

# intouch



One Million Trees  
Launch

COVID-19 Pandemic



## We're all in this together

We find ourselves living in unprecedented times, dealing with challenges we couldn't have imagined earlier in the year. The global pandemic, which has caused so much disruption, has wholly altered the way we live our lives as we follow the guidance from government to isolate ourselves.

As your general secretary, I want to thank each and every one of you for how you have navigated uncharted waters since schools closed. You have demonstrated the very best of our profession, adapting and innovating to ensure our pupils are kept engaged with schoolwork through distance learning. This remains the main responsibility of all educators. By doing this work so effectively, you have shown that the education sector is an essential service

### Our communities are the better for your contribution over the last number of weeks

that remains open for business, albeit in a new way for the moment. I share the concerns of a huge number of members for the safety and well-being of the children we teach, particularly those who are vulnerable or who have additional needs. No teacher wants to see children missing opportunities because of school closures, but everyone is deeply conscious of the delicate balance between public health priorities and the delivery of educational services. INTO has exhorted government to provide vital support for our most necessitous pupils during this national emergency.

While it comes as no surprise, many teachers have been volunteering in their communities outside of contractual hours. We are closely connected with the families of our pupils and worry about them now more than ever, as some parents and guardians work in the front line and many families are grappling with the unknown. Our communities are the better for your contribution over these last number of weeks. I have no doubt that your efforts will continue to make a difference in the period ahead.

During this crisis, the INTO will be with you every step of the way. Our web and social media channels will broadcast daily updates, InTouch magazine will feature helpful content from minding your mental health and well-being to supporting our local communities and much more. If you have any ideas, get in touch. We are all in this together,

one strong mobilised and key group of public servants supporting Ireland's mission to preserve life.

In the weeks leading up to the closure of our schools, the INTO was hard at work, along with the wider trade union movement in securing vital agreements from government and guarantees that all staff within our schools would continue to be paid.

### Congress 2020

Last month we convened an emergency meeting of the Central Executive Committee, to consider our response to the current pandemic and in particular, to consider whether it was advisable to proceed with our Congress. Ultimately, we took the decision to postpone this year's gathering, only the second time in our one hundred and fifty-two-year history to do so. Working with our colleagues in the ASTI and TUI, this decision was taken with the health and safety of our members and their families in mind.

We also took the decision that, despite this year's Congress being postponed, newly elected officers would take on their new roles on the date the event was due to take place – so new members of national committees and our incoming president and vice-president will take office on Wednesday, 15 April.

Many INTO events across the country have been postponed, and we will seek to reschedule these events as soon as we can. Our staff continues to work remotely with a view to continuing to deliver a high level of service to members.

### Securing an all-island approach

Our colleagues in Northern Ireland worked diligently to secure an all-island approach to containing the pandemic in our schools. Following an intensive campaign led by our Northern Committee and Northern Office, the UK government and subsequently the Northern Ireland executive finally relented, cancelling formal classes in the north.

Tabhair aire daoibh féin. Ní neart go cur le chéile.

# intouch



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INTO Solidarity Fund



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## Niamh departs as an examiner of accounts

The INTO thanks Niamh Harris, Monaghan branch, for her service over several years as an examiner of accounts. The examiners are appointed by the CEC and scrutinise INTO's accounts each quarter. This is in addition to the

annual external audit, and the pre-Congress examination by the Accounts Committee. Niamh is replaced by Aileen Lynch, Tullamore branch; with Kieran Brosnan, Portlaoise branch continuing as an examiner.



Pictured left to right are: (back row) Noel Ward, Deputy General Secretary/General Treasurer; Aileen Lynch, Tullamore branch; Gráinne Cleary, Assistant General Secretary/Director of Operations and Finance; (seated) Niamh Harris, Monaghan branch and Kieran Brosnan, Portlaoise branch.

## INTO and IPPN school visit



INTO President Feargal Brougham and IPPN President Damian White on a recent visit to Scoil Eoin Phóil II Naofa in Tullamore. They met principal Simon Byrne where they discussed key leadership issues including workload, DEIS and the School Completion Programme. Feargal and Damian also met the teachers and school staff during their tea break.

## Standardised testing: friend or foe?

Across the world, the issue of compulsory standardised testing continues to raise concerns amongst teachers, particularly when test results are seen to carry high stakes. In many parts of the US, the UK and East Asia, for example, there is a very strong focus on accountability and value added (as measured by improved test performance year on year), and policy decisions are often seen to be unduly influenced by pupils' standardised test scores. The immediate consequences for teachers' remuneration, school funding (often linked with league table rankings) and pupils' SEN allocations can be very serious and are often associated with more long-term problems such as narrowing of the curriculum, teaching to the test and grade inflation.

Until relatively recently, primary education in Ireland was seen to be somewhat immune from problems of this kind. However, significant policy changes in Ireland over the past decade in particular (e.g., the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, *Circular 0056/2011*

[DES, 2011]), resulting in mandatory testing and reporting to the DES annually of pupils' performance in English reading and Mathematics, have given pause for thought. In response, colleagues from the Centre for Assessment Research, Policy and Practice in Education (CARPE) at DCU and the INTO conducted a research study involving 1,564 teachers. Published in May 2019, the report (available online here: <http://bit.ly/INTOCARPE>) provides unique insights into teachers' beliefs about, and attitudes towards, standardised testing in general and how tests are being used currently in schools. Based on the study findings, the report identifies five principles which, it argues, "...should be stated, reiterated and/or highlighted in all policy documents":

1. Standardised testing is an integral part of the teaching and learning process and the outcomes of standardised tests can be used by various stakeholders (pupils, teachers, policy makers and others) to enhance teaching.
2. Standardised testing is important



but is not more important than the assessments teachers and their pupils use in the course of normal classroom activity.

3. Standardised tests in English reading and mathematics measure elements of literacy and numeracy but can never capture the full range of what achievement in both areas of learning means.
4. Single assessments are a poor basis for making important educational decisions and the results of standardised tests should never be used, or reported, in isolation.
5. Standardised tests are not designed to be measures of teacher effectiveness. Further details of teachers' responses to the study and advice on how to address concerns raised regarding the administration, interpretation and reporting of standardised tests will be provided in the April and May editions of *InTouch*.

**DR ZITA LYSAGHT is a member of the School of Policy and Practice at DCU.**

# INTO Summer Programme 2020

INTO Learning is in the process of preparing for an enhanced summer programme. The programme will offer nine online summer courses and one face-to-face summer course. Subject to Department of Education and Skills approval, they are as follows:

- Moving from Mainstream to SET
- Learning Through Play
- Digital Technologies in SESE and STEM
- Maths Problem Solving: A Process, not a Product!
- Our Environment, our Lives!
- Literacy Through the Arts
- Global Citizenship Schools
- Creating an LGBT+ Inclusive School 
- Understanding and Supporting Pupils Suffering Adverse Childhood Trauma 

## An Ghaeilge: Cumarsáid, Comhluadar agus Craic

Our long-time favourite face-to-face course, An Ghaeilge: Cumarsáid, Comhluadar agus Craic, will take place in Dún Chaoin from Monday 6 to Friday 10 June.

### Course registration

Registration for the programme will take place online at moodle.intolearning.ie from Wednesday 6 May and close on Monday, 28 June.

The online summer programme will run from Wednesday 1 to Wednesday 22 July. All online courses will cost €35 with the exception of Creating an LGBT+ Inclusive School which will cost €25. A limited number of places is available on each course so early booking is advisable.

Bookings for the An Ghaeilge: Cumarsáid, Comhluadar agus Craic course will be taken both online and via an application form to the summer course co-ordinators Nuala Úi Ghearralt (nualauig@hotmail.com) and Seán Ó Catháin (seanocathain6@gmail.com). This course costs €100. An application form will be made available in the next issue of *InTouch*.

### New branch officer training: diary date

Training will be made available to all new branch officers – secretaries, chairpersons and organisers. This training will take place in Athlone on Thursday, 4 (secretaries a full day, other officers arriving for an evening dinner) and Friday, 5 June, venue to be confirmed.

## ICTU Women's Conference pass parents' leave motion

The 23rd Congress Women's Conference took place from 5 to 6 March in the Clayton Whites Hotel, Wexford. Themed around the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 40th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. Delegates debated 25 motions on topics ranging from Brexit, the new maternity hospital, access to education for asylum seekers, gender pay gap, parental leave and sexual harassment. There was also consideration of the Congress input to the Citizen's Assembly on Gender Equality. The ICTU General Secretary, Patricia King, gave an address drawing on all the themes included in the conference.

Eight delegates from the INTO Equality Committee and the two INTO representatives on the ICTU Women's Committee attended on behalf of the INTO. The INTO Equality Committee submitted a motion on the failure to top up parents' leave to the conference:

'Conference welcomes the introduction of two weeks' parent's leave in respect of babies born on or after 1 November



2019, to be taken within a year of the birth. However, Conference condemns the fact that the state benefit payable in respect of the parent's leave is not topped up to normal salary levels for public sector employees who avail of the leave, and across much of the private sector. Conference considers that this failure to top up the state benefit payment of €245 per week will result in many new parents being unable to avail of the leave for financial reasons. Conference urges the ICTU to engage with the government on

this matter, in order to secure a top-up payment in respect of parent's leave across the public sector. Conference also calls upon all employers to top up the state benefit to enable their employees to avail of the leave.'

Deirdre Fleming, chairperson of the Equality Committee proposed the motion while it was seconded by the Committee's vice-chairperson, Nuala Grealay. The motion was strongly supported by conference delegates and was unanimously passed.





# Different Families, Same Love competition returns for May 2020

The INTO LGBT+ Teachers' Group are delighted to announce the return of the National LGBT+ Federation GALAS award-winning 'Different Families, Same Love' competition for May 2020.

We are asking primary teachers to take action in their classrooms to celebrate the diversity of people and families in Ireland and to address homophobic and transphobic bullying in primary schools.

The 'Different Families, Same Love' competition offers teachers a chance to showcase their work in this regard and to win prizes for their classrooms to boot.

Competition entries, like families, can take many forms and schools can choose to create individual, group or class artwork, comics, stories, poems,



plays, songs, videos, or podcasts based on the theme 'Different Families, Same Love.' Entries will be judged on creativity, originality, relevance to the theme and how well the learning was shared with wider school and local community.

### Prizes

- iPad for your class
- Raffle for One4All voucher for all participating teachers
- Hamper of books
- Lots of runner up prizes!



This competition is open to all primary schools and special schools across the island of Ireland.



Tá fáilte faoi leith roimh iarratais ó Ghaelscoileanna agus scoileanna Gaeltachta.

Entries from special schools are also welcome.

### Categories

- Junior: Infants to 2nd Class
- Senior: 3rd to 6th Class

Visit [into.ie/lgbt](http://into.ie/lgbt) for participation criteria and recommended teaching resources.

Closing date for receipt of entries is Friday, 22 May.



## INTO meets schools to review School Completion Programme

The School Completion Programme (SCP) encompasses 400 schools nationwide, aiming to have a significant impact on levels of pupil retention in primary and second level. SCP is based on the concept of integrated services providing effective, multi-faceted actions that respond to young people's needs. Having met with principals and school representatives last year to explore the experiences of schools in relation to the SCP, the INTO hosted a series of follow-up meetings during the spring term. A team of INTO representatives comprising Fergal Brougham (INTO President), Mary Magner (INTO Vice-President), Dr Deirbhile Nic Craith (Assistant General Secretary) and Aoife Mullen (education official) met with members in Athlone, Cork, Donegal, Dublin, Dundalk, Limerick and Wexford to gain an insight into how the scheme is currently operating in various regions across the country and the vision of each school for SCP.

## Opening of Córfhéile na Scoileanna Áth Cliath

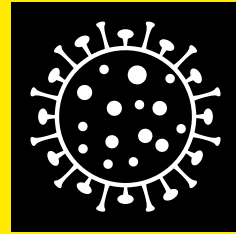


Pictured at the opening night of Córfhéile na Scoileanna (CNS) Áth Cliath, which was held in March, are:

Back row (left to right): Rhona Clarke, moltóir cheoil; John Gearty; Joe Johnston, PRO CNS; Tom McGorman, cathaoirleach CNS; Oliver Hynes; Pat Kitterick; Carrie Maher, cisteoir CNS.

Front row (left to right): Niamh Dillon; Máirín Uí Scolaí; Mary Fleming; Mary Magner, Leas Uachtarán CMÉ; Brian Fleming, percussion maestro, who performed the official opening; Áine Kitterick; and Patricia Cassidy, secretary CNS.

# Coronavirus COVID-19



Coronavirus  
**COVID-19**  
Public Health  
Advice

**If you have fever and/or cough you should stay at home regardless of your travel or contact history.**

**If you have returned from an area that is subject to travel restrictions due to COVID-19 you should restrict your movement for 14 days.** Check the list of affected areas on [www.dfa.ie](http://www.dfa.ie)

## All people are advised to:

- > **Reduce** social interactions
- > **Keep a distance** of 2m between you and other people
- > **Do not** shake hands or make close contact where possible

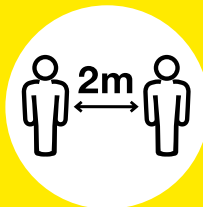
If you have symptoms visit [hse.ie](http://hse.ie) OR phone HSE Live **1850 24 1850**

## How to Prevent



### Stop

shaking hands or hugging when saying hello or greeting other people



### Distance

yourself at least 2 metres (6 feet) away from other people, especially those who might be unwell



### Wash

your hands well and often to avoid contamination



### Cover

your mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing and discard used tissue



### Avoid

touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands



### Clean

and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

## Symptoms

- > Fever (High Temperature)
- > A Cough
- > Shortness of Breath
- > Breathing Difficulties

## For Daily Updates Visit

[www.gov.ie/health-covid-19](http://www.gov.ie/health-covid-19)  
[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)



# Supporting learning in these strange times

Ciara Reilly offers some suggestions for teachers and parents

The sudden nationwide school closures to assist the country's fight against COVID-19 have posed a huge challenge for teachers and parents alike. The latter are suddenly cast in the role of home educator for which they were unprepared; the former might easily feel powerless to continue playing a meaningful role as teachers when the pupils are out of sight.

Given the speed at which the closure was announced and enforced, both camps are understandably faced with a scramble to try and structure what may be a lengthy and frustrating closure. While some schools had already embraced electronic means to contact parents or students – the likes of [Seesaw](#), [ClassDojo](#) or [Google Classroom](#) are popular examples – and therefore had a head-start in trying to arrange a Plan B, no school and no teacher could ever be expected to have a perfect system ready to deploy

for such circumstances.

No teacher should therefore feel any guilt, or indeed any overt pressure, to supply a perfect substitute by way of ad-hoc distance learning. This is despite some of the pressure they may feel from parents who are keen to have as much assistance offered as possible – and the pressure that teachers might feel to be overtly performative in keeping busy. This is new territory for all and poses particular challenges for primary level teachers.

Naturally any attempt to come up with a plan for guiding learning from afar will lean heavily on electronic resources, and will likely be communicated in such ways. But, speaking even as a lecturer who focuses on embedding digital resources into the primary classroom, the use of technology to supplement 'formal' curricular education should not be the absolute priority at present. When devising tasks for pupils it might be helpful to bear in mind the relative access each home might have to broadband, or how

many devices might be available to share between multiple siblings. It should be noted also that such tasks often exclude our most vulnerable learners, and we must try to be as inclusive as possible, even from afar.

Instead, we should advise working-from-home parents to try and focus on universal 'life' skills which will make their children more proficient in real-world tasks.

Now might be the good time, for example, to teach a child how to tie their laces, or work on reading a clock, getting to grips with gardening or planting seeds, learning to knit or sew a button, experimenting with cooking and baking or more. Maybe it's time to help them memorise the phone numbers of family members, rediscover the art of writing and sending a letter (especially to an older relative they are keeping distant from), use old newspapers to practice wrapping a present, or even learn to ride a bike! They might also take a creative approach to filling time by interviewing other family members on their views

Naturally any attempt to come up with a plan for guiding learning from afar will lean heavily on electronic resources, and will likely be communicated in such ways.



about the world and the past, which may become invaluable in future years as an oral history of this time. Crucially, tasks like this are largely accessible to all and are not dependant on access to technology or resources.

And, of course, they might simply like to pick up a few books and rediscover the joy of reading, perhaps setting themselves a reading challenge. Libraries may be closed but many now offer an online sign-up, which then allows members to use the [Borrowbox app](#) to borrow e-books free of charge. They also offer audiobook services, which may be a useful hook to engage reluctant readers.

When it comes to technological assistance for activities, it might be helpful to categorise the available tools and resources into two distinct groups: online resources which might be thought of as supplementing offline learning – the likes of printables, or other tools which might inspire creative tasks – and, separately, technological tools where the app or services performs a standalone function in and of itself.

The former category includes many different resources across all strands of the curriculum. In English, the [Creative Worksheet Tool](#) can be used to add some finesse to handwriting. In Irish, the Rainn agus Amhráin resource – or the [Irish games list](#) devised by my Marino colleague Claire Dunne – can make Gaeilge come alive in the home. [Pinterest](#) is packed with ideas for make-and-do challenges in art – and even PE can be supplemented through the [Active Schools Flag 'Running around the Garden' challenge](#). More holistic supports can be found in the [Walk in my Shoes wellness resources](#), while therapeutic activities can be pursued at [Therapy Street for Kids](#).

Tools of this kind might be a useful 'middle ground' for parents who are generally opposed to increased screen time for their children, or who would hope to strike a 'middle ground' between a formalised school-style education and the previously mentioned 'life skills' class of activities. They might also be of greater preference to parents who are less pressured with work-from-home productivity targets. Further similar resources can be found at [Scoilnet](#), the

... we should advise working-from-home parents to try and focus on universal 'life' skills which will make their children more proficient in real-world tasks.

superb [PDST Distance Learning page](#), or [Twinkl](#) (a portal of teacher-designed resources).

In the other category, of more immersive standalone apps and services, the likes of [Epic Reading](#) or [Oxford Owl](#) can be helpful to encourage reading; the celebrated [Khan Academy](#) can help pupils develop a more innate understanding of maths; [Cúla4's apps](#) can support Gaeilge activities, while the [Nessy Reading and Spelling website](#) can help particularly address the challenges faced by pupils with dyslexia. Infant pupils can benefit from the likes of [Topmarks](#) and [Starfall](#); new skills can be developed at [Code.org](#) or [Typing Club](#), while even PE can be addressed through services like [GoNoodle](#), [RTÉ's 10@10](#), or the [Body Coach's YouTube channel](#). [Seomra Ranga's](#) online daily quiz might also be a useful

The Taoiseach's recent admission that schools may remain closed into May means schools will have to prepare for a sustained period of abnormality.

online distraction!

Helpfully, given under the circumstances, many websites have lifted their paywall and allowed public access to their resources for free (though in some cases registration is required). Resources from the likes of [Twinkl](#), [DabbleDoo](#) or [Teach Your Monster to Read](#) are therefore more freely available and can assist teachers and parents alike in trying to find resources to keep the educational journey alive. Educational publishers like [EdCo](#), [Folens](#) and [CJ Fallon](#) have also made the electronic versions of their books, and the accompanying workbooks or resources, available free of charge for the crisis period.

Over a hundred tools across both categories can be found through [a Padlet resource I created](#) to respond to the school closures, the address for which is provided at the bottom of this article (and is also the pinned tweet on my Twitter profile, [@PrimEdTeacher](#)). That Padlet also includes links to other similar [Padlets](#) compiled by other teachers, with even more resources that might be especially useful in certain cases.

Twitter has come into its own in the current circumstances too, where the [#edchatie](#) hashtag – ordinarily used as a channel for more generalised discussion among Irish educators – has become [#edshareie](#), a cache of fresh ideas and resources being shared within the teaching community.

The Taoiseach's recent admission that schools may remain closed into May means schools will have to prepare for a sustained period of abnormality. It also means that, if schools do return only a few weeks before the end of term, some thought must be given to a 'recalibration' of the classroom to take stock of each child's different experiences. But in the meantime, practical activities and online resources can help teachers to continue as active stakeholders in their pupils' education – even if they are not setting foot in the classroom.

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**CIARA REILLY** is a lecturer in ICT and Digital Education at Marino Institute of Education. Her Padlet collection of resources (such as all of those mentioned above) can be found at <https://padlet.com/ciarareillymarino/primarydistancelearning>.



# Supporting our communities during the pandemic

The novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is a time of great uncertainty for everyone. As the global crisis unfolds, each one of us has a duty to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe by practicing good hygiene and social distancing.

Schools, shops and businesses are closed. Our lives are temporarily on hold. So, what can we do? There are practical ways to offer support to pupils, family, friends and the wider community during school closures.

## Online

### Social Media

This is a difficult time for many parents and guardians as they navigate the uncharted territory of home-schooling; it can be hard to know what to do or where to start. As a teacher, you have invaluable knowledge you can share online to the benefit of others.

In a recent trend, teachers are taking to social media to offer help to their online community. In a post, teachers state their area of expertise, whether they teach in primary or secondary, and offer their support to parents and guardians who are at home with young children or

home-schooling. By offering guidance and practical advice, you'll be providing vital tools to those managing home learning for the first time and can help keep children's learning on track during this unprecedented time while schools are closed. Post links to recommended teaching resources that provide useful material for parents and guardians who are suddenly feeling the pressure of creating their own curriculum. It's also a good idea to reassure families who are struggling that they're not expected to re-create school at home. Children may be feeling anxious and if they're finding it difficult to keep up with structured learning, they can learn other life skills at home through cooking, baking, physical exercise, play and meditation. INTO has compiled a comprehensive [list of home-schooling resources](#) for you to share.

Members are reminded that if you are providing support online, consider setting up an email/social media presence specifically for professional purposes rather than providing access to your personal account.

### YouTube

If you've ever thought about setting up your own YouTube channel, now is the perfect time to start! Why not host a virtual classroom sharing lesson plans, crafting ideas, PE plans,

games, etc. to keep pupils learning and entertained. Share the link to your channel with your school or class.

## Offline

### Looking after your community

You may know someone in your neighbourhood who may be in the higher risk category or who feels particularly vulnerable at this worrying time. Reach out to them, by phone or even a note in the letterbox, to let them know you are thinking of them and offer to assist with shopping, collect a prescription or walk the dog. Small gestures such as these can have a profound uplifting effect and even a simple 'hello' can help alleviate loneliness.

### HSE – 'Be On Call for Ireland'

If your family or friends would like to support the health services and think they have a relevant skillset that can help, the HSE has begun a major recruitment drive for healthcare professionals and volunteers. If you'd like to find out more, [read the FAQs here](#). You can set up a profile in order to register your interest. You can also upload your CV, listing any useful skills you may have that could be put to good use.

### Volunteer Ireland

If you are in good health and want to formally volunteer, you can register with [Volunteer Ireland \(www.volunteer.ie\)](#) in your local Volunteer Centre. Volunteer Ireland expects to receive a large volume of advertisements for COVID-19-related volunteer roles in the coming days and weeks. These roles will include COVID-19 support roles and others will be to help maintain services in local community organisations.







# Worried about your mortgage?

Sean Couch from EDUC Mortgages shares some advice on houses and mortgages during the COVID-19 outbreak

## Mortgage payments

We are receiving a large number of calls from members who are concerned about the effect this crisis may have on their ability to pay their mortgage in the event of earnings being affected (for example, if their partner has suffered temporary layoff or they are a substitute teacher not working at present).

All the lenders, including subprime lenders, are to put in place a 3-month payment break.

Customers will have to demonstrate that their income has been affected by the virus, with the thousands who are now facing unemployment expected to avail of the mortgage breaks.

To avail of this break you should contact the bank directly. It is very important that you do not stop paying your mortgage without firstly calling your lender and getting their permission to avail of this payment holiday.

## Loans and credit cards

Some banks have also agreed to a payment holiday for short-term loans and credit cards.

*The one important thing to remember is this is not free money, any missed payments will be added on to the mortgage/loan at a later stage.*

## Mortgages approved or approval pending

Members are also concerned about whether lenders will stand over their current mortgage approvals. Where you have a full

mortgage approval and have signed contracts to purchase a property, I do not foresee any issues.

For members who have an approval in principle for a mortgage, in 99% of cases the banks should stand over the approval. Having said that if, say, you are a couple purchasing and one of you has suffered a layoff, the banks may look at this application again, but this will be done on a case-by-case basis.

## Effects on the housing market

What will happen to the housing market? We are in unprecedented times and no one can predict what will happen to the housing market. At present there is a shortage of houses in large cities and towns and this will not change.

As a result of COVID-19, I do not see much activity in the housing market in the next 2-3 months.

I think we will have a better understanding of what will happen to the market in the next two months so I would recommend that if you are considering purchasing at present that you still apply for your mortgage now so you are ready to purchase when this crisis passes.

## Time to look again at interest rates?

Now might be the time for you to look at your current interest rate and switch to another provider...

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**SEAN COUCH, EDUC Mortgages, [educmortgages.ie](http://educmortgages.ie).**



# Caring for yourself – mind, body and spirit

These are unprecedented times we are now living in. We are being asked to accept and live in a new reality. With a change such as this, fear, worry and anxiety are inevitable so if you are feeling like this know that, right now, this may not be pleasant, but is perfectly normal. We are struggling to find a reference point to relate this back to and we forget that there is a mammalian part of our brain that sets off alarms when a threat such as this is presented. The mind goes into overdrive trying to figure it out so that it can protect us. So in a sense our mind is being a caretaker to us as it attempts to predict outcomes and guard us against harm. In reality, for us, this may not feel like protection but rather just fear and worry.

Let's face it, as teachers, we like routine and knowing what comes next! We work in schools which, yes, are by their nature, unpredictable environments, but yet they provide a strong sense of security through predictable daily routines where a bell calls us in and out of class, along with a certainty of when a term begins and ends. We plan our daily, weekly and monthly lives around all of it. So at a time like this, when there are many unanswered questions, we may have a constant feeling of uncertainty in this 'unknowing,' a stark contrast to what we are used to. This is perfectly normal and yet we do need to put measures in place now to protect ourselves physically, emotionally and mentally. Essentially, it's a time in history where self-care has never been so important, not just for us but for our families and our communities.

There are some really simple and practical ways for you to ease yourself into some good self-care practices over the next few weeks and months in order to place less pressure on your body, to ease your mind and to soothe your spirit on a daily basis.

## Mind

- As best you can, keep a lightly structured routine in place. This will give you a sense of purpose each day

and will help to keep your mind more balanced.

- Choose carefully what you 'feed' your mind with each day; immersing yourself completely in news and updates can be harmful. Listen only to reliable sources of information in relation to COVID-19 and when you feel you are hitting 'saturation point,' switch off from social media for a while.
- Once a day, write down on piece of paper (or journal), all of your worries and fears. This will help to keep you 'checked-in' with, and become more aware of, your thought processes.
- Talk to a loved one about these anxieties as this can release a 'valve' on any built up pressure in the mind and sharing can really help.

... we need to put measures in place now to protect ourselves physically, emotionally and mentally.

- Practice gratitude – make a short list of all of the good things about today (there will always be at least one thing, even if it's a nice cup of coffee!)
- Whilst we think worry will solve a problem, it never does so it is important that we take a proper 'mind break' from worrying on a daily basis. Once you have written your fears or worries down, close your eyes and imagine each worry is a brick you are carrying. Take all of the bricks, put them in an

imaginary bag and put them down, even for an hour or two and engage in some enjoyable activities that create a space for you to relax and even have some fun with e.g. board games, a silly movie, floor picnics etc. This will take your mind off the fear and when you do return to the 'bag of bricks,' it may just seem that little bit lighter to carry; your mind will find it easier to cope with as it has had a 'rest' from it all for a period of time.



## Body

We know our bodies love routine as above, so try to include a balance of the following where possible:

- Plan and eat regular meals – lack of school routine could result in lack of eating at regular intervals and right now, we need steady intake of ‘fuel’ in order to keep our bodies healthy and well.
- Stay hydrated.
- Create a space each day for some light exercise or yoga (or both) – if you love your workouts and are missing the gym, access many of the online gym resources. Exercise releases endorphins (feel good hormones) and is an excellent way of relieving stress.
- Fresh air – thankfully spring is here and the days are getting brighter so whilst practicing social distancing is essential, you can still get outside, get moving and explore nature.
- Access your internal ‘breathing space’ – when we access our parasympathetic nervous system through conscious breathing and meditation, the body slips into a space where it is actively renewing and rejuvenating itself which strengthens all of our systems, including our immune system. Where you can, take some moments every day for resting and conscious breathing. Activating and then returning to your calming ‘set-point’ every day is crucial:
  - \* 4/5 Breathing – breathe in gently for a count of 4 and breathe out slowly for a count of 5
  - \* Breathe/Feet – notice your feet, wiggle your toes to ground yourself and breathe in and out gently, slowly and consciously (repeat)
  - \* Mindful Senses – notice in this moment what you can smell, feel, hear, see and even taste (when you are eating or drinking)
  - \* Check-In Practice – head, shoulders, stomach and feet (check in with each and breathe in gently and consciously as you relax each body part)
- Become aware when you are in the stress response – heart racing, sweaty palms, feelings of anxiety and worry and then use your breathing, feet and five senses to gently bring you back into the present moment. This will ease the stress response and you will begin to feel calmer.

- Create a healthy bedtime routine - try to get to bed at the same time you would on a normal school night (at least during the week), try to avoid screen time even for 20 minutes before sleep, use lavender or other essential oils that you favour on your pillow and enjoy a guided meditation online or just use your conscious breathing exercises to ease you into a more relaxed, comfortable and satisfied sleep.



Connect with others, even it is online or through the phone. This is one of our basic needs as humans and without it, our spirit will feel the pinch.

## Spirit

- Connect with others, even it is online or through the phone. This is one of our basic needs as humans and without it, our spirit will feel the pinch. Over time, it can affect our well-being in all ways.
- Volunteer in some way even if only over the phone – this will provide you with a sense of purpose and, again, will link you into your humanity which will lift your spirits hugely.
- Get back into activities that you once loved – painting, drawing, cooking,

baking, sewing or reading. Take an online class and learn something new.

- Through meditation and conscious breathing, connect into your intuition or ‘gut’ in order to find solutions and respond, rather than react to daily challenges.
- Spend time in nature and breathe in the fresh air – this will soothe your mind and calm your spirit.
- Laugh! Yes this is such a difficult time but if something is funny, you have permission to laugh; it is the best medicine after all.

Many of you are teaching online every day and this may be providing structure and routine for you, and for your pupils but do be careful to balance this with some or even all of the above self-care practices. My lovely friend said to me this week, ‘We must be the calm within the storm now, and we must also be the calm in each other’s storm.’ I agree. This is a storm we will weather best if we are united but we must begin with anchoring in our own calm ‘set-point’ first and foremost. This is, and will always be our first port of call; our only starting point of real value. We put on our own oxygen mask first. Never before has this been more important to us and to those around us.

**ANN-MARIE IRELAND** is a former primary school teacher, motivational speaker, published author and researcher. Her company **Breathing Space Ireland** ([www.breathingspaceireland.ie](http://www.breathingspaceireland.ie)) offers courses and workshops in self-care, renewal and well-being for educators. She is currently conducting research related to teacher self-awareness as part of a masters by research in DCU. She has worked with Education Centres and various educational bodies nationwide for almost 10 years and believes that the school is a human community where pupils, teachers, school leaders, staff and parents can thrive and flourish through the practices of mindfulness, gratitude, compassion and self-care.







# Why INTO went without an Easter Congress once before

## *No INTO Congress at Easter 2020*

Although the earliest INTO Annual Congresses took place near Christmas, Congress has been an Easter event for over 120 years. It is a fixture in the spring INTO timetable and that of hundreds of delegates from branches, districts and committees.

The Coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic has restricted many activities which are seen as part of normal living and has caused postponement of Congress 2020. Only once before has there not been a scheduled Annual Congress, also linked with events which challenged the wider world. While in 2020 there is no option but to postpone, the decision about Congress 1915 – based on considerations of solidarity and perception – was contested.

### **No INTO Congress at Easter 1915? – Context and Consultation**

The resolution not to hold a Congress at Easter 1915 was taken in light of the world war which had broken out and escalated from autumn 1914. The war had a profound effect in Ireland. Ultimately, some 200,000 Irish troops fought in the British army; those who died included Willie Redmond (MP for Clare) and poet Tom Kettle, alongside thousands of others from across the island. Home Rule was in abeyance until after the international conflict but active drilling by Irish and Ulster Volunteers suggested that civil war on the island was a possibility. Once the world war began, local differences were deferred and army recruitment became active.

INTO Congress 1915 was planned for Cork. A meeting of the INTO Central Executive Committee (CEC) on 31 October 1914 had before it a communication from the Cork Teachers' Association suggesting "the desirability" of Congress's postponement. Following discussion, the CEC resolved both that "no Congress should be held next Easter" and to ask teacher associations (the precursor of INTO branches) to express their views on this proposal.

The CEC proposition was by no means



universally popular. Some writers to the Irish School Weekly (ISW) railed against it, deploring the "abandonment of Congress". Suggestions were made about holding a curtailed event, or one focussed on "professional and scholastic" topics. The CEC proposal was in one writer's view "the most serious blunder in the history of the Organisation".

Reports of association meetings in the ISW, however, showed broad support for the CEC position.

### **Decision is Made**

When meeting on 19 December, the CEC had before it the outcome of the consultation process among INTO's constituent associations. The aggregate membership of those seeking to hold a 1915 Congress was reported to be 1,163, with those against totalling 5,347. Expressed as numbers of teacher associations, 20 favoured holding Congress while 107 opposed this.

For every teacher association supporting the holding of Congress, near neighbours were against. As examples, those in the former group included Ennis, Dublin Central, Tyrone Central, Kilkenny and Castleisland, while among the latter category were West Clare, Dublin Metropolitan, Armagh, Waterford and Tralee.

Following the consultations, Congress 1915 was "postponed" and did not take place. A linked decision of CEC, to postpone also the annual CEC elections, was the subject of further argument.

### **Elections not Held**

Dublin Central Association joined battle on issues arising from cancelling Congress even before the outcome of the INTO plebiscite was known. Its November 1914 meeting called on the CEC to "hand over" money saved on Congress to retired teachers who had not benefited from a revised pension scheme. And the meeting declared "unconstitutional" a CEC proposal for a War Relief Fund, half to be devoted to assist Belgian refugees, "while a single old member of our organisation remains a refugee in an Irish workhouse".

The same meeting's position on postponement of elections was similarly forthright. Its Secretary recorded the Dublin Central view that in the absence of a Congress to ratify CEC elections, "an injunction could readily be obtained in the courts" to prevent the CEC administering INTO affairs.

The CEC meeting of 27 March 1915 noted that "a few associations" had objected to the non-holding of elections. The Central Secretary was mandated – in order, in his own words, "to silence all cavilling" – to put the decision on elections to the associations for ratification or otherwise.

Central Secretary Eamon Mansfield initiated this further consultation process, seeking views by 1 May 1915. In his letter to association secretaries he referenced "one or two" who had objected to the deferral of elections, and he rejected suggestions "in the press" that the CEC had acted dictatorially regarding the postponement of Congress. Mansfield recalled that this course had been first suggested by the Cork Congress Committee.

Controversy around deferring the CEC elections did not arise in the ISW's columns thereafter – clearly the decision was widely accepted. However, Dublin Central continued to ventilate its grievances; members at its December 1915 meeting linked perceived INTO deficiencies with the executive "having bull-dosed the teachers into abandoning" Congress.

**Justification and Recrimination**

In its report for 1914, issued in April 1915, the CEC set out its perspective on these events. It had recommended postponement of Congress “owing to the unprecedented and extraordinary state of

affairs which has arisen out of the present war”. With postponement, “elections automatically lapsed”.

The CEC took aim at the “one Association at least” which “thought fit to raise the question of the legality of our

action” and “to ventilate these doubts in the public Press”. Referencing the (then ongoing) consultation process regarding elections, local associations could “silence all harmful cavilling on this matter”.

## No Easter Congress in 2020

The postponement of Congress 2020, 105 years after the events summarised above, occurs in a different context. There was no option, on public health grounds, but to postpone the event.

As regards 2020’s elections to CEC and other positions, nominations were made at INTO branch meetings in January, and Congress no longer has a role in ratifying outcomes. The results of elections where no ballot was required will be declared online by the president. Contested

elections to national committees, where more than one candidate was nominated by branches, are deferred until the COVID-19 crisis has waned. In the interim, the related committee positions remain vacant.

The importance of matters like INTO’s Congress and elections are placed into perspective when life and death are at stake, as at present. When the current crisis ends, INTO’s rule-bound operations will resume.

As we recall from the 1914-1918 years, even lengthy wars end. So do pandemics. Individually and organisationally, we will move on from the current health crisis, and while the battle lasts teachers will not be found wanting in contributing appropriately.

[Sources: All quotes and references re the 1915 INTO Congress are based on material from the Irish School Weekly (ISW), editions from November 1914 to end-1915, inclusive].



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# Northern Secretary Gerry Murphy shares his thoughts on the current health crisis

Teachers in District 1 and District 2, along with those in the remaining districts across the island, have been distinguishing themselves with their selflessness and desire to contribute to protecting the communities they work in and particularly protecting the health and well-being of the children and young people in their care. This is being done at a time when the working environment has completely changed and the response of INTO members has been fantastic. Teachers everywhere have stepped up to ensure that the continuity of pupils' learning is maintained.

Across the North, teachers have produced learning resources in both the traditional paper format and electronically, in the space of just a few days, and these materials have been distributed to about 340,000 pupils. The employment authorities are confident that our teachers have enough material distributed to sustain learning up until the end of the Easter holidays.

INTO is currently engaged with the Department of Education to develop guidelines to inform the system as to what can be reasonably expected of our teachers attempting to manage distance learning from their own homes. These guidelines will take account of factors such as the availability of broadband and more importantly the necessity to facilitate teachers in looking after their own families and others for whom they have caring responsibilities. We are determined that our members will not be pressurised into maintaining the continuity of pupils' learning at the expense of their own families.

The officials in Belfast, the outgoing chairperson of the Northern Committee, Kevin Daly and the incoming chairperson, Caroline McCarthy have been working with the Northern Committee to ensure that our members have access to the most up-to-date and accurate information. We are grateful for the help we have been receiving from our colleagues in Dublin. The response from INTO has been on an all-Ireland basis as we appreciate the virus doesn't recognise lines on maps. This is something our members really appreciate.

As I write, schools in the North are closed for pupils but remain open for staff who are expected to attend and be available to provide day care for the children of essential workers who are unable to secure suitable childcare themselves. This facility has been extended to include children who are being described as vulnerable. This is an ever-changing situation and over fifty per cent of schools have remained closed as principals, in conjunction with their boards of governors, have concluded that the risks are too great. The Department expected that between fifteen and thirty per cent of children may have to be accommodated, however this number has proven to be substantially less, under five per cent. A change of approach

seems necessary and INTO will be ready to advise members accordingly.

So, for now, we soldier on. It has been heartening to see the level of co-operation across the profession as a whole and amongst the trade unions. It is a truism that every cloud has a silver lining and this one does too. We in the INTO have been reaching out and sharing resources and advice across the trade union movement and we very much appreciate the help our brother and sisters in other unions are providing to us. When this passes, as it will, we will strive to hold on to this solidarity and employ it to rebuild and secure the brighter future we all deserve.

**GERRY MURPHY, Northern Secretary.**

## Northern Conference 2020



The INTO's Northern Conference took place in Newry on 6 and 7 March 2020. Education Minister Peter Weir MLA was in attendance, pictured above with INTO President Feargal Brougham, General Secretary John Boyle, Northern Committee Chair Caroline McCarthy and Northern Secretary Gerry Murphy.



# Vere Foster Winners



From left to right: Professor Marie McLoughlin, head of the Froebel Department of Primary and Early Childhood Education; Colm Keane, BEd Vere Foster recipient; Aoife Ní Mhurchú, PMed Vere Foster recipient and Professor Philip Nolan, President of Maynooth University.



President of Marino Institute of Education Dr Teresa O'Doherty presents Hilary Conroy with the Vere Foster Medal for the highest marks for school placement on the PME (primary) programme.



Pictured are INTO President Feargal Brougham, Dr Teresa O'Doherty and Dr Gene Mehigan at the alumni presentation to Feargal Brougham as the first MIE graduate to be elected president of the INTO. Photo: Richard Gavin Photography.




Cillian Rowney was awarded the Vere Foster Medal at the Marino Institute of Education graduation ceremony. Cillian achieved the highest marks on the BEd degree. The award was presented by Feargal Brougham and Dr Teresa O'Doherty. Photo: Richard Gavin Photography.

## Vere Foster Medal

The INTO Congress of 1956, held in Belfast decided to organise a suitable memorial as a tribute to the memory of Vere Foster. Captain McClure-Field, President of the INTO at the time, acted as secretary to the committee which undertook this task. He prepared and published an interesting and informative account of Foster's life and work.

The memorial takes the form of a Vere Foster medal, and is generally awarded by the INTO, to the student obtaining the highest mark in Teaching Practice and/or Curriculum areas of Education.



Keating Stone, Gold Plated, Not Worked


## Vere Foster 1819 – 1900

### First President of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation

Vere Foster was born in Copenhagen of an Irish-born father. He worked in the UK Diplomatic Corps but left to help the victims of the great Famine on his brother's estate in Andee, Co Louth.

Concerned by reports of the terrible conditions for those using emigrant ships, Foster campaigned in the USA and Britain for improved conditions for passengers. He helped to found and became the first President of the INTO, travelling throughout the country campaigning for the maintenance and improvement of national schools.

Foster is also known for the popular 'Vere Foster National School Writing Books'. He died in Belfast on 21 December 1900.



# Save the bees

One third of the food crops we grow benefit from pollination, yet 30% of bees are in danger of becoming extinct in Ireland. This will create an impact on our food supply and environment over the coming years if not addressed.

Bees are facing many threats, including habitat loss and lack of food, which means an uncertain future for bees and other pollinators. This ultimately will affect the food we eat, in particular fruit and vegetables, as without pollinators it would be extremely difficult to eat a healthy balanced diet! The loss of bees' habitats and their food source is a significant factor in their decline, but this is an area where people can make simple changes that will have a big impact into

the future.

In collaboration with the All-Ireland Pollinator Plan, SuperValu has launched a Save the Bees campaign in an effort to raise awareness of the importance of pollinators and to support the local biodiversity in communities around Ireland. The campaign will educate and empower school children to make a difference.

Every primary school in Ireland has been sent a Save the Bees Pollinator Pack. This pack has been co-created with Dr Una Fitzpatrick, Head of the All Ireland Pollinator Plan. The Save the Bees Pollinator Pack contains guidebooks, posters and bookmarks in addition to a wildflower garden kit with native Irish seeds and a garden sign to allow every school to create their own wildflower patch which can be replicated in home

gardens across Ireland.

The Save The Bees campaign will not only help schools understand pollinators and how to protect them but also help them make Ireland more pollinator friendly. Many bedding plants are not rich in pollen or nectar and, in order to thrive, wild bees need pockets of wildflower-rich habitat to provide them with nesting areas and a diverse diet. To further promote awareness and action, families can collect their own Save the Bees cards in SuperValu with a spend of over €30. These cards are added to each school's Save the Bees poster which once completed can be entered into a draw to win a share of €50,000 for the school. All elements of the Save the Bees Pollinator Pack have been sustainably sourced and are recyclable.

Find more resources at: <http://bit.ly/SuperValuSaveTheBees>.

## Shortlist for the KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards 2020

The ten titles competing for this year's KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards have been revealed. The ten titles will compete for a total of six awards, with the winners to be announced at a ceremony on 19 May at Dublin's Smock Alley Theatre by book-loving broadcaster Rick O'Shea as part of International Literature Festival Dublin.

### The shortlisted titles are:

- *All The Bad Apples* written by Móra Fowley-Doyle
- *Madame Badobedah* written by Sophie Dahl and illustrated by Lauren O'Hara
- *Mór agus Muilc* based on a traditional tale told by John Óg Hiúdaí Neidí Ó Colla and illustrated by Kim Sharkey
- *Nóinín* written by Máire Zepf
- *The Deepest Breath* written by Meg Grehan
- *The Hug* written by Eoin McLaughlin and illustrated by Polly Dunbar
- *The Tide* written by Clare Helen Welsh and illustrated by Ashling Lindsay
- *The Star-Spun Web* written by Sinéad O'Hart
- *Toffee* by Sarah Crossan

- *Scúnc agus Smúirín* written by Muireann Ní Chíobháin and illustrated by Paddy Donnelly
- Children's Books Ireland, which administers the awards, will as ever be working closely with 'Junior Juries' – groups of children and young people who will read and judge the shortlisted titles. The Juries' scores decide the winner of the Junior Juries Award, giving children a

real way to participate in the awards and make their voices heard.

Five other awards will also be made – The Book of the Year Award, The Honour Awards for Fiction and Illustration, the Judges' Special Award, and the Eilís Dillon Award for a first children's book, named in honour of the revered Irish children's author Eilís Dillon, whose birth centenary was on 7 March this year.







# Planting one million trees to combat climate change

The threat of climate change is real and frightening, but Irish schools have the chance to help combat this by supporting a new campaign to plant more than a million trees in 2020.

One Million Trees is a local-to-global initiative that will see development charity Self Help Africa plant ten new trees in Africa for every single native tree planted in Ireland throughout the campaign.

For incoming INTO President Mary Magner, 'One Million Trees' gives pupils, parents and teachers a very real chance to do something practical and positive to combat climate change.

As school principal at Scoil Chroí Iosa in Blarney, Co Cork, Mary says that she intends to do whatever she can to promote Self Help Africa's initiative. "I've seen at first hand the increasing concern that young people have about the environment. They're alarmed by what is happening to the world, and want to be a part of the change that they know is needed," she said.

"While planting trees is not the answer to global warming, it can make a positive contribution, by both removing carbon from the atmosphere, and improving the biodiversity of the natural environment", she adds.

"At our own school in Blarney our pupils were at the forefront of a campaign that has virtually eradicated single use plastic bottles; they've been involved in a 'No Waste Lunch on Wednesdays' programme,



INTO Vice-President Mary Magner and former INTO President Sean McMahon supported the launch of this campaign with Self Help Africa and TV Presenter Kathryn Thomas.

and have also been to the fore in promoting a Pre-Loved Uniforms scheme in the school. These initiatives and others have virtually halved the amount of waste that we generate," she says.

Mary Magner says that Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg has been a huge inspiration to young people, and she has shown schoolchildren that they have the right to speak out on the issue of global warming and environmental destruction more widely. "Schoolchildren are miles ahead of their parents on these issues. They are the ones bringing the issues and effecting changes in the home," she said.

"Teachers and pupils can show strong leadership in combating climate change and simple actions like planting trees

and bee-friendly flowers can significantly reduce carbon dioxide, increase biodiversity and help create a more sustainable future. Taking concrete action and changing habits is not a choice, but a necessity, she added.

The INTO is an official supporter of Self Help Africa's 'One Million Trees' campaign, which is aiming to plant 100,000 native trees in Ireland, and one million new trees in Africa, this year. Schools across the country that sign up to support the campaign will receive a tree seedling to plant, with Self Help Africa planting a further 10 saplings on their behalf in Africa.

To find out more visit: [www.selfhelpafrica.org/onemilliontrees](http://www.selfhelpafrica.org/onemilliontrees).

## Plastic packaging pirates

St Thomas Senior School in Jobstown, Tallaght, Dublin 24 recently qualified to participate in the regional final of the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI) One Good Idea competition which took place in The Omniplex, Rathmines on 27 February 2020 with their idea of using 'Ecobricks' to recycle and reuse single use plastics.

The SEAI One Good Idea competition gives children a platform to act and make positive changes in regard to climate change in their schools, communities and hopefully across the nation.

Inspiration for the project came from action research through the Green Schools committee in our school and the report that it is predicted that by 2050 there will be more plastic in the ocean than fish. Our project is called Plastic

Packaging Pirates and is based on the manufacturing of Ecobricks in school.

Ecobricks are plastic bottles that we pack full with single use plastics to create a reusable building block.

With these Ecobricks we have made furniture for our school community. Since we entered the competition we have also created numerous items which reuse and



recycle single use plastics e.g. eco-pillows, eco skipping rope, eco beanbags, eco art mats and eco-cushions made from recycled school jumpers stuffed with single use plastic.

As a Green School we want to inspire the entire Green School Network of Ireland to reduce or reuse their single use plastic in a similar way. We collect our single use plastics from our Breakfast Club, our lunch bags, our staff and some local Dublin based business also give us their single use plastics to recycle.

We have a Twitter account specifically for our idea @pirates\_plastic so please follow us and hopefully we will inspire other schools to create their own Ecobricks!

**ANN MARIE KIERNAN, St Thomas Senior School, Jobstown, Dublin.**



# Global solidarity

A proud legacy on the international stage

The trade union movement is one of the largest civic society entities worldwide and the INTO, as the largest teachers' union on the island of Ireland, plays its part in connecting with teachers and their unions all around the globe in a number of ways, one of which is through INTO Global Solidarity.

The INTO is connected to the global trade union family through the ICTU Global Solidarity Committee, and, most importantly, with Educational International (EI). EI is the global union federation for teacher organisations

In 2019, the INTO helped to establish the Irish Forum of Global Education (IFGE). This forum is an independent network of civil society actors, NGOs, teacher unions, and others concerned with education inequities and issues that impact on education at a global level. It promotes Ireland's contribution to realising 'Sustainable Development Goal 4: Quality Education' for sustainable development.

Within the INTO, global solidarity needs the enthusiasm and participation of members and is guided by three principal areas of activity, learning, volunteering and campaigning.

## Learning



Global Citizenship School (GCS) is an online support for teachers and schools, with ready-to-go online lessons, other classroom-friendly resources and suggestions for primary school appropriate actions. The resources are available on the INTO website, and a major part of the work of the INTO Global Citizenship School, centres on the promotion of and advocating for the achievement of the 17 Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs) by 2030, such as the #NoMorePlasticPaddy campaign, coinciding with the 2019 St

Patrick's Festival. The campaign asked for support from schools and pupils all around Ireland, to reduce and/or eliminate single use plastics at their schools.

Global Citizenship School has a stand at all of the INTO conferences throughout the year and hosts both an online and face-to-face summer courses within the annual INTO Learning programme.

## Volunteering



The INTO has always been very proud of the strong tradition of members travelling throughout the world as volunteer teachers. INTO Global Solidarity promotes the INTO Solidarity Fund which provides support to individual volunteer members and the projects they are involved with. INTO members are encouraged to apply to the INTO Head Office for this funding in advance of their trip abroad.

Most members who choose to do

**The INTO, as the largest teachers' union on the island of Ireland, plays its part in connecting with teachers and their unions all around the globe**

teacher volunteer work have found the experience to be very rewarding, however, it is also very important that members prepare properly, well in advance of travelling. INTO recognises Comhlámh as the expert organisation in this area and continues to strongly support the guidelines of the *Comhlámh Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies*.

*The Code of Good Practice for Volunteer Sending Agencies* is a set of standards for the organisations involved in facilitating international volunteer placements in developing countries. Its focus is to ensure overseas volunteering has a positive impact for the three main stakeholders: the volunteer, the sending agency, and the local project and community.

As an associate member of Dóchas, the INTO adheres to the seven principles of the *Dochás Code of Conduct on Images and Messages*. The purpose of this code is to provide a framework which organisations can refer to when designing and implementing their public communication strategy on volunteering and related matters. More information is available on the INTO Global Solidarity at <https://bit.ly/INTOGlobalSolidarity>.

## Campaigning

The INTO Global Solidarity Network lobbies and campaigns both nationally and internationally for workers' rights on behalf of teachers' unions and individual teachers who are being victimised or harassed in pursuit of their human/trade union rights.

Our campaigning work on behalf of the INTO membership currently includes efforts to inform members of the ongoing treatment of Palestinian schoolchildren and the reported human rights abuses they endure due to the political and military occupation of Palestine, as covered in last month's InTouch. The INTO's union-to-union activities are a significant feature of the solidarity work and the INTO has engaged in partnership programmes with teacher unions in The Gambia, Cambodia and India on an ongoing basis, providing assistance and funding mainly, for teacher training programmes.



# Why we need the right to switch off

The Financial Services Union's 'Right to Disconnect' campaign

As I write, we are in the midst of the first weeks of the COVID-19 shutdown. Of the many things not likely to be the same after this, work is high on the list.

Many will remember that it was the tech giants, including Google and Facebook, who moved first to shut down their offices and send staff home. Others quickly followed.

The shutdown of schools and colleges, and the transition to homeworking for people working in education, was another signpost on the homeworking journey.

So as a society, we are moving more and more towards homeworking, flexible work and agile work. Many people want to work from home. There are clear advantages: a better work-life balance, a more family-friendly lifestyle, shorter commutes and environmental benefits are often cited. For employers, there are gains to be made by offsetting some of the costs of maintaining buildings, renting offices and buying properties.

In the words of Bryan Adams, so far, so good.

But working from home comes with challenges.

Talking to a friend, who recently started working from home, I asked him how he found it. He said it was fine, but he didn't know when to 'switch off'. "When you are working in an office, the day has a clear start, middle and end. When you are working from home, none of that is clear", he told me. "Work is always on your mind".

Hence, the need for a right to disconnect. What the right to disconnect means is the right not to have to work outside of paid working hours. It is a

demand that has been made to respond to the rise of homeworking, but also the extension of the working day through technology. Research conducted for the Financial Services Union (FSU) by the University of Limerick has revealed that one in five are expected to engage in work-related communication outside of paid working hours. This is in effect unpaid overtime.

And so what is to be done? The movement for a right to disconnect is international. As is often the case with work-related issues, the French have led the way, with a strong code which enshrines the right to disconnect in law. Many other European countries have followed suit. The EU Work Life Balance directive (2019) has added momentum towards the adaptation of policies in the area.

In the case of Ireland, the FSU has been spearheading a campaign calling for legislation to introduce a 'right to disconnect'. The FSU has won widespread support for the call which we launched last October. We succeeded in raising the

issue in the last general election, and we have asked Oireachtas members for their continued support. At the time of writing, it is not yet clear what the programme for government will commit to.

The FSU is clear that legislation will be more effective than a voluntary code, which has been suggested by some. Opt in, voluntarist policies will not be enough to protect workers from the effects of the 'always on culture'.

The University of Limerick report which recommended the right to disconnect is available at [https://www.fsunion.org/download/pdf/fsu\\_ul\\_technology\\_work\\_and\\_skills.pdf](https://www.fsunion.org/download/pdf/fsu_ul_technology_work_and_skills.pdf). To deal with the impact of technology at work, the report also recommends increased investment in skills, and crucially, collective bargaining. Workers having a voice in the workplace will be crucial if we are to deal with the challenges ahead. Collective bargaining legislation will be necessary to facilitate this.

**PAUL DILLON, growth and communications manager, Financial Services Union.**







# Laying the foundations

Brian Kenny talks to *InTouch* about his work in Zimbabwe, supported by INTO's solidarity fund

Have you ever seen a trillion dollar bill? It's unlikely, there aren't many countries whose inflation is so bad that they would need one, yet Zimbabwe famously produced their first trillion dollar bill in 2016, such was the state of their economy!

Zimbabwe is a country in the south of Africa with a population of 13 million, half of whom live on less than a dollar a day. It's most well known for its once long-time dictator, Robert Mugabe, who ruled with an iron fist for almost 30 years. In 2017, amidst promises of reform and a rising wave of optimism, Mugabe was replaced and the people waited for their lives to improve. Sadly, they are still waiting and little has changed for the majority of the country's inhabitants, Zimbabwe remains one of the world's poorest nations.

Amidst this poverty, the basics which we take for granted in Ireland, free education, health and social welfare, are non-existent. If you are poor in Zimbabwe there is little opportunity to change your life, no matter how hard you may try. In this situation help is needed and this is where Irish organisations Serve and the Dublin Province of the Redemptorists work tirelessly.

Last April, supported by the INTO Solidarity Fund and the Redemptorists, I travelled to Zimbabwe to meet the people they worked with and produced *Foundations: A Development Education Resource Pack for Primary Schools*. The free pack gives teachers an opportunity to teach a series of lessons around the challenges facing communities on the global poverty line.

When looking at a country like Zimbabwe you have to remind yourself that there is no social welfare. If you are unemployed, like huge cohorts of the population, life is a struggle no matter how much you work to better yourself. In



who have trained as mechanics, young men who had no hope of a future and are now running successful businesses.

Mavambo Trust operates on the opposite side of Harare and its mission is different yet equally important. In the slums surrounding Mavambo Trust there is a disproportionate number of orphans facing into bleak prospects. In this context, with no primary carers or access

to education, many children are simply lost to poverty. Through its community outreach team, Mavambo Trust prioritises young children who haven't attended school and enrolls them on their specially designed Accelerated Learning Program where they receive two intense years of schooling. On graduating from this programme, students are ready to join mainstream schools equipped with motivation and self-confidence. For these children, Mavambo Trust provides a safe place where they are fed and educated and most importantly given hope, something money can't buy.

You can access the free lesson plans and resources here <http://bit.ly/ServeFoundations>.

The Young Africa model works, I've seen it first hand. Young people are trained in skills such as carpentry, motor mechanics, solar technology and then given essential life skills training alongside entrepreneurial skills. On completion of their training they can confidently go out into their communities and create small businesses, carve out a living and possibly help others in the process. I met many young people whose lives have been changed by these opportunities, girls

this environment the harsh reality is that it's very difficult to prosper. The work that the Redemptorists and Serve do is not simply charity, it's helping people to help themselves, to develop their communities and build essential skills vital to a better life. In order to do this effectively, they partner with local organisations on the ground such as Young Africa and Mavambo Trust who took me around their projects and showed me how they operate.

**BRIAN KENNY is a teacher in St Joseph's Primary School, Ballinrobe, Co Mayo. This project was supported with a grant from the INTO Solidarity Fund and the Redemptorists Ireland.**



# End child labour

INTO Global Citizenship School's May Day campaign

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines child labour as work that is mentally, physically, socially or morally dangerous and harmful to children; and interferes with their schooling.

The negative effects of child labour, arising from the difficulty of tasks and harsh working conditions, include a number of problems such as long-term injuries, malnutrition, depression, drug dependency and even death. Most child labourers come from disadvantaged backgrounds or minority groups and many are abducted from their families. Most of these children are defenceless and have little or no protection.

## Current state of child labour in the world today

2020 figures show more than 220 million children from age 5 to 17 years are child labourers. An estimated 150 million of them are victims of forced labour with an estimated 50% engaged in hazardous work. 75 million of these children are under 10 years old. 50% of child labourers are in sub-Saharan Africa and 40% in Asia. Over two million victims of child labour live in wealthy countries. Official figures show more boys in child labour than girls (87 million vs 63 million) but that may be because many girls are domestic service labourers in private households and go uncounted. Over half of the child labourers work in family enterprises or on farms with no contacts.

The causes of child labour include:

- poverty and high unemployment levels;
- limited compulsory and free education;
- inadequate child labour national laws and enforcement;
- a lack of workers' rights and decent living wages;
- unfair global economy pressures and unregulated capitalism.

## The big questions

### 1. Who is responsible for child labour?

Child labour is a fact of life for children in many countries and it is an issue that affects us all. Just look at our food and clothing chains for evidence of child labour abuse. It is therefore the responsibility of everyone to contribute

to the elimination of child labour – all governments, trade unions, businesses, international NGO organisations, communities, employers, teachers, parents and indeed children have a role to play in ending child labour.

### 2. What is the solution and what can we do?

We in Global Citizenship School support the view that decent work for all, as a principle, and ending child labour, as a specific target, are worth campaigning on as core actions and part of our 'Justice, Equality and Sustainability' raison d'être.

### 3. What is 'decent work'?

Decent work is based upon the principle of 'a fair day's pay for a fair day's work'. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) 'decent work' involves opportunities for work that are productive and deliver a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organise and participate in the decisions that affect their lives, and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men. If all workers were paid fair wages and had decent work conditions then poverty and child labour would be on the way out, both locally and globally.

### 4. What is 'May Day'?

In Celtic tradition, Lá Bealtaine (May Day) separated the dark days from the bright days. 'May Day' took on a new meaning in the 19th century as an International Workers' Day. It grew out of the movement for labour rights and an eight-hour working day. This year, May Day, and International Workers' Day, is on Friday, 1 May.



This May Day, we ask primary school families to take May Day action in support of ending child labour.

Three suggestions for May Day, end child labour action:

- Have pupils create black and white posters which contrast the lives of children in child labour with children enjoying a decent childhood.
- Play the following song and video about child labour – Til Everyone Can See to all the pupils. <http://bit.ly/TilEveryoneCanSee>.
- The multi-national company, Nestle, have been recently exposed for using child labour on the Dispatches documentary on Channel 4. We recommend you take photos of the children's posters and email them to [dundalk@honrep.ch](mailto:dundalk@honrep.ch) which is a Swiss Embassy office here in Ireland. Please address your correspondence to Nestle c/o the Swiss Embassy, Ireland, with a request that they explain: (a) why they use child labour and (b) why your school should not boycott Nestle products?

Please share your action with your friends/networks and also using the hashtag #EndChildLabour on Friday, 1 May.

**MAURICE HURLEY, INTO Global Citizenship School.**

## Are you an INTO staff representative?

Now is the time to sign up for INTO's free online course

### The INTO staff representative

The INTO staff representative plays an extremely important role in our union. The staff representative is the link for INTO in each of our schools and the INTO face for each and every one of our members.

The INTO staff representative has three key roles:

1. Recruiting members
2. Informing members
3. Supporting members

### Recruiting members

Staff representatives talk to all new teachers and substitute teachers in our schools and ask them to join the INTO. INTO provides key information to staff representatives to enable them to communicate the benefits of membership to potential members.

### Informing members

The INTO staff representative is the main communicator of much INTO news and current issues, particularly when it comes to campaign materials and materials on ballots or directives. We advise staff representatives to have an INTO display corner where notices of branch meetings and other important events, key dates and information can be made available to members.

### Supporting members

Often the INTO staff representative is also the first point of contact and support for any member seeking information or experiencing difficulty in school. This could be needing information on sick leave entitlements or advice about dealing with a parental complaint. The INTO staff representative will always point colleagues in the right direction – this could be to where on the INTO website

to find the information, passing on the contact details of the local Central Executive Committee representative or INTO Head Office details.

### INTO online support course for staff representatives

To support our staff representatives, INTO Learning has designed an online support course to provide reps with key information and guidance to support them in their role. The course comprises of four modules:

- Staff representative role and responsibilities
  - INTO structures and communications
  - Teacher employment terms and conditions
  - Managing workplace relationships
- Each module is short and interactive, providing details in a clear and uncomplicated way. Advice is also provided on talking to non-members about joining, managing an INTO ballot or an INTO directive and on how best to support members who might find themselves in difficulty.

INTO structures are explained including the role of our national committees and our Benefit Funds Committee, how the INTO makes decisions and how members can fully and democratically participate and engage in INTO decision making processes.

The module on teacher employment terms and conditions provides details on appointments and contracts, salary and pension, leave entitlements, teacher promotion, redeployment, as well as teacher suspension and dismissal and the fitness to teach process.

The module on managing workplace relationships outlines agreed procedures to address staff relations difficulties, the procedure to address adult bullying or harassment and the grievance

procedure and advice on how to support members who might be experiencing difficulties. One of the big concerns that staff representatives have is that they might have to actually represent a colleague who is taking a bullying/harassment or a grievance case – this is not the case. The role of the staff representative is to support the member by providing information, while the CEC representative or an INTO official will represent the member where necessary.

Staff representatives who complete this course before 9th April can avail of a reduced cost summer course. Full details on the course at [moodle.intolearning.ie](http://moodle.intolearning.ie) For access to the course staff representatives should contact [learninghelpdesk@into.ie](mailto:learninghelpdesk@into.ie) with their school details.

### Other supports

Local branches hold special meetings and briefings for their staff representatives.

These are an excellent way to get to know other staff representatives in your local area and to meet your local branch officers.

Note: we advise schools to hold an annual election for a new INTO staff representative each June. Any INTO member can put themselves forward for the role. If you have any further queries about the role contact [tut@into.ie](mailto:tut@into.ie).





# Cornmarket Cumann na mBunscol

Awards go from strength to strength

The Cumann na mBunscol awards, sponsored by Cornmarket Financial Services, have long occupied a special place in the Cumann na mBunscol calendar. This year's awards banquet was held in Thurles, birthplace of the GAA, and it was a night to remember for all who attended. The local committee, led by Cathaoirleach Paddy Kelly, spared no effort in their preparations for the weekend and the presence of Liam Sheedy, coach of the All-Ireland hurling champions, as guest speaker was the icing on the cake.

"The Cornmarket Cumann na mBunscol awards highlight the huge range of work that goes on in schools the length and breadth of the country in the promotion of Gaelic Games", said Liam Magee, chairman of Cumann na mBunscol. "It is fitting that the awards banquet takes place in Thurles where the GAA was founded. Let's not forget that the driving force behind the movement was a teacher, Michael Cusack."

The Pat Trainor Award for lifetime service to primary schools' Gaelic games was won by Liam Weir, who taught in Scoil Barra, Beaumont, Cork, for his entire teaching career. Liam's involvement in Sciath na Scol in Cork, and also as an officer of Cumann na mBunscol at provincial level over several decades, made him an ideal recipient of the award which was presented by Ann Trainor, widow of the late Pat Trainor.

The award for Best Public Relations once again went to Sciath na Scol of Cork, while Cumann na mBunscol Chiarraí were runners-up.

Cumann na mBunscol Luimnigh won the Best Publication award with its long running magazine *The Green and White*.

Cumann na mBunscol promotes Gaelic games in primary schools throughout the island of Ireland and beyond. However, members of Cumann na mBunscol also promote GAA rounders, handball and athletics, as well as activities such as table quizzes. Herbertstown NS were popular winners of the Promotion of Gaelic Games and Culture category. The county Limerick school was nominated in two categories, as was a neighbouring school in south Limerick, Kilbehenny NS, who were runners-up to Herbertstown NS in the category for Promotion of Gaelic



Left: Liam Sheedy addresses the awards. Above: Liam Magee of Cumann na mBunscol with INTO Vice-President Mary Magner.



Carmel Heelan and Michael Fitzgerald of Herbertstown NS, winners of Promotion of Gaelic Games and Culture Award, with Liam Magee of Cumann na mBunscol and Emer Conroy of Cornmarket

Games and Culture.

Kilbehenny NS was placed second in the Small School category last year but the school went one better this year and was named as Small School of the Year for 2020. Located on the border of Limerick, Cork and Tipperary, Kilbehenny NS was also nominated in two categories this year. Principal Stephen Walsh, a former Limerick hurler, and his staff are steeped in Gaelic games.

The Large School of the Year award went to Creevy NS, Donegal, who fought off stiff opposition from Scoil Phrionsias Naofa, Offaly, and Holy Trinity NS, Fethard, Tipperary.

Cur chun cinn an Chultúir Ghaelaigh agus na gCluichí Gaelacha was a category introduced in 2019. Gaelscoil na Cruiche, Mayo, were winners of this category.

"The number of entries in 2020 was the highest ever and the standard is exceptionally high. The judges had an unenviable task," said Liam Magee, who is principal of St Columban's PS, Belcoo, Fermanagh.

Tipperary manager Liam Sheedy came

straight from a training session at Semple Stadium to the Anner Hotel to address

the guests. Liam spoke of the positive influence that teachers have on their pupils and praised the volunteerism which drives Cumann na mBunscol. He listed the senior stars of today who started their days in Cumann na mBunscol competitions.

INTO Vice-President Mary Magner represented the union at the awards. Sponsors of the awards are Cornmarket Group Financial Services and they were represented at the awards by Emer Conroy while Allianz, sponsors of Cumann na mBunscol, were represented by Martin McKeogh.

## Full list of award winners

### Pat Trainor Award

Liam Weir (Sciath na Scol)

### Public Relations

1. Corcaigh
2. Chiarraí
3. An Mhí

### Merit Awards

Port Láirge, Fear Manach, Tír Eoghain, Ard Mhacha

### County Publication

1. Luimneach
2. Corcaigh
3. Áth Cliath & Chiarraí

### Promotion of Gaelic Games and Culture

1. Herbertstown NS, Co Limerick
2. Kilbehenny NS, Co Limerick
3. Divine Mercy NS, Dublin

### Cur chun cinn an Chultúir Ghaelaigh agus na Cluichí Gaelacha

1. Gaelscoil na Cruaiche, Maigh Eo
2. Gaelscoil Mhic Easmainn, Trá Lí
3. St Mary's Parish NS, An Lú

### Small School of the Year

1. Kilbehenny NS, Co. Limerick
2. Thomastown NS, Co Tipperary
3. Herbertstown NS, Co Limerick

### Large School of the Year

1. Creevy NS, Co Donegal
2. Scoil Phrionsias Naofa, Clara, Co Offaly
3. Holy Trinity NS, Fethard, Co Tipperary

**JOE LYONS, public relations officer, Cumann na mBunscol.**





## Tips for tackling credit card debt

Carrying credit card debt can be stressful. With high interest rates, and penalty charges if you miss payments, managing your credit card is an important part of your financial wellbeing. If you are constantly worried about receiving your credit card bill, follow these steps from the Competition and Consumer Protection Commission (CCPC) to get you on track to being debt free:

**Face up to your finances:** Do you find that you are always running out of money, missing repayments or relying on credit cards for your day-to-day spending? It is never too late to start taking control of your finances. The first step is to stop using your credit card. Fight the temptation by leaving your card at home.

**Make a repayments plan:** Start by figuring out how much you can pay each month. It is important that you pay as much as you can afford, and not just the minimum repayment. By paying more than the minimum repayment by even a small amount you will reduce the time it takes you to get debt free and will save you money in interest. The CCPC has a free credit card calculator, available at [ccpc.ie](http://ccpc.ie), to show you how long it will take you to clear your debt.

Balance	Interest rate (APR)	Not using your credit card for further purchases/ withdrawals	Monthly repayments	Length of time to repay full balance
€1,000	17%	yes	€50	24 Months
€1,000	17%	yes	€100	11 months

**Check out if switching could save you money:** Have you checked to see if there is a better rate available? Interest rates currently range from 13.8% to 26.6%, so it could pay to switch. Some financial providers offer a 0% interest on transferred balances for a limited introductory period. So, if you move your balance, every cent you pay will reduce your debt, as you won't be paying any interest for that period of time. Check out the CCPC's credit card comparison tool at [ccpc.ie](http://ccpc.ie) to see what's on offer.

**Consider taking out a personal loan:** Although you may feel reluctant to take on more debt, it might make better financial sense to take out a personal loan to pay off your credit card debt. Interest rates on personal loans are generally lower than on credit cards. If you do this, make sure you stop spending on your credit card or else you will be faced with both the loan repayments and credit card

repayments. Check out the CCPC's personal loan comparison tool, at [ccpc.ie](http://ccpc.ie), to compare the costs of loans and to work out what your repayments would be.

**Learn to manage your credit card:** If you have a credit card there are some small steps you can take to help you keep your debt to a minimum and ensure that your credit rating is not affected.

- Firstly, try to keep your credit limit low and don't view it as a spending target.
- Consider reducing the credit limit to an amount you can comfortably afford to repay every month, so you are not able to run up debt you can't repay.
- Don't use your card for cash withdrawals except in emergencies, as you will be charged a high rate of interest often from the day you take out the money, as well as a cash advance fee.
- Set up a monthly standing order or direct debit for the minimum monthly repayment, or more if you can afford it, to avoid late payments. Late payments can also appear on your credit history and may impact your ability to borrow in the future.



**DOIREANN SWEENEY**, head of corporate communications, Competition and Consumer Protection Commission. More information on financial wellbeing and the tools available can be found at [www.ccpc.ie](http://www.ccpc.ie).



# Supporting children with anxiety

Clinical psychologist, David Coleman, explains how we can help



Anxiety among children and teenagers is a growing issue. In my clinical practice I see more and more children for anxiety-related issues than ever before. If I am meeting such children in my practice, then I am sure you are coming across them in your classrooms.

It is never easy to know what to do when we meet anxious children. Sometimes we may be keen to try to reassure them, sometimes we just try to sort whatever problem seems to be distressing them. Other times we may get frustrated at the apparent irrationality of their fears and feel powerless to know what to do!

I think it is that powerlessness that is most difficult for us adults. We are used to understanding problems and then fixing them. But the kinds of things that worry children are sometimes just not fixable ... or at least they are not fixable by us. Somehow we have to empower children to understand their own anxieties and then deal with them.

At the heart of dealing with children's anxiety is our ability to empathise with them and their feelings. Even when we may feel, from an outside perspective, that their anxiety makes no sense, or is unnecessary, it is still crucial that we put ourselves in their shoes and try to understand the world as they see it.

When they are in the height of anxiety,

the typically rational part of their brain may be entirely overwhelmed and unable to function, such that they are in the grip of their primitive and instinctual brain stem responses. That fear response is very powerful. When we simply try to reason with them, we are speaking to their rational, cortical brain (which isn't functioning well in that moment!). Our reassurance may well fall on deaf ears,

... we have to empower children to understand their own anxieties and then deal with them

until such time as we connect to their instinctive, emotional brain. That is what empathy does. It connects to a child's feelings.

When a child feels like we understand how they are feeling, they begin to calm, soothing their emotions, and they become much more open to hearing, and following any advice, guidance or reassurance we may want to offer. So, when faced with an anxious child or teenager, validate their experience and their feeling, saying things like "you sound

really worried about..." or "I'm guessing you are pretty scared about..." or "I wonder if you are nervous about..."

Statements like these, help to soothe the intensity of the anxiety and show a child that you might understand their perspective. From that point it may be that we help them solve their issue.

Ultimately, for children to deal successfully with their anxiety, they need to be able to feel some element of that fear, but still face the feared circumstance, person or event. 'Feeling the fear and doing it anyway', is what allows children to build their confidence that they can cope.

In class, you may have an opportunity to help them with relaxation techniques, or mindfulness, or even positive self-talk. But, even if you don't have that chance, simply empathising with their distress and then being a practical support to them with the task, project, circumstance or social interaction, may be enough to help them feel that sense of achievement in themselves, giving them the confidence to approach a similar situation alone the next time.

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**DAVID COLEMAN, clinical psychologist and broadcaster. David has created online course 'Scared Kids – Helping Children to Cope with Anxiety' in collaboration with Anokha Learning. For more see <http://bit.ly/ScaredKids/>.**



# NCCA consultation

## *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework*

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) published the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* on February 25 for consultation. The framework sets out proposals for the redevelopment of the primary curriculum. The curriculum is 21 years old this year and so a key question 'behind' the proposals has been, what is the purpose of a primary curriculum when we think of the next 20 years? Shaped by work with the Schools Forum, research and ongoing deliberations with education partners, the proposals look at what children learn in primary school, how they learn and how schools can be given more flexibility and agency to make important decisions about teaching and learning.

This article outlines the key proposals within the draft framework and ways in which you and your colleagues can share your thoughts and responses between now and the end of October.

### **What are the main proposals?**

The *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* builds on the successes and strengths of the 1999 curriculum such as children's

enjoyment of learning and teachers' increased use of active learning methodologies. At the same time, the framework responds to key challenges



which schools have identified such as curriculum overload and using assessment in a meaningful way to inform teaching and learning. In addition, the

framework recognises that the 2020s are different times to the 1990s when the last curriculum was developed.

The consultation is framed around key messages which, taken together, represent the main features and significant changes proposed for the redeveloped primary curriculum. Each of these is outlined below.

### **Agency and flexibility**

Teachers and principals have called for greater flexibility in schools' work with the curriculum, including how to plan and allocate time (NCCA, 2018). In response, the framework proposes up to seven hours of 'flexible time' per month (every four weeks). Each school would decide how best to allocate this time which might include using it for a particular curriculum area in a given month and another area the following month or term. Equally, a school might decide to allocate the time to a local project or initiative. The draft framework also proposes weekly allocations for language, mathematics and the area of wellbeing, moving to monthly allocations



for other curriculum areas. Three different timetabling options are presented for consideration.

**Connections**

The draft framework supports stronger connections between children’s experiences in preschool and in early primary, and between later primary and early post primary. It does this through its eight principles, the proposed key competencies which link to *Aistear’s* four themes and the eight key skills in the *Framework for Junior Cycle*, and through the types of learning experiences described across the curriculum areas and subjects which would provide children with opportunities for decision-making, creativity and collaboration.

**Emerging priorities**

Children born this year will begin primary school in 2024 or 2025 and start their working lives in the 2040s and retire in the 2080s/90s. Taking account of the Ireland and world these children will be part of, the proposals include seven key competencies from junior infants to sixth class. These are intended to equip children with essential knowledge, skills, concepts, dispositions, attitudes and values to help them adapt to and deal with a range of situations, challenges and

contexts that life will bring.

- The framework also proposes:
- giving more time and prominence to well-being;
  - introducing modern foreign languages from third class;
  - broadening the arts education area;
  - increasing the focus on technology.

**Curriculum structure and presentation**

Building on previous consultation findings (NCCA, 2018), the framework proposes moving from subjects in the first four years of primary school to broad curriculum areas which support an integrated approach to teaching and learning. These areas would become more differentiated into subjects from third class onwards to reflect children’s growing awareness of subjects as a way of organising their learning.

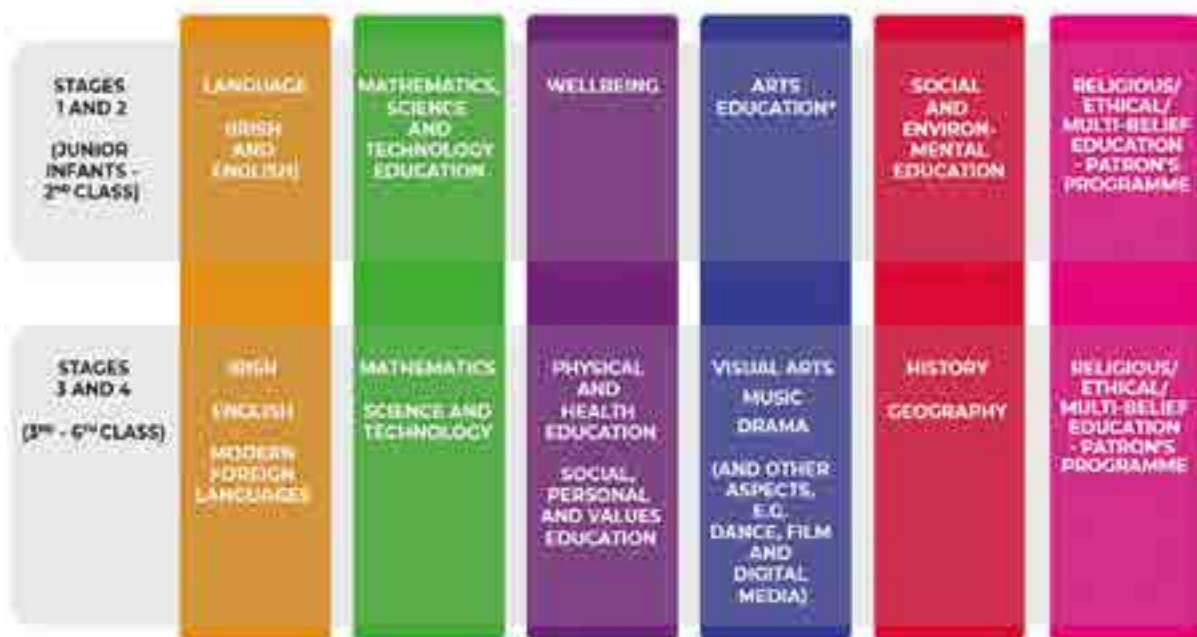
**Pedagogical approaches with assessment central to teaching and learning**

Finally, the draft framework promotes evidence-based pedagogical approaches and strategies that foster engagement, ownership and challenge while connecting with children’s life experiences and their interests. As part of this, the framework emphasises the

importance of curriculum integration, inclusive practice, inquiry-based learning and playful pedagogy. Assessment is presented as a central part of teachers’ daily practice with the information enabling them to feed back to children and to make important decisions about what to teach next, the types of activities to use, and how to modify pedagogical approaches to support further learning.

Consultations on the redevelopment of the primary curriculum as a whole don’t happen often. The coming months are an opportunity for you to share your thoughts on the proposals. You’ll find full details of the consultation at [www.ncca.ie/primary](http://www.ncca.ie/primary) along with the [draft framework](#) and [information videos](#). There are links to an [online questionnaire](#) and a [written submission template](#). You can sign up [here](#) to receive monthly e-bulletins on the consultation. We hope to be in a position in the coming weeks to reschedule the focus group meetings which had been due to take place before Easter. We look forward to hearing from you during the consultation.

**NCCA EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRIMARY TEAM**



**\*Broad learning outcomes in Arts Education would continue to support learning in visual arts, music and drama, as well as supporting other aspects of arts education such as dance, film and digital media, and enabling schools to engage with local, national and international initiatives and opportunities. The learning outcomes would also support integrated learning experiences in stages 1-2. While disciplines within Arts Education have a common creative process and share transferable skills, each has its own knowledge, concepts and skills. Subject-specific learning outcomes in stages 3-4 alongside a set of broader outcomes overarching the subjects, would ensure children experience a broad and balanced Arts Education.**



# NCCA Schools Forum

A primary principal shares her experience of reviewing the primary curriculum through the NCCA Schools Forum, and encourages other teachers to have their say

There are still some of us in the profession that remember when the complete curriculum was contained in two orange books. A bit like knowing where you were when you heard about John Lennon's death, we also remember where we were when the truck trundled into the school yard to deliver the copies of the new 1999 curriculum! With its 23 books, strands and strand units, and specific aims and objectives that were numerous and ambitious, it was, to say the least, a bit of a change.

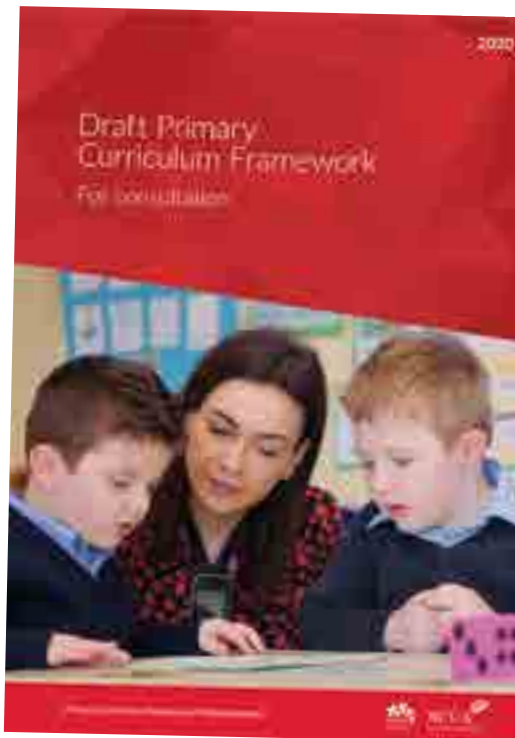
Fast forward twenty years and the 1999 curriculum is well embedded in school practice. The general consensus is that much of it is still relevant today and it has served us well. Nevertheless, changing societal expectations and new initiatives have led to curriculum overload and we need to re-evaluate how the primary school curriculum will look for today's children who are facing new challenges in the 21st century.

## NCCA Schools Forum

Since 2011, the NCCA has been engaged in reviews and consultation on what a redeveloped curriculum might look like. As part of that work, a network was established of 43 schools, (37 primary, three preschools and three post-primary schools), to look at priorities for children's learning and how a redeveloped curriculum should look. These schools represent a cross-section of schools throughout the country, reflecting a diversity of context, ethos and environment.

Our school is a single stream, vertical school with eight classes, 228 pupils, 15 teachers (including SET) and four SNAs. Under Church of Ireland patronage, it is situated in the suburban area of Rathfarnham in south Dublin.

When the NCCA invited schools to take part in a schools forum, we signed up. Like many other schools, we've felt the pressure of having to deliver many new initiatives alongside the original core curriculum, and trying to choose what to prioritise. We felt that the forum was a great opportunity to be involved in the process of curriculum review from an early stage.



The NCCA Schools Forum meets every four to six weeks and it has been a very engaging process, moving from big picture, research based thinking about education and how children learn, to the more practical aspect of what a redeveloped curriculum should look like.

Essentially, the work of the forum to date has focused on two key questions:

- What is the purpose of primary education for tomorrow's children?
- What structure and components within a curriculum can support this?
- Several members of our school staff have attended forum meetings, bringing different personal perspectives to the process. This in turn has fed back into staff meetings, focus groups and meetings for parents, where we have teased out and considered possible changes and how they might translate into practice. The child's voice is also an important factor in these deliberations.

## Draft Curriculum Framework

The result of this work is the *Draft Primary Curriculum Framework* which is available on [bit.ly/PrimaryCurriculumFramework](http://bit.ly/PrimaryCurriculumFramework). The framework sets out the proposed

structure, purpose and content of the next curriculum for primary schools. It sees teachers and school leaders as 'curriculum makers', using broad learning outcomes alongside curriculum vision and principles to allow schools to devise a curriculum which is appropriate for their particular context and community.

The Schools Forum has placed teachers and schools at the centre of curriculum development. It is grounded in the reality of primary education in Ireland while still being aspirational. It has allowed us to collaborate with colleagues, share ideas and make suggestions. We also involve the wider community by promoting the work of the forum at local level with our boards of management, parents associations and other networks.

In our school we have taken time to explore important educational issues for children's learning and examine our own attitudes and values. Meeting teachers and leaders from other school contexts regularly has encouraged us to consider issues that we would rarely encounter in our specific situation. During the past two years we have developed relationships and built a network which has enriched our experience of the forum.

Overall, our involvement has been a really positive experience and it has been a privilege to be so closely involved in this important work.

## Where now?

The published framework (the new 'red book!') is available on the NCCA website and the public is encouraged to provide submissions – sign up for updates and submit feedback on the 'have your say' section of the NCCA website. This is an important document for everyone but specifically for teachers and anyone involved in education. Consultation is open until October 2020.

This is only the first chapter in this important work and we are looking forward to continuing to engage with the forum in the coming years.

**JOYCE PERDUE, principal of Rathfarnham Parish NS, Dublin 14.**

# Teaching matters

## Holocaust education

It is 75 years since the liberation of Auschwitz. To coincide with this anniversary, Education International (EI), the federation of teacher unions across the world, organized a conference in Poland on the topic of holocaust education. As a member of Education International, INTO was represented at the conference which emphasized the crucial role that teachers and teacher unions play in ensuring mass genocide does not happen again.

As part of the conference, delegates visited the Auschwitz museum and attended the commemoration ceremony. Listening to survivors speak of their experience was very moving. Marian Turski, addressing his comments to the generations of his daughter and grand-daughter, delivered a powerful message – do not be indifferent when any minority is discriminated against. During his speech, Turski said the Holocaust did not “fall from the sky” but emerged gradually in small acts of discrimination that led to what happened at Auschwitz.

Teacher unions spoke of increasing anti-Semitism, the impact of climate change, growing levels of migration and refugees, the rise of the far-right in many countries, and a post-truth world. These create challenges for societies in relation to truth, democracy and human rights. The importance of the European convention on human rights, character education, civic engagement and media literacy were highlighted

in an era of populism and an increasingly fragile international order.

Teachers at the conference spoke of their approaches to holocaust education and inter-country education projects. They acknowledged the debt we owe to victims, and focused on investment in the future and recognizing the importance of developing of a framework of competencies for citizenship. A teacher from Berlin spoke of the use of story in upper primary when learning about the life of Jews. A teacher from Israel spoke about teaching about the Holocaust in kindergarten, creating a sense of belonging. Other teachers spoke about youth exchange projects between young people in Poland, Germany and Israel. A teacher from the US spoke about the work of the Educators’ Institute for Human Rights in developing partnerships with teachers working with conflict, human rights and holocaust education.

The presentations from teachers led to interesting discussions around the nature of holocaust education, the right age to start teaching about the Holocaust and the role of human rights in education.

Delegates were privileged to hear film director and scriptwriter Agnieszka

Holland, who was born in Warsaw, speak about her career in film-making. Among her films are *Europa Europa*, *Angry Harvest*, *Washington Square*, *Copying Beethoven* and *In Darkness*. She spoke about the role that film and the arts can play in education about human rights and holocaust awareness. The Holocaust should not be forgotten nor should anything like it happen again.

The conclusion of the conference recognised that matters of the heart and values are central to education. The key messages from the teacher unions were the importance of education in human rights, teaching children about racism and discrimination, developing empathy and understanding and educating for diversity. All children, regardless of who they are or where they come from, should have the same rights to safety, security, health and education. Sadly, this is not the case in many parts of the world. In the words of HG Wells, “human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe”.

**The Holocaust Education Trust Ireland provide resources in Ireland – <https://hetireland.org> to support holocaust education.**



Left: Sylvia Stieneker holds up teaching materials used in her primary school in Berlin. Above: INTO AGS Deirbhile Nic Craith pictured with Susan Flocken, ETUCE, and Dorota Obidniak, Polish Teachers’ Union.



# Benefits of a Scoilnet account

Teachers now have access to the Irish Newspaper Archive through a Scoilnet Account

The vast majority of resources on Scoilnet are completely free and open without any restriction to access. When the site was re-developed five years ago there was a debate about setting a requirement for users to register for free before being able to download or access resources. This is common practice with other portals and does enable portal owners to target users with resources specific to their profile. However, notwithstanding this, Scoilnet opted for a barrier-free solution that did not require a sign-in and furthermore gave access to resources from anywhere in the world.

Some content on Scoilnet, though, is licensed and carries restrictions. World Book Online, which is the portal's main licensed content stream, is free through Scoilnet but is restricted to IP addresses in the Republic of Ireland. Other services – like the amazing Dictionary of Irish Biography (a comprehensive collection of biographies covering the island of

Ireland), *The Irish Times Archive* (1859 to the present day), and JSTOR Ireland (collection of academic journals) – are available free through the Schools Broadband Connection.

Some other services are free in schools but also allow access to teachers – via a Scoilnet account – from outside school. The account is restricted to teachers, active and retired, and is authenticated against their Teaching Council registration. Scoilnet Maps (Ordnance Survey Ireland maps, aerial photography, historical maps and teaching tools) can be viewed at home through a Scoilnet account. And at post-primary level, the re-developed Census At School is similarly attainable.

## Irish Newspaper Archive

Since last month, the Irish Newspaper Archive has extended access to teachers with a Scoilnet account. The archive is a collection of over 70 national and

regional newspapers from the 1800s to the present day and covers such widely read titles, like *The Irish Independent*, *Irish Press* and *Belfast Telegraph*. In recent months the archive has also added its 'Radical Papers' to the collection of titles available to schools and teachers. Allowing teachers to view the newspapers from home is a major development and should dramatically change how papers from the past are used in the classroom.

A Scoilnet Account also allows teachers to enroll for free online courses organized by the PDST Technology in Education through TeacherCPD.ie. A number of the

courses for summer 2020 are highlighted below and around 5,000 course places are accessed through Scoilnet accounts annually.

Teachers who have registered for an account can also share resources through Scoilnet. This was a major innovation of the re-vamped site five years ago and while initial skepticism and experience from European portals indicated that teachers would not share, the experience from Ireland has confounded this with many hundreds sharing lesson plans, PowerPoints and links to useful websites.

Any teacher who signs in to Scoilnet has access to a dashboard to which they can save their favourite resource links, a useful feature given the ever-growing database of tagged-assets (currently over 20,000). The dashboard also contains a listing of the teachers shared resources and learning paths and allows them to edit the descriptions on demand.

## Free Online Courses

PDST Technology in Education is providing three online courses this summer via our online learning platform TeacherCPD.ie, including an exciting new course on Digital Video in the Primary Classroom. (Courses are subject to approval for EPV days.)

The courses are:

- Digital Technologies in the Primary Classroom, July 1-17
- Digital Video in the Primary Classroom, July 1-17
- Digital Video in the Primary Classroom, August 4-20.

All courses are free of charge.

Enrolment will be available in late April or early May via TeacherCPD.ie. You need a Scoilnet account username and password to login to TeacherCPD.ie and proceed with the enrolment process for your chosen course.

For all the latest news and information, subscribe to the PDST Technology in Education newsletter (via the [www.pdst.ie](http://www.pdst.ie) homepage).

**PATRICK COFFEY, national coordinator, Scoilnet**



# Ending child poverty

Why this should be a national priority

There are over 100,000 children in Ireland living in consistent poverty and that simply isn't right. This means there are families choosing between heating and eating. Thousands of children are spending their childhoods in unsuitable emergency accommodation. While more struggle to access education or healthcare when they need it. Young people living in consistent poverty are also locked out of opportunities they deserve to participate in society and reach their full potential. To really break the cycle of child poverty, we need clear and decisive action.

There have been efforts made in past governments to tackle child poverty with the 'consistent poverty' rate for children falling from 10.9 per cent in 2016 to 7.7 per cent in 2018, and the 'at risk of poverty' rate declining from 19.1 per cent to 15.9 per cent. While these reductions are very welcome they still mean that large numbers of children are growing up in poverty: over 200,000 children are in households at risk of poverty, and among these children more than 100,000 are in consistent poverty.

Addressing child poverty requires radical change in areas of housing, health and nutrition, education and climate action. The new government has a choice: ignore the scale of child poverty and lock out a generation of young people from the opportunities and childhoods they deserve; or face up to the challenge. We know that when the Government prioritises child poverty and shows leadership significant progress can be made.

The Children's Rights Alliance is calling on our political parties to put children first

in the next Programme for Government and make ending child poverty a national priority.

This can be achieved by:

- Making ending child poverty the primary focus of the next National Children and Young People's Strategy and establishing a dedicated implementation team and budget;
- Ensuring that all children have access to a hot nutritious meal every day in educational settings by expanding the School Meals Programme nationally;
- Investing in a major public housing programme and introduce a Child and Family Homelessness Strategy that includes strict limits on the length of time children and families spend in inappropriate accommodation;
- Transforming the lives of children seeking international protection by providing own-door accommodation and developing alternatives to direct provision and making HIQA the inspection body for refugee accommodation to ensure it meets the new national standards;
- Investing in creating a dedicated public health nurse service for children and develop a home visiting strategy to ensure every child has access to prevention and early intervention supports they deserve in their own community;
- Improving quality in universal early childhood education and care by introducing a programme that supports early years' professionals obtaining a qualification and establish a system to monitor the quality and consistency of professional

qualifications;

- Making quality childcare affordable for parents by increasing investment and introducing price caps on fees. Making childcare free for lone parents and families on low incomes intending to access training or education;
- Ensuring quality early years' services for all children, particularly those most in need by establishing an early years' programme for marginalised children with wraparound family supports in the community;
- Establishing an Oireachtas committee to identify how the State can invest up to €1 billion in childcare;
- Making primary education free for all children by providing free school books, eliminating voluntary contributions and reinstating capitation rates for schools;
- Introducing free public transport for all children and young people under 18;
- Improving living conditions for families struggling with fuel poverty by delivering a Warm Homes programme focused on reducing energy use and costs.

Every child deserves every opportunity to reach their full potential. The next Programme for Government is the new government's chance to deliver the change that is needed to transform the lives of children and families across the country.

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**CHILDREN'S RIGHTS ALLIANCE, The Children's Rights Alliance unites over 100 members – including the INTO – working together to make Ireland one of the best places in the world to be a child.**

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## Including children with movement skill challenges in the PE lesson

Many children develop good movement and co-ordination skills through play and movement opportunities in early childhood. Factors that influence the development of fundamental movement skills (FMS) include age, health, motivation and environment (PDST, 2017). Failure to develop and refine these skills may lead to a child becoming frustrated and unwilling to participate in physical activity with consequences both physically, socially and cognitively. Movement skills must be explicitly taught to young children, embedded and practised through the strands of the PE Curriculum. Some children may have persistent and unexpected difficulties with co-ordination and movement and following assessment may be diagnosed with developmental co-ordination disorder (DCD) or dyspraxia. Occupational therapy is often prescribed for children with a clinical diagnosis of

DCD. Using the TREE model, teachers can assist children with motor challenges in a range of ways.

### Teaching Style

- Demonstrate skills
- Give clear, short instructions
- Highlight three skill criteria at a time
- Give regular, meaningful feedback
- Offer a choice of developmentally appropriate skill level to all children
- Ask permission to use 'hand over hand' feedback
- Use verbal cues to aid with timing e.g.: 1,2,3, catch
- Use station teaching
- Allow time for children to discuss their challenges
- Build trust so children can ask for help

### Rules

- Offer individual learning opportunities

in small groups

- Minimise competition – participation is key
- Play modified activities with modified rules

### Equipment

- Use tasks cards and visual supports
- Use a whiteboard to write key messages
- Use videos to assist instruction
- Use a range and choice of equipment – consider slower moving balls, larger bats

### Environment

- Keep child close to you so they can hear/see instructions clearly
- Remove distractions within general area of the child
- Keep environment predictable
- Ensure the child with movement challenges is always included – consider a buddy to help
- Practise skills in a variety of environments and strands
- Provide instructions for external providers supporting the PE lessons
- Provide loose equipment at yard time

### Resources

- PDST (2017) Move Well Move Often Teacher Guide PDST [https://www.scoilnet.ie/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Move\\_Well\\_Move\\_Often\\_Teacher\\_Guide\\_7\\_1\\_.pdf](https://www.scoilnet.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/Move_Well_Move_Often_Teacher_Guide_7_1_.pdf).
- Dyspraxia Ireland DSD Ireland. [www.dyspraxiaireland.com/Reading](http://www.dyspraxiaireland.com/Reading) (For a range of useful books on DCD).
- Special Education Support Service (2005). Information on Motor Dyspraxia (DCD) [https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Categories/ASD/10DCD\\_Motor\\_Dyspraxia.pdf](https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/Categories/ASD/10DCD_Motor_Dyspraxia.pdf).

IPPEA committee members CAITRIONA COSGRAVE, primary teacher and SUSAN MARRON, DCU.

### Case Study: Outdoor and Adventure activities

Kate is 8 years old. She is in second class. Kate has been diagnosed with DCD. This affects her fine and gross motor skills, most notably in her handwriting and during yard time. She often 'trips over herself' and bumps into others. Kate finds PE difficult.

#### Proposed activities

Outdoor challenges from PSSI lesson plans (Pass the hoop p.7 #3 [https://pssi.pdst.ie/pdf/out/out\\_WAOC.pdf](https://pssi.pdst.ie/pdf/out/out_WAOC.pdf) and obstacle course p.10)

#### Pass the hoop

- In advance of lesson, let Kate bring a hoop home to practise playing freely and manipulating it
- In the lesson allow each child practise stepping in and out of a hula hoop and 'thread' hoop up over their bodies while stationary and then moving. Praise Kate when successful.

- Progress to pairs. Kate hold hands with a buddy as they try to move the hoop up and over their partner's head
- Provide visual demonstration after exploration
- Progress to small group in a circle. Emphasise that it's not a race to allow Kate and others time to co-operate and master skill

#### Obstacle course

- In advance of lesson give Kate a simple map of the course. Explain the course in the classroom on the whiteboard
- Ensure equipment is well spaced out
- Walk through the course. Give visual demonstrations and plenty of verbal cues along the route
- Allow repeated practice on one route, if required, before moving to a new route



# A day on the bog

When you hear someone say they spent 'a day on the bog' your first thoughts, or indeed your pupils' thoughts, may be of memories of long summer days spent cutting and footing turf on a bog. However, for the Irish Peatland Conservation Council (IPCC) based at the Bog of Allen Nature Centre, Co Kildare, a day on the bog holds a different meaning. It is an opportunity for pupils to explore a bog ecosystem, a living habitat supporting a wide variety of unique flora and fauna, a carbon store, a habitat that regulates water, that has inspired some of Ireland's renowned poets and artists and, for the raised bogs in the midlands, a 10,000 year journey of formation. There is no doubt taking your pupils to explore a local bog would benefit their learning. However the wet nature of bogs, storing 90% water and an accumulation of 10% dead plant material, means that schools are not built on bogs! Supporting schools in their exploration of bogs, the Heritage in Schools Scheme has encouraged development of resources to bring bogs alive in the classroom through activities and discussion while also offering schools an opportunity to explore a local bogland with a heritage specialist. As a heritage in school specialist with a particular focus on bogs, I share with pupils my own childhood days spent on the bog but also aim to share the values we now know our bogs offer us while promoting the well-being of pupils in an inclusive environment.

## Climate Change Heroes

The well-being of the child is central to schools. In this global climate emergency children can be concerned about their future and, from my own experience, will convey to you the most drastic and devastating consequences we may experience with the changing climate. During classroom discussions on this

There is no doubt taking your pupils to explore a local bog would benefit their learning.

theme I recommend you use the bogs of Ireland to express how nature, in particular our bogs, can be our heroes. To explain, in brief, bogland plants absorb carbon dioxide as they photosynthesise. Bogs are natural water storage units which prevents decomposers such as worms living beneath their surface. When bogland plants hibernate in winter, their dead leaf litter becomes part of the bog surface. This leaf litter will not decompose due to the absence of decomposers and in turn becomes stored carbon helping to reduce carbon dioxide a greenhouse gas in our environment.

## Wonderfully Different

We all learn in different ways. Bogland plants and animals all have to be different to survive in the wet, wild and open landscapes. Each has adapted a special way of surviving including a lizard that drops its tail, an insect eating sundew, a snipe that drums and a hare that chooses not to burrow. You can choose to explore bogland plants and animals with your pupils using ICT, using a practical hands-on approach, with pupils making their own bog plant flower identification dials, or incorporate the lesson with developing the pupils' literacy skills using wildlife identification books.

Although undertaking an educational bog visit, exploring the carbon storage ability, the formation of and the plants and animals of a local bog is different to harvesting turf from a bog, somethings will never change – wellies or old runners are advised for all visiting a bog, bring plenty of sandwiches to keep energy levels up and wear clothes that will work in all weather types. For those choosing to bring the bogs alive in the classroom visit <http://bit.ly/BogsinClassroom> and download IPCC's *Discovering the Wild Boglands Primary School* worksheets to support you.

**NUALA MADIGAN, Irish Peatland Conservation Council and heritage expert with Heritage in Schools. The Heritage in Schools Scheme is coordinated by the Heritage Council. To find out more and to book a visit from a heritage expert visit [www.heritageinschools.ie](http://www.heritageinschools.ie).**



# Winnie the Pooh

*inspiration for geographical and outdoor learning*

Widespread attention has been paid to the benefits of children learning outdoors since the American author Richard Louv developed the concept of nature-deficit disorder. In books such as *Last Child in the Woods*, Louv linked the rise in obesity, attention-deficit disorder and depression to children's lack of contact with nature.

The Winnie the Pooh stories (Milne and Shepard, 1994) can be used by teachers to inspire outdoor adventures for children. During an era where children are spending less time outdoors, it is opportune to revisit the characters created by A.A. Milne. The magical setting for Winnie-the-Pooh's adventures is a real place: the Hundred Acre Wood was inspired by Ashdown Forest, a wildlife haven that spans more than 6,000 acres in southeast England. Milne's childhood connection with nature inspired his writing as he spent hours outside exploring the woods

with his son.

In 1921 A.A. Milne gave his son Christopher Robin Milne a toy bear. Initially called Edward, the bear was renamed Winnie after a brown bear in London Zoo. Harry Colebourn, a Canadian lieutenant and veterinary surgeon, had brought the bear cub to England at the beginning of World War I. Winnie was named after the city of Winnipeg and she was donated to London Zoo when Harry's unit left for France. The origin of the second part of the name 'Pooh' is explained in the 1924 book *When we were young*. The name Pooh originally belonged to a swan, as can be seen in the introduction of Milne's *When We Were Very Young*. "Christopher Robin, who feeds this swan in the mornings, has given him the name of 'Pooh'. This is a very fine name for a swan, because, if you call him and he doesn't come (which is a thing swans are good at), then you can pretend that you were just saying

Ashdown Forest, Sussex

**Subject**  
Geography

**Strand**  
Natural Environments

**Strand Unit**  
The local natural environment





‘Pooh!’ to show him how little you wanted him.”

The friendship between Christopher Robin and Winnie the Pooh inspired a collection of books starting with *Winnie-the-Pooh* in 1926. The books were illustrated by E.H. Shepard. Winnie the Pooh has also been immortalised by the animated film created by the Walt Disney Corporation. Milne’s stories have been translated into 50 languages and are considered classic children’s stories today. Other characters, such as Eeyore, Piglet, Tigger, Kanga and Roo were also based on stuffed animals belonging to Christopher Robin. Most of these stuffed animals are now on display in the New York Public Library. The characters, Rabbit and Owl, were based on animals that lived, like the swan Pooh, in the surrounding area of Milne’s country home, Cotchford Farm in Ashdown Forest, Sussex. It is this area on which the 100-Acre-Wood was based.

The end-paper to *Winnie the Pooh* by A.A. Milne, first published by Methuen in 1926, is a map of the 100 ‘aker’ wood (Hundred Acre Wood). Using the device of a map or bird’s-eye view, it shows each of the characters in their own home or locality in the Hundred Acre Wood, where the story is set. When E.H. Shepard first drew the map of the 100 ‘aker’ wood he based the location on Ashdown Forest, near the home of the Milnes in East Sussex. Over the years there has been much speculation about the location of the story and how many of the landmarks were inspired by real places. According to Christopher Robin in his own autobiography *The Enchanted Places*, Ashdown Forest is 100 Acre Wood. The best-known landmark is Poohsticks Bridge, which on the local map is called Posingford Bridge.

In his later years, Christopher Milne recruited Pooh to help in the campaign for the survival of Ashdown Forest, which was then being threatened by a proposed exploration by British Petroleum. Fortunately, Ashdown Forest was saved for posterity.

Initiatives such as forest schools ensure that children have an opportunity to play outside, to swing from ropes, climb trees and explore natural habitats with a sense of adventure rather than fear. The forest school movement originated in the Scandinavian countries in the 1950s and since the mid 1990s is increasingly being supported in the UK and more recently in Ireland. At forest school events,

children learn to make swings in trees, to use ropes to climb muddy slopes, and to be outdoors in all weather conditions. They take risks, develop gross motor skills and engage in problem solving. Teachers can design multiple outdoor activities inspired by the Winnie the Pooh stories.

### Geographical and outdoor activities based on Winnie the Pooh

- Select a special tree from the local environment. Find out its name and special characteristics. Draw a sketch of this tree using E.H. Shepard’s illustrations as inspiration. Encourage the children to label their picture with a title inspired by the Winnie the Pooh books. Also include the child’s name, date of drawing and name of tree.

Initiatives such as forest schools ensure that children have an opportunity to play outside, to swing from ropes, climb trees and explore natural habitats with a sense of adventure rather than fear.

- Using an iPad or video camera, record children reading a favourite line from the story and their reasons for this choice. You could film this outside under a tree and use props to make it look like the Hundred Acre Wood. Collate the film clips together and show them to the rest of the school in assembly, or play the video on a loop at parents’ evening. There is excellent support available on the FÍS Film Project website via PDST.
- Map work: Situate the story in a local landscape. Show children a map of the Hundred Acre Wood. Discuss the map. Ask the children to draw a map of their local area as a setting for the Winnie the Pooh stories. Give each child a large piece of paper and a selection of collage materials, including coloured and patterned papers, twigs and leaves,

- small scraps of fabric, images of Pooh and friends and PVA glue or sticky dots. Then ask them to glue materials onto the map, to create a tactile and sensory piece of art. Include local versions of the key sites which feature in the story e.g. the ancient black walnut tree on the edge of the forest that became Pooh’s house, a bridge to represent Poohsticks Bridge and an old quarry where Roo played in his sandy pit.
- Create a honey trail in the school grounds using templates of bees dotted around the school ground. Children understand that bees are important pollinators. A decline in the bee species causes a decrease in pollination, new plants, flowers and ultimately honey. Part of the school ground can be planted as a wild garden with an explicit aim of attracting bees and enhancing the school’s biodiversity.
- On a fine day organise a Christopher Robin Tea Party outside. Children can dress up as their favourite characters or bring miniature toy versions.
- ‘The case of the missing tail’: Create a treasure hunt to enable the children to find Eeyore’s missing tail.
- Print out Winnie the Pooh characters on cardboard. The children can use these to create new Winnie the Pooh stories in their school grounds. These characters can also be used to create a diorama with a scene from the Hundred Acre Woods.
- If the school is located near a river or stream the children can play poohsticks. This is a game whereby each player throws a stick over the upstream side of a bridge into a stream or river, the winner being the person whose stick emerges first from under the bridge.

### Further resources available:

Aalto, K. (2015) *The Natural World of Winnie-the-Pooh: Exploring the Real Landscapes of the Hundred Acre Wood*, Timber Press

Louv, R., 2008. *Last child in the woods: Saving our children from nature-deficit disorder*. Algonquin books.

Milne, A.A. and Shepard, E.H., 1994. *The complete tales of Winnie-the-Pooh*. Penguin.

**DR ANNE DOLAN is a lecturer in primary geography in Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.**

# Exemptions from the study of Irish

## New criteria are damaging

The criteria in the revised *DES Circular 0052/2019* issued by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) for the exemption of pupils from the study of Irish are damaging and not based on scientific evidence. I explain here why I think this is the case and how this will impact both teachers and pupils alike.

### Why was a review needed?

A very informative review of policy and practice in 2018 in relation to exemptions was undertaken by the DES Inspectorate. This review clearly illustrated that the processes in place at that time were broken and new processes were required. Coupled with this, the number of pupils with exemptions had grown from 2.5% in 1999 to 11% in 2019. The DES initiated a public consultation process on exemptions from the study of Irish in December 2018.

It was clear to me and colleagues in SEALBHÚ in DCU, however, that the consultation process was flawed and that it did not take the findings from the Inspectorate's consultation document nor international research into account. A more fundamental review was required that questioned the underlying basis for exemptions from the study of Irish.

### Is there a basis for exemptions from the study of Irish?

Exemptions from the study of languages

do not exist in other countries. For example, there is no exemption from the study of Welsh in Wales. The overwhelming response was that education systems in other countries employ inclusive education practices which meet the learning needs of all pupils regardless of ability.

Additionally, from our understanding of the research, there is no such thing as a language learning disability per se. Children with a range of special education needs can and do successfully learn a second language. The fact that 67% of students with an exemption from the study of Irish in 2017 successfully studied another language for their Junior Certificate is evidence of this.

### Why are the new criteria damaging?

The existence of an exemption from the study of Irish gives legitimacy to the false notion that there is such a thing as a language learning disability. Granting exemptions to pupils who don't require them sends them an implicit message that they cannot learn a second language. This denies them the opportunity to enjoy all the cognitive, social and academic benefits that come with being bilingual. Furthermore, it denies them the opportunity to learn the language in a manner that might better suit their learning needs and style.

*DES Circular 0052/2019* sets a

standardised score on a discrete test in either word reading, reading comprehension or spelling at or below the tenth percentile as the cut off to qualify for an exemption. As percentile is a norm-referenced score, this means that 10% of all children will be identified at or below this score. The responsibility will now lie with the teacher to create the case for approving or denying an application by a parent for exemption.

In setting a cut-off point, the impression is created that there is scientific evidence to support the notion that these children cannot learn a second language. Nothing could be further from the truth. Learning Irish as a second language helps children learn another language at post-primary or third level. In setting the cut-off so high, children who are capable of learning Irish will be denied the opportunity. They will also be denied career opportunities in primary teaching, an Garda Síochána and civil service.

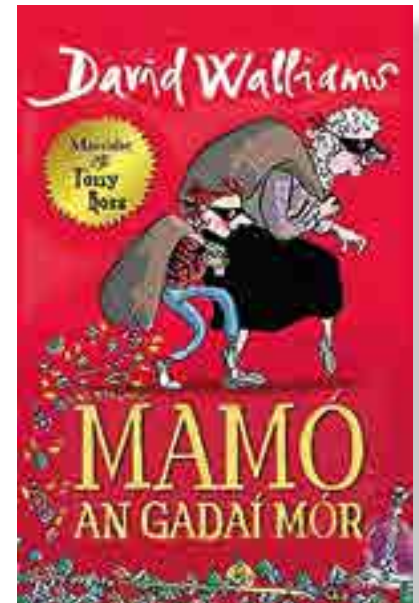
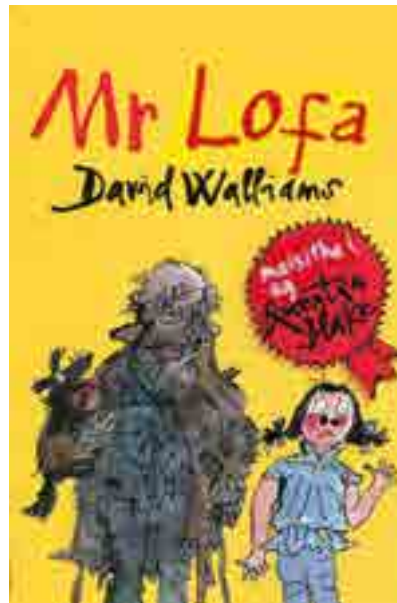
The DES has committed to review *DES Circular 0053/2019* in 2021. I have called for its withdrawal as it is normalising the concept that many children cannot learn Irish.

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**PROFESSOR PÁDRAIG Ó DUIBHIR**, deputy dean, DCU Institute of Education and director of SEALBHÚ, the DCU Research Centre for the Learning and Teaching of Irish.

# David Walliams

An Chomhairle um Oideachas  
Gaeilteachta & Gaelscolaíochta



Is úrscéalaí Béarla don óige é David Walliams agus tá lucht leanúna mór aige in Éirinn. Tá a chuid leabhar ar fáil i mbreis agus leathchéad teanga ar fud na cruinne. Tá trí leabhar dá chuid ar fáil i nGaeilge.

Tá saibhreas den scoth agus greann sna haistriúcháin cumasacha ó Futa Fata a spreagfaidh suim agus a chuirfidh le taitneamh na bpáistí. Cabhróidh pictiúirí spráilúla Tony Ross le páistí an téacs a thuiscint níos fearr.

## *An Billiúnaí Beag*

Buachaill óg 12 bhliain d'aois é Joe Práta atá lofa le hairgead. Tá na milliúin euro aige agus teilifíseán plasma 100 orlach aige i ngach seomra sa teach, tá ráschúrsa grand prix ar chúl an tí aige. Níl rud ar bith de dhíth air, ach rud amháin, cara.

## *Mr Lofa*

Is í Chloe an cailín is uaigní ar domhan, go dtí go mbuaileann sí leis an bhfear déirce, Mr Lofa. Tá boladh bréan uaidh agus tá daoine ag iarraidh é a dhíbirt ón mbaile. Socraíonn Chloe é a chur i bhfolach i seid sa ghairdín nuair atá áit le fanacht de dhíth air mar gurb é an t-aon duine ina saol atá deas, cineálta léi. Caithfidh Chloe an rún a choimeád ach is gearr go dtuigeann sí gur féidir le rún go leor trioblóide a tharraingt agus faigheann sí amach go bhfuil a rún féin nach raibh coinne ar bith aici leis ag Mr Lofa.

## *Mamó an Gadaí Mór*

Ceapann Ben gur seandúine leadránach í a Mhamó. Is gnáthMhamó í amach is amach. Itheann sí anraith cabáiste, tá gruaig bhán uirthi, tá fiacla bréige aici, bíonn ciarsúr páipéir ina muinchille i gcónaí aici agus caitheann sí an oíche ag imirt Scrabble. Ach ansin faigheann Ben amach go bhfuil rún ag Mamó – rún dochreidte – is gadaí idirnáisiúnta seod í!

## Úsáid sa Rang

### *An Billiúnaí Beag*

- Iarr ar pháistí machnamh a dhéanamh ar conas a bheadh an saol muna mbeadh aon cairde acu. Pléigh an tábhacht a

bhaineann le cairdeas agus cineáltas.

- In ainneoin a chuid airgid, tá cairde de dhith ar Joe, pléigh slite go mbeadh sé in ann cairde nua a dhéanamh
- Tarlaíonn bulaíocht sa scéal, pléigh conas is féidir cabhrú leo siúd a ndéantar bulaíocht orthu.
- Iarr ar pháistí liosta siopadóireachta a scríobh de na rudaí a bheadh siad ábalta a cheannach dá mbeadh míle euro acu.

### *Mr Lofa*

- Cuireann Chloe a lán ceisteanna ar Mr Lofa ag tús an scéil. Iarr ar pháistí liosta ceisteanna a bheadh acu féin dó a chumadh.
- Iarr ar pháistí an scéal a athinsint ó thaobh dhearcadh Annabelle, deirfiur óg Chloe.
- Baineann an scéal le cineáltas agus carthanacht. Pléigh an tábhacht a bhaineann le bheith cineálta agus carthanach lena chéile.
- Scríobh próifíl carachtar do Mr Lofa (nó do dhuine ar bith ó na scéalta eile). Spreag na páistí le machnamh a dhéanamh ar thréithe fisiceacha chomh maith le pearsantacht agus dearcadh an duine – dean tobsmaoineamh ar na haidiachtaí a dhéanann cur síos ar Mr Lofa agus scríobh ar an gclár bán iad chun cuidiú le páistí.

### *Mamó an Gadaí Mór*

- Cruthaigh comhrá beirte idir Mamó agus Ben agus í ag iarraidh leithscéal a dhéanamh leis maidir leis an rún atá aici.
- Imríonn Ben agus Mamó Scrabble le chéile, tabhair sreang litreacha do na páistí chun focail a chumadh leis na litreacha sin.
- Is breá le Mamó cabáiste agus ullmhaíonn sí oidis éagsúla le cabáiste iontu. Cruthaigh biachlár le miasa a bheadh oiriúnach do Mhamó.
- Scríobh liosta de na ceisteanna a chuirfeá ar Mhamó dá mbeadh agallamh á chur agat uirthi agus tú mar Gharda Síochána.

Ar fáil: [www.futafata.ie](http://www.futafata.ie)

**MÁIRE NIC AN RÍ, oifigeach bunscoile, COGG.**



# Reviews

## Political division, hard borders and the strength of hope

I think I am correct in saying that there is a real market for historical fiction for Irish primary school classrooms. We really enjoy a well-written, dramatic historical story. *Hope Against Hope*, by Sheena Wilkinson, is the type of novel that primary school teachers and children will love, especially the senior classes.

The novel is set in 1921 when Ireland was separated under British law by the Government of Ireland Act, which created Northern Ireland.

This is a time when communities were divided and the hard border is the catalyst for our protagonist, Polly's call to action. Polly decides to run away from home and ends up in a



Helen's Hope Hostel in Belfast. The hostel is a feminist space where young women live and work together. People in Belfast start to turn against the progressive values of the hostel.

This story is one of brilliantly vibrant and current themes for a 5th/6th class student. It will provoke debate in language, history and learn together lessons. Most of all it is an enduring tale that will entertain the class while teaching children about political division, hard borders and the strength of hope (against hope).

Published by Little Island. ISBN: 978-1912-4174-21. Cost: €9.99.

**Reviewed by ROZZ LEWIS, Co Carlow.**

## Journey through the trenches

Liam and Aoife are off on a second adventure! The siblings are upon the battlefields of Northern France and Belgium shadowing their grandfather as a young man. *World War I: When the Lights Went Out in Europe* is the second book of the historical time travelling trilogy.

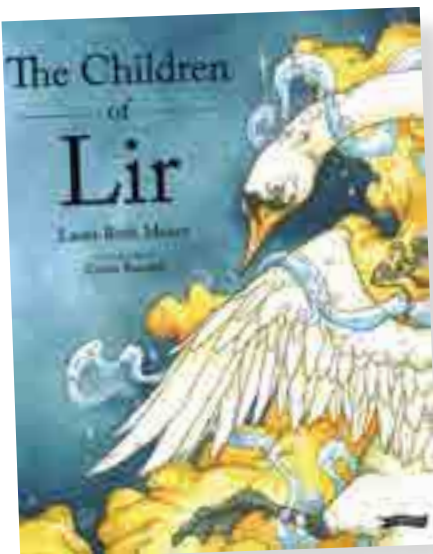
The pair are aided in their adventures by Seamus and Phelim, a couple of sidekicks who bring levity to the narrative. For a story which takes place during World War I, the author, Rod Smith, treats the subjects of warfare and death both realistically and sensitively.

Since the book is historical fiction there are many real life characters who cross paths with the children: Francis Ledwidge the poet, Nurse Edith Cavell, Sir Adrian Carton de Wiart. The reader is met with true-to-life events characteristic to war. These events and the many well-drawn characters bring the narrative to life evoking both interest and a strong feeling of empathy for those who were subject to the many pains of war.

If studying World War I with students, this book would make an excellent resource to use as a read aloud novel or as a class novel. The novel is rich in descriptions, strong characters and engaging scenes to deem it worthy of not only reading and comprehension lessons but oral language and writing sessions too. The novel is suitable for 4th to 6th class. Poolbeg. ISBN: 178-1997-78-0. Cost: €8.99.

**Reviewed by STUART PURCELL, Co Dublin.**

## Lovely introduction to Irish legends



This book is a lovely introduction to Irish legends for children. It's a rhyming version of *The Children of Lir* which enables children to join in as they become familiar with the story.

It tells the story of how Lir's children were turned into swans by their wicked

stepmother and forced to wander across Ireland for 900 years.

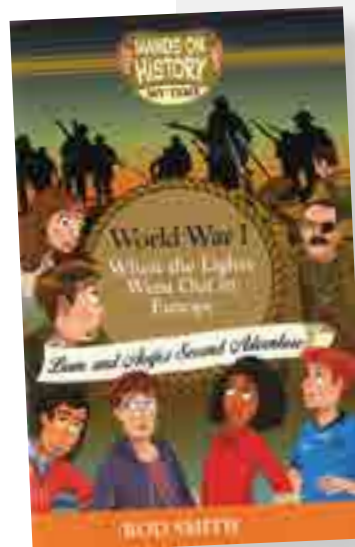
The book comes in hardback which makes it robust for the classroom. It has a handy ribbon attached to the book which can be used as a bookmark.

It's written by Laura Ruth Maher, a Montessori teacher with an interest in the importance of rhyme for early literacy development. It's nicely illustrated by Conor Busuttill.

The book is suitable from 1st class upwards due to its rhyming nature. A lovely, enjoyable book for children and teachers.

O'Brien Press. ISBN 978-1-78849-106-8. Cost: €12.99.

**Reviewed by AUDREY KEOGH, Co Longford.**



# Where Teachers Borrow



**Comhar Linn**  
INTO Credit Union

[comharlinnintocu.ie](https://www.comharlinnintocu.ie)

## Comhar Linn Draw winners

### CAR – TOYOTA YARIS

Winner details withheld by consent – District 21 – Waterford

### CASH €2,000.00

Sharon McGough – Co. na Gaillimhe

### CASH €1,000.00

Winner details withheld by consent – District 10 – Galway

### CASH €1,000.00

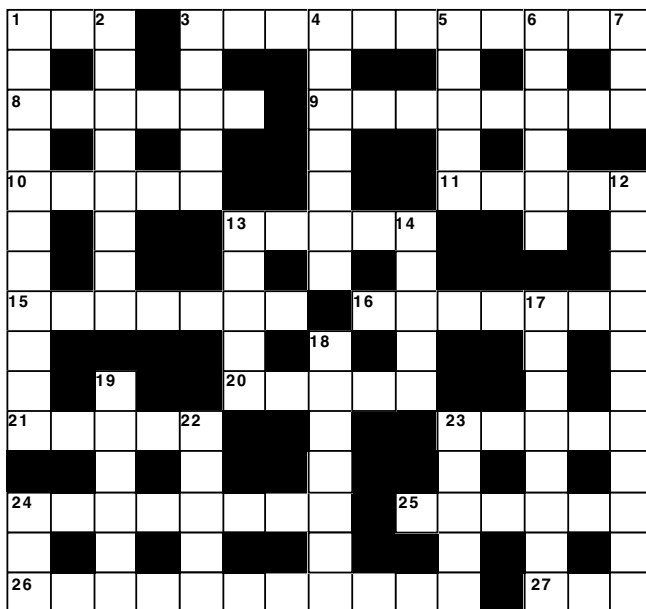
Caroline Carey Co. Donegal

### CASH €1,000.00

Winner details withheld by consent – District 18 – Meath

## Comhar Linn Crossword No. 205

A draw for 2 x €100 will be made from all correct entries. Simply complete the crossword and email it to : [competitions@into.ie](mailto:competitions@into.ie) before 29th April 2020.



NAME:  
ADDRESS:

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To read the Crossword Competition Terms & Conditions and INTO's Data Privacy Notice, please visit <https://www.into.ie/about/compliance/data-privacy-notice/>

### Across

1. Label a character with silver. (3)
3. Gave in a little on seeing commies drop out. (11)
8. Darren has gone off on a message. (6)
9. Whale-food gives the board added weight. (8)
10. Punitive way to confine a novice. (5)
11. The heart of the teachers' quibble is a little explosive! (5)
13. Harsh, irritated ulcer. (5)
15. Part of the pig reserved for Del-Boy or Rodney? (7)
16. Soundly one learns a character provides gossip. (7)
20. Indoor sport involving many skills. (5)
21. Head-case! (5)
23. Found under Director-Generals' expenses initially? How sweet is that? (5)
24. Connacht, perhaps, is in favour of Lombardi. (8)
25. Note, a French composer is small and stony. (6)
26. The occupation of teaching the aged rope guy to change. (11)
27. Type of music produced by an artist, quietly. (3)

### Down

- 1.& 13d. Telecasters hoped change would occur to a prayer. (3,8,5)
2. Native American with a strangely minor ego. (8)
3. Despite its many locks, it's open to barges. (5)
4. This plant may provide syrup, Pa. (7)
5. Makes money making confectionary. (5)
6. Embark to find a hawker from the south-east. (3,3)
7. Professor? It's all put on! (3)
12. Piece of film about two-wheelers one kept just over a foot? (7,4)
13. See 1 down.
14. Loamy soil damages soles. (5)
17. One who jumps from planes make kids very upset. (8)
18. Sounds like Canadian premier Justin has real money! (7)
19. With a little wolf love, I would be in shape! (6)
22. Prone to telling fibs. (5)
23. Will two score this many? (5)
24. An explosive sound from Dad. (3)

## Gordius – In Touch No. 204 – March 2020 solutions

### Across

1. Trace element 7. Oft 9. Memo 10. Aviary
11. Glue 14. Pedal 15. Baize 16. Flat
18. Lodge 21. Haiku 22. Visit 23. Small
24. Vent 25. No-one 26. Penny 29. Oily
33. Oracle 34. Lucy 36. Rag

### Down

1. The Sport of Kings 2. Ahoy 3. Exam
4. Loire 5. Maria 6. Toll 8. Twenty-twenty vision 9. Misbehaviour 13. Menus 14. Polka
17. Lesson plan 19. Dolly 20. Event 27. Error
28. Nacho 30. Legs 31. Week 35. Cos

Winners of Comhar Linn InTouch Crossword No. 203 are Mary Hickson, Co. Kerry and Siobhan O'Callaghan, Co. Tipperary.

Winners of crossword no. 204 will be announced in our next InTouch issue.

Each month Children's Books Ireland recommend a book of the month for primary pupils



## Children's Books Ireland recommended read – April

# In The Garden

Written by Noëlle Smit. Little Island Books, 2020. ISBN 9781912417490. 32pp. Cost: €20



Ecology, green living, clean eating and growing your own food have all become important current topics for a variety of reasons, not least of which is climate change. This book might show children that by gardening, they can take action and do something very beneficial to help the environment. This could provide

them with a sense of agency as an antidote to the regular news stories about the effects of global warming.

The endpapers are bright and attractive showing a summer garden filled with flowers, and a big butterfly taking centre stage. Starting in January, each opening of the book depicts a month in the garden. The interdependence of soil, plants, insects, birds, animals and people is understated but visible. The cyclical nature of the gardener's year is depicted through the use of very bright contrasting blocks of colour. From dark earth tones in winter and early spring, we progress to light-filled double spreads, showing summer in all its glory of blue skies, and riotous reds and pinks. There is a very strong design element and a lot for children to look at and discuss. The text is minimal and factual, whereas the illustrations are busy and energetic.

This book, then, is a timely and welcome addition to homes and classrooms. It might well entice parents, teachers and children to begin gardens of their own. Overall, the message conveyed is that growing plants is hard work, but that it provides great joy and satisfaction as well as food to eat. Non-fiction, 5–7.


**Children's Books Ireland is the national children's books organisation of Ireland. For further information and more reviews, visit [www.childrensbooksireland.ie](http://www.childrensbooksireland.ie)**

### InTouch competitions and draws


From time to time, the INTO runs competitions and draws for our members via InTouch, our e-newsletter, website or social media. Only essential data required for the running of the competition is requested from members. The data collected is deleted once the winners have been selected.

The full name and county of prize winners are published by the INTO. By entering the competition, it is assumed consent is given by members for publication of these details.


For more information on T&Cs for competitions visit the benefits section of the INTO website.



portal for irish education  
lárphointe na h-áiteanna




Star site



Top 10


**SCOIL NÁISIÚNTA INIS CHLÉIRE CO CORK**



<http://snchleire.com/>  
Situated in a beautiful part of the country, the website uses a lot of strong imagery to reflect life in the school. While there is not a huge amount of written content, the images speak for themselves. Bi-lingual content.

ONES TO WATCH

**SAFEFOOD IRELAND –**



**HANDWASHING**  
[www.safefood.eu/handwash/index.html](http://www.safefood.eu/handwash/index.html)  
A guide to handwashing that contains storybooks, videos and posters. Information is aimed at childcare providers and parents.

**HSE – HYGIENE POSTERS**  
<https://tinyurl.com/ugsas6f>  
Posters in both Irish and English around coughing and sneezing. Also includes a number of images created for sharing on social media.

**LANDSCAPES IN IRISH ART**  
<https://tinyurl.com/spxqzm7>  
A set of lesson plans from the National Gallery based on well-known Irish paintings.

**1 CARE OF THE EARTH**  
<http://bit.ly/CAFOD-ZeroHero>  
A four minute animation for children based on a letter from Pope Francis on caring for the earth.

**2 BIA – BOSCA LÓIN**  
[bit.ly/BoscaLoin](http://bit.ly/BoscaLoin)  
Seo cur i láthair PDF le focail don téama bosca lóin.

**3 LENT, SHROVE TUESDAY, ASH WEDNESDAY**  
<http://bit.ly/Lent-ShroveTuesday>  
Among other things, it explains the differences between the Western and Eastern churches in how they celebrate these significant days.

**4 AN TEARRACH**  
<http://bit.ly/Daltai-Irish-Puzzle>  
Crosfhocal bunaithe ar an tEarrach. Tugtar na leideanna i mBéarla agus bíonn ar an dalta iad a aistriú.

**5 CREATIVE DRAMA LESSONS**  
[www.childdrama.com/lessons.html](http://www.childdrama.com/lessons.html)  
Games include; mixed fractions, adding fractions, subtracting fractions, reduce fractions, greatest common factor, lowest common factor.

**6 EASTER RISING**  
<http://www.easter1916.net>  
Background information to the 1916 rising.

**7 LESSON ACTIVITIES – BOY IN THE STRIPED PYJAMAS**  
<http://bit.ly/Boy-Striped-PJ>  
A series of eight lesson activities based on the John Boyne novel.

**8 MONEY – SHOPPING PROBLEMS**  
[tinyurl.com/rehml14](http://tinyurl.com/rehml14)  
PowerPoint presentation aimed at a 3rd/4th maths class.

**9 HOLY WEEK THEMEPAGE**  
<http://bit.ly/Holy-Week-Resources>  
Collection of resources and videos to explain what is being commemorated during Holy Week.

**10 COUNTRIES OF EUROPE**  
<http://bit.ly/CountriesofEurope>  
Interactive to test knowledge about the location of countries. Not so easy!