



impact report 2024



**children's
books
ireland**
every child a reader

Design: www.fintanwall.com

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receives financial assistance from
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Anne O'Gorman (Secretary,
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Children's Books Ireland

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Financial Controller
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Claire Hourihane,
Communications Manager
(resigned March 2024)
Emma Carville,
Communications Manager
(appointed March 2024)
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Development Manager

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Ruth Ennis, Book-gifting Assistant
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Dr. Becky Long,
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Dan Conroy, Social Media Officer
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Introduction



In 2024, Children's Books Ireland launched a new strategic plan for 2024–2028. Our focus remains firmly on our core audiences: young readers, the artists who make work for them, and influential adults who can guide a child's reading journey. Our vision, too, remained unchanged: every child a reader. Inclusion for all is at the heart of our work and we truly believe that there is a book out there for every reader.

We revised our strategic aims to include a heightened focus on reading for joy in education. Recent studies show a high level of burnout among teachers and principals, and with a staffing crisis in teaching all over the island of Ireland, we are acutely aware of the significant workload faced by educators. In partnership with a range of organisations, we have been sharing our expertise and supporting the sector to develop a culture of reading, while also communicating to government the urgent need to invest in school libraries, staffed by qualified professionals, in order to give every child an equitable chance to become a reader. Our Reading Revolution campaign drew attention to the growing need for a sustainable funding stream to support schools in their reading promotion.

We continue to connect young readers with excellent books in any way we can: in 2024, we donated 42,707 books to children and young people in areas of need. Whether these books find their new owners in a school, hospital, homelessness service or international protection accommodation, we aim to create opportunities for every child to become a reader, with most supports for those with the highest level of need.

No matter what aspect of our work you look at throughout this report, you will find the wonder and joy of children's literature – and the incredibly talented and hard-working artists who create it. 2024 saw Laureate na nÓg Patricia Forde launch her flagship project, the Whole Wild World tour. This extraordinary undertaking brought together 35 writers and

illustrators over more than two weeks, travelling in a unique, multicoloured bus down the west coast of Ireland, meeting children and young people and visiting schools, libraries, bookshops, theatres and cultural centres along the way. This celebration of stories encompassed almost every aspect of our work – creating communities of readers and artists, ensuring that remote communities have access to high quality experiences with children's books, donating thousands of books along the way and finding new ways for young readers to delight in the artforms of writing and illustration.

One notable change in our 2024–2028 Strategic Plan is the addition of a new value: joy. We know that reading can delight, excite, and enhance the lives of children and young people, and we are excited to share that in our communications, our publications and at our events. In our work, we believe it is essential to ensure that adults understand the far-reaching benefits of reading, and that we support and motivate them to nurture children's reading through guidance and encouragement. When we talk to children, however, we don't tell them that reading is good for them. We tell them that reading can help them to relax, to escape, that it can make them laugh, that they can travel through a book and become a robot, an alien, or anything else that can be imagined. Above all, we tell them that they are a reader.

We are proud that, in 2024, we reached 53,916 children and young people through our book-gifting and school engagement programmes. Without our members, funders, sponsors and donors, we could not do what we do. We are hugely grateful for your support and partnership, both financial and otherwise, as we work to spread the joy of reading to every child and young person on the island of Ireland.

Thank you.

Elaina Ryan, CEO Children's Books Ireland



Vision, Mission and Values

Our Vision

Every child a reader.

Our Mission

- to inspire a love of reading in children and young people on the island of Ireland, and to champion equitable access for all to excellent books
- to share our expertise and enthusiasm with the adults who guide and influence young readers
- to encourage schools and early childhood settings to build a positive culture of reading and reading aloud
- to support and promote authors and illustrators and connect them with their audiences through our work

Our Values



Excellence:

The people who make up Children's Books Ireland care deeply about the work we do. We are an energetic, creative and flexible team, and we take pride in maintaining an extremely high standard across all our work.



Connection:

Children's Books Ireland is at the heart of the children's book community. We nurture an ecosystem that is vital to children's reading and work in partnership with like-minded people and organisations towards our shared vision of making every child a reader for life.



Warmth:

We value kindness and inclusion within our team and when working with our partners. We are open, friendly and accessible in all our interactions and activities.



Joy:

We know that reading can delight, excite, and enhance the lives of children and young people, and we are excited to share that in our communications, our publications and at our events. Children and young people benefit significantly from reading, and while we raise awareness of these benefits with adults, we talk to children about enjoyment. We provide opportunities for young readers to have joyful experiences with reading and to delight in the artforms of writing and illustration.



Strategic Aims and Objectives

How do we go about achieving our mission?

1: To encourage a love of reading among all children and young people

We will bring readers together so that children can encourage each other and engage critically and playfully with books. Giving every child and young person an opportunity to become a reader gives them equitable access to the many benefits of reading, and opens up a lifetime of stories for all children regardless of their background.

2. To support authors and illustrators who make work for young readers

There is a unique value in children's literature from Ireland, made by our talented authors, illustrators, translators, poets, publishers and storytellers. We will nurture our community of artists throughout their careers and connect them with their audiences, so that young readers in Ireland can experience the richness and diversity of Irish society and culture expressed in literature. We will defend artists' rights to creative freedom of expression and readers' rights to access excellent books.

3: To share our expertise and enthusiasm with the adults who guide young readers

We will grow and strengthen our network of champions – people who can encourage children's reading as a family member or trusted adult, and those who have professional connections to children, including our invaluable booksellers and librarians. We will consolidate our reputation as the go-to organisation for independent advice and recommendations on books and reading at every stage from birth through the teenage years.

4. To embed reading for joy in the education sector

Developing a positive culture of reading for joy from early childhood through secondary school is the most powerful way to ensure that every child has the chance to become a reader, regardless of their background. We will share our expertise and enthusiasm widely and raise the profile of Irish children's books in this sector.

5: To be inclusive, effective and sustainable

Children's Books Ireland is a charity that lives our values every day, in everything we do. We value the many relationships which are the foundation of our work, and which support our ambitions. We work with integrity, in a way that is respectful, responsible and connected. We rely on many strategic partnerships to achieve our aims and to grow our impact exponentially.

2024 in Numbers

€143,479 paid to artists in 2024, a **49%** increase on the previous year

42,707 books donated to young readers across all our projects through schools and charities in partnership with corporate, philanthropic, government and publishing partners

a **20%** increase on the previous year

d Hole

Thomas Docherty



59,431 children and young people reached through our programmes

569 children were prescribed their next great read at **33** Book Clinics

Over **400** appearances in national and local media

Strategic Aim 1:

To encourage a love
of reading among all
children and young
people



Book gifting

Our book-gifting schemes enable us to get books into the hands of as many young readers as possible across the island of Ireland. By ensuring equitable access to rich, representative books, we can give every child the chance to become a reader. Research published in 2023 by BookTrust (UK) on the benefits of reading shows that children who read are more likely to overcome disadvantage caused by inequalities; are more likely to be happier, healthier and experience better mental wellbeing and self-esteem; are more likely to do better at school and make progress across the curriculum; and are more likely to develop empathy and creativity. Reading is more important for children's cognitive development than their parents' level of education and is a more powerful factor in life achievement than socioeconomic background. According to the OECD, finding ways to engage students in reading may be one of the most effective ways to leverage social change.

In 2024, our core book-gifting work was supported by a number of key partners, enabling us to reach children and young people in schools, areas of disadvantage, homelessness services, hospital settings and Direct Provision centres. We are hugely grateful for the support of An Post, Aviva, Benefact Group's Movement for Good Awards, Brown Bag Films, Cairn Homes, Davenham Switchgear, Enterprise Mobility, KPMG, PGIM, RTÉ Toy Show Appeal and Community Foundation Ireland, the Smurfit Westrock Foundation, The Ireland Funds and William Fry.

In numbers:

35,070 books gifted

41,189 children and young people reached through our book-gifting programmes

€66,200 paid to authors and illustrators for workshops and events through our book-gifting programmes

449 hours of author and illustrator school visits

237 schools across the island of Ireland were selected for our book-gifting projects, a **35%** increase on 2023

757 applications for support received from schools for 2025, a **57%** increase in demand

'We are tremendously grateful for the honour of being chosen to partake in this excellent initiative and it really did create a virtuous love of reading amongst all our pupils. It created excitement at home too and it was such a pleasure to see a book in every child's hands and witnessing my pupils getting lost in their books and their imaginations.'

- Helena Hyland, teacher, Athenry Boys National School

'We are a relatively newly established Educate Together school, with pupils from diverse backgrounds and cultures with many differing abilities. Our school is built on inclusivity, and providing a culture that is welcoming of difference and diversity so these books will be a wonderful addition to our class libraries.'

- Mary McDowell, Principal, Leixlip Educate Together National School



Every Child A Reader

Every Child A Reader is the vision of Children's Books Ireland and the name which encompasses our suite of school library gifting programmes. Our programmes include Every Child A Reader, which is our programme for primary schools; Everyone A Reader, the name for our secondary school model which is aimed at teenage readers; and the Robert Dunbar Memorial Libraries, named for our late friend and patron who was instrumental in the establishment of Children's Books Ireland, and who inspired so many to read children's literature. In 2024 these programmes were generously supported by donors who wish to remain anonymous, as well as Davenham Switchgear and the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal through Community Foundation Ireland.

In 2024, twenty-five primary and secondary schools received a combined 8,170 books under these programmes, as well as display materials, resources, training and a dedicated Champion of Reading – an author or illustrator who visited their school over a number of weeks to inspire creativity and encourage reading for joy. In some instances, notably in our three Toy Show Appeal schools, the students also received books to keep, helping to deepen the impact of the project and extend it into children's homes and communities.

In partnership with Davenham Switchgear, a leading Irish manufacturer based in Clondalkin, Dublin, we continued working with three local secondary schools on our three-year Everyone A Reader project. Our three schools are:

- **Deansrath Community College**
- **Coláiste Bríde**
- **St. Kevin's Community College**

Since commencing the programme in 2023, each school has received 800 new books, helping to transform the shelves of their school library and instil a love of reading in students. The selection of books is curated by the Children's Books Ireland team and participating students so that their interests are considered and crucially, reflected on the shelves of their school library. By the programme's completion in 2025, each school will have received over 1,200 brand new exciting titles across a wide variety of genres.

Data from the Growing Up in Ireland longitudinal study shows a worrying decline in reading rates in teenagers from the age of 13 with 53% of 17 year olds reportedly never reading. Our Everyone A Reader programme aims to support and motivate students and school staff to get excited about books and discover the myriad benefits of reading for joy. In our Clondalkin schools, assigned Champions of Reading, Aoife Dooley, Marie-Louise Fitzpatrick and Oisín McGann, have continued to visit their class groups, leading creative workshops and engaging activities to help embed a long-lasting love of reading in each school. So that we can measure the impact of this multi-annual project in this setting, we will continue to distribute school-wide surveys until its conclusion in 2025.

'The Everyone A Reader project has been an overwhelmingly positive experience for both our students and teachers. It represents a pivotal step towards instilling a love of reading in our students, aligning perfectly with our ongoing Reading for Pleasure initiatives. This initiative has opened up new opportunities within our school, providing a much-needed space for students to unwind and immerse themselves in the world of books.'

- Sarah McNamara, teacher, Roscommon Community College



Every Child A Reader: Reading Communities

In the summer of 2024 our Every Child A Reader: Reading Communities project came to an end. This project expanded the model of our year-long initiative and was funded by the 2020 RTÉ Toy Show Appeal and Community Foundation Ireland to last for three years. With this investment of time and resources, Reading Communities demonstrated the positive impact that well-stocked and supported schools can have on schools and pupils.

This bespoke programme was carried out in the following schools with dedicated Champions of Reading:

- **St. Brendan's National School, Myna, Mayo** with Kim Sharkey
- **Scoil Chroí Íosa, Newcastle, Galway** with Sarah Moore Fitzgerald
- **Scoil na Croise Naofa, Mahon, Cork** with E.R. Murray
- **St. Joseph's National School, Dundalk, Louth** with Tarsila Krüse

For the duration of Reading Communities, we worked closely with students to ensure the project was as student-led as possible and specific to the needs and interests of the entire school community. Our staff also guided students in their selection of a wide range of contemporary books for their new libraries so that every school had titles representative of modern Ireland and their diverse student body. The children conceptualised, voted on and developed the projects they wanted to work on, while their assigned Champion of Reading helped them bring their ideas to life and their love of reading to the surface.

An independent evaluation report was carried out by Dr Eemer Eivers, detailing the key learnings of this large-scale book gifting initiative, and taking into account the challenges of delivering such an extensive project during the Covid-19 pandemic. The findings indicated that each school developed more positive attitudes to reading with increased rates of reading for fun, talking about reading and borrowing books from the school library. Through reading materials that reflected the students and their frequent engagement with real life authors and illustrators, by the end of this project, children identified themselves as readers. The full, extensive report and executive summary are available to download from www.childrensbooksireland.ie

The Reading Communities project is a small scale success story that could, if supported or replicated by government, solve a nationwide need in schools. We will continue to advocate for a comparable school library programme, with sustained funding for books and qualified school librarians, to put reading for joy at the heart of school life.

in 2024, 1,081 books gifted and 49 workshops given by Champions of Reading and guest artists
from 2021–2024, 4,187 books gifted and €79,300 paid in artists fees

'I can see the children's confidence in their own creative minds growing through the access and engagement to the books, the insight to the creation of a book and the agency in their hands of this project. I can see that the access to this long-term creative engagement has instilled an inner trust and I'm sure we'll have planted positive seeds for these children going forward.'

- Kim Sharkey, Champion of Reading



Free To Be Me Little Libraries

We believe that every school deserves access to a well-stocked library where students can recognise themselves and learn more about the experiences of others, within the pages of a good book. Back in 2021 we created our *Free To Be Me: Diversity, Inclusion and Representation* reading guide, to celebrate diversity and inclusion through stories for young readers. Using this valuable resource, we launched our Little Libraries initiative, helping schools to replenish their libraries with rich and representative titles.

With the support of our like-minded corporate partners at Aviva, KPMG, William Fry and PGIM, and with the support of The Ireland Funds, Benefact Group's Movement for Good Awards and the Smurfit Westrock Foundation, we provided 48 schools with Little Libraries in 2024. Each school was provided with a diverse library of over 100 books and display materials such as posters, stickers and bookmarks. In ten of our schools, thanks to the Smurfit Westrock Foundation and Benefact Group's Movement for Good Awards, the students also received a book to keep.

In numbers:

48 Little Libraries gifted to schools across Ireland

8,647 brand-new, diverse and inclusive books donated

'Our library has been named "Adventures in Bookland" and your books have pride of place in the new facility.

The children of our school are a unique, diverse and engaged group of people. Your book selection mirrored that and already the books have been in high demand during the weekly class visits to "Bookland". We are extremely grateful and forever fortunate to be one of your lucky recipients.'

– Keith Joyce, Principal, Radharc na Mara Primary School, Galway



Enterprise ROAD Forward

2024 marked the third year of our five-year partnership with Enterprise Mobility under their ROAD (Respect, Opportunity, Achievement, Diversity) Forward initiative. The aim of this project is to promote book ownership and gift books with a strong message of inclusion and acceptance. *Wider than the Sea* by Serena Molloy was the chosen book for the partnership project. This debut verse novel features a dyslexic protagonist, enabling many young readers to see themselves reflected in the story. The book was also designed with accessibility in mind, using larger, well-spaced type and black-and-white illustrations by George Ermos. Dyslexia is a condition affecting an estimated 1 in 10 students in Ireland and through this partnership we wanted to raise awareness and celebrate neurodiversity. 134 schools and over 4,600 students across Ireland received a copy of this important novel.

We launched our 2024 programme at St. Philip the Apostle Senior National School in Clonsilla, Dublin with author Serena Molloy. On the day, pupils had the opportunity to talk to Serena and bring their own ideas and imaginations to life by illustrating on the Enterprise Mobility transport vans.

Since its launch in 2020, this initiative has gifted more than 10,000 books to children and young people in Ireland. Enterprise Mobility's ROAD Forward initiative represents a €50 million commitment over five years aimed at advancing social and racial equity in communities worldwide.

In numbers:

4,677 books gifted to students in **134** participating schools across Ireland; an additional **1,157** students (+33%) and **42** schools (+46%) reached compared to 2023.

'We are absolutely thrilled ... on behalf of the Sixth Class students in St. Colman's N.S. a sincere thank you. Your donation is gratefully appreciated and will help us as we continue to promote a culture of reading for pleasure by making books accessible to everyone in our school.'

- Aisling Walters, special education teacher, St. Colman's National School, Mullingar, Westmeath



KPMG Books for Birdies

KPMG has been a proud partner of Children's Books Ireland since 2017, supporting a number of excellent projects to help us towards our vision: every child a reader. Each year, we run two classroom-based volunteering programmes with KPMG staff in Dublin and Belfast. Based on our *BOLD GIRLS* and *Free To Be Me* reading guides, these programmes encourage children to have conversations about equality and diversity by engaging with excellent, inclusive books.

In June 2024 we welcomed the return of our Books for Birdies initiative with KPMG ambassador Leona Maguire. For every birdie scored during the 2024 KPMG Women's Irish Open at Carton House, along with every birdie scored by Leona during the 2024 KPMG US Women's Open, KPMG pledged to donate a children's book to local schools. Across the tournament, a total of 1,343 books were won by the players. KPMG augmented the overall donation which brought the grand total to 2,102 books.

Each of the 20 participating schools in this initiative received a collection of over 100 books, selected for their diverse characters and inclusive themes, with many featuring empowering stories of women in sport to further inspire pupils. We supported KPMG in choosing schools in Counties Kildare and Meath to receive these new libraries of brilliant books.

In support of this important initiative, Leona Maguire visited Leixlip Educate Together National School to present them with their new collection of books and celebrate yet another successful year of the Books for Birdies campaign.

In numbers:

2,102 books gifted to
20 schools in Kildare and Meath

'Books have the power to open up new worlds and possibilities, and I'm so happy to be part of an initiative that puts these powerful tools into the hands of young readers. It's especially rewarding knowing that my rounds at the KPMG Women's Irish Open translated into these books, and it's been wonderful meeting the students at Leixlip Educate Together National School and seeing their excitement.'

- Leona Maguire, professional golfer and KPMG Ireland Ambassador



Bookbag

Bookbag is a children's book-gifting initiative established by Niamh Sharkey during her term as Laureate na nÓg (2012–2014). The project is delivered in partnership with Brown Bag Films and aimed at schools in areas of disadvantage in Dublin. Bookbag ensures that every child in the school owns at least one book. Book ownership is linked to improved vocabulary, reading achievement and listening and speaking ability, as well as encouraging a habit of reading at home.

In 2024, the winning school was Scoil Íosagáin Boys' Primary School in Crumlin, Dublin. This small school expressed their need for books from more Irish artists and a better selection of titles to cater for the varied interests of their 72 students ranging from second to Sixth Class. The book-gifting team and representatives from Brown Bag Films visited the school in May to present 319 contemporary books to the students – 72 books to keep and 247 for the school library.

The books gifted were visually striking, entertaining and engaging; the type of book that will entice a child who has never thought of themselves as a reader. With thanks to Brown Bag Films, every pupil was also gifted a Bookbag which included an artist's sketchpad, drawing materials, bookmarks and stickers from Children's Books Ireland.

On the day, volunteers from Brown Bag Films led a large-scale Monster Doodle while illustrators Karen Harte and Alan O'Rourke held draw-along workshops inspired by characters from their books, the Milly McCarthy series and *Dinosaur Pie*. Later in the school term, each class was visited by Alan Nolan and Shane Hegarty, leading Irish artists whose books now feature on the shelves of Scoil Íosagáin's replenished school library.

In numbers:

319 books gifted to Scoil Íosagáin Boys' Primary School with **72** of these books to keep

'It was a pleasure to have the very talented team visit our boys and create some very special memories for them. The Monster Doodle activity and workshops inspired the boys to be creative and believe that they can achieve anything. As the saying goes ... "you have to see it to be it!!" Thank you so much for a fun educational event that will benefit our push on literacy here in the school.'

- Aoife Wrynne, Principal,
Scoil Íosagáin Boys' Primary School, Crumlin, Dublin



World Book Day 2024

Children's Books Ireland partnered with An Post to bring the joy of reading to thousands of children in need on World Book Day in Ireland, Thursday 7th March 2024. So that every child could join in the annual celebrations, we delivered boxes of brand-new books to children in hospital, Direct Provision centres and temporary accommodation with the help of fellow charity partners like The Society of St Vincent de Paul, NOVAS and Children's Health Ireland. We also gifted a little library of new books to BUMBLEance, providers of dedicated ambulance services for sick children, so that their young service users could enjoy getting lost in a good book.

The books donated were all created by Irish artists and selected for their warmth, excellence and joyful illustrations, guaranteed to bring a smile to children who needed it most on World Book Day.

- ***Fox & Son Tailors*** by Paddy Donnelly
– The O'Brien Press
- ***Milly McCarthy is a Complete Catastrophe***
written by Leona Forde and illustrated by Karen Harte
– Gill Books
- ***Rita agus an Ninja*** written by Máire Zepf and
illustrated by Mr Ando – An tSnáthaid Mhór
- ***The Hug*** written by Eoin McLaughlin
and illustrated by Polly Dunbar – Faber

In numbers:

3,150 books gifted to children across Ireland
in time for World Book Day

'Happy World Book Day! Huge thanks to An Post and Children's Books Ireland for their fantastic book donations. These books are bound to spark joy for the little bookworms in the NRH Paediatric Programme, who are currently on their rehabilitation journey in the Hospital. The average stay for children in the NRH is 3 months and this donation will bring lots of fun to the Daisy Unit.'

- National Rehabilitation Hospital



Christmas book gifting

In November 2024 we launched our annual 'Gift A Book' fundraising appeal. We asked the public for their help to ensure that every child had a gift to open and a brilliant book to call their own at Christmas.

We partnered with Irish charities such as Mosney Village Community Room, Donegal Travellers Project and Waterford Immigration Network to ensure that children in hospitals, experiencing homelessness or living in Direct Provision could all be given the gift of a great book and the chance to fall in love with reading.

We hand-picked a range of brilliant books that covered all ages, interests and genres, all of which were Irish-authored, -illustrated or Irish-published, including titles such as *The Golden Hare* by Paddy Donnelly, *Fia and the Last Snow Deer* by Eilish Fisher and Dermot Flynn and *Nina Peanut is Amazing* by Sarah Bowie.

Running a six-week fundraising campaign, we were delighted to raise €15,477 from generous public donations. This money will be put toward our 2025 Christmas book-gifting initiative, ensuring that we can continue to bring the joy of books to as many children as possible in Ireland during the season of giving.

In numbers:

2,470 books donated to charities in
15 counties across the island of Ireland

€15,477 raised during our
2024 Gift A Book appeal

'We gifted the children a book each with some goodies and they were thrilled with this! We are so very grateful for your generosity.'

- Niamh Walsh, Family Support Worker, Focus Family Resource Centre

'Thank you so much for this wonderful donation of books. We're extremely grateful and appreciate your thoughtfulness. These will bring so much joy to all our Christmas Mums and babies.'

- Fiona Molony, Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, County Louth



Reads and Rhymes Together with Children's Health Ireland

Reads and Rhymes Together is a Children's Books Ireland book-gifting initiative in partnership with Children's Health Ireland (CHI), which seeks to create communities of readers aged between 0 and 16, and support their families across Children's Health Ireland's acute hospitals. We know that parent- and guardian-led reading in hospital forms important connections in simple but meaningful ways, and together, we wanted to inspire a culture of reading for joy across the paediatric healthcare setting, encouraging patients and families to spend time together within the pages of a book.

This partnership was initially launched in 2021, inspired by author Deirdre Sullivan's personal experience, as Little Reads and Rhymes. In 2024 it was renamed Reads and Rhymes Together, and a new image was commissioned from Jennifer Farley. It aimed to support patients and their families in the Paediatric Intensive Care Unit through the power of reading. The partnership has grown and will continue to expand with the support and expertise of the Arts in Health team at CHI.

Our aim for this project is to help relieve stress and bring comfort to those in hospital through books and storytelling. To achieve our aims, we welcomed Irish author Eve McDonnell to the project in the role of CHI's Champion of Reading in the Spring of 2024. Working together with CHI staff, Eve and the Children's Books Ireland team encouraged and promoted reading as an everyday part of the creative culture in CHI.

In numbers:

1,316 books were gifted to patients in CHI, an increase of **466** books (+55%) since 2023

'After his last surgery we were so overcome with grief and worry, finding words of comfort were too hard so instead we read him stories from the books at the hospital. They were tales of happiness, bravery and comfort that allowed us to talk to our baby with animation, positivity and care. They provided comfort to him through the sound of our voices and distracted from our grief and worry.'

– Linda, mother of baby Arlo, a patient in CHI Crumlin

'In a hospital room, where reality can feel surreal, there is something spellbinding about the connection that unfolds at the turn of a page or with the rhythm of a rhyme. When you share stories with young patients and their families, you are opening far more than a book – you are opening hearts. To hope. To each other. To empathy. And sometimes, whether among mermaids and dragons or on distant planets, they get to experience, if only for a moment, their greatest wish: a sense of normality.'

– Eve McDonnell, Champion of Reading



Laureate na nÓg 2023–2026

Laureate na nÓg champions and celebrates literature for children and young people, inspiring generations of writers, illustrators and readers. Our seventh Laureate na nÓg is Patricia Forde. Her ambition as Laureate is to encourage wild creativity and imagination in the children and young people of Ireland, embodied in her chosen theme: ‘Samhlaigh! Samhlaigh! Making it up as we go along.’

After months of planning with the Children’s Books Ireland team, Patricia’s pioneering flagship project began in April 2024. The ‘Whole Wild World’ bus tour was a 1,500 km cultural roadshow, travelling from Malin Head in County Donegal to Mizen Head in County Cork. Joined by a group of 36 Irish children’s artists, a specially branded and brightly coloured bus stopped at schools, libraries, theatres, bookshops and cultural venues across nine counties during the two-week adventure. At every location, the bus and its passengers generated excitement, encouraged creativity and garnered quite a lot of attention!

Throughout the year, Patricia held ambassadorial roles for Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) Ireland as well as Irish Book Week in October. As part of the International Literature Festival Dublin, she developed a special event for children celebrating the art of storytelling: *The Search for the Story Bird*, with Alan Nolan. Later in the year, she attended Baboró Festival in Galway, where she delivered her inaugural lecture as Laureate na nÓg. Focusing on the chosen theme for her laureateship, Patricia discussed the importance of reading in a child’s creative development and the importance of immersive play in fostering the skills required to read and write creatively. The lecture is available as a podcast from Baboró’s website, www.baboro.ie.

For our *Recommended Irish Reads* 2024 reading guide, Patricia was the ambassador of the #SparkALoveOfStories campaign, championing the best of Irish and Irish-based authors and illustrators published throughout the year. At a very special event at Dubray Books, Grafton Street, Dublin, on Culture Night, she led a free storytelling and reading session celebrating the new guide with the help of a host of writers and illustrators.

In November, applications opened for the Laureate na nÓg Live Literature Performance Mentoring Programme. The fully-funded programme aims to support début children’s artists to connect with the wider arts community and develop their live performance practice with guidance from Patricia, ensuring the continued provision of excellent events for young readers across Ireland in the years to come. In January 2025, Patricia will welcome four début writers as mentees on to the scheme which will feature a range of creative and practical supports, training sessions and live workshops with industry experts until its conclusion in September 2025.

Laureate na nÓg is an initiative of the Arts Council. It is managed and delivered on Council’s behalf by Children’s Books Ireland, and also supported by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth. More information can be found at www.childrenslaureate.ie



The Whole Wild World bus tour

The idea for a bus tour down the Wild Atlantic Way came fully formed from newly announced Laureate na nÓg, Patricia Forde, in January 2023. Patricia had a very clear vision from that early stage – that the children and young people of Ireland, and the writers and illustrators who create books for those children, needed to connect. She was particularly conscious of those isolated places along the west coast of the country that don't receive frequent visitors, schools that may never have had a visit from an author or illustrator, and libraries or bookshops who don't get to host artist events.

After months of planning, Laureate na nÓg, along with artists and Children's Books Ireland staff, gathered at the Children's Books Ireland offices to wave the Whole Wild World bus tour off on Sunday, 14th April. Over the following two weeks, the bus covered more than 1,500 km on a route from Malin Head in Donegal all the way to Mizen Head and on to Kinsale in Cork. While every day was different, the most common schedule was to visit two schools or hold a large theatre event during the school day, then to hold an event in a library where possible in the afternoon and/or visit a local bookshop in late afternoon or early evening. As part of the tour, Patricia held a public event in her home town of Galway city, with a free Book Clinic onsite and a Monster Doodle activity that took over Middle Street. The event amassed a huge amount of interest with families and local media in attendance. Across the two weeks, we had expansive media coverage including Ireland AM and RTÉ Radio's *Drivetime*. The tour was featured extensively on a full episode of RTÉ's *Nationwide* dedicated to children's writers, illustrators and booksellers, with footage from our adventures in Dublin, Leitrim and Galway.

The tour ended in Kinsale on Saturday 28th April, but its legacy is lasting. We received hugely positive feedback from all involved in this project. A documentary crew from Piquant Media joined us along the route recording our events at Malin Head, Galway and Sherkin Island. The documentary had a preview screening at the Children's Books Ireland International Conference in 2024 and was selected for the Catalyst International Film Festival and The Fastnet Film Festival. It will be formally launched in September 2025, along with a full evaluation of the Whole Wild World bus tour.

In numbers:

36 children's and young people's artists involved

11.5 million media reach

2,000 books gifted to young readers

1,565 km travelled across **9** counties in Ireland

3,150 children and young people reached

'The thing that really took me by surprise was the overwhelmingly sense of being part of a collective. I think I hadn't realised how solitary I usually am as I make my way into schools and libraries. I probably never admitted to myself how shy I feel about signing books in bookshops! Suddenly, we were a loud, yellow-coated troop, wherever we went. We were invincible. And it felt amazing.'

– Máire Zepf, scríbhneoir



KPMG Reading Hero Award 2024

A core element of our annual KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards is the KPMG Reading Hero Award which recognises a young person in Ireland or Northern Ireland for their reading efforts.

Our KPMG Reading Hero in 2024 was 11-year-old Alannah O'Donoghue, a Fifth Class student from St. Patrick's Girls National School, Limerick. Alannah was nominated by her teacher, Clare Farrell, who recognised her student's unwavering determination and commitment to reading, and learning through reading. KPMG Partner Maria Flannery presented the KPMG Reading Hero Award to Alannah during the ceremony which was also attended her teacher, classmates and her proud parents.

In recognition of her reading achievements, Alannah was awarded a trophy, a €200 book token and her school also received a collection of brilliant books worth more than €1,000. In 2024 we received 119 nominations for the KPMG Reading Hero Award. To acknowledge these tremendous submissions we selected five runners-up who each received a €100 book token.

'From a young age, Alannah discovered the magic of books and the joy of getting lost in their pages. While others might breeze through texts, Alannah takes her time, savouring each word and immersing herself fully in the worlds created by authors. Her approach to reading is not about speed but about depth, understanding, and appreciation.

Whether it's deciphering difficult vocabulary or dealing with intangible concepts, Alannah approaches every book with a willingness to learn and grow.

- Clare Farrell, teacher,
St. Patrick's Girls National School, Limerick

'Reading gets me into the zone, it calms me. When I read it's like I'm living in the world of the characters, reading helps me escape from the stress of school and tests.'

- Alannah O'Donoghue, KPMG Reading Hero 2024



Book Clinics

Since 2012, the Children's Books Ireland Book Clinics have visited libraries, festivals and cultural venues across the island of Ireland, with our team of expert Book Doctors meeting thousands of young readers in need of a prescription for a new read.

Between March and November 2024 we partnered with the Department of Rural and Community Development to deliver a series of digital Book Clinics for children and young people residing in more rural areas across Ireland via Broadband Connection Points (BCPs). These points are public locations which were selected to receive high-speed connectivity as part of the National Broadband Plan with locations including community halls, libraries and enterprise hubs.

Throughout the year, we held 15 Book Clinics via Zoom with BCP partners in 10 counties. A total of 134 children met with our brilliant Book Doctors. To encourage a life-long love of books and reading, we also provided a Little Library of books to each of the 15 BCP locations we worked with, as well as bookmarks, stickers and helpful reading guides.

Thanks to the Department of Rural and Community Development, we also brought our Book Clinic to the National Ploughing Championships. We were delighted to attend Europe's largest outdoor event and advise lots of avid young readers and families who visited our stand. On Culture Night, our free Book Clinic was also set up in Dubray Books on Grafton Street, where we celebrated the launch of our annual reading guide, *Recommended Irish Reads 2024*.

In numbers:

569 children met with a Book Doctor and received a book prescription

540 books gifted as part of the Little Libraries in **15** Broadband Connection Points.

33 Book Clinics held, including **15** virtual and **2** as Gaeilge

1,080 reading guides distributed to families

5 new administrators added to the Book Clinic team

'Thank you both so much for giving us the opportunity to offer your Book Clinic to our community. Each of the parents and their children were blown away when they came out from their appointments. It was a wonderful experience for them and they thought it was brilliant.'

– Broadband Connection Point host

Strategic Aim 2:

To support authors and illustrators who make work for young readers



KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards 2024

The KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards 2024 shortlist announcement took place at the Crescent Arts Centre in Belfast on 7th February. Enthusiastic Junior Juries from across Northern Ireland, shortlisted artists and representatives from KPMG were all in attendance and enjoyed a discussion and on-stage draw-along with shortlisted illustrator P.J. Lynch.

In a long-standing partnership with International Literature Festival Dublin, the KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards winners were announced at a ceremony in the Speranza tent in Merrion Square on 22nd May. The tent was full with 640 guests comprising Junior Juries, shortlisted artists and their families, sponsors and funders as well as the wider children's books community.

Both awards events, which were presented by Rick O'Shea, were streamed live to an engaged online audience across the island with viewers in Wales and France too! The KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards 2024 were presented in partnership with our headline sponsor KPMG Ireland and generously supported by the Arts Council of Ireland and the Arts Council of Northern Ireland.

Book of the Year Award:

Clara Kumagai for *Catfish Rolling*

Honour Award for Fiction:

Brian Conaghan for *Treacle Town*

Honour Award for Illustration:

P.J. Lynch for *Three Tasks for a Dragon*
(written by Eoin Colfer)

Éilís Dillon Award:

Serena Molloy for *Wider than the Sea*

Judges' Special Award and Junior Juries' Award

John Dougherty and Thomas Docherty for
The Hare-Shaped Hole

In numbers:

383 Junior Juries representing
12,727 young readers

1,522 books gifted to **143** schools across the island as part of the awards, **+26%** on 2023 figures

2,650 junior jurors enjoyed 22 in-person or digital events with shortlisted authors and illustrators, **+25%** on 2023

A combined total of **1,115** children and adults attended the winners ceremony in-person and online

€26,279 was paid to artists in award prizes and event fees

'The entire class is in awe after meeting such incredible authors and illustrators. It was a dream come true for them, and the books from this year's awards will forever hold a special place in their hearts, as will the memory of that remarkable day. I have already witnessed some of our reluctant writers picking up a pen and seeing themselves as authors. My heart is bursting with joy! I wish I had the words to fully express the impact being Junior Jurors and attending the awards had on our class.'

– Laura Williams, teacher,
St Joseph's Boys National School, Rathkeale, Limerick.

'I loved watching the children talk about all the shortlisted books in their own words, they were so articulate and perceptive and I think that the Junior Juries' Award is a really special one for me. It was great that so many of the schools could attend and a pleasure to chat with some of the children and staff. I've been writing and illustrating for nearly twenty years now and yesterday was without doubt a career highlight, it really does mean so much to me.'

– Thomas Docherty, Judges' Special Award and Junior Juries' Award winner



Children's Books Ireland International Conference 2024 and Children's Books Ireland Annual Award

In September 2024 the Children's Books Ireland International Conference returned to the Light House Cinema in Dublin. A calendar highlight for many, our annual conference is a weekend-long celebration of the best in children's books and an opportunity to consider the impact, imagination and importance of books for young people.

Our chosen theme was 'Character Building' which carried a double meaning. Our speakers and attendees thoughtfully reflected on the importance of characters and character development as well as what builds character, resilience and strength, both on the page and in real life. The visual identity for the conference perfectly encapsulated the theme, using artwork by conference speaker Chris Haughton from his 2024 non-fiction book *The History of Information*.

International guests included David Almond, Samira Ahmed, Harry Woodgate, Chloe Savage, Fiona Woodcock and Nathanael Lessore alongside a host of Irish and Irish-based artists including Oein DeBhairduin, Sophie Kirtley, Tristan Rosenstock, Olivia Hope, Sarah Moore Fitzgerald, E.R. Murray, Tarsila Krüse and Laureate na nÓg Patricia Forde. Our popular New Voices panel continued as a regular feature, showcasing début artists across a range of genres.

The Annual Children's Books Ireland Award was presented to author-illustrator Alan Nolan, recognising his unwavering enthusiasm and dedication to the children's books community. Announcing the artist's win, Laureate na nÓg Patricia Forde described Alan as 'a champion of reading and illustrating and a natural leader of young people'.

In numbers:

29 guest speakers

231 in-person attendees and **36** online attendees

The conference met or exceeded expectations for **99%** of attendees

100% of attendees said that they would recommend the conference to a friend

'This conference made me so proud to be part of this community, my heart is full.'

– Conference attendee

'The Children's Books Ireland Conference gets better every year!'

– Conference attendee

'The #CBIconf24 was outstanding. A wide range of great, thoughtful speakers, lots of time to chat and mingle, and an atmosphere of kindness welcome to all. Bravo to all involved!'

– Conference attendee



Artists' Coffee Mornings

Our monthly Artists' Coffee Mornings continued as a fixture of the Children's Books Ireland community calendar. Held over Zoom and free of charge, these gatherings allow authors and illustrators from all over the island of Ireland, as well as Irish artists who live abroad, to connect. They provide space for new and established children's authors and illustrators to learn from each other, alongside expert guest speakers from the worlds of publishing and creative arts, including representatives from libraries, festivals, publishers and several children's artists.

January: Arts Council staff Sarah Bannan, Head of Literature, and Aisling Nic Artáin, Head of Irish Language Arts

February: Eve McDonnell and Sadhbh Devlin, talking about 'My Tabletop Museum'

March: Anna Carey to talk about the adaptation of her novel *The Making of Mollie* from page to stage at The Ark

April: Emma Larkin, author and Children's Books Ireland Financial Controller, on financial health for artists

October: Emma Walsh, Senior Client Manager from Alice PR

November: Lori Moriarty, librarian with Laois Library Service, on social media and online networks

#ProperBook

#ProperBook, our event for aspiring and emerging children's authors and illustrators, created in partnership with author Sarah Webb, returned in 2024. The event was held at An Taibhdhearc in Galway as part of Cúirt Festival and Laureate na nÓg Patricia Forde's Whole Wild World tour on 20th April. Guests included Patricia herself alongside artists Sarah Webb, Siobhán Parkinson, Niamh Sharkey and Dave Rudden, as well as agent Polly Nolan and publishers Matthew Parkinson-Bennett and Tadhg Mac Dhonnagáin.

In numbers:

6 coffee mornings held with **204** attendees

1 professional development event held with **22** attendees

11 artists were granted bursaries to attend the Tyrone Guthrie Centre

'I cannot thank Children's Books Ireland enough for the amazing opportunity. I met and got to chat with a lovely group of writers, illustrators and artists which was so encouraging. I am back home now with new energy, enthusiasm and ideas.'

– Lucy Kelly Desmond, author



Return of the Raising Voices Fellowship

Following the success of our 2022 pilot programme, we were delighted to announce the return of The Raising Voices Fellowship in November. This tailored programme aims to develop and support aspiring artists who make work for children and young adults and whose voices have been traditionally underrepresented in literature. Six Raising Voices Fellows were announced in February 2025 and the mentorship will run until November 2025. Each Fellow will receive a host of creative and practical supports to help them carve out a career in children's books. This includes one-on-one mentorship, detailed critique from industry experts, a tailored programme of events and workshops and a week-long residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig.

The Fellowship is led by a key group of literature organisations including Children's Books Ireland, Illustrators Ireland, Publishing Ireland, the Dublin Book Festival and the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig.

Tyrone Guthrie Centre Residencies

Following previous successful residencies, we were delighted to offer bursaries once again for Irish and Irish-based children's books authors and illustrators to attend a week-long residency at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig in 2024. These bursaries support a range of creatives from unpublished to mid-career. The residencies gift artists with the time and space to focus on their craft to the benefit of their burgeoning or established careers, complemented with a focus on creative exchange and collaboration.

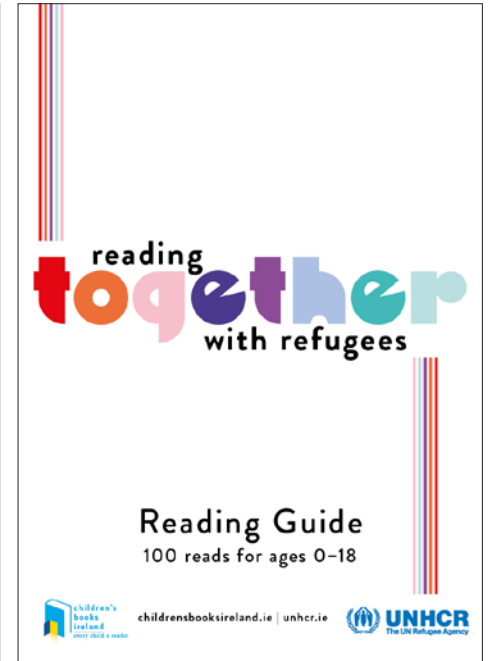
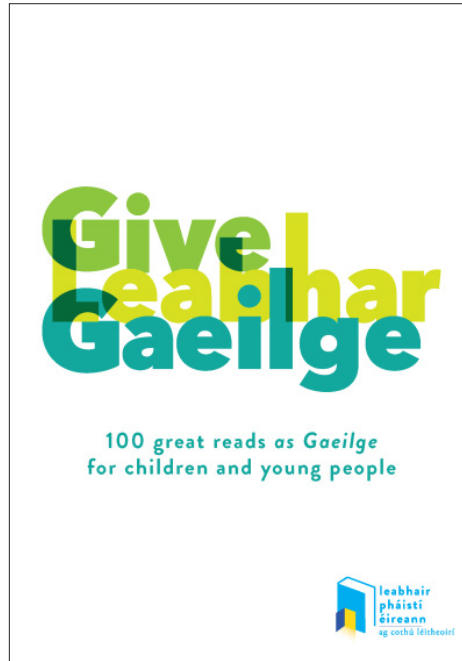
Bursaries were made possible with support from Roscommon County Council, Fingal County Council, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, the Tyrone Guthrie Centre, the Betty and Jenny Bursary (sponsored by author Rod Smith), and Laureate na nÓg.

‘Thank you for the absolute best week at the Tyrone Guthrie Centre I could’ve imagined. It was so valuable to have the time to dedicate to my WIP and with other children’s writers who were so supportive and helpful. Everything about the visit was amazing, from the inspirational views to the delicious food to the uninterrupted time to focus and edit. I was able to complete a second draft of my YA novel, something that likely would’ve taken three months in the real world between my day job, kids, and other household responsibilities. Thank you to everyone at Children’s Books Ireland for such a gift!’

– Alison Weatherby, author

Strategic Aim 3:

To share our expertise
and enthusiasm with
the adults who guide
young readers



In numbers:

- 3 new editions of *Inis* magazine printed
- 3 new themed reading lists published
- 4 new reading guides published
- 967 new books reviewed
- 224 volunteer reviewers with
- 24 of these as Gaeilge
- 3,575 leabhair Ghaeilge gifted to
- 125 schools as part of #GiveLeabharGaeilge

Recommended Irish Reads 2024

We launched our annual reading guide on Culture Night with a free event in Dubray Books on Grafton Street, Dublin celebrating our renowned culture of storytelling. The reading guide showcased the best books of 2024 from Irish and Irish-based artists spanning fiction, non-fiction, graphic novels, poetry and verse, in English and as Gaeilge and featured commissioned artwork by Donough O'Malley. The guide featured 100 book reviews suitable for readers aged 0–18 years as well as 100 more 'read also' recommendations.

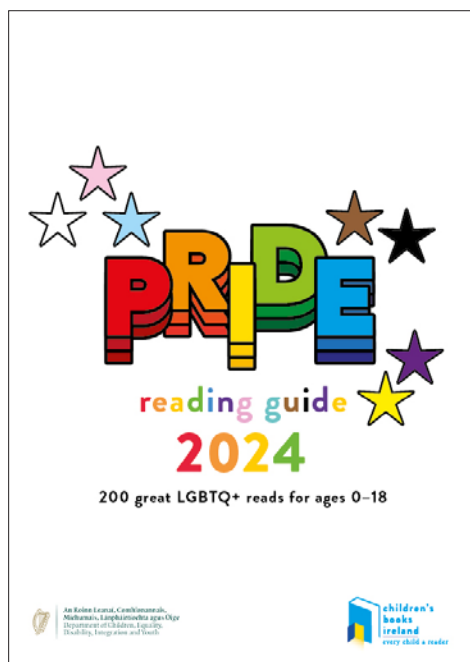
Ahead of its release, we encouraged our community to #SparkALoveOfStories by engaging with us online and attending our Culture Night event led by Laureate na nÓg Patricia Forde and ten featured artists, where they could pick up a physical copy of the new resource.

Give Leabhar Gaeilge

In February we partnered with Clár na Leabhar Gaeilge and Foras na Gaeilge to launch our guide to great books in Irish and an accompanying campaign entitled *Give Leabhar Gaeilge*. The guide highlighted 100 brilliant leabhair Ghaeilge for children and young people aged 0–18 with 25 titles selected as editor's picks. Ahead of Seachtain na Gaeilge, copies of the reading guide were made available in 30 libraries and 25 bookshops nationwide, as well as available to download for free on our website. To inspire a life-long grá for leabhair Ghaeilge, we also gifted a set of the 25 editor's choice titles to 125 primary schools across the country.

Reading Together with Refugees

We continued our longstanding partnership with UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, to mark Refugee Week Ireland 2024 (17–23 June 2024). *Reading Together with Refugees* is updated annually and aims to encourage compassion and solidarity with refugees through books. We collated a wide selection of stories from around the world for readers aged 0–18 to choose from. This curated guide featured 88 titles with stories about those who have fled conflict and made extraordinary journeys to reach safety. We teamed up with libraries and bookshops across the country to help us encourage young people to buy or borrow a book about refugees.

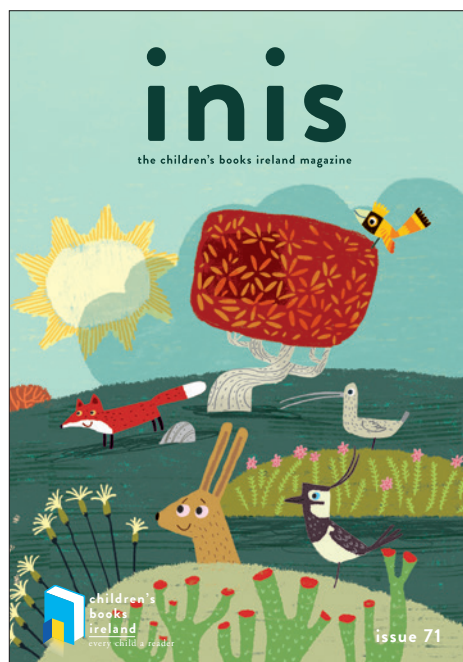


Pride reading guide 2024

In celebration of Pride month, we published our *Pride* reading guide 2024 thanks to the support of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth through the LGBTI+ Community Services Fund 2023.

This guide is updated annually to inspire children and young people to #ReadWithPride for the month of June and beyond. Our 2024 edition contained 100 LGBTQ+ books for ages 0–18 as well as 100 ‘read also’ recommendations for further stories to explore. Each of the 200 excellent books were selected for their portrayal of the rich diversity of LGBTQ+ experiences and cover a variety of genres and formats including picturebooks, fiction, non-fiction, verse novels and graphic novels.

In 2024 research conducted by BelongTo revealed that 79% of LGBTQI+ young people witness homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying in their school, with a further 31% feeling like they don’t belong in school at all. We believe it is essential that children and young people have access to excellent inclusive books and representative stories so that together we can build a better, more compassionate world and give young LGBTQ+ readers a sense of belonging, helping to combat feelings of loneliness and isolation. Our Pride reading guide is an essential resource and a showcase of the stories that can also help to build empathy, understanding and allyship in all young readers.



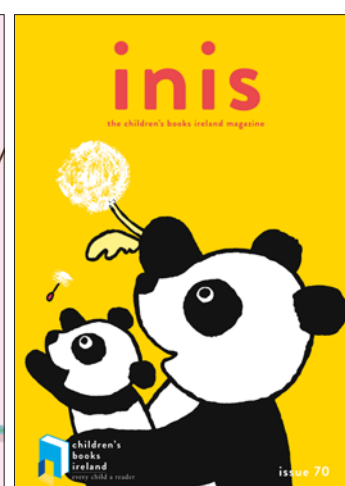
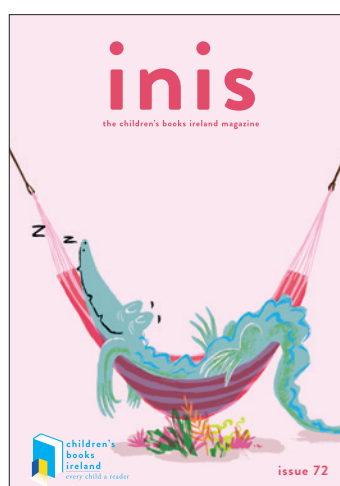
Inis magazine

Inis magazine and its predecessor, Children’s Books in Ireland, have been in print since 1989. It is the only publication of its kind in Ireland – a magazine solely devoted to children’s books and the wider world of literature for young people.

The three annual print issues each feature forty-four reviews of current or upcoming titles and the features section includes five articles, ranging from artist interviews to project overviews or a broader focus on a topic or theme. The first issue of 2024 was published in January and was also our 70th issue.

Since 2014, the covers of *Inis* magazine have showcased and celebrated artwork by Irish or Irish-based illustrators. Our three 2024 issues had cover images by Mary Murphy (*I Love You*), Brian Fitzgerald (*The Rattlin’ Bog* with Jessica Law) and Colleen Larmour (*A Crocodile Should Never Skip Breakfast*).

The publication of *Inis* magazine is made possible thanks to our brilliant team of volunteers, who read and review books for the printed magazine and for our website.





In the media and online

Throughout 2024 we had a powerful and sustained presence across media and social media, increasing visibility and awareness of Children's Books Ireland at every opportunity. As a well-established organisation in Ireland's children's books landscape we strive to maintain extensive coverage, showcasing our work and giving our expert advice and recommendations on books and reading for babies to teenagers, in English and as Gaeilge.

In 2024 we maintained our monthly book round up of reviews for readers aged 0–18 in the *Irish Examiner* Weekend supplement and online. We continued working with long-standing partners RTÉjr on monthly themed RTÉjr Book Club content and collaborated on their hit children's podcast *We Love Books*, bringing our recommendations to new listeners.

In line with our key projects and initiatives, we boosted the organisation's profile by securing regular slots for our CEO Elaina Ryan on TV and radio as well as in national and local print media. In 2024, we visited Virgin Media Television's Ireland AM studio five times, bringing the very best of Irish children's books to the screen. We also joined Oliver Callan in the RTÉ studio for two seasonal shows – one of which was entirely devoted to children's books with Elaina as the leading expert. Throughout the year we were delighted to secure national coverage with features published in *The Irish Times*, the *Irish Independent*, the *Sunday Independent* and *The Sunday Times Culture Magazine*.

Laureate na nÓg Patricia Forde and Children's Books Ireland were the focus of a very special full episode of RTÉ's *Nationwide* programme which was dedicated to children's books and aired on 26th April. The show centred around Patricia's pioneering flagship project, the Whole Wild World bus tour and emphasised the importance of books for children and young people.

In numbers:

44,614 followers across social media channels

Reached over **10,000** followers on Instagram

Over **124.1** million viewers, listeners and readers reached throughout the year

+400 pieces of coverage across national, local broadcast, print and online media as well as TV and radio

4,700 subscribers to our newsletters

116,000 new visitors to the Children's Books Ireland website

Strategic Aim 4:

To embed reading for
joy in the education
sector



Developing a positive culture of reading for joy

Developing a positive culture of reading for joy from early childhood through secondary school is the most powerful way to ensure that every child has the chance to become a reader, regardless of their background. Our strategic objectives in this area include powerful advocacy, professional development for educators at all levels and awareness-raising in the sector so that we can share our expertise and enthusiasm around Irish children's literature and reading promotion with a wide audience.

Our Education Outreach Manager, Dr. Becky Long, joined the team in late 2023 and has led the growth of our connections in the education sector. Through attending conferences, webinars and information sessions, we are actively engaging with educators and leaders across school and early learning settings across the island of Ireland.

'Our students often feel underrepresented in society generally, and some believe they do not belong in cultural spaces like libraries or theatres. To be represented in the books that they read would give them a sense of pride and a personal voice that they sincerely lack.'

- teacher, DEIS Secondary School, Dublin 8

Partnerships

Throughout 2024, we continued to publish recommended class reads in issues of the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) *InTouch* magazine. We also worked with the Oide English and Literacy team to offer advice and support to schools undertaking the WellRead Award. We continued our longstanding partnership with Gaisce – The President's Award as a Challenge Partner. In 2024, we held a webinar for President's Award Leaders and produced a new Reading Challenge Framework to support students who want to use books and reading use to help them achieve different Challenge Areas of their Gaisce award, namely Personal Skill and Community Involvement.

To celebrate International Literacy Day on 9th September, we teamed up with the Microsoft Ireland Dream Space team to co-host a live, virtual event for schools. The event was designed for upper primary and lower secondary students and focused on the power of literacy in its various forms including cultural awareness, digital literacy and creative thinking. The event was livestreamed to over 200 primary and secondary school students from 21 schools. Becky worked with Michael Barrett, Microsoft Dream Space Audience Engagement Manager to create a coding game based on Chibundu Onuzo's book *Mayowa and the Sea of Words*.



Sharing our expertise and enthusiasm

One of our strategic objectives is to upskill and support educators in early childhood settings, primary and secondary schools, particularly in relation to Irish children's books. We were delighted to partner with Dr Siobhán Morrissey of University of Galway on her application to the Irish Research Council's New Foundations scheme. The project, entitled 'Irish Children's Books in the Classroom: Enhancing Pre-Service Teachers' Knowledge of Irish Literature', was successfully funded and will be delivered throughout 2025. It will deepen our understanding of the needs and baseline level of knowledge of pre-service teachers in relation to children's literature, as well as delivering high quality professional development across a number of university settings. We also partnered with Dublin City University (DCU) Writer in Residence Dave Rudden to produce curated reading lists for student teachers in DCU.

In November 2024, Becky was a guest on two episodes of *That'll Teach You*, a popular teachers' podcast in Ireland, to discuss the work of Children's Books Ireland and the importance of reading for joy.

Throughout the year, we worked with a range of partners, including Oide, the INTO, the Teachers' Reading Group and Mary Immaculate College, to deliver webinars to upskill and support primary and secondary school teachers. We worked with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment to advise on new recommended texts for secondary school, and met with the Professional Children's Literature Network, a group of primary school inspectors who are passionate about children's literature. Becky joined the Children's Rights Alliance Education Advisory Group and the SPHE Network Committee. We also spoke and took display space at a range of education conferences, including those of INOTE (Irish National Organisation for Teachers of English), IPPN (Irish Primary Principals' Network), the Literacy Association of Ireland and the INTO Education Conference.

We also created three new resources to help schools develop a positive culture of reading for joy:

- *Creating a reading culture in your school*
- *Running a book club or reading group in your school*
- *Setting up and managing a school library*

In numbers:

6 webinars with a total audience of **245** primary and secondary school teachers

3 free to download resources created for schools





Advocacy: #ReadingRevolution

At Children's Books Ireland, we know that books make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people. In January 2024, our Education Outreach Manager was selected to take part in the inaugural Alice Academy for Activists – a free residential bootcamp for aspiring activists. The aim of the Academy was to upskill emerging activists from across the country by sharing expertise from the team at Alice PR and a wider network of communications experts and activists – ultimately fostering a vibrant network of progressive activists in Ireland.

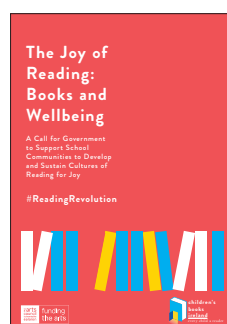
In May 2024, ahead of the local and European elections in Ireland, we called upon our community to actively engage canvassing candidates in conversations about the value and benefits of reading for joy for children and young people, because reading a good book should always be fun and rewarding. To support, we compiled a list of helpful questions in a bid to get reading for joy prioritised in the political agenda.

Since the 2022 Literacy Resources Grant, primary and secondary schools in the Republic of Ireland have not received any dedicated funding for school library books. Following the call for a general election in Ireland, in November 2024 we launched our #ReadingRevolution campaign to advocate for sustained public investment in our school libraries. We called on our community to use their collective voice and join the #ReadingRevolution, arming them with key information and sample questions to ask campaigning parties ahead of the election. Through a series of informative infographics, research and testimonials from teachers, our campaign evidenced the stark need for funding for

schools to meet even the basic standards of provision of reading materials and highlighted why reading, especially for joy, is so important.

In 2024, we recorded our highest ever number of applications for our annual book-gifting projects, with 757 schools submitting detailed forms expressing their need for access to new and diverse books. As we engaged with political parties ahead of the election, these stories formed the basis of our case for the incoming Government to invest in school libraries. We created a briefing document entitled *The Joy of Reading: Books and Wellbeing. A Call for Government to Support School Communities to Develop and Sustain Cultures of Reading for Joy*. As a result, support for reading for joy and school libraries was included in general election manifestos by Labour, the Social Democrats and Sinn Féin.

As we seek to embed a culture of reading for joy in the education sector, we will continue to work hard to influence policies and investment at government level. We will advocate for all children and young people so that they can develop a lifelong love of reading and allow all children equitable access to this cultural right.



Strategic Aim 5:

To be inclusive,
effective and
sustainable



Strategic Plan 2024–2028

In October 2024, we formally launched our Strategic Plan for 2024–2028 at LinkedIn HQ's Community Space in Dublin with an audience of members, donors, partners and friends. Led by our CEO Elaina Ryan and chair of the Children's Books Ireland Board, Madeleine Keane, we outlined our exciting plans for the years ahead which will support us in our vision: every child a reader. A specially produced video was screened, featuring illustrations by Karen Harte commissioned for the Strategic Plan, and voiced by broadcaster Rick O'Shea. Guest speakers, illustrator Tarsila Krüse and teacher Yvonne Crowley, shared powerful stories about the impact of our work together in primary and secondary schools.

Our community of donors

Our supporters and partners play a vital role in advancing the work of Children's Books Ireland. We wish to thank all of our socially minded government, corporate, philanthropic and individual supporters, partners, and funders for enabling us to bring the joy and excitement of reading to children and young people all over Ireland.

In 2024, 45% of our total income came from fundraising. Of this, 58.5% came from trusts and foundations, 37% from corporate partners and 4.4% from our community of Leading Lights (regular donors), once-off donations and from our Christmas Gift A Book appeal.

The Ireland Funds also generously supported our work through donor-advised funding, for which we are hugely grateful. We were also successful applicants to the Heart of the Community Fund, which contributed to the re-establishment of our Raising Voices programme, which is also funded by Dublin UNESCO City of Literature and the Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon.

In 2024 Children's Books Ireland was selected as one of only six recipients of Rethink Ireland's Social Innovation Regeneration Fund, a two-year fund created in partnership with the Department of Rural and Community Development via the Dormant Accounts Fund. This allowed us to leverage previously secured funding and will provide supports to revisit our business model and improve our financial sustainability.

Community Foundation Ireland and the RTÉ Toy Show Appeal provided vital ongoing support during 2024, both to our three-year Reading Communities programme and our Every Child A Reader programme.





We were also delighted to receive support from Smurfit Westrock Foundation which allowed us to bring Free To Be Me Little Libraries to ten schools.

2024 marked KPMG's sixth year as headline sponsor of the KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards, supporting artists and young readers all over the island of Ireland. We held our second volunteer day, where KPMG staff visited Junior Jury groups all over Ireland to discuss the shortlisted books. We continued our work together on the BOLD GIRLS and Free To Be Me classroom-based volunteer programmes. We also delivered our second year of Books for Birdies with KPMG Ambassador and professional golfer Leona Maguire, which saw little libraries of books donated to 20 schools in Counties Kildare and Meath following the KPMG Women's Irish Open at Carton House, Fairmont, in Kildare.

We continued our work with our partners at An Post, enabling us to deliver 3,150 brilliant Irish books to children in need on World Book Day. We were also proud and grateful to work with Davenham Switchgear, Enterprise Mobility, William Fry, Ecclesiastical/Benefact Group Movement for Good, Aviva, Cairn Homes and Brown Bag Films, all of whom helped us to get books into the hands of children in playful and creative ways.

Our community of Leading Lights – regular individual donors – are our champions and stalwart supporters, and we are so grateful for their generous support. Of course, we can't forget about the generosity of new and returning donors who kindly supported our annual Christmas 'Gift A Book' appeal, by donating the cost of a book to give to a child in need.

Children's Books Ireland has been part of the RAISE capacity-building fundraising programme since 2018. This programme of supports is run by OKC on behalf of the Arts Council, and includes a series of webinars on various aspects of fundraising, leadership and organisational policy-making, all with the aim of ensuring that organisations are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to resource their ambitions through fundraising.

We continue to be hugely grateful to Mary O'Kennedy and her team at OKC, and to the Arts Council, for these high-quality supports from the RAISE programme, which has been a vital factor in the growth and success of Children's Books Ireland. The impact of this programme has been nothing short of transformative, and it has allowed us to expand our services exponentially in line with our ambitions.





KPMG Volunteer Day

In 2024 we held our second volunteer day with the staff from KPMG visiting Junior Juries groups all over Ireland.

All volunteers were trained in how to deliver live events for children and young people by author E.R. Murray as well as the art of book cover design by Marty Cleary, Assistant Art Director at Walker Books. Every volunteer was provided with a comprehensive pack to assist them on the day of their session.

During these visits, volunteers and pupils discussed the shortlisted books for the KPMG Children's Books Ireland Awards 2024. Through a variety of fun and engaging activities, each volunteer supported our work at Children's Books Ireland and encouraged a love of reading in the students they visited.

In numbers:

KPMG Volunteer Day was held with
59 KPMG volunteers visiting
35 schools in 11 counties



'A huge THANK YOU to you and the team for organising such an amazing experience, it was absolutely brilliant! I thoroughly enjoyed it! Before joining KPMG Ireland, I spent 3 years as a Secondary School educator in Bangalore, India, so this opportunity was extra special and brought back so many wonderful memories.

The Senior Infants class was just delightful, they were all true 'Reading Heroes'! They were so engaged in the reading, sharing their thoughts, ideas, and even some fun anecdotes. The Book Cover design activity was a huge hit as well, and I was genuinely impressed by their creativity and representations.

Ms. Grace Kenny was incredibly supportive throughout the session, and we had a great time bonding over our teaching experiences and the different education systems around the world.'

– KPMG volunteer

Thank you for facilitating this opportunity.

I absolutely enjoyed the engagement with the girls, and was very happy with their participation and willingness to volunteer to read. I was also impressed that some of them were also keen to know more about the author, and their ideas for the book cover activity.

Overall a lovely session, as good as the weather outside! Thanks again and look forward to getting involved in the future.

– KPMG volunteer



Our international community

Children's Books Ireland is a proud, active member of EURead, a network of European reading promotion organisations who believe that reading is essential for full participation in today's diverse society. Founded in 2000, EURead's aim is to exchange knowledge, experiences and concepts, and to jointly develop new strategies for the promotion of reading. For more information see www.euread.com

In June 2024, CEO Elaina Ryan and Deputy CEO Jenny Murray travelled to Athens in Greece for the annual general meeting of EURead. Under the theme 'Promoting literacy in a changing world', the summit brought together leading experts from more than 15 countries, specialising in literacy, reading promotion, education, publishing and communications. During the forum, participants exchanged experiences and presented projects and initiatives for promoting reading at national and global levels. All EURead members also joined an open forum on the theme 'Literacy and Democracy in the Era of Technology and Information: Facts, Challenges, Strategies'.

The members of EURead meet regularly online throughout the year, and two sub-groups of the network meet especially regularly: the Global Network for Early Years Book Gifting and the Researchers' Network. Both of these groups encourage sharing of information and build an understanding of the international context for reading promotion, and Children's Books Ireland's Research & Evaluation Officer and our book-gifting team are regular participants.

As EURead members and representatives of Children's Books Ireland, Education Outreach Manager Dr Becky Long and CEO Elaina Ryan attended a conference on reading promotion in Leuven (Belgium) on 25th and 26th March 2024, organised by The European Commission in the frame of the second edition of the Day of European Authors. This initiative celebrates European literature and encourages interest in reading. It inspires younger generations to explore the richness of European literature. The objective of the conference was to foster collaboration between the book and the education sectors to tackle declining reading skills and habits among young people. Elaina moderated a panel including Dr Dirk Hasted – Executive Director of IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievements), Dr Tiziana Mascia – Adjunct Professor of Children's Literature at the University of Urbino and Representative of the European Literacy Policy Network (ELINET), and Valentina Stoeva – Founder and Chairperson of Detski knigi Foundation and Representative of EURead.

Dr Becky Long also presented at the 39th iBBY International Congress in Trieste, Italy, to discuss books, Irish classrooms and the best ways that we can support teachers to use new, diverse, inclusive and representative books in their practice. iBBY – International Board on Books for Young People – is committed to guaranteeing and defending young people's right to access books and reading, particularly in deprived and remote areas. The organisation is present in 82 countries around the world, and their mission resonates deeply with Children's Books Ireland's vision.



Bologna Children's Book Fair 2024

The Bologna Children's Book Fair is a highlight in the global children's book community's calendar, playing a vital role in raising the visibility of Irish children's books internationally. We were delighted to be amongst the 1,500 exhibitors in attendance sharing our knowledge of and our passion for the world of children's books in Ireland.

Children's Books Ireland co-ordinated Ireland's attendance at the 2024 fair on behalf of exhibitors, including Laureate na nÓg, An tSnáthaid Mhór, Futa Fata, Gill Books, iBbY Ireland, Little Island Books and The O'Brien Press.

H. E. Patricia O'Brien, Ambassador of Ireland to Italy and Arianna Whelan, Head of Cultural Affairs at the Embassy of Ireland in Rome, formally opened the celebratory reception at Ireland's 'Nation of Storytellers' stand. The reception was made possible through support from the Embassy and was attended by colleagues and fellow children's book-lovers from around the world.

During the Book Fair, our CEO, Elaina Ryan contributed to a panel discussion organised by EURead which focused on reading promotion and working in partnership across the sector to ensure we meet our shared vision of reading for joy in our young people. The panel was moderated by Daan Beeke of Stichting Lezen/ Network Manager of EURead, and other guests were Lovisa Fhager Logothetis of The Bonnier Family Foundation and Anna Zdrojewska-Żywiecka of Mamania/Relacja Publishing Group Ltd.

Ireland's presence at the Bologna Children's Book Fair was made possible thanks to the support of Culture Ireland and our annual reception was supported by the Embassy of Ireland to Italy.

'Our thanks go to Children's Books Ireland and Culture Ireland for displaying our titles so beautifully and encouraging passing interest and new connections so effectively. It was also great to be part of the broader Irish publisher collective and to meet the wider contingent of Irish authors and illustrators travelling to the Fair, who see the stand as a home from home, culminating in drinks on the stand with the Ambassador in attendance, which was a great celebratory moment for Irish publishing, and drew in many agents, international publishers and friends. All in all, a very successful second Fair for Gill Books, and one which will help us to build our international reach further in 2024 and beyond.'

– Venetia Gosling, Publisher, Children's at Gill Books



Inclusivity Partnership

The Inclusivity Partnership is a continuation of many years of collaboration between the School of English – Trinity College Dublin and Children’s Books Ireland, and seeks to explore diversity, inclusivity and representation in modern Irish children’s books.

Every year, the partnership invites proposals for M.Phil dissertation projects in the areas of race and minority group representation, LGBTQ+ representation, ageism, (dis)abilities, mental health, and gender. Our hope is that in time, this partnership will support in building a body of research on children’s literature which reflects the diverse and inclusive world of today.

The 2024 Inclusivity Partnership Awardee was Anastasiia Gostiunina, a student from the M.Phil programme in Children’s Literature at the School of English – Trinity College Dublin. Under the supervision of Dr Pádraic Whyte, she led an investigation into neurodivergent characters in Irish children’s literature.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy

In 2024 Children’s Books Ireland published our Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and action plan. At Children’s Books Ireland, we have been discussing and actively working on making positive changes in the area of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) over a number of years. We are driven by a genuine desire to be inclusive in all areas of our work, to remove or reduce barriers to participation and to increase our understanding of the issues and systems which contribute to exclusion. Our action plan lays out a clear roadmap on which we will report annually.





Fundraising

Supporting our Work

Children's Books Ireland is a well-established charity with an ambitious team, and we are determined to change lives through reading. Our work helps to level the playing field for those who do not have a culture of reading in their homes. We give expert advice on great books to families so that they can excite young readers. We also bring artists and readers together, creating unforgettable experiences and helping authors' and illustrators' careers to flourish. With your help, we can do even more for those who need us most, especially those experiencing disadvantage in schools, families and communities. Every gift, regardless of size, is sincerely appreciated by Children's Books Ireland as we strive to ensure that every child can experience the joy of reading.

Become a Leading Light

A monthly gift to Children's Books Ireland is a powerful way to support our work on an ongoing basis. Our regular supporters allow us to be responsive to needs as they emerge. Becoming part of this community of donors is an investment in bringing a love of reading to children and young people all over the island of Ireland. Become a Sunbeam, Lightning Bolt, Shooting Star or Luminary, each with their own level of impact and reward, or make a one-off donation.

Sign up today on www.childrensbooksireland.ie.

Join our Corporate Community

Our corporate and philanthropic partnerships are vital in continuing our mission to make reading a part of every child's life. We are proud to have won the Business to Arts Judges' Special Recognition Award in 2021, supported by Accenture, for our partnerships with An Post, Brown Bag Films, Community Foundation Ireland, Ecclesiastical, KPMG, Rethink Ireland and William Fry. If your company would like to make a donation or explore a partnership, please get in touch with our Development Managers, Áine O'Mahony and Emma Walsh, on development@childrensbooksireland.ie

Consider Leaving a Gift in Your Will

We know that not everyone has the capacity to give while living. By leaving a legacy in your will, you can leave your mark by gifting the joy of reading and improving the lives of children and young people now and for generations to come. We will always respect your privacy and confidentiality and will handle your gift with sensitivity and respect at a time that suits you. We are also happy to talk about gifts made in memory of a loved one, a special way to remember and honour friends and family whose lives were enriched by a love of reading.

Funders, Partners and Supporters/Maoinitheoirí, Comhpháirtithe agus Lucht Tacaíochta

An Post	Dublin UNESCO City of Literature	Respond
An Siopa Leabhar	Dubray Books	Rethink Ireland
An Táin	Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council	Roscommon Arts Office
An tOireachtas	Eason	RTÉ
Ards and North Down Borough Council	Educational Authority Northern Ireland	RTÉjr
Arts Council of Ireland	Enterprise Mobility	RTÉ Toy Show Appeal
Arts Council of Northern Ireland	ESB Energy For Generations Fund	South Dublin Library Service
Arts Office, Waterford City and County Council	Féile na Bealtaine	Smurfit Westrock Foundation
Aviva	Fingal County Council	SPHE Network
Baboró International Arts Festival for Children	Fingal Festival of Children's Literature	St Brigit's Festival
Belfast Book Festival	Foras na Gaeilge	<i>The Bookseller</i>
Belfast Children's Festival	Gaisce – The President's Award	The Gutter Bookshop
Benefact Group/ Movement for Good Awards	Garner Lane Arts Centre	The Ireland Funds
Bookselling Ireland	Google for Nonprofits	The Sunflower Charitable Foundation
Branar Téatar do Pháistí	IMRAM	Tomar Trust
Brown Bag Films	International Literature Festival Dublin	Towers and Tales Festival
Children's Health Ireland Arts in Health	Irish National Teachers' Organisation	Trinity Access Programme
Children in Hospital Ireland	<i>Irish Examiner</i>	Trinity College Dublin
ChildVision	Junior Certificate School Programme	Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig
Clare Art Office	Kilkenny Library Service	Tyrone Productions
Cork World Book Fest	KPMG Ireland	UNHCR – The UN Refugee Agency
Community Foundation Ireland	Lá Mór na Gaeilge	University of Galway
Crescent Arts Centre	LGBT Ireland	Vision Ireland
Cúirt Festival	Libraries Ireland	William Fry
Culture Ireland	Libraries NI	Words Ireland
Culture Night	Lorg	World Book Day UK
Davenham Switchgear	Mayo Library Service	Young at Art
Department of Children, Disability and Equality	Meath Library Service	
Department of Rural and Community Development and the Gaeltacht	National Book Tokens	
Dublin Book Festival	Oide	
Dublin City Arts Office	Oifigeach Pleanála Teanga Inis Oírr	
Dublin City University	OKC	
Dublin LGBTQ Pride	Póta Cafe	
		We wish to thank all of our socially minded government, corporate, charity and individual supporters, partners and funders. Particular thanks to our members, whether longstanding or new, and to our Leading Lights, whose ongoing support and generosity is essential to the work we do. Our supporters are fundamental to our success and play such an important role in furthering our goal of making books part of every child's life in Ireland. We also wish to thank all the children's publishers whom we work so closely with on a weekly basis: we could not carry out the work of Children's Books Ireland without their support.

Children's Books Ireland is the national charity and arts organisation that champions every child's right to develop a love of reading. Our mission at Children's Books Ireland is to inspire a love of reading in children and young people on the island of Ireland, and to champion equitable access for all to excellent books. We share our expertise and enthusiasm with the adults who guide and influence young readers, and encourage schools and early childhood settings to build a positive culture of reading and reading aloud. We support and promote authors and illustrators and connect them with their audiences through our work.

Continue the conversation with us at **childrensbooksireland.ie** where you will find more reviews, articles and up-to-the-minute news.

Tá sé mar mhisean againne i Leabhair Pháistí Éireann grá don léitheoireacht a spreagadh i bpáistí agus daoine óga ar oileán na hÉireann, agus tacú leis an gceart atá ag gach páiste teacht ar leabhair iontacha. Roinnimid ár gcuid saíneolais agus ár ndíograis leis na daoine fásta a threoraíonn iad agus a théann i gcion orthu, agus spreagaimid scoileanna agus suíomhanna luath-óige le cultúr dearfach a chruthú maidir le léitheoireacht agus léitheoireacht os ard. Cuirimid údair agus maisitheoirí chun cinn agus tacaímid leo dul i gcion ar a lucht léitheoireachta tríd an obair a dhéanaimid. Táimid ag súil le bheith ag comhoibriú le loveleabhargaeilge.ie ar 100 scothleabhar Gaeilge na bliana seo do pháistí agus do dhaoine óga idir 0 agus 18 mbliana d'aois.

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