

**School of the Divine Child 2019-2021**



# Creative Schools- Voice of the Child

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At the Core of Creative Schools is the voice of the child, putting the child at the heart of decision making.

# Creative Schools

School of the Divine Child  
September 2019- June 2021

Creative Schools  
Coordinator- Mary Mc Auliffe

Creative Associate –Lisa Cliffe

# Role of Creative Schools Coordinator

- As coordinator of the Creative Schools project I have worked closely with our Creative Associate Lisa Cliffe over the past two years. My role has been briefing Lisa on creativity already within our school and discussing with her how we can expand and introduce new areas of creativity as we go forward. My role has been introducing Lisa to our pupils, teachers and SNA staff so that she gets a feel for the school as a whole . Overseeing the setting up of the student Advisory group and hearing the voices of our pupils [which is the core of this project] has been very exciting and something we will encourage and continue. It has been a joy to witness the unifying nature of this group on zoom in a time of distancing protocols.

# Role of the Creative Associate

The role of a Creative Schools' Creative Associate is to engage with the school as a creative consultant, supporter, confidante and friend whilst the school develops a Creative Plan and engages in new experiences and relationships to develop their engagement in arts and creativity. The primary relationship is between the School coordinator and the Creative Associate. Mary and Lisa developed a really strong relationship.

Lisa drew on her artistic skills in movement and dance to support children in including their voice and ideas into the school's Creative Schools Plan and activities. Lisa spent time in class and outside class with staff and children listening and documenting their responses to the question; 'What does creativity mean here?'

Hearing everyone's thoughts and opinions was important and spending time with this was hugely valuable.

# Three Stages in Creative Schools Project



There are three Stages in  
Creative Schools Project




Understand



Develop



Celebrate



## Understand Phase – September 2019- February 2020


Lisa visited the school on regular occasions to meet with pupils and staff.

Parents know their child better than anybody and we felt we would like to know what they wanted for their child from the project. Lisa devised a parent survey and their wishes for their child can be seen in the next slide.

We had discussions on creativity within the school and how it could be expanded by hearing the student voice.

We organised movement workshops for Junior and middle school where Lisa met with pupils and observed and facilitated their creativity.

In these workshops pupils explored different ways of moving their bodies. They took part in single and group movement activities to music. Pupils experienced stillness and movement in these sequences. They had fun doing the 'sponge dance'.





# Parents' Survey

## The Parents Survey

Activities needs to be fun. Invest in a good camera to take photos of young people participating. Share images. Young people love to see themselves.

Develop a sensory garden or a water feature with fish.

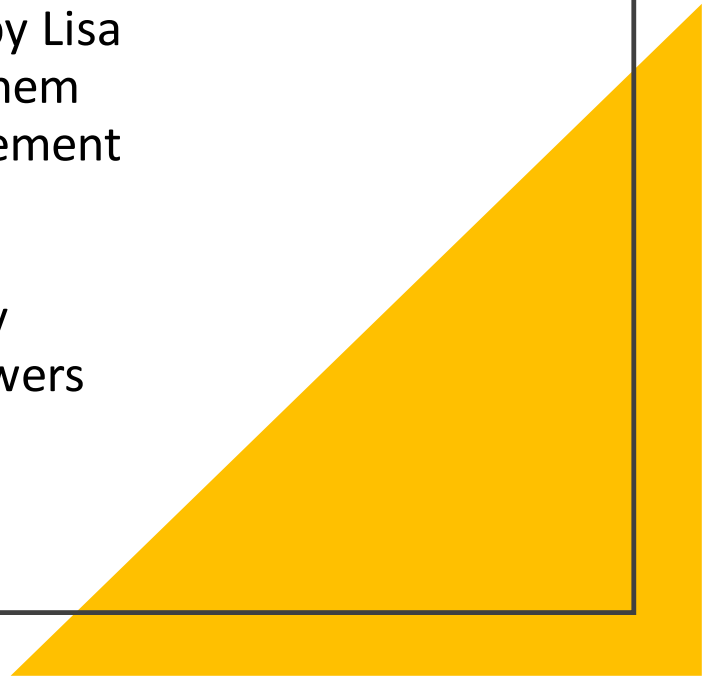
Play through music, materials and objects with different sounds and colours, painting and drama, 'wet' activities, sensations on the body, story telling,

Multi sensory activities - music, clay, moving to music, messy play, sand, water, textures, squeezing dense liquid through hands,



## 2020 Creativity in lockdown- March - September

Lockdown came upon us suddenly on 13/3/20 and we started to engage with our pupils digitally via zoom . Creative Schools continued to reach our pupils through movement mime and song in home produced videos by Lisa and Mary. The pupils greatly enjoyed seeing a familiar face greeting them by name , singing a song and encouraging them to take part in a movement activity. The inclusion of Lamh signs in these videos made them very meaningful. This connection eased our pupils' sense of isolation and fostered connectivity at this unusual time. Lisa did a beautiful activity where she made representations of the names of our pupils with flowers from her garden.



# Develop Phase Sep 2020

The theme of our 2020 Creative Plan is 'Connecting and Belonging'. This theme emerged through extensive consultation with all staff, experiential workshops with Lisa, family feedback forms and observation of students by staff members. Huge thanks to everyone for their input in the Understand stage of our Creative Schools project. Our vision is that all pupils and staff feel a sense of joy and purpose in connecting with others. Our vision is that pupils are motivated to engage in lots of different ways with their peers and with the school community. This vision has emerged because of a priority to address the challenge of isolation that so many of our pupils have faced in recent times and continue to experience in many aspects of their lives. We are committed to developing experiential, creative, fun and joyful ways to play as a school community and support everyone to feel more connected and a deeply heartfelt sensation of belonging to this place, the school community as a family and to each other as friends.



# Advisory Group

**Scoileanna  
Ildánacha**  **Creative  
Schools**

Advisory Group meetings take place on zoom per fortnight . It is wonderful to hear our pupils' expressing themselves verbally and by eye gaze.

The delight in the pupils faces at seeing each other on zoom is heart warming. The pupils express their delight in seeing each other on zoom and express their sadness at missing seeing their friends in person. [At present they are only seeing pupils in their own pod and bubble].They chat about their favourite creative activities and proudly show and discuss some of the work they have been doing in class.

Their most urgent desire is to see more of each other and their friends from other classes.

See below some examples of the voices of the Junior classes.

# Our Pupils' voices

- Movement and mime with my class outdoors always makes me happy
- I love music and Home Economics
- I am very interested in people and finding out about them.
- I love seeing my classmates and I love seeing pupils from other classes.
- I miss seeing my friends
- I would like to see my friends in other classes.
- I love drawing and colouring.
- I love action songs and movement to music.

# Developing a vision and aims for School of the Divine Child Creative School Plan

## Notes from meeting staff, speaking with Mary and the Student Advisory Group

Students are part of the planning, decision making, project development and evaluation. A Student Advisory Council is group where students' are primarily listened to. They are invited to share their opinions on things

Creativity and creative activities really support connection. Children want to connect with children and staff. Who

Children have choice. Children make choices. Choices are made by the student. An activity takes on a life of its own by the student's decision.

Age appropriate activities

Incorporating artistic engagements into the everyday life of a class. Repeating and experimenting with props, songs, games, etc.

Build local and national connection with excellent artists and creative practitioners who develop work with and for children and young people with profound and complex needs. Connections such as

Connection means; feeling included, seeing others, hearing my name been called? Feeling that I am part of this experience. I'm with people who want to be with me in fun ways.

Artists and creative facilitators need time to get to know the children, young people and staff at the beginning of a project.

How can children be part of the decision making?

Sensory play


Concrete experiences. Students make decisions in their activities. Create the environment for this to happen

Covid 19 restrictions and impact

Whole school activities support a sense of belonging

Develop outdoor spaces in the school environment





# ‘Hearing the Student Voice’ working group

This group consisting of one teacher and two SNAs was set up in December 2020 to develop activities arising from the student voice that support experiences of feeling connected to the whole school. These activities built on what was already happening in the school and were developed in response to the students’ request to ‘see each other more’ and observations of the children’s delight in seeing and connecting to other pods, bubbles and staff across the school. We made use of the large windows in each class and created a sense of connection through ‘window interactions’. The “Advisory Group” assisted by “Hearing the Student Voice” working group made the student’s voice heard- “we want to see our friends in other classes” by having Window Visiting and a Flashmob Dance before Christmas, observing covid protocols for pupil and staff safety.



# Creative Activities Christmas 2020

## Window Visiting

Each class invited the other classes to visit. Windows were decorated and personalised with names of visiting classes, Christmas themed jokes, treasure hunts, and guess the Christmas song/movie. Windows were open with pupils inside greeting the visiting class and singing Christmas songs with them.

## Flash Mob Dance


The whole school “came together” [observing covid protocols/distancing] in different rooms, corridor and hall doing a dance routine for Jingle Bells and singing Christmas carols. All pupils were visible to each other as these areas had windows that all opened onto a central courtyard. Pupils enjoyed waving at and greeting each other.







## Senior class – creative sessions with Lisa Cliffe



An in depth planning and consultation process took place with the senior classes in Autumn 2020. A project proposal and plan around a film making project was created. See below some of the ideas and interests of the pupils.

# Senior class ideas and interests

Workshop 1 with Lisa  
Creative Schools Programme



# Creative Schools January –June 2021

In lockdown again from January to 13<sup>TH</sup> Feb 2021

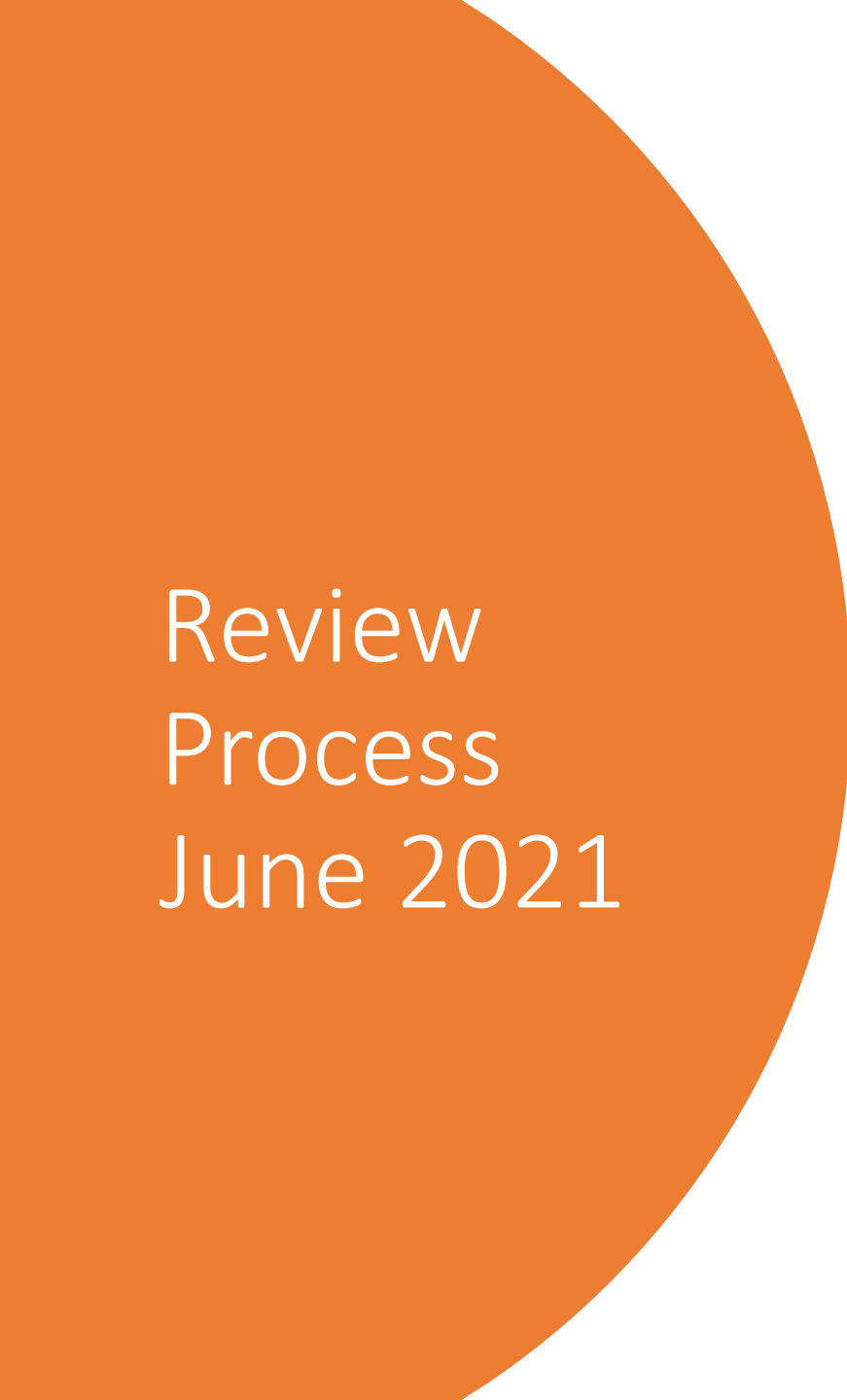
- Lisa has identified two creative artists in our locality who are interested in working with our pupils. Rachel Doolin and George Hanover introduce themselves to us on zoom .In January they meet with Junior pupils on zoom and engage in creative activities based on the North Pole.
- A link has also been made with international creative artist Anna Newell.
- Due to level 5 restrictions being in place, the artists cannot have face to face creative sessions with our pupils and the project is deferred for the months of February /March/April .

# May –June 2021

- Level 5 restrictions are lifted and creative artists Rachel and George enter the school and meet Junior, Middle and senior pupils in their classrooms.
- Pupils engage in sensory based activities based on the themes of weather and the beach.

# Achievements



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# Review Process June 2021

- To assess the effectiveness of our work with Creative Schools a survey was sent to all school staff. We received some very positive comments on how wonderful it was to hear our students expressing themselves and the joy they experienced when engaging in creative activities. This feedback from staff is most valuable to how we proceed with the project in September 2021.





# Creative Schools Going Forward


September  
2021

Two positive outcomes from the Creative Schools project have been-

1. Creating a space to facilitate the voice of our students so they can express their opinions and witness tangible outcomes as a result of this.
2. Recognition of the value of high quality levels of engagement by our students in sensory based immersive activities leading to greater present moment awareness, increased joy and for some pupils an increase in verbalisation.

In September 2021 we will continue to facilitate the student voice so the desires and opinions of our students will be heard, valued and acted upon.

As teachers we aim for maximum student engagement in all areas of the curriculum cognisant of the value of sensory based learning to achieve this.







# Reflections on the Creative Schools Project

In the Autumn of 2019 I set out with great excitement and hopes for the Creative Schools Project totally unaware of the challenges and obstacles that lay ahead due to the Covid pandemic. It feels like a seed has been planted in adverse conditions but has sprouted against all the odds and holds the potential for change and growth into something bigger. Two things I really wanted to see happening were pupils expressing their own ideas and being fully engaged in the moment with an experience at hand. It is rewarding to have witnessed both and know that our pupils are capable of expanding on these experiences. It has been a joy to see the delight experienced when fully present to an experience and interacting with each other on zoom. Our pupils have truly shown their resilience in challenging times. I look forward to continuing on this exciting journey of creativity with our pupils.

Mary Mc Auliffe- Coordinator.





