

PRESS RELEASE



**An Roinn Leanaí, Míchumais
agus Comhionannais**
Department of Children,
Disability and Equality

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New guide to foster artistic creativity in young children launched by Ministers Foley and O'Donovan

Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Norma Foley, and Minister for Arts, Culture, Communications and Sport, Patrick O'Donovan, have today launched the 'Principles for Engaging in the Arts: A Guide for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Settings'.

The Principles for Engaging with the Arts are designed to inspire and support meaningful arts experiences for children in early learning and care and school-age childcare settings across Ireland. The principles are closely aligned with the principles underpinning both Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, and the National Quality Guidelines for School Age Childcare Services. They have been developed to give greater detail and further clarity on this area of practice, to support early years educators, school-age practitioners and childminders in promoting arts experiences as part of their setting's curriculum or programme of activities. The principles are also intended to support artists and arts organisations in their work with babies, toddlers, young children and children attending school-age childcare, while creating a shared language and shared understanding across and between sectors.

Minister Foley said:

"The arts are essential to how children make sense of the world, build relationships, and express themselves. These Principles celebrate the power of the arts to enrich everyday experiences in early learning and care and school-age childcare settings, and they offer a shared language and framework for educators and artists."

"As well as launching the Principles, I am delighted that Minister O'Donovan and I are also joining in the announcement of this year's Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme. The scheme continues to go from strength to strength, offering bursaries to support artists working in settings and services right around the country."

Minister O'Donovan said:

“Early learning and care and school-age childcare settings have a key role in nurturing the innate creativity of young children. It is therefore imperative that early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners and artists are supported in their professional practice.

“Through research, sector consultation and collaboration facilitated under the Creative Youth Plan, I am delighted to launch, alongside Minister Foley, these set of Principles for engaging with the arts. In addition, I wish to congratulate the latest recipients under the Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme, providing more opportunities for babies, toddlers and children to create and enjoy the arts.”

The development of the principles was an action under strategic objective 3 in the Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027, which aims to place creativity at the heart of children and young peoples' lives.

They were developed by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality in partnership with the Department of Culture, Communications and Sport (through the Creative Ireland Programme), the Department of Education and Youth, the Arts Council, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, early years educators, school-age childcare practitioners, childminders and artists.

The Principles for Engaging with the Arts recognise the unique role of the arts in fostering creativity, expression, and holistic development in early childhood and beyond. They focus on values such as inclusion, child-led exploration and collaborative practice, supporting adults to create environments where children's creativity can thrive.

The launch event, which took place at The Ark cultural centre for children, in Dublin, featured contributions from artists and early years educators, showcasing creative work inspired by the principles.

The Principles for Engaging with the Arts and supporting videos are now available to download [here](#).

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Note to Editors:

- The [Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027](#) aims to provide everyone from birth to 24 years with more opportunities for creative engagement in every aspect of their lives.
- The Plan is implemented by the all-of-Government Creative Ireland Programme based in the Department Culture, Communications and Sport in partnership with the Department of Education and Youth, the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science and the Arts Council.
- The Arts in Early Learning and Childcare Scheme supports individual artists and arts organisations to partner with eligible services to develop opportunities for babies, toddlers, young children, and children attending school-age childcare, to explore and enjoy the arts. It focuses on collaboration between artists, early years educators, school-age practitioners, families and carers to develop their capacity in this area. The scheme is co-funded by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality and the Arts Council. The successful artist and arts organisations for 2025 are:
 - Graffiti Theatre Company Ltd

- Mónica Muñoz
- Music Network
- The Ark
- Chris Finnegan
- George Higgs
- Kids' Own
- Mother Tongues
- Freshly Ground Theatre

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