



Primary School  
Curriculum

Curaclam na  
Bunscoile

# Drama

Arts Education

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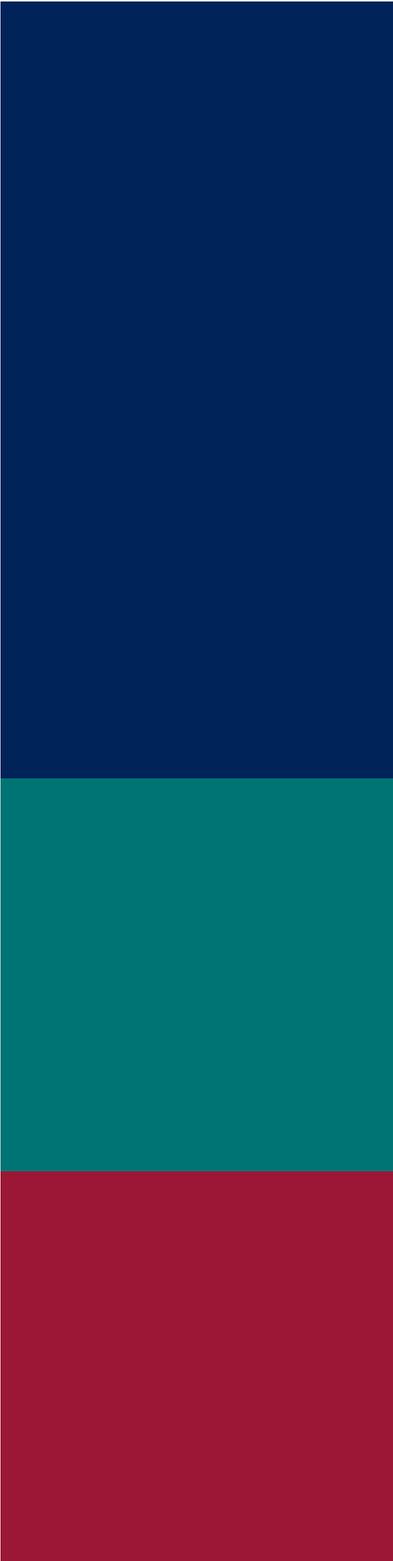


# Drama

Arts Education

Curriculum

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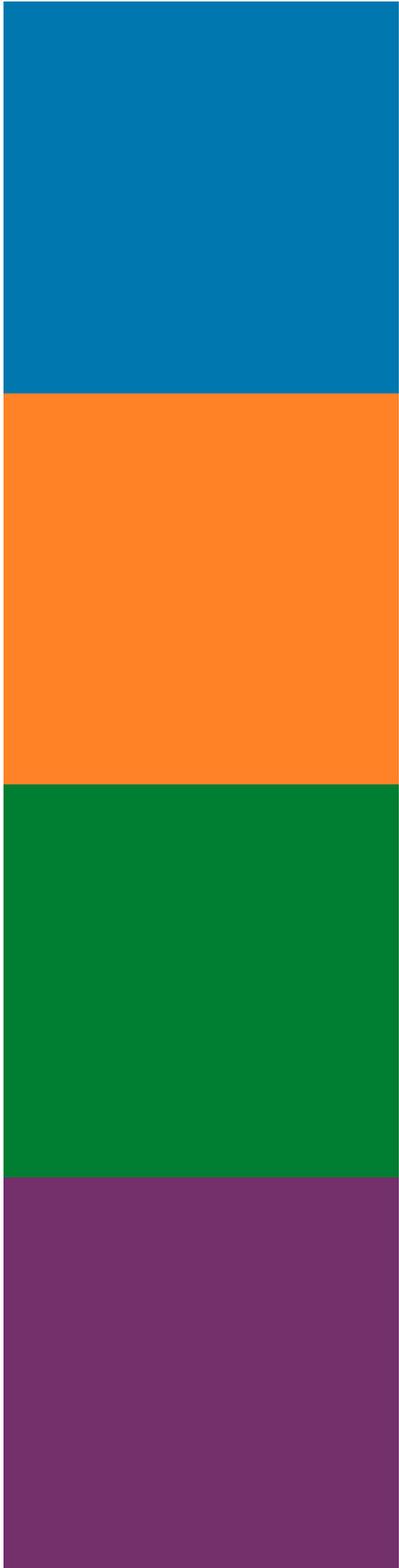
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# Introduction



# Arts education

The arts are organised expressions of ideas, feelings and experiences in images, in music, in language, in gesture and in movement. They provide for sensory, emotional, intellectual and creative enrichment and contribute to the child's holistic development. Much of what is finest in society is developed through a variety of art forms which contribute to cultural ethos and to a sense of well-being.

Arts education enables the child to explore alternative ways of communicating with others. It encourages ideas that are personal and inventive and makes a vital contribution to the development of a range of intelligences. A purposeful arts education at primary level is life-enhancing and is invaluable in stimulating creative thinking and in promoting capability and adaptability. It emphasises the creative process and so ensures that the child's work is personal and has quality. Attempts at artistic expression are valued, self-esteem is enhanced, spontaneity and risk-taking are encouraged, and difference is celebrated. It is this affirming aspect of the creative arts that makes participation such a positive experience. Arts education is integral to primary education in helping to promote thinking, imagination and sensitivity, and arts activities may be a focus for social and cultural development and enjoyment in school.

Arts education encompasses a range of activities in the visual arts, in music, in drama, in dance and in literature. These activities and experiences help the child to make sense of the world; to question, to speculate and to find solutions; to deal with feelings and to respond to creative experience.

## The arts education curriculum

The arts education curriculum provides for a balance between expression and the child's need to experience and respond to the visual arts, to music and to drama. Dance is outlined within the physical education curriculum, and the contribution that literature makes to the emotional and imaginative development of the child is described within the language curricula.

The visual arts curriculum comprises interrelated activities in *making art* and in *looking at and responding to art*. It presents a range of activities in perceiving, exploring, responding to and appreciating the visual world. Perceiving involves looking with a awareness and understanding of the visual elements and their interplay in the environment and in art works.

This awareness is fundamental to the development of visual expression and to the child's personal response to creative experience. Making art involves two and three-dimensional work in a range of media.

Appreciating promotes understanding of the qualities inherent in art works and aesthetic enjoyment. In developing the programme, the expressive or making activities are balanced with opportunities to see and to make a personal response to visual art forms of different styles, periods and cultures. Regional craft traditions and their modern developments, as part of the national heritage, are among those art forms.

The music curriculum comprises *listening and responding*, *performing* and *composing* activities. Focused listening is emphasised, both for its sheer enjoyment potential and for its essential role in composing and performing. The child is encouraged to listen with attention to sounds in the environment and to become gradually aware of how sound is organised in music. Performance incorporates a balance of singing and instrumental playing of his/her own work and the work of others. Ways of using sound are explored in composing, both with the voice and with a widening range of musical instruments. In the development of the programme, performance is balanced with opportunities to hear and to make a personal response to music of different styles, periods and cultures, including the national repertoire in its varied national and regional forms. Interrelated activities for listening, performing and composing are suggested in the curriculum content.

The drama curriculum comprises interrelated activities which explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding. It explores themes and issues, creates a safe context in which to do so, and provides for opportunities to reflect on the insights gained in the process. It draws on the knowledge, interests and enthusiasm of the child. In drama, the child explores the motivations and the relationships between people that exist in a real, imagined or historical context, to help him/her understand the world. The child is encouraged to make decisions and to take responsibility for those decisions within the safe context of the drama.

Dance provides the child with opportunities to organise and develop his/her natural enjoyment of expressive movement in dance form. Through dance, the child is encouraged to explore and experiment with a variety of body movements and to communicate a range of moods and feelings. The dance programme comprises activities in the exploration,

creation and performance of dance and in developing understanding of dance forms.

Through literature, the child is guided to explore the world of the imagination and to discover how language brings it to life. Expressive language, both oral and written, is fostered for its enjoyment value and to help develop aesthetic awareness.

## Aims

The aims of arts education are

- to enable the child to explore, clarify and express ideas, feelings and experiences through a range of arts activities
- to provide for aesthetic experiences and to develop aesthetic awareness in the visual arts, in music, in drama, in dance and in literature
- to develop the child's awareness of, sensitivity to and enjoyment of visual, aural, tactile and spatial environments
- to enable the child to develop natural abilities and potential to acquire techniques, and to practise the skills necessary for creative expression and for joyful participation in different art forms
- to enable the child to see and to solve problems creatively through imaginative thinking and so encourage individuality and enterprise
- to value the child's confidence and self-esteem through valuing self-expression
- to foster a sense of excellence in and appreciation of the arts in local, regional, national and global contexts, both past and present
- to foster a critical appreciation of the arts for personal fulfilment and enjoyment.

# Drama

There are strong elements of make-believe in all children's play. This make-believe helps the child to test out his/her hypotheses about what the world is like and how it might feel to have certain experiences. It is fuelled by inquisitiveness and a desire to think about possibilities and concepts through the medium of action. The process by which this is done is the same process as that by which drama is made for all levels and ages. The primary task of the teacher of drama, therefore, is to preserve and encourage this desire to make-believe while at the same time extending it to other areas of life and knowledge. In this way drama can assist in the fulfilment of the child's current cognitive and affective needs and in providing for his/her future personal, social, emotional and intellectual development.

We meet drama most frequently in the theatre, on television or in the cinema, and we associate it with performance, costumes, setting and stages. Similarly, in school we often associate drama with script, rehearsal, voice production and the display of acting talent. This type of drama has certain benefits in that it increases children's self-confidence, gives them the opportunity to express themselves in public and allows them the opportunity of appearing on stage. However, it represents only a part of the rich learning and developmental experience that drama has to offer.

This curriculum will not dwell on the display element of drama but will, rather, emphasise the benefits to be gained from the process of exploring life through the creation of plot, theme, fiction and make-believe. Drama used in this way is called classroom drama or process drama.

The field that drama can explore is as wide as life itself, and the areas of the exploration can be derived from the content of other curricula or from any other aspect of life that interests and concerns the children or the teacher. Examining these topics through drama will involve children in such activities as

- the spontaneous making of drama scenes (sometimes called improvisation)
- entering into other lives and situations
- engaging with life issues, knowledge and themes through drama
- honing and shaping drama scenes for the purpose of communicating them to others

- living through a story, making it up as they go along, solving problems in the real and fictional worlds, co-operating with others, and pooling ideas
- thinking about and discussing the patterns in life so that the outcome of encounters and plots will reflect their perception of how life is or might be.

All of this can take place at a level suitable to the age of the child. However complex the material may seem, the child, at any level, will find his/her own understanding and ways of dealing with it.

Because drama is a holistic activity it is difficult to separate the form from the content, the affective from the cognitive, the social development from the personal. Nevertheless, it can be said that its educational outcomes derive from two sources:

- the knowledge and insights gained from bringing the child's experience to bear on the examination of a particular aspect of life through drama
- the personal skills, social skills and drama skills that must be encouraged if the class is to enter effectively into and create the world of the drama.

These skills are as natural to the younger child as playing and need only careful support and nurturing to extend them into continuing to serve the child's education. It requires primarily that the teacher adopts the role of facilitator and acts like a good guide in the forest, pointing out the possibilities of certain directions and delights but leaving much of the responsibility for the exploration, and its enjoyment, to the child.

### An Ghaeilge agus an curaclam dr ma ochta

This curriculum will be followed in English in schools where English is the normal medium of instruction and in Irish in scoileanna l n-Ghaeilge and scoileanna Gaeltachta. However, at every level some Irish-language exemplars are included, so as to remind the teacher that in schools where English is the medium of instruction Irish-language teaching can be woven into the drama and that, through drama, facility with Irish can achieve the fluency and registers of life. In this way the drama curriculum complements the communicative approach to language learning inherent in the Gaeilge curriculum.

## The subject matter of drama

The learning objectives in the curriculum are all drama-related. Drama, however, cannot exist without exploring some content, whether simple or sophisticated. The exemplars given in the three strand units indicate the kind of content to be examined through the fictional lens of the drama. The subject matter, whether taken from other curriculum areas or from life in general, will reflect the needs, concerns and interests appropriate to the ages and abilities of the individual children in any particular class.

## The drama curriculum and teacher guidelines

The learning benefits of drama in the classroom spring from the process of children making drama. The product of the drama lesson is, indeed, the learning that accrues to the child through that process, as well as the actual drama that results from it. This gives a special importance to teacher guidelines for drama. They should be seen as complementary to the curriculum and the means through which the teacher can maximise its educational potential. Teachers, therefore, are urged to use the curriculum and the guidelines side by side as interdependent teaching resources.

## Aims

The aims of the drama curriculum are

- to enable the child to become drama literate
- to enable the child to create a permanent bridge between make-believe play and the art form of theatre
- to develop the child's ability to enter physically, emotionally and intellectually into the drama world in order to promote questing, empowering and empathetic skills
- to enable the child to develop the social skills necessary to engage openly, honestly and playfully with others
- to enable the child to co-operate and communicate with others in solving problems in the drama and through the drama
- to enable the child to understand the structures and modes of drama and how they create links between play, thought and life
- to enable the child to acquire this knowledge of drama through the active exploration of themes drawn from life (past and present), whether they have their source in other curriculum areas or in general areas relevant to the child's life
- to enable the child to begin the process of translating a knowledge of drama into the active exploration of life themes from drama literature, leading to the appreciation of world drama culture
- to form the criteria with which to evaluate the drama texts, written or performed, to which he/she is continually exposed.

## Broad objectives

When due account is taken of intrinsic abilities and varying circumstances, the drama curriculum should enable the child to

- develop the ability to enter physically, mentally and emotionally into the fictional drama context and discover its possibilities through co-operation with others
- develop empathy with and understanding of others and the confidence needed to assume a role or character
- experience and create an atmosphere where ideas, feelings and experiences can be expressed, where conflict can be handled positively, and life situations explored openly and honestly
- develop personal adaptability, spontaneity, the ability to co-operate, verbal and non-verbal skills, and imagination and creativity, in order to ensure that the drama text reflects real life in a fresh and valid way
- develop the ability to decide what course is likely to lead to significant drama action
- develop the ability to steer the drama towards areas that are likely to lead, through whatever genre, to insights into the subject matter to be explored
- develop the ability to co-operate with others in solving, out of role, the problems that are presented in making the drama
- develop the ability to co-operate with others, in role, in keeping the drama alive, in creating context, and in exploring the problems that are presented in making the drama
- develop the ability to use drama to promote or express a view on a subject on which he/she may have strong views or feelings
- develop the ability to use drama to examine and explore unfamiliar material so as to reach an understanding of the patterns, meanings and concepts contained in it
- develop concern, curiosity and understanding of the increasingly sophisticated patterns that comprise drama content and of the increasingly refined insights that can flow from it
- use drama to explore actively the human aspect of all learning as a means of curricular integration

- become aware of subtexts, which manifest themselves involuntarily, in drama and in life
- begin to develop, through active story-making in drama, an appreciation of plot and theme so that these can form the basis of an understanding of drama literature and how it relates to text-making in a specific time and place
- begin to be able to discern the covert or overt messages in drama texts, ranging from advertising to Shakespeare, through becoming aware of how values and attitudes are woven into drama
- begin to develop the ability to assess critically the validity of the meanings hidden in drama texts and what can be learned from them.

## Explanatory notes

The exemplars given in the curriculum are merely suggestions that may help to clarify the content objectives. These have a number of contexts. Some have already been used in actual drama activities and the teacher may have to infer a context for them. In others the context is obvious. Some others are illustrated more extensively in the descriptions of successful drama activities in the teacher guidelines.

The exemplars are chosen to demonstrate that drama draws its content from the full range of human experience. Many of them are in fact drawn from lessons already taught which had been so framed that issues of morality, violence, life and death were being explored in an active and reflective way. The inclusion of exemplars such as these reminds us that drama often enters the realm of the mythic and the archetypal in order to achieve distance from social or personal issues and to provide a lively focus for pupils' exploration. Furthermore, it affords children a valuable perspective that will be a counterbalance to the trivialisation of such content in so many films and television programmes to which they are exposed.

The word drama is used in three contexts in the drama curriculum and teacher guidelines, as follows:

- drama refers to the widest generally accepted meaning of the word
- a drama refers to a specific drama activity in any form or genre
- the drama refers to a drama activity on the classroom floor.

A number of terms are used and a number of concepts are referred to in both the curriculum and the guidelines that may be unfamiliar to teachers. These are explained in the glossaries in the documents.

# Infant classes

# Overview

infant classes

## *Strand*

Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

## *Strand units*

Exploring and making drama

Reflecting on drama

Co-operating and communicating in making drama

## *Prerequisites for making drama*

Content

The fictional lens

Creating a safe environment

## *Elements of drama*

Belief

Role and character

Action

Place

Time

Tension

Significance

Genre

## Strand: Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

### Strand unit Exploring and making drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- develop the instinct for make-believe play into drama
  - move from dressing-up play into making dramas about the dressed-up characters*
  - move from playing at being a rabbit in a warren to becoming one of the rabbits in the group who has to find a way of dealing with a fox who keeps interrupting their grazing*
  - be one of a group of toys in the shop when the owner comes and tells them that he/she will have to sell the shop or sell one of them*
  - move from playing a chasing game to being tigers playing the same game, and thence into a drama about tigers that will retain the same energy as the original game*
- develop the ability to play in role as an integral part of the action
  - adopt the role of the helper of the bear who wants to climb the slippery slope*
  - adopt the role of one of the children whom the lion asks to be his friends*
  - take on different roles in a puppet drama*
  - in a drama about making a suitable village for tigers, be a person who wants, for example, a playground for baby tigers*
- experience how the use of space and objects can help to create the reality of the make-believe world
  - a table and chair represent a king's or queen's throne*
  - a ruler becomes a saw or a magic wand*
  - imagine what is happening in a certain space if chairs and objects are arranged in a certain way*
  - sheets of paper become stepping-stones across a stream.*
- experience how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present dramatic action
  - the rabbits' previous experience of the fox chasing them, together with their desire to be safe, forces them to think about what they must do*
  - the children wanting to visit an bh b g bhreite in hospital have to check the visiting hours, so they look up the telephone number and ring the hospital*
  - the children, knowing that the elf has always been afraid of the dark and wishing him not to be afraid in the future, offer to help him to go to the wizard, who will cure him*

- develop awareness of how he/she, as part of a group, helps to maintain focus in the dramatic action

*concentrate, with the group, on convincing the cowardly wizard that the frog will not harm him/her*

*in a drama about a mountain rescue, concentrate on helping the whole group to follow the leader over the stepping-stones without anyone falling in*

*together with the other children decide, by concentrating on listening to the sounds of animals in the woods, whether it is safe to leave the tent*

*while making get-well cards for an bh b g bhreite the teacher keeps the focus on b b g by telling the children about his/her own visit to the hospital*

- develop awareness of tension in the drama

*if the bear cannot go up the slippery slope, he/she will not be able to rescue the stranded penguin*

*if one person (represented by a coat) falls into the stream, he/she, together with the group, will have to abandon the journey*

*a 'friendly' stranger offers sweets to him/her and to other members of the group, who decide whether or not to take them.*

## Strand unit      Reflecting on drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- develop the ability to reflect on the action as it progresses
  - speculate whether he/she and the other children could have persuaded the old woman to give them bread if they had been nicer to her*
  - in a drama about bears going to school, consider what bears should put in their schoolbags in the morning*
  - reflect on appropriate behaviour when visiting people in hospital, discussing and demonstrating how we show that we care about the person who is sick*
- experience the relationship between story, theme and life experience
  - in the drama about the tiger village, become one of the children who has to defend his/her plan when the chief tiger (the teacher in role) says that it will not serve the tigers' purpose*
  - show the lion who can't make friends some of the strategies that the child uses in making friends*
- share insights gained while experiencing the drama
  - tell how he/she felt when the fairy had to walk in the snow without shoes*
  - tell if mother or father would do things differently from one of the characters in the drama.*

## Strand unit      Co-operating and communicating in making drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- develop the ability, out of role, to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

*co-operate with others, in small groups, in making a scene between puppets*

*contribute ideas on where we should place each burrow in the warren, where the green area should be, and where we should have paths through the briars*

*in a play about an ark, take turns making the sound of his/her animal*

- develop, in role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

*contribute ideas about what has to be done if this wet night must be spent on the hillside*

*help others to decide how best to find a way out of the forest*

*as rescuers, help the others to decide which songs they could sing for the king or queen so that he/she will not notice the prisoner being released*

*mar dhaoine at ag dul go dt an t-oile n, abair na rannta agus na hamhr in a sh s idh an b d ir.*

First  
and second  
classes

# Overview

first and second classes

## *Strand*

## *Strand units*

Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

Exploring and making drama

Reflecting on drama

Co-operating and communicating in making drama

## *Prerequisites for making drama*

Content

The fictional lens

Creating a safe environment

## *Elements of drama*

Belief

Role and character

Action

Place

Time

Tension

Significance

Genre

## Strand: Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

### Strand unit Exploring and making drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- use the ability to play at make-believe to enter fully into participation in drama

*moving from a game with blindfolds into a drama about children who were struck blind by the wicked witch*

*create circus acts for the circus owner who has lost his/her circus acts, and which must be good enough to fool the cross king or queen*

*react as one of a group of snowmen or snowwomen playing, singing and dancing while people are asleep, and who is told by Jack Frost that the sun will soon be here*

- use his/her emerging awareness of the differences in people in order to begin to develop an understanding of the relationship between role and character

*increase audibility and volume when talking to the man at the toll bridge who is hard of hearing*

*play out the scene where a dealer convinces Jack that he should sell the cow he loves for a bag of beans, exploring what kind of person the dealer is and what kind of person Jack is*

*in an alternative working of the same story, play out the scene where Jenny meets the giant's wife for the first time and the giant's wife tells her about how hard the giant is to live with*

*take a role in a 'presentation' for people from China who want to see what life is like here in Ireland*

- experience how context is built and a drama reality created through the use of space and objects

*set out different objects to represent aspects of the room in which the camogie or football team meets*

*use various objects to signal the different individual compartments in the rabbit warren*

*a scarf round the neck is taken as the royal robe, which passes from the king or queen to the pauper when they want to exchange places for the day*

- experience how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present dramatic action

*the knowledge that the princess has been imprisoned in the castle and the children's desire to get her out make them negotiate with the gatekeeper*

*because the shepherds and their wives have been warned that innkeepers are likely to exploit them, they treat this innkeeper warily*

*the animals, knowing that some of the wilder animals have eaten smaller animals, go to Noah to ask him to devise the 'Rules of the Ark'*

- develop the ability to help maintain the focus in the dramatic action

*focus on helping to solve the mathematical problems the gatekeeper sets*

*how can we help the peacock who has lost the ability to spread his tail?*

*the capital letters and small letters are arguing with each other but have to bury their differences when they hear there is a computer coming who wants to make them his/her slaves*

*mar bhall den ghr pa at ag iarraidh an mhuc dhra ochta a fhil n bhfeirm, ceistigh an bhean a bhfuil mioneolas aici ar obair na feirme*

- begin to see how tension adds to drama the suspense that ensures the interest of the participants

*decide with the group whether to give a man directions to the church and what he wants to do there*

*in the same drama, decide whether to tell the garda that we gave him directions to the church*

*in a drama about friendship and exclusion, see how the group behaves when somebody new joins them*

*c ard a tharla onn nuair a chasann an garda a labhra onn Gaeilge ar na p ist agus iad tar is an chathaoir a th g il amach as an teach.*

## Strand unit     Reflecting on drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- use reflection on a particular dramatic action to create possible alternative courses for the action

*out of role, speculate whether the drama might be more exciting if the ball goes into the river and is taken away by it*

*in role, decide how to teach the frustrated frog to calm down*

*write a short account of what he/she thinks the animals should do if they want to avoid being caught by the hunter*

*the teacher in role (as Noah) and the animals draw up a list of suggestions on how to calm the giraffe and save the Ark, after the giraffe has put his foot through the hull*

- experience, through drama, the relationship between story, theme and life experience

*examine the question of bullying through a reworking of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' or 'Jenny and the Giant's Wife'*

*use reflections on stories gathered from his/her grandparents to lead to a drama about buying a house*

*without knowing sign language, think about how to communicate with a person who cannot hear or speak*

- share insights while experiencing the drama or insights that arise out of the drama

*reveal whether he/she suspected that it was the man posing as the lollipop person who had robbed the church*

*in the context of a drama that uses a reworked Little Red Riding-Hood story, speculate whether there is any time when it is right to talk to strangers*

*make a picture-sequence, frieze or model to record or interpret what happened in the drama.*

## Strand unit Co-operating and communicating in making drama

*The child should be enabled to*

- develop, out of role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

*help set up an obstacle course in which the different elements represent the various hardships the shepherds might have encountered in going to Bethlehem*

*in a drama about space travel, decide whether we should stop to research what Mars might be like in reality before moving on with the drama*

*listen and contribute when the teacher asks for help in recalling and recording key moments in the journey of the Ark before the animals reach the new world*

- develop, in role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

*discuss and decide whether we should take the road that leads high into the mountains or the one that leads down to the water*

*as members of a picnicking group, make suggestions about how the group should go about finding out, without arousing suspicion, who owns the clothes and belongings that have been found*

*decide from an old map which direction we should go in search of the treasure*

- develop fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters in small-group or whole-class scenes as the drama text is being made

*as a peasant woman, try to sell your produce in a market-place full of robbers and tricksters*

*as a donkey, try, through physical and vocal communication, to make known to your masters how you feel about being pushed up a rocky mountainside*

*as one of a group of starving refugees, try to communicate your anger at those who are preventing you from entering the wheatfield*

*as a shepherd, try to get your scattered sheep into the pen without becoming too cross with them*

- re-enact for others in the group a scene that has been made in simultaneous small-group work

*as part of a drama on an encounter with a giant, show how you think the huge key should be lifted up to the lock so as to open the door*

*in a randomly selected group of three, show for the class the scene in which the donkey is helped up the rocky slope*

*in a randomly selected pair, show how you might convince your mother to let you go to the woods.*

Third  
and fourth  
classes

# Overview

third and fourth classes

## *Strand*

Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

## *Strand units*

Exploring and making drama

Reflecting on drama

Co-operating and communicating in making drama

## *Prerequisites for making drama*

Content

The fictional lens

Creating a safe environment

## *Elements of drama*

Belief

Role and character

Action

Place

Time

Tension

Significance

Genre

## Strand: Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

### Strand unit Exploring and making drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- enter into the fictional dramatic context with the same spontaneity and freedom that he/she has earlier applied to make-believe play

*in a drama about a family situation, experience the anger and frustration arising from a conflict over changing the television channel*

*while accepting a commitment to the fictional consequences, take on the task of creating a welcome for members of a rival tribe whose help is needed in building a dolmen*

*d an dr ma ina dtarla onn easaontas i measc gr pa p ist ag imirt cluiche 'hopscotch'*

*using the 'mantle of the expert', the teacher helps the children to enter into the fiction by reading a letter from Lord Caernarfon inviting them to Egypt on a dig for Tutankhamun's tomb*

- understand the relationship between role and character and develop the ability to hold on to either role or character for as long as the dramatic activity requires

*in role as members of a tribe, the children decide to build a dolmen, but as their characters develop through the drama they decide to abandon the project*

*a whale has landed on the shore: encourage the children to become certain people with attitudes to the whale (other than the children's own)*

*the Children of Lir meet a group of people who have diverse attitudes to swans*

*in a boat scene a group member is briefed to show, in role, how reflective (St.) Patrick is, compared with the other hostages*

- discover how the use of space and objects can help in building the context and in signifying dramatic themes

*imagine PE mats as magic carpets that fly to different places*

*imagine any object as a machine that he/she is trying to sell at the market*

*become aware of how the protagonists in an argument, gradually moving closer to each other, can increase the expectation that they may soon come to blows*

*become aware of how the need to move away increases as soon as the decision to betray a friend is made*

- explore how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present dramatic action

*the members of the tribe, having had the experience of trying to move the stone and desiring to go home to help their starving kinsmen, decide whether to bring the stone home or let it sink into the bog*

*knowing that the tide is coming in fast and that some of the children can't swim, decide whether to try and wade to safety or spend the night on the island*

*the parents, knowing that a child has fallen into the lake, decide to find out how it happened*

*Aengus knows that Patrick is holy and doesn't want to disturb his prayers, but when Patrick stakes Aengus' foot by mistake enact what happens next*

- become aware of the rules that help maintain focus in the dramatic action

*learn and apply simple rules that give focus and meaning to dramatic activity, for example 'do your bit,' 'believe it is happening to you,' 'listen to and accept the contributions of others'*

*work out from the map the meaning of the riddle that will lead him/her to where the UFO has landed*

*follow the leader in hauling weapons along a narrow mountain pass*

*help the other children to teach the spacewoman how to treat the flowers*

- begin, as a member of a group, to include in drama activity the elements of tension and suspense

*brief a third character, who is joining the drama, with an agenda that is not known to the two who are already involved*

*a greedy worker at the tomb of Tutankhamun tempts others who are busy making copies of hieroglyphics to steal what they can*

*in a drama about differences between two groups of children, increase the tension by implanting the knowledge that any person in a particular group could be a spy for the other group*

*enact the scene when, in the market-place where Miolchu is buying Patrick, one of the hostages tries to escape*

- begin the process of using script as a pre-text

*learn to look on a piece of script as an invitation to create dramatic action, discovering that interpreting six lines of script, for example, can lead into many different situations*

*learn to transform script into one's own thought processes*

*b in ann script ghearr Ghaeilge a l imhse il agus dr ma a dh anamh di*

*it is the turn of the hieroglyphics expert to entertain campsite colleagues by enacting the story of hieroglyphics he/she has copied.*

## Strand unit Reflecting on drama

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*The child should be enabled to*

- use reflection on and evaluation of a particular dramatic action to create possible alternative courses for the action

*he/she wonders if a parent would treat his/her child in this way and what direction the drama could take if he/she were kinder*

*in a drama about friendship, the cowboy wonders if he should have told the sheriff what he had seen his friend do*

*decide whether the drama is exciting enough and what could be done to make it more exciting*

- learn, through drama, the relationship between story, theme and life experience

*through a drama about a child whose parents never let him/her do what he/she wants to do, explore and ask questions about freedom and responsibility*

*if one were to make a soap-opera about the school, enact with others a small group scene that would best encapsulate the school*

*small groups depict people's reactions at moments of great change in history*

- use the sharing of insights arising out of dramatic action to develop the ability to draw conclusions and to hypothesise about life and people

*discuss one child's opinion that the drama is silly, because if the gang had behaved like that they would have been arrested long ago*

*reflect on whether parents generally behave as the parents in the drama did*

*reflect, as a result of doing a drama on a dolmen, on the number of problems people in the past had to solve to get us to the world we have today*

*the archaeologists from Tutankhamun's tomb are compiling a history of the dig, and each expert must profile himself/herself and explain his/her work.*

## Strand unit Co-operating and communicating in making drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- develop, out of role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

*in small-group work, exchange roles so that each member of the group has a chance to contribute in the making of each character*

*co-operate with other members of the group in making an art representation of the kind of world the crag-people live in*

*research the kinds of domestic and farming implements people used a thousand years ago in order to experience in drama the kind of work they might do*

- develop, in role, the ability to co-operate and to communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

*in small-group work, keep the improvisation going without repetition in order to ensure invention and creativity*

*in an Irish-language play, decide what to do when a farmer has gone to the Garda after learning that he/she, as a member of the group, is trespassing on the farmer's land, and abide by that decision and its consequences within the drama*

*from a map supplied by the teacher, decide how best to get to the house of the friendship-maker*

*when, on an upturned boat, food rations are running out, decide as a member of the group whether to eat now and hope the group is rescued or to ration the food to make it last longer*

- develop fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters in small-group or whole-class scenes as the drama text is being made

*discover how tribal rivalries influence relationships when food is being distributed*

*discover what relationships develop between people when they are worried about whether their relatives will survive the storm at sea*

*discover how relationships develop in a scene in which the light has suddenly gone off in the haunted house*

- enact spontaneously for others in the group a scene from the drama, or share with the rest of the class a scene that has already been made in simultaneous small-group work

*as part of a drama on the making of a dolmen, show half a minute of action in which the members of the tribe endure great hardship*

*show the scene at home when the teacher's letter arrives to say that Jenny has been misbehaving*

*in a drama about a crime, show, as groups of detectives, an enactment of how each group thinks it happened*

*in a drama about life on a tropical island, show how the relationship between the girls develops when they go swimming in the sea.*

Fifth  
and sixth  
classes

# Overview

fifth and sixth classes

## *Strand*

Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

## *Strand units*

Exploring and making drama

Reflecting on drama

Co-operating and communicating in making drama

## *Prerequisites for making drama*

Content

The fictional lens

Creating a safe environment

## *Elements of drama*

Belief

Role and character

Action

Place

Time

Tension

Significance

Genre

## Strand: Drama to explore feelings, knowledge and ideas, leading to understanding

### Strand unit Exploring and making drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- enter appropriately and with facility, whether watched or unwatched, into the fictional dramatic context

*enact a drama about green people from a dark world; engage, as in make-believe play, with the feelings, emotions and thought processes of a person who has never seen brightness as he/she emerges into the light of day*

*in the same drama, enter fully and accurately into the prejudices of the first people to meet the green children*

*mar sh rt cluiche, d an dr ma as liosta focal a thugtar d ibh*

- extend playing in role and in character to include the ability to accept and maintain a brief that has been decided on by either the teacher, the group or himself/herself

*as the friendly mistress of the workhouse, the child holds back until the appropriate moment the news that the family must split up*

*on entering the scene where the children of the family are planning to emigrate, the member of the group who is playing the mother is told: 'Don't say a word; just be suspicious of what they have been talking about'*

*accept the brief of looking at a character in terms of how he/she inhabits and moves in personal space (relate to dance)*

- discover how the use of space and objects helps in building the context and in signifying the drama theme

*in a small-group Irish-language piece, arrange chairs and objects to represent an uninhabited house*

*discover how space and the placing of things and people in space can provide information about relationships and happenings*

*work from a picture of a Famine cottage to the layout of objects to represent it*

- explore how the fictional past and the desired fictional future influence the present dramatic action

*the children of the Rhine valley, reading the signs of the wind that sweeps down the valley and knowing the danger of the wind, want to tell their parents to take precautions against it*

*the people of the island, knowing how the smugglers exploit them, have to decide whether their future is best assured by telling the police or by taking the law into their own hands*

*a group of scientists, deciding that the spacewoman should be allowed to stay, do an experiment on the composition of air to find out if she can live in this atmosphere*

- become adept at implementing the 'playing rules' that maintain focus in dramatic action

*agree methods by which a drama in the dual setting of the sitting-room and the kitchen does not split into two separate dramas*

*help to create and maintain the atmosphere in the cold damp room in which they wait for the ghost to come*

*mar dhuine de na cailín at ag lorg a míthreacha, ceistigh in ir na feirme faoin míd a chonaic sí/s*

- help to plan dramatic activity to include the particular tension and suspense appropriate to the theme being explored

*in a drama about honesty, explore how contrary physical and verbal signals can indicate deception*

*as the fishermen depart for three months, leaving their families on the quays, help create and be aware of the tension that comes from everyone trying to be cheerful*

*as members of a dance troupe in a drama about betrayal, make a dance that lets the queen know her secret is out*

- become comfortable with script and understand the basic processes by which script becomes action

*ask the who, what, where, when and why questions in creating the action that a piece of script suggests*

*be aware of the basic conventions of play-writing through occasionally writing sections of script for other groups to make into drama texts*

*perform simultaneously a few lines of script to lead to a drama about the issue of family break-up during the Famine*

- 
- distinguish between various genres, such as comedy, tragedy, fantasy

*begin to appreciate that, just like different games, different drama worlds (other than naturalistic drama) can have their own rules*

*to lift a drama out of the naturalistic mode, do a silent scene depicting action in a labour camp while the remainder of the class juxtaposes the sounds of children playing by the seaside*

*do a drama in which the adults act like children and the children act like adults*

*invent an extra group of characters that Alice (in Wonderland) might meet, and do a scene she might have with them*

*d an dr ma greannmhar faoi nathair san il ar.*

## Strand unit **Reflecting on drama**

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*The child should be enabled to*

- reflect on a particular dramatic action in order to create possible alternative courses for the action that will reflect more closely the life patterns and issues being examined

*participate in hot-seating*

*write the poem the character might write at this time (it is sometimes useful to distance true emotion from the child) and then decide what course of action he/she is likely to take*

*decide as a member of a group whether the woman with the fur coat should be helped to meet the fur dealer who will repair it*

*decide, as a member of the group, whether to allow a soldier to pass on and possibly get killed or to risk one's own life to save him/her.*

- learn, through drama, the relationship between story, theme and life experience

*beginning with the finding by the police of an abandoned wallet, see where the investigation leads and how it must be shaped by the rules by which the police abide*

*explore bullying through a drama about a boy or girl, his/her mother and father, a dog and a gang who attack him/her going to school*

*explore a mathematical problem through a 'mantle of the expert' drama about a builder who wants to renovate a church*

- use the sharing of insights arising out of dramatic action to develop the ability to draw conclusions and to hypothesise about life and people

*in a drama on board a sailing ship explore why the tired sailors might disagree with the captain and decide to take over the ship*

*as part of a group, make a wall chart about the insights gained during a drama about a pop group and the conclusions for life that could be drawn from it*

*as part of a group of Irish-speaking children, decide how best to teach the English girl to answer in Irish the questions the gardener will put to her.*

## Strand unit      Co-operating and communicating in making drama

---

*The child should be enabled to*

- develop, out of role, the ability to co-operate and to communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

*respond in small groups to the teacher saying, 'Let's make a short play about fear'*

*as part of a group, work out what kind of scene will communicate most clearly to others in the class the kind of life lived in our grandparents' time*

*in a scene about a death at a wall-building project during Famine times, agree on when the focus should shift so that the story may unfold out of the action*

*decide whether the women of the island should let the strangers know that the flowers growing on the hillside are extremely valuable*

*decide who should undertake the various aspects of the research that is needed before proceeding with the drama*

- develop, in role, the ability to co-operate and communicate with others in helping to shape the drama

*as 'experts' on local history, research the kind of lives people led in 1925*

*respond to the teacher's probe, 'Now that Celia has told the lie, can we tell the truth without seeming to let her down, or what will we do?'*

*for a drama about nomads and settlers, decide how best to arrange the wagons in case of attack*

- develop fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters in small-group or whole-class scenes as the drama text is being made

*in a drama allow the relationship between a character and his friend, whom he wants to look at some birds, to develop physically and emotionally as the scene is being enacted*

*in a drama in which a man from outer space, a landlubber, and a person who has never seen the night try to fish the moon out of the sea, explore the relationships that develop between them*

*in a drama about the Famine, explore the relationships between the children who creep out at night into the potato field to see what their elders mean by blight*

- enact spontaneously for others in the group a scene from the drama, or share with the rest of the class a scene that has already been made in simultaneous small-group work

*enact a scene that shows the reaction of a family to the news that they have won the lotto*

*as part of a drama on the bravery of peacemakers, enact the scene in which the hero or heroine says goodbye to his/her family before going on his/her mission*

*as part of a comic piece about people who care about nothing, show a scene in which the hurlers or camogie players are completely uninterested in the lecture from the coach before the game.*

# Assessment



# Assessment

## Assessment: an essential part of teaching and learning

Assessment is an essential element of the teaching and learning process. One of its principal purposes is to provide the teacher with continuous detailed information about children's development, their knowledge, their grasp of concepts and their mastery of skills. This in turn leads to a greater understanding of the children and their needs and can help the teacher to design appropriate learning activities that will enable them to gain maximum benefit from the drama curriculum. This cyclic process of learning, assessment, identifying individual needs, evaluating teaching strategies, and planning future learning experiences is central to effective teaching and learning.

## The role of assessment: why assess?

Assessment can help the teacher to monitor children's learning and development through drama. It provides the teacher with the means of identifying the needs of individual children and enables him/her to create the drama contexts and to modify curriculum content in order to facilitate effective learning. Used like this, assessment has a formative role to play in children's development.

In using assessment for formative purposes, the teacher can build a cumulative picture of children's development through the three strand units of the drama curriculum. This will contribute to the child's overall developmental profile and can form a basis for reporting to teachers, parents and others. This is the summative use of assessment. The teacher can also use assessment to evaluate his/her mediation of the drama curriculum to the children. This involves monitoring the effectiveness and balance of curriculum content and the different strategies, contexts and resources employed to advance the development of the child. In this way assessment is used evaluatively and contributes to providing the most effective learning experiences for the child.

## Assessment in the drama curriculum: what should be assessed?

Assessment in drama is concerned with monitoring the development of the children's drama skills and concepts and the success with which they learn through an engagement with the three strand units of the curriculum. This entails a consideration of both the drama objectives and the learning objectives inherent in the content.

### *Exploring and making drama*

In this strand unit the teacher will, in the first place, assess how successfully the child has preserved the impulse for make-believe play and is able to bring belief and spontaneity to the drama. This will manifest itself in the extent to which he/she enters into a role or a character and develops it in the context of the action. It will also be apparent in the way the child uses place and space to build the context of the drama and understands, and explores the element of time in bringing depth and believability to it. The teacher will also monitor the way children adhere to the 'playing rules' that help to maintain focus in the dramatic action and enhance dramatic activity by including the element of tension. As they become more experienced in the drama process, their ease and facility in using scripts and their ability to distinguish between different genres and to explore meaning through them will be other indicators of the effectiveness of the child's learning through drama.

### *Reflecting on drama*

Reflection is an essential part of the drama process. This takes place both during the drama activity itself and through discussion and other activities after the drama activity is over. The success of the children's reflection will be seen in the extent to which they use it to create alternative courses for the action that reflect the issues being examined and in their ability to recognise the relationship between story, theme and life experience. The quality of the insights they gain from the drama experience, and the extent to which they can reach conclusions from it and are able to hypothesise in a more general way about people and life, will also indicate the success of their learning through drama.

### *Co-operating and communicating in making drama*

The ability to co-operate and communicate with others, both in and out of role, is central to the child's experience of the drama. This will be seen in his/her ability to contribute to the shaping of the drama, both in discussion about it and as the action takes place. It will also be seen in the success with which the child develops fictional relationships through interaction with the other characters as the drama progresses. In enacting scenes for other members of the class with spontaneity and without self-consciousness, children will show another aspect of their ability to co-operate and communicate through drama.

### **Assessment tools: how to assess**

The above range of learning activity presupposes the use of appropriate assessment tools. Those most suitable to drama are:

*teacher observation*

*teacher-designed tasks and tests*

*work samples, portfolios and projects*

*curriculum profiles.*

#### *Teacher observation*

This is the form of assessment most consistently used by teachers and the most effective in relation to children's engagement with drama. It involves the informal monitoring of children's progress as the drama process takes place. In observing the varying degrees of success with which children acquire drama skills and concepts and learn through the drama process, the teacher can adjust his/her methods and approaches and modify the drama contexts in order to maximise its learning benefits for individual children.

Much of this observation is concerned with detailed and immediate drama activity and is unrecorded. However, it can be useful to make brief notes from time to time about particular learning requirements. This can be a further help to the teacher in taking account of the progress of the class, a group or an individual at any particular juncture, and can inform his/her planning of short-term and long-term drama approaches.

### *Teacher-designed tasks and tests*

A further dimension of this type of continuous assessment is the monitoring of children's performance in various tasks arising from their engagement with the drama. These arise continually in the course of drama activity, as, for example, when a pair of children is asked to play two characters in order to explore a particular issue, or a group of children is asked to work together to solve some problem or to arrive at a decision about the course the drama should take. The assessment of children's ability to perform particular tasks such as these will to a great extent involve teacher observation in a way that is focused on a particular aspect of children's engagement with drama.

### *Work samples, portfolios and projects*

In drama these would be made up of writing, art work and other examples of children's response to, reflection on, and extension of their drama experience. For assessment purposes, a representative sample of a child's work that includes some of the best examples would be of greatest use. Decisions about what might be included will be made variously by the teacher, by the child and the teacher together, and by children in consultation with each other. In this way a valuable dimension of self-assessment will be given to the assessment of the child's progress in drama and in learning through drama.

The question of manageability will be a significant factor in deciding how much of the child's work might be included, although in drama this will be less problematical, since the portfolio will consist mainly of items in written form. However, since the child will have similar portfolios in other areas of the curriculum, the question of storage will arise. Obviously, circumstances will vary from school to school, and the nature, size and management of portfolios will be a factor in school planning.

### *Curriculum profiles in drama*

The teacher's continuous informal observation of children's progress can be structured more formally through the use of curriculum profiles in drama. These entail short descriptive statements of pupils' achievements, behaviour and attitudes in relation to drama and to learning through drama. They may be standardised for different levels of competence and used to check children's individual ability in relation to each of the statements. In the case of drama they would reflect children's progress in relation to aspects of the three strand units, enable the teacher to construct a learning profile of each individual child, and create a reference record of his/her progress.

### *Recording and communicating*

By using the appropriate selection of the different assessment tools, the teacher can monitor the children's progress in drama and their learning through drama. If this monitoring process is to be effective it is important that the teacher adopts a method of recording the relevant information in an accessible form that is compatible with the assessment of other areas of the curriculum. This will facilitate continuous communication with the principal, with other members of the staff, and with parents. It will also assist the teacher in eliciting responses from parents that will enable him/her to plan more effectively the drama programme for individual children.

### *Pupil profile cards*

Over a period the teacher can construct a comprehensive profile that would constitute a summative record of an individual child's progress in drama. This could be adjusted and updated regularly. It could help determine long-term learning strategies and ensure consistency in the child's development from year to year. It would also contribute to a cumulative assessment of the child and facilitate communication with parents and other agencies.



# Appendix



# Glossary

action	the interaction between character and situation in the drama, involving the resolution or attempted resolution of conflict and tension
brief	a suggestion or instruction given to one character, of which the other characters may or may not be unaware, which has the purpose of giving a new direction to the drama
character	the entire intellectual, emotional and physical make-up of a real or fictional person
content	the subject matter of a drama, based on the child's general experience and needs or drawn from the content of some other curriculum area
enactment	the action in which the text of the drama is created
fictional lens	the choice of fictional characters and the situation they are placed in that creates the dramatic context for the enactment
framing	the process through which a fiction is transformed into directions and suggestions for an enactment. (It is through this process that the drama text is distanced sufficiently from the children to be safe but remains close enough to be explored effectively.)
genre	the form of dramatic expression—naturalistic, comic, absurd, etc.
improvisation	the spontaneous dramatic enactment of a fiction
in role	doing or saying something from the standpoint of role or character
mantle of the expert	the process by which the teacher implies that the children are 'experts' in some particular topic so as to encourage them to research that topic within the drama
out of role	talking about issues, choices and possible directions in the drama when outside the enactment
plot	the coherent series of incidents that, together with the theme, make up the drama

pre-text	an effective starting point that will launch the dramatic world in such a way that the participants can identify their roles and responsibilities and begin to build the dramatic world together.
process drama	the process by which drama texts are made
role	pretending to be someone or something other than oneself
scene	a short play, an improvised text or a dramatic action
significance	that which signals something important about plot, theme or life
sub-text	the non-verbal signals by which thoughts, feelings and attitudes are transmitted
teacher in role	the teacher taking a role in the drama and moulding it from within
tension	the expression in drama of the conflict inherent in the needs and desires of the different characters in the drama that drives the action forward
text	<p>a class text is the selection, enactment and linking of scenes in the drama, and all the class activities related to this</p> <p>a drama text is an enacted drama fiction, watched or unwatched, whether it takes place in the class or in a theatre-like situation</p> <p>a written text is a script that describes a dramatic action</p>
theme	the underlying patterns by which the plot of the drama is connected to life

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## Educational drama consultant

John McArdle

## Education officers

Paul Brennan  
Regina Murphy  
Catherine Walsh

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