

Oireachtas Committee - Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht

Arts and Education - The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon

This paper provides an overview of current Arts Council policy and initiatives as they relate to the arts and education. The paper is presented by Seóna Ní Bhriain, Head of Young People, Children and Education.

1. Background

The Arts Council has a long history of advocacy and support for the arts in education in Ireland. Since the publication of *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education* in 1979, commonly referred to as the Benson Report, the Council has continued to advocate for a more central place for the arts in Irish schools, as well as in children's lives outside of school. *Points of Alignment, the Report of the Special Committee on the Arts and Education* was another landmark report published by the Arts Council in 2008. The Special Committee was convened at the request of the then Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism, with the cooperation of the Department of Education and Science, with the Arts Council playing a key role in facilitating and documenting the committee's discussions and recommendations. The report set out clear recommendations for 'joined up action' across the twin fields of arts and education. While these recommendations were not adopted by the Departments at the time of the report's publication, elements of *Points of Alignment* were re-iterated in the Arts in Education Charter, launched in 2012 by the then Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and the Minister for Education and Skills. In particular, the principles and values articulated in *Points of Alignment* were re-stated, and some specific actions were included and have been implemented in the context of the Arts in Education Charter, such as the development of an online portal site for the arts in education. The Arts Council Director was appointed as a member of the High Level Implementation Group of the Arts in Education Charter, and the Arts Council has developed policies and initiatives to support its implementation.

2. Arts Council Strategy (2016-2025)

The Arts Council supports and promotes children and young people's engagement with the arts from birth to early adulthood. Young People, Children and Education (YPCE) is the term used to describe this area of work. YPCE encompasses all art form areas, and centres on the child or young person's experience of the arts whether as a young artist, learner, participant, audience member, or a combination of these.

Making Great Art Work, Arts Council Strategy (2016-2025) clearly states the Arts Council's commitment to plan and provide for children and young people. The Council's *Three-Year Plan 2017-2019*

outlines a number of actions and measures of particular relevance to children and young people's engagement with the arts. Relevant extracts are included below:

Actions 2017-2019

- Incorporate our commitment to young people into the mainstream of our decision-making
- Work with others, including Local Government and the Department of Education and Skills, to support the provision of excellent arts experiences for young people.

To deliver these, we will:

- Increase our investment and prioritise our commitment to children and young people across all art forms from 2017.
- Continue to advocate full implementation of the Arts in Education Charter

What we will have achieved?

- Our work with children and young people will be prioritised across all of our arts areas.
- In areas where we target our investment, advocacy and related initiatives, children and young people feel included in the cultural life of their community, and have a positive and rewarding experience of the arts.

3. Research - arts and cultural participation among children

In 2016, as an essential first step to address its commitment to plan and provide for children and young people, the Arts Council commissioned *Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People - Insights from the Growing up in Ireland Study* (Arts Council/ESRI, 2016). This research has improved our knowledge and understanding of children's participation in the arts, and continues to inform Council policy and initiatives. The research has demonstrated that participation in the arts impacts positively on other child outcomes such as socio-emotional wellbeing, cognitive development and attitudes to school. It has highlighted the importance of arts and cultural experiences in early childhood, and identified barriers to participation for certain groups, including young people with additional needs, those in low-income households, and families who have recently immigrated to Ireland. The research has also shown that children who have opportunities to experience arts and culture at school are more likely to participate after school.

4. Developmental initiatives

The Arts Council invests in a number of developmental initiatives to foster children and young people's engagement with the arts. Recent and current initiatives of particular relevance to the arts in education are outlined below.

4.1 Artist Residencies in Initial Teacher Education

As part of the implementation of the Arts in Education Charter, the Arts Council has, since 2012, supported artist residencies in Higher Education Institutes providing Initial Teacher Education. Currently, five artist residencies are supported by the Arts Council in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Maynooth University, and Marino Institute of Education. Through these residencies, the Arts Council aims to:

- support institutions offering initial teacher education to plan and provide for the arts as a key aspect of their students' experience and development
- support artists in residence in a variety of art forms, and develop partnerships with a range of institutions offering initial teacher education in Ireland
- provide future teachers with opportunities to engage meaningfully with the arts as part of their initial teacher education
- support future teachers to develop the skills and confidence to facilitate meaningful arts experiences for their students, and to champion the arts in schools
- provide opportunities for artists to develop their skills and experience in education settings, and to develop their artistic work in a collaborative and supportive environment

4.2 The Arts Council played an active role in the development and establishment of the Arts in Education Portal www.artsineducation.ie and continues to have representatives on the Editorial Committee.

4.3 A recently renewed Music Generation/Arts Council partnership supports local music education partnerships to engage with high-calibre musicians through targeted developmental initiatives. The current partnership will run to 2020.

4.4 In 2016 and 2017, the Arts Council has had a representative on the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) development group for visual art in junior cycle and senior cycle. The Arts Council also nominated a representative to

the Quality and Qualifications Ireland (QQI) standards review group for music and dance at levels 5 and 6 in 2017.

4.5 In 2013 and 2014, the Arts Council invested in two pilot initiatives - Performing Arts Learning Service (PALS) and Arts in Junior Cycle in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills. The Arts Council played a leading role in the development and implementation of these pilots, which have since been embraced by the Department of Education and Skills as a model for arts-based Continuing Professional Development (CPD) at post-primary level.

4.6 At the request of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, the Arts Council invested in Teacher Artist Partnerships in 2017, a CPD model at primary level.

4.7 In 2016, the Arts Council convened a working group, with representatives from the fields of arts and education, to develop an implementation plan for Arts Rich Schools (ARIS) as outlined in the Arts in Education Charter. According to the Charter, Arts Rich Schools would incentivise and recognise those schools (primary and post-primary) which make the arts a key part of school life. The draft implementation plan developed by the group was presented to the High Level Implementation Group of the Arts in Education Charter. Following the launch of Creative Ireland in November 2016, the implementation plan was reviewed and expanded to become Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools. This initiative is outlined in greater detail below.

5. Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools

Pillar One of the Creative Ireland programme (2016) and the Creative Youth Plan (2017) describe an all-of-government intention to enable the creative potential of every child and young person. Within this framework, and as part of the implementation of the Arts in Education Charter, the Arts Council has worked closely with the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht in leading the development of Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools, which will begin implementation in 150 schools in 2018.

Creative Schools aims to put the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives. It is a pilot initiative that will support schools to develop and begin to implement their own Creative Schools plan. Schools selected for the pilot will be partnered with a Creative Associate, who will support them in planning and implementing a creative programme that can be sustained in their school.

Creative Associates will be artists, creative practitioners and educators who will help schools to draw on the range of

opportunities within their school and wider community. Each school will also receive €2,000 to help them implement their programme. All Department of Education and Skills recognised primary and post-primary schools and Youthreach centres are eligible to apply. 150 schools will be selected to participate in the initiative in the 2018-2019 school year. The Creative Schools initiative will support a diverse range of school types from a wide range of geographic regions to explore an extensive array of artforms.

The project team for Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools is currently housed within the Arts Council, with two teachers on secondment from the Department of Education and Skills. The Arts Council issued a tender for the provision of Project Lead services and has engaged international experts Creativity, Culture and Education to lead the project on the Arts Council's behalf in its pilot phase. Part of this phase will involve planning for the scaling of the initiative over time, and ensuring coherence and complementarity with related initiatives in the Creative Youth plan.

More details are available on www.artscouncil.ie

6. Investment in the arts for children and young people

In addition to the developmental initiatives outlined above, the Arts Council invests in local authorities, venues, festivals, and resource organisations that recognise and place emphasis on children and young people's arts engagement as part of their remit. The Arts Council places emphasis on children and young people in its guidelines for funding across a range of these contexts. The Council also runs a number of schemes such as the Young Ensembles Scheme and YPCE Bursary Award that are specifically designed to support work with and for children and young people. Through its Strategic Funding programme, the Arts Council has already invested just under €2.8 million in 2018 in 22 organisations whose work is largely or entirely focused on children and young people. These include The Ark, Baboró, Barnstorm Theatre Company, Branar Dramaíochta Teo, Children's Books Ireland, Dublin Youth Theatre, Dublin Youth Dance Company, Fíbin Teo, Fighting Words, Fresh Film Festival, Galway Community Circus, Graffiti Theatre Co., Irish Association of Youth Orchestras, Irish National Youth Ballet, Kids' Own, Monkeyshine Theatre, National Youth Orchestra of Ireland, Theatre Lovett, Waterford Youth Arts, Young Irish Filmmakers, and Youth Theatre Ireland. In partnership with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the Arts Council supports the National Youth Council of Ireland to deliver its youth arts programme in youth work settings.

7. Concluding remarks

The all of government intention of the Creative Youth plan is warmly welcomed by the Arts Council. In particular, the potential for the

Department of Children and Youth Affairs to play an active role in the development of the plan, alongside the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Culture, Heritage and Gaeltacht, is significant. This provides potential for a holistic approach in planning and providing for children and young people, that gives due regard to arts and cultural provision in children's lives both in and out of school. The complementarity of these experiences in a child's development and experience has been clearly demonstrated in the research regarding arts and cultural participation among children, referenced earlier in this document. Key areas of policy and strategy led by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which the Arts Council considers of shared interest include wellbeing; children and young people's participation in decision making; and early childhood arts, which is an area of significant interest to the Arts Council, building on our research to date in this area.

The Arts Council is very pleased with the active partnership with the Department of Education and Skills that has developed through the Creative Schools initiative. The decision to second two teachers to the Arts Council to develop Creative Schools during its pilot phase has fostered a particularly productive relationship. The level of engagement and partnership with colleagues across the range of government departments has been encouraging.

The Arts Council considers it essential that a joined up approach is taken as the Creative Youth plan is developed and implemented. To date, Scoileanna Ildánacha/Creative Schools has been the main area the Arts Council has led in relation to the plan. However, the Arts Council is aware that this sits alongside a range of related actions within the Creative Youth plan, all of which are at different points of development, and some of which may perhaps over time become more closely aligned, or may be re-imagined as partnerships continue to develop.

A key recommendation of Points of Alignment was to establish an Arts in Education Development Unit, which was to be responsible for implementing most of the report's actions and recommendations. It could be argued that the absence of such a unit presented challenges in the implementation of the Arts in Education Charter, and in the delivery of a range of partnership initiatives across the arts and education.

As the Creative Youth plan is further developed and implemented, a development unit, or similar resource, supported by the three key departments may be worth exploring. Local partnerships should continue to play a key role in the development and delivery of the plan, while a national unit would assist in ensuring a coherent approach, tied in with national policies of key agencies and departments. Whether through existing or new structures, the Arts Council remains committed to working in partnership with others to ensure children and young people have ample opportunities to

participate in the arts, and to develop their skills and experiences across a range of art forms, both in and out of school.