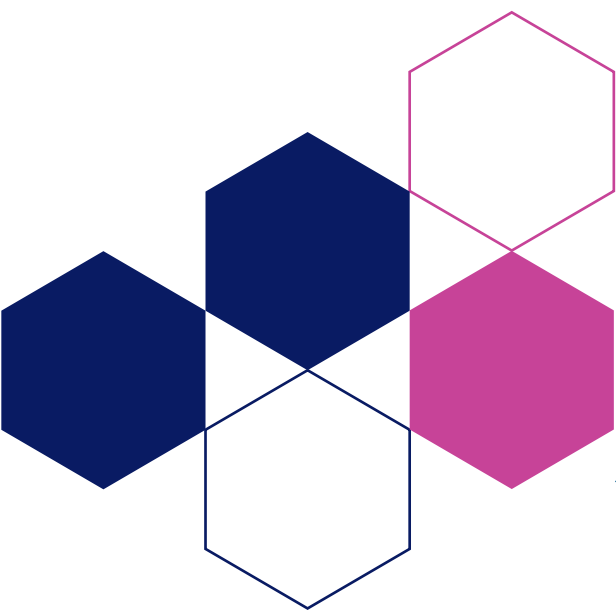
This document forms part of a suite of curriculum materials published for consultation





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## Vision statement

In a world where food systems, family life and resources are rapidly changing, home economics equips young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to navigate everyday life. As the only subject that integrates food, nutrition, health, finance, family life and practical ability, it occupies a distinctive place in the curriculum. By blending knowledge with practical experiences, the subject enables pupils to understand essential aspects of daily life and apply this understanding beyond the classroom.

Home economics helps pupils recognise how nutrition affects wellbeing and how food choices are shaped by culture, resources and advertising. Through this knowledge, pupils learn to weigh evidence and make safe, responsible decisions, with appropriate consideration of sustainability and wider ethical issues.

The subject develops pupils' competence in food preparation, nutritional understanding, managing household resources and consumer decision making, while strengthening their awareness of how economic and marketing factors influence everyday choices. The subject's strong emphasis on real-world application enables pupils to apply knowledge, consider consequences and make informed choices.

Learning in home economics also helps pupils develop independence and confidence by valuing the experiences which pupils bring from home, and extending these through the curriculum, thereby enriching family life and participation in the wider community.

By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils can make informed decisions about food, health and everyday living. This powerful blend of knowledge, life skills and judgement reflects the unique purpose of home economics and provides a foundation for further study and independent living.



# Subject-specific categories

Home economics is organised into four subject-specific categories:

- nutrition and health
- food preparation and cooking
- consumer awareness and food choice
- home, family and relationships

The subject categories do not need to be taught in isolation. Instead, they should be interlinked to help pupils recognise how choices in one area influence and depend on those in others. Teaching should connect with pupils' cultural backgrounds and what they encounter in their daily lives, while broadening their knowledge beyond that experience. Practical and theoretical learning should be woven together throughout.

## Nutrition and health

This category draws primarily on nutritional science, health education and biological understanding. Pupils develop secure knowledge of nutrients, dietary patterns and energy balance, and how these relate to growth, development and wellbeing. They learn how nutritional needs vary between individuals and groups, and how diet and lifestyle choices are linked to long-term health outcomes. Over time, pupils move from identifying basic nutritional principles to evaluating dietary choices in relation to health, lifestyle and sustainability.

## Food preparation and cooking

Food preparation and cooking develop pupils' practical capability alongside their understanding of ingredients, processes and techniques. Pupils learn how food is prepared safely and hygienically, how cooking methods affect nutritional, sensory and functional properties, and how to plan and prepare meals for themselves and others. Progression is reflected in increasing technical competence, confidence in the use of equipment, and the ability to adapt dishes to meet nutritional, cultural and practical requirements.

## **Consumer awareness and food choice**

This category draws on economics, consumer studies and aspects of behavioural science. Pupils learn how individuals and families make food and purchasing decisions, and how these are influenced by factors such as price, income, marketing, culture, peer pressure and sustainability. Pupils build the knowledge needed to act as informed, responsible consumers, making choices that balance cost, health, convenience and ethical considerations.

## **Home, family and relationships**

This category focuses on knowledge about family life, relationships and the home as a context for health, safety and wellbeing. Drawing on social and health sciences, pupils explore how families support individuals across the lifecycle, how roles and responsibilities are shared, and how relationships and communication influence wellbeing.



## Key Stage 3

In Key Stage 3, pupils develop their knowledge through the study of the interrelated areas of nutrition and health; food preparation and cooking; consumer awareness and food choice; home, family and relationships. They learn about nutrition and health by studying the principles of healthy diet, the functions and sources of nutrients, and dietary needs of individuals and groups. Through practical cookery experiences, pupils develop their competence in planning, preparing, cooking and evaluating a range of dishes. Alongside this, pupils develop knowledge about consumer awareness, and food, health and family living, in order to secure the foundations to make responsible decisions about food and health in their everyday lives.

### Nutrition and health

*Pupils should learn:*

- about a balanced diet and the current government guidelines for healthy eating
- about nutrients, their functions and sources, including:
  - macronutrients: carbohydrate, fat, protein
  - micronutrients: calcium, iron, vitamin C, vitamin D
  - water
  - fibre
- about energy balance, including energy intake and energy expenditure
- the factors that affect energy needs, including:
  - age
  - sex
  - activity level
- how nutritional and dietary needs vary for individuals and groups, including:
  - at different life stages (e.g. adolescence [12–18 years])
  - food allergy and food intolerance
  - vegetarians and vegans
  - religious and cultural dietary requirements
  - athletes and other physically active individuals

- about the links between diet, lifestyle and diet-related disease, and how to reduce risk through dietary and lifestyle choices, including:
  - cardiovascular disease
  - dental caries
  - iron deficiency anaemia
  - obesity
  - osteoporosis
  - type 2 diabetes

## **Food preparation and cooking**

### **Food safety and hygiene**

*Pupils should learn:*

- about why food safety matters (e.g. some foods are higher risk and certain groups of people or individuals are more vulnerable to foodborne illness)
- about food poisoning, including:
  - the names of common food poisoning bacteria (e.g. Salmonella, Campylobacter and E. coli)
  - symptoms of food poisoning
  - the causes of food poisoning
- to understand and adopt hygiene practices when preparing, cooking, storing and serving food, including:
  - personal hygiene (e.g. handwashing, tying hair back, covering cuts, clean apron and not preparing food when ill)
  - cleaning
  - chilling
  - cooking
  - preventing cross-contamination

### **Meal planning**

*Pupils should learn:*

- factors to consider when planning meals (e.g. skills, budget, local and seasonal produce, time, equipment, personal preferences and dietary needs)

- to plan a range of meals for themselves and others, taking account of dietary requirements, cost, and available time and equipment
- about the traditional and local dishes of Northern Ireland
- about the role of food in family life and celebrations (e.g. traditions, special occasions and shared meals)
- to make some of the traditional and local dishes of Northern Ireland, so that they have a repertoire of meals they can make independently

### **Cooking principles and practical skills**

*Through practical cookery experiences, pupils should learn:*

- about the nutritional, functional and sensory properties of ingredients
- practical cookery skills including:
  - weighing and measuring ingredients accurately
  - knife skills, including slice, dice, cut, chop and trim
  - preparation techniques, including peel, grate, crush, drain and sift
  - mixing and combining, including stir, whisk, beat, cream, fold in, rub in and knead
  - shaping and assembling, including roll out, cut out, shape and spread
- standard cookery techniques including:
  - cooking methods, including bake, grill, fry, stir-fry, simmer, boil and microwave
  - sauce making, including tomato-based sauce and all-in-one sauce
  - finishing techniques, including glaze
- to use appliances, equipment and utensils safely and effectively including:
  - utensils, including knives, wooden spoon, spatula, balloon whisk, grater, peeler
  - equipment, including saucepan, frying pan, baking tray, mixing bowl, measuring jug, weighing scales, colander, sieve and chopping board
  - appliances, including oven, grill, hob, microwave, kettle, toaster and electric whisk
- to make and present a range of dishes with attention to presentation and suitability-
- to evaluate dishes they make, and make simple modifications to improve nutritional value, sensory properties and suitability for dietary needs

## **Consumer awareness and food choice**

### **Being an informed consumer**

*Pupils should learn:*

- what it means to be a consumer and how to make informed purchasing decisions
- about different methods of payment used when making purchases, including:
  - cash
  - card payments (e.g. debit, credit and contactless)
  - online payments
- how to compare prices and assess value for money when buying food, including unit prices and promotional offers
- how to make value for money choices between different food options, including own-brand and branded products, convenience foods, takeaway foods, and homemade options
- about consumer rights and how consumers are protected when buying goods and services, online and in shops
- how to resolve problems with purchases, including how to complain appropriately online and in person

### **Factors influencing food choice**

*Pupils should learn:*

- how personal, social, economic and environmental factors influence food choices (e.g. health needs, price, quality, preference, peers and sustainability concerns)
- how family, culture, advertising and branding can shape what people choose to eat
- how marketing and social media can influence food choices and eating behaviours

### **Food information and labelling**

*Pupils should learn:*

- how to find reliable and trustworthy nutrition and food information, including recognising misinformation online and on social media
- the mandatory information found on food labels

- to interpret the information found on food products, including:
  - ingredients list, including allergen information
  - nutrition panel
  - front of pack labelling systems
  - nutrition and health claims
  - date marks, including best before and use by
- how to compare similar foods using nutrition information and the ingredients list

### **Food origins, farming and food systems**

*Pupils should learn:*

- about where food comes from, including:
  - animal sources (e.g. meat, poultry, fish and dairy products)
  - plant sources (e.g. cereals, fruit and vegetables)
- how food is produced and prepared by farmers, growers and processors
- about the journey of food from farm to fork, including production, processing, packaging, transport, retail, consumption and traceability
- the contribution the Northern Ireland agri-food sector makes to the local economy, employment and rural communities
- how consumers can make informed, ethical and environmentally sustainable decisions about food, including:
  - buying local and seasonal produce
  - animal welfare and quality assurance schemes shown on food packaging
  - ways to reduce the environmental impact of food choices (e.g. reducing food waste, choosing products with less packaging and considering the carbon footprint of food)
  - schemes to promote ethical trading

## **Home, family and relationships**

*Pupils should learn about:*

- how the home environment can support health, safety and wellbeing
- families and different family structures
- shared roles and responsibilities within families, and how individuals contribute positively through cooperation, routines and caring for others
- how the physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs of individuals and families change throughout lifecycles
- factors that can affect the health and wellbeing of individuals and families (e.g. relationships, communication, lifestyle, resources and external pressures)





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