

Primary Lesson Ideas

Using the 1926 census in primary school classrooms can support teachers to support pupils in Social and Environmental Education, particularly in the following areas outlined by the NCCA (2025).

Competencies

- Being an active citizen
- Being a digital learner

Concepts

- Change and continuity
- Time and chronology
- Sense of place

Skills

- Investigating
- Using evidence and sources
- Interpreting and analysing
- Chronological thinking
- Historical thinking
- Mapping/graphicacy

These lesson plans are particularly intended for pupils in **Stage 4** to support the following learning outcomes:

My Locality

- Identify and discuss the similarities and differences in the lives of people in their locality, both past and present.

The Island of Ireland

- Develop an awareness of the motivation for people's migration to and from Ireland over time and the impact of these movements.



An Chártaínn Náisiúnta
National Archives

Census 1926

Primary Lesson Ideas

Activity	Curriculum Links	Content
Activity 1: Meet a Child from 1926	Strand: My Locality Strand Unit: Identify and discuss the similarities and differences in the lives of people in their locality, both past and present	1. Navigate to the 'search the census' page of the National Archives website. 2. In the search box, leave the 'surname' and 'first name' boxes blank and search for the county that the school is in. 3. On the results page, you can use the 'DED' section to select the town/village the school is in. Then filter results by age and instruct pupils to identify children whose ages match their own. 4. Choose a search result and write down information such as: a. Age and family members b. Occupation of parents, if listed 5. Draw a Venn diagram on the board, one circle for a child in 1926, another for a child in 2026. Ask the class: • How was life different for children in 1926? • Use the Venn diagram to note things that are different and things that are the same. What is like your life today? 6. Pupils create a 'Day in the Life' diary entry for that child, imagining their daily life based on the census information.

Primary Lesson Ideas

Activity 2: Map your street in 1926	Strand: My Locality Strand Unit: Identify and discuss the similarities and differences in the lives of people in their locality, both past and present	Before the lesson: Teacher should count how many students are in the class, and divide the class into groups of eight pupils. Teacher should have pre-selected streets in the locality from the 1926 census to assign one street per group. Teacher models this activity at the start of the lesson for pupils. Frame the whole activity as a mystery, 'In 1926 a census was taken of everyone living in Ireland. Today, you're history detectives investigating who lived on your street nearly 100 years ago. What clues can you find?' 1. Pupils are assigned their street in their groups, and asked to get into pairs for the task. 2. Within their group of eight, pupils split into four detective pairs, each with a specific mission: • The Counters: how many households are on the street and what is the average number of people per household? • The Explorers: how many people were born in another county or abroad? Where did they come from? • The Linguists: how many people could speak Irish, or read and write? • The Career Detectives: what jobs did people on the street do? 3. Each pair digs into the census record for their street and records findings in their Detective's Notebook. 4. As a group of eight, pupils combine their findings onto a poster, presenting their findings and including a simple map of the street (tell pupils to use the 'Search by Map' function on www.nationalarchives.ie to see what the street looked like in 1926). 5. Share findings and discuss: display the posters on boards or hang them around the room, 'museum-style'. Ask pupils to go around in groups to read other posters and maps, and leave a sticky note on each poster with one thing that surprised them. 6. Reconvene as a class, asking the questions: • What were you most surprised about from the other streets? • What patterns do you notice across different streets? • What does this tell us about life in our area in 1926? 7. Optional extension activity: access Scoilnet Maps (or Google Maps) and display the present-day map of the same streets. Ask pupils: • What has changed? What has stayed the same? • Would you recognise this street from your 1926 map? • What do you think will have changed inside the buildings? (prompts could include people's employment; family sizes; women in employment; a more diverse community; technology, etc.)
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Worksheet: Activity 2

STREET DETECTIVES

Investigating Our Street in 1926

Street under investigation:	Detective team (group):
Detectives' names:	

Your mission: work with your partner to investigate your questions, then bring your findings back to your group of eight to build your street map together.

THE COUNTERS
<i>How many households are on your street? What is the average number of people per household?</i>

THE EXPLORERS
<i>How many people on your street were born in another county or abroad? Where did they come from?</i>

Primary Lesson Ideas

THE LINGUISTS

How many people on your street could speak Irish? How many could both read and write Irish?

THE CAREER DETECTIVES

What jobs (occupations) did people on your street do? List as many as you can find.