Evaluation of Creative Schools Scoileanna Ildánacha Final Report

Dr Regina Murphy and
Dr Eemer Eivers

DCU
Ollscoil Chathair
Bhaile Átha Cliath
Dublin City University

EVALUATION OF
CREATIVE SCHOOLS
SCOILEANNA ILDÁNACHA

FINAL REPORT

DR REGINA MURPHY & DR EEMER EIVERS
DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY

2023

Contents

Acknowledgements

The authors wish to acknowledge the following in the execution of this study:

Arts Council Creative Schools central team, including Catherine Boothman, Mags Walsh, Mary Ellen Greene and Ross Curran

Academic collaborators in DCU:

Dr Francis Ward

Dr Una McCabe

Dr Irene White

Dr Michael Flannery

Dr Joe Binetti for analysis of social media

Dr David Millar for advice on the development of two scales related to creativity.

In addition:

Sarah Ward for research assistance

Maelíosa Griffin for administrative assistance

DCU IOE Research Support Office

DCU Research Ethics Committee

DCU Research Support Administration

DCU Communications and Marketing

Our thanks is also extended to the school principals, leadership teams, teachers, pupils and students in the many Creative Schools nationwide for their participation in the evaluation, facilitation of visits to their schools, and wholehearted welcoming of the research team. Thanks is also extended to the Creative Associates for their enthusiastic engagement with the evaluation, and vivid illumination of many aspects of the experience. Without their help, this report would not have been possible.

Suggested citation: Murphy, R. & Eivers, E. (2023). Final Report on the Evaluation of Creative Schools/Scoileanna Ildánacha. Dublin: Dublin City University.

Cover image: Photo courtesy of Holy Family Junior School, Portlaoise, Ireland

Executive Summary

Creative Schools is a flagship initiative of the Creative Youth strand within the Creative Ireland Programme that seeks to enable the creative potential of every child. Creative Schools is led by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. The initiative is also informed by the Arts Council's ten-year strategy (2016–25): *Making Great Art Work: Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland*. Creative Schools supports schools and centres in putting the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives.

Creative Schools was introduced in a selection of Irish primary and post-primary schools in 2018 with a view to supporting creativity in education. This report presents an evaluation of the first four years (2018-2022) of the initiative and provides information on a range of experiences, processes and outcomes that have been observed over time.

Creativity in Education

The importance of creativity features increasingly in education policies that encompass a wide range of facets of learning such as problem-solving, critical thinking and innovation. While creativity is often associated with the arts, creativity and creative thinking is also emphasised in subjects such as science, mathematics, social and environmental studies, language studies and other areas of learning. Although the capacity for developing creativity is seen to exist in various curricula, the arts is often the domain where it is believed that creativity can be most easily expressed and developed. The focus on creativity in education is seen as timely, as recent developments in curriculum policy at primary and post-primary levels in Ireland include an express focus on creativity. Additionally, related policies in relation to digital learning and wellbeing in Irish schools also point to more holistic and integrated approaches for thinking about creativity in multiple ways.

Advances in research on creativity in school settings focus on broader conceptualisations of creativity as an educational, sociocultural and developmental construct that goes beyond traditional, individualistic ideas of 'genius'. Consequently, schools are encouraged to focus on creating contexts for creativity for the many, not just for the select few, and to do so through the various learning materials, spaces, processes and structures that impact the lives of children and young people in their everyday learning environments. To these ends, consulting children and young people on their views is integral to the generation of authentic, creative experiences and to fostering ownership of both processes and outcomes.

Evaluation Methodology

The approach to the evaluation was designed as a formative one and conducted primarily for the purposes of programme improvement. The original plan of the research team was to gather real-time data early in the process and provide feedback to the Creative Schools team in the Arts Council. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and school closures, the formative phase had

to be adjusted. The evaluation therefore focused on desk-based work initially that could inform selection processes for inclusion from a representative and equitable perspective, as well as understandings of the actual initiatives that schools intended to undertake. Feedback on the analysis was provided to the Creative Schools team, together with proposals on ways to streamline the application process and recruit schools that were less likely to apply, and the necessary adjustments were put in place.

Evaluation of Training

A key component of the evaluation was the training provided to Creative Associates (CAs) and Creative School Coordinators (CSCs), both in person and online. The overall goal of the training was to support CAs and CSCs in enhancing creativity in participating schools and in developing the key skills, knowledge and dispositions to support the programme effectively. The training included opportunities for social interaction among participants as emergent Creative Schools. It also focused on the meaning and significance of creativity, its place in education, and models of creative practices in schools. Guidance was provided on how CAs could support CSCs in consulting with children and young people in seeking their views, developing their ideas, writing the Creative Schools plan, and imagining possibilities for a range of activities. Follow-up training sessions focused on sharing experiences of creative activity and encouraging the sustainability of new practices. Networking was an important feature for CAs in building a sense of community through shared learning experiences and understanding of the administrative requirements. For CSCs, mobilising support, involving other colleagues, understanding the key stages of the process, as well as the guidelines on how the Arts Council Creative Schools grant money might be expended, were all important elements of the training.

Desk-based Research

A review of schools' creative practices was conducted through desk-based analysis of an anonymised sample of school websites and social media accounts from participating Creative Schools. This dimension of the study revealed that visual art, music and drama or theatre comprised the arts forms most commonly drawn upon to exemplify creativity in both primary and post-primary schools, and therefore creativity was predominantly portrayed as "creative expression" in the schools within that sample.

Views and Experiences of Creative Associates

Creative Associates (CAs) completed surveys about their experiences with Creative Schools. CAs indicated that they joined the initiative with a view to advocating for the arts in schools and putting children at the centre of the creative process. A majority of CAs were female and visual arts was the most common area of arts practice, followed by drama or theatre, and craft. CAs were positive about the programme, but less positive about initial understandings among school coordinators and management about the initiative. There were some understandable differences in satisfaction levels among different cohorts of CAs, potentially due to COVID-19 disruptions, but CAs were generally satisfied with their training and communication from the Creative Schools team. Issues that were raised were subsequently resolved for the next intake of CAs as part of

the formative evaluation process. To this end, regional coordinators appointed in 2021 were well-received. Most CAs felt they were able to meet schools' needs. They also experienced personal benefits, such as building connections for wider work opportunities through the sharing of information. Ultimately, almost all CAs indicated that they would recommend becoming a CA, with females being more positive than males.

In terms of the impact of Creative Schools, according to data gathered at the beginning of their involvement, only a minority of CAs believed that their assigned schools valued creativity and diversity, but by the end, a significant proportion reported that schools listened to the student voice and valued these aspects. CAs had mixed views on the integration of creativity into teaching and learning practices at the beginning, but by the end, the majority agreed that teachers modelled creativity, that creativity was integrated across topics, and that schools used creativity to support learning. The initiative was considered suitable for all types of school settings, but small primary schools were found to be the most ideal due to the flexibility of the model. Nevertheless, CAs identified several effective aspects of the initiative across various school types, including its capacity to generate bespoke processes and experiences, the valuing of the voice of the child and young person, the empowerment of teachers, and the fostering of new opportunities for self-expression. CAs also offered suggestions on how to improve the CSC role, including having at least two coordinators sharing the school-based role, providing financial compensation or increased substitution cover, and creating a support group for coordinators. Other suggestions included allocating funding based on school size, encouraging follow-up ideas once the two-year term of the project had concluded, designing more intensive and prolonged initiatives, better dovetailing with school calendars, and more emphasis on the process rather than the product. CAs felt that more time and resources were needed for the programme to be successful, and that a slower and more developmental process might be more effective.

Views and Experiences of Creative Schools Coordinators (CSCs)

Analysis of data from CSCs indicated that the majority of CSCs were from primary schools, reflecting the higher proportion of primary school participation, and that school leaders such as the Principal or Deputy Principal frequently acted as the coordinator at primary level. In contrast, none of the post-primary coordinators also served as a principal, and relatively few were Deputy or Assistant Principals. Rather, at post-primary level, the coordinator was usually an Art teacher. Schools were mostly mixed-sex and located in a mixture of rural and urban or suburban areas. CSCs expressed considerable satisfaction with the application process, induction and training as well as the funding provided. CSCs were also satisfied with the support provided by the school's assigned CA, but disagreed with the model whereby CA time was evenly distributed between schools, irrespective of size. At primary level, visual arts was the most popular art form chosen as the main creative activity, followed by drama/theatre, music, and then dance. At post-primary level, the dominant art form was music, followed by visual arts, creative writing and then drama/theatre. Other arts and non-arts areas such as horticulture, science and coding also featured as expressions of creativity. Understandably, COVID-19 constrained and delayed what was possible for most schools, typically leading to Creative Schools activity being conducted

mainly outdoors during that time. In turn, this led to new ways of seeing, interpreting and maximising the school environment. Most primary schools involved all class levels in the decision-making and planning processes, while post-primary schools largely restricted activities to Junior Cycle and Transition Year students.

Surveys undertaken by the CSCs sought their views on the efficacy, strengths, and weaknesses of the Creative Schools initiative based on two questionnaires administered at the end of the 2020/21 (T1) and 2021/22 (T2) school years. Ratings on the value CSCs placed on diversity increased during the two time periods, while ratings for student wellbeing remained broadly similar. The latter is noteworthy, given the widely documented negative impact of COVID-19 on student wellbeing in general. There was little change in the ratings of academic achievement and attitudes to school. Ratings on engagement in class and lessons improved slightly, whereas ratings on attendance decreased slightly, possibly due to the impact of COVID-19. The percentage of CSCs who felt that most or all of their teaching colleagues valued diversity, creativity, and the role of the arts in education, increased. CSCs were reasonably positive about how many of their colleagues listened to the student voice, and this increased between T1 and T2. The percentage of CSCs who felt that their colleagues incorporated creativity into their work and classrooms also increased in the same time period. Three-quarters of CSCs said that they would definitely recommend Creative Schools to other schools, with almost all others indicating that they would probably do so. Responses were very positive, irrespective of school type, geographic location, and language of instruction. Those in DEIS schools and small schools were most positive where four-fifths reported that they would definitely recommend participating in the initiative.

At both timepoints when CSCs were surveyed, large percentages of respondents reported that most of their students valued creativity and saw the importance of arts in education. For primary CSCs, 70% believed that most of their enrolment valued creativity—a figure that rose to 94% at T2, as did 52% of post-primary CSCs, with the figure rising to 71% at T2.

In terms of participation in the arts *inside* school, at T1, just over one quarter (28%) of all CSCs felt that "all or almost all" students in the schools where they worked engaged with the arts *inside* school. At T2, this figure had more than doubled (58%). Although CSCs' perceptions of the engagement of their students in the arts *outside* of school also increased, the difference was slight.

In terms of the most effective part of Creative Schools, the appointment of a Creative Associate to a school was the most highly rated dimension by just over one-third of the respondents, followed by the importance placed on the 'voice of the child' as well the emphasis on creativity itself. Access to funding, and exposure to different art forms and artists, were also highlighted as important elements. Areas identified for change included the need for more funding, greater engagement with parents and the community, and more support and training for teachers. Respondents also raised concerns about how to address organisational issues during COVID-19 and its impact on the implementation of Creative Schools, but this concern lessened once schools emerged from lockdowns. Several areas were identified that require change, i.e., the timing and

eligibility of training for teachers and the inclusion of more than one staff member. Workload was also identified as a concern for some respondents, noting that the amount of work required was much more than expected.

Views and Experiences of Primary School Pupils

In the 2020-21 school year, primary school pupils participating in Creative Schools completed a detailed survey about their experiences of the arts and creativity in school, their involvement in various extracurricular activities, their attitudes towards school, and their academic aspirations. The survey was repeated in the 2022-23 school year to ascertain changes over time.

The results revealed that the most popular extracurricular activity among pupils were sports, followed by reading and participation in various clubs and activities such as music, art, dance, drama and youth clubs. However, engagement in other cultural activities such as concerts, of any kind, and exhibitions was limited.

While there was relatively little change in pupils' views between the two surveys, from a general wellbeing perspective, the majority of pupils indicated that they felt safe in school, felt that they belonged in school and liked their classmates. However, pupils in DEIS schools were marginally less likely to agree that school was a place where they felt safe and slightly less likely to feel good at many things in school. Outside of school, it should be noted that at both timepoints for the survey, large majorities of pupils had not engaged in any cultural activities, such as exhibitions, concerts and other artistic performances. Moreover, a sizeable minority (26%) indicated that they did not engage with any sport or cultural related activities outside of school. In terms of school subjects, art and PE were listed as the favourites by both boys and girls, with girls more likely to favour art above PE, and boys the other way around.

Pupils from both DEIS and non-DEIS schools had overwhelmingly positive views of their teachers, considering them approachable and fair. In both surveys, over 90% of pupils believed that their teachers listened to them and treated them fairly, while 85% felt comfortable talking to their teachers about problems. In order to ascertain interest in the arts and in creativity more broadly, pupils were asked to indicate the types of activities they would like their ideal job or work to involve. From a list of seven different types, work involving creativity was the most popular choice in the two surveys. Moreover, half of the pupils expressed a definite desire to pursue careers that involved creativity.

Views and Experiences of Post-Primary Students

At post-primary level, surveys were also issued on two occasions. Post-primary students generally had positive attitudes towards school and their classmates. Students expressed high educational aspirations and expectations, and positive classroom interactions were reported by many students. A standardised measure of self-esteem was also undertaken as part of the survey. Compared to a national sample of adolescents who were surveyed pre-COVID-19 (Dooley et al., 2019), levels of self-esteem were higher over two time periods for the students in post-primary Creative Schools than for their counterparts in the previous study. Regarding differences by gender, the scores of Creative Schools' students at both time periods somewhat reflect the

differences found in the earlier survey although the gender gap was slightly smaller in Creative Schools. Additionally, from a wellbeing perspective, most students reported that they had 'never' or 'seldom' experienced being bullied, with little difference in incidence between the two survey time points.

In terms of creativity, at post-primary level, music was the art form with which students engaged most frequently, followed by visual arts, and drama/theatre. In terms of the activity students would like their ideal job or work to involve, work involving creativity was the most popular type indicated.

Case studies

Finally, four case studies from contrasting schools, situate the experience of Creative Schools within unique contexts. Each one focuses on a dimension of creativity in practice in different school settings, i.e., in a rural primary school, a rural post-primary school, an urban primary school and a school for students with special educational needs.

Among a range of perspectives, illuminations of practice reveal the many ways in which "little c" creativity (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009) can be developed as well as how various dimensions of creative expression, creative thinking and creative problem solving are expressed—all of which are features of creativity in education (OECD, 2019). Taken together, the examples engender a belief that Creative Schools has the capacity and flexibility to strengthen school engagement and build self-confidence in learners across a range of school types and settings, including special education contexts.

Summary

Overall, the Creative Schools initiative has been successful in promoting and infusing creativity in participating schools and in drawing attention to the importance of creativity in educational contexts. In addition, Creative Schools has enabled children and young people to engage in dialogue about creativity, to be listened to, to be taken seriously and to have their ideas acted upon, resulting in the origination of a plethora of artistic and creative processes and products within participating schools. Surveys have found that young people of all ages showed a high level of interest in creative work through expressing a definite desire to pursue careers that involve creativity. Moreover, the garnering of children and young people's views on creativity in its myriad forms, and the translation of such views into an enacted capacity to influence creative processes and practices in the participating schools, is one of the outstanding successes of the initiative. Several recommendations are offered for improving the Creative Schools initiative, but overall, its continuation is strongly endorsed.

Preface

Creative Schools is a flagship initiative of the Creative Youth strand of the Creative Ireland Programme to enable the creative potential of every child. Creative Schools is led by the Arts Council in partnership with the Department of Education and the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media. The initiative is also informed by the Arts Council's ten-year strategy (2016–25) *Making Great Art Work: Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland.*

The Creative Schools initiative supports schools/centres to put the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives. This initiative provides opportunities for children and young people to build their artistic and creative skills; to communicate, collaborate, stimulate their imaginations, be inventive, and to harness their curiosity. Creative Schools seeks to empower children and young people to develop, implement and evaluate arts and creative activity throughout their schools/centres and stimulate additional ways of working that reinforce the impact of creativity on children and young people's learning, development and wellbeing (Arts Council, 2023).

This report presents the findings of an evaluation of Creative Schools since its inception in the 2018-19 school year. An accompanying Technical Report outlines the technical and methodological elements with the following dimensions:

- The Terms of Reference (including what the Arts Council saw as potential positive outcomes, and what they felt should be included in an evaluation) and a summary of the evaluation approach developed in response to the Terms, described in more detail in subsequent sections.
- The methodology underpinning a review of the characteristics of those who successfully applied for Creative Schools status.
- The development and administration of sets of surveys designed to gauge the effectiveness of Creative Schools in bringing about the possible positive outcomes referred to in the Terms.
- A description of the various forms of qualitative data collected (school visits, interviews with students, teachers, Creative Associates, and document analyses).
- The methodology underpinning a review of social media outputs from a sample of Creative Schools.
- Appendices containing:
    - samples of the information provided to pupils, students and their families, and the related consent and assent forms.
    - the questionnaires administered to pupils, students, Creative Associates and Creative Schools Coordinators in 2021 and in 2022.

It is important to note that in addition to the report presented here, and in keeping with the formative nature of the evaluation, confidential feedback was presented to the Arts Council at

frequent intervals. Such feedback impacted the evolution of the initiative over the course of the 4-year period.

Outline of the report

Chapter 1 sets out the context for Creative Schools within the broader framework of the Creative Ireland Programme (2017-2022) and other relevant educational policy initiatives that impact on school development.

Chapter 2 provides a review of creativity literature and a consideration of relevant contexts for creativity in education. The evaluation methodology is outlined in Chapter 3 while further details on methodology may be found in an accompanying Creative Schools *Technical Report* (Eivers & Murphy, 2022). Chapters 4 and 5 largely address the formative dimension of the evaluation with a specific focus on the process of becoming a Creative School. Insights on training elements for participants is explored in Chapter 6. An analysis of social media as outward expressions of creativity in participating schools is presented in Chapter 7.

The views and experiences of Creative Associates are outlined in Chapters 8 and 9, while the views of Creative Schools Coordinators are presented in Chapters 10 and 11, together with their views on the effects of the initiative. Using survey data, Chapters 12 and 13 report on the interests, attitudes and behaviours of pupils (at primary level) and students (at post-primary level) before their school had begun their Creative Schools journey, and then again near the end of their schools' participation in Creative Schools. In Chapter 14, selected case studies are presented that provide an illustration of the experience within a single school. Insights were generated from observations in situ and interview data from a range of participants, including teachers and students. Attention is drawn to features of both creative processes and the creative practices in education settings. Chapter 15 discusses the main findings and draws conclusions. Finally, the report closes with recommendations for both the education and arts sectors.

Impact of COVID-19

Similar to work patterns, events and initiatives locally and globally, including in educational institutions, the COVID-19 pandemic (United Nations, 2020) had a marked impact on the design of both the Creative Schools' programme itself, as well as on the implementation of the evaluation. The operation of remote learning of various kinds in schools, and the management of severely restricted movement and strict social distancing in classrooms, called for new approaches to evaluating experiences on the ground. Much of the original design and accompanying stages of the evaluation had to be continuously adapted due to constraints on schools. The COVID-19 context affected activities at all levels including in-person communications among the Arts Council Creative Schools' design team, the Creative Associates, and the DCU research team for most of the first year of the evaluation, as well as intermittently in the year following. Many practical dimensions, including research activities, had to be abandoned or adapted in the early part of the evaluation. Despite these challenges, almost all of the planned evaluation activities were conducted in a reformulated sequence that was developed in dialogue with the Arts Council. Fortunately, delayed site visits were offset by intensive desk-based work which yielded important insights on the operational dimensions of the initiative overall.

Notes on terminology and data

- Creative Schools operates in a variety of settings, including primary schools, special schools, Youthreach Centres and post-primary schools.
- Creative Associate is a freelance artists, creative practitioner or individuals working in the arts, culture and heritage sectors who has their own arts and creative practice and a deep understanding of creativity and its potential to transform the lives of children and young people. This will include artists and creative practitioners working in a creative capacity in any art form where the individual's primary concern is a high-quality artistic or creative experience for children and young people. As dynamic agents for change, they will be uniquely placed to form sustainable partnerships between teachers, school staff, learners and other partners. They may be individuals working in a freelance capacity or individuals nominated by an organisation in the arts, culture or heritage sectors. Creative Associates will be original thinkers who will match the needs of schools to creative opportunities in their locality. They will identify potential areas for improvement and will inspire, energise and drive schools forward in addressing these. Through this pioneering initiative Creative Associates will have the chance to shape the place of the arts and creativity in Irish schools. Please note: Creative Associates may also be qualified and registered teachers working in primary or post-primary schools in Ireland. Teachers' participation as part of the team of Creative Associates is supported by the Department of Education and Skills. Such applicants must meet specific terms and conditions and must apply as a Teacher Creative Associate. [Arts Council, 2018]

Note:

- *Pupil* refers to children in primary level only (aged 4-12 years approximately)
- *Student* is used to refer to post-primary level enrolment (aged 12-18 years approximately)
- General use of the term *student* and *schools* refers to participants across both primary and post-primary levels.
- All percentages reported are based on *valid responses* only – i.e., the percentage of those who answered a specific question. Thus, for example, if 200 respondents answered some part of a questionnaire, yet only 20 of the 100 who answered a specific question chose the Yes option, then Yes is reported as 20% (20/100) not 10% (20/200).
- All Figures and charts report values rounded to the nearest whole number. In contrast, tables report values to one decimal place.
- Summed values in text are based on non-rounded data (e.g., 30.6 + 30.6 = 61). Thus, there are occasional small differences between summed values in text and the summed values that can be derived from Figures and Tables.

List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

CA	Creative Associate
CSC	Creative Schools Coordinator
DE	Department of Education (from Oct 2020)
DES	Department of Education and Skills (2010-2020)
DCU	Dublin City University
DEIS	Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIRLS	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PSC	Primary School Curriculum
SSE	School Self-Evaluation
TAP	Teacher-Artist Partnership

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1 Introduction

Creativity is a vital aspect of human life as it is foundational to innovation on multiple levels and the capacity of the world to thrive (Zhao, 2015). Creativity is typically defined as the ability to build on existing knowledge, skills and experiences to generate new and original ideas, thoughts and solutions. Featuring in every domain of human interaction, creativity can be observed from the arts to science, engineering to business, language to politics, education to public administration, as well across many other domains. In democratic societies and through democratic processes, creativity can provide an avenue for addressing many issues in education as well as in broader society (Adams & Owens, 2016; Craft, 2001; Jones, 2012; Long et al., 2022). In this regard, creativity is associated with social and emotional factors (Robinson, 2001), life satisfaction (DeNeve & Cooper, 1998), wellbeing (Seligman & Csikzentmihalyi, 2000), increased student achievement (Hattie, 2009), student attendance (Cooper, Benton, & Sharp, 2001) and outcomes in the workplace and labour market (Kautz et al., 2014). Therefore, it is argued that the creative capacity of children, students, teachers should be enhanced and developed, and thus lead to greater innovation, enjoyment and fulfilment for society as a whole (Lucas, 2016; OECD, 2021).

Defining creativity

Broad definitions concur that creativity is something both new or novel, as well as being of worth or task appropriate (Barron, 1955; Burnard & Murphy, 2017; Hennessey & Amabile, 2010; Simonton, 2012). Other characteristics of creativity include being of high quality (Sternberg, 1999), containing elements of surprise (Boden, 2004; Bruner, 1962; Simonton, 2012), features of aesthetics and authenticity (Kharkhurin, 2014), and leading to the making of a product (Plucker, Beghetto, & Dow, 2004).

Elsewhere we see a differentiation between what is termed ‘big C’ creativity which refers to the work of great scientists, inventors and composers such Einstein, da Vinci or Mozart and ‘little c’ (Craft, 2001) which refers to everyday creativity. The latter is particularly applicable to school contexts. Likewise, an elaboration of the big C/little c perspective is provided by Kaufman and Beghetto (2009) who argue that a dualistic perspective overlooks the type of creativity demonstrated by individuals engaged in the process of learning. They propose the considering the term ‘mini c’ to highlight “the importance of recognising the creativity inherent in students’ unique and personally meaningful insights and interpretations as they learn new subject matter” (Kaufman & Beghetto, 2009, p. 4).

In educational settings, the 5-dimensional model of creativity developed by Lucas (2001) is also useful as it builds on the idea of “little c” creativity. In the absence of a strict definition, the Lucas typology can provide a useful rubric for exploring the presence or absence of creativity in the

classroom or school. It is also important to note that the Lucas model was the one that inspired the training model for Creative Schools, from both experiential and conceptual perspectives.

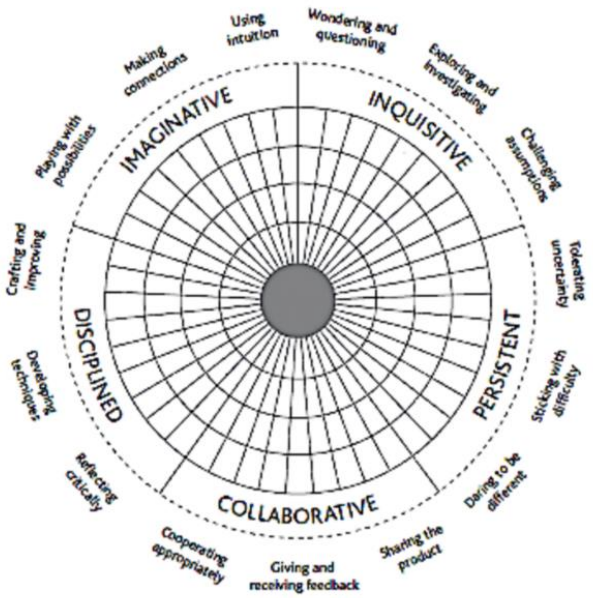


Figure 1.1 The 5-dimensional model of creativity

While Lucas (2001) suggests that creativity spans all domains, others argue that the arts play a pivotal role and that learning in this field can contributed to innovation, creativity and imagination in education (Coolahan, 2008; Robinson, 2013). The inherent characteristics of the arts, that is, in the freedom of exploration, interpretation and creation of ideas and the avoidance of reductionist, binary approaches to form, provides a way of understanding that differs from the sciences and other academic subjects (Winner, Goldstein & Vincent Lancrin, 2013, p.19). In this regard then, arts subjects become closely interwoven with creative initiatives in school settings.

Echoing the resonances between the arts and a holistic sense of wellbeing, a study by Haner et al. (2010) explored the role of arts-based curricula in bullying prevention through the creation of a children's opera. In this context, the power of story, theatre and music were seen as corresponding with a reliable increase in 'bullying knowledge' and a reduction in self-reported victimisation. The authors note how live performances can provide powerful experiential learning experiences and that emotions can be developed vicariously for audience members. In other words, seeing artistic performances with powerful social and emotional and messages may serve to educate for interpersonal creativity.

However, Winner and colleagues (2013) argue that, rather than a utilitarian approach to arts education, it is the intrinsic benefits that should be foregrounded in any policy aspiration when they state that:

> [T]he main justification for arts education is clearly the acquisition of artistic skills – the current priority objective of arts education in the curricula of OECD countries. By artistic skills, we mean not only the technical skills developed in different arts forms (playing an instrument, composing a piece, dancing, choreographing, painting and drawing, acting, etc.) but also the habits of mind and behaviour that are developed in the arts. Arts education matters because people trained in the arts play a significant role in the innovation process in OECD countries: the arts should undoubtedly be one dimension of a country's innovation strategy. Ultimately, however, the arts are an essential part of human heritage and of what makes us human, and it is difficult to imagine an education for better lives without arts education. (pp. 14-15)

Notwithstanding the policy aspirations, Kim (2011) warns of the decline of creativity in schools compared to earlier decades and this is certainly both a question and a concern that might be explored through testing. However, much research points to the fact that creativity can be taught through various strategies (Cropley, 1995, 2011; de Bono Group, 2022, Odena, 2018) and that key factors are the environment (resources, time and emotional environment), and the process (level of structure, support for students). Odena and others (e.g., Burnard & Murphy, 2017; Lucas et al., 2013; Murphy, 2017) argue that creativity can be assessed.

Policy Context of the Creative Schools' Programme

In its most recent social-spatial equity policy, the Arts Council articulates an expansive and inclusive vision for creative expression, seeing it as "a fundamental part of our humanity" and concomitantly, Ireland as "a country where people can confidently exercise their rights to creative and cultural expression and engagement ultimately leading to a richer, more multi-faceted quality of life (Arts Council, Social-spatial equity policy, 2022, p. 13). Among other ambitions, this policy locates the Arts Council within a socio-spatial analytical environment that is cognisant of the role of the arts, the places where arts and creativity can occur, and practical imperatives to achieve such vision.

From historical and contemporary perspectives, several policies across education and the arts reflect a combined focus on the importance of both arts education and creativity for children and young people in Ireland. A sustained emphasis can be traced on the importance of providing children and young people with opportunities to develop their creative and artistic skills as a means of promoting overall wellbeing, both within formal education as well as in other contexts. The importance of collaboration among different governmental departments and agencies in the process is also evident as a means of ensuring complementarity in the approach to arts education.

The first section below briefly outlines some of the key arts policies that predated, and led to, the establishment of Creative Schools. Parallel developments in education policies are then outlined.

Arts in Education Policy

In the 1970s, two significant reports published by the Arts Council (Richards, 1976; Benson, 1979) drew attention to the provision of the arts in Ireland and made recommendations that focused on the development of arts education. Richards' recommendations encompassed the expansion of arts education within schools and the incorporation of additional art subjects into the curriculum, particularly in boys' schools. He also advocated not only for the training of artists, but for the fostering of greater appreciation and comprehension of the arts among all Irish citizens. Building on Richards' work, Benson's report underscored both the significance of the arts in education and the significant lack of attention they were receiving. Further reports and documents followed that reflected dialogue on the place of the arts in education and in the community, including *Art and the Ordinary* (Benson, 1989), *Artist~Schools Guidelines* (2006), a collaborative initiative of the Department of Education and the Arts Council, and *Points of Alignment* (2008). Among the terms of reference for the latter were to advise on "how best to align the Council's strategies for the promotion and encouragement of the arts with the priorities of the formal education system" (p. 8).

Arts in Education Charter

Following many years of dialogue and increasing alignment, The *Arts in Education Charter* (2013) emerged as a landmark outcome of cooperative policy endeavour by the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht in association with the Arts Council. The Charter sought to combine strategies to promote young people's entitlement to a rich world of creativity through the arts and elsewhere. A programme titled *Arts Rich Schools* (ARIS) was included as an action in the charter with responsibility for it assigned to the Arts Council.

Additional initiatives which were also contained in the charter included, the *Arts in Education* portal website which was launched in May 2015 as the key national digital resource for arts and education practice in Ireland. As an open website, it is outward facing and accessible and thus provides an opportunity for teachers, artists, students and the interested public to engage productively with the arts in education. Speaking at the launch, Professor John Coolahan, observed that "The Charter is a landmark attempt at co-operative policy endeavour for the arts-in-education". (Arts Council website. Accessed Nov 22).

Other arts in education initiatives

The relatively low visibility of policy and research in arts and arts education however belies many creative, grassroots activities. Initiatives such as the *Writers-in-Schools* scheme, administered by Poetry Ireland on behalf of the Arts Council for over 20 years, and *Encountering the Arts Ireland*, established in 2008 and with membership drawing largely from the arts and cultural sector, have also advocated for increased provision for the arts in schools for many years.

In education, following the implementation phases of the Primary School Curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999), and the wave of national professional development in the arts that followed in schools (2005-6), a number of voluntary groups—such as the *Association for Creativity and the Arts in Education* (ACAE)—sought to maintain a focus on the arts and creativity

in schools through various advocacy activities. The ACAE was established under the patronage of Michael D. Higgins, President of Ireland and located in Dublin West Education Centre. Comprising teachers and artists, ACAE established an initiative titled the "Creative Schools Award" which stimulated creative processes in teaching and learning across the curriculum. The evidence-based award promoted process over product and held an annual showcase and award ceremony at The Ark, the Children's Cultural Centre, Dublin each year from 2012-2018. Long, (2015) notes how the *Arts Rich Schools* bore a close resemblance to the initiative developed by the ACAE. Other grassroots, voluntary organisations such as the *Society of Music Education in Ireland*, established in 2010, have sought to advocate for and support music education across the formal and non-formal sectors, attracting both musicians and educators to its annual conferences (SMEI.ie, 2023). Similarly, the *Association for Drama in Education* (ADEI.ie) established in 1999, comprising both teachers and artists, promotes drama in education across all levels. Likewise, members of the long-established post-primary subject associations, such as in visual art (Artteachers.ie) that emerged in the 1950s, and music (PPMTA.ie) in 1998, demonstrate commitment, advocacy and leadership for their respective subject areas through the Education Centre network and in their annual conferences.

Creative Ireland

The Creative Ireland Programme is currently the defining, all of government policy initiative that connects people, creativity, and wellbeing and underpins Creative Schools. The programme aims to inspire and transform individuals, places, and communities through creativity by providing opportunities for people to realise their full creative potential. Established in 2017 as a legacy of the state initiative, Ireland 2016, and marking the hundredth anniversary of the Easter Rising, the programme works in partnership with local and national government, cultural and enterprise agencies, and local enterprise to create pathways and opportunities for people and communities to unlock their creative potential. The key structures of the Creative Ireland programme are five pillars as follows: (i) Creative Youth; (ii) Creative Communities; (iii) Creative Industries; (iv) Creative Health and Wellbeing; and (v) Creative Climate Action and Social Sustainability (Creative Ireland, 2023). Of these, Creative Youth provides the overarching national strategy for children and young people's creativity in Ireland.

Creative Youth

The original strategic objectives of Creative Youth 2017-2022 were as follows:

- Supporting collaboration between formal and non-formal approaches to creativity in education;
- Extending the range of creative activities for our young people;
- Embedding the creative process by developing programmes that will enable teachers to help young people learn and apply creative skills and capacities;
- Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers working in Early Years, Primary and Post-Primary Schools.

Building on the success of the first Creative Youth Plan 2017-2022, the more recent Plan (launched in March, 2023) aims to continue providing opportunities for creative engagement for young people from birth-24 years in every aspect of their lives. In addition, the seven strategic objectives of the Plan seek to ensure that children and young people retain "a key voice in decision-making" on its implementation while prioritising "those who are seldom heard and most at risk of disadvantage". Through the Plan, it is envisaged that those charged with nurturing young people, e.g., parents, caregivers, educators, artists, and creative practitioners, will be supported to recognise the centrality and value of creativity in their life experiences.

Development of Creative Schools

As an enactment of *Creative Youth* within first and second level education, the aforementioned concept of *Arts Rich Schools* was subsequently renamed *Scoileanna Ildánaca/Creative Schools* during its design and development in 2018. As such, it was deemed a flagship programme and gave expression to the commitment to close cooperation between the Arts Council, the Department of Education and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

Fostering participatory decision making

Among other ambitions, a key principle in the overarching *Creative Youth* plan is the aim of giving voice in decision-making to children and young people in all aspects of their lives. International legislative frameworks, to which Ireland is a signatory, have inspired such thinking. For instance, clear principles are expressed in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), both of which give the right to children to have a voice in decision-making and to see their views given due weight (Lundy, 2007). All Government departments and agencies, including the Arts Council, are committed to specific actions in the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-making (2015). Hub na nÓg was established by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to build capacity in children and young people's participation in decision-making particularly for those seldom heard and to this end, the Hub devised a model of training based on the Lundy (2007) model of child participation.

The Hub na nÓg training model was provided to CAs and CSCs as part of the training for the Creative Schools initiative for a number of years and as such ensured alignment between Creative Schools and best practice in children and young people's participation.

Creativity in Education Policy

The incorporation of creativity into education policies has become increasingly prominent in recent years. This trend has involved fostering creativity not just in the arts, but across all school subjects, where the teaching of creative problem solving, critical thinking, and innovation are underlined. The Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 (Department of Education, 2022) is an example of this trend, emphasising the use of technology to provide a more creative and interdisciplinary educational experience. The Primary School Curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999) and the updated Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2023) where a broad, integrated arts curriculum is proposed, together with the Junior Cycle framework (DES, 2015) with its explicit

focus on creativity, critical thinking, and independence, both seek to equip students with the skills to apply their creativity in the real world.

Primary School Curriculum

The Primary School Curriculum (Government of Ireland, 1999) acknowledges the significance of developing the complete potential of each child by nurturing and promoting a wide range knowledge, skills and experiences that include children's innate creativity as well their emotional and physical wellbeing. The document also recognises continual advancements in society, thus recognising the need to develop the child's resilience and adaptability through foregrounding and supporting interpersonal and intrapersonal skills, communication skills, critical thinking, adaptability, and creativity to help children to successfully adapt to change.

The PSC also encourages children to appreciate the aesthetic dimension in all subject areas and this is seen to enrich their broader learning experiences and conceptual development. Recognising the unique creativity of each individual is emphasised in a shared rationale for arts education subjects of visual arts, music, drama and dance (as a strand in physical education). Here, the primary curriculum underlines the importance of developing children's creative expression and responses, perceptions, insights, interpretations, and knowledge. School leadership, and specifically the principal, is identified as one who plays a crucial role in motivating and supporting teachers and fostering open communication to establish a sense of ownership in the teaching and learning process.

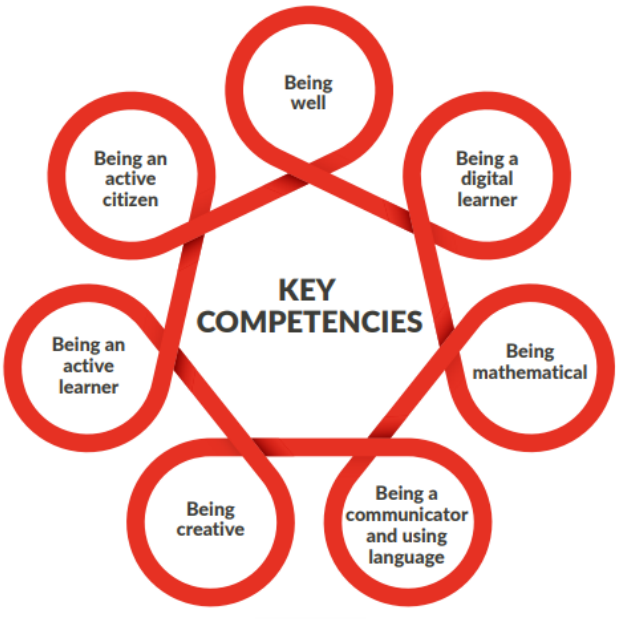


Figure 1.2 Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2023)

A key feature of the PSC (1999) is the lead-in phrase to the curriculum objectives across all eleven subject areas: "The child will be enabled to…". This expression has helped to advance the child-centred philosophy that underpinned the previous curriculum statement published as Curaclam

na Bunscoile (1971), but it foregrounded and reframed child-centred pedagogy more explicitly. The Draft Primary Curriculum Framework (NCCA, 2020) builds on its predecessor while providing a more consolidated, inclusive and expansive rationale. Here, key competencies are outlined, including one explicitly focused on creativity ("Being Creative") together with associated attributes, listed as: "Participating in and enjoying creative and cultural experiences; Being curious, Being imaginative; Being innovative; Using creative processes; and Exploring alternative ways of communicating". The current delineated subjects within arts education are referenced as Visual Arts, Music and Drama, but wider arts practices are also mentioned in parenthesis as "And other aspects, e.g., Dance, Film and Digital Media" thus presenting a much broader palette of potential arts subjects and creative practices within the curriculum framework. In addition, an integrated arts approach is proposed for junior classes, while senior classes may engage with subject areas both individually as well as in integrated forms. Such framing of curriculum allows for continuing opportunities to place the child at the centre of the teaching and learning experiences in primary schools and to foster creativity in multiple ways.

Junior Cycle Framework (DES, 2015)

At Junior Cycle level, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) presents eight key principles for Junior Cycle education, many of which align with policy suggestions and recommendations from the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) reports and Education Policy Outlook Ireland, placing emphasis on and improving equity, quality, continuity, development and assessment for students in second level education. Eight principles underpin the Framework for Junior Cycle. These principles inform the planning for as well as the development and the implementation of junior cycle programmes in all schools. The inclusion of creativity as one of the key principles is significant in that it recognises it as fundamental to student learning (Figure 1.3).

Figure 1.3 Principles for Junior Cycle Education

Source: NCCA (2015) A Framework for Junior Cycle

In line with the key principles, the Framework identifies eight key skills of Junior Cycle. In addition to literacy and numeracy, which are highlighted as fundamental to student development, the Framework identifies eight key skills required for successful learning by students across the curriculum, one of which is "being creative". Here the JC Framework specifies the following key elements to be embedded in student learning:

- Imagining;
- Exploring options and alternatives;
- Implementing ideas and taking action;
- Learning creatively;
- Stimulating creativity using digital technology. (See Figure 1.4)

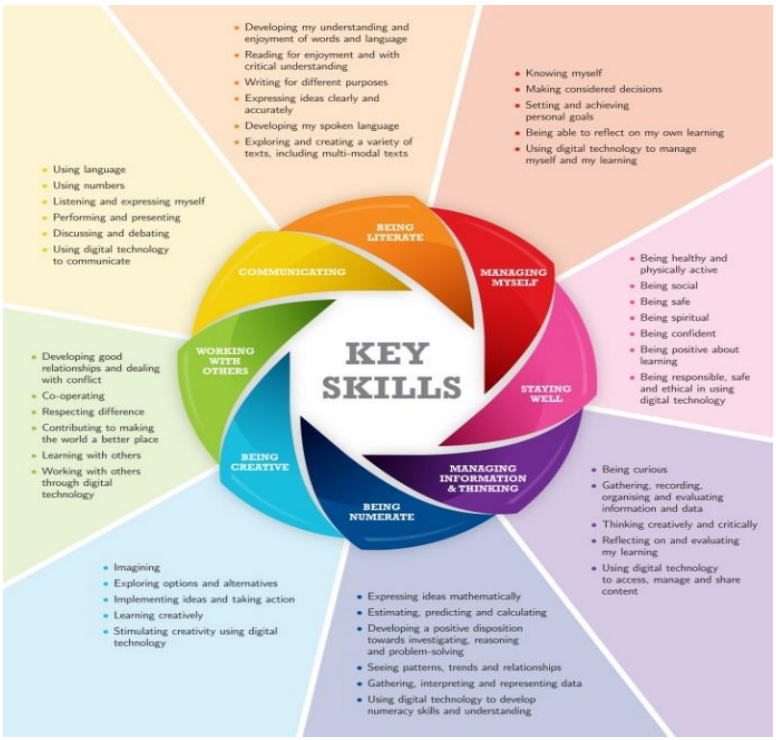


Figure 1.4 Key Skills for Junior Cycle Education

Source: NCCA (2012) A Framework for Junior Cycle

The document states that this skill enables learners to develop their imagination and creativity as they explore different ways of doing things and of thinking. Students learn to stay with challenges or tasks to completion and to learn from their experiences. Again, it is argued here that promoting creativity has the potential to facilitate attainment of all the other key skills.

In summary, the proposed Junior Cycle reform promises a student-centred approach to learning and assessment, an increased emphasis on active teaching and learning methodologies, deeper learning, a greater choice in curriculum and the embedding of key skills. In terms of creativity, the curricular changes demonstrate a much greater emphasis on creativity and imagination than ever before and, as such, the changes offer greater opportunities for the promotion of creativity within the formal education system.

Artist Residencies supported by the Department of Education via Education Centres

In 2021, the Department of Education developed a model for artist residencies in schools as a dimension of arts-in-education, titled the BLAST (Bringing Live Artists to Students and Teachers) Residency Programme to enable up to 400 artist residencies in schools, with administrative support from the Education Centre network. This programme also sought to support the integration of the principles and key skills outlined in the Arts in Education Charter (2013) and the Creative Youth pillar of the Creative Ireland Programme (2017-2022; 2023-2027). Subsequently, the BLAST programme was extended twice—in 2022 and 2023.

Creative Clusters is also an initiative of the Department of Education, led by, and in partnership with, the Association of Teacher Education Centres Ireland (ATECI), and funded through the Schools Excellence Fund. Established in 2018, Creative Clusters typically consists of between three and five schools collaborating on the design, implementation, evaluation and dissemination of an innovative creative-learning project which supports them to address a common issue or challenge. Each school is afforded the expertise of a facilitator, artist or creative to facilitate a programme of activities for their students. An evaluation of the pilot phase found the programme to have potential for embedding creativity in schools and the school principal to be the "the single most significant enabler" in that regard (Morrissey, 2022, p. 10).

Digital Strategy for Schools

The Department of Education and Skills published The Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020 Enhancing Teaching Learning and Assessment in October 2015 to underpin the continuing development of the ICT in Schools programme. The Digital Strategy for Schools provided a rationale and a Government action plan for integrating ICT into teaching, learning and assessment practices in schools over five years. The strategy built on previous strategies in the area of ICT integration and was thus interlinked with the overall strategy of the DES in a number of key areas including curriculum implementation, skills development, teacher education and learner outcomes, and creativity more broadly.

Following the earlier action plans and strategies, the most recent Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 continues to build on the substantial progress that has been made to date by its predecessor. Key elements of the 2027 Plan include the idea of "*pedagogy first technology second*" (emphasis added) and where technology serves to "enhance teaching, learning and assessment…" beyond "merely replicating traditional practices" (p. 22). The Plan specifically advocates for the use of technologies both to support creativity, and to provide opportunities for creative usage of technologies.

Wellbeing policy

Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2018–2023 (DES, 2018)

The Creative Ireland programme is conceptualised as a wellbeing programme. With this in mind, consideration of policies on wellbeing in education is essential. The current Department of Education policy (DES, 2018) positions wellbeing as an overarching structure encompassing existing, ongoing and developing work in wellbeing as a topic in itself, as well as across the curriculum, i.e., in *Aistear*: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, in the Social Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum at primary level, and in the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Programme at postprimary level. Wellbeing comprises many interrelated aspects including being active, responsible, connected, resilient, appreciated, respected and aware (DES & NCCA, 2017). The following definition of wellbeing is cited in the guidelines and aims to take account of its multi-dimensional nature (DES, 2018, p. 10).

> Wellbeing is present when a person realises their potential, is resilient in dealing with the normal stresses of their life, takes care of their physical wellbeing and has a sense of

> purpose, connection and belonging to a wider community. It is a fluid way of being and needs nurturing throughout life. (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2001)

In acknowledgement of the tenet that schools enable the development of the 'whole child', there is a recognition of the individual and societal dimensions of children's wellbeing, as well as their emotional and cognitive worlds (OECD, 2014). Of relevance to the current evaluation are the protective factors and risk factors that may feature in school experiences together with the roles that educators play. These factors are identified below:

Protective factors include:

- positive relationships with peers and teachers – including positive teacher classroom management strategies and a sharing of positive behaviour management practices with parents
- a sense of belonging, security and connectedness to school through a positive school climate and participation in school and community activities
- opportunities for social and emotional learning including the development of attention and planning, self-awareness, self-management, relationships, and responsible decision-making skills (CASEL, 2015)
- opportunities for the development of knowledge and skills providing a sense of mastery and self-efficacy (Shonkoff et al, 2015)
- fostering expectations, recognising contributions, effort and achievement and providing opportunities for success
- wellbeing of school personnel
- protocols and support systems that proactively support children and their families should difficulties arise
- opportunities to develop the necessary skills to cope with using online technology in a safe and appropriate way
- opportunities to develop skills to manage stress that may be linked to schoolwork.

Risk factors include:

- disengagement, absenteeism, isolation and alienation
- violence/aggression, bullying and relationship difficulties
- low achievement/learning difficulties/special educational needs including social, emotional and behavioural needs
- cultural differences
- school transitions
- poor connection between family and school
- harsh and inconsistent discipline
- lack of opportunity to develop social and emotional learning, including problem solving and coping skills (DES, 2018, pp. 12-13)

In light of this policy, it is clear that a proactive approach to developing protective factors may offset some of the risk factors in fostering student wellbeing, whilst recognising that experiences in the arts can be instrumental in various ways through generating stronger engagement and participation in school experiences.

Research on connections between the arts and wellbeing

While a comprehensive review of children's and young people's experiences of education and the arts is beyond the scope of the current study, selected research perspectives below are relevant for current research in that they shed light on factors impacting creative experiences, such as socioeconomic factors and the role of wellbeing in young people's lives. For example, a scoping review conducted by the World Health Organisation, synthesises global evidence on the role of the arts in improving health and wellbeing, with a specific focus on the WHO European Region. Drawing from a wide range of study designs, including study designs spanning quantitative and qualitative approaches, e.g., case studies, small-scale cross-sectional surveys, nationally representative longitudinal cohort studies, community-wide ethnographies and randomised controlled trials, the findings from more than 3,000 studies point to "a major role for the arts in the prevention of ill health, promotion of health, and management and treatment of illness across the lifespan" (Fancourt & Finn, 2019). More specifically, a large body of research points to the many ways in which engagement with the arts can enhance all types of individual and social wellbeing, for instance through singing, group drumming, arts and crafts, magic, dancing, photography and visits to cultural heritage sites.

Growing up in Ireland (Arts Council/ESRI, 2016)

Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) is the national longitudinal study of children and young people in Ireland that is nationally representative with over 20,000 cohort members. Previously an interdepartmental initiative, GUI is currently funded by the Government of Ireland through the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY, 2023).

Research conducted by the ESRI/Arts Council in 2018 based on the Growing Up in Ireland study sought to assess arts and cultural participation specifically among 3, 5, 9 and 13-year-olds. The study measured the impact of arts and cultural participation on the cognitive development and emotional wellbeing of children and young people in Ireland. The research concluded that arts and cultural participation leads to a range of positive outcomes for children, both in terms of their cognitive development and their wellbeing. Some key findings that are relevant for the current evaluation draw attention to the following indicators:

- Socio-economic: children from more advantaged families are much more likely to engage in activities such as reading and attending music or drama classes that enhance their within-school learning, thus contributing to a social gap in achievement;
- Gender: the highly gendered nature of children's participation in arts and culture reveals that girls are much more likely to participate than boys from as young an age as three;

- Within and Outside of School: children who have exposure to arts and culture during school time are more likely to engage in out-of-school cultural activities;
- School Type: children in smaller schools currently have fewer opportunities to engage in arts and cultural activities, prompting the need for linking school and community arts;
- Early Years: the importance of ensuring that children's participation in arts and culture is understood as part of a quality preschool experience;
- Role of Libraries: The high level of library use by families with young children across the country confirms that libraries are an important community resource.

Most importantly, barriers to engagement in arts and cultural activities are also identified as:

- Economic: related to household income, with most structured cultural activities outside of school requiring payment;
- Linguistic: related to language for immigrant families with young children.
- Disability: related to children with special educational needs who are less likely to access structured cultural activities.

These findings are significant in relation to children and young people's experiences of, and access to the arts in Ireland. In particular, access to the arts for children (and boys moreso than girls) who are from disadvantaged contexts, immigrant families, have special education needs, or are attending small schools might be targeted for creative initiatives in schools in particular.

Research on Postprimary Students' Wellbeing in Ireland

While the ambitions of the policy initiatives outlined above reflect positive developments in the education sector, they are set in sharp relief when set alongside recent research that explores the wellbeing of 3,000 students aged between 12 and 19 at postprimary level in Ireland. In a study by Burke and Minton (2019), it was found that that the wellbeing of students steadily declines as they progress through secondary school, up to their final exams. Furthermore, the decline has been found to be sharper for girls than for boys. The results indicate a small but steady decrease in wellbeing from junior (aged 12 to 13), through to the middle years (14- to 16-year-olds) and senior groups (17- to 19-year-olds). Predictably, the authors state, age-related increases in measures of negative emotions and loneliness were found. In comparison to boys, girls reported lower levels of wellbeing across the board, and higher levels of negative emotions and loneliness. These findings concur with research conducted by Nolan (2021). However, Nolan also found that engagement in cultural activities (such as drama or music clubs) is associated with greater life satisfaction at age 17. An additional finding was that the availability of good, local facilities, are also associated with higher levels of wellbeing.

Voice of the Child

"Voice" is not enough (Lundy, 2007)

As outlined in Chapter 1, the observing the voice of the child in the implementation of Creative Schools was an important dimension from the outset. Likewise, capturing the voice of the child in interview data was also central to this evaluation.

In an article published in the British Educational Research Journal in 2007, Laura Lundy offered a critique of interpretations of Article 12 of UNCRC especially where this was expressed as "pupil voice". She argued that this is an incomplete representation of Article 12. Rather, she argued, the strength of the Article lies in the possibility for children to determine the issues that affect them, through consultation—from classrooms, to schools to educational legislation. Lundy contends that such ideals are not always implemented in practice. She also highlights Article 42 where all articles of the UNCRC must be made known to all, yet this right is commonly infringed, possibly due to a perceived threat to institutional authority and its disciplinary power structures as well as an undermining of school policy including teachers' status. Lundy proposes a model to fully conceptualise all facets of Article 12. This involves provisions to allow for Space, Voice, Audience and Influence on the part of pupils.

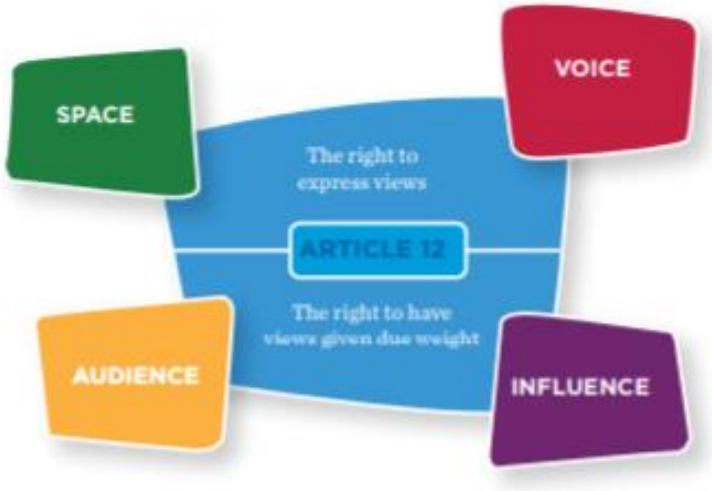


Figure 3.4 The Lundy Model of Child Participation (2007)

Lundy's model provides a way of conceptualising Article 12 of the UNCRC which is intended to focus educational decision-makers on the distinct, albeit interrelated, elements of the provision. The four elements have a rational chronological order:

> **SPACE**: Children must be given safe, inclusive opportunities to form and express their view.
> **VOICE**: Children must be facilitated to express their view.
> **AUDIENCE**: The view must be listened to.
> **INFLUENCE**: The view must be acted upon, as appropriate.

Source: National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision making (2015-2020).

Fortune (2019) reminds that in accordance with The Education Act (1998), a school's board of management must "facilitate the involvement of the students in the operation of the school, having regard to the age and experience of the students, in association with their parents and teachers" (Sect. 27 (2) p. 26). Related to this, the Ombudsman for Children was established for

the purpose of safeguarding the rights of children in Ireland. Their report, Submission of the Ombudsman for Children's Office Consultation Paper, DES, RE: Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2018 draws from Article 12 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) referring to participation. Participation is one of the general principles of these rights. Other principles include best interests of the child (Article 3), non-discrimination (Article 2) as well as survival and development (Article 6). Article 12 specifically refers to respect for the views of the child.

It should be noted that the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) is a complaints body and it receives most complaints in the area of education. The Submission of the Ombudsman for Children's Office Consultation Paper, DES, RE: Statement of Strategy 2016 – 2018 recommends that the capacity of school management and staff should be developed and strengthened. A goal of the current evaluation has been to highlight the potential opportunities, benefits and learning experiences for all participants in engagement with Creative Schools initiative.

Conclusion

In recent years, there has been a growing emphasis on incorporating creativity into a wide range of both arts and education policies. In the arts, the establishment of Creative Ireland as an all-of-government policy (2017-2027), including an express focus on youth, has contributed to the design of the Creative Schools programme. Equally, some of the parallel trends in education have led an increased emphasis on fostering creativity across all subjects, not only in the arts, but also in teaching for creative problem solving and critical thinking more generally, and innovation in subjects such as science, mathematics and broader social and environmental studies. Additionally, the curriculum framework at primary level (DE, 2023) points to the importance of creativity as a "key competence" that is related to art education but is also found across other subject domains. Likewise, the Digital Strategy for Schools to 2027 (DE, 2022) illustrates a broader tendency towards embedding technologies across all subject areas to provide a more creative, integrated and interdisciplinary educational experience. Creativity is also considered to be an important aspect of the Junior Cycle (DES, 2015) in its explicit focus on creativity as one of the key themes, together with related concepts of enabling critical and independent thinking, as well as curiosity and open-mindedness, whilst also encouraging students' capacities to develop their own ideas and perspectives. On the face of it, the Junior Cycle aims to create an environment that promotes creativity, curiosity and innovation in students, and provide them with the skills and knowledge to apply their creativity in real-world contexts. However, research on wellbeing points to challenges for students as they progress through school, and for girls particular in realising their full potential. A raft of research also highlights the persistence of systemic economic, linguistic and abelist barriers that inhibit children's access to the arts and the development of their creative potential.

Chapter 2 Creative Processes in Education

This chapter draws attention to creative teaching and learning in education settings. Ideas in this section build on the beliefs that while individuals may originate and demonstrate creative outputs, a conceptualisation of creativity in education does not entail a focus on 'genius' but rather that creativity is considered a sociocultural construct (Glăveanu, 2018) that can be taught and learned through a focus on the classroom climate, the pedagogical processes involved, and sensitivity to the learner's stage of development.

The creative process

The defining features of a generic creative process can vary depending on the theories and perspectives used to define creativity. However, some common features that are often mentioned in the literature include:

- Originality: The idea or solution being generated must be new and unique.
- Flexibility: The ability to consider multiple perspectives and generate a range of different ideas or solutions.
- Elaboration: The ability to elaborate on an idea or solution, to add detail and complexity.
- Persistence: The ability to persist in the face of obstacles and setbacks in order to bring an idea or solution to fruition.
- Risk-taking: The willingness to take risks and consider unconventional ideas or solutions.
- Evaluation: The ability to evaluate the potential of an idea or solution and make decisions about whether to pursue it further.

These features are based on several theories of creativity such as Wallas' (1926) model of the creative process, Guilford's (1950) distinction between convergent and divergent thinking, and Csikszentmihalyi's (1988) theory of the flow state. Additionally, some cognitive theories such as Sternberg's (1988) theory of successful intelligence also highlights the importance of creative thinking.

Notwithstanding the many efforts to conceptualise the creative process, Botella and Lubart (2015) warn of the risk of creating a "uniform" or definitive model of how to be creative. These authors note that while some creative processes may be transferable to some individuals, one should not assume that all individuals would pursue a similar process. These authors also note how creative processes differ across different domains, cultures, personalities and tasks, and therefore prescriptive approaches should be avoided (Botella et al., 2018).

While considerations of the creative process in wider society are of interest, for the purpose of this study and its focus on schools, it is important to hone in on creative processes for teachers, learners and other educators, including Creative Associates.

Creative processes in the classroom

Cropley (1995, 2011) identified a number of features of educational contexts that teachers should employ in order to foster creativity in the classroom. Such approaches focus on developing expertise or knowledge in a domain, creativity-related skills and abilities, motivation and self-confidence, and are outlined in the following section.

Educative, creative process vs pseudo-creativity

Cropley (1995) draws attention to the need for teachers to focus on teaching students how to achieve effective 'surprise' as this is a central element of creativity. Effective surprise entails some degree of novelty that evokes surprise, but it is also must be relevant to a domain and effective in how it is employed. In addition, given that creativity requires communication and validation, teachers need to ensure that when students seek to create something novel and effective that the processes occur ethically. The model of creativity to achieve effective surprise includes steps in the creative process, such as preparation, incubation, inspiration, and verification, in addition to communication and validation. Much like scientific processes of investigation, or stages in a creative writing process, teachers are advised to guide students in gathering information, thinking specifically about their subject matter, engaging in problem posing and problem solving, and finally, evaluating their process and communicating the outcome to others in the 'real world'. While some surprising element of a creative process or product may be novel to the learner, it may not be so novel outside the classroom. Again, this is where the role of the teacher is vital in contextualising the extent to which something novel is merely unconventional, and thus a kind of pseudo-creativity, versus a more genuinely novel creation that still aligns with the conventions of the domain.

Expressive and technical creativity

Heinelt (1974) and Taylor (1975) both made distinctions that help to differentiate between effective and ineffective novelty in creativity. For example, Heinelt distinguished between pseudo-creativity and quasi-creativity, with the former involving mere unconventionality and the latter involving fantasy and properties of genuine creativity. Taylor described five levels of creativity: (i) expressive spontaneity as uninhibited production of ideas; (ii) technical creativity as exceptional skill with language or tools; (iii) inventive creativity as an adaptation of something already known for a new purpose; (iv) innovative creativity which involves pushing the boundaries of a discipline to develop new ideas; and finally (v) emergent creativity which can lead to greater conceptual development of principles and paradigms. Of these, the first: *expressive spontaneity and technical creativity*, are everyday phenomena that Cropley believes can be easily fostered in schools. However, he recommends that teachers should aim to encourage inventive creativity and at least some elements of innovative and emergent creativity. Undoubtedly, many subjects areas lend themselves to expressive spontaneity and technical creativity, and the challenge for teachers then is to afford space, time and contexts to challenge students to extend their thinking beyond the normal, well-worn paths of school subject matter.

Assimilative and accommodative creativity

A study by Rejskind, Rapagna, and Gold (1992) emphasised the importance of distinguishing between assimilative and accommodative creativity in the context of education, building on Piagetian theories. Assimilative creativity involves expanding and enriching existing knowledge of the world to 'fit' the idea that is already known. Accommodative creativity on the other hand is more substantial and involves creating new ways of seeing the world. The distinction is useful for educators because it highlights the need to promote both types of creativity in order to foster overall creativity in students.

Sudden inspiration versus hard work

In a school context, beliefs concerning the extent to which creativity is fostered are important to consider. For example, whether one believes that creativity occurs through (i) 'sudden inspiration', (ii) 'a result of hard work', or (iii) halfway between the first two (Tardif & Sternberg, 1988) has an impact on one's self-efficacy in relation to becoming creative. From a teacher's perspective, Cropley (1995) argues that a view that creativity is only achieved through sudden inspiration is unsound since it suggests a passive approach by the teacher and does not provide a basis for maintaining a commitment to developing students' intellectual capacities. Consequently, teachers are advised to consider a balance of inspiration, hard work and knowledge of a field when fostering creative thinking in students. In the same vein, teachers need to recognise that it is their role to motivate and sustain students' efforts and immersion in a topic so that they acquire the necessary foundation for further development in the field.

The role of subject knowledge

An important dimension of creativity development is the role of subject knowledge within a field. Again, the role of the teacher is uppermost. As cited in Cropley (1995, n.p.):

> a child would be greatly aided in displaying musical creativity if it could play a musical instrument, literary creativity requires knowledge of language, scientific creativity knowledge of mathematics or other areas. A large number of researchers have argued that, in addition to knowledge, creativity is the result of systematic cognitive processes.

Therefore, deep subject knowledge would seem to be a prerequisite for creativity to occur. This dimension may be of particular importance in relation to the development of musical creativity.

Problem finding

Related to the idea of deep subject knowledge is the idea of problem finding which involves recognition that a problem exists, producing a large number of relevant ideas, evaluating the ideas, and drawing appropriate conclusions. Developing the capacity to find good problems is an important skill that applies to many disciplines including artistic creativity (Tardif and Sternberg, 1988; Runco and Okuda, 1988) and is dependent on deep knowledge of the field in the first instance. A key observation from this research is the emphasis on encouraging students to find

problems, to recognise their inherent quality and potential for resolution. Such work is considered integral to fostering creativity.

Convergent and divergent thinking

Guilford's (1950) distinction between convergent and divergent thinking is one of the best known definitions of creative thinking. Convergent thinking involves applying conventional logic to a number of elements of information in order to find the definitive answer implied by the available information. The process requires a narrowing down of options to arrive at a single correct answer. On the other hand, divergent thinking involves inventing answers by extending available information and noticing unexpected aspects. The process involves generating multiple possibilities and ideas from a given piece of information. Divergent thinking allows for multiple answers and solutions, as each individual may suggest a range of different solutions. This distinction highlights the importance of both convergent and divergent thinking in the creative process.

Places and Spaces that Promote Creative Skills and Wellbeing

This section draws attention to aspects of the learning environment – the classroom climate, thinking environment, the physical environment and the relational environment.

The classroom climate

The classroom is considered the key starting point for creativity in schools on a day to day level. It is a significant space in the lifeworld of the child or student that frames the social context of their learning.

The atmosphere of the classroom, known as the classroom climate, can either foster or inhibit creativity, depending on how it is managed. Creativity is characterised by a willingness to think daringly and be open-minded. Therefore, to foster classroom climate, the teacher needs to foster an atmosphere where such expression and interaction is accepted as the norm. In turn, this can influence the thinking skills and motivations of other students. Likewise, students need to be aware of how they contribute to the classroom climate and need to see their role as integral to the endeavour. Cropley (1995) acknowledges that fostering such characteristics may be difficult in traditional classroom settings where the teacher leads the learning and where curricula or subject matter is carefully prescribed, where timetables are strict, and where expectations of student behaviour require a high level of student conformity and compliance.

The thinking environment

Davies et al (2013) sought evidence identifying the most effective learning environments and conditions which promote creative skills development in children and young people. Creative environments have been found to have a positive impact on pupils' academic attainment and progress, particularly in the case of lower-achieving students. In this context, a 'learning environment' is understood as extending beyond the physical architecture of the space in which

learning takes place (Dudek, 2000) to encompass psychosocial and pedagogical features (Fraser & Fisher, 1982; Roth, 2000) as well as the influence of places and people outside the school. A professional learning culture provides opportunities for teachers to take risks in a supportive environment (Davies et al., 2013).

The phrase 'creative skills' was interpreted broadly to include cognitive and practical elements. Here, five aspects of creative skills emerged:

(i) Creative thinking (Torrance, 1977): the ability to come up with new and original ideas;
(ii) Creative thought processes (Mumford, et al, 1991): the specific methods or techniques used to generate those ideas;
(iii) Creative problem-solving skills (Williamson, 2011): thinking 'outside the box' to resolve problems;
(iv) Creative learning (Jeffrey, 2006): the use of multiple methods to enable students to be actively engaged in their own learning process, taking ownership of their own education, and making connections between different subjects and real-world scenarios;
(v) Possibility thinking (Craft, 2000): an approach where a positive mindset encourages a focus on a wide range of possibilities, coupled with a focus on potential solutions and opportunities, rather than problems and limitations.

The physical environment: School gardens as creative spaces

In relation to the physical architecture of schools, and looking at the intersection of creativity and wellbeing, school gardens are often proposed as sites for various approaches to creative outdoor learning, progressive and experiential education, and sensory experiences. Literature on children's gardening points to positive outcomes of such initiatives in the areas of social and environmental knowledge and food behaviour, including the fostering of more positive attitude towards healthier eating and trying out new foods by both children and young people. Involvement of parents in garden activities has also been reported in many countries (Chan, Tan & Gong, 2022).

A systematic review of 22 peer-reviewed published papers found positive nutritional benefits for children and adolescents overall as a result of participation in school garden activities. This included fruit and vegetable intake, a focus on knowledge/attitudes, as well as willingness to try new foods. The authors caution that any beneficial impact on physical activity and sedentary behaviours, life skills, academic performance, and anthropometric metrics are as yet unclear due to limited evidence. Such outcomes cohere very well with the "Healthy Ireland" policy. Interestingly, none of the studies in this review (Zeng & Gallarza, 2022) explicitly cite benefits in relation to children's creativity skills development. This may be simply due to the fact that creativity was not a construct of interest to the researchers in relation to their study.

On the other hand, school gardening activities that have included cooking lessons, nutrition education and activities to promote more positive attitudes towards the consumption of fruit

and vegetables have demonstrated beneficial effects on children's knowledge and acceptability of fruit and vegetables. However, parental involvement, the duration of the programme and age of the children at the beginning of the intervention have all found to be factors that influence the findings overall (Berezowitz et al., 2015). Kirkland et al (2018) also support the idea that school-based gardening and nutrition programmes can be effective in promoting healthy eating habits and children's wellbeing especially where they provide opportunities to learn about healthy food choices and how to grow food that the children are likely to eat. Again, they call for more research to identify best practices for implementation in schools and for tracking any long-term outcomes of programmes.

While such activities do not necessarily point to increased creativity skills or dispositions, one might infer that positive, enthusiastic learning in sites other than regular classrooms that involve children and students in practical, open-ended tasks would be interesting and motivational for learners as a contrast to their normal, sedentary, learning activities. Moreover, practical experiences in growing different foods, and trying out foods that they might not otherwise experience (e.g., various salad vegetables) could lead to more positive dispositions towards not just gardening, but also towards adapting environments creatively and productively. However, a key aspect in developing enthusiasm for gardening lies in teachers' "horticultural confidence" (Blair, 2009) which can vary according to the supports available in the educational context in question.

In the Irish context, Austin (2022) has observed how schools use their gardens in a variety of imaginative ways to encourage children's development. In her recent study, she noted the factors that drive garden success and enable schools to overcome associated challenges. Here, she sees leadership from the school principal as vital in the first instance, together with a team approach that involves key staff who lead the project, supported by other teachers as well as the wider school community. Austin identifies the essential external support that may include resources and advice or funding. Determination and vision are also important in overcoming challenges that invariably arise when seeking to initiate a change to the school environment through gardening. However, the author concludes that school gardens are valued by teachers in several ways as they create spaces for outdoor learning, pastoral activity, school and community involvement, and visual or sensory appeal to both the school and the community (Austin, 2022).

The relational environment: Restorative practices

Restorative practices have featured in many Irish educational settings in recent years, notably in post-primary schools. The roots of restorative practice (RP) can be found in a variety of cultural and philosophical traditions, and more latterly in the restorative justice movement. The International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) defines restorative practice as "the science of restoring and developing social capital, social discipline, emotional wellbeing and civic participation through participatory learning and decision-making" (Wachtel, 2005, p. 86). Currently, restorative practices are used in schools, criminal justice systems and other settings with the aim of rebuilding and repairing relationships communities through constructive communication, active engagement and collaboration (Wachtel, 2013). Restorative Practices

Ireland supports a continuum of restorative practices that features restorative language and conversations at the more informal and universal end of the continuum, and facilitated restorative circles, meetings and conferences at the more formal and targeted end (RPI, 2021, p. 4). Furthermore, professional development for primary and post-primary teachers in RP is specifically offered through the PDST as a dynamic model that enables schools to become 'a restorative school' (PDST, 2023). By promoting open dialogue and empathy, restorative practices are seen to create a safe and supportive environment for individuals to express their thoughts and ideas freely.

Research has found that a RP ethos can strengthen the relationships between the school principal and other staff members as well as helping to engage students from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds. The associated processes help in the development of schools, enabling the voice of young people, promoting common themes, and the involvement of interdisciplinary and multi-agency working (Wilson, 2011).

While engagement with restorative practices is not a precondition for schools' development of creative practices, there can be a natural connection between the two in that where tensions between staff or students are addressed and resolved, and students feel safe and comfortable in expressing views, emergent ideas can be productively channelled. Consequently, the socio-emotional environment is more likely to support and foster fresh thinking, collaboration and problem-solving on many levels. In turn, such an ethos is more likely to lead to creative processes and outcomes in the school.

Conclusion: creativity as a sociocultural and developmental construct

In bringing the aforementioned theories of creative processes in education together, it is important to maintain a view of creativity as a sociocultural and developmental construct (Glăveanu, 2018) that moves away from individualist paradigms of the creative genius to more contemporary views of creativity as residing beyond the individual. From the point of view of schools and the nurturing of creative processes, the emphasis should lie on the cultivation of climates and contexts for creativity for the many, rather than for the individual alone. To this end, Glăveanu recommends that we develop in education "more emic or local understandings of creativity instead of simply 'importing' theories and models developed in other geographical and cultural places" (p. 30).

A large body of research points to ways in which creativity affords children and young people an opportunity to adapt and become agents of change in their own rapidly changing worlds. In education settings, creativity is seen as a multidimensional concept that encompasses creative thinking, creative thought processes, creative problem-solving, creative learning and possibility thinking. It is argued that teachers should strive to develop a range of skills and dispositions that can enable children and young people to develop creativity.

Consideration of the physical structure of schools draws attention to the environment and schools grounds where school gardens can provide a practical outlet for creative thinking, creative processes and creative structures. Conversely, from an interpersonal perspective, restorative practices can also inform the sociocultural workings of the school in subliminal ways. Perspectives on restorative practices cohere with creative processes in that a supportive environment that fosters open communication, diverse perspectives, trust and active listening can form the bedrock for enabling students to express their ideas freely and promote collaborative creativity. Similarly, when fostered in schools, creativity can lead to a lifelong love for learning, mastery of specific domains, and the ability to make connections across different fields and subject matter. Taken together, these characteristics and abilities are desirable for all learners in becoming creative, productive and healthy members of society and schools are therefore important places to highlight and strengthen creativity.

Chapter 3 Evaluation Methodology

In line with the RFT document for this study, the adoption of a mixed methods research approach was employed to explore the extent to which the impact of participation in the Creative Schools initiative is evident for the children, young people and their teachers in the participating schools. As the purpose of the evaluation was to focus on both process and impact, in order that lessons learned throughout the earlier stages that could be applied to those schools continuing the programme and/or joining the programme at a later date (RFT, p. 22), the approach was designed as a formative evaluation (Mertens, 2015) and conducted primarily for the purposes of programme improvement. Typically, formative evaluations are conducted during the development and implementation of the programme and are reported to in-house staff that can use the information to improve the programme. This chapter should be read in conduction with the Creative Schools *Technical Report* (Eivers and Murphy, 2022).

The evaluation involved a dialogic process from the outset to ensure understanding of an evolving initiative from the perspective of the design team in the Arts Council and the corresponding experiences in schools. However, COVID-19 had a significant impact on educational institutions globally (UN, 2022). Due to perceived external accountability pressures, many schools felt obliged to narrow curriculum to focus on priority areas (Nelson et al., 2021), pivot to online learning, manage expectations in relation to the activity that could take place and restrict visitors to schools. Such intensive redesign of organisational, educational and health-related factors in schools required a sharp focus on resource needs and the prioritisation of many dimensions of curriculum. For the evaluation team, the approach to the evaluation had to consider how Creative Schools could operate in contexts where schools were closed, and where various types of learning were now taking place online. The team also had to consider what activities and events might be deferred or cancelled in the context of COVID-19, as well as the new situations and readaptations once schools reopened. In this regard, the evaluation team were dependent on information from schools, and this varied. Consequently, developing shared understandings of the process was integral to the building of trust and collaboration between the evaluator and evaluee to ensure the validity and trustworthiness of the data.

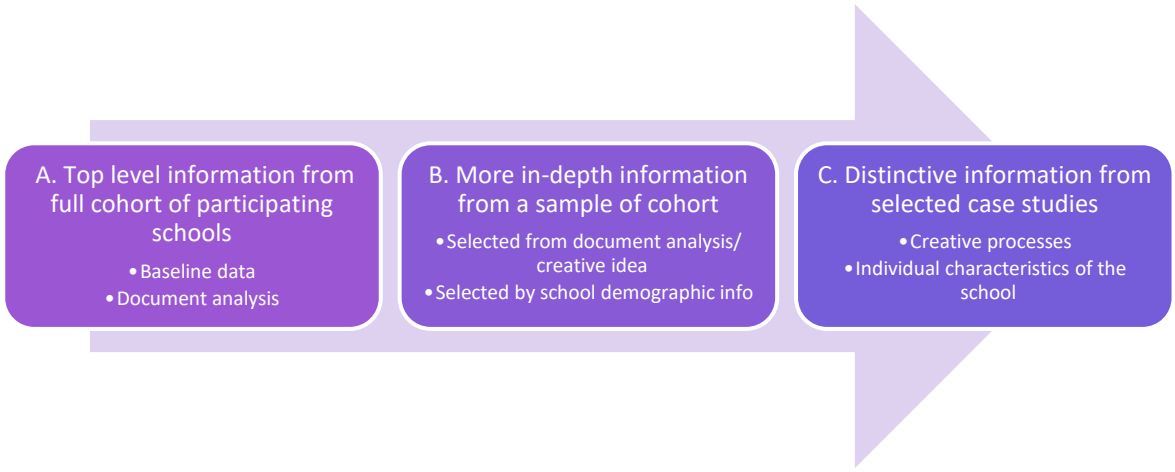
A first step in the evaluation was the need to focus on the selection of schools, the representativeness of the schools on a national level, and the practices that were planned and undertaken in schools. In this regard, the recommendations of the ESRI (2016) study in terms of addressing issues of equitable participation of pupils and children from DEIS backgrounds also needed to be undertaken. Following the document analysis stage, surveys were conducted to collate 'top level' data at the beginning and end of the project. The surveys were based on representative samples of participants using careful sampling techniques.

In addition to quantitative approaches, case studies based on selected sites, involving interviews and various qualitative data gathering methods with the key stakeholders, i.e., pupils, students, teachers, principals and creative associates were provided to add depth to the quantitative data.

Sampling Design

The precise detail of the sampling design is outlined in the Technical Report (Eivers & Murphy, 2022). The main thrust of the design involved a sequential model which enabled a progressively deeper understanding of the data at each stage from the top-level document analysis of application forms, to the more detailed surveys of participants: Creative Associates, Creative School Coordinators, other participating teachers, students and pupils and finally to the generation of illustrative case studies from selected school sites.

Figure 3.1 Sampling



Underpinning principles:

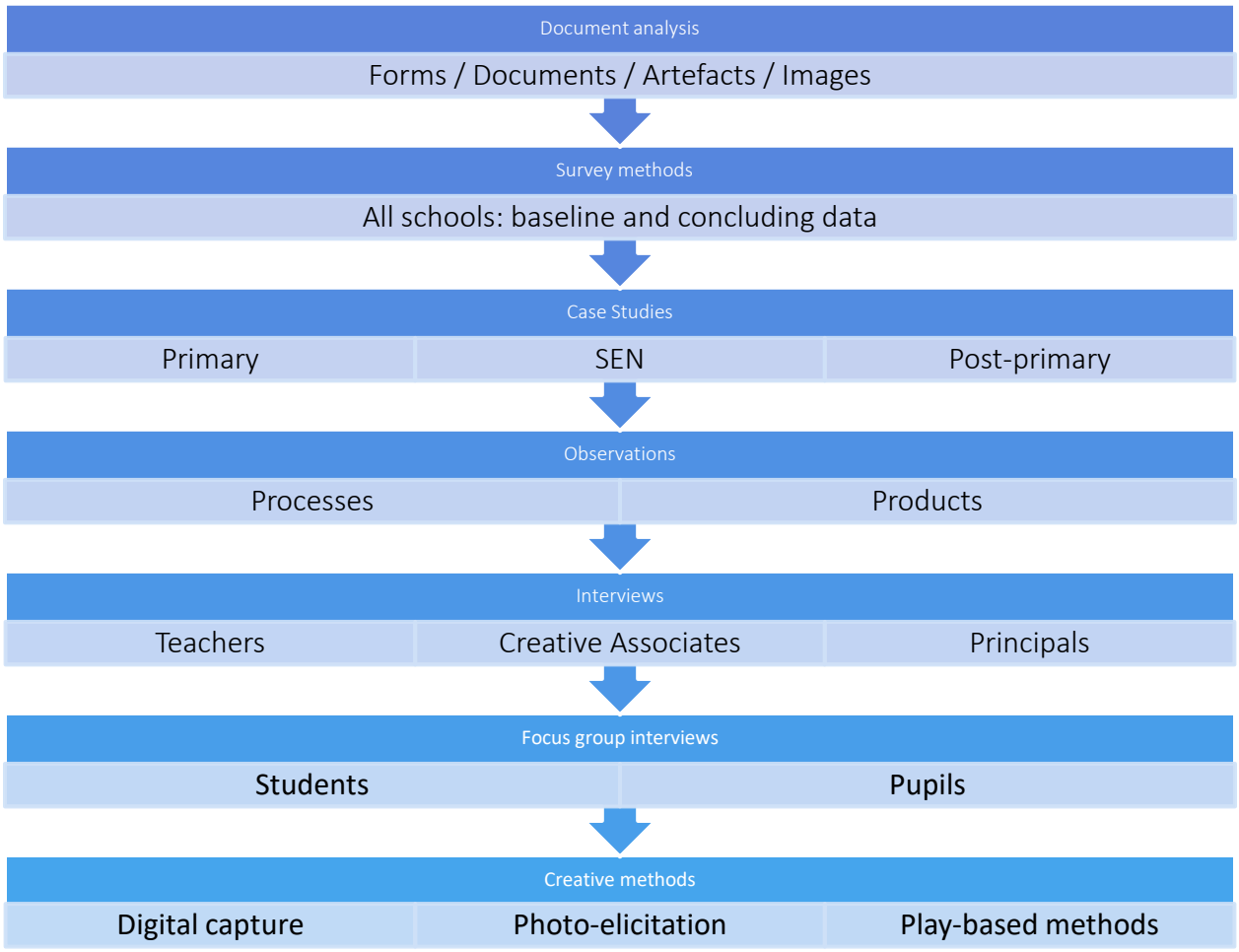
In addition to demonstrating the principles of research integrity as required by the Research Ethics Committee in DCU, the following principles, drawing from the DES approaches to inspection in schools, underpinned this evaluation:

1. A focus on learners
2. Development and improvement
3. Respectful engagement
4. Responsibility and accountability (DES Inspectorate, 2016).

Research instruments

A range of research instruments were employed throughout the study and these are outlined in the figure below.

Figure 3.2 Types of research instruments



Document Analysis

Various documents can be particularly useful in describing institutional characteristics, such as backgrounds and academic performance of students, and in identifying institutional strengths and weaknesses. These aided the evaluation team to understand each school's resources, values, processes, priorities, and concerns. As such, they provided a record or history of events that are not subject to recall bias.

The application forms and related assessment criteria provided important baseline information of schools' starting points, of their intended processes and possible impacts (see Figure 3.3 below) and were subjected to quantitative and qualitative analysis (Bowen, 2009).

Figure 3.3 Application requirements for participation in Creative Schools **(Arts Council, 2019)**

Application requirements for participation in Creative Schools (Arts Council, 2019)

1. Benefits for learning and development
This includes why you want to be a Creative School and how participation in the initiative will support the school's learning and development in the arts and creativity, relevant areas of the curriculum and school development.

2. Capacity for participation
This includes the extent to which the school management is committed to developing the arts and creativity in the school; the willingness to identify and allocate suitable time and resources to the initiative; and to support relevant staff to participate in the initiative as part of their existing roles.

3. Voice of children and young people
This includes the extent to which the application demonstrates a clear commitment to ensuring the voice of children and young people is central to the school's work as a Creative School and to the process of development, implementation and evaluation of the Creative School Plan.

4. Range of schools
The Creative Schools initiative will seek, where possible, to support a diverse range of school types. It is anticipated that 150 schools will be selected nationally from across all the regions of Ireland.

Key Informant

A key informant (Payne & Payne, 2004) is a person (or group of persons) who has unique skills or professional background related to the issue/intervention being evaluated, is knowledgeable about the project participants, or has access to other information of interest to the evaluator. Key informants help the evaluation team better understand the issue being evaluated, as well as the project participants, their backgrounds, behaviours, and attitudes, and any language or ethnic considerations. The Creative Schools' Team in the Arts Council served as the key informant for the evaluation. This was vital in terms of understanding the evolution of the project and the continuous adaptions that were necessary in light of COVID-19.

Creative and Participatory Methods

It was originally proposed to use a range of creative and participatory methods in site-specific contexts as part of the case studies. These would include visual methods and drama-based methods to elicit the voice of the child in particular. However, as the COVID-19 context for visiting schools continued, more conventional qualitative methods had to be employed. However, some creative methods proved useful in a small number of sites.

Interviews

Indepth interviews were used to evaluate processes and impact. They were especially useful in answering questions relating to the lived experience of the project for various stakeholders, knowledge of each stage, salient features, changes that have occurred, future expectations and recommendations that they would make for various dimensions of the project at the micro or macro levels.

Focus Groups

Focus groups interviews helped to understand the experience of Creative Schools in context, especially among children and some students who were quite shy and reticent at the start of the interview situation.

Observations

Observations are useful in studying the setting, in seeing classrooms, schools and school environments at first hand. Various artefacts of the Creative Schools experience were also observed, such as artwork by children or students, both large scale and small, or creative artefacts generated by visiting artists. School gardens were of particular interest and generated much dialogue in those settings where they were observed.

Case Studies

A case study is a "bounded system" (Stake, 1995, p. 2) and is employed to study a particular setting, context or problem for instrumental or intrinsic reasons. Given that any one research investigation will present many variables in relation to the participants and practices in any one environment, case studies are useful for combining evidence from more than one tool for data collection and many sources of evidence. In this way, numerical and qualitative data may be meaningfully blended as a prototypical instance of mixed methods research (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2018) as they can enlighten, explain, describe, illustrate all the interactions in one setting (Yin, 2009).

A distinguishing feature of case study research is "holism" rather than "reductionism" (Verschuren, 2003, p. 124), referred to as a 'unit of analysis' as discussed by Yin (2009). For the purposes of the current evaluation, the cases constitute a school within a community.

Methods for data analysis

Survey instruments were analysed used various statistical methods as outlined in the Technical Report (Eivers & Murphy, 2022). The qualitative data were synthesised and presented according to themes was based on patterns from the textual responses to open-ended questions in the survey instruments as well as responses to questions posed in one-to-one interviews or focus groups. Thematic coding and was conducted several times to ensure the validity and precision of the data, patterns in the data and meaningful clusters of ideas as suggested by Creswell (2015). These analyses allowed meaningful interpretations to emerge from the work.

Further details of statistical processes are found in the Technical Report.

Triangulation

Following the emergence of themes, triangulation was used to check and establish validity of findings by considering the evaluation questions from multiple perspectives i.e.,

- through different methods (quantitative and qualitative), adding context, depth and illustration to numerical data,
- via different sources (i.e., participants at different levels of the schools, from children to adults, classroom teachers to those in leadership),
- from different locations or school types.

Ethical issues, Data and Safeguarding Considerations

The research proposal was reviewed by the DCU Research Ethics Committee and IUA (2019) policy on research integrity. All procedures were undertaken in compliance with General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and standards for Research Integrity.

Chapter 4 Analysis of Applicants: Formative Findings

This chapter describes some of the formative aspects of the research. A formative component had been included in the research from the outset with the intention that data gathered *in situ*, including survey outcomes would be used to provide feedback on Creative Schools to the central team. However, the global and local impact of school closures and national lockdowns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic (UN, 2020) meant that school visits were prohibited for much of the duration of the research, and for almost all the formative phase. Also, while the 2018 cohort of schools had considerable engagement with their Creative Associate prior to national school closures (and prior to the start of the research phase), for the 2019 cohort it was less so. Thus, the formative aspect focused initially on quantitative analyses of the applicants (comparing those successful with those not so), and on data from questionnaires. As a consequence, less emphasis than originally planned was placed on the types of *activities* taking place, and more emphasis placed on the types of *schools and centres* applying to, and being chosen as, Creative Schools.

For the remainder of this chapter, the term 'school' is used to denote primary and postprimary schools as well as Youthreach centres, unless otherwise stated.

Intended targets of Creative Schools

According to the Arts Council's Guideline for Applicants, the initiative is open to all Department of Education-recognised primary and post-primary schools and Youthreach centres, provided they have not already participated in an earlier round of Creative Schools or are not currently part of the Creative Clusters initiative. In addition, the Guidelines indicate that a holistic review of applications is undertaken, to ensure that all types of schools/centres and regions are represented.

At the time, the published documentation did not specify if "represented" meant that school types should be included in proportion to the number of schools, to the number of students in them, or that representation was intended to target (i.e., over-represent) certain school types. However, initial communication with the Creative Schools team suggested that the original aim was that the selected applicants reflected the number of schools at a national level, rather than targeting specific types of schools. In practical terms, this meant that if almost three-quarter of places of educational provision were primary schools (comprising roughly 60% of learners), then likewise, about three-quarters of selected applicants should be primary schools.

The application form in use for 2018 and 2019 indicated that efforts would be made to ensure that a "diverse" range of schools would be represented, with possible additional points available for schools that were one of the following types: DEIS, Irish-medium, Youthreach or special schools. However, the final allocation of awards was drawn from lists of schools grouped by region, to ensure that each region was adequately represented. The regional division was based on the EU's division of Ireland into administrative regions known as NUTS 3 (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics – Level 3). The eight NUTS 3 regions are: Border, Midlands, West, Dublin, East Midlands, South East, Mid West, West.

Review of applications from 2018 and 2019

Beginning with the information provided to prospective applicants, the research team conducted an in-depth review of the applications from 2018 and 2019. The aims of the review were to identify (a) which types of eligible schools applied, (b) what types of application were most likely to be successful, and (c) how closely the successful and unsuccessful applications reflected the target population. The review and the outcomes were used to advise the selection process in 2020 and in subsequent years.

Review by Level

Initial reviews of the applicants focussed on how well those selected reflected the different types of schools nationally, in addition to how well they reflected how children and young people are located within those places, nationally. For example, while 39% of the student population were enrolled in post-primary schools, only 18% of places in 2019 were awarded to post-primary schools. These issues are of interest when assessing how well an initiative either reflects or targets a population.

In total, 710 applications were received in 2018 and 2019. A comparison of the two years showed little difference in the composition of applicants, either successful or unsuccessful. Thus, the outcomes of the reviews for the two years were presented together to the Creative Schools' team. Taken as a whole, the distribution of applications across levels was *reasonably* similar to the distribution across the population. Although there were proportionally more post-primary applicants and proportionally fewer primary applicants than might be expected, primary schools still comprised a large majority of applicants (68%).

Primary schools also comprised a large majority of awardees (71%), but the success rates for different types of providers were quite different. For example, only 34% of applications from post-primary schools were successful in 2018 and 2019, compared to 79% of applications from special schools (Figure 4.1). Some of the disparity might be accounted for by the quite small numbers of special schools and Youthreach centres that applied (as small numbers can be easily skewed). Nonetheless, there remained quite a gap between the likelihood of an application being successful if it came from a special school versus any other type of setting, but especially a post-primary one.

Having a mixture of levels represented is only one aspect of ensuring that Creative Schools was successfully targeted. For primary and post-primary schools, it was possible to identify some structural characteristics of applicants by matching schools with data in the Department of Education databases, using school roll number. This was not done for Youthreach or special schools as the numbers involved were relatively small, meaning it would be difficult to establish balance by structural characteristics. Also, there is no comparable central database for Youthreach centres.

It is important to note that in some cases, the DE database was at odds with schools' own description of themselves in the application form for Creative Schools. For example, some applications from DEIS schools did not flag their DEIS status. As an externally verified source, the DE database was taken as the more accurate of the two sources. However, the mismatches were

also flagged for the Creative Schools team, noting that it might be administratively more efficient and accurate to draw information on structural characteristics from centralised sources. The following structural information about the applicants was compared with primary and post-primary schools nationally:

- Region
- Language of instruction (and Gaeltacht location)
- Gender mix
- Ethos
- Size
- DEIS status
- Sector (post-primary only).

Region

Region was initially the only explicit selection factor (meaning that all applications were divided into regions and a quota selected from each). As a result, there was quite a good match between the regional distribution of schools and centres, nationally, and in Creative Schools. The largest number of applications came from Dublin which was also the region with the largest number of successful applications. In contrast, applications were slightly below what might be expected from both primary and post-primary schools in the Midlands.

Primary level Dublin schools were more likely than average to apply, but a little less likely than average to be successful in their application, whereas post-primary Dublin schools were slightly more likely than average to apply, but those that did apply had average rates of success. Applications were slightly below what might be expected from primary schools in the Border area, but this was offset by rates slightly higher than might be expected at post-primary level.

Thus, minor deviations from regional differences in rates of applications aside, applications for Creative Schools were quite well distributed across regions in proportion to their population. Where slight disparities arose, it was mainly due to over- or under-representation of the region in the overall applications. In other words, schools could not be awarded a place in Creative Schools if they had not applied.

Language of instruction

The Department of Education classify schools by two variables related to the Irish language. Schools located within a designated Gaeltacht area are classified as *Scoileanna Gaeltachta*. Schools outside of Gaeltacht areas where all lessons are taught through Irish are considered *Scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge*. For the review, the term “Irish-medium schools” was defined to include both *Scoileanna Gaeltachta* and *Scoileanna lán-Ghaeilge*.

At primary level, the number of Irish-medium schools included in Creative Schools was broadly in line with their representation, nationally (8% of primary level awardees versus 9% of all primary schools). In contrast, Irish-medium schools were slightly over-represented at post-primary level (11% of Creative Schools versus 7% nationally). Of the 10 Irish-medium schools that

applied in 2018 or 2019, seven were successful. This was a much higher success rate than average of 34% for post-primary schools.

Gender mix

At primary level, just over 90% of schools that applied to Creative Schools were mixed sex, which reflected the situation nationally. The percentages of successful schools broadly reflected the gender composition of schools nationally, with relatively few all-boys or all-girls schools. Nationally, two-thirds of post-primary schools are mixed sex, with the remainder split between all-boys and all-girls schools. While the *applications* for Creative Schools closely reflected this gender distribution, mixed sex schools had a higher chance of success than did all-boys schools.

Ethos

Inter- and multi-denominational primary schools were noticeably more likely to apply for Creative Schools than were their Catholic counterparts. They were also somewhat more likely to be successful in their application. This meant that the primary schools in the 2018 and 2019 cohorts of Creative Schools tended to be skewed in favour of inter- and multi-denominational schools. Nationally, only 5% of primary schools had an inter- or multi-denominational ethos, compared to 15% of primary schools who were included in the initiative.

At post-primary level, Catholic schools were slightly under-represented among Creative Schools whereas inter- and multi-denominational schools were slightly over-represented. For example, while Catholic schools comprised 48% of post-primary schools in Ireland, they comprised only 42% of Creative Schools. However, at post-primary level, the ethos disparity was largely attributable to proportionally more applications from inter- and multi-denominational schools. Among those that did apply, the likelihood of success was similar, irrespective of ethos.

Size

Size is an important aspect to consider when looking at the disbursement of funds and resources. For example, in 2021/22, the smallest primary school had just one pupil while the largest had over 1,000; the smallest post-primary school had just seven students and the largest had over 1,500. Given that Creative Schools funding is a flat amount, unrelated to the size of the school, the financial component can vary from a very small to a very large proportion of a school's discretionary budget.

When reviewing applications, the definitions in use at that time by the (then) Department of Education and Skills were used to identify small schools. Thus, primary schools with 60 pupils or fewer and post-primary schools with 300 or fewer students were considered small. The Department of Education more recently redefined small primary schools as those with no more than four mainstream class teachers (DE, 2021), but for consistency, the older definition is used here and in later sections.

At primary level, there were fewer small schools in the initiative than might be expected, based on the number of such schools, nationally (18% of Creative Schools, versus 23% of all primary schools). The gap was attributable to fewer applications from small schools, rather than a low success rate among those small schools that did apply.

In contrast, small post-primary schools were more likely than average to apply and even more likely to be successful in their application. Whereas 25% of all post-primary schools were "small", 34% of post-primary schools in Creative Schools were classified as small. Conversely, large post-primary schools (800 or more students) were under-represented in Creative Schools. Large schools applied more or less in proportion to their prevalence within the population. For example, 16% of post-primary schools, nationally, are large schools, compared to 18% of all post-primary applications. However, applications from large post-primary schools had a lower-than-average rate of success. Thus, only 12% of post-primary schools in Creative Schools were classified as large.

DEIS

At primary level, DEIS schools comprised one quarter of Creative Schools, which is marginally higher than the 22% of schools that were part of DEIS, nationally in 2020. Overall, DEIS schools were marginally more likely than average to apply to Creative Schools. Among those schools that did apply, their chance of success was average.

At post-primary level, DEIS schools were also slightly overrepresented in Creative Schools (33%, versus 27%, nationally). In contrast to the situation at primary level, DEIS post-primary schools applied in line with their prevalence, but their applications were slightly more likely than average to be successful.

Sector

At post-primary level, sector is an important school characteristic. Nationally, just over half of post-primary schools are secondary schools, about one third are vocational, and 13% either community or comprehensive schools. Among unsuccessful applicants, this distribution was mirrored almost perfectly. However, among those chosen to take part in Creative Schools, secondary schools were very slightly under-represented and vocational schools were very slightly over-represented.

Feedback on targeting

A comprehensive review of the outcomes of the application process was fed back to the Creative Schools team, supplemented by feedback gathered from questionnaires distributed to school coordinators and CAs as part of a piloting process. Subsequently, modifications were made to the application process and to the selection methodology and criteria applied to applications. In particular, the research team outlined the unusually high success rate among applications from special schools and from multi- or inter-denominational schools, relative to applications from other types of schools. Regarding multi- or inter-denominational schools, the research team suggested that the relatively high profile of student or pupil councils in the applications from such schools might be contributing to their high success rate. One of the aims of Creative Schools is to give greater weight to the student voice. However, the selection process may have inadvertently given additional weight to applications where student voice was *already* an integral feature of school life, rather than where an applicant school *aspired* to give greater weight to this dimension.

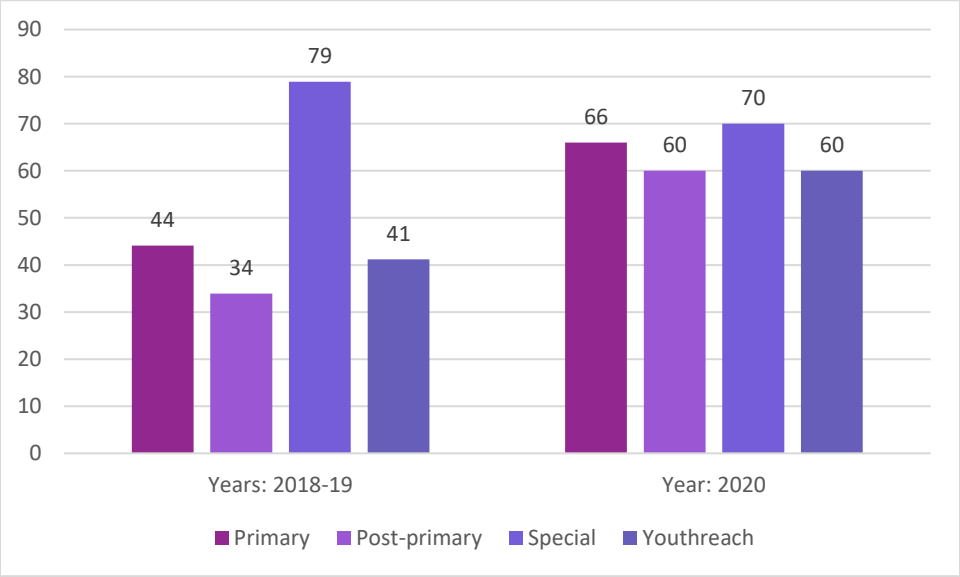
The team noted that one of the targeted characteristics was DEIS status, and that communication with the Creative Schools team had identified a strong wish to broaden access to creative activity in DEIS schools. However, while the percentage of Creative Schools that were DEIS schools was marginally higher than the percentage of DEIS schools, nationally, the differences were small and did not represent targeting of DEIS. Further, a small number of fee-paying schools had applied to Creative Schools (one of which was successful), and no additional negative weighting was applied to fee-paying schools. This seemed to militate against the intended targeting of socioeconomically disadvantaged schools and students.

Finally, the research team also outlined some issues related to the uptake of Creative Schools among small schools. Specifically, small primary schools were less likely to apply for Creative Schools whereas small post-primary schools were over-represented among all applicants and among successful applicants. This aspect is discussed further below. However, it is important to note that one the outcome of these analyses were known, the necessary adjustments were made to the programme by the Creative Schools Team and subsequent iterations of the programme reflect these changes.

Outcomes

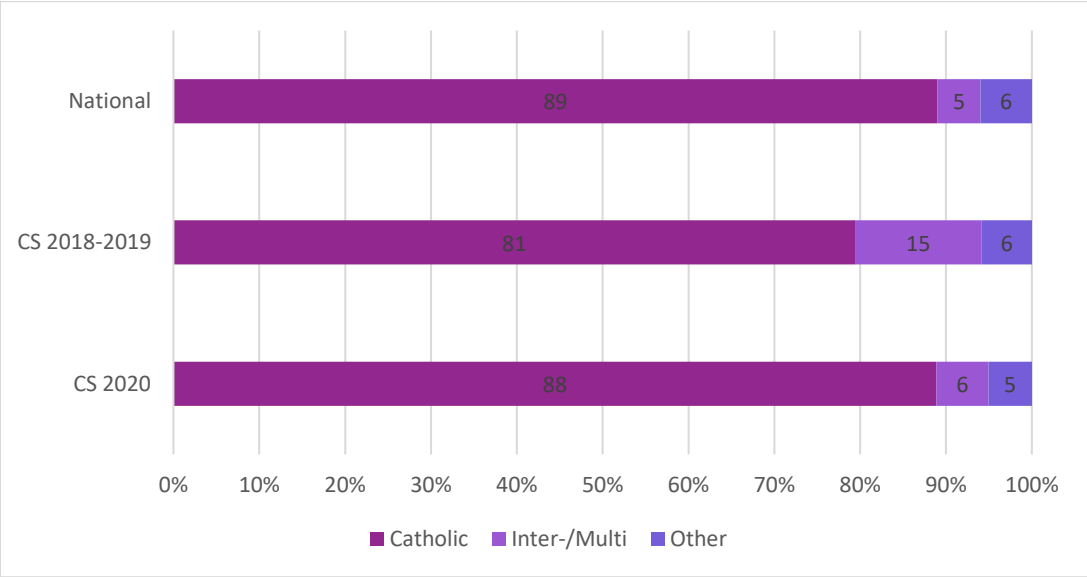
As can be seen from Figure 4.1, the likelihood of an application from a special school or post-primary school being successful was much more balanced in 2020 than in the preceding two years. Overall, fewer applications were made in 2020 and the number of available places in Creative Schools increased to 163. This led to an increased likelihood of applications in general being successful. That aside, there was a much better balance in success rates across sectors. While applications from special schools still had the highest rate of success (70%), all other settings also had success rates of at least 60%.

Figure 4.1 Percentages of applications that were successful in 2018-2019 versus 2020.



As well as school type, ethos was an area identified where the primary school awardees did not reflect the population. An unexpectedly large percentage (15%) of the 2018 and 2019 cohort of primary schools in Creative Schools were inter- or multi-denominational schools, considerably higher than the percentage of such schools nationally (Figure 4. 2). In a related vein, the percentage of Catholic ethos primary schools was much lower than might be expected. However, as can be seen, the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools at primary level was very similar to the national picture, in terms of ethos, with 6% of awardees expressing an inter- or multidenominational ethos.

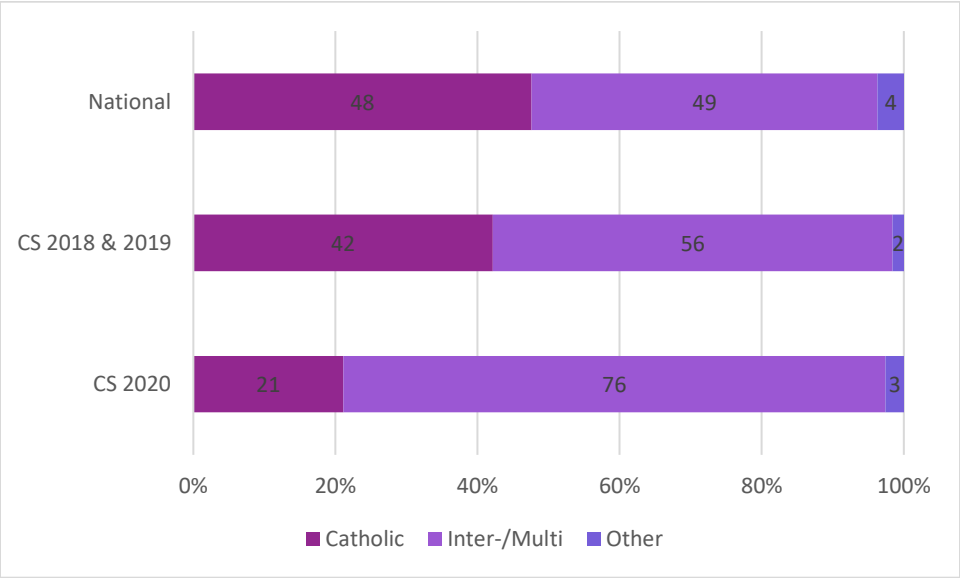
Figure 4.2 Percentages of primary schools, by ethos, nationally and in Creative Schools



SOURCES: DE primary school database for 2019/20 and database of Creative Schools applicant schools.

In sharp contrast, the ethos of post-primary schools chosen as Creative Schools changed from being reasonably reflective of the national situation to being quite skewed towards inter- or multidenominational ethos schools in 2020 (Figure 4.3). Just over half of the 2018 and 2019 cohorts were inter- or multidenominational, compared to 76% of the 2020 cohort. Part of the disparity arose because only 30% of post-primary applications in 2020 were from Catholic ethos schools, but the disparity was exacerbated by a lower rate of success amongst the Catholic ethos schools that did apply.

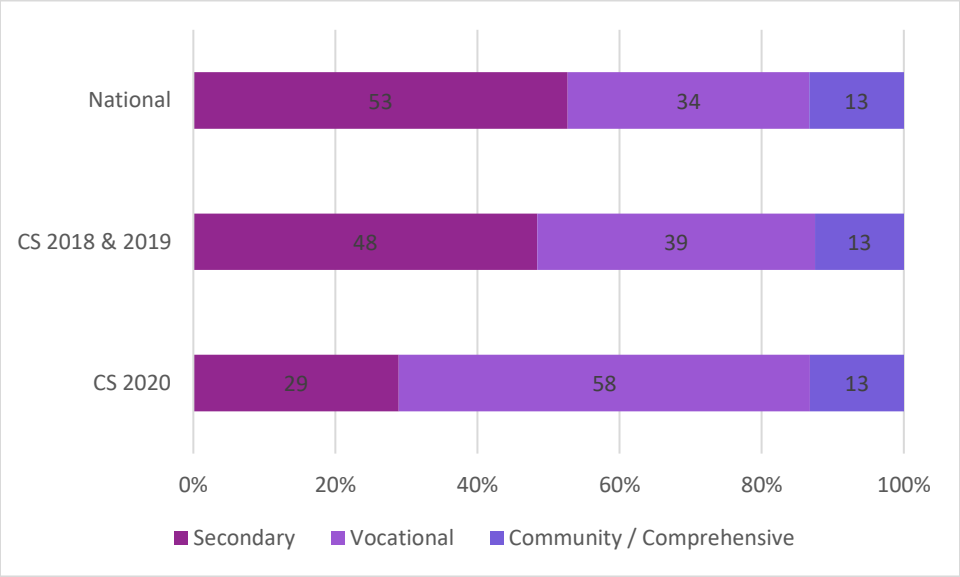
Figure 4.3 Percentages of post-primary schools, by ethos, nationally and in Creative Schools



SOURCES: DE post-primary school database for 2019/20 and database of Creative Schools applicant schools.

However, it is likely that the change in ethos composition at post-primary level reflects greater targeting of DEIS and socioeconomically disadvantaged schools in 2020, which inadvertently also affected ethos. In 2020, 58% of post-primary schools selected were in the vocational sector, a very significant increase from the 39% in previous years (Figure 4.4). All schools in the sector are multi-denominational and are more likely than schools in the religious secondary sectors to be designated as a DEIS school or to be socioeconomically disadvantaged.

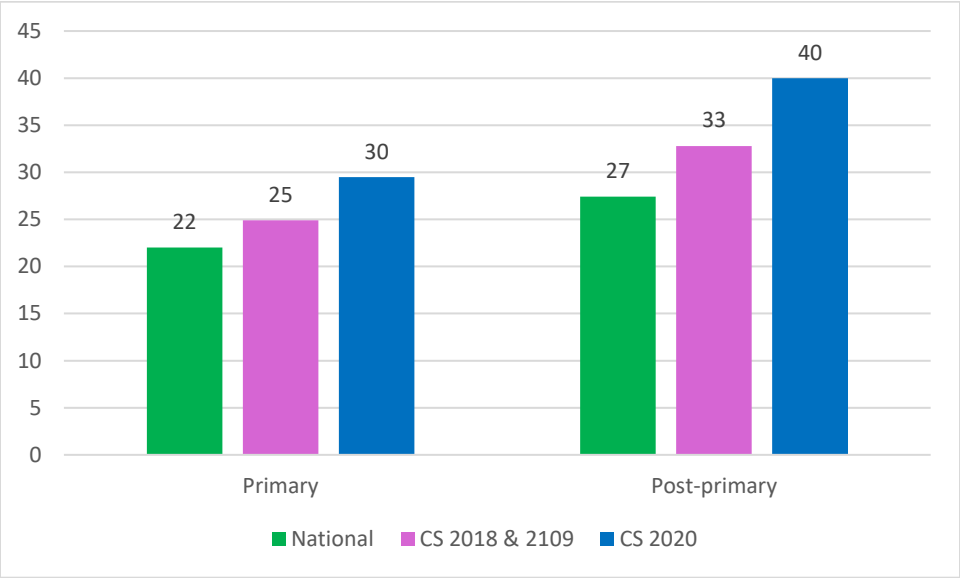
Figure 4.4 Percentages of post-primary schools, by sector, nationally and in Creative Schools



SOURCES: DES schools database for 2019/20 and database of Creative Schools applicant schools.

In a related vein, Figure 4.5 shows that the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools had a much stronger emphasis on DEIS schools, especially at post-primary level. Whereas 27% of post-primary schools are DEIS schools, 40% of the 2020 cohort of post-primary schools in Creative Schools are DEIS schools.

Figure 4.5 Percentages of DEIS schools, by level, nationally and in Creative Schools



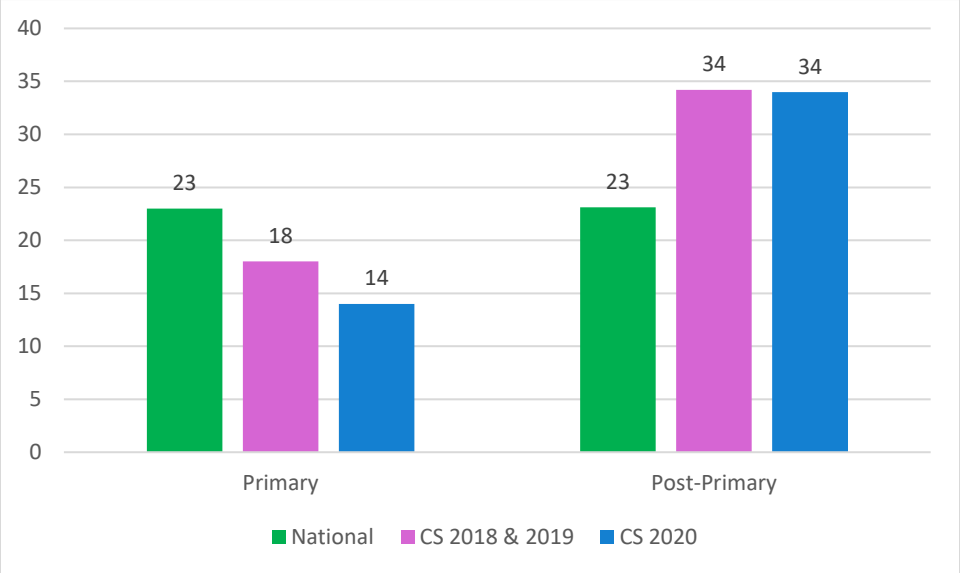
SOURCES: DES schools database for 2019/20 and database of Creative Schools applicant schools.

The final aspect of feedback provided to the Creative Schools team related to small schools. While preliminary survey and interview data collected from school coordinators and Creative Associates suggested that small primary schools were those best suited to the Creative Schools model, small primary schools had a relatively low rate of application in 2018 and 2019, whereas small post-primary schools had a relatively high rate of application. In 2020, the proportion of applications from small post-primary schools increased further, whereas the proportion of applications from small primary schools remained low (about 18% of all primary applicants). Unfortunately, their low rate of application was compounded by a much lower success rate. Thus, as shown in Figure 4.6, the percentage of primary Creative Schools that were small schools fell to only 14% among the 2020 cohort, while the equivalent percentage at post-primary level remained static, at 34%. Given that many questionnaire responses from coordinators and CAs suggested that small primary schools were the type of school most suited to the Creative Schools model, it was worth considering why these schools were less likely than average to apply. An obvious reason may be the demand on teaching principals to discharge both their teaching and administrative duties (Lodge & Tuohy, 2016)—and the vagaries of substitution cover for the latter especially.

As the analysis of the previous years' applications was an extensive process, the feedback from the research team was not completed in time to influence the 2020 application *process*; only the review of the applications received. However, the team strongly advised that the process was quite time-consuming and would benefit from streamlining, clearer instructions for applicants, and stronger targeting by flagging that bonus points might be cumulatively applied under multiple criteria. For example, an application might garner additional points if from a DEIS school, and further additional points if from a small school, or from a school type that was under-represented in the overall pool of applicants.

In particular, the research team felt that the application process drew on grant application skills that might not always be available in small schools (with relatively few staff members). This was a factor contributing to unintended bias against small schools. The advice of the team was that a simplified process should be complemented by outreach to small schools to make them aware of Creative Schools, and application advice and support specially tailored to smaller schools.

Figure 4.6 Percentages of small schools, by level, nationally and in Creative Schools



SOURCES: DES schools database for 2019/20 and database of Creative Schools applicant schools. Small primary defined as 60 or fewer pupils, and small post-primary defined as 300 or fewer students.

Summary

This chapter discussed the initial components of the research with a particular focus on the formative element. While the research team originally intended to gather data in real-time and provide feedback to the central team on the Creative Schools initiative, due to the COVID-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures and lockdowns, the formative phase at school level had to be redesigned as it was not possible to undertake school visits. Additionally, the 2019 cohort of schools could not avail of as much engagement with their Creative Associate as those in the 2018 cohort. Consequently, the formative aspect of the research primarily focused on analysis of successful and unsuccessful applicants based on their application forms and focusing on the representativeness of schools at a national level across a number of school characteristics. Qualitative analysis also explored the plans that schools sought to undertake as part of Creative Schools. Following a review of the analysis of the application process, information was fed back to the Creative Schools team that proposed ways in which the process could be further streamlined from an equity perspective, as well as reaching schools that were less likely to apply. Subsequently, the relevant modifications were made to the application process and to the selection methodology, and these criteria were applied effectively in subsequent calls for applications.

Chapter 5 Content Analysis of Application Forms – Formative Findings

This chapter presents the findings from the formative aspects as well as the summative dimensions of the study. As outlined earlier, the approaches involved a wide range of methodologies, including document analysis of various types of materials such as application forms, maps and websites. This chapter focuses on a review of the Application Forms that participants completed in order to become a *Creative School.*

Content analysis of Application Forms

The purpose of exploring school application forms was to ascertain which schools applied to become a Creative School in the first instance, and where the schools were located.

For each of the 2018, 2019 and 2020 cohorts, the Creative Schools' team shared the details of all successful and unsuccessful applicants. This first stage of the analysis had focused on *structural* differences (size, gender composition etc.) in applications, rather than the meaning and relevance of the content in terms of what schools planned to undertake. Based on quantitative structural review, there were clear differences by success/failure in 2018. Given this, it was important to also see if the actual written expressions of activities outlined in the applications differed in substantive ways from a content perspective.

Primary level applications

The first content analysis of applications was based on 120 unsuccessful and 81 successful primary applications (including 10 from 2019). About half of the applications were made by a member of the senior management team, i.e., deputy principal or assistant principal, and about one third were made by the principal. Little difference by success rate was evident using this determinant.

Current practice

As revealed in Table 5.1, almost every primary school indicated that visual arts and music were part of their current curricular practice. Successful schools were more likely to say they also did drama (88% vs 73%), craft (66% vs 53%) and coding (43% vs 26%). Successful schools were also more likely to tick more boxes saying they currently did more activities of various kinds (an average of almost 8 boxes ticked versus 6.6).

Table 5.1 Primary Schools' indications of current practices.*

Range of practices	Successful applicant	Not successful	% difference
Visual arts	99	95	4
Music	97	96	1
Drama/Theatre	88	73	15
Creative writing	84	75	9
Play	74	67	8
Dance	72	63	8
Craft	66	53	14
Literature	49	40	9
Coding	43	26	17
Traditional arts	38	29	9
Heritage	26	19	7
(digital) Media Arts	15	8	7
Film	15	13	2
Comedy/Improv	8	4	4
Spectacle	5	3	2
Other	4	2	2
Circus arts	3	0	3
Street arts	0	2	-2
Opera	0	0	0
Average total ticks	**7.9**	**6.6**	

* based the percent that ticked various boxes on the form.

Envisaged practice

The most popular activity that primary schools wished to undertake as part of Creative Schools was visual arts (64% and 68%), which was the top choice for both successful schools and unsuccessful schools. Successful schools were more likely to want to do dance (54% vs 39%), be somewhat more keen on Play (31% vs 24%) and somewhat less keen on coding (31% vs 39% unsuccessful schools). Successful schools were very slightly more likely to tick that they wished to undertake more activities (an average of almost 4.7 vs 4.4 boxes ticked). See Table 5.2.

Table 5.2 Primary schools' indications of their *prospective* activities*

	Successful	Not successful	% Diff
Visual arts	64	68	-4
Drama/Theatre	57	56	1
Music	54	58	-3
Dance	54	39	15
Craft	49	45	4
Film	45	41	4
Creative writing	39	35	4
Trad arts	39	41	-2
(digital) Media Arts	35	40	-5
Heritage	32	28	4
Play	31	24	7
Coding	31	39	-8
Literature	27	21	6
Street arts	26	25	1
Spectacle	18	15	3
Comedy/Improv	18	16	2
Circus arts	14	13	0
Opera	8	5	3
Other	4	3	1
Average total ticks	**4.7**	**4.4**	

* based the percent that ticked various boxes on the form.

Post-primary Level Applications

At post-primary level, 52 unsuccessful and 29 successful post-primary applications were analysed. About half of the applications were made by the Art teacher, and about 10% by the principal with little difference by success rate.

Current practice

As revealed in Table 5.3, and similar to their primary counterparts, almost every post-primary school indicated that they already did visual arts and music. Successful schools were more likely to say they also did creative writing (78% vs 62%) and coding (48% vs 25%) and less likely to do dance (only 19%) or "play" (7%). However, overall both successful schools and unsuccessful schools did not differ much on number of boxes ticked (an average of almost 6.6 boxes ticked versus 6.4).

Envisaged practice

Again, the most popular activity envisaged by both successful post-primary schools and unsuccessful post-primary schools was to engage with visual arts. See Table 5.4.

Table 5.3 Post-primary schools' indications of current practices.

	Successful applicant	Not successful	% diff
Visual arts	93	87	6
Music	85	81	4
Creative writing	78	62	16
Craft	70	73	-3
Drama/Theatre	67	69	-3
Literature	52	42	10
Coding	48	25	23
Traditional arts	41	44	-3
Film	41	38	2
(digital) Media Arts	26	17	9
Heritage	19	17	1
Dance	19	33	-14
Play	7	27	-20
Street arts	7	6	2
Comedy/Improvisation	4	6	-2
Other	4	4	0
Spectacle	0	4	-4
Opera	0	0	0
Circus arts	0	4	-4
Average total ticks	**6.6**	**6.4**	

* based the percent that ticked various boxes on the form.

Length of answers supplied

Considerable variation between application forms was observed, even between successful applications. However, for every written response from schools, the average length for successful schools exceeded that for unsuccessful schools. The smallest difference was for the description of the school as it only permitted a brief response. Successful schools wrote approximately 10% more words than unsuccessful schools (93 versus 85). The gap was greater for the *Rationale* section (listing three main points) where applications from successful schools were about 13% longer than unsuccessful school on this question. For each of *Capacity for Participation*, *Role of young people*, and *Details of Application*, the successful schools wrote answers that were at least 20% longer than unsuccessful schools.

Table 5.4 Post-primary schools' indications of prospective practice.

	Successful	Not successful	% Diff
Visual arts	78	69	9
Music	70	48	22
Drama/Theatre	63	54	9
(digital) Media Arts	63	44	19
Film	63	48	15
Craft	59	58	2
Creative writing	44	35	10
Dance	44	23	21
Coding	44	21	23
Traditional arts	41	33	8
Street arts	37	19	18
Heritage	33	21	12
Comedy/Improvisation	26	12	14
Literature	26	25	1
Play	22	23	-1
Spectacle	4	10	-6
Opera	4	2	2
Circus arts	4	4	0
Other	4	0	4
Average total ticks	**7.3**	**5.5**	

* based the percent that ticked various boxes on the form.

Quality of the application overall

From a qualitative perspective, successful schools completed applications in a focused manner, with a clear articulation of particular processes and outputs, specific goals and the use of more active verbs in expressing these objectives in longer forms. Such schools appeared to be adept at handling consultative processes, either through their existing ethos or by virtue of the stage of the school's development. Among some of these schools, creativity and arts practices appeared to be well embedded. Moreover, democratic processes of consultation were more likely to occur where schools had a well-established student council and could draw from this experience in outlining how they envisaged providing or supporting mechanisms to engage child voice.

The applications from successful schools also conveyed a dynamic quality in terms of envisioning how they would develop capacity, share learning, inspire students, improve motivation, empower staff, provide opportunities at various levels, make connections with local artists and thus enhance the school's standing both creatively and strategically.

As stated earlier, unsuccessful applications were shorter than successful ones, although they were also aspirational in their focus. Here however, in their descriptions of proposed activities,

the plans evidenced a slightly more inward emphasis on improving the existing school curricula while also focusing somewhat less on the building relationships within the school and in the community. In this regard, unsuccessful applications were more conservative to a certain extent, and while they also sought to enhance students' participation in the wider arts community, the focus in the application was less clearly articulated.

These observations were discussed with the Creative Schools team as part of the formative evaluation and the feedback informed the next development of the application form, as well as the guidance to schools on how to complete the form itself.

Summary

Quantitative and qualitative document analyses of applications from primary and post-primary school were analysed to determine the factors that were associated with successful applications. The analysis found that the length of successful school applications exceeded that of unsuccessful applications, with successful schools demonstrating a more focused and articulate approach, articulating more specific goals, and more active verbs in expressing objectives. Successful schools also demonstrated a dynamic quality in envisioning how they would develop capacity, share learning, empower staff, and enhance their standing creatively and strategically. In contrast, unsuccessful applications were shorter, more conservative, and focused less on building relationships within the school and in the community. The evaluation team shared the findings with this dimension of the work as part of the formative evaluation.

Chapter 6 Observation of Training

The many elements of the Creative Schools initiative were underpinned by a range of approaches to training that conveyed both the artistic vision and educational context for the initiative. An additional element of the Creative Schools programme involved specific training to foster student voice and participation in the creative process, referred to as "The Voice of the Child" (Lundy, 2007). The training also addressed the formal elements, such as the expectations and responsibilities of participation.

In the year prior to COVID-19, training was provided in person in central and regional venues for the various cohorts of participants, such as the Creative Associates (CAs) and the Creative School Coordinators (CSCs). From the early stages of the evaluation process, as well as throughout, an invitation was extended to the research team to observe the training, and/or participate in activities accordingly. Given that the Creative Schools was already in place for up to a year before the evaluation commenced, gaining insight on the training design elements, as well as participants' experiences of both the training and their unfolding experiences of Creative Schools, was vital to understanding the policy ambitions, the overall thrust of the programme and the enactment of the policy in practice. To this end, members of the evaluation team observed in-person training events pre-COVID-19 in Dublin at the Arts Council Offices in Merrion Square and in the Croke Park Conference Centre. Observation of training of participants in regional centres included venues in Wicklow, Carlow and Cork.

At the outset, it must be noted that all elements of the training were presented in a highly professional manner by both the external organisation that focused on creativity in education (led by Creativity, Culture, Education, UK), the local contextual and operational dimensions (led by the Arts Council), and the Voice of the Child workshops (led by Hub na nÓg, as part of the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth). Workshops were designed carefully, and then piloted, reviewed and refined accordingly.

At training sessions, opening activities largely comprised warm-up games and playful experiences to develop trust and open communication among participants, helping them to find and share commonalities, and develop opportunities to get to know one another through activities involving movement, mime, imagination, reflection, discussion and interaction. The activities also served to generate ways of thinking about creative learning through games and mini creative challenges.

As well as the more social and interactive dimensions of the training, each session included a clear overview of the timetable which, in addition to the opening activities described above, typically comprised:

- Views on the importance of creativity in society and for children and young people's development;

- Familiarisation with the Lucas et al (2013) framework for creativity; known as the five Creative Habits of Mind
- Opportunities for aligning examples of creativity with dimensions of the Lucas framework;
- An articulation of aspirations, expectations and broad timelines for participants in executing the phases of the programme (*Understand / Develop / Celebrate*) thus developing a deeper understanding of the model as a whole;
- Guidance as to how the CA could support the CSC in writing the *Creative School Plan* – or conversely, how the CSC could enlist the support of the CA in a particular dimension;

In addition, follow-up sessions focused on:

- Sharing of good practice from previous experiences with creativity and/or Creative Schools in other school settings and events, depending on the input from a guest speaker (other CA) and the participants' stage in the process and cycle of the training.
- Discussion and reflection in small groups
- Encouragement to consider sustainability of the new practices, or sustainability itself in the schools and educational settings.
- Opportunities to link with initiatives in Creative Ireland or with other governmental initiatives, such as Healthy Ireland.

For CAs, having a focus on networking was significant, as participants needed to know where complementary expertise was located and whom they could approach if particular expertise was required. Opportunities for both CAs and CSCs to discuss their experiences of working with children and young people with special educational needs, and young people in youth reach centres was particularly well considered. CAs also received guidance on how to use the Arts Council's administrative systems for submitting invoices as well as other practical and professional matters.

For CSCs, other important elements of the training included issues related to mobilising support for the initiative at school level, ways of involving other colleagues in the programme, understanding the key stages of process, and guidelines on administration with respect to how the Arts Council Creative Schools grant could be expended.

Observers from the research team noted that while the use of drama games and other activities to create social interaction was good in face-to-face contexts, it comprised a large part of the initial sessions. The effect may have been helpful in generating good group dynamics, but given the very temporary nature of the group, it may have been unnecessary to devote much time to this dimension. Although many models and types of creative practice were outlined, defining creativity in school settings focused on the Lucas model only, with some reference to the importance of creativity internationally.

As outlined by Vincent-Lacrin et al (2019) in an OECD publication, a useful framework for considering how creativity can take place in schools is to think about a focus on creative thinking,

creative problem solving, or creative expression. This framework can help teachers to think beyond arts practices and focus on pedagogies across various subject areas. Likewise, it can prompt a focus on systems in the school and factors that may directly or indirectly afford or constrain creativity in schools. However, neither this framework, nor other research-based theories on creative teaching and learning in education, were discussed specifically in the training contexts observed.

Voice of the Child training

As part of the National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation in Decision-Making (2015-2020), additional training was offered to Creative Schools participants on ways in which the voice of the child (VotC) could be developed and elicited democratically in school settings. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (1989) and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2000) provided the underpinning legislative frameworks for this work. While the National Strategy is primarily aimed at children and young people under the age of 18, it also embraces the voice of young people in the transition to adulthood. For Creative Schools participants, the training was designed and offered at a separate day/time by presenters from Hub na nÓg (located in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs), which features elements based on the Laura Lundy (2007) model of child participation as part of the National Strategy. The approach was characterised by the sharing of information on legislative frameworks and attendant responsibilities, experiential learning in groups that focused on team-building and relational qualities, while equipping teachers with a practical toolkit of ideas from which they could draw in implementing inclusive strategies in school settings. Here, participants were provided with a training manual in the form of a large ringbinder of printed material that comprised a combination of theoretical perspectives and practical ideas or worksheets that focused on legislative frameworks, democratic processes and practical pedagogies. The toolkit also included useful strategies and techniques for eliciting the voice of children and young people in matters that affect them.

Online Training

Training for all groups moved to an online format once COVID-19 placed restrictions on schools regarding in-person training events. Overall, the training provided online was very sophisticated in terms of the use of various digital or online tools that maximised opportunities for presentations to the individual groups of attendees (i.e., regional school coordinators, CAs, teachers in Youthreach Centres etc). Tools employed included Zoom© meeting rooms, breakout rooms, digital slideshows, digital voting, and interactive digital meeting spaces where participants could manipulate images and texts in a shared virtual space to convey feelings, thoughts and ideas metaphorically (e.g., Mural©). Such processes served to include all participants, generate discussion and embed a deeper understanding of ways to inspire creativity in schools. Moreover, small group meetings ensured that all participants could be afforded sufficient time to articulate their views, share insights and ask questions.

For example, in one small group session, in describing their progress in implementing the Creative Schools initiative to date, one participant chose an image of a bicycle, explaining the metaphor as follows:

> *We're not a high speed car in terms of where we would like to be; we advanced slightly—at least we did not stall. We're having a dedicated week next week in order to be able to advance and get to the end of the Understand phase.* (Participant, online training, autumn 2021).

Another chose an image of a boat and used it to depict the challenge of gathering the students' views in the post-lockdown school setting, to generate momentum for the project again:

> *We did a survey last year, but the students have since left, so we needed a new survey this year, so we had to gather that information again; But I've spoken to the students now, I've had some good conversations, and we're in the boat, moving now, and we have our projects underway.*

Feedback to participants from the Arts Council facilitation team was sensitive in acknowledging the challenges of progressing the work during COVID-19, recognising the changes to the learning environment while also validating the efforts of teachers. At the same time, the facilitation team gently encouraged all participants to think about how they could inspire other colleagues to become involved – so that, as the facilitator urged: "*it's not the same passenger in the boat every day*" and that others might also be empowered to get on board. Here, the emphasis was on making creativity an everyday, inclusive activity and generating a creative mindset in the school that could infuse the work of all teachers in the school.

In one observed example of online training, participants noted that because of delays to activities due to lockdowns and restrictions, their school had more time to focus on the *Understand* or consultative phase of the process with their students and colleagues. Here, some participants remarked on how eliciting the child or young person's voice had caused them to reflect more deeply on their normal school interactions and think about children who would not normally be consulted, with one noting that "*It's lovely to hear students voices, especially those whom you wouldn't hear as much.*"

Overall, the participating teachers expressed their appreciation of the support of the CA, the CA's local knowledge of artists, the guidance on how the funding could be expended, and processes that could link meaningfully with the Creative Schools work. Moreover, time spent on considering how to interweave the project among a range of other extant initiatives could augur well for its future sustainability.

Learning about, or seeing examples of, good practice from other Creative Schools was also considered very beneficial as part of the training. As one participant remarked in relation to other school-based initiatives: "*Usually these begin with a meeting and then off you go – you're on your*

own". However, this was not the case for Creative Schools where the ongoing facilitated sessions were deemed to be a valuable mechanism for supporting the initiative as it unfolded.

In general however, and unsurprisingly, the observation of online training events conveyed a more muted experience than those offered in person—due to the widely acknowledged 'overload' of the online environments for daily teaching as well as for many other areas of administration and professional development. For teachers, the Creative Schools professional support events were typically scheduled in the afternoon/after school period. While multiple training sessions were provided to accommodate participants in small groups in the different regions, in general, the number of participants at these meetings was low. On the other hand, the intimacy of the small group setting allowed for quality exchanges among participants.

Months later in the evaluation process, some participants found it difficult to recall various pieces of information about the online training or the thrust of some dimensions as they had few tangible reminders of the main aims and outcomes of these experiences.

> Researcher: *What do you remember about the Voice of the Child training?*
>
> Creative Schools Coordinator: *We did this online and I can't remember it. We did touch on it though. They [training experiences] all merged together and you can't remember what they were. It just seemed like more online stuff.*

However, while it was clear that the school in question above *had* internalised the key messages of the training through their practices in context, in other cases, it appeared that school coordinators relied on the CAs to guide them through the recommended consultative processes in schools, as well as the formal accountability and reporting elements, and this largely worked well in ensuring the schools' practices aligned with the overall vision for Creative Schools.

Summary

This chapter provided insight on the provision of training to CAs and CSCs. Content included various elements such as ice-breaker activities, drama-type games, social interaction and expectations of participants in the programme. The sessions also aimed to familiarise the participants with the importance of creativity in society and in children's development, using the Lucas et al (2013) framework for creativity. Opportunities were provided to align examples of creativity with dimensions of the Lucas framework, as well as clarify issues related to the timelines for executing the phases of the project. Additionally, guidance was given on how CAs could support CSCs in writing the Creative Schools Plan.

The follow-up sessions focused on sharing experiences of creative activity through Creative Schools, as well as encouraging sustainability of the new practices. For CAs, networking was an important feature of training as it served to build a sense of community through shared learning, locating complementary expertise, as well as understanding administrative requirements in relation to fees and other professional matters. For CSCs, mobilising support for the initiative, involving other colleagues in the programme, understanding the key stages of process, and

guidelines on how to expend the Arts Council Creative Schools grant money were important elements of the training.

Overall, the training aimed to enhance creativity in the participating schools, and to develop the skills and knowledge of the participants to support the programme effectively.

Chapter 7 Analysis of Visual Data in Social Media of Expressions of Creativity

This chapter seeks to analyse the outward, public-facing expressions of creativity that schools presented in visual form as part of the experience of Creative Schools. The images provide one mechanism for exploring the variety of activities undertaken by schools and their spontaneous reporting of them using social media. In undertaking such an analysis, it must be acknowledged that any analysis of public images is, by nature, limited to what schools may have decided to share at a particular point it time; one cannot necessarily generalise from this sample to practices in all participating schools. Neither should the sample of visual material discussed in this chapter be considered representative of the broader range of work that may have been undertaken in schools, but not recorded digitally. In the same vein, a wider range of work may have been digitally recorded but not made available publicly on social media.

However, the entirely anonymised data analysed here may be regarded as naturalistic in that it had not been generated for evaluative purposes *per se* but rather voluntarily produced and publicly shared by schools to represent some facet of Creative Schools and each schools' participation in the endeavour. In this regard, the data represents authentic representations of creativity in schools that enables participants to convey pride in the work and ascribe value to the effort. Each item represents a documentation of some type of biographical detail of creative activity in context, and at times, the related opportunities and challenges in the setting (Banks, 2007). A full discussion of visual qualitative analysis to explore the meaning and significance of selected imagery is beyond the scope of this chapter however; rather, the main purpose is to illustrate in quantitative terms: (i) the types of digital platforms utilised by schools to display images of creative endeavours; and (ii) the breadth of activities exemplified in the images, including the most commonly featured.

Approach to sampling

This section presents the outcomes of a review of websites and social media accounts from a selected cohort of Creative Schools. The analysis focused on an anonymised sample of 25 schools (15 primary and 10 post-primary). The schools were chosen to reflect a diverse range of schools in terms of size, location, DEIS status, gender composition and ethos.

As well as school websites, three social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram) were examined for creative practice references. School websites were located either through https://www.schooldays.ie/ or https://www.education.ie/. School social networking sites were located either through links to handles on the school website or through a Google search of the school name and address.

The review was conducted in January and February 2021, with the majority of searches conducted by one member of the research team. Following a verification process by another researcher, a second sweep of the sites was conducted. Part of the second sweep included collecting more information about other initiatives in which schools were involved in order to situate Creative Schools within the broader context of school life.

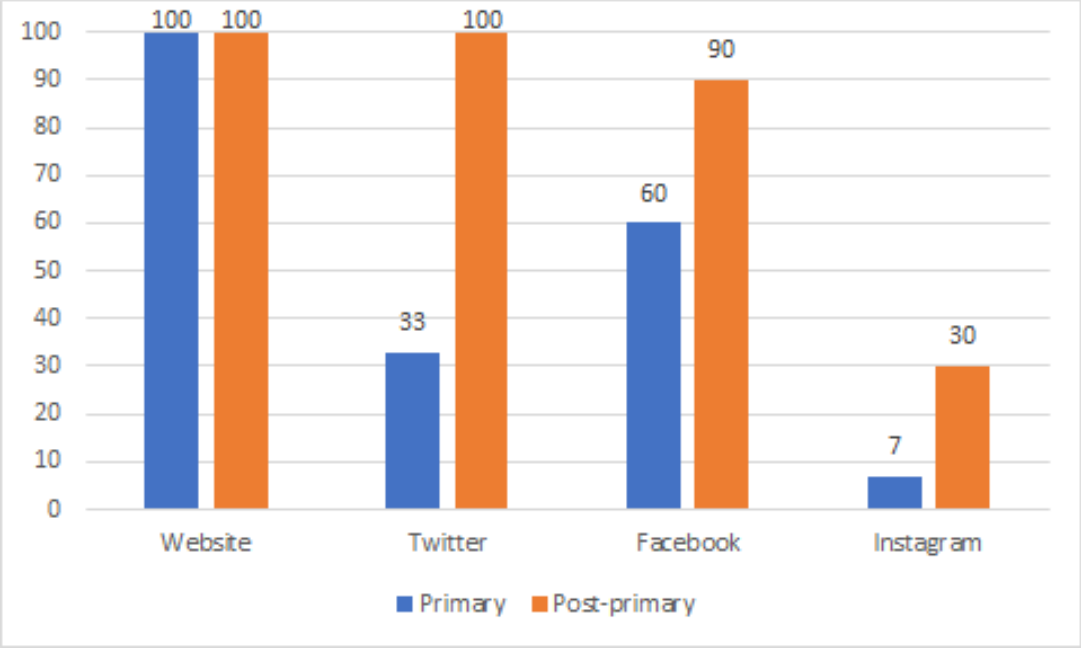
Each of the 25 schools had a school website, although there was considerable variation in the amount of information contained therein or in its recency (Table 7.1). The next most common form of digital presence was Facebook (18 schools), then Twitter (13 schools). Instagram was far less common, with only one primary and three post-primary schools having an official school account.

Table 7.1 Multiplicity of school social media accounts.

	Primary (n=15)	Post-primary (n=10)
Website	15	10
Twitter	3	10
Facebook	9	9
Instagram	1	3

Generally, post-primary schools were more likely than primary schools to have social media accounts (Figure 7.1). The most pronounced difference was for Twitter: whereas all post-primary schools had a Twitter account, only one-third of primary schools did.

Figure 7.1 Social media accounts held by post-primary schools



Search method

The method of searching for evidence of creative practice varied by format. Many school websites had a search bar which meant it was possible to search for "Creative Schools", and related terms such as art, arts, creativity, music, drama, dance etc. The search bar was used to search through the school's active web pages concerning school activities / initiatives, image galleries and newsletters, limited to the time period 2018 to 2020. Where schools did not feature a search bar, a manual review was undertaken insofar as the website structure was amenable to such searching.

On a school's Facebook pages, the researcher used the search bar to find posts, pictures and videos posted by the school, referencing Creative Schools or art. As Twitter and Instagram do not have search bars within individual accounts, the search involved scrolling through all media images and videos which showed evidence of creative activities.

Website content

The review of websites showed that schools involved in Creative Schools are typically part of a number of other national or regional initiatives. To gauge involvement in "substantive" initiatives (defined as those that are typically multi-year and intended to occur throughout the school year, rather than as one-off events), the website search sought formal notice of the school's involvement, located on either:

- The home page (as text or logo imagery)
- Listings by initiative name as a menu option
- Listings by initiative name under a menu option such as "Initiatives".

Looking first at the sample of primary schools, 13 of the 15 highlighted at least one other initiative in which the school was involved, using one of the three methods above. As well as two schools that listed no initiatives:

- Three listed one initiative
- Four listed two initiatives
- Two listed three initiatives
- Two listed four initiatives
- Two listed five initiatives.

Thus, in most schools, Creative Schools was only one of a number of initiatives in which the school was involved. Indeed, the number of initiatives is likely to be much higher than those formally listed on websites, given that approximately one-third (6 of the 15 websites reviewed) mentioned Creative Schools, despite all being part of the initiative.

The most frequently mentioned initiative was the long-established, *An Taisce's* Green Schools (10 of the 15 sites). This is unsurprising, given that approximately 95% of primary and post-primary schools participate in Green Schools (personal communication, Claire McDonald, 16 February

2021). The next most frequently mentioned in five sites was Active Schools (established in 2009), and then Food Dudes (established in 2007), Digital Schools of Distinction (launched in 2013), and Discover Science Project (established in 2003) are each mentioned on two sites.

Reference to creativity by type of media

Across all platforms there was a total of 652 individual pages or posts referencing creative activities, where 122 posts referenced Creative Schools or Creative Ireland and 12 posts announced successful receipt of Creative Schools funding.

Table 7.2 Summary of posts in the sample of 25 schools selected.

Media	Number of posts
Websites	**25** active: **15** Primary and **10** Post-Primary. **14** Primary and **10** Post-Primary promoted creative activities.
Facebook	**17** active: **9** Primary and **9** Post-Primary. **8** Primary and **8** Post-Primary promoted creative activities.
Twitter	**13** active: **3** Primary and **10** Post-Primary. **2** Primary and **10** Post-Primary promoted creative activities
Instagram	**4** actives: **1** Primary and **3** Post-Primary. **1** Primary and **3** Post-Primary promoted creative activities.

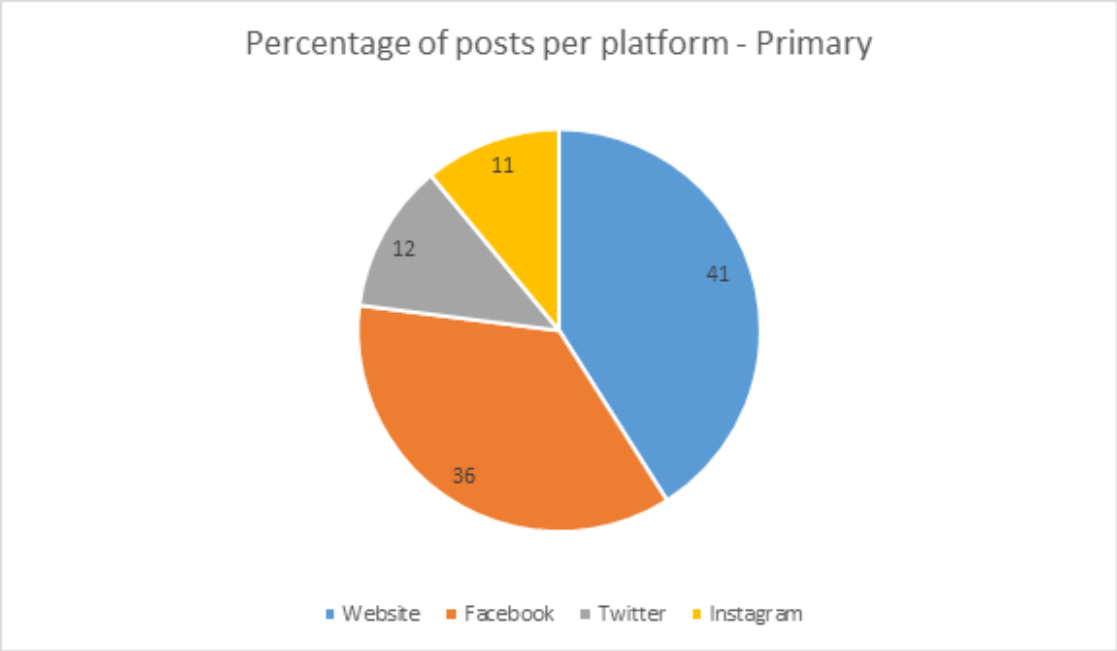
Table 7.3 Number of posts that referenced Creative Schools per platform.

	Websites	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
PRIMARY				
No. Posts	134	118	39	35
Average No. Posts	9	14	19	35
POST-PRIMARY				
No. Posts	60	145	74	56
Average No. Posts	6	18	7	18
Total No. Posts	**194**	**263**	**113**	**91**
Total Average	**8**	**16**	**9**	**22**

School websites were the most common platform employed by primary schools for sharing posts, followed by Facebook (see Table 7.3 and Figure 7.2).

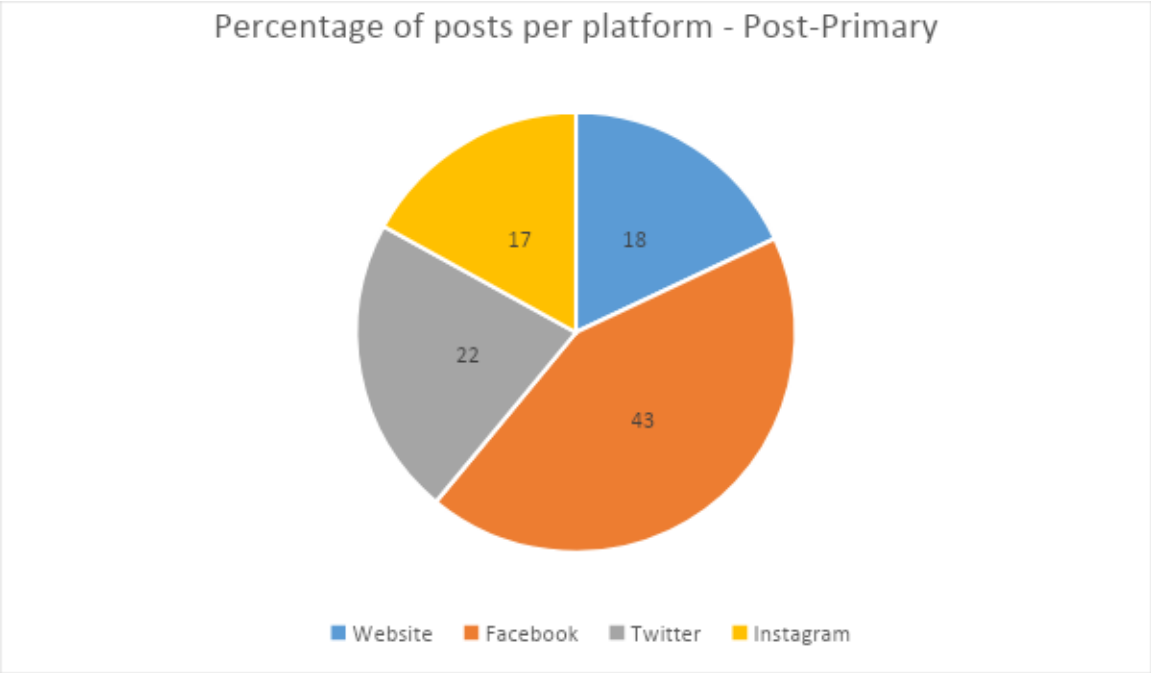
In contrast, at post-primary level, Facebook was the most popular site used for sharing posts, followed by Twitter (see Table 7.3 and Figure 7.3).

Figure 7.2 Percent of posts that referenced Creative Schools per platform: Primary Level.



In the pie chart illustrated here, we see the posts on Facebook referenced Creative Schools more frequently than the posts on the school website.

Figure 7.3 Percent of posts that referenced Creative Schools per platform: Post-Primary Level



At post-primary level, the posts on Facebook more frequently represented Creative Schools than the posts on Twitter or on the school website.

Illustrations of creative activity categories across web pages and social networking posts:

The figures below relate to the total number of creative references made on each site. Creative references are considered as appearing on any live web page, newsletter, website gallery album or social networking post. It is important to note the total number of creative references do not correspond to the total number of posts listed above as a newsletter and webpage is considered as one post that often makes reference to multiple categories of creative activities.

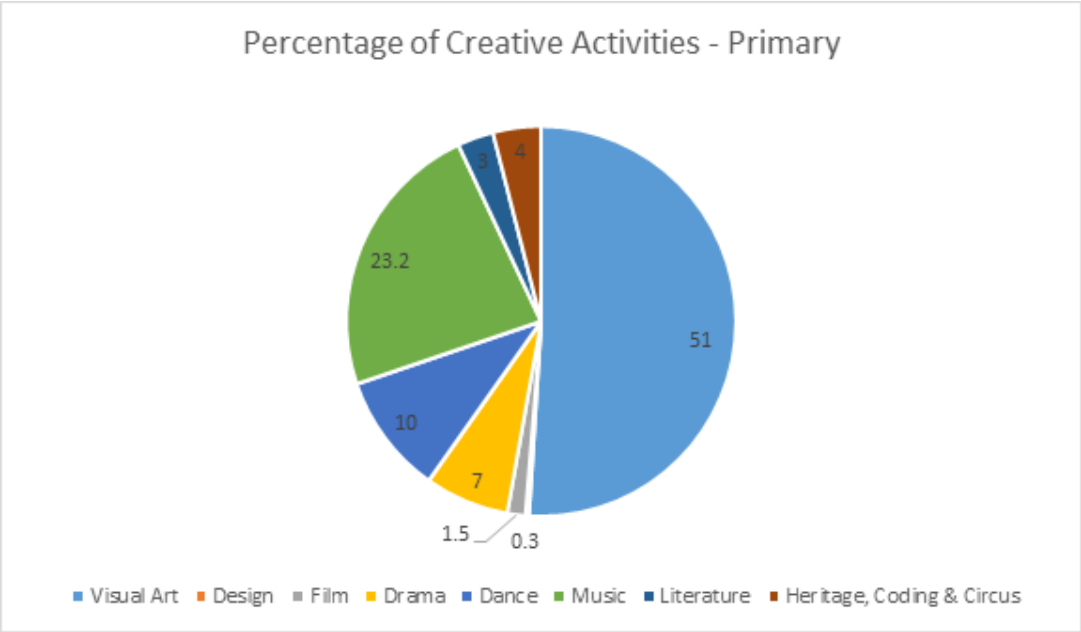
In the tables below, the Creative Schools category relates to the number of creative activities in which the post also referenced Creative Schools or Creative Ireland.

Visual Arts refers to class activities, projects, extra-curricular activities, art clubs, gallery visits and art practices such as painting, drawing, sculpture, printmaking, crafts and photography. While the range of Visual Arts practice is wide, it is clear that visual art forms dominate both primary and post-primary schools' experiences as *expressions of creativity*.

Table 7.4 Total number of creative references made on each site.

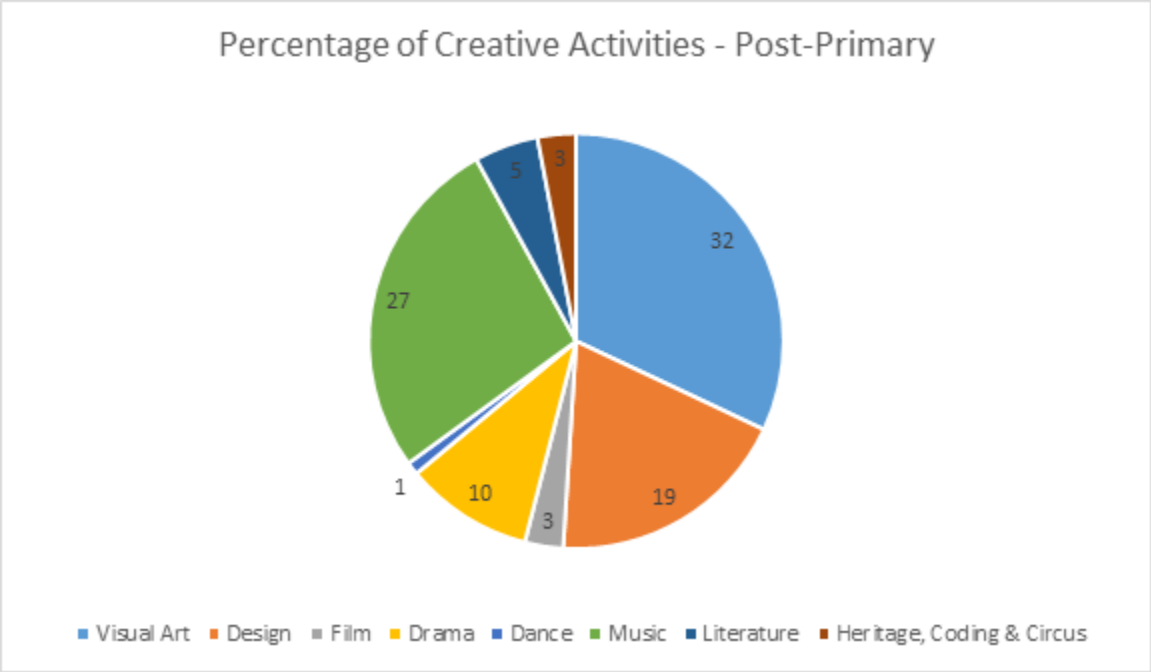
Category	Websites	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram	Total
Visual Arts*					
Primary	61	57	20	35	173
Post-Primary	29	46	19	27	121
	90	103	39	62	**294**
Design					
Primary	1	0	0	0	1
Post-Primary	6	37	27	2	72
	7	37	27	2	**73**
Film / Animation					
Primary	3	0	2	0	5
Post-Primary	4	4	2	2	12
	7	4	4	2	**17**
Drama					
Primary	15	9	0	0	24
Post-Primary	12	16	7	1	36
	27	25	7	1	**60**
Dance					
Primary	18	16	0	0	34
Post-Primary	3	2	0	0	5
	21	18	0	0	**39**
Music					
Primary	38	27	14	0	79
Post-Primary	22	45	17	17	101
	58	72	31	17	**180**
Literature					
Primary	9	3	0	0	12
Post-Primary	7	3	3	4	17
	16	6	3	4	**29**
Heritage					
Primary	1	0	0	0	1
Post-Primary	4	0	0	4	8
	5	0	0	4	**9**
Coding					
Primary	6	0	0	0	6
Post-Primary	3	0	0	0	3
	9	0	0	0	**9**
Category					**Total**
Circus					
Primary	2	0	4	0	6
Post-Primary	0	0	0	0	0
	2	0	4	0	**6**
Creative Schools **Gen**					
Primary	20	29	12	35	96
Post-Primary	5	13	5	3	26
	25	42	17	38	**122**

Figure 7.4 Percentage of creative activities: Primary Level



At primary level, the most frequently posted activity, accounting for just over half of all posts, related to visual art, followed by music in approximately one quarter of the posts.

Figure 7.5 Percentage of creative activities: Post-Primary Level



At post-primary level, close to two-thirds of the social media posts represented visual art and music, with design representing almost one-fifth. Although one cannot generalise from this sample to other participating Creative Schools or to other cohorts in other years, in this sample,

it is clear that representations of creativity are illustrated in the most commonly practiced visual art forms.

schools to display images of creative endeavours; and (ii) the breadth of activities exemplified in the images, including the most commonly featured.

Summary

This section reported on an analysis of an anonymised sample of 25 (15 primary and 10 post-primary) school websites and social media accounts from a selected cohort of Creative Schools. The sample reflected a range of schools in terms of size, location, DEIS status, gender composition and ethos. School websites were the most common platform employed by primary schools for sharing information about the school's activity in Creative Schools, followed by Facebook, while at post-primary level, Facebook was the most popular followed by Twitter. The analysis revealed that visual art forms predominantly served to exemplify creativity in both primary and post-primary schools'. In this regard, creativity in the schools, as presented on their website and social media was predominantly portrayed as "creative expression" (OECD, 2019).

Chapter 8 Creative Associates' Views and Experiences

Implementation of Creative Schools

This chapter describes the outcomes of a questionnaire completed by Creative Associates (CAs) during the summer of 2021, supplemented by a small number of questions asked in May 2022. Questionnaires were hosted on Qualtrics©, a secure online survey platform. Recruitment of participants was undertaken through the provision of a link to the survey to the Arts Council Creative Schools team, who subsequently shared the link with CAs.

The surveys drew on the outcomes of a previous survey piloted during the summer of 2020. In particular, some of the CAs' responses to open-ended questions in the pilot survey were used to develop questions for the main survey. The pilot revealed a reluctance among some CAs to share their contact details (email) with the research team, meaning not all could be invited to take part. For the main survey, therefore, an anonymous link was shared with the Associates via the Creative Schools team, rather than emailed directly from the DCU evaluation team.
The initial 2021 questionnaire examined several topics, including:

- General background information on CAs (e.g., gender, art forms, experience).
- The process of joining Creative Schools.
- Satisfaction with initial induction and supports provided.
- Information about their assigned schools (type, arts forms, attitudes to creativity).
- General satisfaction with their work as a Creative Associate and with the supports provided.
- Views on the concept of Creative Schools and of the role of Creative Associate, more generally.
- Views on the efficacy of Creative Schools, generally.

Apart from the last topic, which is addressed comprehensively in the next chapter, each of these themes is described below in this chapter. In addition to the main survey in summer 2021, a short follow-up survey was distributed in May 2022. The follow-up repeated a small subset of questions about creativity-related attitudes and behaviours of staff and pupils/students in assigned schools. It was distributed *only* to CAs who were currently working with at least one school from the 2020 cohort, and CAs were asked to base their responses only on the 2020 cohort. Outcomes from this survey, and the matched questions from the 2021 survey are described in the next chapter.

For the summer 2021 survey, the Creative Schools team invited 119 CAs to take part. A majority (70%) completed at least some part of the survey. For the follow-up in 2022, only the 77 CAs working in the 2020 cohort of schools were invited to complete the survey. In total, 50 completed some questions, giving a response rate of 64.9%. The response rates to both surveys are sufficiently high to suggest that the outcomes provide reliable quantitative evidence about CAs, their work, and their views on the efficacy of Creative Schools.

Most of what is reported in this chapter is based on the views of *all* CAs who responded to the main survey. Some additional analyses describe views of subsets of CAs, based on either gender or Creative Associate cohort (e.g., started in 2018 versus 2019). In most cases, the views of CAs did not vary much by gender nor by cohort, and are therefore not reported. However, where interesting differences arise, they are reported immediately after the responses provided by the group as a whole.

CA backgrounds

This section examines the gender and background of CAs working in the arts, their experience of dealing with schools and with young people, and art forms in which CAs engage.

Gender

For both the 2021 and 2022 surveys, a large majority of CAs were female (Table 8.1). The 2021 survey asked respondents "*Are you…?*" and offered three tick boxes (male/female/prefer not to say) as well as an option to describe themselves ("*I'm* …). Ten CAs ticked the last option and then described aspects of their career, personality, or home life, but made no reference to sex/gender (e.g., *I'm an artist who works with children*). If those who did not provide any relevant information are excluded, then 82% were female, with 4% opting not to categorise themselves as male or female. In the follow-up survey in 2022, the "describe yourself" option was removed. This time, most (86%) indicated they were female, with only one respondent (2%) indicating that they preferred not to say.

Table 8.1 Percentages of CAs falling into various gender-related categories.

	Female		Male		Prefer not to say		"I'm …"	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
2021	60	72.3	10	12.0	3	3.6	10	12.0
	60	82.2	10	13.7	3	4.1	Excluded	
2022	43	86.0	6	12.0	1	2.0	Omitted	

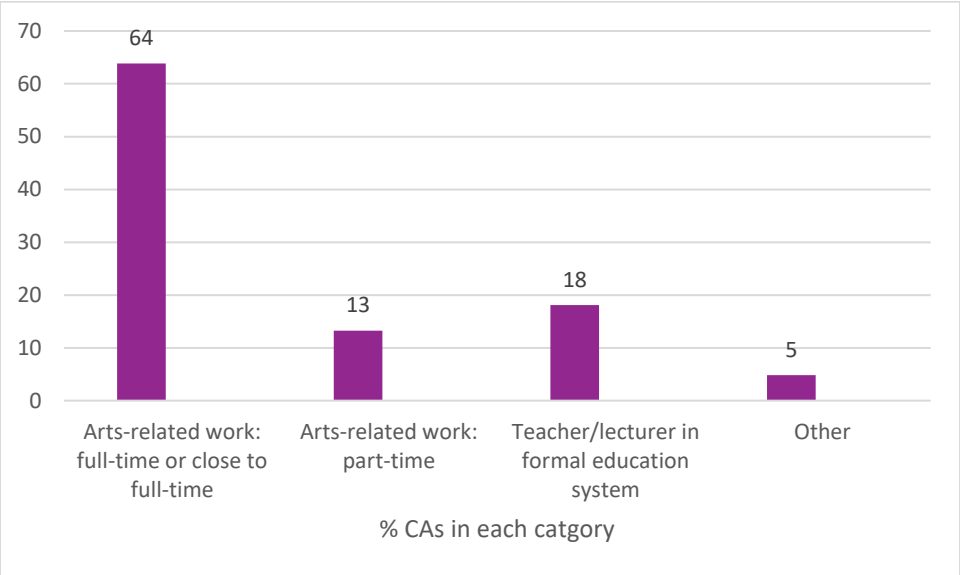
Subsequent analyses by gender

Later sections include some analyses by CA gender. However, it is not appropriate to report separately on CAs who preferred not to say if they were male or female, as their small numbers mean specific individuals might be identifiable. Thus, their responses from the 2021 survey were combined with those who *described themselves* into an "Others" group, as this group was sufficiently large to retain respondent anonymity.

Employment status

A large majority (77%) were independent CAs, while 14% were teacher CAs and 8% an organisation nominee CA. In terms of their main professional activities prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, 64% of CAs had been working in arts-related activities on a full-time or almost full-time basis (Figure 8.1). A further 18% were educational professionals, with the remainder engaged in part-time arts-related work or a mixture of activities. There were some differences by gender. Whereas 90% of males were working in arts-related activities on a full-time basis, this was true of only 60% of females and Others.

Figure 8.1 CAs' employment status prior to COVID-19



Based on 83 responses.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of CAs described themselves as having considerable experience working in a school environment, while only one reported having *no* experience in a school. In a related vein, 84% had extensive experience working with young people, and all had at least some experience. However, the CA who had *no* experience in schools also reported having very little experience working with young people.

Art Forms

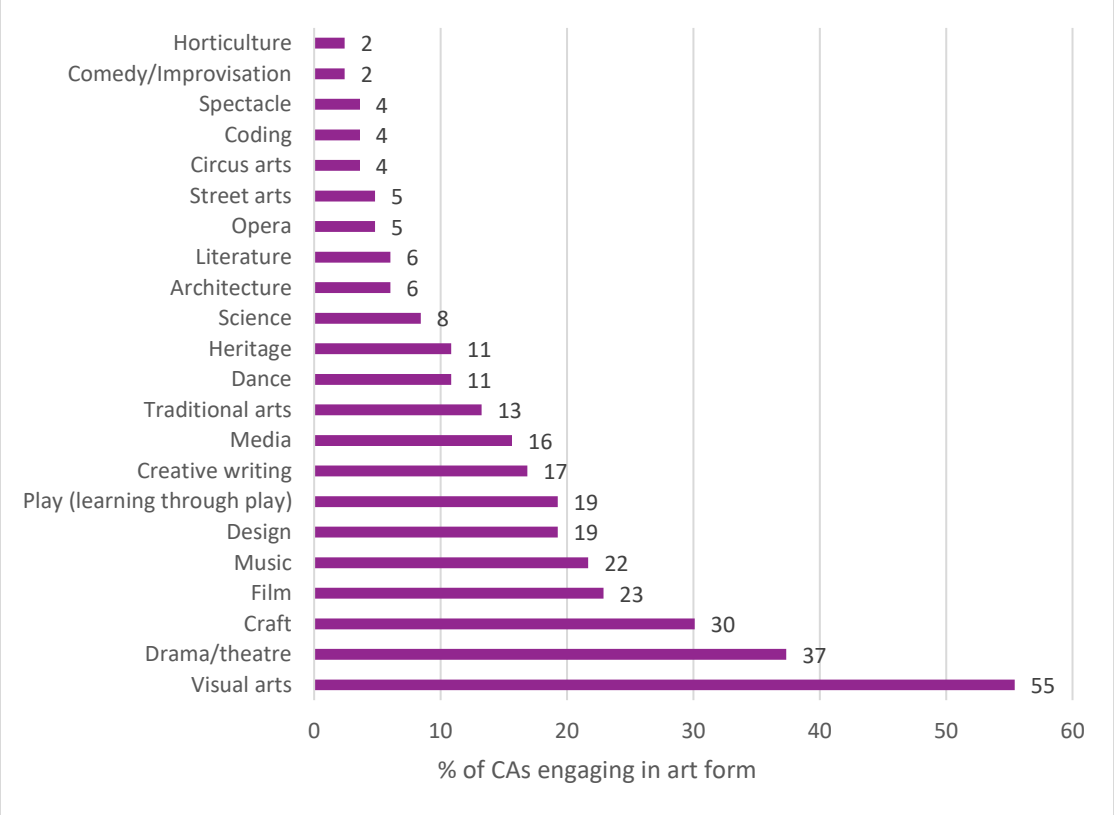
CAs were presented with a list of 22 types of art form and asked to indicate, which, if any, they practiced. Visual arts was by far the most frequent form chosen (55% of CAs), followed by drama or theatre (37%) and craft (30%) (Figure 8.2). Film, music, design, play and creative writing were all relatively common art forms. However, fewer than 5% of CAs indicated that they practiced any of horticulture, comedy, spectacle, coding, or circus arts.

While more than half of all CAs indicated that visual art was the art form in which they engaged, only one male CA did so. Among male CAs, music (six of the 10 males) was the most commonly

selected art form, followed by creative writing, drama/theatre, and traditional arts (three CAs, in each case). In contrast, almost two-thirds of female CAs indicated that they engaged in visual arts, as did 54% of Others. Other commonly selected art forms among females were drama/theatre (42%), craft (32%), and design (23%). Among the Others group, visual arts was the most frequently selected option, followed by film and craft (each selected by 38%).

There was also some variation by cohort. Over half (56%) of the original 2018 cohort of CAs had experience in drama/theatre, compared to 25% of the 2020 cohort. In contrast, while relatively few of the 2018 cohort were experienced in craft, 36% of the 2019 and 2020 cohort had a craft background. None of the 2018 cohort engaged in heritage, horticulture, or literature, and only two engaged in creative writing. However, the 2019 and 2020 cohorts contained several CAs with experience of these art forms. Thus, as Creative Schools has evolved, an expanded pool of CAs has also expanded to include more art forms.

Figure 8.2 Main art forms in which CAs engaged



Based on 83 responses. As CAs could engage in multiple art forms, answers sum to more than 100%.

Joining Creative Schools

This section examines reasons for becoming a CA and satisfaction with aspects of the recruitment process. It also reports CA views on the extent to which school coordinators and school management understood what was involved when they initially applied to become a Creative School.

Those who completed the surveys provided a good balance between those who joined in different years. One-third began in 2018, one-third in 2019 and a final third in 2020. This means that it is possible to examine if opinions on elements of Creative Schools such as initial induction or interaction with the Creative Schools central team vary by the year in which the CAs started – an indication of how or if the initiative has evolved over a three-year period.

CAs were presented with seven possible reasons for becoming a CA and asked to rank order their personal top three reasons why they became a CA. By quite some distance, "To contribute to an initiative that accords status to the arts in schools" was the most popular first choice (Table 8.2). Over half chose it as their main reason for becoming a CA, while 77% cited it as one of their top three reasons. Putting the child at the centre of the creative process was the next most popular reason, with 22% choosing it as their main motivation, and 67% listing it in their top three reasons. Six CAs indicated that a desire to share their expertise was their main motivation. All other options were chosen as a main reason by fewer than five CAs. Nine CAs cited other reasons, including four who mentioned the importance of reliable income or payment.

Being part of an initiative that accords status to the arts in schools was the most frequent main reason for males, females and Others. For males, it was followed by being part of a community of practice; for females, by putting the child at the centre of the process; for Others, by the opportunity to influence future models of teacher~artist partnership.

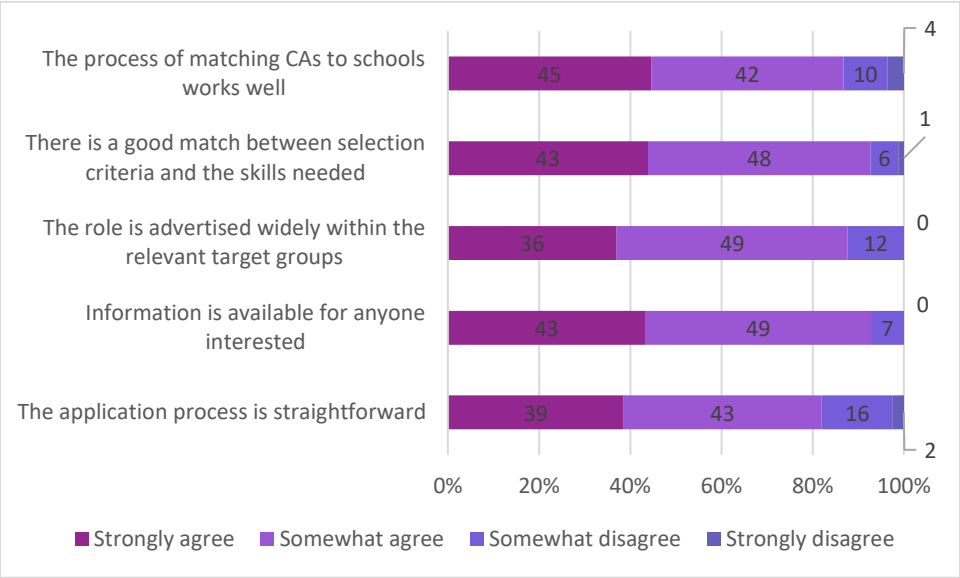
Table 8.2 Reasons for applying to be a CA, ranked in descending order.

	% 1st choice	% 2nd choice	% 3rd choice	% in top 3 choices
Accord status to the arts in schools	53.0	13.3	10.8	77.1
Put child at centre of process	21.7	31.3	14.5	67.5
Share my expertise	7.2	12.0	12.0	31.3
Work with YP in schools	4.8	12.0	10.8	27.7
Be part of community of practice	3.6	7.2	16.9	27.7
Extend my own arts practice	3.6	4.8	9.6	18.1
Influence future models T:A partnership	1.2	14.5	18.1	33.7
Other	3.6	3.6	3.6	10.8

Based on 82 responses.

There was widespread satisfaction with how CAs were "recruited" (Figure 8.3). Over 90% agreed that there was a good match between selection criteria and the skills needed, and that information was available for anyone interested (with none strongly disagreeing that these were true). Large majorities also agreed that the process of matching CAs to schools worked well and that the role was advertised widely with the relevant target groups. However, three CAs (4%) strongly disagreed that CAs were well matched to schools. Satisfaction was lowest with the application process. Almost a fifth (18%) of CAs disagreed that the process was straightforward.

Figure 8.3 CA satisfaction with aspects of the CA recruitment process

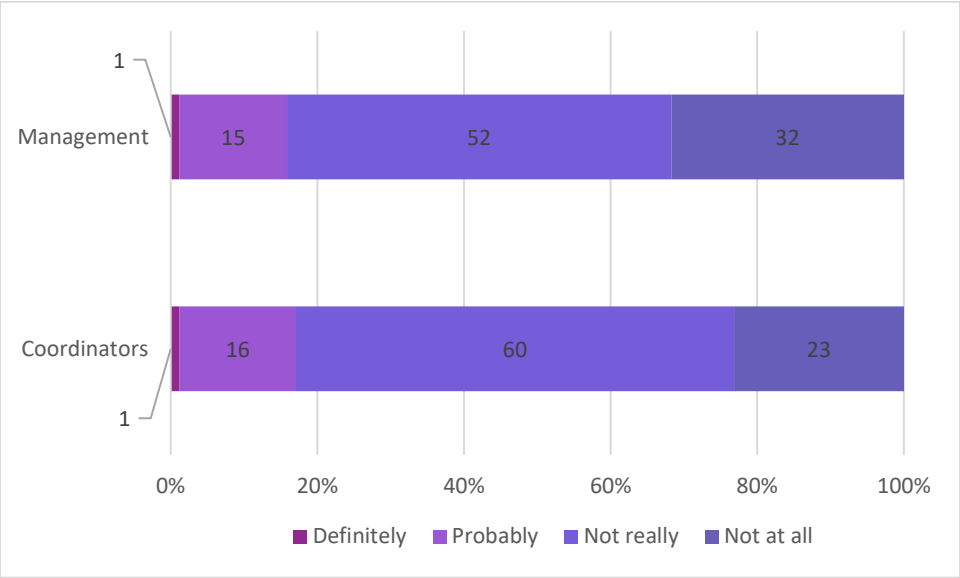


Based on 80 – 83 responses.

Those who started as a CA in 2018 were slightly more positive in their ratings than CAs in the other two cohorts. In particular, this first group were more likely to agree that the application process was straightforward – only 4% felt that this was not the case, compared to over 20% of those who became CAs in subsequent years.

Although generally positive about their own experience of joining Creative Schools, CAs were noticeably less positive when rating the level of initial understanding among school coordinators and management (Figure 8.4). Only one CA (1%) felt that either school management or the school coordinators *definitely understood* what was involved when they originally applied. In contrast, over 80% thought that neither school management nor the coordinators understood what was involved when they applied.

Figure 8.4 CA views on schools' understanding what was involved in Creative Schools



Based on 82 responses.

Induction/initial training

This section examines CA views on their own induction and training, and their view on the adequacy of training provided to Creative Schools coordinators in schools. In contrast to the almost universal satisfaction with recruiting CAs, satisfaction with aspects of initial training for CAs was much more mixed (Table 8.3), and was largely negative for coordinator training (Figure 8.5).

Regarding their own training, CAs expressed highest levels of satisfaction with their initial CA induction. Almost half indicated that they were *very satisfied* with induction, while fewer than 10% indicated some level of dissatisfaction. Satisfaction levels were also high for training related to the Lundy Model/Children's Voice, and for preparing CAs to work with children or young people, and was reasonably high for ongoing learning opportunities for CAs and for explorations of creativity. In contrast, half of CAs expressed dissatisfaction with advice provided on working within school structures and timetables, and almost two-thirds expressed dissatisfaction with the advice related to the curriculum and integration across subjects.

As issues related to timetabling and curriculum integration might be assumed to be more familiar for teacher CAs, we looked responses to these two questions by type of CA. While it was the case that independent CAs were more likely to express dissatisfaction than were teacher CAs, both groups contained sizeable numbers who were dissatisfied. For example, half of teacher CAs (vs 62% of independent CAs) were fairly or very dissatisfied with advice on curriculum and how to facilitate integration across subjects, while one-third (52% of independent CAs) were dissatisfied with advice on working within school structures and timetables.

Table 8.3 CA satisfaction with aspects of initial and ongoing training.

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Initial induction for CAs (N=83)	45.8	44.6	6.0	3.6
Training: Lundy Model/Children's Voice (N=83)	38.6	48.2	12.0	1.2
Preparation for working with children/young people (N=82)	28.0	53.7	17.1	1.2
Ongoing learning opportunities (N=83)	19.3	49.4	27.7	3.6
Explorations of creativity (N=83)	19.3	60.2	20.5	0.0
Advice on working within school structures and timetables (N=82)	8.5	41.5	40.2	9.8
Advice on curriculum and how to facilitate integration across subjects (N=83)	3.6	32.5	53.0	10.8

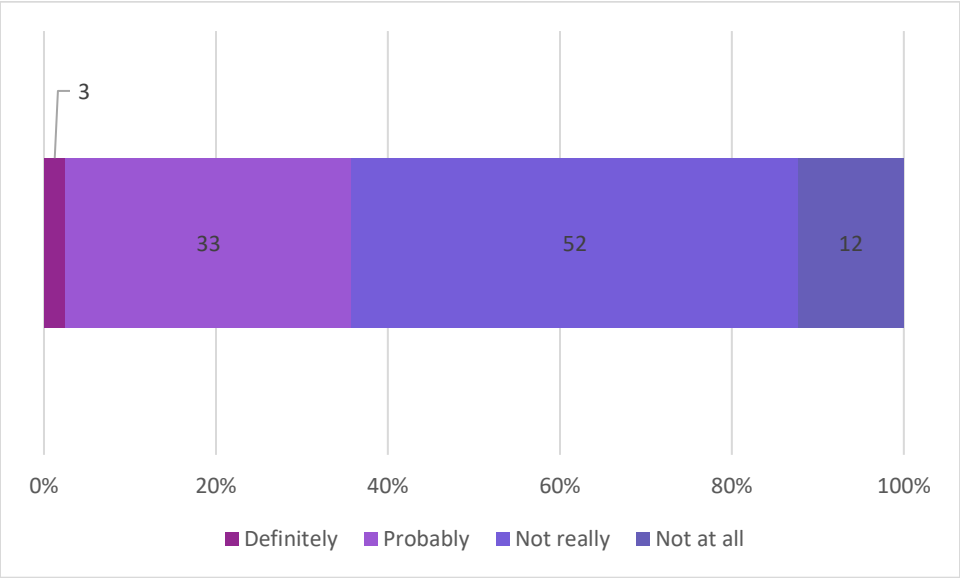
Responses can also be examined by the year in which the CAs started as a CA. There are broad similarities in response patterns across the three years. Generally, satisfaction was highest with the initial CA induction and with training related to the Children's Voice, and lowest for advice on curriculum. In terms of differences, those who started in 2019 were much less satisfied with aspects of their initial training than were CAs who began in either 2018 or 2020. It is likely that the 2019 cohort was the one most acutely impacted by COVID-19 from various perspectives.

For example, 21% of those who began in 2019 were dissatisfied (fairly or very) with the initial CA induction. The most pronounced difference related to dissatisfaction with ongoing learning opportunities (64% of 2019 CAs versus only 4% of 2020 CAs). Further, while satisfaction with advice on school structures and timetables was low, generally, it was particularly low among the 2019 cohort of CAs. Among 2019 CAs, 68% expressed at least some dissatisfaction.

In contrast to their views on their own training, CAs were markedly less positive about the adequacy of the amount of training provided to coordinators in schools (Figure 8.5). Less than 3% felt that the amount of training provided was *definitely* sufficient, while one-third felt it was probably sufficient. Just over half of CAs felt that coordinator training was not really sufficient, while 12% felt it was not at all sufficient.

CAs who started in 2018 were least likely to think that coordinator training was adequate. Of that group, 78% felt that coordinator training was either not really or not at all sufficient (compared to 48% of the 2020 cohort).

Figure 8.5 CA views on whether coordinator training was sufficient.



Based on 81 responses.

Creative Associates and their schools

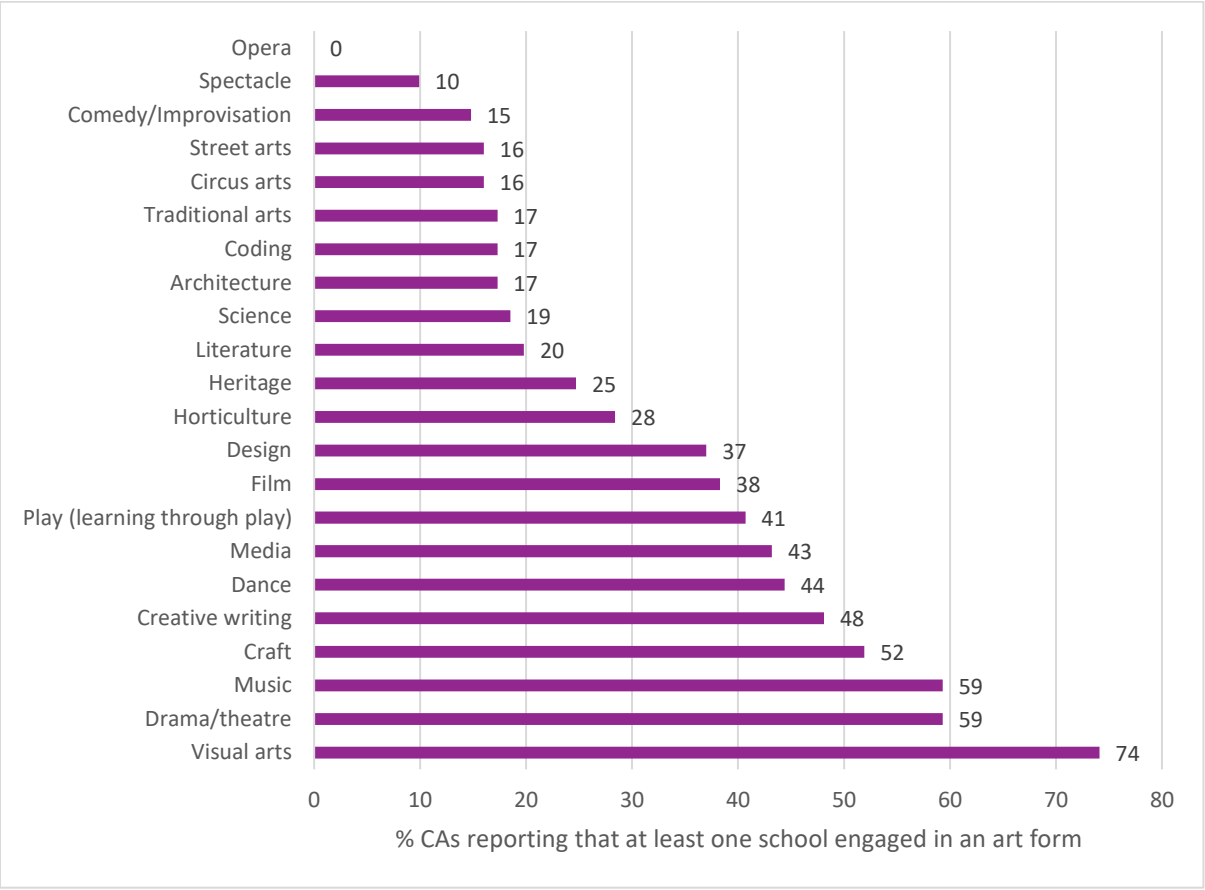
This section describes the types of schools with which CAs work, and their location, relative to their CA's home base. It also outlines the types of art forms with which the school has engaged (as part of Creative Schools).

Half (51%) of CAs lived close to all their school(s), which was defined as within a 30-minute drive. A further 37% reported that they lived a long distance from some of their schools, while 12% lived a long distance from all their assigned schools. Fewer than 10% of CAs who were female or in the "other" category lived a long distance from all their schools, compared to 30% of male CAs.

As might be expected, by far the most common type of school environment was a primary school. Almost all (95%) of the CAs surveyed were attached to at least one primary school, with 54% attached to a post-primary school. Smaller percentages worked with Youthreach Centres and special schools.

As with a CA's own art practices, visual arts was the art form/creative practice most frequently enacted in schools (Figure 8.6). Three-quarters of CAs indicated that visual arts featured in at least one of their assigned schools. The next most common art forms were music and drama/theatre (59% of CAs in each case) and craft (52%). All other art forms were being developed by less than half of CAs in at least one of their assigned schools. That noted, design, film, play, media, dance, and creative writing were all relatively popular art forms. At the other end of the spectrum, no school had engaged in opera-related activity, only 10% had used spectacle, and only about one in six had engaged with comedy/improvisation, street, circus or traditional arts, coding, or architecture.

Figure 8.6 Art forms with which CAs engaged schools as part of Creative Schools



Based on 81 responses. As schools could engage in multiple art forms, answers sum to more than 100%.

Male CAs were proportionally slightly more likely to engage schools with architecture, those classified as Others were slightly more likely to engage schools with circus arts, and females were slightly more likely engage to schools with science. Generally, however, the art forms with which schools engaged did not differ by CA gender.

Those who became CAs in 2020 were least likely to have had their schools engage with a wide variety of art forms – as might be expected, given the relatively limited time frame and the physical restrictions placed on them due to COVID-19. That noted, the most common art forms reported in schools by the 2020 cohort were visual arts (56% of CAs), music (48%) and drama/theatre (44%), followed by craft and creative writing. Thus, although not as many schools had engaged in as many art forms as earlier cohorts, the pattern of activity among schools was remarkably consistent from year to year.

The CAs act as conduits to other artists and practitioners rather than being the sole artist with which schools engage. This means that there is not necessarily a strong relationship between each CA's own expertise and the activities in which the school engages. Nonetheless, we see that visual arts, music, drama/theatre and craft were the most common art forms, both for CAs and for schools in these first years of Creative Schools.

That noted, almost half of CAs indicated that their schools had engaged with creative writing and with dance, each of which are art forms that were engaged in by relatively few CAs. There is also a large difference between the 28% of CAs reporting their schools engaged in horticulture-related activities and the 2% of CAs who reported it was an art form in which they had expertise. As horticulture is an activity that lends itself to the outdoors, the relative popularity of horticulture-related activities may be somewhat influenced by restrictions related to COVID-19.

Satisfaction with being a Creative Associate

This section describes CA satisfaction with supports for CAs and communication with Creative Schools central team. It also describes CAs views on whether they found it enjoyable being a CA, if they felt that they had benefited from taking part, and if they would recommend becoming a CA.

The vast majority of CAs (90%) expressed satisfaction with email updates from the central office, but satisfaction with all other supports was markedly lower (Table 8.4). For example, approximately 30% expressed some dissatisfaction with information provided about key dates, about how engagement with other CAs was facilitated, and with fora for CAs to share ideas and practice. Almost four-fifths (79%) of CAs were satisfied with the support provided for administrative tasks, while just over three-fifths (62%) were satisfied with facilitating school access to external resources, but only a minority (43%) were satisfied with the availability of central sources of information on artists.

There were marked differences by CA cohort in the levels of satisfaction expressed. The 2019 cohort of CAs expressed far higher levels of dissatisfaction with supports than did either the 2018 or 2020 cohorts. This may be explained by the fact that the 2019 cohort experienced the most disruption to every dimension of their role due to COVID-19, from training to establishing relationships with schools. In contrast, the 2020 cohort tended to be more positive in their evaluations than the 2018 or 2019 cohorts. For example, while only 4% of the 2020 cohort expressed any dissatisfaction with how communication between CAs was facilitated, 57% of the 2019 cohort did so. The 2019 cohort also expressed elevated levels of dissatisfaction with central sources of information (82%), fora for CAs (68%), and support with administrative tasks (36%).

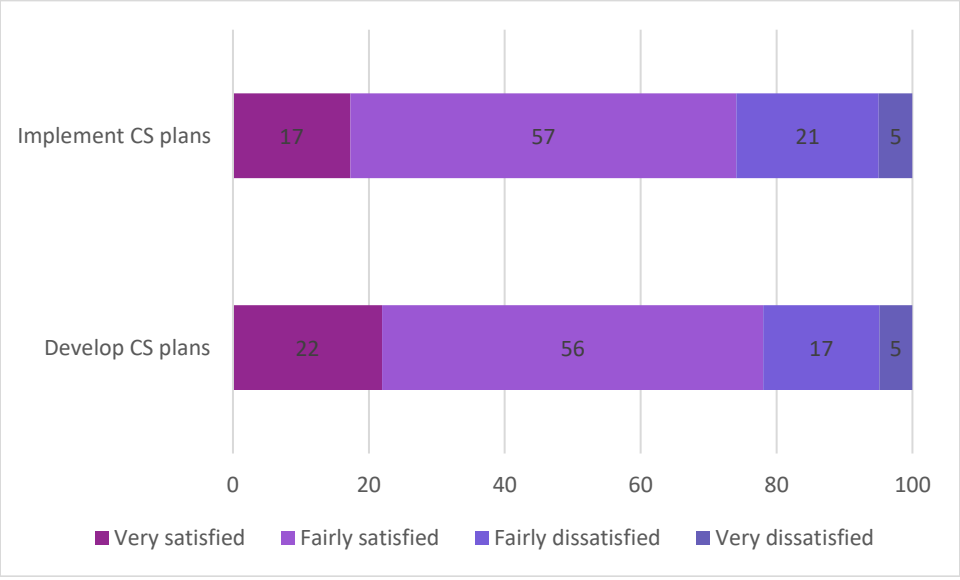
These findings also reflect the formative nature of the evaluation where a wide range of emerging data was reported to the core team at regular intervals. The findings also reflect the evolution of the administration of Creative Schools. The smaller 2018 group spearheaded the activity and benefitted from the excitement of being at the forefront of such a ground-breaking initiative. As the number of CAs (and participating schools) increased year-on-year, more coherent and formalised communication structures needed to be put in place. Some of the issues that prompted dissatisfaction by the 2019 cohort were resolved for the next intake, and this might explain the relatively positive ratings from the 2020 cohort and the relatively negative ratings from the 2019 cohort. In 2021, regional coordinators were appointed to support the CAs and this additional structured support was well received.

Table 8.4 CA satisfaction with supports from Creative Schools central office.

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
Updates via email and newsletters (N=83)	48.2	41.0	8.4	2.4
Information on key dates (training, school holidays, deadlines) (N=82)	27.7	44.6	18.1	9.6
Facilitating engagement with other CAs (N=83)	26.8	48.8	20.7	3.7
Fora for CAs to share ideas, practice, resources (N=82)	20.5	45.8	28.9	4.8
Support with administrative tasks (N=82)	18.3	61.0	13.4	7.3
Central sources of information on artists, by region and art form (N=83)	12.2	30.5	45.1	12.2
Facilitating school access to external resources (N=82)	11.0	51.2	31.7	6.1

CAs were also asked about the supports they received to help schools to develop and to implement their Creative Schools plans. Overall, responses were reasonably positive (Figure 8.7). Approximately three-quarters were satisfied or very satisfied with the supports provided to help schools to develop and to implement their plans, while only 5% indicated that they were very dissatisfied. However, CAs who were male and/or who started in 2019 were *considerably* less satisfied than their colleagues. Only half of males and slightly more than half of the 2019 cohort expressing satisfaction with supports for either developing or implementing the plans.

Figure 8.7 CA satisfaction with supports provided to develop and implement Creative Schools plans.



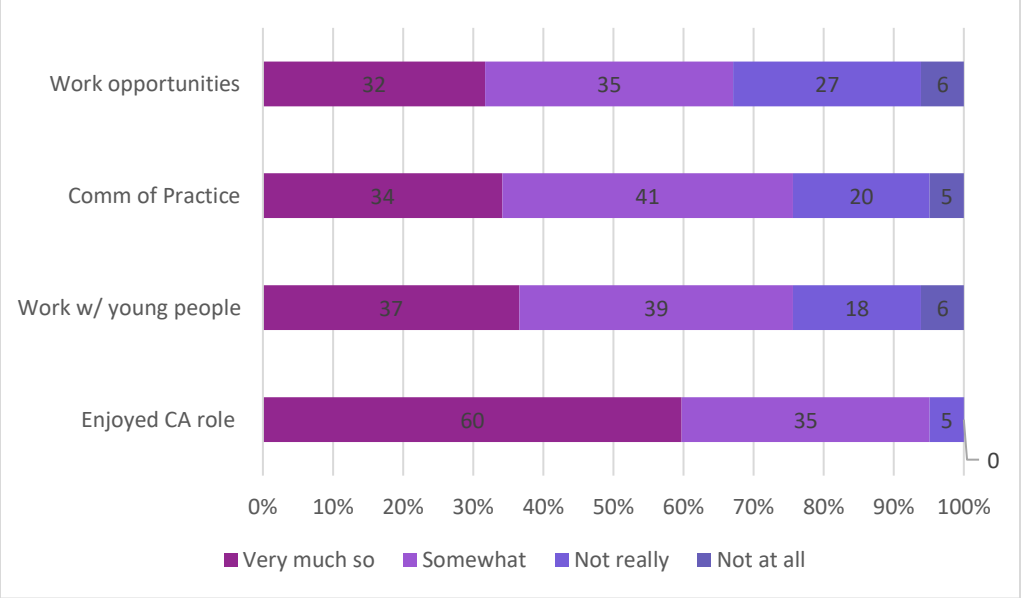
Based on 81-82 responses.

As well as satisfaction with supports, CAs were asked how they, personally, felt about or benefited from, being a CA. As can be seen from Figure 8.8, most CAs felt some personal benefit from various aspects of being a CA.

Approximately one-third very much agreed that being a CA had opened up wider work opportunities for them, that their own practice had benefited from being part of a "community of practice" and from working with young people. However, one-third also felt that being a CA had little or no effect on opening up wider work opportunities for them, while approximately one-quarter saw little benefit from their community of practice or from working with young people. In contrast, responses were very positive to the question asking if they had enjoyed their role as CA. Sixty percent very much enjoyed the role, while only 5% responded that they did not really enjoy the role, and no CAs indicated that they did not enjoy the role at all.

As with other aspects of the survey, males CAs tended to be the most negative, while females tended to be the most positive. In particular, males were less likely to see any benefit to their own practice from working with young people (44% did not see a benefit) or in terms of improved work opportunities (56% saw no major benefit). However, differences in responses by cohort were more mixed, and the 2019 cohort were not (overall) more negative in their perceptions of the personal benefits that might arise from the CA role.

Figure 8.8 CAs' perceptions of potential benefits from being a CA.



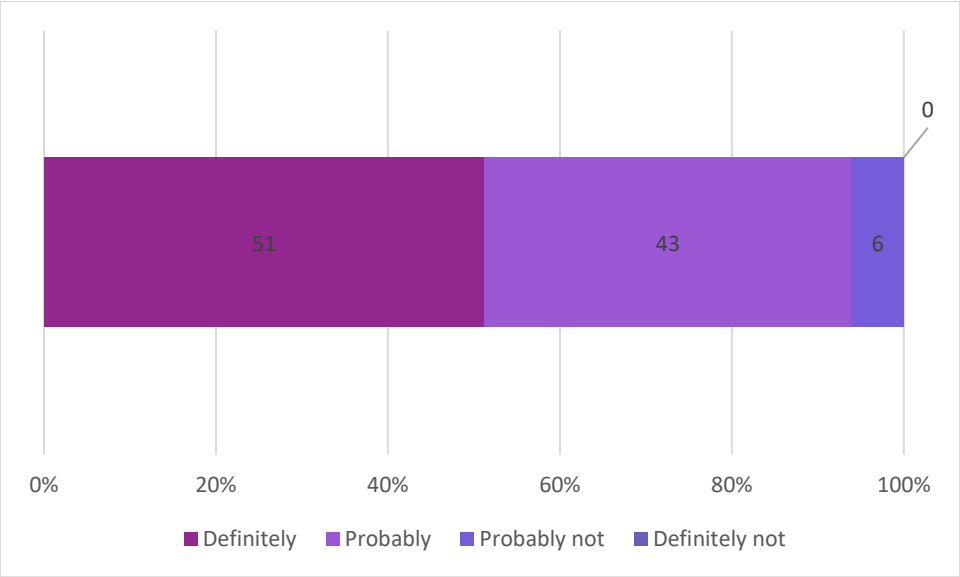
Based on 82 responses.

Finally, as a global measure of their satisfaction with the role of CA, they were asked would they recommend becoming a CA. Almost all (94%) agreed that they would either *definitely* or *probably*

recommend the role, if asked. Only 6% indicated that they "probably" would not do so, with none choosing the "definitely not" response. Thus, responses were overwhelmingly positive.

Although all cohorts were positive about the role, the 2019 cohort were slightly less so (85% would definitely or probably recommend the role, compared to 100% of the 2020 cohort). Regarding gender, females were the most positive, with 98% probably recommending the role and males the most negative (with 22% probably not recommending the role).

Figure 8.9 Extent to which CAs would recommend becoming a CA, if asked.



Based on 82 responses.

The concepts of Creative Associates and Creative Schools

As well as the practicalities of their role and of the Creative Schools initiative, CAs were asked for their views on how their role and the model of Creative Schools was conceptually defined. This included the relationship between CAs and other partners in Creative Schools, the amount of support a CA can provide to schools, the types of schools to which they felt that the Creative Schools model was suited, and the collective skills of CAs.

Broadly, satisfaction with CA role definition was higher than satisfaction with more practical aspects. None of the CAs surveyed indicated that they were *very* dissatisfied with how the relationship between CA and their schools or between the CA and Creative Schools was defined (Table 8.5). In each case, 84% expressed satisfaction, while 87% were satisfied with how the role of CA in facilitating school relationships with other artists was defined.

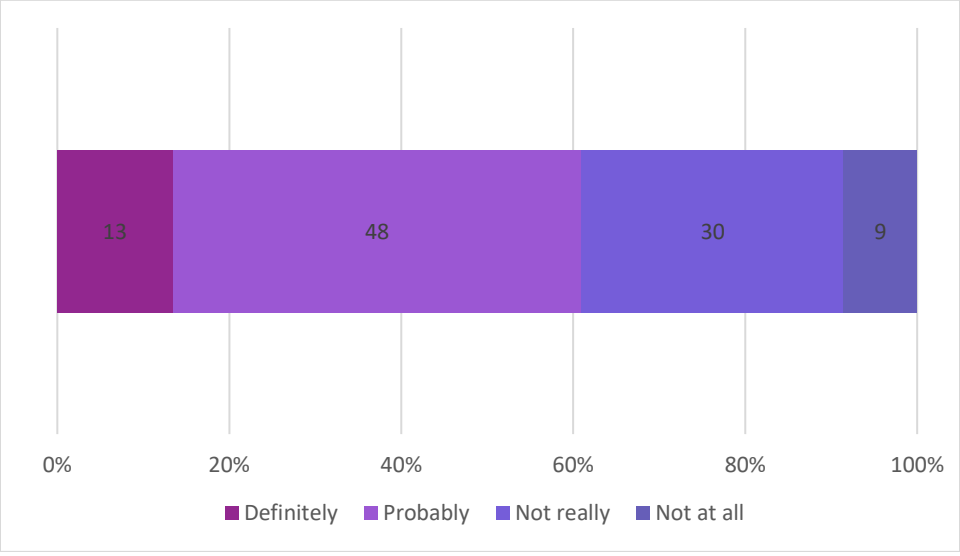
Similar to the level of satisfaction in relation to the support from central office, the least satisfied groups were males and CAs who started in 2019. For example, 40% of males (vs 12% of females) and 29% of the 2019 CA cohort (vs 7% of the 2018 cohort) were fairly dissatisfied with how the relationship between CAs and Creative Schools was defined.

Table 8.5 CA satisfaction with how aspects of their role was defined.

	Very satisfied	Fairly satisfied	Fairly dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied
The relationship between CA and school (N=83)	30.1	54.2	15.7	0.0
The relationship between CA and Creative Schools (N=83)	32.5	51.8	15.7	0.0
The role of CA in facilitating school relationships with other artists (N=83)	33.7	53.0	12.0	1.2

CAs expressed mixed views on whether the amount of CA time allocated to each school was sufficient (Figure 8.10). Overall, 13% felt it was *definitely* sufficient, with almost half thinking it was *probably* sufficient. However, almost one in ten felt it was *not at all* adequate. Unusually, female CAs expressed more negative views than did males or other CAs. Forty-two percent of females felt that insufficient time was allocated to schools, compared to approximately 30% of male and other CAs. The most negative ratings came from the 2020 cohort of CAs, half of whom felt that the time allocation was inadequate. However, this is somewhat to be expected, as they were newest to the role and might be considered to be on a steeper learning curve.

Figure 8.10 CA views on the adequacy of time allocated to each school.

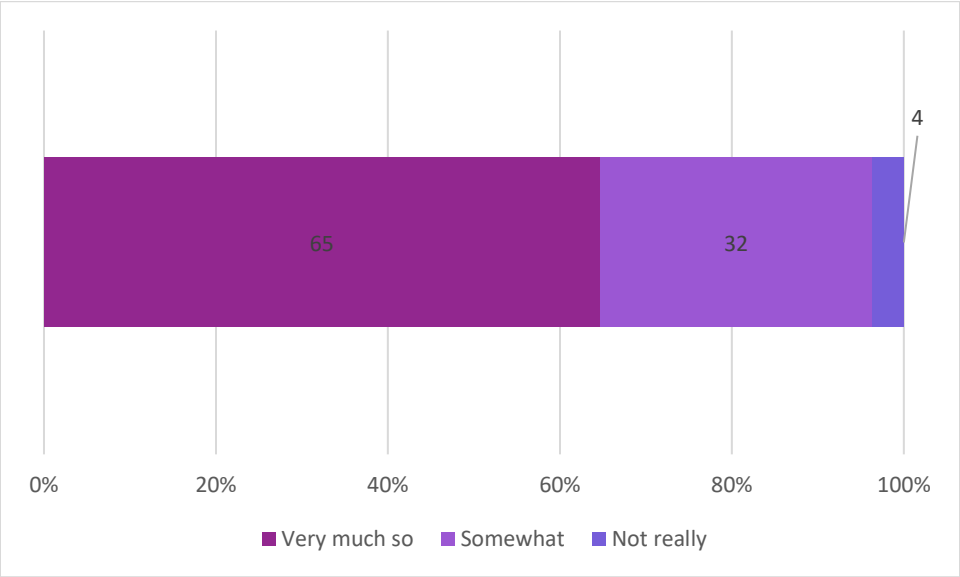


Based on 82 responses.

Although each school is assigned a single CA, the Creative Schools model also draws on a collective pool of expertise among CAs, and a community of practice model. Thus, CAs were asked

how they thought that the expertise of CAs, collectively, was able to meet the needs of schools. About two-thirds felt that CAs were very much able to meet school needs, and almost one-third felt that this was somewhat the case (Figure 8.11). Fewer than 4% felt CAs were not really able to do so, and no CA felt that CAs collectively were not at all able to meet school needs. Irrespective of cohort, almost all CAs responded positively to the question. However, male CAs were slightly less positive than female and other CAs. Slightly less than half (44%) of males very much agreed, compared to 68% of females.

Figure 8.11 CA views on how well the collective expertise of CAs meets the needs of schools.



Based on 82 responses.

Summary

The chapter presented the results of surveys completed by Creative Associates (CAs) that sought information on several aspects of the CAs' experiences, such as background information about them as artists, their process of joining Creative Schools, satisfaction with induction and supports provided, information about their assigned schools, general satisfaction with their work as a CA, views on the concept of Creative Schools, and the efficacy of Creative Schools. The main art forms pursued by the CAs in their practices were visual arts, followed by drama or theatre and craft. The main impetus for becoming involved in Creative Schools was a desire to "accord status to the arts in schools"—reflecting the CAs' strong commitment to arts advocacy in the first instance, followed by putting the child at the centre of the creative process.

Overall, the surveys revealed that CAs were positive about their experience with the programme, from the beginning, especially in terms of how they were selected and matched to schools. However, there were some areas where CAs were less positive, such as the level of initial understanding among school coordinators and management about what participation in Creative Schools entailed. There were also some differences in satisfaction levels among different cohorts

of CAs, some of which may be attributed to experiences during COVID-19 disruptions. CAs were generally satisfied with their own training and communication from the central offices Any issues that prompted dissatisfaction were communicated to the central office and resolved for the next intake, leading to more positive ratings from the following cohort. In 2021, regional coordinators were appointed to support the CAs, and this additional structured support was well received.

Overall, most CAs felt that they were broadly able to meet schools' needs. Moreover, they experienced personal benefits from being a CA, with approximately one-third feeling that being a CA had opened up wider work opportunities for them, while one-third also felt that being a CA had little or no effect. However, the survey revealed that almost all the CAs would recommend becoming a CA, with females being the most positive and males the most negative. The vast majority of the CAs indicated that they enjoyed their role with none indicating that they did not enjoy the role at all.

Chapter 9 Creative Associates' Views on the Effects of Creative Schools

This chapter is based on two questionnaires completed by Creative Associates (CAs) during the summer of 2021 (T1), supplemented by a small number of questions asked in May 2022 (T2). The first questionnaire covered a variety of topics, including background information on CAs (art forms, experience, etc), views on how Creative Schools was organised and implemented at national level, and views on the concept of Creative Schools and the role of CA. Much of the content covered in that questionnaire has already been described in the preceding chapter.

In this chapter, we describe CAs' views on the efficacy of Creative Schools, and its strengths and weaknesses, drawing on a set of identical questions about creativity-related attitudes and behaviours that were repeated in both administrations of the survey. The chapter also includes responses to two questions about possible benefits to the CAs' own practices (asked in May 2022) and responses to open-ended questions asked as part of the 2021 survey only. There are four sections in the chapter.

Section one focusses on CAs' perceptions of students and the value they placed on creativity, art, diversity and wellbeing, and their interest in creative or artistic activities. These views were sought at two timepoints.

Section two focusses on CAs' views of their assigned schools and staff, again at two time points. It describes the CAs' views on how teachers in their schools viewed diversity and creativity, as well as the extent to which they modelled creativity, and listened to the student voice.

Section three is a short section focussing on the perceived benefits of participation in Creative Schools to the CAs themselves. Section four examines broader aspects of Creative Schools. It is based on responses from CAs to some open-ended questions about the most effective aspects of Creative Schools, which aspects they felt might be improved, as well as their more general views of Creative Schools as a whole.

Survey participants

As noted in the preceding chapter, the 2021 survey was open to all of the 119 CAs involved with Creative Schools at that time. A majority (70%) completed at least some part of the survey and their responses are presented in the previous chapter. However, the responses in *this* chapter are based only on the subset of respondents that had been assigned a new school in 2020/21. This is because the aim was to compare students and teachers near the start and near the end of their Creative Schools journey.

Thus, for the questions described here, the first (2021) survey asked CAs to consider the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools only, and to rate them as they were at the *start* of the 2020/21 school year. Tables in this chapter showing data from the first survey are based on the subset of 66

respondents who were working in at least one school in the 2020 cohort. In contrast, the follow-up survey in 2022 was only offered to CAs working in the 2020 cohort of schools. Of the 77 invited to complete the survey, 50 (64.9%) completed at least some questions and data from all are included in this chapter.

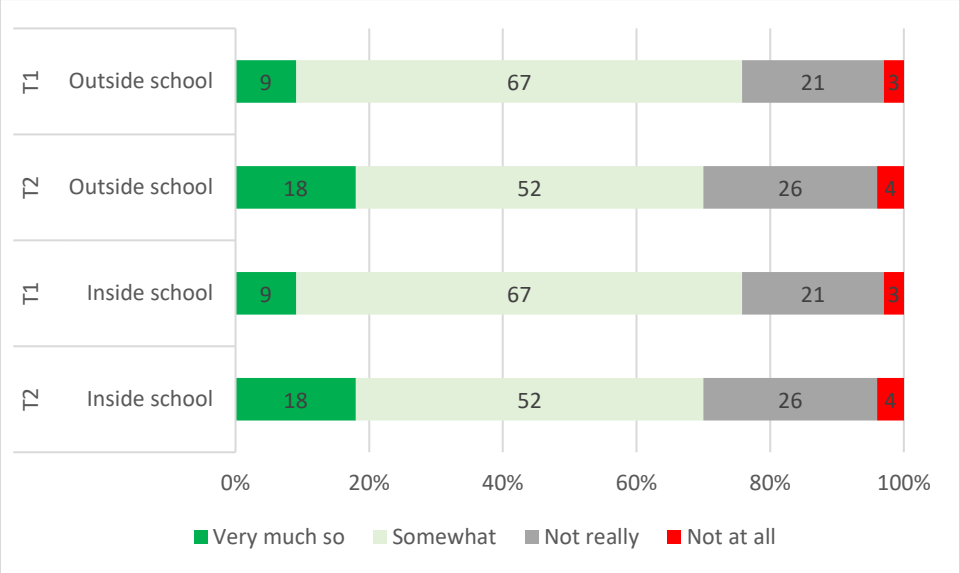
CA views of students' attitudes and behaviours

CAs were asked to describe primary pupils' and post-primary students' interest in, and engagement with, creative activities. From here on, the term student is used in all instances except those referring specifically to primary level Descriptions from both surveys were generally quite positive, especially regarding interest and attitudes, but slightly less positive for understanding of art and creativity.

Engagement with the arts

At T1, about two-thirds of CAs felt that students in their school somewhat engaged with the arts, inside and outside of school, at the start of Creative Schools (Figure 9.1). Roughly one quarter felt that they did not really or not at all engage with the arts, in or out of school. By T2 (May 2022), the numbers who perceived students to be very much engaged, both in and out of school, doubled (from 9% to 18%), but there was also a slight increase (to 30%) in those who perceived them to not really or not at all engage.

Figure 9.1: CA views on student engagement with the arts, inside and outside of school.



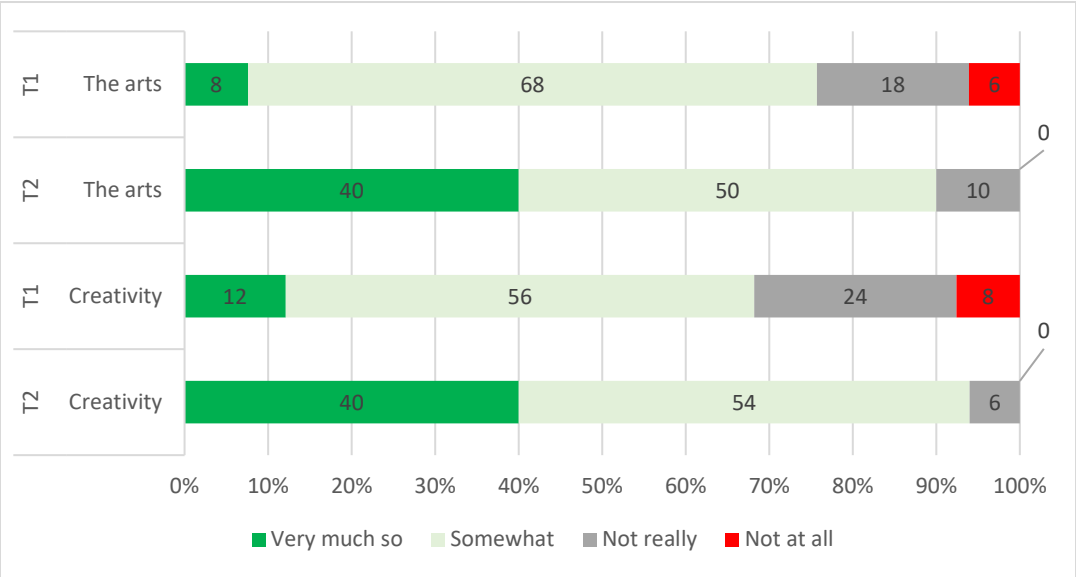
Based on 66 responses at T1, and 50 at T2.

Understanding of the arts and creativity

In contrast to engagement with the arts, CAs perceived large changes in student understanding of the arts and of creativity (Figure 9.2). Few CAs felt that their students very much understood either at T1, but by T2 40% very much agreed that their students understood both the arts and

creativity. Also, there were sizeable drops in the percentages of CAs feeling that students did not really or not at all understand either. For example, 32% of CAs felt that their students initially did not really or not at all understand creativity, but this fell to only 6% by T2.

Figure 9.2 CA views on student understanding of the arts and of creativity.

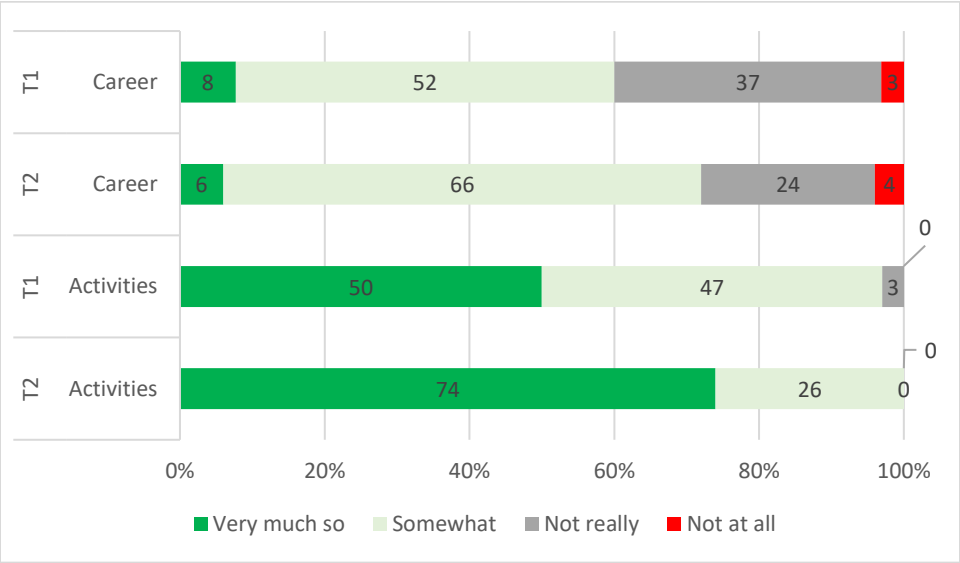


Based on 66 responses at T1, and 50 at T2.

Considering an arts or creative career

Figure 9.3 shows responses to questions asking if CAs believed students in their schools would consider an arts or creative career, and if they expressed interest in arts or creative activities. There was little change from T1 to T2 in the percentages who very much thought that students were interested in an arts career, but a noticeable drop in the percentages who felt that their students were not really or not at all interested in artistic career (from 40% to 28%). At T1, half of CAs felt that their students were very much interested in arts and creative activities, rising to 74% by T2.

Figure 9.3 CA views on student interest in arts/creative activities and careers.

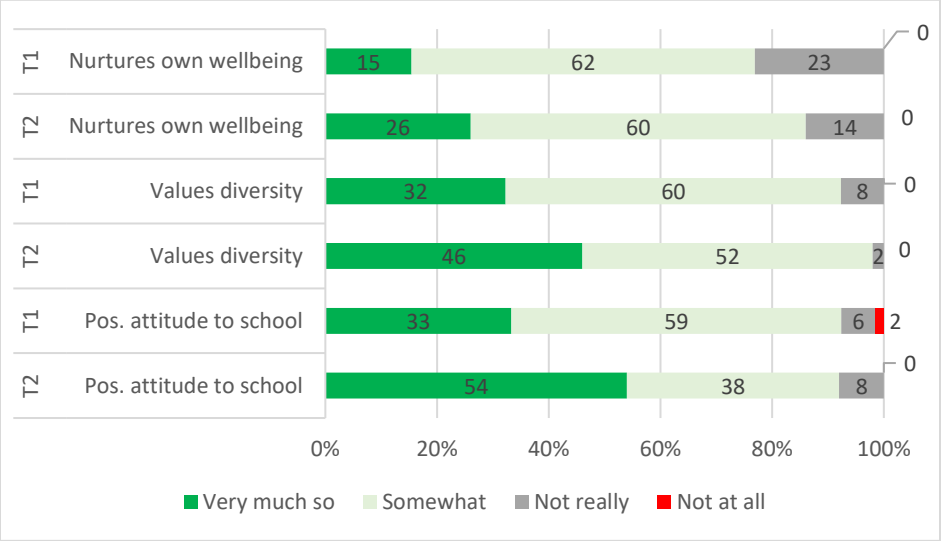


Based on 66 responses at T1, and 50 at T2.

Nurturing wellbeing, valuing diversity

CAs were asked if students in their 2020 schools nurtured their own wellbeing, valued diversity, and had a positive attitude to school. At T1, CAs were noticeably less likely to feel that students nurtured their own wellbeing than they were to agree that they had a positive attitude to school or that they valued diversity (See Figure 9.4). For example, 92% felt that students either very much or somewhat valued diversity and had a positive attitude to school, compared to the 77% who felt that students very much who felt they at least somewhat nurtured their own wellbeing. By T2, 86% of the CAs felt students at least somewhat nurtured their own wellbeing, while all but one felt that the students valued diversity.

Figure 9.4 CA views on how students nurture their wellbeing, value diversity, have a positive attitude to school.



Based on 66 responses at T1, and 50 at T2.

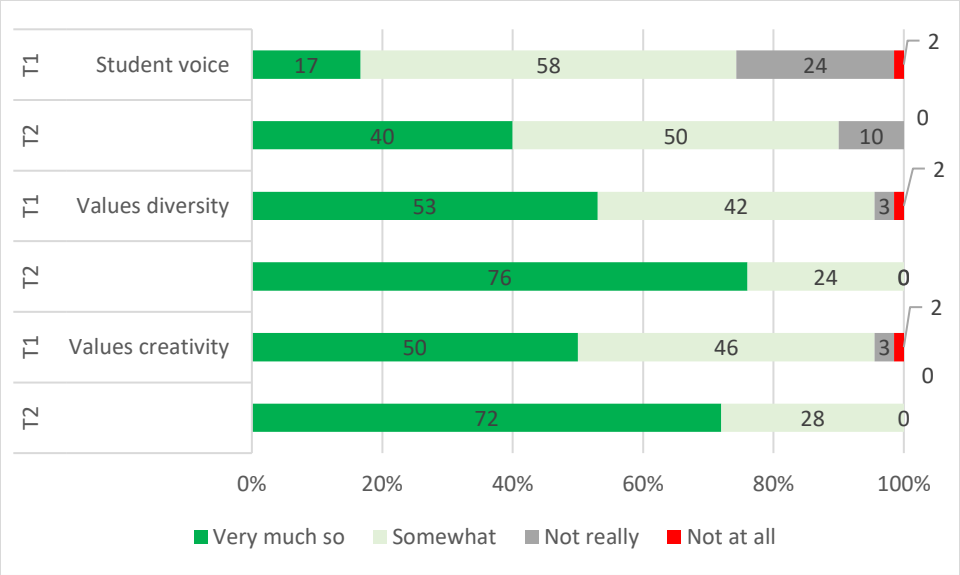
CA views of their assigned schools

This section outlines CA perceptions of what their assigned "schools" were like just before they started and just before they finished their formal involvement with Creative Schools. The questions were immediately preceded by questions asking CAs for their views on "children and young people in schools that joined in 2020". Thus, although not explicitly stated, it is assumed that the responses are based on views of *staff* in the school or the general atmosphere in the school, rather than views of students.

Voice of the child

At T1, relatively few CAs (17%) felt that their assigned schools very much listened to the student voice, while 26% felt the student voice was not really or not at all listened to (See Fig 9.5). By T2, the percentage that felt the student voice was *not* listened to had fallen to 10% and there was a large increase (to 40%) in those who agreed very much that the school listened to the student voice. At T1, roughly half of CAs felt that their schools very much valued diversity and creativity. By T2, this rose to approximately three-quarters of CAs, with none indicating that their schools did not really or not at all value creativity or diversity.

Figure 9.5 CA views on how their assigned schools listened to the student voice, valued diversity and creativity.



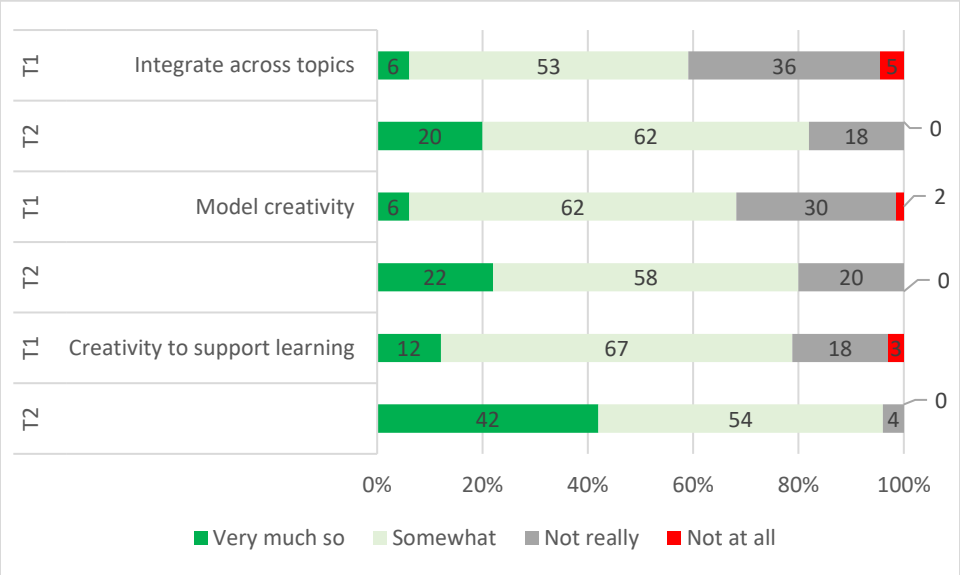
Based on 66 responses at T1, and 50 at T2.

Modelling creativity

In the first administration of the survey, CAs had mixed views on how well teachers modelled creativity, how schools integrated creativity across topics or subjects, or used creativity to support learning. For example, only 6% of CAs thought that teachers very much modelled creativity or that creativity was integrated across subjects (Figure 9.6). Views at T1 were a little more positive regarding how schools used creativity to support learning, with almost 80% of CAs

indicating that their schools very much or somewhat did so. By T2, CA views on each of the three areas were far more positive. Roughly 80% agreed at least somewhat that creativity was integrated across topics and that teachers modelled creativity. Close to half (42%) of CAs very much agreed that schools used creativity to support learning, while 96% agreed at least somewhat that this was the case.

Figure 9.6 CA views on how their assigned schools model creativity, integrate it across lessons, and use it to support learning.

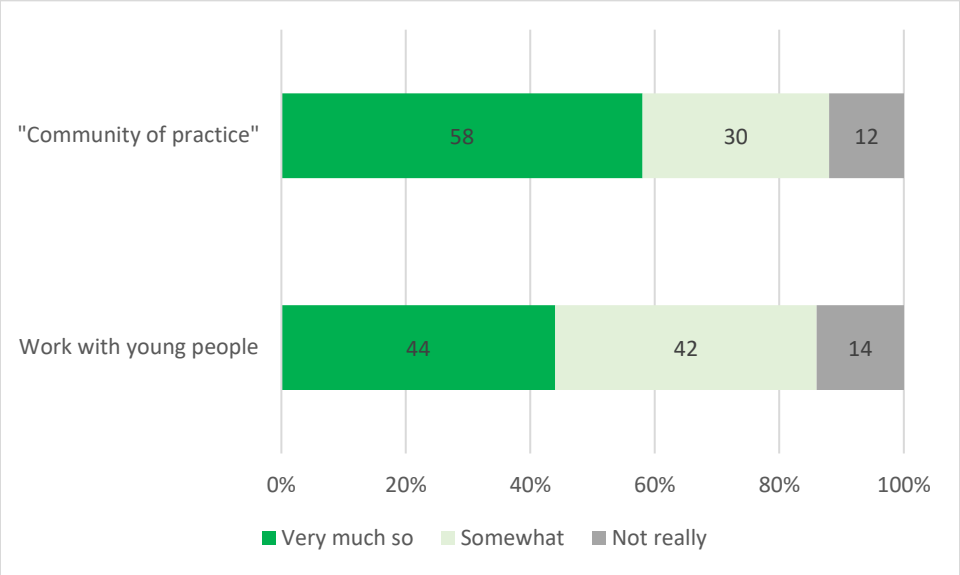


Based on 66 responses at T1, and 50 at T2.

Possible benefits to CAs from Creative Schools

As part of the T2 survey, CAs were asked if they felt that Creative Schools had benefited their own practice, either from their work with young people or as part of a Community of Practice. As can be seen from Figure 9.7, none chose the "not at all" option. A majority (58%) felt that they had very much benefited from being part of a Community of Practice, while only 12% felt their own practice did not really benefit from it. Responses were also largely positive for the perceived benefits to their practice from working with young people. Forty-four percent felt that they had very much benefited from it, while only 14% did not really perceive any benefits to their own practice arising from their work with young people.

Figure 9.7 CA views on possible benefits to their own practice from elements of Creative Schools.



Based on 50 responses, T2.

CA views on the efficacy of Creative Schools

This section is based on the responses of all CAs who completed the first survey (summer 2021), rather than just those associated with the 2020 cohort. As it comprises a mixture of those who started in 2018, 2019 and 2020, this should be borne in mind when reviewing their thoughts on the efficacy of the initiative. The section describes CA responses to a set of multiple-choice questions regarding the suitability of the Creative Schools model for different types of educational settings (e.g., small primary school/Youthreach centre). Next, it summarises responses to three optional open-ended questions, asking CAs:

- what they felt was the most effective aspect of Creative Schools.
- to identify what they would like to change about Creative Schools.
- for any other comments they wished to add.

Suitability for different settings

The questions asking CAs how well they felt Creative Schools was suited to different types of settings were answered slightly differently to most other questions in the survey. Many skipped some questions, later explaining that they did not answer regarding settings that they had not personally worked in. Others answered all questions, combining their own experiences with feedback from CA colleagues, or extrapolating from their own experience. Thus, as can be seen in Table 9.1, there are noticeable differences in the number who responded to different questions, with CAs most likely to answer with regard to primary schools and least likely to answer about special schools or Youthreach centres.

Table 9.1 CA views on the suitability of Creative Schools for different types of settings.

	Very suitable	Fairly suitable	Fairly unsuitable	Very unsuitable	N responses
Small primary school	82.4	17.6	0.0	0.0	74
Rural primary school	71.6	25.7	2.7	0.0	74
Small post-primary school	65.6	28.1	6.3	0.0	64
Urban primary school	65.2	31.9	0.0	2.9	69
DEIS schools	63.6	33.3	3.0	0.0	66
Youthreach centre	49.1	45.5	5.5	0.0	55
Mixed-sex post-primary school	48.3	40.0	10.0	1.7	60
Special school	45.5	50.9	3.6	0.0	55
Single-sex post-primary school	44.8	44.8	8.6	1.7	58
Large primary school	43.1	44.4	9.7	2.8	72
Large post-primary school	25.8	48.4	16.1	9.7	62

Sorted by percent selecting *Very suitable*, in descending order.

That caveat noted, it is clear CAs felt that Creative Schools was most suited to small primary schools and least suited to larger schools and to post-primary schools. Over 80% of respondents thought that Creative Schools was very suitable for small primary schools, and none felt it was unsuitable. Over 70% thought it was very suitable for rural primary schools (often considered synonymous with small schools), while two-thirds thought it was very suitable for small post-primary schools. At the other extreme, only 26% felt that Creative Schools was very suited to large post-primary schools.

However, while there was a clear preference for smaller schools and primary schools, Creative Schools was considered by a majority to be either very or fairly suitable for *all* types of settings. Of the long list shown in Table 9.1, large post-primary schools were the only setting where a sizeable minority (26%) felt Creative Schools was an unsuitable model for such schools.

Responses to open-ended questions

As a general preface, it is noteworthy that there was an extremely high level of engagement with what were optional questions at the end of a questionnaire. For example, 78 (of the 83 respondents) specified what they saw as the most effective aspect or aspects of Creative Schools, 75 specified at least one area they would wish to change, and 50 made additional general

comments or made specific points about the initiative. This high level of engagement is unusual with open-ended questions and indicates that the CA's responding to the questionnaire were invested in the process of feeding back information.

Most effective aspects

Most CAs listed multiple aspects of Creative Schools that they saw as effective. What follows below are some of the main themes that emerged from an analysis of their responses, graphically summarised in WordArt (Figure 9.8). As can be seen below, the words *Art, Voice, Children,* and *CA* are most prominent.

Figure 9.8 WordArt of CA's views of the most effective aspects of Creative Schools.

NOTE: The two most frequent words (Creative, School), and all words with frequency of 3 or less have been removed.

Flexibility

One of the aspects of the initiative that CAs particularly appreciated was the flexibility built-in to their own role, in the methods they could use, and how they could adapt to the particular needs of individual schools. Some example comments included:

> *The fact that it's not a "one size fits all" scheme, and each CA tailors his/her advice and interaction/recommendations to the needs of the school and young people and staff.*
>
> *The flexibility provided for each school to make it match their individual needs and interests.*
>
> *The freedom to explore and dream big - or small, depending on how each individual school responds to the brief.*

Valuing the Voice of the Child

Encouragingly, the Lundy model, and the Voice of the Child featured prominently among the positive aspects identified.

> *The voice of the child is central to the programme and is key to its success!*
>
> *…the projects that are undertaken become really meaningful (both in terms of being child led and child centred, and being appropriate to the school community as they are in the here and now).*
>
> *Giving children and young people agency and broadening the view of children, students, young people and teachers of the Arts and Creativity and their role in education and personal development.*

Skills and expertise to bring to the role

CAs believed that they had a particular set of skills and expertise that they brought into schools, expertise that may otherwise not have been readily available to many schools.

> *The CA expertise in helping the school design bespoke projects.*
>
> *…the support of a CA is the most important aspect of Creative Schools, all schools I've worked with say this is an invaluable support and takes the pressure of the school.*

Synergistic partnership

Many also recognised the importance of the partnership and connections between the CA and the school, and potentially the wider artistic community in the area. to a certain sense this was flagged as a synergy rather than just a partnership, in that the various parties contributed to a whole that was more than the sum of its parts.

> *It also helps to develop connections/relationships with artists for future more embedded projects. Stimulates discussion around the importance of creativity by providing opportunities to engage with a range of non formal, experiential, process-based learning experiences.*
>
> *Brokering of relationships between the school and the arts community. It's ability to foster a bird's eye view to planning for creativity and perhaps identify areas for development and work to those.*
>
> *Relationship building between different stakeholders, arts organisations and creative practitioners.*

New ways of doing things

Another positive that emerged was that the initiative encouraged, or allowed, schools to try new ways of doing things and new ways of thinking. Because of the nature of Creative Schools, there was a perception that school staff had greater freedom to experiment then might otherwise have been the case.

Takes the pressure off the school and encourages creative activities, new and different approaches.

Introducing the concept of enjoying the process of creativity, not focusing upon the product to the school, teachers, students.

Advocating thinking outside the box and not in the structural traditional form of schools.

Pooling skills

CAs were also cognisant of the benefits of the pooled or collective skills of the CA community within Creative Schools. These collective skills of CAs were perceived to not only be of benefit to schools but also to other CAs.

CAs' pooling of expertise.

CA contact and support through community of practice seemed to work really well this year.

Conduit for artistic knowledge

The role of CA was very much structured as a conduit through which schools and the local artistic community could engage. This mediating role was considered an important element in providing schools with access to expertise and resources of which they may otherwise have been unaware.

Helping schools to develop their links to artists, arts organisations & services within their locality & further afield. Many schools are not aware of/familiar with the arts infrastructure around them & how to link in with arts in Ed opportunities that may be available through local authority arts office, heritage office, local arts in Ed partnership, craft Ed, music generation etc.

schools appreciated the networking facilitated by CAs and the subject knowledge from CAs.

Funding supports

The financial benefits of being in Creative Schools were also included among the positive elements of the initiative. Given the budget constraints under which most schools operate, the additional funding, and the additional human resource of a CA were perceived as particularly important.

Schools having significant funding to spend on Creative activities.

I think the combination of a CA with the funding allows the schools a unique opportunity to further their understanding of creativity and the vital role it can play in education in general and not just art.

Extended time

Other positive aspects mentioned by CAs included the fact that Creative Schools is structured around different stages and has a longer duration than most initiatives, the opportunity to embed creativity/arts across the curriculum, and to engage directly with children.

> *Embedding applied Arts Practice across the curriculum.*
>
> *The stages of Creative Schools, from Understand to Implementing a school plan allow for a unique model to be crafted around the needs of the school. This enables a sustainable approach to planning that extends beyond the tenure of the programme.*

Areas identified for change

The WordArt (Figure 9.8) shows some of the most frequent words used when discussing what changes might need to be made to Creative Schools. As can be seen, CA features far more prominently than any other word, followed by (in descending order) More, Work, Trained and Time.

In contrast to the positive aspects of the initiative (often related to abstract concepts), criticisms were typically about quite concrete matters. In particular, while generally happy with the *concept* of the CA role, there was unhappiness with the practical implementation of that concept and the supports provided to CAs at the outset and during their role, including the amount of training provided, and the amount of time needed to deal with the administrative aspects of the CA role.

Five main themes emerged from a review of the responses, summarised briefly, then described in more detail further below. By far the most prominent was a series of inter-related issues about how Creative Schools was managed and how that affected the activities of CAs. The next most frequent criticism related to the training provided to CAs, coordinators, or to both. This was followed by a series of criticisms of aspects of the role of Coordinator, with suggestions for improvement, and then by suggestions as to how the initiative needed to be adapted for post-primary settings. Other criticisms related to the fact that the same amount of money was given to each successful school, irrespective of their size of enrolment, to the need for a legacy period after Creative Schools formally finished, and understandably, to the limitations that the COVID-19 pandemic placed on what was possible.

Figure 9.9 WordArt of CA's views of the changes needed in Creative Schools.

NOTE: The two most frequent words (Creative, School), and all words with frequency of 3 or less have been removed.

Many of the suggestions were specifically relation either to aspects of central management, or to aspects of the CA role. However, there is considerable interplay between what is designed and implemented centrally and what is experienced on the ground. Thus, in this section we combine both to examine the management of Creative Schools both centrally and locally.

Challenges with the application process

Following a chronological sequence, CAs noted that some of their schools had difficulty with the application process, which was perceived as cumbersome. They also felt that school staff sometimes misunderstood what was involved and what was required of them when applying. In this regard, their comments reflect the survey results in the previous chapter (where a large majority of CAs felt that school staff did not understand what was involved when they applied). In particular, a number criticised the lack of clarity over what was required from the person who filled the role of Coordinator. Other complaints related to a perceived slow response from central management if issues arose, with the slow response to changes arising from the COVID-19 pandemic a particular point of concern.

Specific to the role of the CA, the difficulty that CAs had in establishing the requirements of their role was flagged by many, with a few noting that it was only through other CAs that they began to understand what was required. Other suggestions related to reducing the excessive and/or repetitive paperwork, and streamlining the invoicing process.

Induction for CAs

A theme that emerged was that many CAs would like to see a clearer induction and support process for CAs that provided *practical* guidance on aspects of the role, including an introductory

handbook, a definition of what the role involved, answers for some typical FAQS (e.g., payments, invoices), and a How To guide for accessing other artists.

> *Application process way too intense and complicated.*
>
> *Even though different approaches are needed in each school, and each CA will bring their own experience to it, I feel there should be a CA handbook that collates all of the information and has sample approaches to the different stages involved in the process. It's a complete head wreck trying to collate all of the information yourself, all of the tools, all of the documentation, all of the resources etc.*
>
> *Most of the info is now distilled into monthly newsletters which make it hard to find old communications and old info. Information is communicated partially and then changed, or not followed up on, decisions are often made that affect CA's and schools with no consultation or input that are then coldly communicated to us.*
>
> *The invoicing system needs to be revised. I feel like the admin in Creative Schools probably waste more time dealing with invoicing, when they could be dealing with the more practical aspects of running the programme. But the biggest problem as a CA is again is the precarious nature of the hours. You are entirely dependent on your schools and them engaging with you in order to get paid. Realistically hours should be paid out on a monthly basis.*
>
> *Success can depend on your own breadth of knowledge about a variety of multidisciplinary artforms. A lot of time is spent trying to find the right artist/ initiative for your school and this can feel like 'feeling in the dark' at times, there is no workable roadmap for that act of procurement. Some sort of database of recommended vetted or experienced artists / their locations. skillsets and contact details would really support this.*

Training for CAs

Difficulties with how training was both planned and implemented were also raised by many CAs. The issues related to both quality and quantity of training, as well as referencing difficulties arising from COVID-19. For example, while some wanted more training and/or more joint training with CAs and school staff, others referred to issues with the quality and the clarity of the training that was received. As noted in the previous chapter, CAs were reasonably positive about the quality of the training that they had received (e.g., almost half were *very satisfied* with their induction). That noted, the fact that CAs and coordinators did not have joint training opportunities was perceived as a weakness. Joint sessions were perceived to contribute to better understanding on the part of Coordinators, or to assist in relationship-building between the Coordinator and CA.

> *The training is poor, particularly for creative coordinators who leave the training process with confused as to how the programme will work. Realistically creative associates and creative co-ordinators should be trained together, specifically they should be paired and trained together. This would help with clarity and relationship building and trust at the start. The lack of training provided to co-ordinators (they get one day) creates a lot of confusion and mistrust at the start of the process and as a CA*

you waste a lot of time navigating this when you could and should hit the ground running.

More training for CAs, training with CAs and School Coordinators together. More individualised training days for each strand, i.e.: a day for Understand, Develop, and Celebrate, all around the times that CAs would be embarking on that aspect of the programme and a proper timeline/outline of paperwork due and how to complete it.

The arts council training - it completely put my schools' coordinators off because it was so wishy washy and impractical. For the Associates, many of us came away completely confused.

The induction was overwhelming. However I think it was because of the COVID 19 pandemic. Screen time is challenging.

I also personally found the training over zoom extremely challenging due to missing social cues, and being a more quiet person, I found it caused anxiety, and my ideas were misunderstood in the moment, as I couldn't communicate as well as I would if I was in the same room with people. However, I thought the training was delivered brilliantly and very creatively over this platform.

Role of the school coordinator

CAs had numerous suggestions as to how the role of the school coordinator could be improved. A relatively common theme was that it should not be a single individual, but that at least two members of the school staff should attend training and share the role. This would address issues arising from staffing changes and would facilitate the dissemination of the Creative Schools approach across the school. CAs were also aware that the role of Coordinator required quite some time, with two suggesting that the Coordinator should be financially compensated, and others advocating increased substitution cover. Interestingly, one CA felt that the coordinator should be a member of school management team (to facilitate embedding within the school) while another felt the role should not be filled by a member of the management team because it was too time consuming.

having a creative team in place in the schools rather than a CC, because when the CC is not available for whatever reason there is no one in the school to keep the Creative Schools show moving and things grind to a halt.

I would ideally require that the school co-ordinator gets more time to dedicate to the programme.

Ideally the school, coordinator would not have a teaching role- it becomes quite overwhelming for teacher/coordinators to manage the workload and to escape the feeling of 'having another thing to do'.

Like the CACOP for the CA's, there should be a group for school coordinators to meet and support each other.

Implementing Creative Schools in a post-primary setting

Another theme to emerge related to the difficulty in implementing the Creative Schools model in a post-primary school setting. Given funding constraints and logistic issues, Creative Schools was seen as easier to implement in primary schools, Youthreach and Special School settings than it was in a post-primary school.

> *I feel that a new more appropriate approach should be developed for secondary schools. Secondary schools are a completely different setting to primary and Youthreach and so need a more programme that better suits and is beneficial to the staff and students.*
>
> *Creative Schools is also very tricky to implement in a secondary school context, where access really is not possible for all students.*
>
> *Reconsider how to work with secondary schools as the model suits primary schools more.*
>
> *There needs to be more buy-in from Post-Primary School management - perhaps an understanding stated or agreed with on the application form - to facilitate a minimum number of contact hours [1 - 3] between CA's and Staff.*

Part of the difficulty with implementing the Creative Schools model in post-primary schools was that the finance offered did not increase as school size increased, thus leading into the next theme: Finance. While a small number of CAs worried that the financial rather than the creative aspect was most appealing to some schools, others were concerned about the "flat" rate of finance, which took no account of school enrolment size.

> *Giving small and large schools the exact same amount of hours and budget and expecting a result for every child is ridiculous.*
>
> *The budgeting allocation for schools is problematic. Budgets should be allocated on the basis of school size. For larger schools it's very tricky to make the budget stretch and this creates barriers to access for students and pupils. My larger schools have all complained about this.*
>
> *The funding is what drives schools to apply. Lack of commitment from management in schools to speak and collaborate with CA. CA have no knowledge/ control of funding making it difficult to support school coordinator and Principals when drawing down funds or paying artists partnered with schools.*

A number of other suggestions were made by CAs. This included legacy-related suggestions, a change to a more intensive and prolonged initiative, better dovetailing with school calendars and the academic year, changes to Creative Schools week (including de-emphasising the product over process, and having a set date each year so it could be embedded in school calendars) and allowing CAs more leeway in using their time to engage in their own art form in their assigned schools.

It is too light touch to make a serious difference in most cases. I think that it would be better to work with fewer schools over a longer period and to properly embed artists in schools. This would be a much slower and more developmental process.

The time frame - that the support could continue and perhaps taper off support rather than abrupt stop.

The funding - post participation in the Creative School Initiative I think there should/could be funding opportunities for schools to continue their work. If we don't fund this then the changes made may not be continued.

I would create a scheme whereby after the first two years schools continue to get a % of funding but that they have to match the funding with their own creative budgetary funding (funds raised by schools, project award funding from other resources, clusters, creative Ireland). This would be to support schools to exercise initiative and newly learnt skills in securing funds and resources to continue to deliver creative activities.

I think there needs to be greater emphasis on the process rather than the product. Both my schools embedded Creativity into school life. Neither school did anything big and flashy, but they brought about a fundamental change to school life and culture. They even introduced new subjects to the curriculum. This was not appreciated by the Creative Schools team especially when it came to showcasing schools. They seemed to only be interested in the 'big flashy event' schools. This is contrary to what I thought Creative Schools *was all about.*

General comments

The final question in the 2021 survey asked CAs to comment if they felt any important issue had not been already addressed. Fifty commented, some at length. The WordArt (Figure 9.10) shows some of the most frequent words used. As can be seen, the words: *more*, *time* and *CA* feature prominently.

Figure 9.10 WordArt of CA's final comments on Creative Schools.

NOTE: The words Creative and School, and all words with frequency of 3 or less have been removed.

Three themes featured prominently (the Creative Schools initiative as *intended,* the initiative as *implemented,* and the effects of COVID-19*).* Other themes that emerged to a lesser extent related to differences between primary and post-primary schools, the importance of collegial supports, and a legacy effect for Creative Schools. Ten also took the opportunity to add positive comments about Creative Schools, generally. For example:

> *I adore being part of the scheme, it's really fulfilling and enriching to be a part of.*

> *It's inspiring to see how children and young people become engaged with creativity as part of everyday school life. Working in schools is a fantastic way to reach all social demographics.*

Regarding the theme of Creative Schools as *intended*, this mainly comprised criticisms of specific aspects of how the initiative was designed, although there were some positive comments too. A common thread related to a lack of clarity over important components of Creative Schools, including the nature of the CA role, the extent of the role's remit, and the nature and aims of the Creative Schools initiative itself. Other comments on Creative Schools included suggestions that more training as well further opportunities to develop a community of practice would be preferable, and that more than one person should be appointed as the school coordinator. Some also felt there should be a shift away from the centralised structure, as it minimised the opportunity to make full use of local networks and knowledge.

> *Schools thought they were getting an artist to come in and make art.*

> *I feel that more workshops for Creative Associates on the delivery of creative practises. There was insufficient time to deliver a full understanding of creative practises and*

what is involved in this skill. Schools have a pre-conceived idea of what will be involved in the Creative Schools project. This was difficult to remove.

I have grappled with properly understanding my role, despite the good advice and training provided. The community of practice groups have been a tremendous help. Seeking advice and support from peers. Without this my role as a CA would have been far more uncertain and stressful. A strange combination of creativity and administration, and trying to figure out my role and how to do it properly.

I would like to see co-ordinators receive more induction and ongoing support particularly through networking and sharing with peers.

I think my role as a CA would have been far more effective if I had been allocated schools in my local area. For example, I had to spend a great deal of time researching external artists and providers to meet the needs identified by the schools.

Regarding Creative Schools as it was *implemented*, criticisms ranged from the application process to the lack of centralised databases, poor information sharing and communication. A number of comments related to re-organising which aspects of Creative Schools could be managed centrally and which would benefit from more local management or input, and making better use of CA skills. For example, some expressed a desire for better-managed central resources such as databases of artists, emails and communications, oversight of training and planning. In contrast, others wanted certain elements devolved to local or regional level (e.g., CA regional groups and communities of practice, with formal sharing of all contact details and a formal communication structure, rather than WhatsApp groups set up by CAs). A repeated theme in the criticisms of the implementation related to poor communication and communication structures.

I think it would be great if CAs had more of an opportunity to use their skills and work on new aspects of the project. CAs could for example be asked to deliver training for teachers in Creativity. CPD is one of the main things that comes up in schools in the Understand section. Teachers want to have more confidence in teaching creatively. If there was a component of the project that allowed CAs to develop CPD for schools that would be hugely beneficial and sustainable.

A Creative Schools portal. Better communication to CAs.

More paid time for meetings between CAs particularly regionally. A centralised database for artists etc

As part of the role, CAs should be required to allow the sharing of their contact information between other CAs, if it was required for the role this would be in compliance with GDPR. GDPR has been used as an excuse to not facilitate direct communication between CA. As an aside, if communication from the office was better CAs probably wouldn't need to have another level of communication between them.

Unsurprisingly, there were several comments related to the effects that COVID-19 had on Creative Schools. As well as the obvious and immediate disruption to Creative Schools when a

national lockdown occurred, some noted that COVID-19 continued to affect Creative Schools long after schools re-opened. CAs were hampered by physical barriers (e.g., unable to physically access the school) and by a largely unwelcome shift to recorded workshops and Zoom sessions, but also by schools' anxieties about engaging in non-essential activities.

> *Schools have been under a lot of pressure re virtual teaching and back into the classroom, anxiety levels are high with COVID19 guidelines and policies. Some schools slow to engage and re-engage once back in the classroom.*
>
> *I know this was mainly the effects of COVID. We were absolutely buzzing with ideas, and children's voice being key in choosing the creative activities that the children wanted to explore. Then COVID hit, the rug was pulled from under it all and it's only at the end of the 2 year period that we are all back into it, excited again, buzzing and eager.*
>
> *It has been incredibly challenging to fulfil the project given the current environmental constraints the Pandemic presented. We were able to offer the schools a number of virtual offerings during the lockdowns. On the surface primary schools seem to embrace the process, where post-primary has a great deal of 'soft' politics to navigate.*

Other themes that emerged related to the legacy of Creative Schools once the funding expired, the differences in implementation in a primary versus post-primary setting, and the importance of collegial CA supports, each mentioned by three CAs.

> *When the programme ends I think there should be more supports in place for schools to continue on their own with* Creative Schools*. Again, if it was embedded into a timetable, support for Arts Council regarding other initiatives and funding etc, but more importantly, how to continue with their plan on their own and maybe offer incentives like green schools flags etc.*
>
> *The idea is great in theory but fits primary school timetabling more than secondary schools. A separate plan needs to be created to support the delivery of* Creative Schools *in secondary schools.*
>
> *As someone with more experience of primary school settings, I feel I need more training specifically around secondary schools.*
>
> *I am grateful for the support provided by* Creative Schools *for new CAs: the buddy system, training, and COCAP groups. These are all invaluable assets.*

Most of the remaining comments were quite diverse and tackling different issues, although the perceived (lack of) value placed on teacher input was mentioned by two teacher CAs.

> *I think there could be a stronger educational/teacher/pedagogical voice in* Creative Schools*.*
>
> *I don't think the view points of teacher CAs were valued or taken seriously at times during training. I felt at time like we were a token gesture to the initiative because the DES insisted on there being teacher CA's.*

Summary

This extended chapter presented the CAs' views of the effects of the Creative Schools initiative, based on data gathered at an early stage in their assignment and again towards the end of their involvement with Creative Schools. At the beginning, a minority of CAs believed that their assigned schools listened to the student voice and valued diversity and creativity. However, by the end of their involvement, a significant proportion of CAs reported that their schools very much listened to the student voice and valued diversity and creativity. The increase in positive views indicates that Creative Schools has had a positive impact on these aspects of school culture.

In terms of modelling creativity, integrating it across lessons, and using it to support learning, CAs had mixed views at the beginning of their involvement. However, by the end, the majority of CAs agreed that teachers modelled creativity, creativity was integrated across topics, and schools used creativity to support learning. This suggests that Creative Schools has had a positive impact on the integration of creativity into teaching and learning practices in schools.

Data revealed that the majority of CAs believed that the Creative Schools initiative was largely suitable for all types of settings, with small primary schools being the most preferred setting. The inherent flexibility in the initiative was cited as one of the most effective aspects of the programme, along with the valuing of the voice of the child, empowering teachers to integrate art into the curriculum and providing new opportunities for students to express themselves. The initiative was considered less suitable for larger schools and post-primary schools, with more support and resources necessary for the latter and a different approach that would better suit the post-primary structures.

In response to the open-ended questions, most CAs identified multiple aspects of the initiative that they believed were effective. These aspects included flexibility, valuing the voice of the child, empowering teachers, being able to avail of the pooled expertise of the artistic community, and creating new opportunities for self-expression. Overall, the CAs responded positively to the initiative, with a high level of engagement and investment in providing feedback.

CAs offered several suggestions to improve the CSC role, including having at least two coordinators share the role, providing financial compensation or increased substitution cover, and creating a support group for coordinators. It was also suggested that funding should be allocated based on school size to address barriers to access for students and pupils. Other suggestions included legacy-related ideas, more intensive and prolonged initiatives, better dovetailing with school calendars, and more emphasis on the process rather than the product. Finally, CAs felt that more time and resources were needed for the programme to be successful, and that a slower and more developmental process might be more effective. Despite some administrative issues at the beginning of the application process, from the perspective of CAs, Creative Schools has been successful in embedding creativity and the arts in the education system.

Chapter 10 Creative Schools Coordinators' Views and Experiences

This chapter describes the outcomes of a questionnaire completed by Creative Schools coordinators (CSCs) at the end of the 2020/21 school year. Questionnaires were hosted on Qualtrics©, an online survey platform. A link to the survey was sent to every coordinator in the 163 schools and centres who had joined Creative Schools in 2020.

Pilot survey to CSCs

A pilot survey was conducted during autumn 2020 which targeted a sample of the CSCs from the first cohort (2018) of Creative Schools. The pilot survey served a few purposes, one of which was to test schools' capacity to engage with online surveys and to trial the delivery of an online questionnaire. The survey included options for CSCs to express their views on any topics not already covered or to expand on answers that they had provided. Responses from the pilot were used to provide important, interim and formative feedback to the Creative Schools team, focussing on the strengths and weaknesses identified by CSCs. In addition, the responses helped to shape the questionnaire design that was administered to CSCs from the 2020 cohort, as some of the responses to open-ended questions were subsequently used to develop multiple choice questions.

Full survey to CSCs

The survey reported in this chapter was administered to the 2020 cohort and examined several topics, including:

- General background information about the CSC and their school (e.g., gender composition, location, size).
- Creative Schools administration and organisation.
- Views on the role of Creative Associate.
- The implementation of Creative Schools in their school.
- Views on creativity-related attitudes and behaviours of the staff and enrolment in their school.
- Views on the efficacy of Creative Schools, generally.

Most of these themes are described in subsequent sections in this chapter. Views on the efficacy of Creative Schools and of the behaviours and attitudes of staff and students or pupils are described in the next chapter, where they are compared with data from a shorter follow-up survey near the end of the 2021/22 school year. The follow-up repeated a small subset of questions about creativity-related attitudes and behaviours of staff and school enrolment. It was designed to gauge if the CSCs descriptions of behaviours and attitudes changed over the course of the initiative.

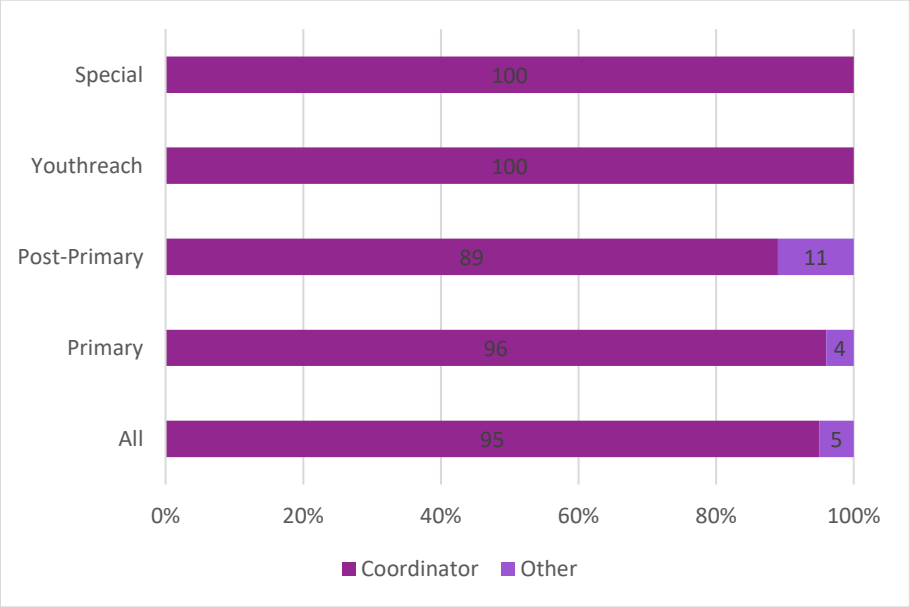
Of the 163 CSCs emailed links to the survey in late 2020/21, 130 (79.8%) completed at least some part in the survey. Most of what is reported in the rest of this chapter is based on the views of *all* 130 who responded to the questionnaire. Some additional analyses describe views of subsets of CSCs, based on characteristics such as school type (e.g., primary vs post-primary), location and size. Where the outcomes did not vary much by subgroup, only the overall data are reported. However, where interesting differences arise, they are reported immediately after the responses provided by the group as a whole.

Coordinator and school characteristics

This section outlines who completed the CSC survey[1], and the type of settings in which they worked. It is based solely on the outcomes of the first survey in 2021, as coordinator and school characteristics remained very similar across the two surveys.

For the 2021 survey, almost all (95%) questionnaires were completed by the CSC, rather than another staff member (Figure 10.1). There was little difference by primary or post-primary setting, and all the questionnaires returned from Special Schools and Youthreach centres were completed by the CSC. Of the six questionnaires completed by someone other than the CSC, four were completed by principals.

Figure 10.1 Percentage of questionnaires completed by the CSC, overall and by setting, 2021.



Based on 120 responses.

Each CSC was asked about their role in the school, outside of Creative Schools. The most common response was a primary school class teacher (43% of all respondents) or a Deputy or Assistant Principal (21% of all respondents). There was, however, considerable variation by type of setting.

[1] Although the survey was for CSCs, schools were advised that where the CSC was not available, it could be completed by another staff member who was familiar with Creative Schools.

Thus, Table 10.1 shows the type of roles held by the CSCs in primary and post-primary schools. Responses from those in Special Schools and Youthreach centres are not shown due to the small numbers involved.

At primary level, the CSC was typically a class teacher (59%). However, the role was also often held by a member of the school management team (40% were either the school principal or a Deputy or Assistant Principal), or by a teacher with a special education or learning support role. A broadly similar pattern was evident in the follow-up survey.

In contrast, at post-primary level, the role was usually filled by an art teacher (76%). None of the CSCs were principals, and only 16% were in a management position. "Other" posts included HSCL, librarian, volunteer. Only one post-primary respondent indicated that they were a subject teacher of a subject other than Art. A somewhat similar pattern was evident in the follow-up, with Art teacher being the most frequent response (54%), and 16% of respondents indicating they were senior management.

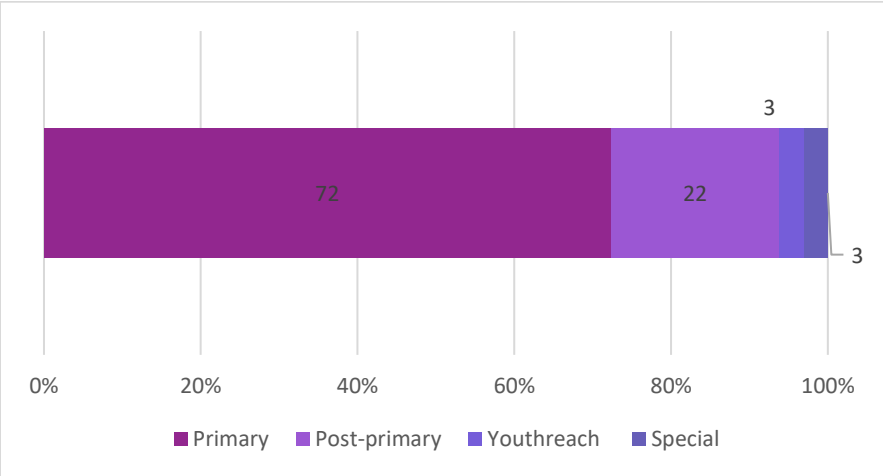
Table 10.1 Main roles held by CSCs, 2021.

	Principal	DP or AP	Art teacher	Class teacher	Special Ed/LS	Other
Primary	16.0	23.5		59.3	18.5	3.7
Post-primary	0	16.0	76.0		0	16.0

Based on 106 responses from respondents who indicated that they were the CSC in either a primary or post-primary school. Percentages may sum to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than one role.

Almost three-quarters (72%) of CSCs were based in primary schools, with most of the remainder working in post-primary schools (Figure 10.2). This closely reflects the division of school type within the overall 2020 cohort of Creative Schools (69% were primary schools and 23% post-primary schools).

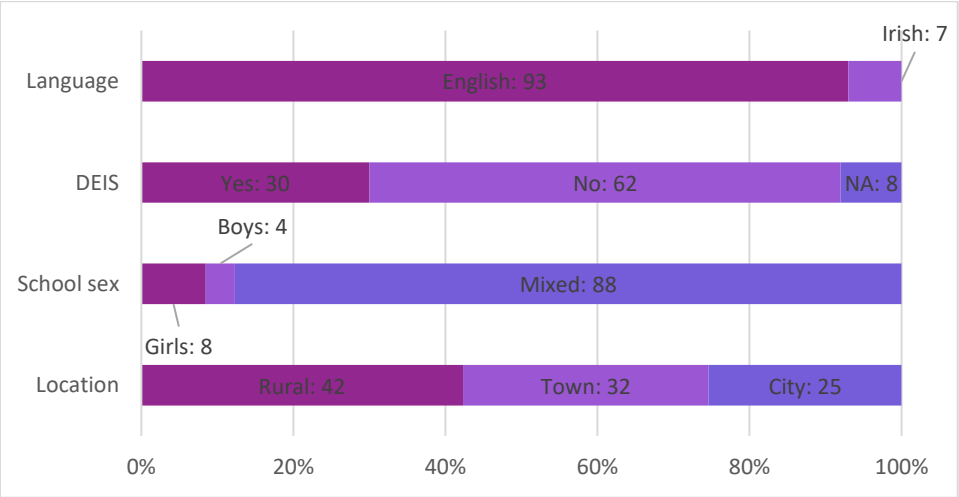
Figure 10.2 Settings in which CSCs worked, 2021.



Based on 130 responses.

Almost all CSCs (93%) worked in an English-medium setting, while 30% worked in a DEIS school, and 8% indicated that DEIS was not applicable to their work (e.g., Youthreach centre) (Figure 10.3). Schools were overwhelmingly mixed sex, with only 4% of CSCs working in an all-boys school and only 8% in an all-girls school. The CSCs also reported that their schools were in a mixture of rural and urban or suburban locations. While 42% were in rural areas, almost one-third were based in towns, with one-quarter located in suburban or city locations. Thus, as Figure 10.3 shows, the CSCs who responded to the questionnaire work in schools that reflect the composition of Creative Schools, generally. The overall characteristics of Creative Schools is also quite similar to the population of schools, nationally, except for DEIS status (DEIS is slightly over-represented in the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools).

Figure 10.3 School settings, by key characteristics, 2021.



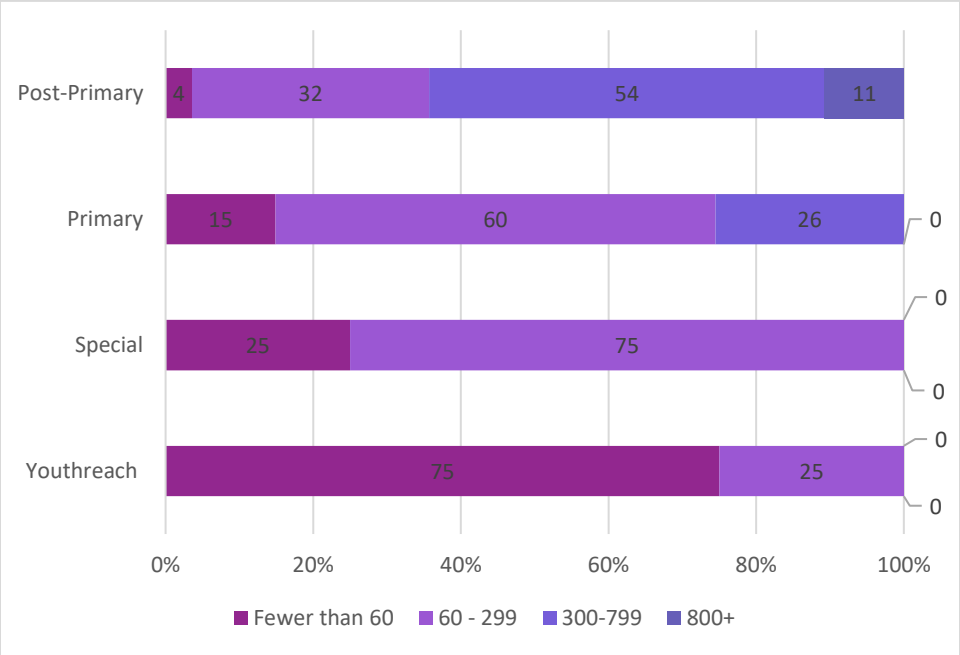
Based on 130 responses.

Figure 10.4 summarises the size of schools in which the CSCs were based, divided by school type because there are large differences in size related to level. As might be expected, Youthreach Centres and Special Schools were smallest. All had enrolments below 300, with most Youthreach Centres (75%) having fewer than 60 students, while most Special Schools (75%) fell in the 60-299 pupils range.

The percentages of small schools are slightly different to the population of schools, nationally. Ireland has very many small schools, especially at primary level (small schools are defined as 60 or fewer pupils at primary level and fewer than 300 students at post-primary level [DE, 2021; DES, 2020]). However, the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools included relatively fewer small primary schools and relatively more small post-primary schools than might be expected. Thus, the percentages of respondents working in small schools was a better reflection of the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools than of the wider school population.

At the other end of the spectrum, post-primary schools were the only category in which enrolment exceeded 800. Eleven percent of respondents from post-primary schools worked in large schools, which, again, reflects the percentage of large schools in Creative Schools. In sum, the characteristics of the schools in which the respondents worked were quite well aligned with the characteristics of the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools. This, coupled with the high response rates for the main survey, means that the views expressed by the CSCs are likely to be an accurate reflection of CSCs as a whole.

Figure 10.4 CSC reports of school enrolment size, by setting.



Based on 130 responses.

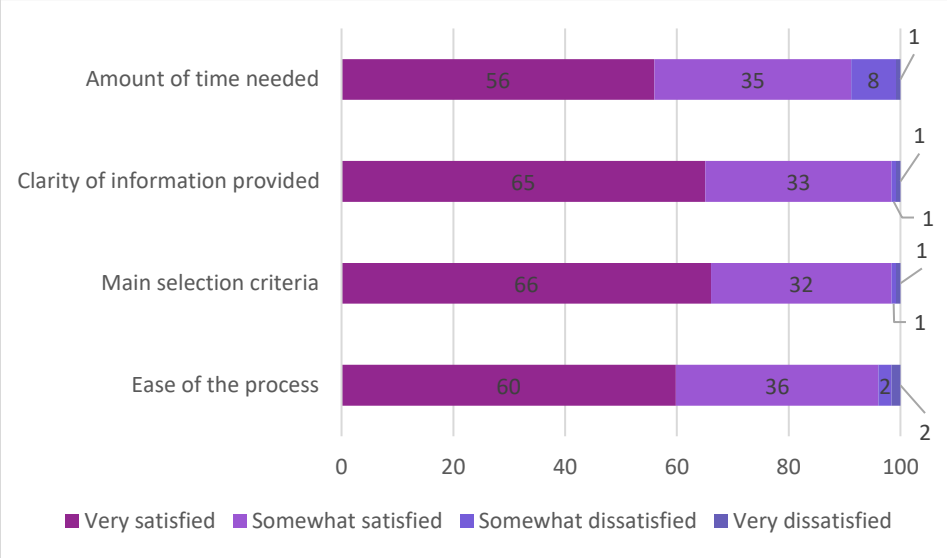
Administration and organisation

This section summarises CSCs' views on aspects of the administration and organisation of Creative Schools. This includes the initial application process, induction and ongoing training opportunities, supports provided to CSCs, and financial issues.

Application process

CSCs expressed considerable satisfaction with aspects of the application process, with at least half indicating that they were *very satisfied* with four listed aspects of the process (Figure 10.5). At least 96% were a least somewhat satisfied with the ease of the application process, the clarity of information provided to applicants, and with the main selection criteria. While there was also a high level of satisfaction with the amount of time required to make an application, 9% expressed dissatisfaction.

Figure 10.5 CSC satisfaction with aspects of the application process.



Based on 124 – 127 responses.

While satisfaction with the process was generally high across all types of schools, respondents from small primary schools tended to be the most satisfied, with those from post-primary schools slightly less likely to be satisfied. The numbers of respondents from Youthreach centres or from Special Schools were too small to analyse separately.

Induction and training

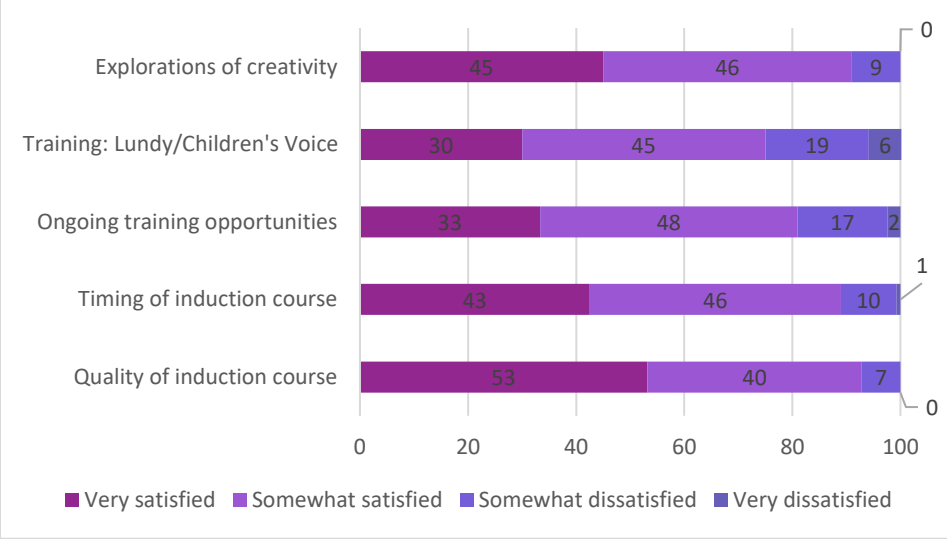
Most CSCs also expressed satisfaction with their induction and with ongoing training as part of their role in Creative Schools (Figure 10.6). The quality of the induction courses received the highest ratings, with just over half indicating that they were very satisfied with it, and none expressing high levels of dissatisfaction. Over 40% also indicated that they were very satisfied

with explorations of creativity in training, and with the timing of the induction course, although between 9% to 11% were somewhat dissatisfied with these aspects.

Satisfaction was lowest regarding ongoing training opportunities and training on the Lundy Model/Voice of the Child. Twenty-five percent of respondents were not satisfied with their training on the latter, while 19% were not satisfied with ongoing training opportunities. In a small number of cases, subsequent comments make it unclear if dissatisfaction was expressed because the CSC *could not access* the induction training (e.g., they replaced a colleague, who had already attended induction) or because they were unhappy with the training they did attend.

Looking at responses by school type, post-primary CSCs were marginally less satisfied than primary teachers on most aspects of training, and noticeably less satisfied with explorations of creativity. For example, 19% of post-primary CSCs were *somewhat dissatisfied* with explorations of creativity during their training, compared to only 5% of primary CSCs.

Figure 10.6 CSC satisfaction with Creative Schools induction and ongoing training.

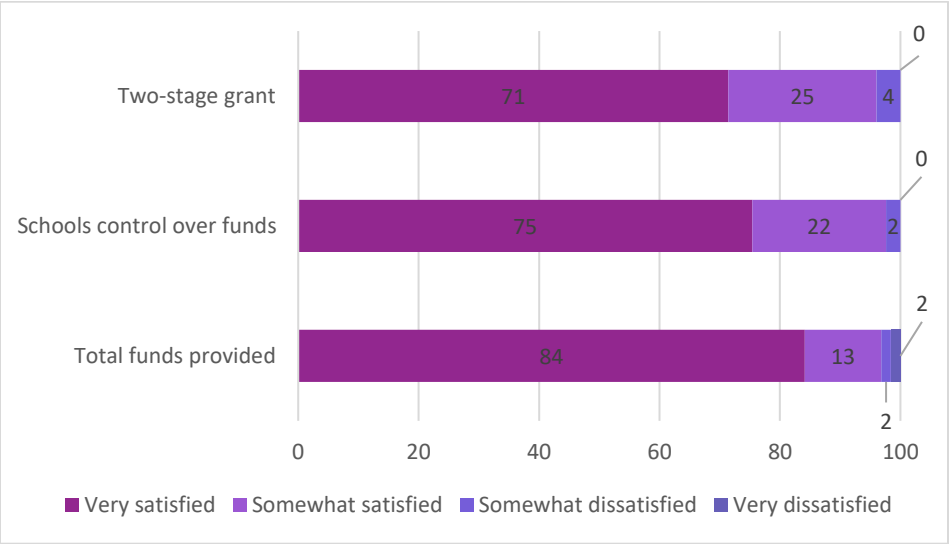


Based on 120 – 127 responses.

Provision of funding

When asked how they felt about aspects of funding for Creative Schools, CSCs were overwhelmingly positive. Over 95% were satisfied with the total amount of funds provided to each school, the control schools have over how to use funding, and with how the grant is drawn down in two stages (Figure 10.7). Irrespective of type of school, a large majority of CSCs were very satisfied with all three aspects of funding. The only difference by type related to the total amount of funds, with 12% of post-primary respondents (vs 1% of primary respondents) expressing dissatisfaction.

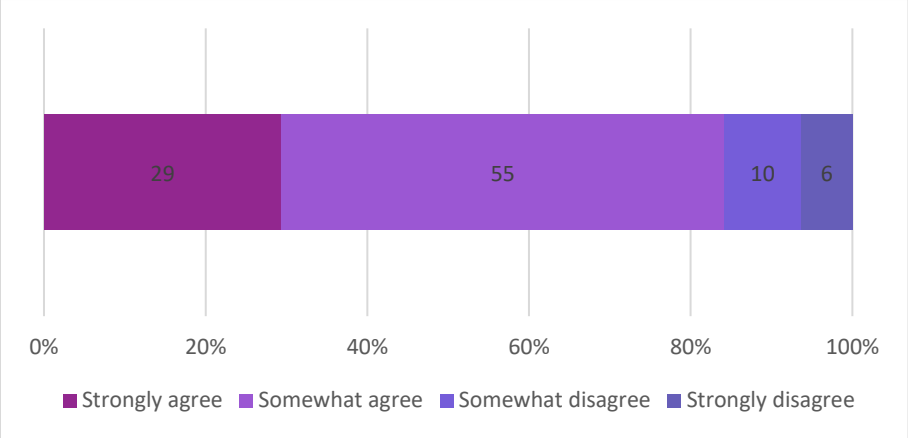
Figure 10.7 CSC satisfaction with aspects of financial supports provided.



Based on 126 responses.

There were lower levels of satisfaction with the model of flat rate funding, whereby level of funding was unrelated to school size (Figure 10.8). While 29% *strongly agreed* that larger schools should receive more funding, a very large majority (84%) agreed to at least some extent that it was appropriate for larger schools to receive more funds. Even among respondents from small schools, a majority (67%) agreed that funding should be proportional to size, as did 90% of respondents from schools with enrolments over 300.

Figure 10.8 CSC views on whether larger schools should receive more Creative Schools funds.



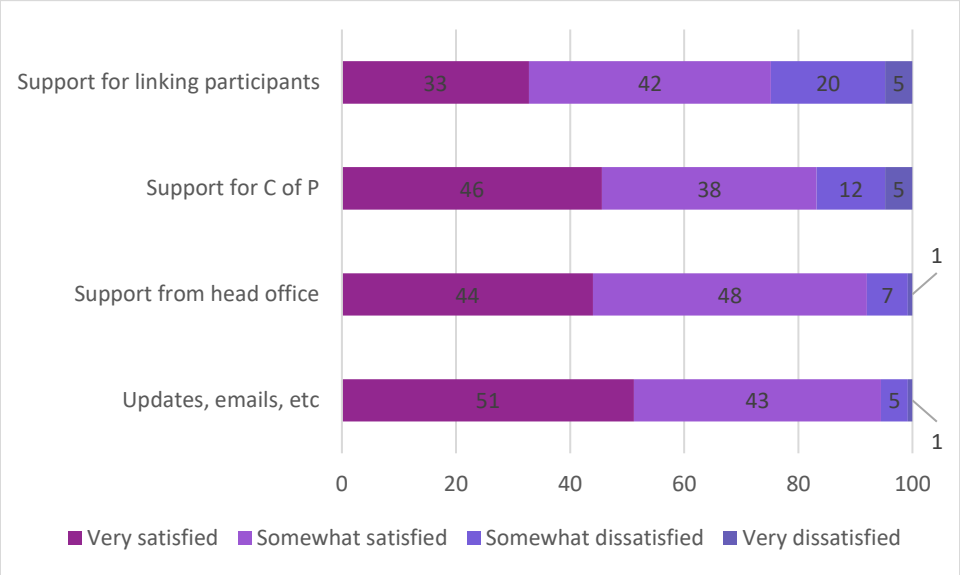
Based on 126 responses.

Provision of general supports

There was also widespread satisfaction with the more general supports provided by the central Creative Schools team (Figure 10.9). For example, over 90% were at least somewhat satisfied

with emailed updates on Creative Schools and with support from Creative Schools team. There were lower levels of satisfaction with supports for coordinator networks and communities of practice and, in particular, with supporting links between Creative Schools participants. Regarding the latter, one-third of respondents were very satisfied, while one-quarter were somewhat or very dissatisfied with available supports.

Figure 10.9 CSC satisfaction with general supports provided to them.



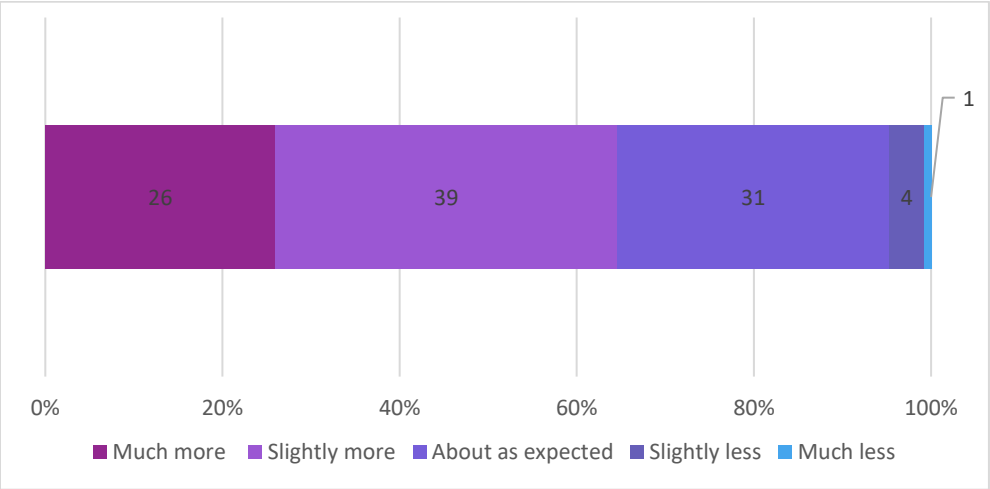
Based on 125 – 127 responses.

Time commitment

When asked how the time commitment needed by CSCs compared to their own expectations for the role, a large majority indicated that the role took more time than anticipated (Figure 10.10). Over one quarter thought the role took much more time than they had anticipated. Conversely, less than 5% found the role took slightly or much less time than they had originally anticipated. There were some differences across settings. For example, 44% of CSCs based in post-primary schools indicated the role took much more time than expected, compared to only 21% in primary schools.

For many other analyses, it is difficult to disentangle differences related to school size and type (as primary schools tend to be smaller and post-primary schools tend to be larger). In this instance, however, there is no clear differences between responses based on the size of the school. Thus, it may be the complexity of the post-primary setting, rather than the absolute size of the school, that adds to the CSC workload.

Figure 10.10 CSC views on the time needed for their role, relative to original expectations.



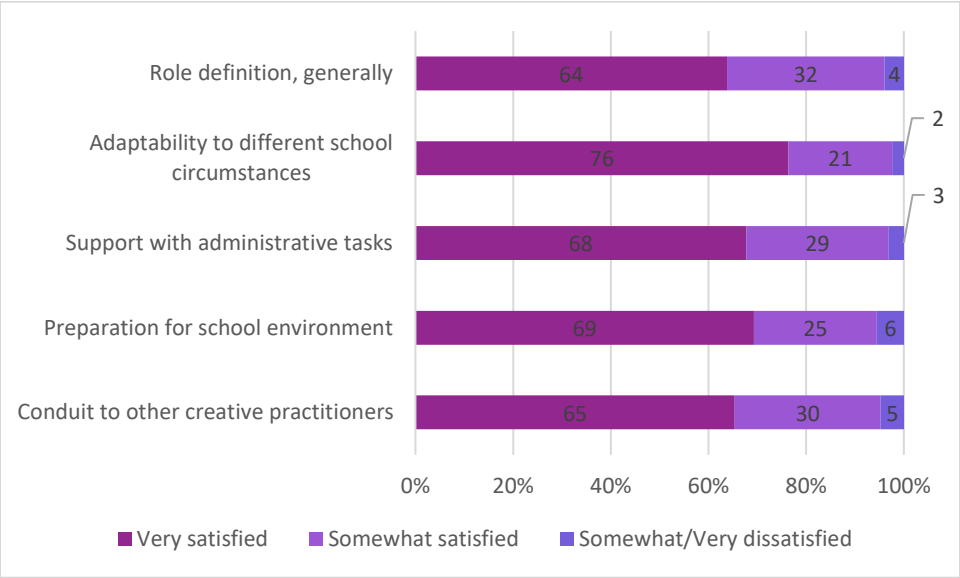
Based on 127 responses.

Perceptions of the Role of the Creative Associate

As part of the survey, CSCs were asked for their views on aspects of the CA role, and on how their assigned CA was supporting their school. Broadly, they expressed extremely high satisfaction levels with how the role was defined, and how it was enacted by their assigned CA (Figures 10.11 and 10.12). No more than 6% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction with any of the five aspects of the role of CA shown in Figure 10.11. Roughly two-thirds of CSCs were very satisfied with the role definition of CA, with the support their CA provided for administrative tasks, with the CA's preparation for working in a school environment, and with the CA role in providing access to other creative practitioners. Further, just over three-quarters indicated they were very satisfied with the flexibility that CAs were given to adapt to different school circumstances.

Given that responses were very positively skewed, there were few differences by CSC characteristics. An exception was that those based in primary schools were more likely to indicate that they were very satisfied with how CAs provided access to other creative practitioners (70%, vs just over half of those in other settings). In a related vein, 72% of CSCs in schools with an enrolment of fewer than 60 were very satisfied with the access CAs facilitated to other creative practitioners. As only nine respondents were from Irish-medium schools, it would be unwise to draw any firm conclusions about relative efficacy or satisfaction levels across the sector. That noted, all but one of the nine (89%) were very satisfied with the CA's role in providing access to other creative practitioners, and with their support with administrative tasks.

Figure 10.11 CSC satisfaction with aspects of the role of CA, generally.

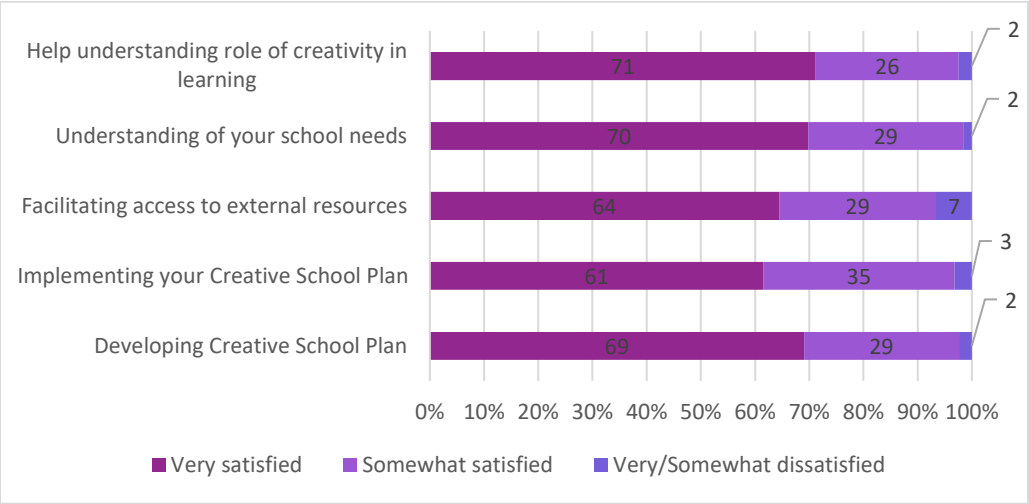


Based on 127 responses. As *Very dissatisfied* was chosen by only 0.8% of respondents, on one question only (adaptability), *Somewhat* and *Very dissatisfied* responses are combined.

As with the role, generally, there were extremely high levels of satisfaction with the support provided by the school's assigned CA Figure 10.12). Only one respondent expressed themselves as very dissatisfied with any aspect of the support provided by their CA (on implementing the school plan, facilitating access to external resources, and understanding of the school needs).

On each of the five types of support provided by CAs, no more than 3% indicated any dissatisfaction with the support provided. At least 70% were very satisfied with their CA's understanding of the school needs, and with the help the CA gave in understanding the role of creativity in learning, while 69% were very satisfied with CA support in developing the Creative School plan. Satisfaction was also very high with the CA support in implementing the school plan and with facilitating access to external resources.

Figure 10.12 CSC satisfaction with the support provided by their assigned CA.



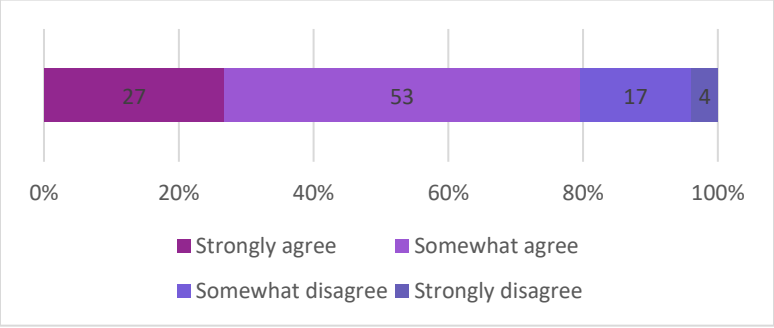
Based on 121 – 126 responses. As *Very dissatisfied* was only chosen by one respondent (on three questions), *Somewhat* and *Very dissatisfied* responses are combined.

CSC Perceptions of CA time allocation

In contrast to the almost universal satisfaction with aspects of how the role is defined, and with their assigned CAs, a large majority disagreed with how CA time was evenly distributed between schools, irrespective of size. Over one quarter of respondents strongly agreed that larger schools should be allocated more CA time, with a total of 80% agreeing to at least some extent (Figure 10.13). In many regards, the views shown in Figure 10.13 mirror those in Figure 10.8 (where 84% felt that larger schools should receive more funds).

Unsurprisingly, views on time allocation were linked to school size and those in larger schools were far more likely to endorse a gradated model for CA time. For example, 49% of those working in schools with enrolments in excess of 300 strongly agreed with a gradated approach, compared to only 6% of those in schools with enrolments smaller than 60. That noted, even in the smallest schools, a sizeable majority strongly or somewhat agreed that larger schools should be allocated more CA time.

Figure 10.13 CSC views on whether larger schools should be allocated more CA time.



Based on 127 responses.

Creative Schools in practice

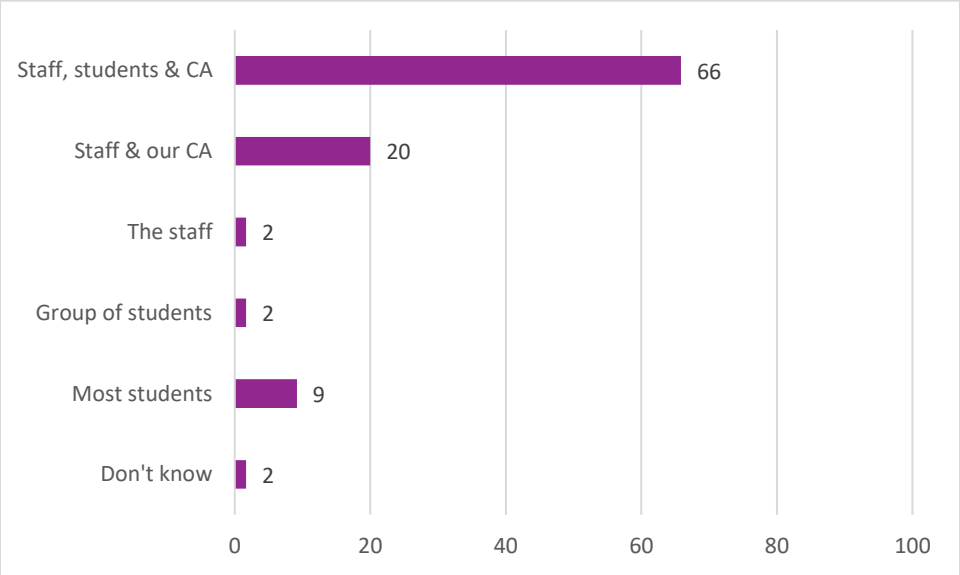
To gauge how Creative Schools was implemented, in practice, respondents were asked what groups were involved in aspects of Creative Schools, and what types of activities or practice was developed.

Planning Creative Schools

Taking all respondents into consideration, the most common situation was that the main decision-makers about how Creative Schools would work in the school were a mixture of staff, students, and the Creative Associate (Figure 10.14). This was followed by the staff and Creative Associate being the main decision-makers (20% of cases) and then a majority of students (9%).

However, there were differences between types of settings. For example, the staff, students and Creative Associate were the combined main decision-makers in all Youthreach settings, compared to 61% in primary school settings. Among post-primary respondents, 14% indicated that the main decision-makers were the staff and Creative Associate, compared to 21% of respondents from primary schools. Who made decisions about how Creative Schools would work in the school varied little by DEIS status, and there were too few single-sex schools to be able to reliably comment. School size and location are somewhat intertwined (smaller schools are preponderantly rural, for example). That noted, both rural location and small size were associated with an elevated likelihood that the decision-makers were a mixture of student, staff and Associate (e.g., 76% of respondents from rural locations indicated that this was the case in their school).

Figure 10.14 Main decision-makers for implementing Creative Schools.



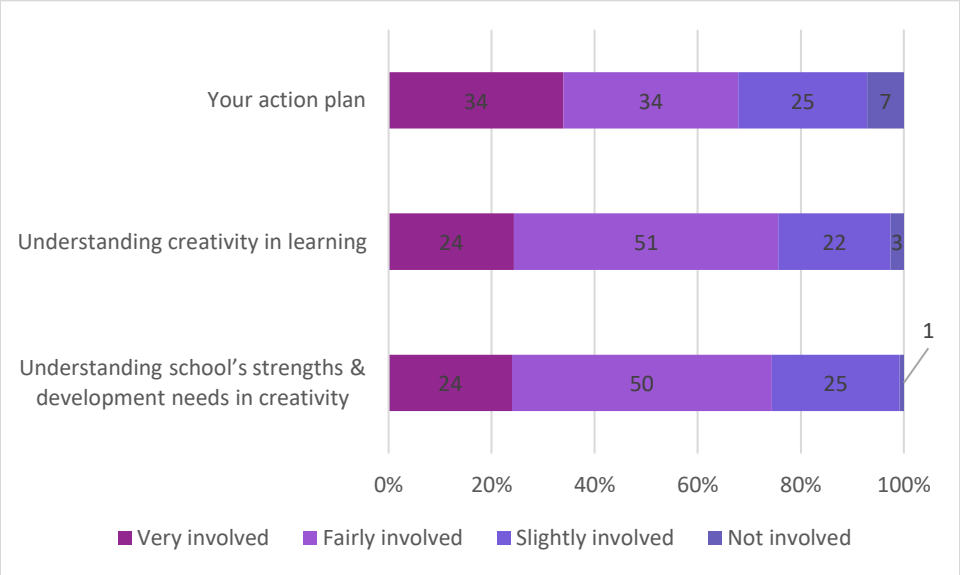
Based on 120 responses.

Three related questions asked about student involvement in aspects of the "Develop" phase of Creative Schools. About three-quarters of CSCs felt that their enrolment had been fairly or very

involved in formulating an understanding of creativity in learning and of understanding of the school's strengths and development needs in creativity (Figure 10.15). Student involvement with formulating the school's action plan was lower, with 25% of CSCs indicating only slight involvement, and 7% indicating no involvement.

There were few differences by school characteristics. In most cases, most schools involved students in each of the three activities. However, 12% of CSCs in post-primary settings indicated that their students had **not** been involved in formulating the school's Creative Schools action plan, compared to only 6% in primary settings and none of the CSCs from Youthreach centres or Special Schools.

Figure 10.15 Extent of student involvement in aspects of the "Develop" phase of Creative Schools.



Based on 112 - 117 responses.

Types of art forms

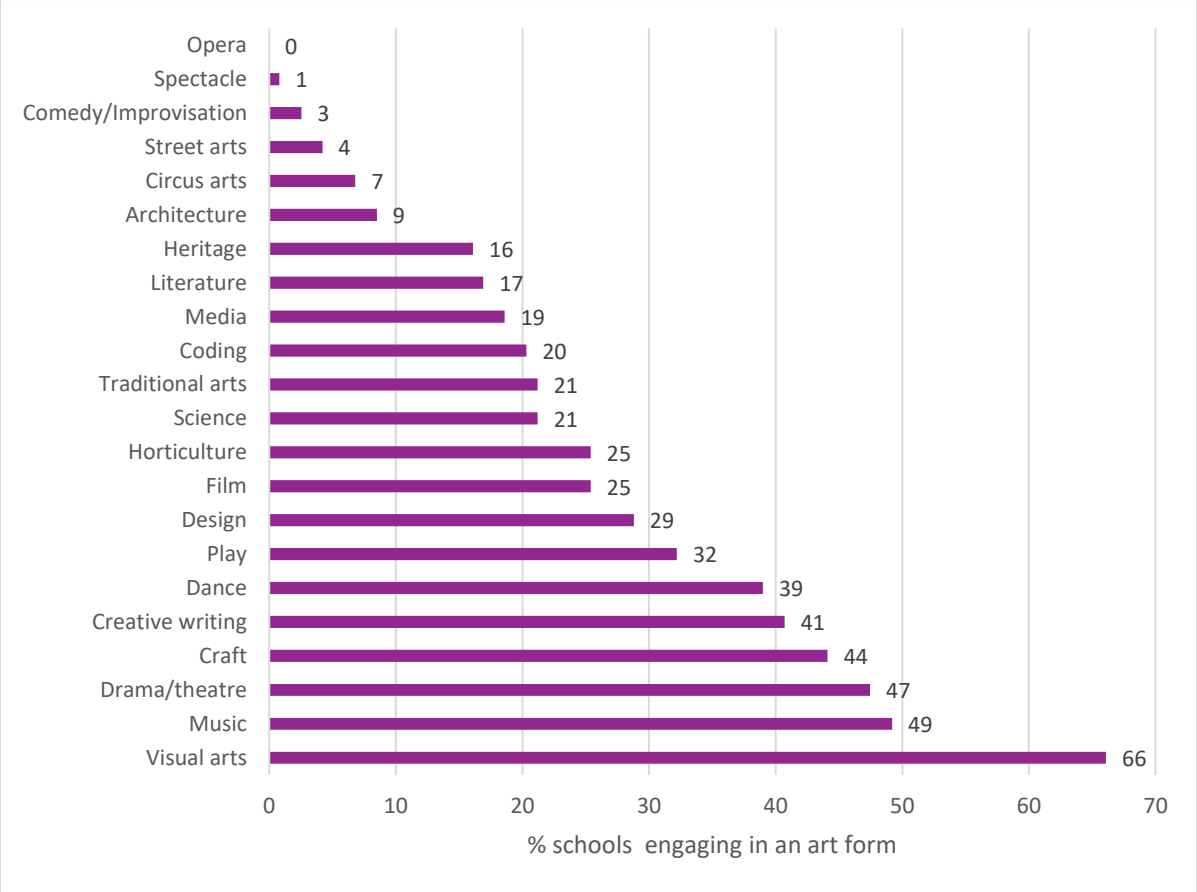
CSCs were presented with a list of 22 art forms (in alphabetical order) and asked with which their school had engaged as part of Creative Schools. Opera was the only listed art form with which *none* of the schools engaged (Figure 10.16). Fewer than 5% of all settings engaged in spectacle, comedy, or street arts, and fewer than 10% engaged in circus arts or architecture. In contrast, a sizeable minority or a majority had engaged with all other art forms listed. Visual arts was by far the most popular, chosen by 66% of CSCs, followed by music and drama/theatre (chosen by almost half of CSCs).

There were some noticeable differences by type of setting. For example, Youthreach centres and Special Schools engaged in fewer types of art forms, overall. However, this is understandable as their overall student numbers are very few. In Youthreach, three of the four centres engaged with craft, and two with media. No other art form was engaged in by more than one centre. For Special Schools, visual arts, play (through learning), music, horticulture, film and drama/theatre

were each engaged in by two of the four schools. No other art form was engaged in by more than one Special School.

Note Figures 10.16 and 10.17 show the percentages of CSCs indicating that their ***school*** engaged in an art form. The values do not represent the percentages of ***students*** who did so.

Figure 10.16 Art forms with which schools engaged as part of Creative Schools.



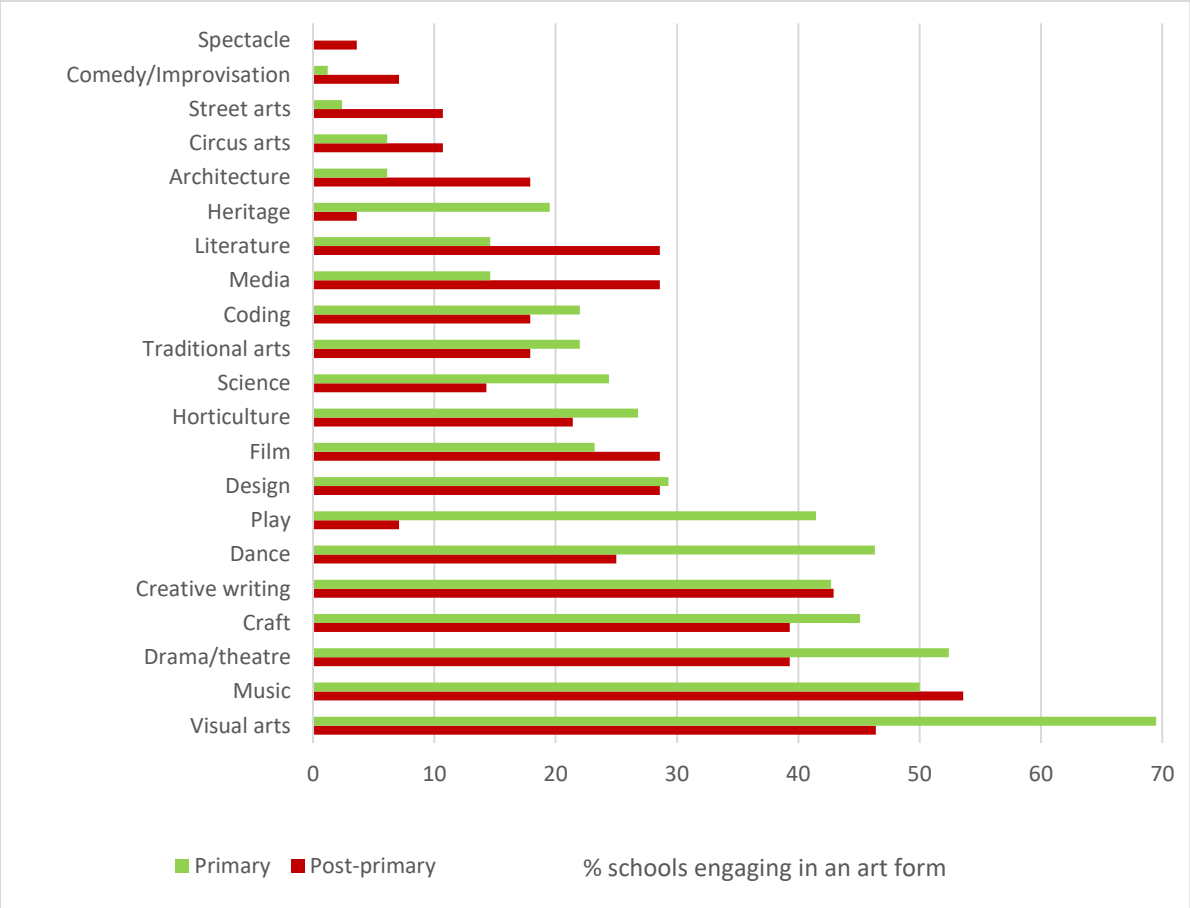
Based on 118 responses.
As CSCs could provide multiple responses, answers sum to more than 100%.

Figure 10.17 shows art forms engaged in by primary and post-primary schools, with some interesting differences by level. While visual arts is the most popular art form, overall, as well as at primary level, this is not the case at post-primary level. Instead, music was the art form most frequently engaged in by post-primary students (54%), followed by visual arts (46%) and creative writing (43%).

Across both settings, well over one-third engaged with creative writing, craft, drama/theatre, music, and visual arts, although their relative ranks varied. Compared to post-primary level, primary schools were noticeably more likely to engage with drama/theatre, dance, play, science, and heritage. For example, almost half of primary schools engaged in dance as part of Creative Schools, compared to one-quarter of post-primary schools. Conversely, literature, media, and

architecture were engaged in by much larger percentages of post-primary schools. For example, for each of literature and media, 29% of post-primary schools engaged with the art forms, compared to only 15% of primary schools.

Figure 10.17 Art forms engaged in as part of *Creative Schools*, primary and post-primary levels.



Based on 82 primary and 28 post-primary responses.
As CSCs could provide multiple responses, answers sum to more than 100%.

Activities Undertaken as part of Creative Schools

All CSCs were asked to describe the main activities that took place in their school, including class levels, number of students, art forms involved, any final artistic event/process, and anything else they felt was relevant. The responses were typically quite detailed and paint a very rich picture of the wide variety of activities that occurred as a result of Creative Schools.

That noted, it was often unclear which class levels had been involved in developing the school plan or in experiencing some of the resultant workshops, events or processes. Looking only at responses that explicitly stated what students had been involved, primary schools were more likely than post-primary to involve all grade levels in the decision-making and planning processes. Only two primary school CSCs (of the 75 that answered the question) indicated otherwise. In one, the staff had made the decision about what activities to engage in, while in another, a bubble within a class group had liaised with the CA. In both cases, the decision was attributed to restrictions related to COVID-19 rather than it being the preferred approach. Somewhat similarly, only one of the 24 post-primary schools that responded had restricted the decision-making process, leaving it to Transition Year students to decide what activities the school would engage in. However, this seemed to be a deliberate choice, rather than a by-product of the pandemic restrictions.

Primary schools' engagement with creative activities

In terms of student *engagement* in creative activities, only two of 75 primary school respondents indicated that a subset of grade levels was involved (junior classes in one school, and Fifth class in another), although a few others noted that they had prioritised the involvement of Sixth class in the first year of Creative Schools as they would not be able to experience the second year. The descriptions of activities suggested that although activities often varied by grade level, in almost all schools, all classes had similar levels of engagement in activities.

> *Pottery- junior and senior infants / Weaving- senior infants and 1st class / Crafting - 2nd and 3rd class / Visual arts- 4th and 5th class / Fabric and fibre - 6th class Outdoor sculpture using tyres - 6th class 23 pupils*

Post-primary schools' engagement with creative activities

In contrast, at post-primary level, activities were slightly less likely to be evenly distributed between grade levels. Three of the 27 CSCs indicated that they restricted activities to Junior Cycle and Transition Year students, with none prioritising or restricting activities to Senior Cycle students. It was also apparent from some other responses that while all grade levels could engage with Creative Schools activities, Transition Year students had higher levels of engagement than most.

> *[Name] working on environmental mural in the school. Ideas were developed with TY students. Whole school photography competition for students and staff. A selection from each year group will be displayed and a prize for one student in each year and*

one main prize. Plans discussed for a creative space in the school for displaying work. [Name] worked with TY students on a rap.

Impact of COVID-19 on activities: Outdoor environments

Unsurprisingly, a common theme that emerged from the descriptions of activities in schools was that COVID-19 had constrained what was possible. The restrictions imposed by COVID-19 permeated the responses and were explicitly or implicitly referred to by a large majority of respondents. A very common response was that the implementation of Creative Schools had been delayed by COVID-19 and that the school was therefore not as far along the process as might be expected, and was still in the "Understand" phase. In a very small number of cases, school management had largely blocked Creative Schools activity until schools re-opened in April 2021, meaning little or no activity had taken place.

> *We are at the understanding stage. We have had staff and class discussions on what is Creativity. Our CA has met with the staff and has met with each class via zoom. Being creative and discussing creativity via zoom has been somewhat difficult. We look forward to the day our CA comes into the school. We are trying to share our understanding of creative visually at the moment. Everything is a little more difficult and time consuming when it has to be recorded, uploaded, developed digitally.*
>
> *We are only at the beginning of the understand phase. The leadership in school would not allow the project during lockdown & we have only started the process now.*
>
> *Due to the lockdown our school did not reopen until after Easter and due to various issues with COVID we had a lot of staff and students isolating. We are hoping to plan workshops next year for staff and students.*

In other cases, the CA and the CSC had found ways to engage within the restrictions imposed by COVID-19. Overwhelmingly, this meant that the CA had provided online video tutorials or had conducted live workshops with groups of students. However, it also contributed to a strong emphasis on schools' outdoor spaces, outdoor classrooms, sensory gardens, and horticultural projects., and to any activity that could be completed outdoors.

> *Our School is a Special School and as a result of the pandemic wished to spend more time outside. This led to the wish to develop a sensory garden. The whole school is participating in creating a performance area, music area, eating area, a wildflower garden, solar water features to name but a few. This is an evolving process and we have just completed our Understand process.*
>
> *Horticulture- an outdoor project looking at more seating outside the school, bird houses and looking into the possibility of a beehive (linking the practical subjects and science/ H.E to this idea.*
>
> *Because of COVID restrictions we were extremely limited in what we could do. We have experienced a very high level of teacher absenteeism throughout the year and there is very little cover. We have implemented hip hop dance classes outside which have been very successful.*

Other activities listed drew attention to links with local organisations through art and heritage, or outdoor exhibitions and activities that involved outdoor engagement in general. Creative processes included baking, animation, photography as well as a focus on creative products such as exhibitions, competitions, murals, collage or a musical performance.

Summary

The chapter presented the results of the first survey of CSCs in 2021. The majority of CSCs were based in primary schools where management frequently acted as the coordinator at primary level (40% of cases). This is understandable at primary level, especially in small or medium schools with few leadership posts. However, none of the post-primary coordinators was also serving as a principal and relatively few were Deputy or Assistant Principals. Rather, at post-primary level the coordinator was usually (76%) an art teacher. Schools were overwhelmingly mixed-sex and located in a mixture of rural and urban or suburban areas. Post-primary schools were the only category with an enrolment exceeding 800.

With regard to administrative issues, the CSCs expressed considerable satisfaction with the application process, with almost all indicating satisfaction with the ease of making an application, the clarity of information, and the main selection criteria. The majority of CSCs were also satisfied with their induction and training, with the quality of the induction courses receiving the highest ratings. In terms of funding, CSCs were overwhelmingly positive, with over 95% being satisfied with the total amount of funds provided to each school and how the grant was drawn down in two stages. However, there was lower satisfaction with the model of flat rate funding in relation to school size. The CSCs were also satisfied with the more general supports provided by the central Creative Schools team, although there was lower satisfaction with supports for coordinator networks and communities of practice, and supporting links between Creative Schools participants. The majority of CSCs also indicated that the role takes more time than anticipated.

CSC also expressed extremely high levels of satisfaction with the support provided by the school's assigned CA, with no more than 3% indicating dissatisfaction with the support provided. However, a large majority disagreed with how CA time was evenly distributed between schools, irrespective of size. The survey also examined the types of activities or practice developed and found that visual arts was by far the most popular art form chosen.

Various art forms and activities were engaged in by participants, especially visual arts, music and drama/theatre, but there was often uncertainty about which class levels were involved in planning and experiencing the activities. Most primary schools involved all class levels in the decision-making and planning processes, while post-primary schools restricted activities to Junior Cycle and Transition Year students. COVID-19 had constrained and delayed what was possible for most schools. In keeping with social distancing requirements during COVID-19, Creative Schools activity was conducted mainly outdoors, and in some cases, the experience led to the development of sensory gardens, outdoor classrooms, and sustainable horticultural projects.

Finally, in primary schools, it was noted that the role of coordinator of Creative Schools was typically a classroom teacher or principal, while at post-primary level, the art teacher was typically assigned to this role. It was observed that the designation of the role to teachers with specific subject area responsibilities may have implications for the integration of creativity into wider school activities, and the possibility of genuine cross-curricular reach, rather than one-off (arts) events that have more tangential links with other curricular areas.

Chapter 11 Creative Schools Coordinators' Views and Experiences on the Effects of Creative Schools

This chapter is based on two questionnaires completed by Creative Schools Coordinators (CSCs), near the end of the 2020/21 (T1) and 2021/22 (T2) school years. The first questionnaire covered a variety of topics, including views on how the initiative was organised and implemented at national level, as well as within their own schools. Much of the content covered in that questionnaire has already been described in the preceding chapter.

In this chapter, we describe CSC views on the efficacy of Creative Schools, and its strengths and weaknesses. The chapter has three main sections. The first two are based on a subset of questions about creativity-related attitudes and behaviours of school enrolment and staff, questions that were repeated in both administrations of the survey, while the final section is based on written responses to open-ended questions asked at T1 only. The term pupil is used where referring specifically to primary level, whereas the term student is used to describe post-primary level, and as a global descriptor.

- Section one focusses on students and pupils. It outlines CSCs' perceptions of the value they placed on creativity, art, diversity and wellbeing, and their interest in creative or artistic careers. It also examines the CSC perceptions of their engagement with arts-related activity inside and outside of school, and academic achievement and engagement in school.

- Section two focusses on staff. It describes CSCs' views on how teachers in their school viewed diversity, creativity and the role of the arts in education, and the extent to which they modelled creativity, shared good practice, and listened to the student voice.

- Section three examines broader aspects of Creative Schools. It is based on responses from CSCs to some open-ended questions about the most effective aspects of Creative Schools, which aspects they felt might be improved, as well as their for more general views of Creative Schools as a whole.

As noted in the preceding chapter, the surveys were open to all 163 coordinators in the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools, and 130 (79.8%) CSCs completed the at least some part of the first survey. For the follow-up survey, 74 completed some or all of the questions, giving a response rate of 45.4%. The previous chapter describes the characteristics of those that responded at T1. For T2, responses were received from 24 of the 44 post-primary and Youthreach centres invited (54.5%) and from 50 of the 119 of the primary and Special Schools invited (42.0%).

Most of this chapter describes the views of *all* CSCs who responded to the surveys. Some additional analyses describe views of subsets of CSCs, based on characteristics such as school type (e.g., primary vs post-primary) and DEIS status. Where the outcomes did not vary much by

subgroup, only the overall data are reported. However, where interesting differences arise, they are reported immediately after the responses provided by the group as a whole.

Coordinator and school characteristics

As described in detail in the previous chapter, a large majority of respondents to both surveys worked in a primary school setting, almost all questionnaires were completed by CSCs rather than another staff member, and settings were overwhelmingly English-medium and mixed sex. At primary level, almost half of the T2 surveys were completed by a principal, deputy or assistant principal, (some of whom were also class teachers), with most of the remaining surveys completed by class teachers or by a support teacher. In contrast, at post-primary level only two surveys (8%) were completed by a member of the senior management team. Two were completed by librarians, with slightly more than half completed by an Art teacher.

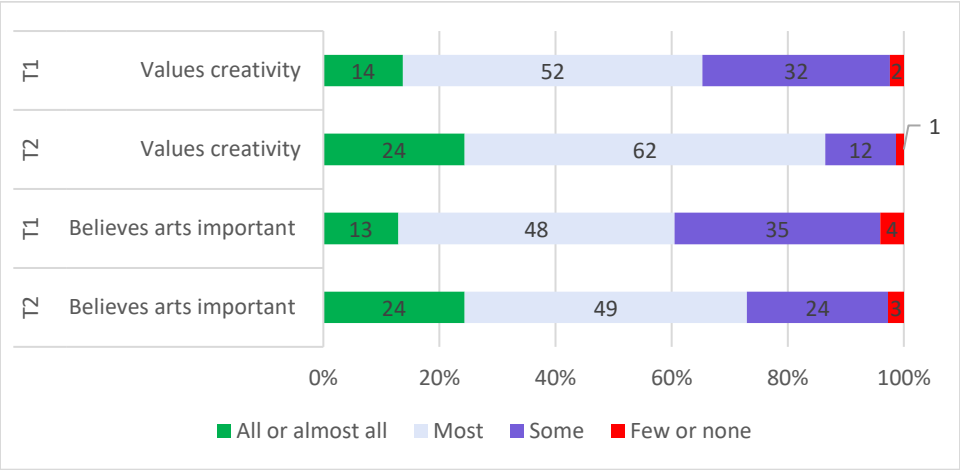
This section compares the how CSCs described the students in their schools at two points. For the T1 survey, they were asked to rate students as they were at the start of the 2020/21 school year, while for the T2 survey, they were asked to rate students as they were at that time (end of 2021/22 year). The topics covered include value placed on creativity and the arts, wellbeing, and academic attitudes and engagement.

CSC Perceptions of students' valuing of creativity and the arts

At the outset, about two-thirds of CSCs believed that a majority of their students valued creativity, and believed that the arts were important in education (Figure 11.1). By T2, there was a marked increase in the percentages indicating this was the case for a majority of their enrolment. For example, 73% of respondents indicated that most believed the arts were important in education and 86% felt that most students valued creativity.

There were some differences by level. At both points, larger percentages of primary school respondents reported that most of their enrolment valued creativity and saw the importance of arts in education. For example, at T1, 70% of primary CSCs believed most of their enrolment valued creativity (rising to 94% at T2), as did 52% of post-primary respondents (rising to 71% at T2).

Figure 11.1 CSC views on student value on creativity and the role of arts in education.

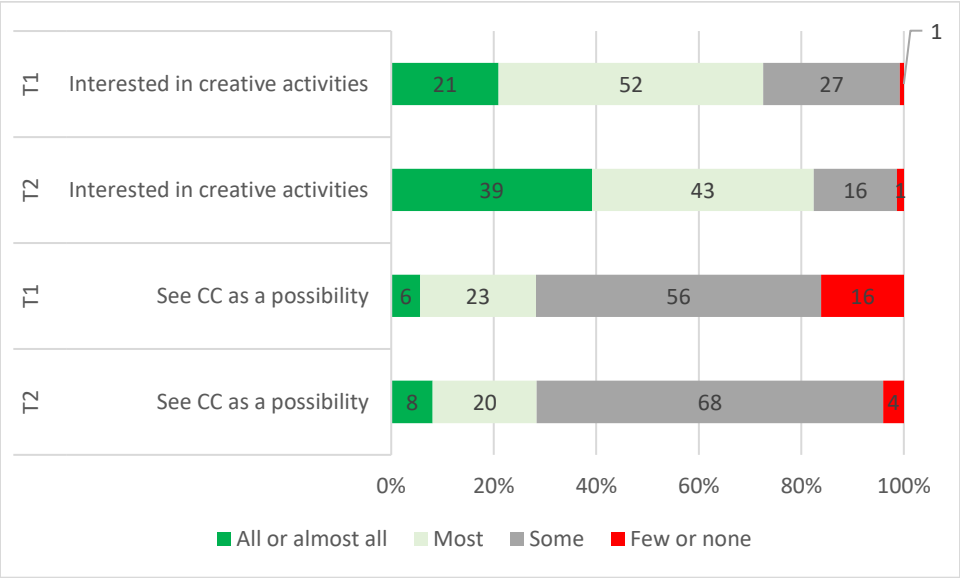


Based on 124 responses at T1, and 74 at T2.

A sizeable majority at T1 felt that most of their school's enrolment were interested in creative activities, although less than one third felt that most saw creative careers as a possibility (Figure 11.2). By T2, there was a large increase in the percentages who felt that most of students were interested in creative activities. In particular, those who felt that all or almost all students were interested in creative activities increased from 21% to 39%. There was also a slight increase in those who felt that their enrolment saw creative careers as a possibility.

Again, there were marked differences by level at both points in time. For example, at T1, 83% of primary respondents indicated that most pupils were interested in creative activities (rising to 94% at T2), compared to only 41% of post-primary respondents (67% at T2). Post-primary students were perceived as less likely than primary pupils to see creative careers as a possibility at both T1 and T2. Despite this, there was still a marked shift in how post-primary students were described from T1 to T2. Initially, 30% of coordinators in post-primary schools felt that few or none of their students saw creative careers as a possibility, but this fell to 10% of coordinators at the second administration of the survey.

Figure 11.2 CSC views student interest in creative careers or seeing such careers as a possibility.

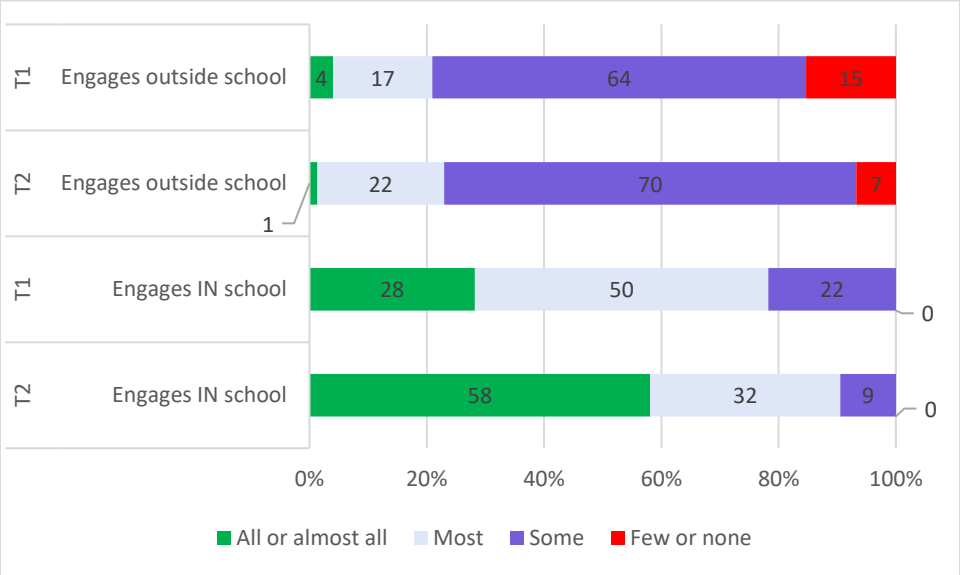


Based on 124 responses at T1, and 74 at T2.

CSC Perceptions of students' engagement with the arts inside versus outside school

There were large differences in ratings on engagement with the arts inside versus outside of school settings (Figure 11.3). At T1, about three-quarters of all CSCs felt that a majority engaged with the arts *in* school, but only 21% felt this was true for engagement with the arts *outside* of school. By T2, there was little change in the percentages who felt that most engaged with arts outside of school. However, on a more positive note, only 7% of CSCs at T2 (vs 15% at T1) felt few or none of their enrolment engaged with the art outside of school. In contrast, there was a sizeable increase in the percentages who felt that all or almost all their enrolment engaged with the arts *inside* school (rising from 28% to 58%).

Figure 11.3 CSC views on student engagement with the arts, in and out of school settings.



Based on 124 responses at T1, and 74 at T2.

All primary level respondents indicated that most or all of their pupils engaged with the arts in school. As Art is optional at post-primary level, it is unsurprising that relatively fewer post-primary level CSCs indicated that this was the case. Nonetheless, from T1 to T2**,** there was an increase from 41% to 67% of CSCs who felt that most or all of their students engaged with the arts in school.

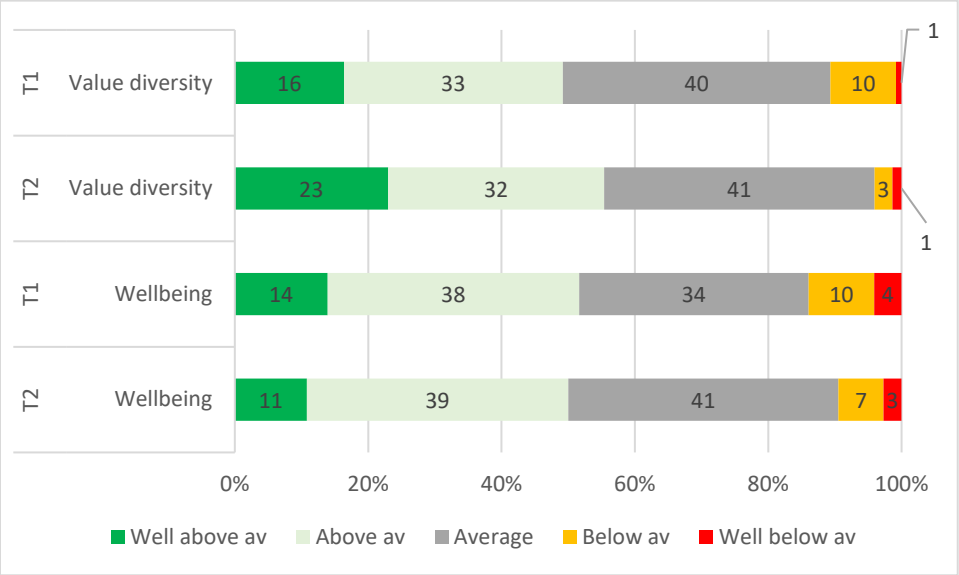
CSC Perceptions of students' valuing of diversity and wellbeing

The questionnaires also asked coordinators to rate their students in a variety of other dimensions, relative to their peer group nationally. For each of the six dimensions, CSCs' ratings were very positively skewed at *both* time points, with far more rating their enrolment above average than below average. For example, well over half rated their students above their peers, nationally, on wellbeing, attendance, attitude to school and engagement in lessons, while relatively few rated them as below average or well below average on any dimension (Figures 11.4 and 11.5). Ratings for attendance and achievement were not quite as skewed as other dimensions, perhaps because there are clear benchmarks against which they can be compared. Nonetheless, while not *as skewed*, they were still quite positively skewed (e.g., at T1 only 16% felt attendance in their school was below average, and only 19% felt achievement was below average).

As can be seen in Figure 11.4, at T2, there was an increase in the percent of CSCs who felt that their enrolment was above average in the value they placed on diversity. Conversely, the percentage who rated their enrolment as below or well below average on the measure fell from

11% to 4%. Ratings for student wellbeing remained broadly similar at T1 and T2, with slightly more describing their enrolment as in the average range, and no pronounced positive or negative shifts.

Figure 11.4 CSC ratings of students valuing diversity, wellbeing, relative to their peers, nationally.

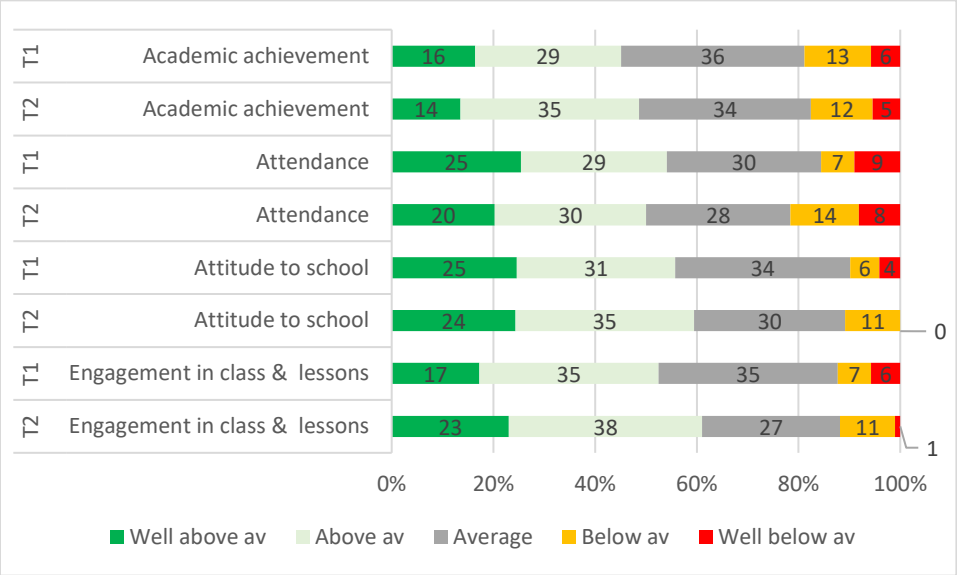


Based on 122 responses at T1, and 74 at T2.

CSC Perceptions of students' achievement, attendance, attitude and engagement

As can be seen from Figure 11.5, ratings of their students' academic achievement and attitude to school changed little from T1 to T2, remaining very positively skewed at both points. Ratings on engagement in class and lessons improved slightly, whereas ratings on attendance disimproved slightly.

Figure 11.5 CSC ratings of students' achievement, attendance, attitude and engagement, relative to their peers, nationally.



Based on 122 responses at T1, and 74 at T2.

A note on attendance

Changes in attendance ratings are difficult to interpret due to the effect that COVID-19 had (and continues to have) on attendance. Most teachers would be broadly familiar with "average" attendance rates in schools, prior to COVID-19, and would be able to roughly gauge where their school fitted in. However, when the surveys were completed, there had been no information on attendance rates, nationally, since the pandemic began. Respondents would have been aware that attendance in their own school had (in all likelihood) disimproved, but would have had nothing to benchmark the magnitude of disimprovement against.

Ratings varied somewhat depending on setting. For example, on both occasions, those in Youthreach settings were markedly less positive for almost all ratings. In non-DEIS schools, no more than 7% of CSCs rated their enrolment as below average on *any* of the six dimensions at either T1 or T2. In contrast, in DEIS schools, one-third rated their enrolment as below average on academic achievement and roughly one-quarter rated them as below average on engagement at both T1 and T2. Irrespective of setting, how CSCs rated attendance in their school was poorer at T2 than at T1.

CSC Perceptions on the effects of CS on teachers' attitudes and behaviours

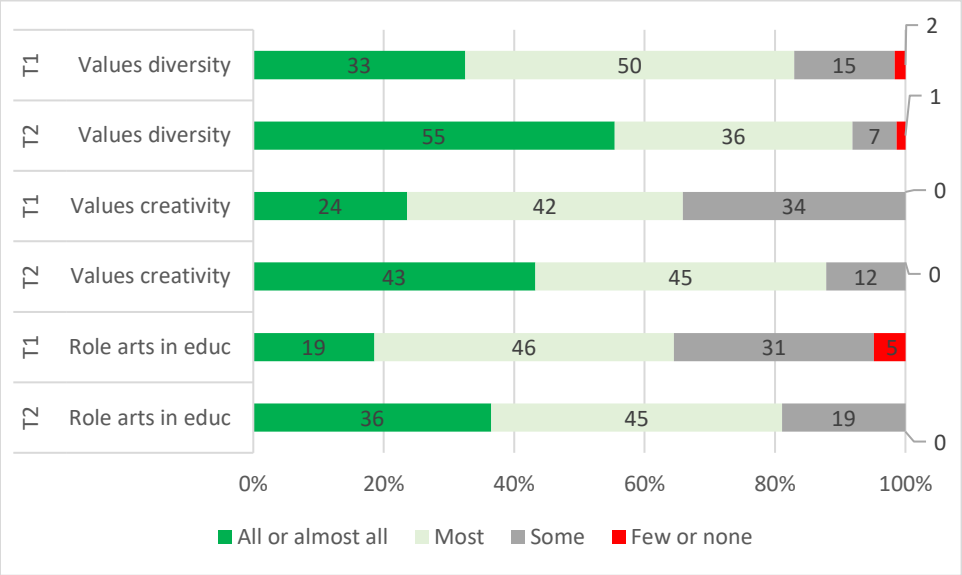
As was the case with students, CSCs were asked to rate teachers in their school at two time points: the start of the 2020/21 year and again near the end of the 2021/22 year. At T1, CSCs were largely positive when estimating the views of their colleagues on a variety of dimensions.

As can be seen from Figure 11.6, sizeable majorities of CSCs felt that most, almost all or all of their teaching colleagues valued diversity (83%), valued creativity (66%) and understood the role of the arts in education (65%). By T2, ratings were even more positive, with very large majorities believing that most staff valued diversity (92%), creativity (88%) and the role of the arts in education (81%).

In contrast to the large differences in how CSCs in DEIS and non-DEIS schools rated their *enrolment*, there were few differences by DEIS status in ratings of *colleagues*. An exception was in relation to the value placed on diversity. At T1, ratings from CSCs in DEIS and non-DEIS schools were relatively similar. However, at T2, 70% of CSCs in DEIS schools felt that all or almost all colleagues valued diversity, a marked increase from 27% at T1.

Some differences in ratings of colleagues were apparent by level on both occasions. While most CSCs at each level felt that most colleagues valued diversity, primary teachers were much more likely to be perceived as understanding the role of arts in education and somewhat more likely to be perceived as valuing creativity. For example, at T2, 92% of primary level CSCs felt that most colleagues understood the role of arts in education, compared to 62% of post-primary level CSCs.

Figure 11.6 CSC views of the extent to which teachers in their school valued diversity, creativity and the role of the arts in education.



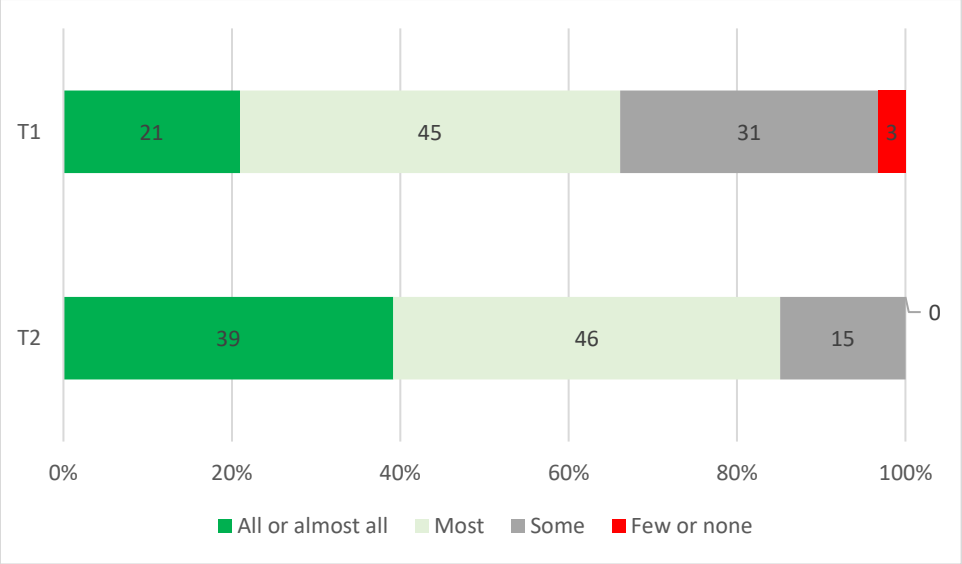
Based on 123 -124 responses at T1, and 74 at T2.

CSC Views on listening to student voice

Coordinators were also reasonably positive about how many of their colleagues listened to the student voice, with a marked increase from T1 to T2 in those who felt that most did so (Figure 11.7). For example, those who felt that all or almost all listened to the student voice rose from 21% to 39% of respondents, while the percentage who felt that no more than some did so more than halved by T2.

CSCs in post-primary schools showed the largest change and the most positive response. At T1, 61% of those in post-primary schools felt that no more than some colleagues listened to the student voice, but this fell to only 10% at T2. At primary level, the equivalent values were 34% at T1, falling to 18% at T2.

Figure 11.7 CSC views' of how many teachers in their school listened to the student voice.



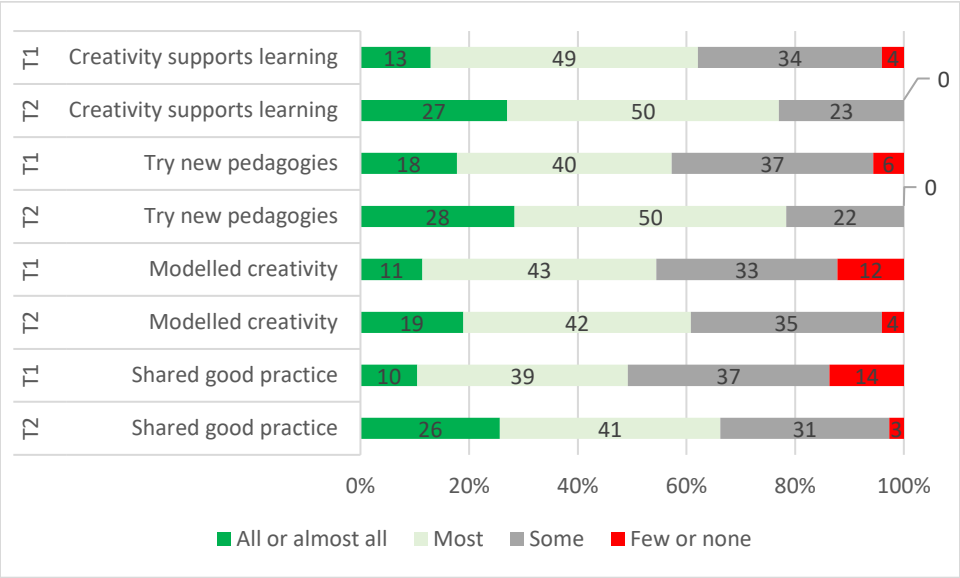
Based on 124 responses at T1, and 74 at T2.

CSC Views on how colleagues incorporated creativity

Finally, coordinators were asked four questions examining how they felt their colleagues incorporated creativity into their work and classrooms. Specifically, they were asked about sharing good practice related to creativity, modelling creativity in classes, willingness to try new pedagogies across a range of topics/subjects, and understanding of how creativity can support learning.

For each of the four areas, there were increases from T1 to T2 in the percentages of respondents who felt that all or almost all of their colleagues did so, and corresponding decreases in the percentages who felt that few or none did so (Figure 11.8). The largest change was for willingness to try new pedagogies. At T1, 57% of respondents felt that a majority of colleagues were willing to do so, but this rose to 78% at T2. A large change was also seen for sharing good practice. For example, at T1 only 10% of respondents felt that all or almost all colleagues did so, but 26% felt this was the case at T2.

Figure 11.8 CSC views of how many teachers in their school integrated creativity into their practice.



Based on 123 -124 responses at T1, and 74 at T2.

Perceived efficacy of Creative Schools

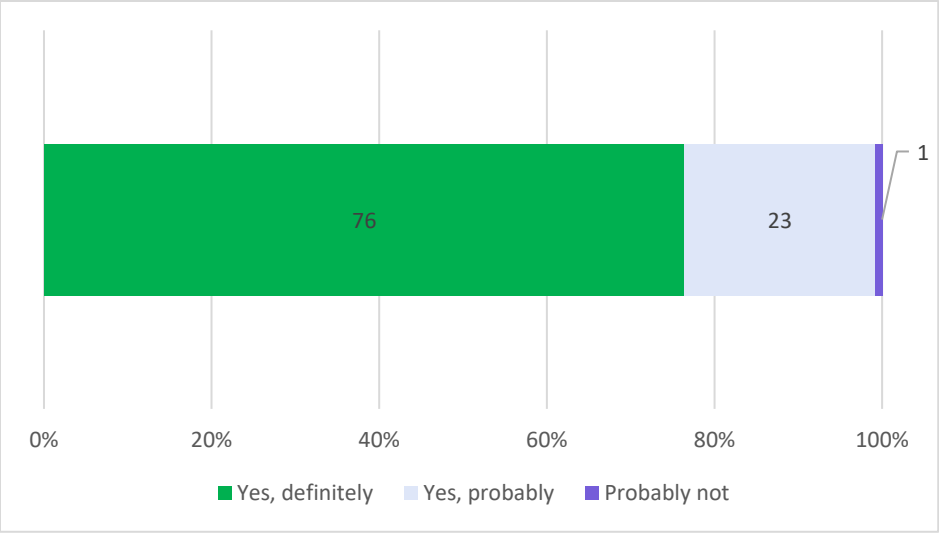
This section describes CSCs' views on the efficacy of Creative Schools, mainly using responses to three open-ended questions that were included in the first survey at the end of the 2020/21 school year. These asked CSCs to identify the most effective aspect of Creative Schools, to identify what they would change, and for any other comments they wished to make about Creative Schools. There were very high response rates to these non-required open-ended questions, and many answers were quite detailed. This is somewhat unusual in survey design, and indicative of a high level of engagement with the questions (and perhaps, with the initiative). Overall, 111 CSCs outlined an effective aspect of Creative Schools, 102 described something they would like to change, and 33 opted to make additional substantive comments.

The open-ended questions deliberately requested both positive and negative comments as a means of identifying strengths and weaknesses of the initiative. However, this might cast Creative Schools in an overly positive or negative light. For example, a respondent who has 10 positive things to say and one negative is likely to only give one positive and one negative response. Thus, as a counterbalance Figure 11.9 shows the responses to a more general evaluative question: whether they would recommend Creative Schools to other schools.

As can be seen, three-quarters of CSCs said that they would *definitely* recommend Creative Schools to other schools, with a further 23% indicating that they would probably do so. Just under 1% said they would probably not recommend the initiative to other schools, with none indicating that they definitely would not do so. Responses were very positive, irrespective of school type, geographic location, language of instruction. Those in DEIS schools and small schools were most positive (over 80% would definitely recommend). In contrast, only one of the three respondents from very large schools (over 800 students) would definitely recommend Creative Schools, with

two indicating that they would probably do so. Readers should bear in mind this overwhelmingly positive response when interpreting the positives and negatives presented in the subsequent sections.

Figure 11.9 Likelihood of CSCs recommending Creative Schools to other schools.



Based on 119 responses.
Although the option "definitely not" was presented to CSCs, it was not chosen by any respondent.

Most effective aspect(s) of Creative Schools

In total, 111 CSCs identified at least one aspect of Creative Schools that they felt was the most effective aspect of the initiative. Many responses were quite detailed and over one-third identified two or more aspects of Creative Schools that were effective. Given that there were so many responses, we have grouped them into broader themes, described next. As can be seen from the WordArt (Figure 11.10), the words Associate, creativity and the voice of the child or student loomed large in responses.

Figure 11.10 WordArt of most effective aspects of *Creative Schools*, CSCs.

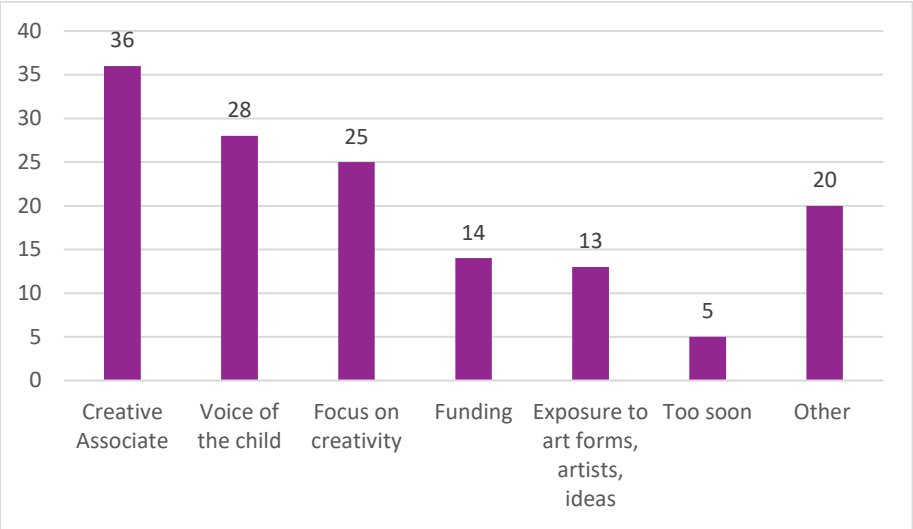
Based on 111 respondents. The words “creative” and “school” are excluded.

Creative Associate as the most effective part

Just over one-third referred to the **Creative Associate as being the most effective part** of Creative Schools (Figure 11.11). Comments tended to be split into those describing the personal attributes of the school’s own assigned Creative Associate (e.g., their personality, expertise, or connections) or to how the role is designed.

> *Building up relationship with CA who is invested in the school and their experiences of the arts. Our interactions with our CA are opening our eyes to possibilities and creative ideas that we unaware of.*
>
> *My CA has exceptional social skills, is super at communication and has been very approachable and friendly throughout. He was very flexible with COVID and made videos to show the classes instead of school visits. We are in year 1 so we haven't had workshops yet but he has lots of exciting links with arts practitioners which are very impressive and a wide range of knowledge of other art forms.*
>
> *Working with an associate, Our associate [NAME], is fabulous with everyone in the school community, very encouraging.*
>
> *The CA is a fantastic resource.*

Figure 11.11 Aspects of Creative Schools identified by CSCs as particularly effective.



Based on 111 responses.
CSCs responses could fall under multiple categories so answers will sum to more than 100%.

Importance of Voice of the Child as the second most effective part

The second most frequently cited aspect was the importance placed on the voice of the child, and the central role that students were accorded in the development and decision-making processes.

> *Involvement of the students themselves in the understand phase and in the decision making on what we will do as a school. Real sense of ownership has been noted with a drive to promote creativity in the school.*
>
> *Involving the pupils in the decision process.*
>
> *The voice of the children.*
>
> *Working with a Creative Associate who is supportive and appreciative of our school's position is especially reassuring and allows us to approach the programme effectively and with the student voice being at the centre of all decisions.*

Emphasis on creativity

One quarter of CSCs felt that the emphasis on creativity was the most effective aspect of Creative Schools. In particular, the value Creative Schools placed on creativity, and exposing staff and students to creative activity was appreciated.

> *Getting the whole school thinking about creativity.*
>
> *Children and staff see creativity as more than the Visual Art subjects. Open their minds to seeing different way of viewing teaching &learning.*

Getting the children to actually think about the meaning of creativity and how it translates across so many artforms, subjects and activities. Also getting teachers to think about the importance of individuality and personal expression when implementing and teaching artistic activities.

Funding

Fourteen percent of respondents cited access to funding as important for them. Perhaps a little surprisingly, respondents working in large schools were as likely as those in small schools to say that the extra funding was welcome. There was also little difference between responses from those working in primary or post-primary schools.

The financial support from the Creative Schools *programme has given a small rural school like ours the chance to put projects into motion that otherwise could only be dreamt of!*

The ring-fencing of the funding is also effective in ensuring that the projects achieve the aims of the programme.

The funding, the online training day, the freedom to embrace creativity being legitimised by the scheme.

Exposure to different art forms and artists

Another key aspect of Creative Schools that was identified as important was the exposure it gave staff and students to different art forms, to different ideas, and to different artists.

Raising awareness for staff & students of not only all of the different arts but the benefits and creativity that flows from them.

The funding to have a range of artists into the school so that children can try out a variety of arts.

Being able to explore different art forms, receive support and advice, learn new skills, facilitate dialogue around creativity, celebrate achievements.

Other dimensions

A relatively small number (5%) of respondents felt it was too soon for them to be able to identify the key aspects of Creative Schools. In one instance, implementation of Creative Schools within the school has been delayed as the assigned Creative Associate did not take up the role, while in a few cases, COVID-19 had delayed the full implementation of Creative Schools. Others were reluctant to pinpoint the most effective aspect as they felt that the benefits of Creative Schools were gradually unfurling as they progressed through the initial stages and the Understand phase.

We are still very early in the process as we are in the Understand phase, it will be nice to move into the next stages with the children.

As we are really only beginning our journey (due to COVID-19) it is difficult to pinpoint something.

Finally, 20% of respondents mentioned other aspects that they felt were effective. Responses were quite varied, although in a small number of cases, they could not be classified as it was not clear what was intended, or the comment was simply a positive statement about Creative Schools (e.g., "*Its very existence!"*). Specific aspects mentioned by a few respondents included the flexibility of Creative Schools to adapt to individual school circumstances, and the fact that it required an initial period of self-evaluation and reflection. Others referred to the engagement of the wider school community, access to targeted training opportunities (either for CSCs or within the school).

> *Conversational time with Creative Associate and the acknowledgement that adequate time should be given to the development of the Action Plan rather than commencing a project immediately.*
>
> *I think the provision of a Creative Associate and the flexibility to tailor and roll out a project or series of projects suited to the school is a really effective way to foster creativity in a school.*
>
> *The opportunities to spend money that is not normally available to avail of creative workshops.*

Aspects identified for change

In total, 98 CSCs responded to the question asking what aspect(s) of Creative Schools that they wished to change. However, a sizeable proportion of these responses (31) did not directly address aspects of Creative Schools that could be changed. These respondents either felt they could not judge the efficacy of Creative Schools because issues related to COVID-19 meant they had not yet been able to implement it as intended, or simply noted that they could not identify any aspect they wished to change.

Many of the remaining 67 respondents provided answers that were very detailed and identified multiple aspects of Creative Schools that were could be improved. As can be seen from the WordArt (Figure 11.12), words such as training, work, time, Associate, process, and coordinate loomed large.

Figure 11.12 WordArt of aspects of Creative Schools that CSCs would like changed.

Based on 102 respondents. The words "creative, school, COVID-19, nothing, restriction, and closure" are excluded..

Three themes were each mentioned by more than 10% of all CSCs: the amount of time needed for the coordinator role, the need for better guidance and support for CSCs, and how the initiative is planned and implemented (Figure 11.13).

Time

In relation to the 13% who referred to the planning or implementation of Creative Schools, training was the most frequently raised issue. Respondents sought more training, often to be available to a wider pool of school staff, and to be delivered earlier in the process. However, other planning/implementation issues raised included a lack of consideration for the school calendar and conflicting demands, and that the Understand phase was too drawn out.

> *Time frame needs to take into consideration how pressurised the school year is towards exams and rigid a school must be in its adherence to timetables, which make meetings between teachers difficult to organise and arrange and carry out. Give some flexibility over the hours.*
>
> *The training was very late in March and with schools closed it all feels very rushed and impossible to get things done in a busy secondary school.*
>
> *I think maybe having some tried & tested workshops to engage teachers/principal & students at the beginning of the process could have been helpful.*

Twelve percent of respondents raised concerns about the amount of time needed for the CSC role, which included significant time spent in meetings with the CA and with other teachers, as well as engaging students with Creative Schools. A common view was that more time or substitute cover time was needed to enable CSCs to fill their role.

The Creative Schools Coordinator is a big role, I don't think I was prepared for that. I am a solo art teacher in the school, so I am busy but Creative Schools took up a lot of time, which I didn't mind this year as the exams didn't quite take up so much of my time. I would have thought there would be more hands-on workshops for teachers, and that any volunteer teachers might be encouraged to take Creative Schools more to heart and be able to attend workshops on what their roles could be.

Substituted release time for Creative Schools coordinator in order to reach the teachers and children during class time.

Guidance

The need for better information or guidance for CSCs was another common theme that emerged from comments. Respondents felt that there was an initial lack of clarity about what the role involved, and the amount of time required, as well as a knowledge gap about what was feasible. Some sought more comprehensive training at an earlier point in their Creative Schools journey, so that CSCs were better prepared for the role. Others identified lack of information on a more practical level, including not knowing what activities might be available, who to contact or what they could do.

I would have a list of people / groups and contact details under each of the headings Drama / Circus skills / Film etc. ready for the Creative Schools co-ordinator so they could contact them for their area at the beginning of the process.

More support/training/better network with other Creative Schools. Its openness is also its weak point.

Would love a comprehensive list of activities that schools could explore.

More support and training for the coordinator at the beginning of the process.

More direction from Creative Schools. We are only starting out on the process and I honestly don't know a lot about it all.

Funding and paperwork

Other relatively common themes that emerged were the need for increased funding or funding adjusted to take into account the much larger costs of implementation in larger schools (e.g., by having a per capita *materials* budget), and dissatisfaction with repetitive or overly complicated paperwork.

The paperwork is repetitive. We are asked for the same info 3 times in different formats. Use the one format and ask us to expand it out instead of making out a completely new template for us to fill in every time.

It may work better to tailor the funding to the size of the school to ensure equal opportunities.

.

Networking opportunities

Other issues that emerged included a need for more networking opportunities for CSCs, and some concerns about CAs' lack of understanding of school context. For example, some CAs were perceived not to recognise that teachers also have very relevant skills, or to appreciate the constraints under which schools must operate. It is important that teachers' own artistic skills are also nurtured as part of the experience of a Creative Schools.

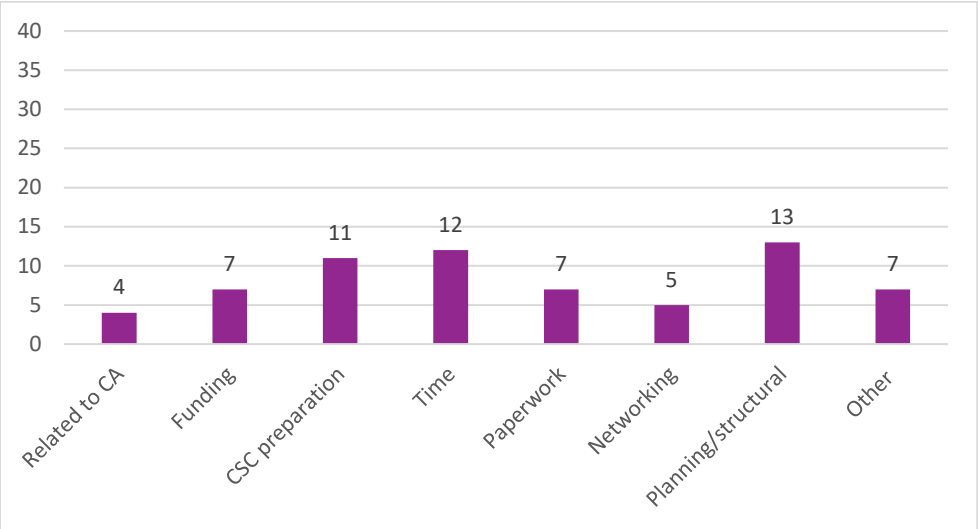
> *More linkage between local schools on the same journey.*
>
> *[need to recognise] experience and professional expertise of teachers in the arts and creativity and in child-centred approaches … is addressed in the training of Creative Associates. For example, I was never asked about my own expertise in this area but rather it seemed to be assumed that teachers needed to 'learn' about creativity and 'child-centred' approaches from the Creative Associate or by websites.*
>
> *I think someone should check in about the relationship between school and associate, we have had a problematic relationship at times. Our associate was not understanding of COVID. And repeatedly pushed for things that we could not do in our school. It was very frustrating. She also mentioned the other school she was working in. A school that is very different to us.*

Many primary teachers have high levels of artistic and musical skills fostered throughout their own school years and in preservice education. While tensions can arise where external artists or internal teachers hold formal coordinator or leadership roles in arts subjects, experienced Creative Schools managers are of assistance in alleviating such tensions between CAs and teachers, ensuring that the expertise of all professionals is maximised.

Timing and eligibility for training

Finally, although already touched on, the topic of training crossed a few different themes. The most common complaint was that more training was needed so that CSCs would have more information about Creative Schools, However, complaints about the timing of training (not at the start of the process) were also common, as were complaints that a model of training that was limited to one staff member was ill-advised. Another area of concern related to a perceived lack of responsiveness in training, as it failed to address COVID-19 or how it might affect the implementation of Creative Schools.

Figure 11.13 Aspects of Creative Schools identified by CSCs as needing change.



Additional comments

In total, 33 CSCs made other comments about Creative Schools, with a small number making multiple comments. As can be seen from the WordArt in Figure 11.14, COVID-19 was the word that featured most prominently, in contrast with a number of positive words such as opportunity, benefit, and hope.

Figure 11.14 WordArt of other comments made by CSCs.

Based on 33 respondents. The words “creative, school, initiative, CREATIVE SCHOOLS” are excluded.

Positive comments

Fourteen commented positively about the initiative and/or about the positive effects it had in their school. This included welcoming the additional funding, the general positive effects on students, and the increased focus on creativity (especially as a cross-curricular concept).

> *I think it's a wonderful initiative. To highlight the cross-curricular opportunities is vital so more buy-in from teachers/whole-school. Not seen as just "art" time. Prioritised and valued as much as Lit/Num. Can tie in so many different aspects of the curriculum.*
>
> *Great opportunity and thanks to the funding, we can level the playing field for our DEIS school.*

Eleven respondents referred to issues related to COVID-19, and how this made it difficult to gauge the effects of Creative Schools or made it difficult to implement it in a meaningful way.

> *Children themselves have had enough online and didn't want zoom engagement during lockdown and since, on Creative arts, so it's been hard for our CA to get people to come in and even start the dance workshops … we are doing our best in the circumstances but hope next year that more face-to-face engagement will come.*
>
> *COVID-19 has had a significant impact on how schools can engage with the* Creative Schools *programme in a safe and responsible manner. Extra funding has been allocated in recognition of this, however this cannot cover the amount of time lost. I would like to see the programme supports remain a little longer in order to ensure that the programme can be fully engaged with and successful.*

Distributed model of CSC and training

Five respondents referred to issues that arose from the designation of a single person as Creative Schools Coordinator in each school. In most cases, the CSCs felt that it would have been preferable to provide access to training and/or substitute cover to other staff, to facilitate whole-school engagement with Creative Schools. However, one respondent raised an issue that also cropped up during some school site visits: the lack of any handover mechanism when the dedicated CSC leaves the school or is absent due to illness or maternity leave.

> *I think offering sub cover for one other staff member would be very helpful. I have 2 other teachers who have offered to be on the committee but to be honest, everyone is so exhausted from COVID that I didn't feel I could ask them for help. However, if they had sub cover too it would have been much more of a team effort.*
>
> *Unfortunately, our Creative Schools Associate was on sick leave and we did not get to finish out plans suggested by her. We hope that next year will be more productive.*

Workload

Finally, eight respondents made other comments about Creative Schools. This included some who expressed a hope that the work required would prove beneficial, with another noting that it had been difficult to find the time to engage as a CSC. A more critical comment about the CSC

workload noted that the amount of work required was much more than was expected, especially in relation to the budget provided.

> *There is a lot of potential for Creative Schools however more I think the budget is extremely small for the sheer amount of work expected. We have received grants far bigger in the past that gave us more scope for our students to work with and less time constraints to "get it done". Expectation to set up 2 committees and the amount of admin work for such a small budget seems a bit much.*

Critical comments

There were a few complaints about other aspects of the administration of Creative Schools. These included lack of clarity in the application process over the amount of substitute cover available and over what was involved, lack of value placed on teachers' own training in child-centred approaches, and poor database management of school contacts (meaning that some CSCs were not receiving Arts Council communication).

> *More clarity about what Creative Schools intend to do within the school and are clearer in the application process. The information from the start was obviously deliberately ambiguous but also unnecessarily hazy.*

> *I was given to understand during the application process that 9 days would be allocated to meeting the CA. I thought more of these days would be given sub cover. I was very surprised that only 1 day was covered. Perhaps this could be outlined clearly in a FAQ section on your website.*

> *I do feel strongly that that teachers with background experience and qualifications in creativity and arts education need to be brought into the Creative Schools programme further and have a formal acknowledged role, or even simply an acknowledgement that they exist in the education system. All teachers also, by way of training to be a teacher, have great experience in creating child-centred opportunities and this needs to be recognised by the programme also.*

Summary

The chapter presented the perceptions of Creative Schools Coordinators (CSCs) on the efficacy, strengths, and weaknesses of the Creative Schools initiative based on two questionnaires administered at the end of the 2020/21 (T1) and 2021/22 (T2) school years.

Ratings on the value CSCs placed on diversity increased during the two time periods. However, ratings for student wellbeing remained broadly similar at T1 and T2 and there was little change in the ratings of academic achievement and attitude to school between T1 and T2. Ratings on engagement in class and lessons improved slightly, whereas ratings on attendance disimproved slightly. Given the impact of COVID-19, the latter is not surprising.

CSCs were also asked to estimate their colleagues' attitudes in relation to broader aspirations of the initiative. There was a marked increase in the percentage of CSCs who felt that most or all of their teaching colleagues valued diversity, creativity, and the role of the arts in education. CSCs were also reasonably positive about how many of their colleagues listened to the student voice, and the percentage of CSCs who felt that their colleagues incorporated creativity into their work and classrooms increased between T1 and T2.

The appointment of a Creative Associate to a school was identified as the most effective part of Creative Schools by just over one-third of the respondents, followed by the importance placed on the voice of the child and the emphasis on creativity. Access to funding and exposure to different art forms and artists were also highlighted as important aspects. Some respondents felt that it was too early to identify the most effective aspect or cited other effective aspects such as flexibility and engagement of the wider school community. Aspects identified for change included the need for more funding, greater engagement with parents and the community, and more support and training for teachers.

Several areas were identified that require change, i.e., the timing and eligibility of training and the inclusion of more than one staff member. Respondents also raised concerns about how to address organisational issues during COVID-19 and its impact on the implementation of Creative Schools. A number of comments focused workload, with some respondents noting that the amount of work required was much more than expected. Finally, encouraging aspects in the feedback noted the positive impact of the initiative on students and the increased focus on creativity.

Chapter 12 Primary Pupils' Views and Experiences

This chapter describes the outcomes of a questionnaire completed by primary school pupils at the end of the 2020/21 school year at time one (T1) and again in spring 2022 at time two (T2). Questionnaires were hosted on Qualtrics©, an online survey platform. A reusable link to the survey was sent to Creative Schools Coordinators as a representative sample of those schools who joined Creative Schools in 2020.

Prior to the surveys described here, a pilot survey was administered in autumn 2020 to a sample of the pupils from the first cohort (2018) of Creative Schools. The pilot assessed schools' capacity to engage with online surveys, trialled the delivery of an online questionnaire, and examined how best to establish consent and assent (while adhering to stringent public health guidelines in place at the time). The surveys described in this chapter drew on the outcomes of the pilot.

At both time points, an identical questionnaire was administered to pupils. The main topics included:

- Activities outside of school (e.g., sport, reading, attending cultural events).
- Attitudes towards school and school-related behaviour
- Academic aspirations, expectations, favourite subjects.
- Views on creativity.

This chapter focuses on a comparison of the T1 and T2 responses from the pupils who took part in each survey. In addition to overall comparisons, differences by subsets of the pupil population were also examined. Where interesting differences arose, these are reported immediately after the overall comparisons. For the most part, these additional analyses look at gender differences, as this information is reliably available for almost all pupils.

In a few places, we report on differences by school characteristics (e.g., responses from pupils in DEIS vs non-DEIS schools). However, while we were able to link school characteristics to each pupil's response for the T2 survey, that linkage is only available for just under half of those surveyed at T1. Each survey sent to schools contained an embedded school ID, not visible to those completing it, but enabling pupil-school linkage. Unfortunately, an issue with obsolete coordinator email addresses for the T1 survey meant that the link was not available for slightly more than half of T1 pupil responses.

Primary Participants

At T1, 506 pupils completed the survey—just over half of the target population of pupils. For the follow-up in 2022, 552 completed at least some part of the survey, giving a response rate of approximately 55%.

At T1, the target group at primary level were Fifth class pupils, almost 100% of those who completed the survey were in Fifth class. At T2, just under 90% were in the target grade level of Sixth class, with 6.5% in Fifth and 3.6% in Fourth class.

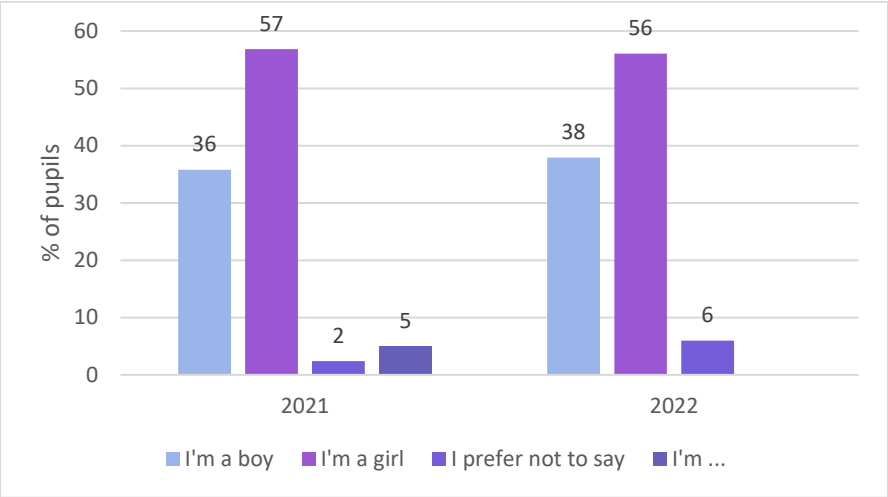
The vast majority of schools in Creative Schools are mixed, with similar numbers of all-boys and all-girls schools. Despite this, there was a pronounced imbalance in the pupils completing the questionnaire at T1 (Figure 12.1). Overall, 57% of respondents were girls, 36% were boys, with 2% choosing the "I prefer not to say" option. Figure 12.1 also shows that 5% chose the fourth option, which asked them to "Describe yourself. I'm ….." and provided a text box for open-ended responses. In fact, almost 7% of pupils chose this option originally. However, in almost all cases, the answers provided showed that the question was misunderstood, and treated as a description of personality rather than gender expression. For example, "11 years old and I have green eyes and brown hair and freckles" / "kind and I like pigeons" / "I'm good looking. I'm funny according to everyone else. I am nice and generous."

Of those who ticked the box, only three might be considered to understand the question. One respondent described themselves as genderfluid, while two specified their sex but indicated that their expression of gender was not always within stereotypical confines. For example, "I'm a boy but like some girl stuff?" / "I'm a girl but I also like 'boys' things". Those two pupils were classified as boy and girl, respectively. A couple of other responses were reclassified because the pupil described their sex in the response ("I'm a boy, bookworm, a good worker and sporty"), while one pupil who described her personality was classified as a girl because the source school was all-girls. Thus, at T1, we have 5% of primary pupils in an "other" category, that, on the balance of probabilities, most did not intend to place themselves in.

At T2, the response options were simplified to Boy, Girl, and Other/Prefer not to say. As at T1, responses were skewed, with markedly more girls than boys responding (56% vs 38%, respectively). Of the 33 pupils (6%) who selected the "other" option, nine were from a single school.

The very small number of pupils in a category other than boy or girl are included in all analyses describing overall percentages. However, as data based on very small numbers are easily skewed, their answers are not reported as a separate category. In contrast, responses from boys and girls are sometimes reported separately, where gender differences are apparent.

Figure 12.1 Gender of primary pupil respondents, 2021 (T1) and 2022 (T2).



Based on 503 respondents at T1, and 551 at T2.

Engagement with cultural and sporting activities

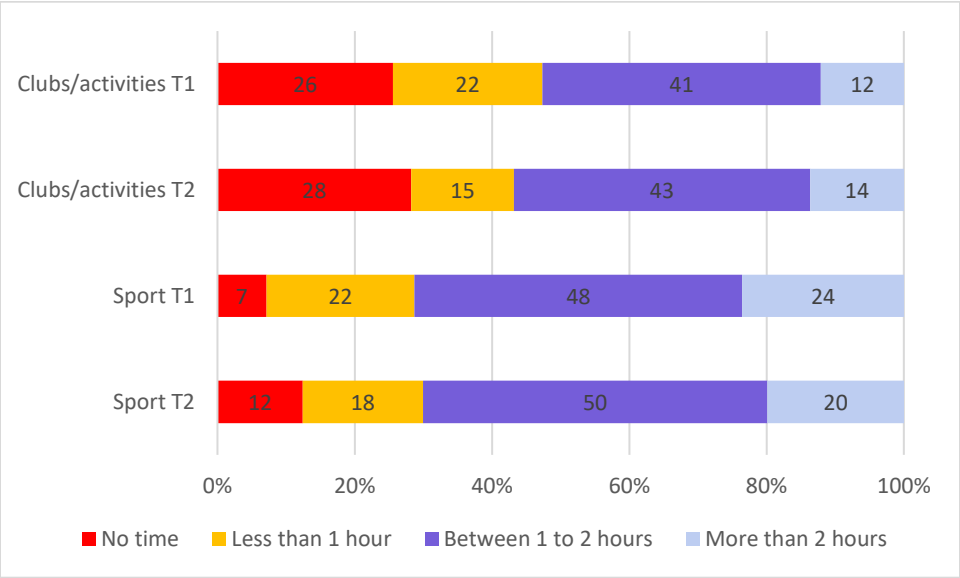
Pupils were asked how often they had engaged in each of eight types of cultural activities in the past year. As physically attending many activities would have been constrained by restrictions related to COVID-19, the pupils were asked to include activities attended in real life or virtually (e.g., going to a concert or watching one on TV). They were also asked about other out of school activities such as playing sports, taking part in clubs or activities, and reading for fun.

As can be seen from the following Figures, sport was the type of activity most widely engaged in (Figure 12.2), followed by reading (Figure 12.3), and clubs and activities (e.g., music, art, dance, drama, youth club). Other cultural activities were rarely if ever engaged in (Figures 12.4 and 12.5).

At T1, only 7% of pupils did not play sport outside of school, with almost three-quarters playing sport for at least an hour a day (Figure 12.2). Non-participation increased slightly at T2, when 12% indicated that they did not play sports. Clubs and activities were also popular, with over half of pupils spending at least an hour a day on them at both T1 and T2. However, a sizeable minority (26%) did not engage at all with clubs or related activities.

At both T1 and T2, gender differences were relatively small for involvement with clubs and other activities. However, sport was more popular with boys, who were about twice as likely as girls to spend over two hours a day playing sport. That noted, almost all boys and girls reported spending *some* time each day playing sport. There were only minor differences in the responses of pupils in DEIS vs non-DEIS schools.

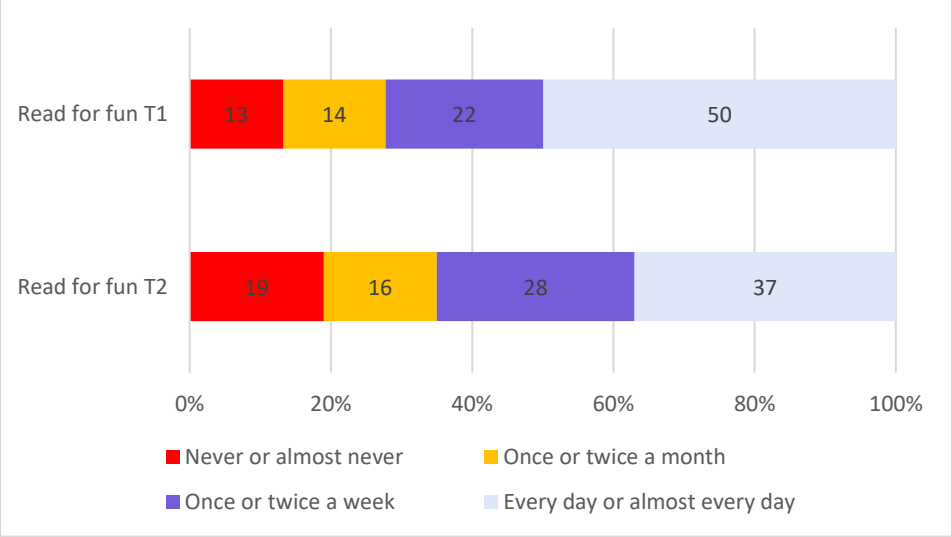
Figure 12.2 Frequency of pupils engaging with clubs/activities, and with sports, outside of school hours.



Based on 505-06 responses at T1 and 548-549 at T2.

At T1, half of pupils read for fun on a daily basis, with only 13% indicating that they never or almost never did so (Figure 12.3). By T2, daily readers had fallen to 37% of pupils, with 19% indicating that they never or almost never did so. Girls were more likely than boys to be daily readers (55% versus 40% at T1, and 43% vs 27% at T2). However, at both time points, large majorities of both boys and girls read for fun on an at least occasional basis. Also at both time points, pupils from DEIS schools were more likely than those from non-DEIS schools to say that they rarely or never read for fun, and less likely to be daily readers. For example, at T2, 25% of pupils in DEIS schools (16% in non-DEIS) indicated that they rarely or never read for fun.

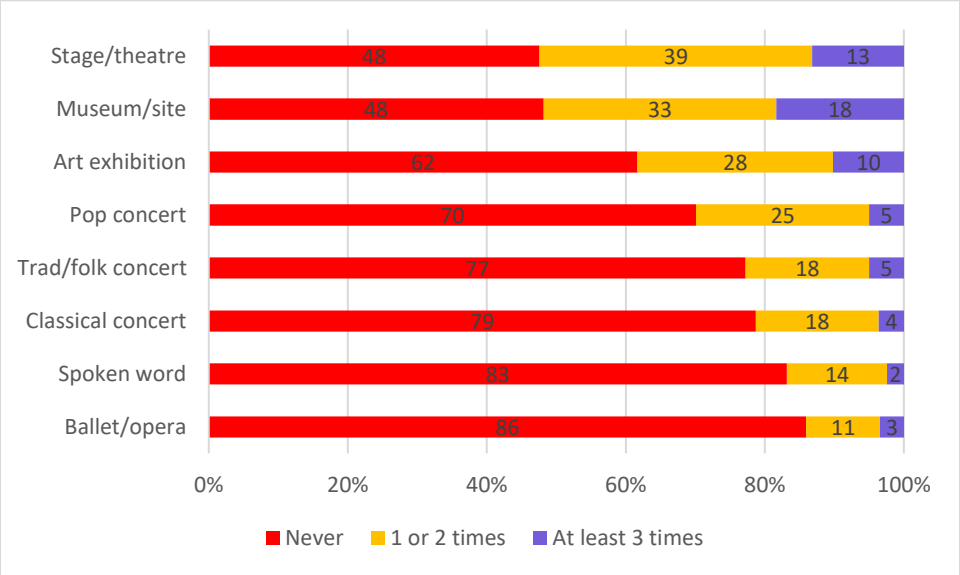
Figure 12.3 Frequency of pupils reading for fun, outside of school hours.



Based on 505 responses at T1 and 548 at T2.

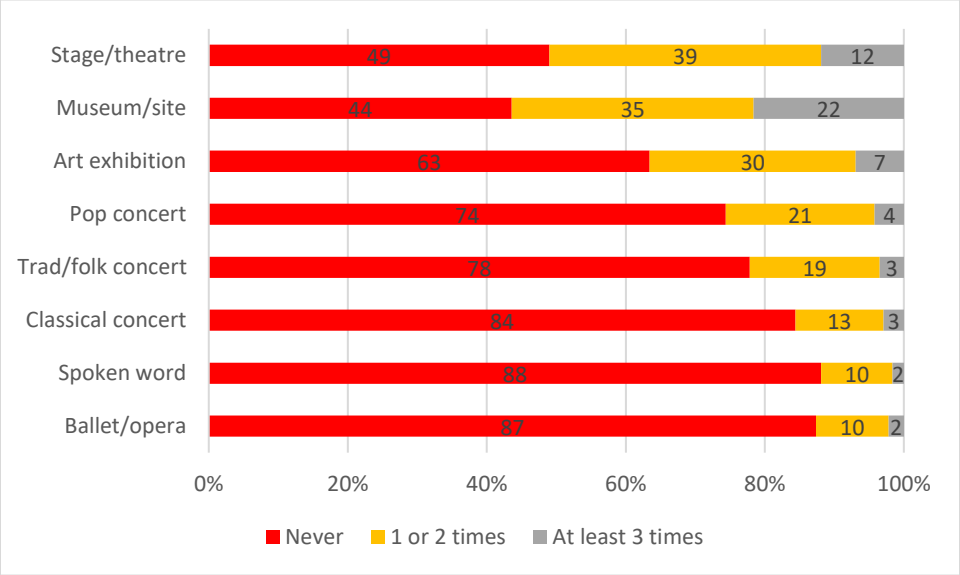
In sharp contrast to sport and reading, large majorities of pupils had not engaged in the listed cultural activities in Figures 12.4 and 12.5 in the year prior to being surveyed. Differences in the extent of engagement between the two time points were negligible. For both T1 and T2, watching a live stage/theatre show and visiting a museum or historic site were the only activities that over half of pupils had done at least once in the past year. In descending order of engagement, about one-third had visited an art exhibition, fewer had attended a pop concert, and fewer than one-quarter had attended traditional or classical concerts. Spoken word events and ballet or opera were the activities least likely to be engaged in, on either occasion.

Figure 12.4 Frequency of engaging in various cultural activities, T1.



Based on 496 – 502 responses.

Figure 12.5 Frequency of engaging in various cultural activities, T2.



Based on 545- 547 responses.

As well as looking at each of the activities individually, we can sum them to see which pupils took part in many activities and which took part in none. Overall, 21% had not engaged in *any* of the listed cultural activities in the year preceding the T1 survey (22% at T2). At both time points, boys were more likely than girls to not have engaged in any activity (e.g., 28% vs 18%, respectively at T2).

The survey results must be interpreted in the context of a global pandemic and restrictions on activities, as well as the fact that events with large audiences were prohibited for much of the year prior to the surveys in 2021 and (albeit to a lesser extent) in 2022. For this reason, the original question was modified to include the following instruction: “Include things you did in real-life or "virtually", like going to a concert or watching one on TV”. Despite this, few pupils engaged with the cultural activities in any format.

Attitudes to school

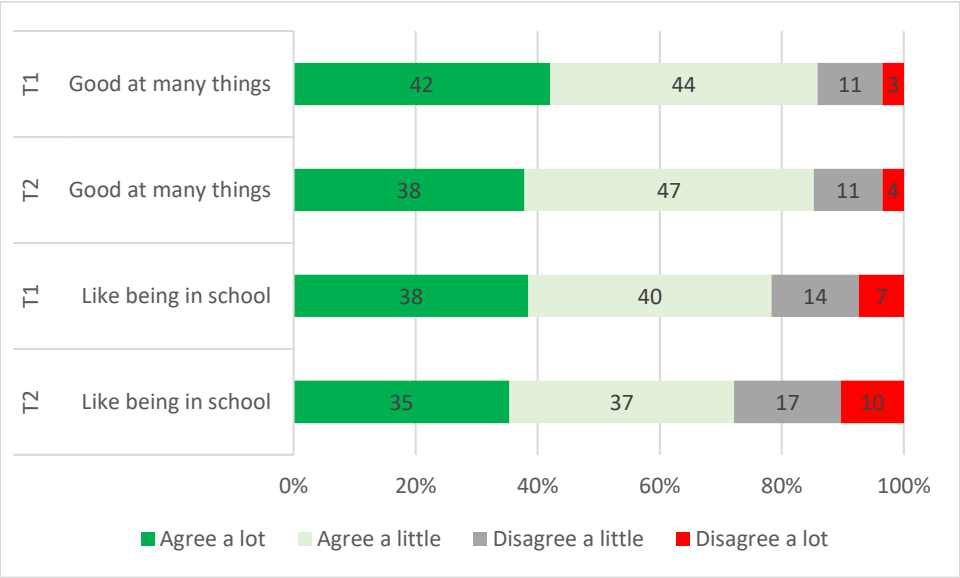
In this section broadly addresses aspects of wellbeing. Here we describe pupils’ attitudes to school, their sense of belonging, views about their teachers, and of their own academic skills and educational aspirations and expectations.

A positive finding from the pupil surveys was that most pupils felt safe in school, felt they belonged, liked classmates and generally, liked being in school (Figure 12.6 and Figure 12.7). The responses to feeling safe in school also need to be interpreted in the broader context of primary schools during a pandemic, when a small number of pupils were likely to have felt unsafe for reasons related to COVID-19 rather than the more typical meaning of this question.

There was relatively little change in views between the two surveys. On both occasions, the most positive responses were for feeling safe in school (about two-thirds agreed a lot that this was the case) and for liking classmates. (again, about two-thirds agreed a lot that this was true). A large majority also agreed on both occasions that they felt they belonged in their school. However, while responses were generally positive, it is a little concerning that at least one in 10 pupils on each occasion did not feel they belonged, while more than one in five said they did not like being in school.

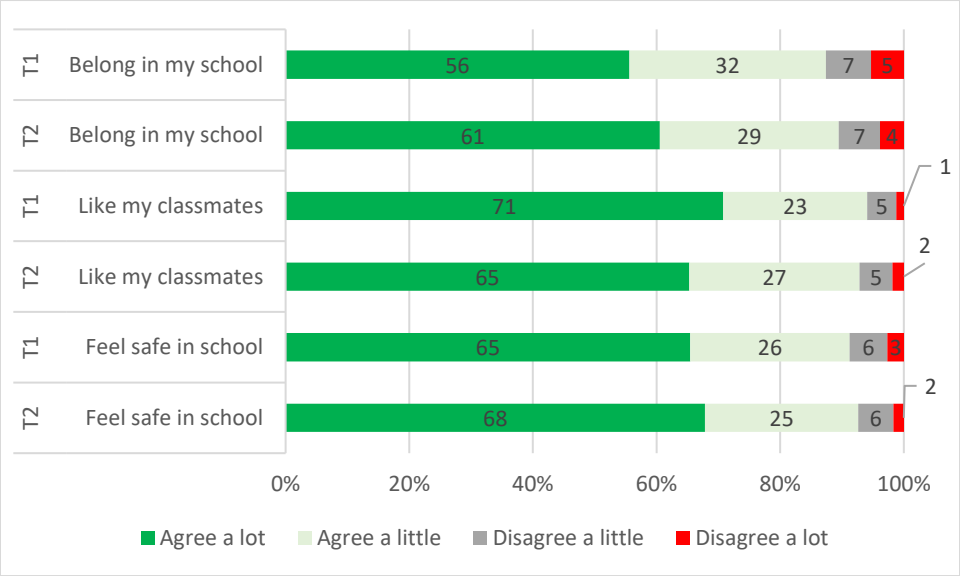
In both T1 and T2 surveys there was little difference between pupils in DEIS and non-DEIS schools in sense of belonging in school, or in liking their classmates. However, pupils in DEIS schools were marginally less likely to agree that they felt safe in school at T1 and T2, and slightly less likely to feel good at many things in school at T2.

Figure 12.6 Pupils' ratings for liking school, feeling good at many things in school, T1 and T2.



Based on 488 - 489 responses, T1 and 542 – 543, T2.

Figure 12.7 Pupils' ratings for belonging and safety in school, liking classmates, T1 and T2.



Based on 489 - 491 responses, T1 and 541 – 542, T2.

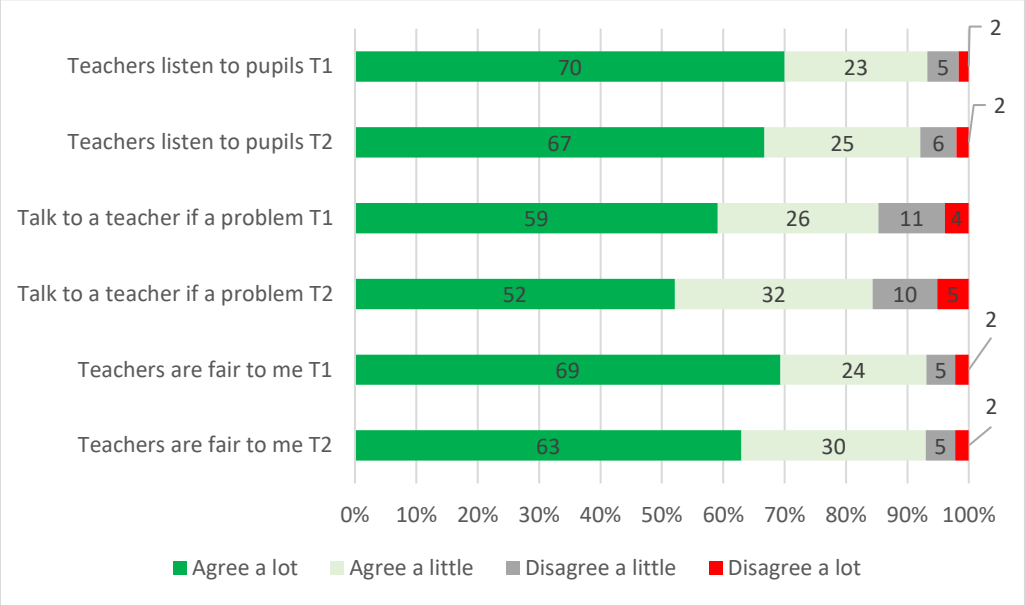
Pupils' attitudes to their teachers

As outlined in earlier chapters of this report, facilitating children and young people's views i.e., enabling the Voice of the Child (Lundy, 2007) was identified as a key component of Creative Schools. In both surveys, most pupils described their teachers as fair and approachable (Figure 12.8). At T1 and T2, over 90% agreed (a little or a lot) that their teachers listened to what pupils

had to say and that teachers were fair to them, while 85% agreed that they could talk to a teacher if they had a problem.

Views on teachers were *overwhelmingly positive*, whether pupils were in DEIS or non-DEIS schools. However, some gender differences arose. At T1, boys were, on average two to three times more likely than girls to disagree that their teachers were fair, approachable, or listened to them. However, by T2, girls' ratings had become slightly more negative, whereas boys' ratings had become slightly more positive. As a result, the percentages of boys and girls who disagreed to some extent with the three statements were very similar at T2.

Figure 12.8 Pupils' views of teacher fairness and approachability.

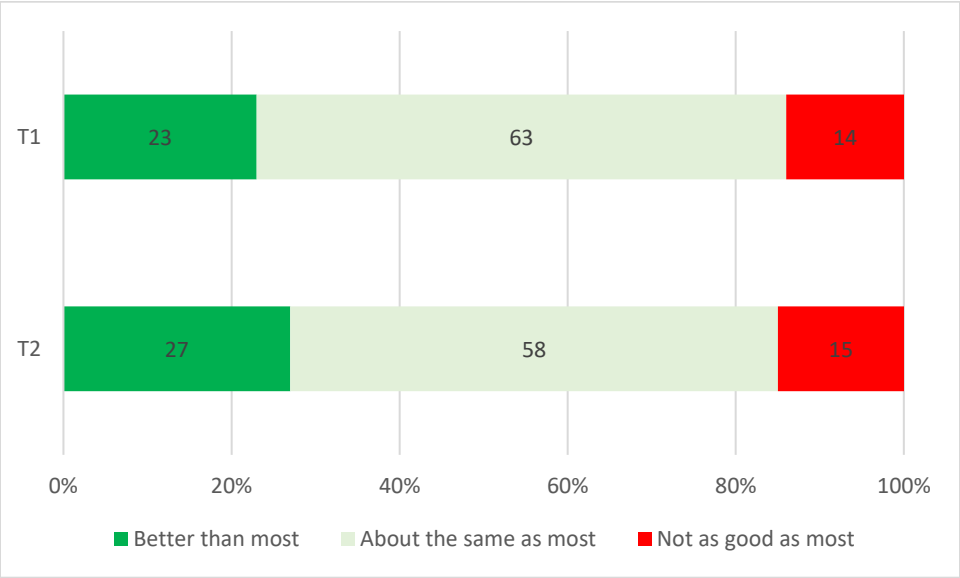


Based on 489-492 responses, T1 and 543-544 at T2.

Pupils' self-rated performance on tests and exams

When asked to rate themselves on tests or exams, responses were slightly positively skewed at T1 and T2 (Figure 12.9). While close to one-quarter rated themselves as better than most, only 14% or 15% rated themselves as not as good as most, with a majority rating themselves as average. At T1, boys were more likely than girls to rate themselves positively (31% rated themselves as better than most, compared to 18% of girls), but by T2 the gender gap was negligible. In DEIS schools, those rating themselves as not as good as most increased from T1 to T2 (from 10% to 24%).

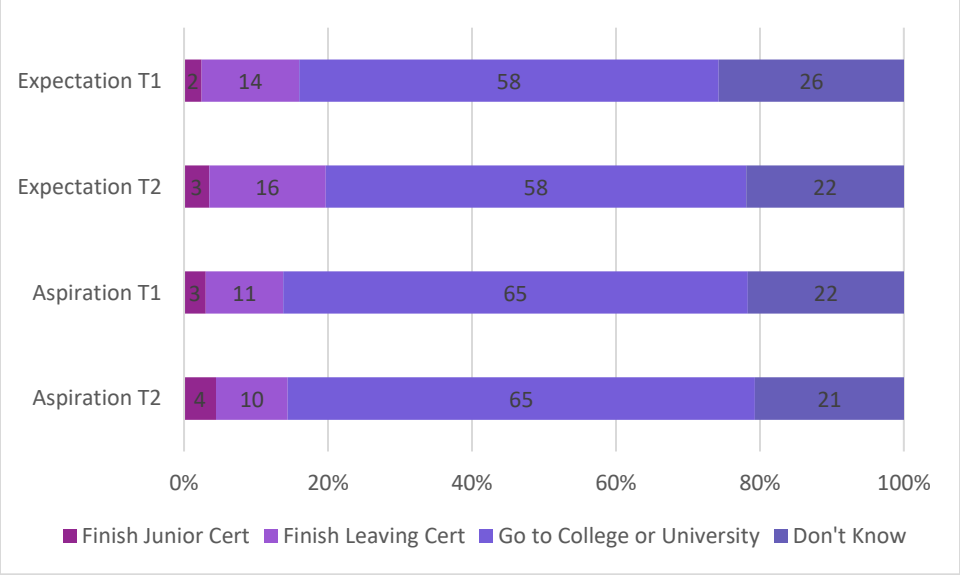
Figure 12.9 Pupils' self-rated performance on tests and exams, T1 and T2.



Based on 506 responses, T1 and 552 at T2.

Pupils expressed relatively high educational aspirations and expectations at both T1 and T2. On both occasions, 58% *expected* to attend college or university and 65% indicated that they would *like to* do so (Figure 12.10). However, between 2-3% did not expect to progress beyond the Junior Certificate while over one in five were unsure of how far they would like to or expected to progress.

Figure 12.10 Pupils' educational expectations and aspirations.



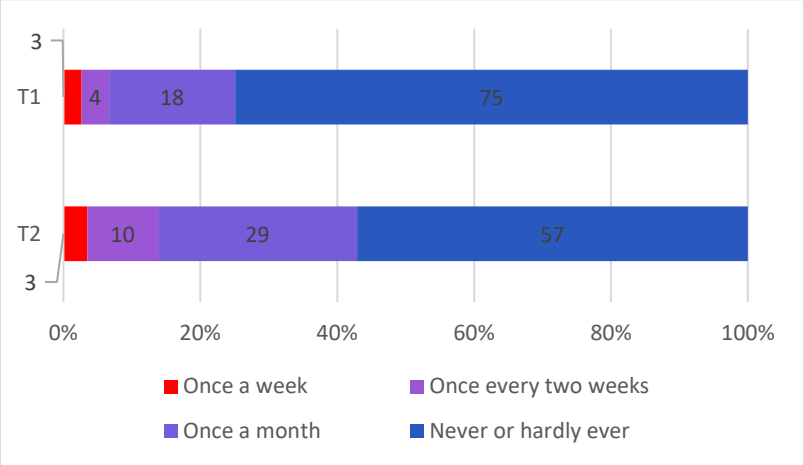
Based on 488 - 491 responses, T1 and 541-544 at T2.

School-related behaviours

In this section, we describe pupil attendance, interaction in classrooms, and experiences of bullying. Average pupil attendance changes little between T1 and T2, with large majorities indicating on each occasion that they rarely missed days (Figure 12.11). However, the data are a little difficult to interpret, given the potential effects of the pandemic on individual level absences as well as school- or class-level closures.

School attendance

Figure 12.11 Pupils' reports of how often they were absent from school.



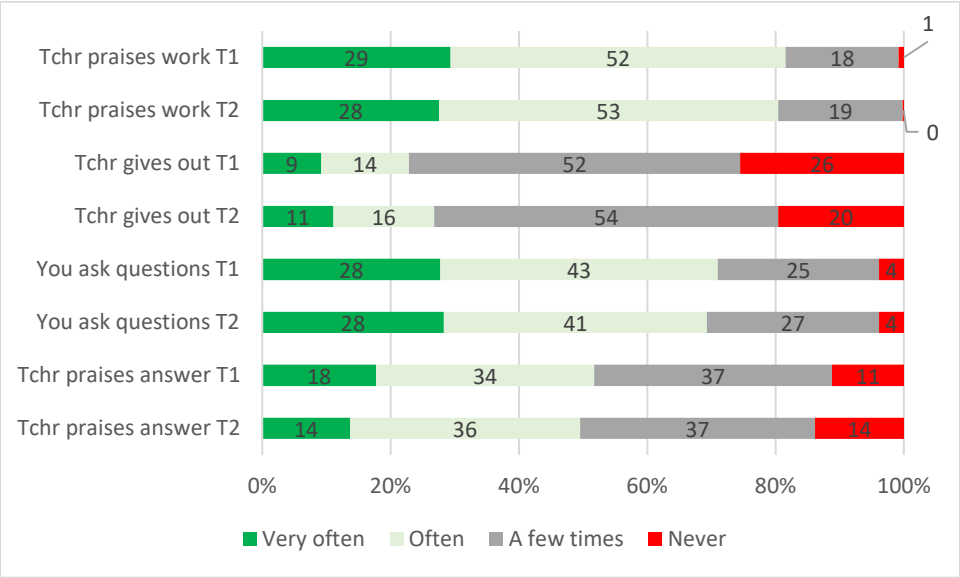
Based on 494 responses, T1 and 543 at T2.

Classroom behaviour

Most pupils experienced positive classroom interaction on a regular basis at both T1 and T2. For example, about half said that their teacher very often or often praised their work or their answer to a question, while about 70% said that they often or very often asked questions in class (Figure 12.12). There was a marginal increase in the frequency of teachers chastising or 'giving out' to pupils for misbehaviour or 'messing' in class and a very marginal decrease in the frequency with which teachers praised pupils. That noted, at both times, at least half of pupils experienced regular praise and about one-quarter experienced regular criticism.

At both T1 and T2, boys were far more likely than girls to be chastised for misbehaviour in class, and slightly more likely to say that they often or very often asked questions in class.

Figure 12.12 Frequency of various types of classroom interactions.



Based on 490-494 responses, T1 and 541 at T2.

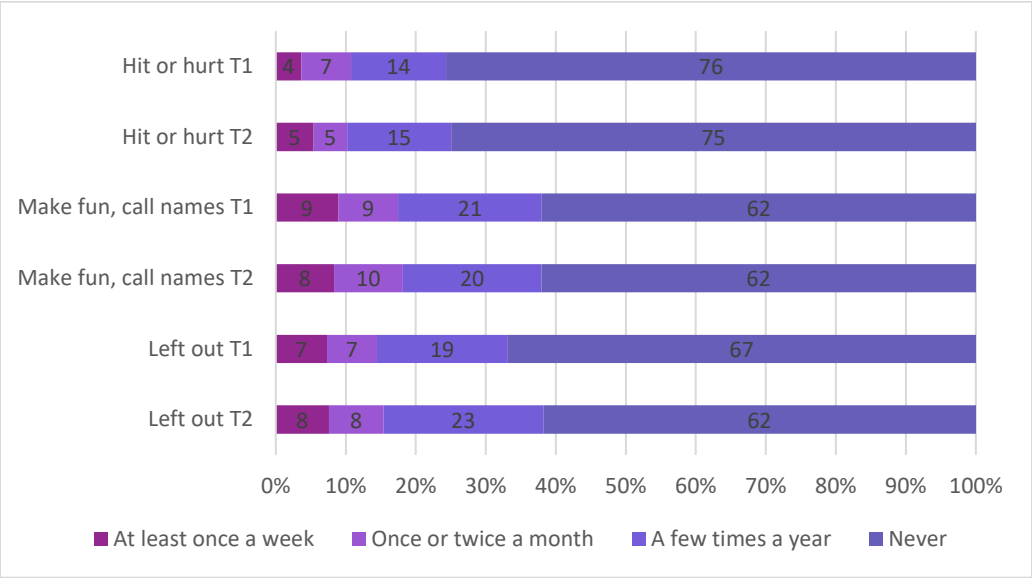
Experiences of bullying

Pupils' responses to three questions about their experiences of being bullied suggests that most pupils are never or very rarely bullied, and that the incidence of being bullied varied little between the two surveys (Figure 12.13). About two-thirds to three-quarters indicated that they were never left out of games or activities, made fun of or called names, or hit or hurt by other pupils. Conversely, between 4-9% of pupils experienced such bullying at least weekly.

Responses to the three questions can also be looked at collectively. At both T1 and T2, almost three-quarters (73%) of pupils did not regularly (at least monthly) experience *any* of the three forms of bullying while 14-15% experienced one form only. Just under 4% regularly experienced all three forms of bullying.

Overall, gender differences were negligible at both T1 and T2, although boys were slightly more likely than girls to report being hit or hurt. At T1, pupils in DEIS schools were about twice as likely to have experienced some form of regular bullying than those in non-DEIS schools (37% vs 15%, respectively). However, at T2, the gap was much smaller between DEIS (31%) and non-DEIS (25%) schools.

Figure 12.13 Frequency of experiencing bullying behaviour from other pupils.



Based on 492-493 responses, T1 and 539-540 at T2.

Favourite subjects

Pupils were presented with a list of 11 subjects (presented in alphabetical order, followed by the option to specify an "other" subject) and asked to pick their three favourites. Table 12.1 and 12.2 shows the percentages of pupils who picked each subject as their first, second and third choice subjects, and percentages who picked a subject as one of their top three (total %). The outcomes were ranked in descending order by their "weighted score", an overall score whereby a first choice is assigned triple the weight of a third choice.

Distinct groupings of school subjects emerged. Subjects that were very popular at both T1 and T2 were PE and Art. Each was in the top three of over 60% of pupils and have weighted scores far in excess of 100. Drama and Maths comprised the next grouping which fell into the top three of about 30% of pupils, and whose weighted scores were in the 50-60 range. At T1, Science, English and Music were the next most popular grouping, with weighted scores of at least 30. However, at T2, the popularity of Music had fallen slightly, from a weighted score of 30 at T1 to only 23 at T2. In contrast, while SESE was just below Music's popularity at T1 (weighted score of 29 vs 30), by T2 the popularity of SESE (especially history) had increased to a weighted score of 44, and was in the top three of 23% of pupils at T2.

At the other end of the tables, SPHE, Irish and Religion were quite unpopular at both T1 and T2. In the case of Religion, it was the least popular subject on both occasions, and no pupils chose it as their favourite subject at T2.

About 5% of pupils picked "other" favourite subjects. While some indicated that their favourite subject was *lunch* or *yard* and others noted that they liked doing *fun things*, responses also

included activities such as *DEAR* (Drop Everything And Read), *philosophy*, *mindfulness*, *group projects* and *computers/technology*.

There were some differences between boys and girls on subject choices. For example, boys were more likely than girls to list PE among their favourite subjects (in both surveys), whereas girls were more likely than boys to opt for Drama. While Art was popular among all pupils, girls were more likely than boys to list it in their top three. With the exception of Music, gender differences tended to be similar at both time points. However, at T1, 21% of girls chose Music among their three favourite subjects, compared to just over 7% of boys, but at T2 roughly 14% of both boys and girls listed Music as one of their favourite subjects.

There was also some evidence of clustering by schools. For example, English was reasonably popular overall, and in most schools. However, in one school only one pupil chose it at T2, and it was selected as their *third* favourite subject. In contrast, another school had a weighted score of 132 for SESE at T2 (over 60% chose it within their top three) and one had a score of 192 for Art (85% had it in their top three).

Table 12.1 Favourite subjects, ranked in descending order of popularity, T1.

Subject	1	2	3	Total %*	Weighted score*
PE	41.4	22.0	13.5	76.9	182
Art	26.1	21.8	19.0	66.9	141
Drama	7.2	12.2	12.6	32.0	59
Maths	9.2	8.7	10.7	29.5	56
Science	3.1	8.3	10.7	22.0	36
English	2.6	8.3	8.3	19.2	33
Music	3.7	6.3	6.3	16.3	30
SESE	4.1	5.2	5.9	15.3	29
Irish	0.7	2.2	2.4	5.2	9
SPHE	0.4	0.7	4.1	5.2	7
Religion	0.4	1.3	1.3	3.1	5
Other	*1.1*	*0.4*	*1.3*	*2.8*	*5*

Total % = Sum of first, second and third choice rankings. Weighted score = (% 1st choice X 3) + (% 2nd choice X 2) + % 3rd choice. Based on 459 responses.

Table 12.2 Favourite subjects, ranked in descending order of popularity, T2.

Subject	1	2	3	Total %*	Weighted score*
PE	42.7	19.6	11.8	74.1	179
Art	26.4	21.0	14.0	61.4	135
Drama	5.0	12.8	12.6	30.5	53
Maths	6.4	10.9	13.4	30.7	54
SESE	6.4	8.2	8.5	23.1	**44** ↑
Science	4.3	6.6	12.0	22.9	38
English	3.9	8.3	9.1	21.4	37
Music	2.9	4.3	6.0	13.2	**23** ↓
SPHE	0.6	2.1	4.5	7.2	10
Irish	1.0	2.1	3.7	6.8	11
Religion	0.0	1.4	1.6	2.9	4
Other	*0.6*	*1.4*	*0.8*	*2.7*	*5*

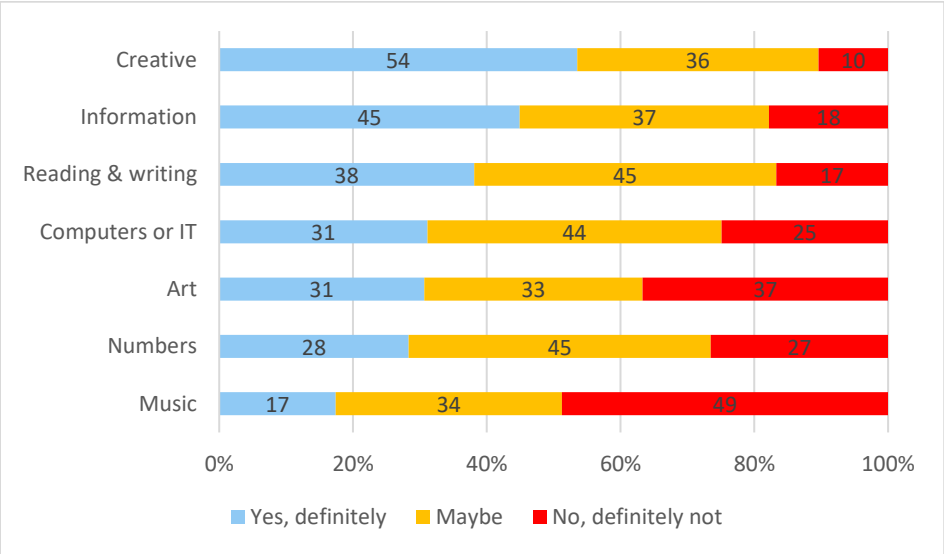
Total % = tot of first, second and third choice rankings. Weighted score = (% 1st choice X 3) + (% 2nd choice X 2) + % 3rd choice. Based on 515 responses.

Pupils' visions of their ideal job

As a way of gauging pupil interest in the arts and in creativity more generally, rather than in relation to school, pupils were asked what types of activities they would like their ideal job or work to involve. Of the seven types of activity, work involving creativity was the most popular choice at T1 and T2. Over half of pupils *definitely* wanted to have a job that involved being creative (Figure 12.14 and Figure 12.15). Working with information was the next most popular choice, although 15-18% definitely did *not* want to work with information.

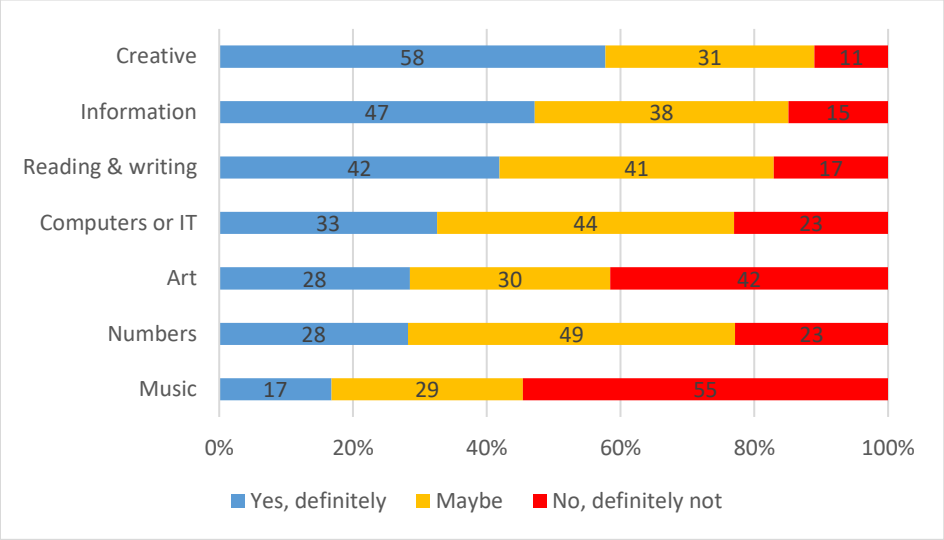
Work involving reading and writing, computers, and art were all reasonably popular, whereas work involving music was the least popular option. Also, a sizeable percentage of pupils on both occasions indicated they *definitely did not* want a job that involved art or music. At both T1 and T2, girls were more likely than boys to want work that involved art, music or reading and writing. For example, in both surveys, over half of boys, but fewer than one-third of girls indicated that they definitely did not want a job that involved art.

Figure 12.14 Aspects of ideal job, in descending order of popularity, T1.



Based on 494 – 499 responses, T1.

Figure 12.15 Aspects of ideal job, in descending order of popularity, T2.



Based on 542– 544 responses, T2.

Summary

In the 2020/21 school year, primary school pupils who were participating in Creative Schools completed a detailed survey about their experiences of the arts and creativity in school, their involvement in various extracurricular activities, their attitudes towards school, and their academic aspirations. The survey was repeated in spring 2022 to ascertain changes over time data. Items in the survey addressed topics such as participation in sport, reading, cultural events

and various clubs and activities. The survey also sought information on the pupils' behaviour, expectations, favourite subjects, and attitudes towards creativity and creative careers.
The results revealed that sports was the most popular extracurricular activity among pupils, followed by reading and participation in various clubs and activities involving music, art, dance, drama, and youth clubs. However, engagement in other cultural activities such as concerts, of any kind, and exhibitions was limited.

From a wellbeing perspective, a significant majority of pupils reported feeling safe and included in their school community, with positive attitudes towards their classmates and teachers. Pupils from both DEIS and non-DEIS schools had overwhelmingly positive views on their teachers, considering them approachable and fair. In both surveys, over 90% of pupils believed that their teachers listened to them and treated them fairly, while 85% felt comfortable talking to their teachers about problems.

In order to ascertain interest in the arts and in creativity more broadly, pupils were asked to indicate the types of activities they would like their ideal job or work to involve. From a list of seven different types, work involving creativity was the most popular choice in the two surveys. Moreover, half of the pupils expressed a definite desire to pursue careers that involved creativity.

Chapter 13 Post-primary Students' Views and Experiences

This chapter describes the outcomes of a questionnaire completed by samples of post-primary students at two time points. The pre-intervention (T1) data is comprised of responses from students in schools that became Creative Schools in 2020, supplemented by a later sample from schools that were part of the 2021 cohort of Creative Schools. In contrast, the post-intervention (T2) data is from students in the 2020 cohort only.

The use of T1 and T2 administrations of the same survey content allowed the evaluation team to compare student attitudes and behaviours **prior to** any real student-level engagement with Creative Schools and **after** their school had been involved in Creative Schools for almost two years. Although the T1 administration is comprised of responses from different cohorts, all were surveyed prior to significant engagement with Creative Schools. All of those surveyed at T2 were in the 2020 cohort of schools that had been involved in Creative Schools for almost two years. In the main, the surveys were hosted on Qualtrics© which is an online survey platform. A reusable link to the survey was sent to Creative Schools Coordinators in selected schools, and the link distributed to students. However, due to the poor uptake of the survey in online format, paper and online versions were provided to the supplementary sample of schools included in the T1 administration.

The surveys described here were preceded by a pilot survey in autumn 2020, delivered to a sample of the students from the first cohort (2018) of Creative Schools. The pilot assessed schools' capacity to engage with online surveys, trialled the delivery of an online questionnaire, and examined how best to establish consent and assent (while adhering to stringent public health guidelines in place at the time). The surveys described in this chapter drew on the outcomes of the pilot.

At both T1 and T2, an identical questionnaire was administered to students. The main topics included:

- Activities outside of school (e.g., sport, reading, attending cultural events)
- Behaviour in school and attitudes towards school
- Academic aspirations, expectations, favourite subjects
- Views on creativity
- Self-esteem.

Survey participants

The T1 survey was initially planned for administration near the end of the 2020/21 school year. However, there was very poor uptake among students in the sampled schools. Response rates were very poor at school and at student level. This means that even among the minority of schools that agreed to take part and that facilitated access to students, the number of students

who completed a questionnaire was very low. The details of the survey methodology are outlined in Chapter 3, but in brief, the survey administration was delayed by COVID-related school closures, then by a backlog of school assessment activities that meant digital devices were unavailable. By May, when schools were finally asked to survey students, many Transition Year students were engaged in activities that kept them away from desks and outside the school environment for COVID-related reasons.

For this reason, T1 data collection was expanded to include another sweep of the same schools in early 2021/22, and two additional samples. Some of the 2020 schools that had not been previously selected were invited to take part, as (eventually) were some schools that became Creative Schools at the start of the 2021/22 school year. Combining the various samples, a total of 376 students completed the survey. Although this represents a reasonably large number of students, the response rate (the percentage of those invited who actually took part) is quite poor, due to the extremely low response rate among the first group invited.

For the T2 survey, completed during in April and May 2021, 372 students completed at least some part of the survey. All of those surveyed at T2 were in the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools.

Grade level

The target grades were intended to be Transition Year at T1, and Fifth Years at T2 (essentially, the same group of students surveyed pre- and post-Creative Schools). However, given the extreme difficulty in accessing students at T1, the final sample of students covered a variety of class levels. At T1, 51% who completed the survey were in Transition Year, with Second and Third Year the next most common grades (Table 13.1).

At T2, individual schools were asked to survey specified grade levels, broadly in proportion to the distribution of students across grades at T1 (e.g., half were asked to survey their Transition Year students). In practice, difficulty in accessing Transition Year students in some schools meant that while Transition Years were the largest group in the final set of respondents, they only comprised 37% of the sample at T2. As was the case at T1, the next most common grade was Second year (26%). While few students at T1 were in First year, at T2, they comprised 11% of the sample.

Table 13.1 Percentages of student at each grade level, T1 and T2.

	1st	2nd	3rd	TY	5th	6th
T1 (N=376)	2.9	23.4	12.5	51.1	10.1	0.0
T2 (N=372)	11.0	26.3	10.2	37.4	9.7	5.4

Gender

Over 80% of all post-primary schools that joined Creative Schools in 2020 are mixed sex. Of the remainder, all were all-girls schools. Thus, it is unsurprising that more females than males completed the surveys. That noted, the gender gap in completion rates exceeds the gender gap across Creative Schools as a whole (Figure 13.1). Overall, 62% of T1 respondents were females,

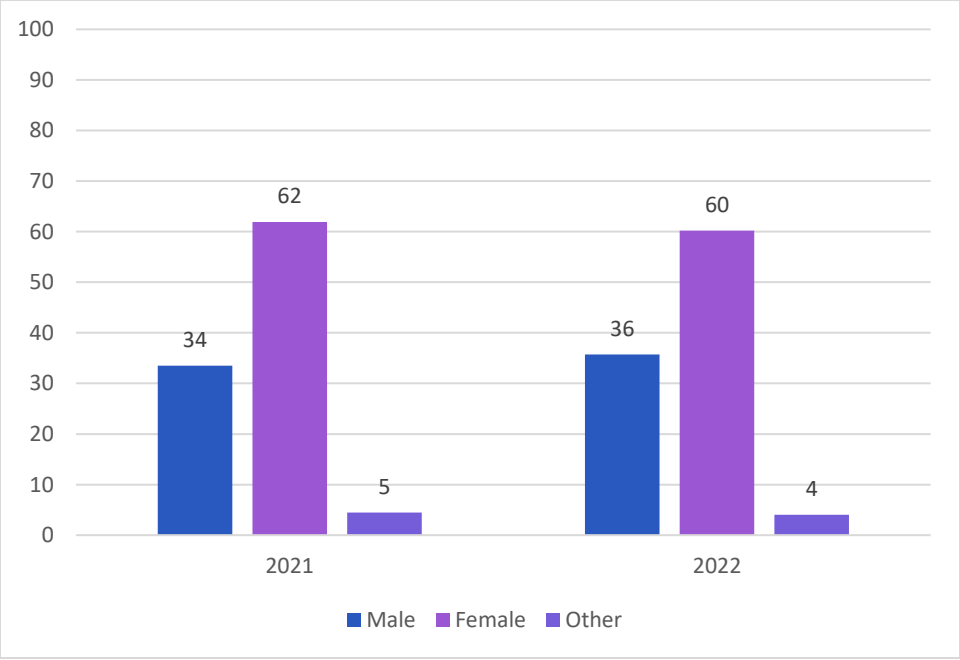
34% were males, with 5% choosing another option. At T2, the split was slightly more balanced, with 36% male, 60% female and 4% other.

The online version of the questionnaire used at T1 had four gender-related options (Male / Female / Prefer not to say / I'm …. (describe yourself [text box]). Five of the nine students who chose the fourth option supplied a description of personality or appearance rather than gender expression. For example, "I'm a bit of an introvert" / "Friendly" / "Hardworking". Only four of those who ticked the box might be considered to have understood the question as intended (one "demi-boy" and three "non-binary" students).

Thus, there were five students at T1 in a category, that, on the balance of probabilities, they did not intend to place themselves in. For this reason, the question on gender was amended and simplified for T2 administration. Students were simply asked if they were male, female, or Other/Prefer not to say.

As at primary level, the small numbers in categories other than male or female are included in analyses describing overall percentages. Additional analyses of responses from males and females are occasionally reported too, where gender differences are apparent. However, as data based on very small numbers of cases in the *other* categories are easily skewed, their answers are not reported separately.

Figure 13.1 Gender of post-primary pupil respondents, 2021 and 2022.



Based on 373 responses at T1, 372 at T2.

School Type

Although surveys were completed anonymously, the survey link contained an embedded school identifier that enabled each respondent to be linked to a school. School details (e.g., size, DEIS status, sector) could thus be applied to all respondents at T2, and to almost all at T1 (then, 10 students used a QR code to access the survey, meaning their school could not be identified).

As noted, most of the 2020 cohort of Creative Schools were mixed sex, and this is reflected in the distribution of respondents at both T1 and T2, with 81% of respondents enrolled in mixed sex schools and the remainder in all-girls schools (Table 13.2). Overall, 42% of the 2020 cohort of schools were DEIS schools. However, DEIS schools were under-represented in responses at T1 (31% were in DEIS schools) and slightly over-represented (48%) at T2.

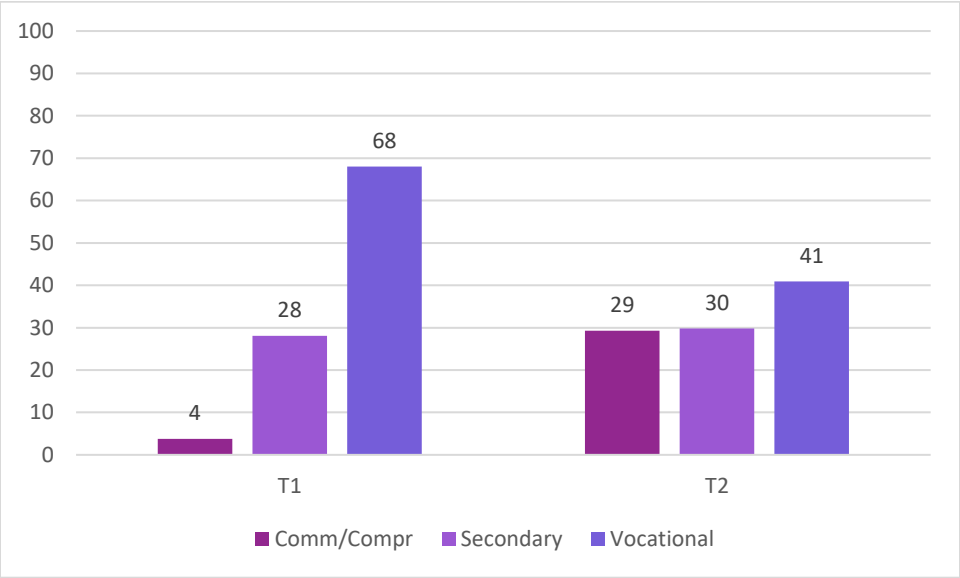
NOTE: Increased representation from DEIS schools has implications for interpretation of the outcomes, as engagement with academic and with creative or arts-related activities is generally weaker in DEIS schools (Smyth, 2016).

Table 13.2 Percentages of respondents in DEIS and mixed sex schools, T1 and T2.

	T1 (N=366)	T2 (N=372)
Mixed sex	80.9	80.6
DEIS	30.9	48.4

Another difference in respondents between T1 and T2 was school sector. Overall, just over half of the 2020 cohort of schools were Vocational schools, with 13% in the Community / Comprehensive sector, while the remainder were Secondary schools. However, Vocational schools were over-represented at T1 and slightly under-represented at T2, while the reverse was true for the Community / Comprehensive school sector (Figure 13.2). In contrast, Secondary school students were appropriately represented at both T1 and T2.

Figure 13.2 Types of schools in which respondents were enrolled, T1 and T2.



Based on 366 respondents at T1 and 372 at T2.

Cultural and out-of-school activities

Students were presented with a list of eight types of cultural activities and asked how often they had engaged in each in the previous year, either in real life or virtually (e.g., going to a concert or watching one on TV). They were also asked about engagement in other out -of-school activities such as playing sports, taking part in clubs or activities, and reading for fun.

Sport was the type of activity most widely engaged in (Figure 13.3). At T1 and T2, a little over half played sport for at least an hour a day. Clubs and activities were also reasonably popular at both time points, with close to 40% of students spending at least an hour a day on them. However, a roughly 40% did not engage at all with clubs or related activities, while 25%did not play sport.

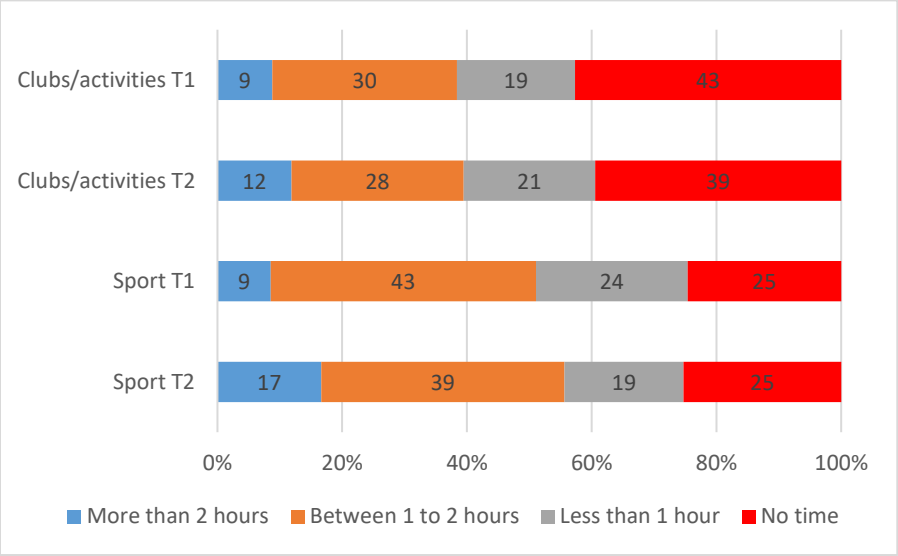
Approximately one in five students at both T1 and T2 reported reading for fun on a daily basis (Figure 13.4), with roughly double that amount reporting that they never or hardly ever read for fun. There were no marked changes in engagement with sport, clubs, or reading between the two surveys.

On each of the three measures, non-engagement is much higher than at primary level. However, at T1, there was no clear pattern of reduced activity as students advance through the post-primary grade levels. Thus, it was not the case that – for example – Fifth Years engaged less than Second or Third Years, but rather that second level students were less likely than primary pupils to engage in out-of-school activities. However, this may reflect the various times of year at which T1 data were collected. In contrast, all T2 data were collected near the end of the school year. At that point in the school year, Fifth and Sixth years were less likely than other grades to spend any time playing sports or engaging with clubs. That noted, the number of students involved (on both

occasions) is quite small when split by grade, so it is unclear how generalisable these differences are to the wider post-primary population.

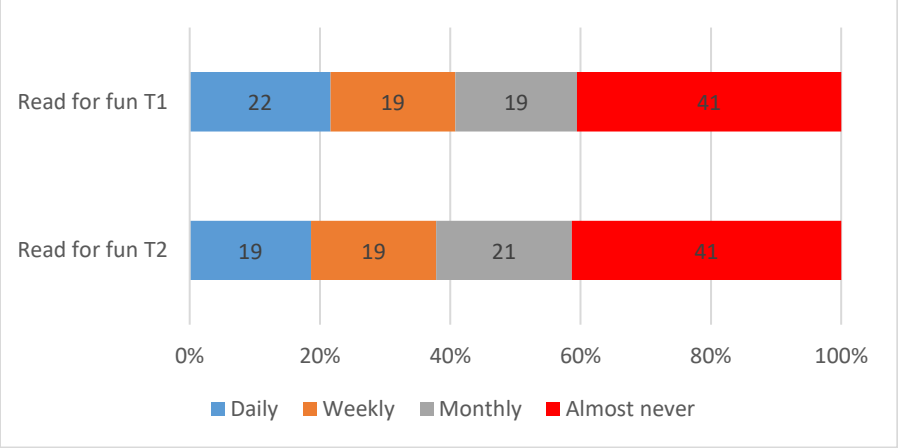
On both occasions, gender differences were relatively small for engagement with sport or with clubs and other activities. Females were slightly less likely to play any sport, while males were slightly less likely to be involved in clubs. However, there were marked gender differences in reading for fun. Females were far more likely than males to be regular readers. At T1, 28% of females indicated that they read for fun on a daily or almost daily basis, whereas only 9% of males indicated that they did so. Differences were slightly smaller at T2, with 21% of females and 11% of males indicating that they were daily readers.

Figure 13.3 Frequency of students engaging with clubs/activities, sports, outside of school hours.



Based on 374-375 responses at T1, 370-372 at T2.

Figure 13.4 Frequency of students reading for fun, outside of school hours.



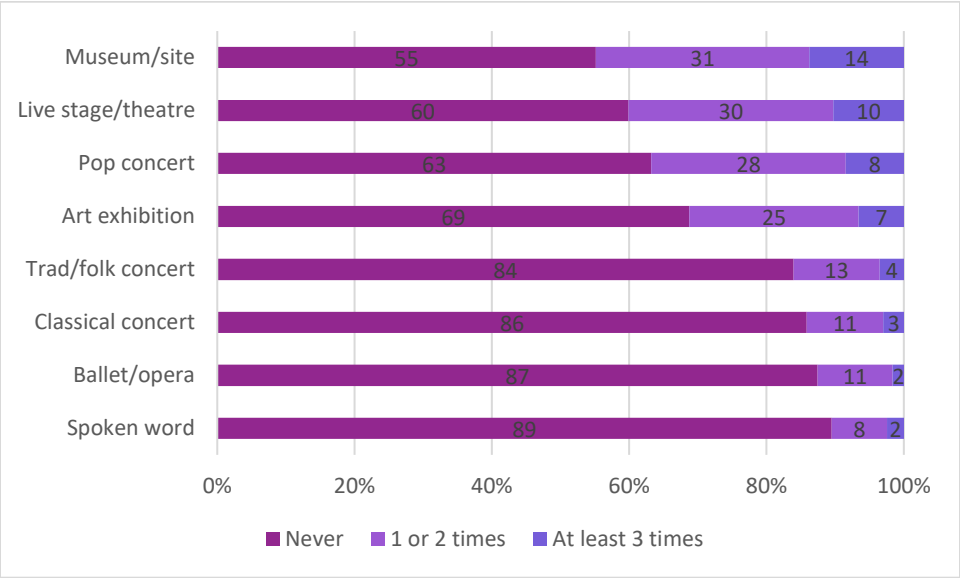
Based on 375 responses at T1, 370 at T2.

In sharp contrast to the relatively frequent engagement in out-of-school activities, a majority or a large majority of students had never engaged (virtually or in real life) in any of the eight listed cultural activities over the year prior to being surveyed at T1 (Figure 13.5). There were only four activities (pop concert, museum or site visit, live stage or theatre show, art exhibition) that at least one-quarter of students had engaged in at some point in the previous year. Activities least likely to be engaged in were spoken word events, ballet or opera, and classical music concerts, with 86-89% indicating that they had not engaged at all with them in the previous year.

As well as looking at each of the activities individually, these can be added together to see which students took part in many activities and which took part in none.

- More than one quarter of the students (28%) had not engaged in *any* of the listed cultural activities in the year preceding the T1 survey,
- Half of all students had engaged in two or more of the activities.
- Participation was closely related to gender, with males were almost twice as likely as females not to have engaged in any of the listed activities (40% versus 22%, respectively).

Figure 13.5 Frequency of students engaging in various cultural activities, T1.



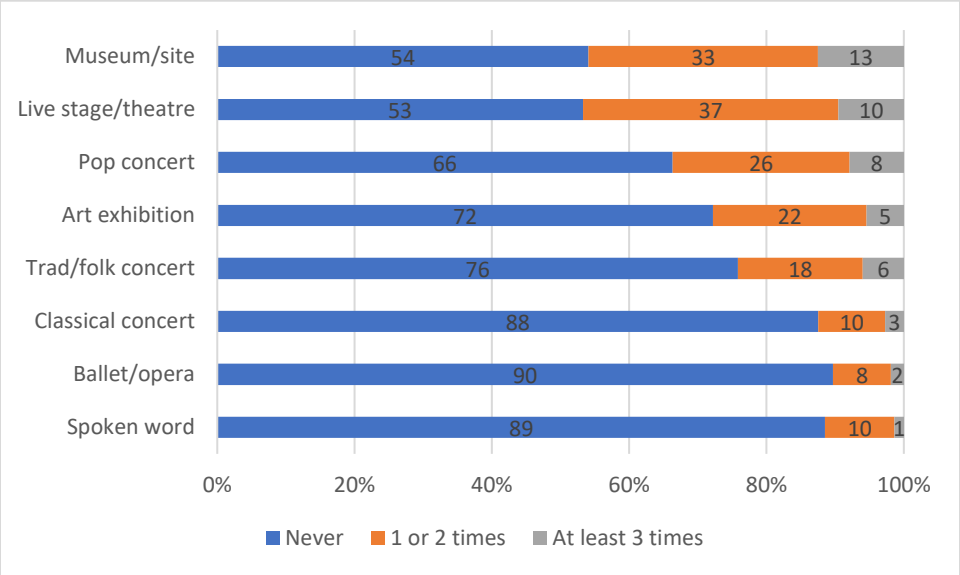
Based on 365 - 371 responses at T1.

The results of the T2 survey are very similar (Figure 13.6). For each listed activity, most students reported not engaging with it in the previous year. As at T1, the activities most likely to be engaged in were visiting a museum (46%) or attending a live stage/theatre event (47%). Attendance at the latter was just slightly higher than at T1 (when only 40% had attended a stage show), as was attendance at a traditional or folk music concert (at which increased from 16% to 24%). However, for the other listed activities, engagement remained broadly on a par with engagement at T1. For example, only approximately one in 10 students had attended the ballet or opera or a spoken word event.

As at T1, the results can be summed to see which students took part in many activities and which took part in none:

- Over one quarter (26%) had not engaged in *any* of the listed cultural activities in the year preceding the survey.
- The percentages of students at T2 engaging in two or more of the activities was slightly higher than at T1 (59% vs 51%, respectively).
- At T2, participation was less closely related to gender, mainly because male engagement increased slightly while female engagement remained similar to levels at T1.

Figure 13.6 Frequency of students engaging in various cultural activities, T2.

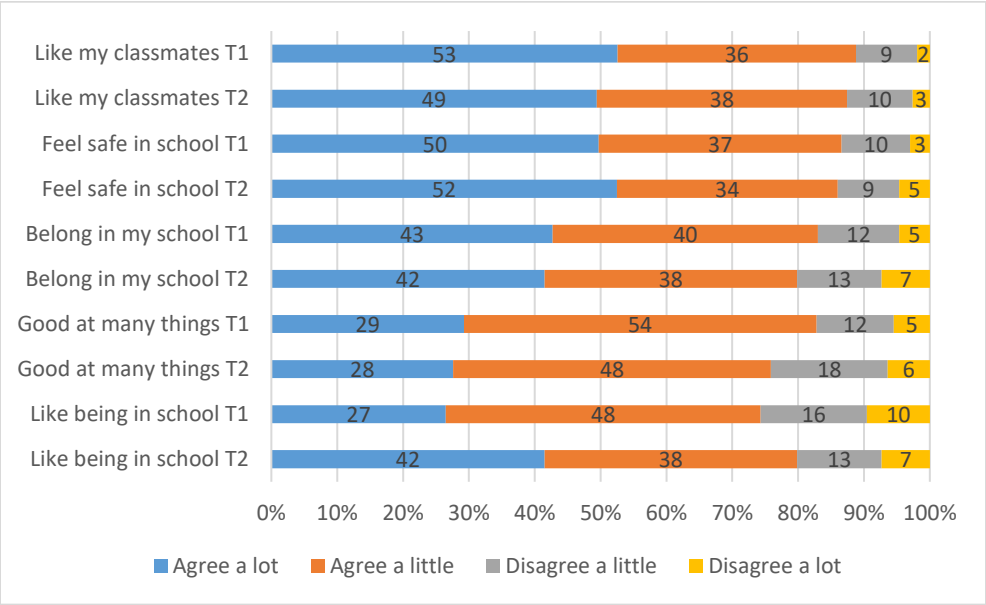


Based on 366-369 responses, T2.

School-related attitudes

This section broadly relates to student wellbeing. It outlines students' attitudes to school, their sense of belonging, views about their teachers, and of their own academic skills and educational aspirations and expectations. A large majority of students expressed relatively positive views about school and their classmates on both occasions. At both T1 and T2, roughly half of students agreed a lot that they liked their classmates, and that they felt safe in school (Figure 13.7). Large majorities also agreed (at least to some extent) on both occasions that they felt they belonged in their school and were good at many things in school, with little difference between T1 and T2. However, there was a noticeable increase in the percentages agreeing a lot that they liked being in school (rising from 27% to 42%) and slight decrease in the percentages who disagreed a little or a lot. While overall outcomes are positive, it is a little concerning that one in five students does not like being in school, feels they do not belong in school, or feels that they are not good at many things.

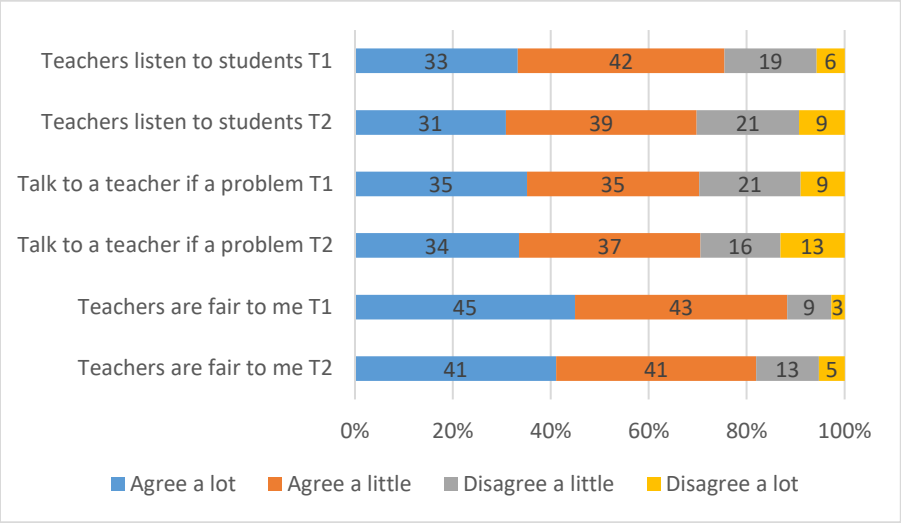
Figure 13.7 Students' sense of safety, belonging, liking school and classmates.



Based on 365-366 responses, T1 and 342-344 responses T2.

Large majorities of students also agreed that their teachers were fair, listened to them, and were approachable (Figure 13.8). These perceptions resonate with the emphasis on enabling the Voice of the Child (Lundy, 2007) in the preliminary training for CSCs and CAs. At T1, three-quarters agreed a little or a lot that their teachers listened to what students had to say, falling slightly to 70% at T2. Most also agreed that they could talk to teachers if they had a problem. The most positive ratings on both occasions were for teacher fairness: over 80% agreed that teachers were fair to them. In contrast to primary level, there were no large gender differences between how males and females rated their teachers. At both T1 and T2, students in DEIS schools were less likely than those in than in non-DEIS schools to believe teachers are fair, or that they listen to students. However, they were more likely to perceive them as approachable if they had a problem.

Figure 13.8 Students' views of teacher fairness and approachability.



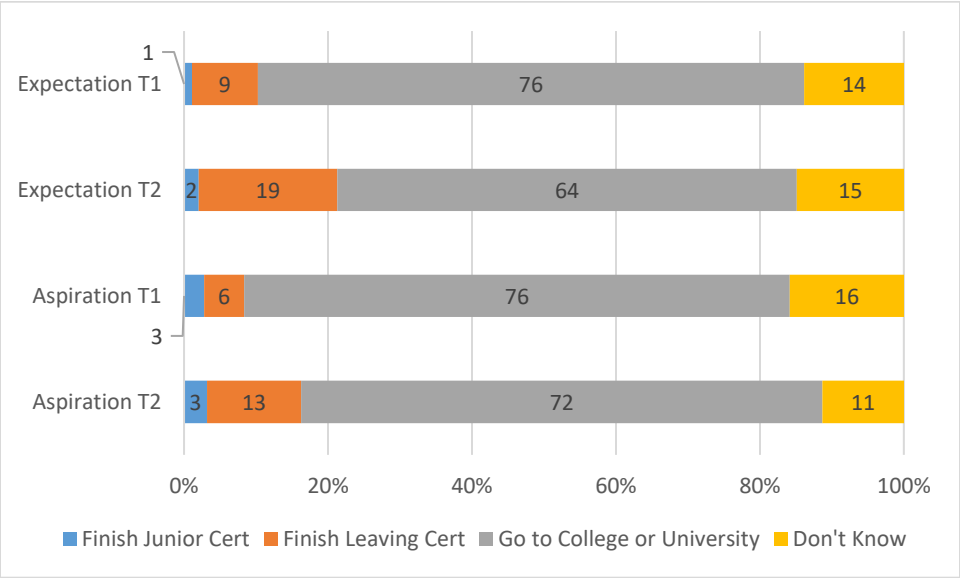
Based on 367 responses, T1 and 343-344 responses at T2.

When asked to rate themselves on tests or exams, responses were positively skewed in both surveys. At T1, 31% rated themselves as better than most, 54% as about the same as most, and 14% rated themselves as not as good as most. T2 ratings were very similar, with 29% reporting that they were better than most at tests, while 17% felt that they were not as good as most. Males were more likely than females to rate themselves as above average (36% versus 29% at T1, and 35% versus 26% at T2, respectively).

Students expressed very high educational aspirations and expectations. For example, 76% at T1 both *expected to* and *wanted to* attend college or university (Figure 13.9). Expectations and aspirations were slightly higher than among the primary cohort, not least because many had already completed Junior Certificate and were progressing towards a Leaving Certificate qualification. Also, as might be expected with an older group, the proportion who were unsure about their educational pathways was lower than among primary pupils. Whereas roughly one quarter of primary pupils were unsure of their educational aspirations and expectations, only 11-16% of post-primary students expressed uncertainty.

Overall, educational expectations and aspirations are a little lower at T2 than T1. This is attributable to exam year (Third and Sixth Year) students skewing T2 responses. They were noticeably less likely to hope or expect that they would attend third level. For example, only 53% of Sixth Years and 67% of Third Years indicated that they would like to attend third level, compared to roughly three-quarters of Second Year and Transition Year students. A similar pattern does not emerge at T1, suggesting that the administration of the T2 survey shortly before the Certificate examinations may have depressed the ratings from students about to sit examinations.

Figure 13.9 Students' educational expectations and aspirations.

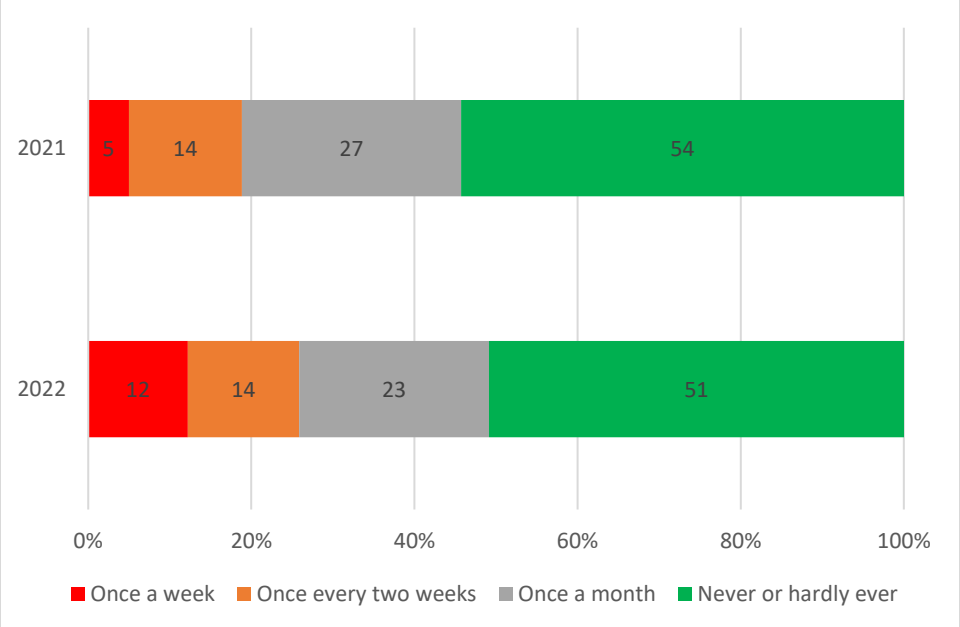


Based on 360-361 responses, T1 and 343-344 responses at T2.

School-related behaviours

In this section, we describe student attendance, interaction in classrooms, and experiences of bullying. Average student attendance disimproved slightly between T1 and T2, although on both occasions just over half indicated that they rarely or never missed days (Figure 13.10). Weekly absences increased from 5% to 12%, although some of this may reflect potential effects of the pandemic on individual level absences.

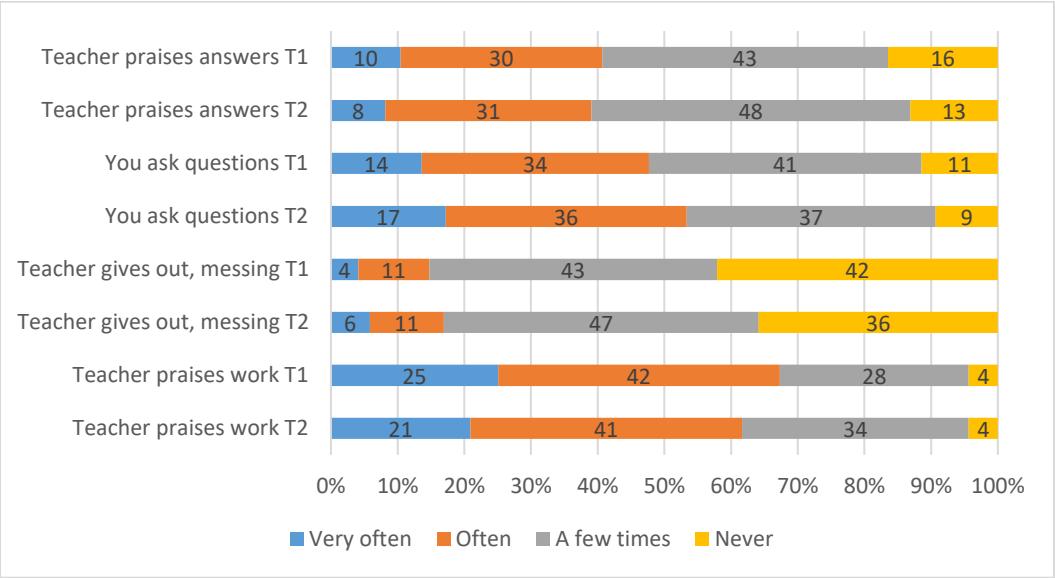
Figure 13.10 Students' reports of how often they were absent from school.



Based on 361 responses, T1, 344 responses at T2.

Many students experienced positive classroom interaction on a regular basis at both T1 and T2. For example, roughly 40% said their teacher very often or often praised their answer to a question in class, while close to two-thirds said that teachers very often or often praised their work (Figure 13.11). Negative interaction was less common, with 83-85% indicating that their teacher rarely or never gave out to them for messing in class. At T1, just under half (48%) indicated that they regularly asked questions in class, rising slightly to 53% at T2, but well below the equivalent percentages at primary level.

Figure 13.11 Frequency of various types of classroom interactions, T1.



Based on 364-367 responses, T1, and 343-344 responses at T2.

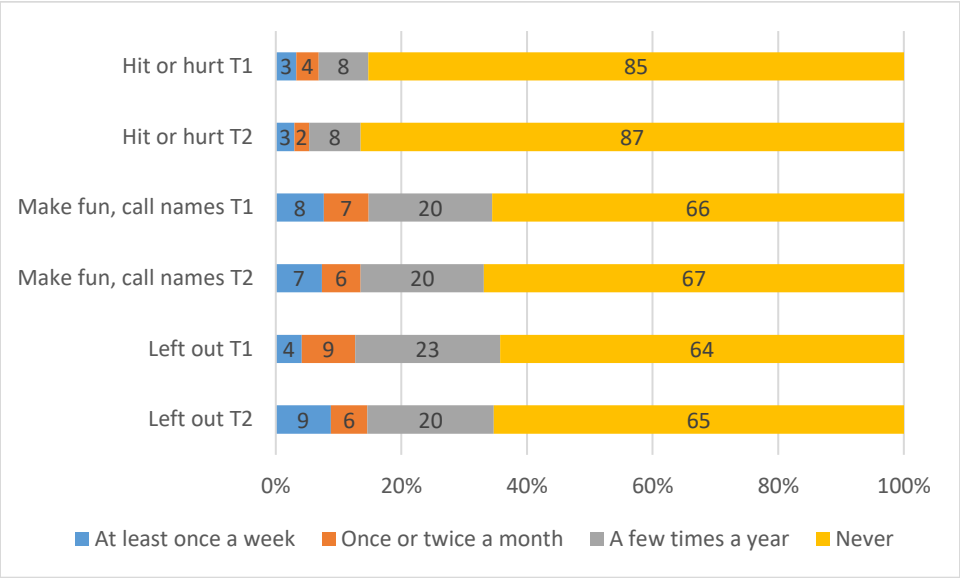
Bullying

Again, as a dimension of wellbeing, students were asked questions in relation to their experiences of bullying at school. Students' responses to three questions suggests that most students are never or seldom bullied, and that the incidence of being bullied varied little between the two surveys (Figure 13.12). At both time points, about two-thirds indicated that they were never left out of games or activities, or made fun of or called names, while 85-87% indicated that they were never hit or hurt by other students. Conversely, between 5-7% were hit or hurt at least once or twice a month, while 13-15% reported that they were made fun of or called names at least once or twice a month.

At both T1 and T2, name-calling was more frequent in DEIS than in non-DEIS schools, but there was no difference for physical bullying. At T1, there were some gender differences by type of bullying. Females were more likely than males to be bullied by exclusion whereas males were more likely than to be bullied by being hit or hurt. In contrast, at T2, name-calling was more likely to be experienced by male students.

Responses to the three questions can also be looked at collectively. At T1, 64% of students had not experienced *any* of the three forms of bullying, compared to 53% at T2. As snapshot data, it is not possible to infer causality from these surveys (i.e., we cannot definitively say that *A causes B*). That noted, there are clear differences on a number of other variables between those who were ever and never bullied. For example, those never bullied had the highest average score on the Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale (at least three points higher than any other group at both T1 and T2) and were more likely to agree that they felt safe in school and belonged in their school.

Figure 13.12 Frequency of experiencing bullying behaviour from other students.



Based on 364-367 responses, T1 and 341-343 responses at T2.

Favourite subjects

Students were offered a list of 11 types of subjects (presented in alphabetical order, followed by the option to specify an Other subject) and asked to pick their three favourites. Table 13.1 and 13.2 shows the percentages who picked each as their first, second and third choices at T1 and T2, and the total percentage who picked a subject type as one of their top three (total %). Subjects are ranked in descending order by their "weighted score", an overall score whereby a first choice is assigned triple the weight of a third choice.

There are three distinct groupings of subjects, comprised of those with weighted scores in excess of 60 (the most popular subjects), those with weighted scores in the 40 to 60 range (reasonably popular) and those below 40 (reasonably unpopular). Those that are very popular are Art, Science, and Practical subjects, each of which was the favourite subject of at least 10% of students. For example, at T1, 39% of students indicted that Art was one of their three favourite subjects, while 37% listed science as one of their three most favourite subjects. Languages, Business, and Mathematics were the next most popular subjects, with close to 30% picking them among their top three, and with weighted scores well over 50. Social and Environmental, and Music were reasonably popular too, whereas Drama, IT and SPHE were relatively unpopular. Of the latter three, fewer than 4% of students selected them as their favourite subject. However, it must be noted that some might not have chosen the subject if it was not available to them.

Eighteen percent indicated that they had another favourite subject, although not all indicated the name of the subject. Of those where a subject was provided, the most popular "other" subject was PE (chosen by 10% of students as one of their top three), followed by Home Economics (chosen by 6%). No other subject was nominated by more than one student.

Table 13.1. Favourite subjects, ranked in descending order of popularity, T1.

Subject	1	2	3	Total %*	Weighted score*
Art	21.2	10.9	7.1	39	92.6
Science	10.0	16.2	10.6	37	73.2
Practical	13.9	7.4	6.2	27	62.5
Languages	7.1	13.0	11.8	32	59.0
Business	9.7	8.6	10.3	29	56.6
Maths	7.4	9.1	13.0	29	53.4
Social/envir.	5.6	10.0	9.7	25	46.6
Music	8.3	5.9	6.2	20	42.8
Drama	3.8	5.3	3.5	13	25.7
IT	2.9	4.1	5.3	12	22.4
SPHE	2.7	2.7	7.4	13	20.6
Other	*7.7*	*5.0*	*5.0*	*18*	*38.1*

Total % = Sum of first, second and third choice rankings. Weighted score = (% 1st choice X 3) + (% 2nd choice X 2) + % 3rd choice. Based on 339 responses.

There were some differences between males and females on subject choices at T1. For example, 26% of females, but only 9% of males, chose Art as their favourite subject. Languages were also more popular among females, with 40% choosing languages in their top three subjects, compared to 19% of males. Music was slightly more popular among female students, with 26% choosing it among their top three, compared to only 11% of males.

Conversely, IT and practical subjects were far more popular among male than female students. For example, while 8% of males chose IT as their favourite subject, fewer than 1% of female students did so. Overall, IT was a top three subject choice for 18% of males, but only 4% of females. Differences for even more pronounced for practical subjects. Half of males chose practical subjects as one of their top three subjects (including 28% who chose it as their favourite), considerably more than the 14% of females for whom practical subjects was among their top three choices.

At T2, Art remained the most popular subject choice, but the gap between it and other subjects narrowed. Overall, 33% listed Art in their top three choices, while at least 30% also listed Practical subjects, maths, languages and social/environmental among their top three. However, only Art, Practical subjects and maths exceeded a weighted score of 60. As was the case at T1, Drama and IT were among the least popular subjects, while the most popular "other" subjects were PE (10%

of students as one of their top three), followed by Home Economics (5%) and Technical Graphics (1%).

In terms of changes in popularity from T1, SPHE and Social/environmental were noticeably more popular at T2, while Science, Art and Business were noticeably less popular. There were also differences in some subject ratings between schools at T1 and T2. In particular, at T2, while Practical subjects and languages were reasonably popular across the board, the popularity of Art and Music varied considerably between schools. As an example, in one school, 100% of those surveyed listed Art as one of their favourite subjects, whereas in another school, only 15% did so. While, overall, 23% listed Music in their top three subjects, in one school, it was among the favourites for 62% of students.

Table 13.2. Favourite subjects, ranked in descending order of popularity, T2.

	1	2	3	Total %*	Weighted score*
Art	16.0	10.8	6.3	33	75.9
Practical	13.6	10.5	7.2	31	69.0
Maths	7.5	13.6	10.8	32	60.5
Languages	8.4	10.2	12.0	31	57.8
Social/envir.	8.1	10.5	10.8	30	56.3
Science	8.4	6.3	12.7	27	50.6
Music	8.4	7.2	7.8	23	47.6
Business	7.2	5.7	8.7	22	41.9
SPHE	5.4	8.1	6.6	20	39.2
IT	3.6	6.6	5.4	16	29.5
Drama	2.4	3.6	4.2	10	18.7
Other	*10.8*	*5.1*	*5.4*	*21*	*48.2*

Total % = Sum of first, second and third choice rankings. Weighted score = (% 1st choice X 3) + (% 2nd choice X 2) + % 3rd choice. Based on 332 responses.

As was the case at T1, Art and Languages were far more popular among females than males (e.g., Art was the favourite subject of 22% of females, versus 5% of males), while Music was slightly more popular among females. Conversely, IT and practical subjects were far more popular among male than female students. As at T1, differences were most pronounced for Practical subjects, with 22% of males choosing them as their favourite, compared to 9% of females.

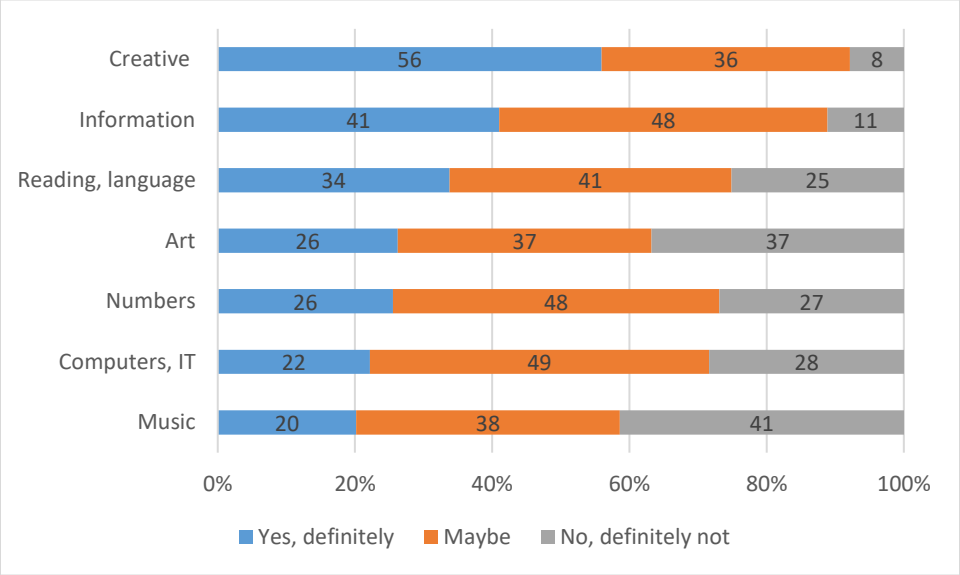
Ideal job

To gauge interest in the arts and in creativity more generally, students were asked what types of activities they would like their ideal job or work to involve. Of the seven types of activity, work involving creativity was the most popular choice. At both T1 and T2, just over half of pupils definitely wanted to have a job that involved being creative (Figures 13.13 and 13.14). Working with information was the next most popular choice on both occasions, with slightly more than 40% indicating their ideal job *definitely* involved working with information.

At both T1 and T2, jobs involving working with reading or languages were the third most popular type of job. However, while art-related work was the fourth most popular option at T1, by T2 the percentage who *definitely* wanted to work in art-related fields fell to 20% (from 26% at T1). Working with music or with computers remained relatively unpopular on both occasions, with music eliciting the most "No, definitely not" responses. Perceptions related to COVID-19, and health risks associated with encounters with live music, and singing in particular, may have had an impact on students' views at both T1 and T2.

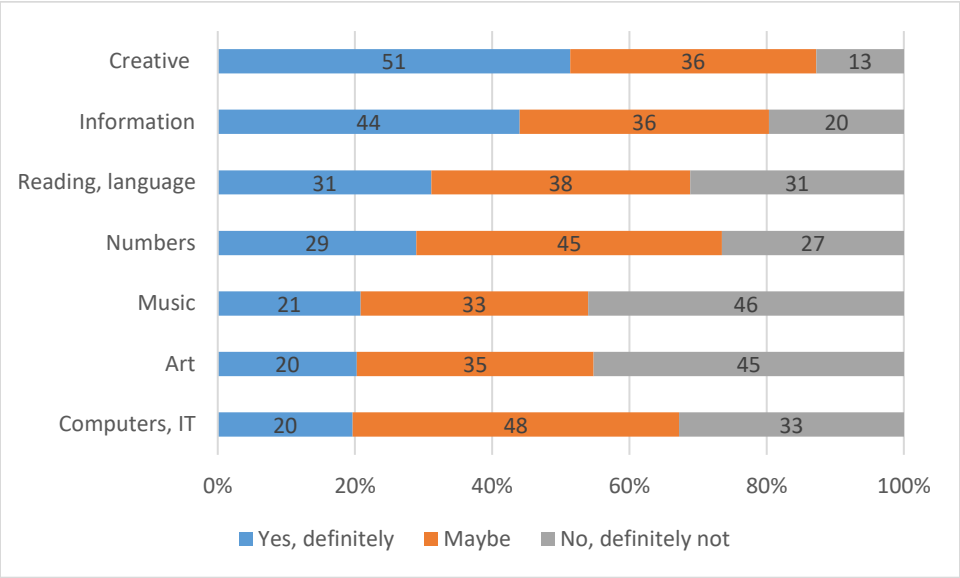
Generally, females were more likely than males to indicate that their ideal job involved art or languages, whereas males were slightly more likely to say it involved numbers, IT or computers.

Figure 13.13 Aspects of ideal job, in descending order of popularity, T1.



Based on 368-370 responses.

Figure 13.14 Aspects of ideal job, in descending order of popularity, T2.



Based on 365-368 responses.

Self-Esteem

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale has a potential score range of 10 to 40, with higher scores reflecting higher self-esteem. Scores on the scale vary by country and by age, meaning that comparisons with a norm group should be restricted to a group of very similar demographics. A good comparison for the students in Creative Schools is the adolescent sample in the *My World* survey (Dooley et al., 2019), as it is based on a recent, large sample of post-primary students in Irish schools.

The My World survey found that mean Rosenberg scores tended to decline slightly with years in school – the highest mean score was found amongst First Years and the lowest among Sixth Years. Also, males tended to obtain higher mean scores than females. However, data from other countries tends to show that while the gender difference in favour of males is very common, the clear decline in scores across post-primary schooling is not.

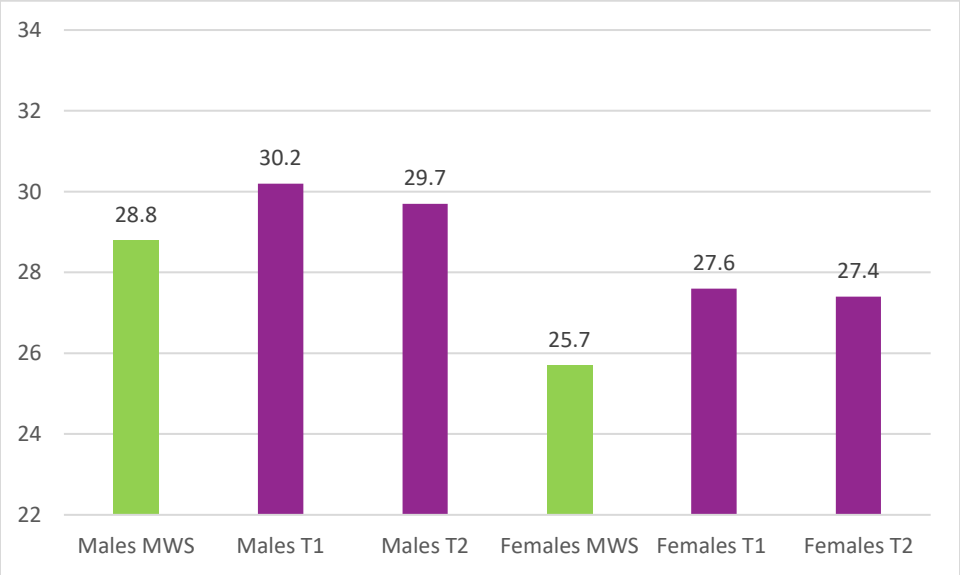
Gender and self-esteem

Regarding gender, the scores of Creative Schools students at both T1 and T2 somewhat reflect the gender differences found in the My World survey (Figure 13.15). My World found a gender gap of just over 3 points, with a mean score for males of 28.8, compared to 25.7 for females. Among Creative Schools students, average scores were higher for males than females on both occasions, although the gender gap was slightly smaller than My World (2.6 at T1 and 2.3 at T2).

Although the direction of the gender gap was as expected, the overall means for male and female students were noticeably higher than those in the My World Survey, at both T1 and T2. For example, the mean Rosenberg Self-Esteem scores obtained by male students in Creative Schools

were about one point higher than in My World, while female students in Creative Schools average nearly two points higher than their counterparts in My World.

Figure 13.15 Mean scores on Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, by gender, with national comparison to the My World Survey (MWS).



Based on 321 responses at T1 and 326 at T2 (My World Survey data based on 10,459 adolescents).

Self-esteem over time

At T1, the scores of students in Creative Schools do not show a decline with age, whereas there is a slight decline at T2. At T1, Transition Years had the lowest average score (27.9) while the highest average score was obtained by students in Fifth Year (29.1). However, other than Transition Year, the number of students at each grade level was relatively small, with no Sixth Year students surveyed.

In contrast, at T2, there was evidence of scores reducing with grade level. First Years had the highest mean score (30.4) whereas Fifth and Sixth Years had the lowest scores (averaging 26.2 across the two Senior Cycle grades). However, as was the case with T1 data, differences must be treated with caution because numbers are quite low for all grades other than Transition Year (e.g., only 51 Senior Cycle students, in total).

Summary

This section outlined post-primary students' attitudes to school, their sense of belonging, views about their teachers, and of their own academic skills and educational aspirations and expectations. Overall, a large majority of students expressed relatively positive views about school and their classmates on both occasions. In addition, students expressed very high

educational aspirations and expectations. For example, more than three-quarters of students at T1 both expected to, and wanted to, attend college or university.

To gain an insight on students' interest in the arts and in creativity more generally, questions were posed to the students seeking information on the types of activities they would like their ideal job to involve. From a choice of seven types of activity, work involving creativity was the most popular choice.

Many students experienced positive classroom interaction on a regular basis at both T1 and T2 and two-fifths indicated that their teacher very often or often praised their answer to a question in class, while close to two-thirds said that teachers very often or often praised their work.

In terms of self-esteem, for students participating in Creative Schools, findings indicate that levels of self-esteem remained consistently higher over time than that found in a comparable largescale sample of post-primary students undertaken pre-COVID-19. Students' responses to three questions about their experiences of being bullied suggests that most students are never or seldom bullied, and that there was little difference in the incidence of being bullied between the two time points for the survey.

Regarding the popularity of school subjects, the most popular were indicated as Art, Science, and Practical subjects, each of which was the favourite subject of at least 10% of students. Practical subjects and languages were reasonably popular across the board while the popularity of Art and Music varied considerably between schools. To gauge interest in the arts and in creativity more generally, students were asked what types of activities they would like their ideal job or work to involve. Of the seven types of activity, work involving creativity emerged as the most popular choice.

Chapter 14 Case Studies from Primary and Post-primary Schools

The following section presents contextualised examples of creativity in selected case study schools. As such, these stories of practice do not necessarily provide an account of the total activity that took place in each setting as part of Creative Schools, nor are the learnings from each case study exhaustive; rather, key points are illustrative of some aspects of the nature of creativity that has taken place while also providing a window into the world of creative learning in a range of settings from across the country.

School 1: Foxglove Rural Primary School

It is a bright summer morning when the researchers arrive at the small, two-teacher rural primary school on the Western seaboard. It has taken some time to identify this school from a number of small schools in the area. The building itself is part of a much older structure onto which an extension has been built to create an additional classroom, staff meeting room and bathroom. As it is, the classrooms adjoin one another and it is not possible to visit the second classroom without walking through the first. The teaching spaces are therefore quite constrained. One could imagine a good deal of noise transfer from one classroom to the other.

In addition to the two classroom teachers, the school staff includes a visiting resource teacher and a caretaker. A separate structure, much like a garage, also features as part of the school grounds. This space has served multiple functions for the school such as an outdoor classroom which was especially useful during COVID-19. The space also provides shelter for the children during breaks in the school yard which would otherwise be a very open to the elements. Today, serves the purpose of providing a sheltered space for the researchers to listen to the children who have participated in Creative Schools to date.

Becoming involved

The impetus for the idea of becoming involved in Creative Schools was prompted by one of the parents of the children in the school who had learned about the initiative elsewhere. As a parent with a close allegiance with the school and a strong educational advocate, she often supported many of the school's routine tasks as well as other functions. In this case, the parent led the writing of the application and collating of information about Creative Schools, thus serving to support the coordination as much as possible. This support was welcomed by the teaching-principal who was usually fully absorbed in teaching and administrative duties to pursue the additional details required for the application process. However, the principal did maintain an overall leadership role in the process.

Here she describes how they undertook the consultative dimension:

Well, we tried to find out first from the whole school community, parents, the parents about, you know, their appreciation of the arts as well and stuff like that and how they view the school. And there was a whole set of questionnaires on that. And then we had another set of stuff that the children had filled in about different areas that they might be interested in doing or working on or experiencing. And then we surveyed them all about that again and then we narrowed it down ….and then we could see that the circus was a high runner.."

So, we're actually going with what the children have expressed their desire to do. So, it is completely child centred.

Commenting on her own opinion of elements she would have liked to develop, she admits: "*There were certain things that I would have liked to have done, and they're not there."* She conceded, however, that it should be the children's choice in the matter in saying: "*But in that we let them, within reason, take the lead."*

A group of children from across the 3rd-6th classes were very happy to talk with the evaluators about their experience with Creative Schools to date. As they recalled, following an opportunity to express their interests with the CA, they were delighted that the principal had supported their idea of learning circus skills as an aspect of creativity. They eagerly described how they had learnt tightrope walking, juggling and spinning hoops as well as a range of skills that they would not otherwise experience. This was confirmed by the parent and principal later in conversation:

I think it got them to think 'outside the box' with movement as well. She [the circus artist] was going down the hill here and she was doing some sort of spider-like movement. And she had the kids follow her, though they weren't able to master it at first. And, you know, they were doing their traditional way of the basic crawl sort of thing. But by the end of the whole session, you could see how loose they had become and how adventurous they had become. And braver! You know, they were tackling things that they wouldn't have at the start. (Parent)

And that will probably inspire a lot of them or make them think, yeah, yeah, I can do a lot more than... Or I'd like to maybe try gymnastics or... stuff like that as well (Principal)

The activities had taken place outside in the school yard. This was both ideal from a circus skills point of view as well as from the COVID-19 perspective, as it afforded the teacher and children opportunities to try something entirely new and different from what they might have otherwise attempted, thus echoing Guildford's (1950) classic emphasis on divergent thinking as integral to the creative process. Given the small classrooms and the relatively high number of pupils in the classrooms, the outdoor space was ideal for facilitating the circus skills experience. The children seemed very happy to have experienced creative movement activities in a school that such as theirs that lacked a gym or indoor hall. And the idea of circus skills seemed at quite a remove from their normal curricular activities both indoors and outdoors. The children were articulate and enthusiastic in their description of the experience.

The principal noted how the creative experience seemed to transfer into other areas of learning as well:

> *Even we don't even really know how much they're getting out of it. But I do know by their behaviour and their talk and ... I did a countdown to the circus, so every day one person was picked out to draw something on the calendar and the excitement of that was just so visible... And it brought in the maths because they were saying, "There's a one in seven chance tomorrow, someone is going to be picked...", "There's a one in five chance tomorrow...", "Oh, I don't want to be picked until the day!"*

The activity also contrasted with the types of curricular and extracurricular experiences that children usually encounter in large urban schools, where there are multiple activities taking place in school halls during the day and in after-school clubs. In contrast, for this rural school there were very few extracurricular activities due to the fact that most of the school going population were driven to the school either by parents or by school bus, allowing little room for participating in after school activity. Moreover, the school grounds were relatively small with very limited in terms of resources and materials for outdoor play. The outdoor classroom provided the only variation on this theme in that its three sides provided shelter from the elements, scope for some interactivity, and some limited space for other activities such as table tennis on a wet day. However, having explored the circus skills, the school was prompted to venture further, as the principal describes:

> *When the Creative Schools week was on, we brought all the children down to the shore and we brushed out certain areas of the sand. And then that was their canvas. So they worked with the sand and the seaweed and the shells. And we had all these trowels and buckets, and they created something to sort of symbolise a brave new world….and we took a lot of photographs of it.*

Key points from this vignette:

1. As a small school, the support of another trustworthy adult to assist with the paperwork and lead the organisational issues was pivotal to getting the school on board with Creative Schools in the first instance;

2. When indoor recreational space was limited or non-existent, the opportunity for creative activity in the outdoors that could be challenging, enjoyable and child centred was afforded through participatory circus activities;

3. The opportunity for the teaching staff to see how the children could be facilitated and trained to experience introductory circus activities in a safe, meaningful and enjoyable way, and achieve a sense of success while doing so, provided invaluable, site-based professional learning for the teachers. Moreover, the teachers learned how simple materials could be employed for developing basic movement skills, that were safe,

enjoyable and challenging for the children to use. In this regard, the observation made it possible for the teaching staff to envision how a creative activity could readily be organised on another occasion. Thus, the experience echoed Craft's (2001) model of creativity as 'possibility thinking' whereby both the children and their teachers could see themselves enacting a different set of possibilities that they might not otherwise have explored.

4. The entire experience led to the widening of horizons and vision for the principal who began to see the school grounds in a new light and ways in which the space could be maximised for meaningful outdoor learning and engagement—instead of just serving as a site for basic exercise, or as a place to eat lunch under the shelter.

School 2: Hawthorn Urban Primary School

Though set in a compact urban area, a bright, colourful schoolyard greets the researchers as they enter the two-storey school. It is coming to the end of the term and clearly the school is a hive of activity. The grounds of the school are colourful, stimulating and child- centred and all approaches to the school clearly indicate a site that is outwardly child-friendly and inviting. Animated voices can be heard from what seems like every quarter of the school, although it is not yet breaktime. There is a palpable sense of excitement and activity. One might expect the school to be too busy to talk to visiting researchers, but the Creative Schools Coordinator greets the visitors enthusiastically, together with members of the Creative Schools' committee. She is confident in the children's interest and willingness to participate in interviews, and in their capacity to articulate individual views.

The children, ranging in ages from 8-12 years, are keen to talk about their experiences of Creative Schools and why they have chosen to do what they are doing. Interactions with these highly articulate children reveals the originality of their thinking and their conviction in relation to the meaning and value of the experience. They talk about where their school is located, and are very mindful of its ethos, and its linguistic, cultural, intercultural, historical and geographical situatedness. Without mentioning sustainability *per se*, they have a strong sense of both their own agency and the significance of their footprint on the landscape. The conversation moves easily between the topic of creativity, what it means, and what their role is in advancing it. Although each member of the group comes from a different class in the school, the sense of unity and coherence in their discussion is remarkable. Clearly these children have a vibrant sense of place, identity and creativity, and feel strongly embedded in the values of their school culture and in their mission as the Creative Schools Committee.

Democratic processes

In developing a focus for their school, ultimately the children concurred with the idea of creating a whole school showcase event based on the theme of the sea, as a celebration and spectacle. They also considered what that might mean for each class, as well as how to demonstrate it. For them, clearly it was important that any expression of creativity would be reflective of their voices as members of the Creative Schools committee, as well as reflecting the voices from each of the classes in the school. Artistic expression was realised through a focus on materials, geography, philosophy and society at large, and the interweaving of such themes into a creative and sustainable future for all.

The members of the Creative Schools committee children described their experience of galvanising the whole school to create a big showcase parade involving costumes, music, 2D and 3D art of the theme of the sea that involved every class as well as the wider community.

Child 1: *We did it all together, twice so that we could accommodate all the parents in the yard.*
Researcher: *It what way was it really special*?
Child 2: *First time seeing the whole school from juniors to seniors in the playground*!
Child 3: *A journalist from the local newspaper took a photograph and that appeared in that week's edition.*
Researcher: *Did you feel it was your idea or did you feel that it was mainly the teachers?*
Child 1: (vehemently) *It was absolutely the committee's idea! The CA and teachers gave some ideas to improve it a bit, but it was most definitely the committee's idea.*

Leadership team affording space and time for creativity

Later, the CSC noted what she had learned from collaborating with the CA:

> *We were working with artist to make sea monsters. But there were time constraints. I didn't like rushing, but I noticed that the artist was better at pulling back and giving the children space. That's what can be challenging for teachers here. We learned from her about the importance of holding back. It's important to reflect on this and the child's perspective on things.*

In the interview, the principal recounted how she pursues a lot of professional development both for her and the staff as part of a learning network. As a school, they are constantly active and involved, but also critically reflective of their own practice and how best to nurture the characteristic spirit of the school. The see this as being respectful but progressive, focused on academic excellence while fostering creativity and the voices of children.

In the spirit of underlining the voice of the child, the researcher asks the children to share their advice for schools:

> *Don't be afraid to go big!*
>
> *Write down everything possible thing you can do with the school, and then pick out your favourite parts.*
>
> *Give yourself more time for planning. We were all over the place.*
>
> *Give more kids jobs to do. We were in charge.*

Key points from this vignette:

1. The ethos of the school infuses the discourse of the school, and is overt and palpable, creating a sense of community and shared endeavour. The transfer of the ethos to creative activity occurs seamlessly.

2. The voice of the child is authentic as the children have been afforded space, voice and audience, and their work is taken seriously.

3. Inclusion features strongly alongside the importance of academic growth, enabling the children to be the best that they can be as part of a child-centred learning experience. Inclusion features strongly in the expressions of children's sense of self and artistic expression across different classes.

4. Democratic practices and nurturing the voice of the child is seen as central to curriculum-making across a wide range of subject areas and non-curricular activity.

5. Creativity is illustrated in creative expression, creative thinking and creative problem solving through the fostering of student collaboration and dialogue which are all features of creativity in education (OECD, 2019)

6. The children's art is of high quality, reflecting focused attention to detail, individuality and a sense of place; it is immediately striking in how it adorns the corridors and is displayed above the doorways. In addition, large scale art works bedeck the walls of the school hall generating an immersive experience. Opportunities to incubate ideas and the bring the work to fruition is a hallmark of meaningful creative processes in education (Cropley, 1995, 2011)

School 3: Snowberry Post-primary School

From the perspective of the capital city, the location to this school seems remote, somewhat off the beaten track, far down the road from the nearest city, and round corners until one wonders if there could be sufficient inhabitants in the district to support a post-primary school population. Any notion of remoteness is dispelled on entering the school grounds where it is clear that the 600 enrolled students are engaged in a wide range of various pursuits, and the school is humming with activity.

The school is coeducational, and at upper secondary level it offers students the option of completing the Leaving Certificate (LC), or the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) or Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). Thus, all levels of abilities in both academic and practical areas of learning are catered for. In addition, the school engages with restorative practices (RP) and staff have undergone professional development to develop skills in the application of RP.

Each year, a number of events are organised to mark a celebration of the arts and various zones are cordoned off to display a range of activities. However, on the day the research team visited, cordoning off does not appear necessary to showcase artistic endeavours and student involvement as it is clear that creativity has been a work in progress over many years, and not a single event.

The spaces between indoors and outdoors appear as one. A coffee truck outside provides refreshments for students and staff alike, suggesting a parity of esteem between all members of the school community, while the outdoor garden spaces, and semi-indoor gardens, located in enclosed spaces between various classrooms, also appear vibrant and inclusive. On one level, the atmosphere is one of jamboree, while on the other hand, the students appear to regard this special atmosphere as a normal part of how they interact in the building. It is clear that the school's ethos values students' contributions, nurtures their skills and talents, and provides tangible and visible evidence for how that can be expressed.

Views of the CSC and Creative Schools teams

The CSC and another senior member of staff outlined how the Creative Schools process was undertaken in the school. The students were surveyed and 70% expressed responses in favour of developing the school garden, thus aligning their interest in horticulture with the concept of creativity. This was a natural step for the school since many students saw their creativity best expressed through outdoor activities. However, developing the school garden fully was an ambitious step. The work involved working in multidisciplinary ways, collaborating with a horticulturist, a landscape gardener and an artist. On the one hand, students needed to acquire and apply knowledge of the most sophisticated skills in metalwork, woodwork, plumbing, horticulture, and use of heavy machinery. On the other hand, they needed to express knowledge creatively through artistic concepts that would be convey through awareness of the height and depth of materials, as well as the sounds, colours and textures of items that would be located in

the garden. The process involved a coalescing of multidisciplinary perspectives. As the CSC remarked: "'*The more it began to take shape, the more classes wanted to become involved."*

Creative problem solving was explored directly in context and through practice. Much of this related to the construction and alignment of a watercourse, the reshaping of the landscape and the planting of specific trees, shrubs or lawn areas.

As the CSC elaborates:

> "*The fountain was all wrong. The angles were wrong, the bricks were wrong, the height was wrong. We were looking at it but didn't know how to fix it. Then the woodwork teacher took the students out on a sunny day… and reminded the students right there in the setting how to take a line from the centre, how to use their mathematics skills to make a line, create right angles and arcs…and then they redesigned it. They changed the whole design and then the other students built it*."

Likewise, in focus group interviews, the students reported how they were afforded opportunities to apply their skills, use tools and instruments, apply their artistry to things—not just heavy machinery—but also fine motor skills in terms of sewing bunting, creating signage on upcycled wood (supported by the woodwork teacher), and applying paint (supported by the art teacher) to paint the sign. In this regard, the Creative Schools initiative, located within the school site, provided the ideal expression of key skills from JC, LCA and LCVP especially in context.

As well as the multidisciplinary challenges, the school staff also depended on and benefited from the ongoing support of the parent body, especially when additional heavy machinery was required.

The overall impact of the Creative Schools initiative was one of consolidation of the school mission and vision through collaborative creative expression. While the creation of an enduring outdoor feature could appear as a single event, it was clear that it would continue to require, and benefit from, ongoing maintenance and elaboration from the students, thus providing the ideal "studio" in which to express creativity in multimodal ways.

Fostering wellbeing

While the ultimate aim of the outdoor garden was to provide a space for reflection and nurturing of wellbeing for all students, the espousal of restorative practices in the school was also interwoven into the approach to creativity. In this regard, the practical nature of the project succeeded in fulfilling a key objective of the Creative Schools initiative in fostering wellbeing to a very strong extent.

For the researchers visiting this site, the experience of the school garden was both joyful and restful, and generated a reluctance to leave the school environment. For schools that are at risk

of student disengagement, creating this quality is an elusive but necessary one that is worth pursuing.

Key learning from this site

Creativity is a

- Symbiosis of teachers, students and parents working together, consolidating the ethos of the school and interweaving restorative practices (Wachtel, 2005) with creative and inclusive processes.

- Practical manifestations of many dimensions of the formal curriculum in context are illustrated, including "technical creativity" and "inventive creativity" (Taylor, 1975).

- Opportunities for various types of creative problem solving, creative thinking and creative expression are conveyed in the initiative (OECD, 2019).

- The school garden becomes a vehicle to develop a shared vision for sustainability, creativity, wellbeing and inclusion in one schoolwide initiative (Austin, 2022).

The school's messages to other schools are:

- "*Working the land and soil, as place-based learning 'roots the students in the school' and provides opportunities to focus on sustainability, growing crops, plants, and applying skills from across different areas of learning.*
- *Being deeply embedded in the community fosters intergenerational relationships and a knowledge level across subject areas within the school.*
- *The community is our strength, our resource.*
- *We are* everyday creative - *day by day."*

School 4: Celandine Special School

Special schools are special in multiple ways— in their students, in their creative and adaptive teaching staff who seek to accommodate every student, in their relationships with families, in their awareness of acute medical needs, in their situatedness in the community and in their in-depth knowledge of their students. Special schools have typically offered their pupils and students a varied curriculum beyond the normal confines of desk-based work. And in Celandine Special School, creativity thrived in a new way.

Enabling the voice of the child

Taking the lead from a very experienced teacher, the experience of enabling the voice of the child was pivotal to the generation of ideas and directions for the project. Considering also the formal examinations that the students would be undertaking, and focusing curriculum on those particular elements was also important in providing a particular focus for the work.

> *Researcher: Do you think we're good at listening to the child in Ireland?*
>
> *CSC: Oh God no! Staff spend most of their time thinking about what they're going to say next, instead of listening. It's like Judge Judy. "You have two ears and one mouth, so you have to listen twice as much as you speak."*
>
> *You'll never learn if you don't listen and are talking at the child the whole time. They need to have their voice.*
>
> *So the students now know they are allowed talk. So if they don't understand that, they say, "Miss, I didn't understand that." So the more they speak up, the better the work. Everything improves.*

Cooking and gardening and refashioning the outdoor space acted as a locus for further development for the students, stimulating learning across a range of abilities in the young people with special educational needs. Again, the work was not tokenistic; rather, the final piece of work was of both practical use and aesthetically appealing.

Involvement of the students motivated them to see beyond the walls of their curriculum and envisage new possibilities, stretching their capacities in cross-curricular ways to make a space for outdoor cooking and strengthening their self-confidence and ambition.

Learning from this site.

Key ingredients in this site are the belief in the importance of the creative process for students of all abilities and motivation in school leadership team to manifest this belief.

In addition, features of the creative process include:

1. Conviction of its intrinsic value: A belief that Creative Schools has the capacity and flexibility to strengthen school engagement and build self-confidence in learners with special education needs;
2. Giving voice to students with special needs in ways that underline and enable their sense of agency and unique capabilities;
3. Reimagining the given spaces for more student-centred, meaningful and participatory activity, according to the students' needs;
4. Shared endeavour: Involving the school community of professionals, support staff and parent body as crucial in the realisation of aims, and consolidating the relationships;
5. Concretising inclusion: Postprimary curriculum for students with SEN can be contextualised within the sensory garden experiences, garden design and outdoor cooking, and thus serve as a powerful motivator for students' learning;
6. Reflecting key insights from research: Approaches to creative teaching exemplify ideas expressed by Cropley (1995, 2011) and Davies et al. (2013) for education contexts.

A senior, experienced teacher remarks:

"*As a teacher who is getting ready to retire, it's changed how I teach."*

Chapter 15 Conclusions

This chapter presents overall conclusions in relation to the evaluation and is followed by a set of recommendations for the various actors involved in the Creative Schools programme.

In this section, a wide range of quantitative and qualitative data, gathered throughout the evaluation process, is synthesised systematically and distilled in the following section to address each dimension of the evaluation, as outlined in the tender for the evaluation of the Creative Schools Programme.

How the programme was implemented

Over the past four years, a sophisticated array of multilevel supports has been put in place by the Creative Schools support team, located in the Arts Council, to ensure that the programme has, and continues to be, implemented in a very effective manner. The supports address each dimension of the programme from financial to organisational, with increasing sophistication in relation to administrative, artistic and pedagogical matters, while at the same time allowing for the uniqueness of each school or centre in determining the nature of their Creative Schools experience.

Appropriateness of the processes compared with what was set out in the plan

The processes employed by the Arts Council to support the implementation of the Creative Schools programme are highly appropriate in enabling artful engagement and ensuring integrity of the process for all participants at each stage. With the aim of "put[ting] the arts and creativity at the heart of children's and young people's lives" (Arts Council, 2022), the model of implementation is designed as a series of stages whereby schools are supported to understand, develop and celebrate young people's engagement with the arts and creativity. A distinctive feature is the centrality of the child or young person as a key agent in determining the nature of the creative, school-based experiences, and this is evident in the data gathered.

As well as administrative and financial supports that are determined centrally, resources to support the programme are predominantly local and have immediate relevance to each school and the community within its artistic and socio-cultural environment. In this regard, resources and processes enhance and consolidate individual, local and regional identity, and highlight the ways in which arts and creativity can impact on children and students' sense of self. In other words, young people are integral to the process.

Implementation of the training process

While drawing from an original model that was designed in the UK, the programme has been modified, adapted and implemented uniquely, involving a very democratic approach that places the pupils/students at the heart of the decision process, in collaboration with external personnel (artist as Creative Associate), the teaching and leadership staff (Creative Schools Coordinator) and in the context of the unique artistic and ecological context of the school.

Reaching participants as intended

Representation of participants at each education level and within each sector is consistent with the populations in question, and care has been exercised in determining those who are included in the programme each year. Thus, equitable representation is assured across the wide range of educational centres and institutions, and across the range of geographical locations, school types and levels within the education system in Ireland. Following feedback from the evaluation team in relation to targeting underserved populations, adjustments were effectively made to the selection mechanism to ensure that the overall participants reflected a proactive approach to addressing existing inequality in terms of arts education access in certain school types.

Overall satisfaction with the process

Participants in Schools and Centres, including children, students, teachers, principals, Creative Schools Coordinators and their supporting Creative Associates have all been overwhelmingly positive in their overall attitudes towards the programme and in their reports of experience.

Innovative achievements

Interpretations of creativity, creative practices and creative products have been diverse and manifold. There is no single exemplification of 'creativity' across the schools or centres, since each site has expanded its experience of creativity uniquely. However, the programme has seen a new focus on the creative potential of both physical and personnel resources in schools. In many settings, the school grounds have become more dynamic spaces for artistic and playful learning experiences, with greater awareness and realisation of how somewhat ordinary school grounds and building structures can be transformed into interactive school gardens, outdoor murals, sculptures, cookery areas or classrooms, thus leading to a greater awareness of the school as an aesthetic environment in itself.

Visual arts remained the most frequent type of activity for both the pilot study (2018) and the 2020 cohort of schools. However, while the second most popular activity among 2018 schools was digital/media arts, it was not among the most popular option in 2020. Drama/theatre was the second most common activity in post-primary schools that were part of the 2018 cohort (70%), considerably higher than the 39% of post-primary schools in the 2020 cohort.

Among the 2018 primary schools, street or circus art (20%) and spectacle (40%) were quite popular, but markedly less popular among the 2020 cohort (none engaged in spectacle and fewer than 10% combined engaged in circus art, street arts or comedy/improvisation). Engagement with traditional arts/heritage and craft showed marked increases in both primary and post-primary schools. Whereas 30-40% of the 2018 cohort had engaged in one or more of traditional arts/heritage/craft, over 40% of the 2020 cohort had engaged in craft alone, with many more also engaging in heritage and traditional arts.

Findings also suggest a meaningful atunement to the role and work of artists and practitioners in the hinterland, and the mutual benefits for schools and centres in developing cooperative practices with local artists in particular in each of the case study sites. This development of greater awareness of the physical environment, coupled with the new relationships with both

the local and artistic community, is a significant outcome of the programme. In turn, this heightened awareness has concomitantly generated a greater sense of local and national identity in micro and macro ways – in recognising and celebrating the diversity of the school population, its potential, and in its re-positioning within the community.

How well the programme worked

The overall Creative Schools initiative has transformed a very broad range of Irish schools in the Irish educational landscape more than any other initiative heretofore in placing learners in every county at the heart of the process, valuing and validating their perspectives and experiences, collaborating meaningfully with them while shifting the focus of arts education in particular from child-centred to child-led participatory practice.

How the programme contributed to the intended outcomes in the short, medium and long term, and for whom

Over the course of the evaluation, the short and medium effects have been observed. Longer term effects remains to be seen in the coming years. However, while change was palpable in many schools, in some settings, depending on their ethos, organisational strategies and existing patterns of practice, change appeared to be less palpable. Similarly, in some schools, while elements of change could appear to be modest, or confined to those who participated directly in Creative School activities, it was clear that such change was beginning to impact the culture and discourse within the school.

As revealed in case studies and other data, in some schools, discussion of the concept of creativity prompted a heightened awareness of issues related to inclusion in the notion of that 'everyone can be creative'. Additionally, in affording voice to children and young through the democratic processes of establishing the Creative Schools committee, and affording parity of esteem to learners as well as teachers, a broader appreciation of diversity, equity and inclusion was perceived. In turn, this led to a shift in the discourse at school level in relation to pupil/student identity and relationships with the school. Such discourse impacted definitions of creativity at the level of the group and the institution. Sophisticated interpretations of creativity as a facet of diversity were articulated during interviews in case study sites that encompassed small rural primary schools, large urban post-primary schools, special schools, and long established, fee paying post-primary schools. However, in a very small number of cases, the desired shift in emphasis from a 'small project' towards a more embedded model of creativity as a more empowering process for pupils and students was not articulated, and where it was, some reluctance was expressed towards the necessary structural changes in the school that such change would entail.

Extent to which can changes be attributed to the programme

In many instances, changes to the physical face of the school (e.g., an art installation, a student co-designed garden or mural), the pedagogical practices and how pupils/students perceive their place in the school can be directly attributed to the programme. In other instances, changes are less attributable to the programme directly, due to the multiplicity of initiatives in some schools that are already embedded in the school's culture, socio-economic status, history and traditions, especially where various practices operate effectively. In post-primary schools, many diverse and

creative initiatives have been instigated in schools as part of the well-established Transition Year programme (since 1974), such as *Gaisce*, *Junk Kouture*, *Young Social Innovators*, and the *BT Young Scientist*, to name but a few. For such institutions, Creative Schools risks being framed as another funding mechanism that is absorbed in a sea of various curricular developments, extra-curricular initiatives, and other internally and externally sponsored activities and events.

Particular features of the programme and context that made a difference

In the first instance, the funding was a key lever in incentivising and driving change, supported by the school leadership. Funding was especially pivotal in generating 'blue skies' thinking in many school settings to imagine new possibilities for artistic events, in supporting teaching and learning through an arts lens, and in the reimagining of creative school experiences for the pupils or students.

The second key feature that made a difference was the immediate human resource of the Creative Associate in the foreground as well as the structured supports provided by the Creative Schools team in the background. These provisions supported democratically inspired mechanisms for finding common ground and establishing shared understandings of creativity at school level. Taken together, these mechanisms were vital supports for schools' emergent discussions and planning in the early stages ('*Understand phase'*) of the initiative.

Third, the focus on building on community at school level, maximising resources in the local community and establishing a stronger sense of the school within a wider (arts) community and as part of shared national initiative inspired a strong sense of focus and purpose.

Finally, sufficient flexibility and school-centredness ensured that the programme was not too constraining, nor tied to particular subject areas, defined spaces, nor prescribed subject specialists, and could thus enable local ideas to flourish organically within schools. In many primary schools, the experience of leading the initiative served to redefine both the leadership role and its enactment by the staff member in question. In many post-primary schools however, art teachers tended to serve as coordinators, supported by other senior staff.

Where Creative Schools differs from other initiatives as outlined above, is in the possibility of influencing school culture and gently, but persistently driving a more enabling school culture for all participants in any one institution.

Influence of other factors

Other factors that impacted positively on the outcome of the programme included the opportunity to meet with other schools the region, as a wider community of practice, to learn from their stories and initiatives, and learn from the Creative Associate about events that were happening elsewhere. Creative Schools Week also provided an important avenue at national level for showcasing the schools' creative endeavours.

Appropriateness, Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Programme

Appropriateness of the programme in addressing an identified need.

At primary level, Creative Schools provided an impetus to focus on wider dimensions of school subjects, beyond literacy and numeracy. It was among a small number initiatives at national level in approximately 15 years that foregrounded professional learning and professional conversations for primary and post-primary teachers in relation to creativity specifically, as well as the arts and arts education practices more generally. During the COVID-19 pandemic and following the end of the national lockdowns, Creative Schools provided an avenue for exploration of different ideas, both internal and external to the classroom, and to foster broader creative thinking.

The focus on participatory decision making, as exemplified in the Voice of the Child workshops, was particularly transformational in many instances. At all levels of education, the programme provided a timely opportunity for schools to reflect on the nature of education, the meaning of more progressive education, and on the need to leverage opportunities for children and young people to consider learning outside the formal, highly criticised examination-focused education system.

However, the initiative was considered less suitable for larger schools and post-primary schools, where more support and resources was deemed necessary for enabling the Voice of the Child and a more strategic approach that would better suit the post-primary structures. However, CAs perceived that schools had increased their capacity to leverage the Voice of the Child over the course of their participation and viewed this as an important success of the programme.

The programme therefore represents a legitimate role for government in supporting the arts and curriculum endeavours, and in aligning with trends at European level and internationally (e.g., OECD, 2019 focus on creative thinking in schools).

Effectiveness in achieving the intended outcomes, at school and programme level, in the short, medium and long term

Outputs and outcomes suggest that the programme is activating elements in the education system that might previously have been un(der)explored – i.e., in making connections, valuing individuality, being inclusive and diverse, looking at the local community context, maximising possibilities, and seeing links with other agencies in terms of leveraging resources**.** The programme has the potential to achieve medium and long term impact in transforming schools.

Results are visible and tangible in many cases. Even where schools opted to create art objects of various kinds and at various ranges of temporality, such outputs provide tangible evidence of a creative process to which many children, staff and wider community contributed. The ‘story’ of the events or object remain in the lifeworld of the school/centre that generated such experiences for the staff. For students, such experiences continue to shape the ethos of the school, while for staff, the event serves as a measure for future possibilities. It is evident that the process of

becoming a Creative School enabled each institution to identify possibilities that they might not otherwise have imagined—such as redesigning their school yard, recognising the need and purposes of outdoor furniture and planting, or thinking about children's use of space and what the space is used for. Both functional and decorative or artistic qualities were considered in these conversations.

Efficiency of the outcomes of the programme in terms of timeliness, cost-effectiveness and value for money

Analysis of data in relation to the experiences of Creative Schools by all participants, at all levels, suggests responsible use of human, material and digital resources towards achieving shared outcomes and understandings of creative endeavours of many kinds. While a detailed cost-benefit analysis was not undertaken as part of the current study, the programme appears most worthwhile in enabling schools to consider depth and breadth of pupils'/students' lived experience of their schools, looking beyond prescribed texts and resources to reimagining spaces, people and processes differently. In this respect alone, the process is invaluable. Moreover, in all case study sites, cost-effectiveness was evident. In the most effective examples, schools sought 'matched funding' through other funding streams to maximise and extend the impact of their designed activity. Here, the support of the CA in inspiring broader thinking, together with the support from school management and parent body was crucial in bringing the designated project to fruition as a collective endeavour.

Chapter 16 Recommendations

Recommendations for the Arts Council

As this formative evaluation attests, extensive and valuable professional, artistic and creative knowledge has been gained by all players in the Creative Schools initiative since its inception in 2018. The Arts Council has played a key role in the design, leadership, coordination and implementation of this ambitious project in working with a range of artists and practitioners in Irish primary and post-primary schools and centres throughout every county. Through building on the ideas generated in schools, the Creative Associates have, in turn, paved the way for other artists and practitioners to work collaboratively with the schools in realising the creative ideas of the participating children and young people.

Given the significant impact of the work as a whole, and the fact that Creative Schools is open to every school and Youthreach centre in Ireland, it is important that the Creative Schools initiative continues to expand and evolve. The addition of a cohort of schools in alternative settings, who joined the programme by invitation in 2022 is an important step in balancing universal and targeted provision in the future. Moreover, given the efficacy of the project and the significant breadth of expertise that the Arts Council has brought to bear on this important initiative, it is vital that the Arts Council continues to lead this work. To this end, the Creative Schools initiative should feature prominently in the next Arts Council strategy from 2026.

Overall therefore, it is recommended that the Arts Council continue its role in leading and coordinating the Creative Schools initiative and that the Arts Council is best placed to continue this work.

Focusing on the schools and settings to maximise the impact of Creative Schools

1. Simplify the current application and selection process to better meets the needs of applicants while ensuring the continuation of the effective representation of school types and geographic spread within the programme. Continue the development of targeted cohorts which specifically address the needs of seldom heard young people.

2. Continue to ensure that a breadth and depth of artform and sector experiences are offered through Creative Schools, taking account of both presentational and participatory processes but prioritising neither. Maintain an open interpretation of creativity which can be flexible enough to include dimensions of creativity with which children and young people develop new and changed affinities.

3. Revisit the ‘one size fits all’ model of support to schools, commencing with an analysis of the particular needs of post-primary schools. Develop a more differentiated approach for

post-primary which in particular allows for a wider Creative Schools co-ordinator role. Encourage Creative Schools activity in all years of post-primary to avoid a pooling in particular years.

4. Develop a clear communications and dissemination approach for the programme that emphasises new insights, shared learning and reinforces the values of the programme. This should include foregrounding the experience of participating school and fostering a sense of community among both current and former participating schools. Include a national inclusive celebration which is currently expressed as Creative Schools Week.

5. Better address the needs of schools who have completed the programme with a locally focussed approach. Help seed networks and capacity on a local basis for schools to engage in creative and arts activities. This work should align with the Arts Council's own spatial policy and other strategic developments within the Arts Council as well as in broader cultural policy.

Supporting and developing Creative Associates

1. Continue to enable CAs to advance their professional development through mentoring and professional reflection, focusing on the both the higher ambitions for the role as well as the mandatory and administrative elements of the Creative School programme. To this end, investment in the development of an interactive hub where CAs could retrieve local, regional or national information, add new information, ask questions of the CA community, promote events and generally enhance their networks etc should be investigated.

2. Recognise and celebrate the expertise, skills and experiences of CAs by maximising opportunities for CAs, teachers, school and community leaders, children and young people to share their learning and artistic experience.

Advocating for the voices of children and young people

3. The centring of the voice of the child differentiates the Irish version of Creative Schools from models elsewhere. Consider how Creative Schools can contribute in an ongoing way to the development of children and young people's participation in decision making and the wider related public discourse. Examine how the Creative Schools experience and how learning from Creative Schools can infuse and influence professional development for relevant professionals.

4. Continue to role model and give expression to children and young people's participation in policy and practice decisions within Creative Schools but also in wider Arts Council policy.

5. Maintain high visibility for the experience and insight of children and young people across the Creative Schools programme, as part of events, publications and wider communications.
6. Continue to develop the learning and models used in the programme and ensure they remain a key part of the training of both Creative Associates and Creative School coordinators.

Focusing on collaboration across agencies

6. Strengthen the partnership with the Department of Education which is at the centre of Creative Schools through ongoing connection and collaboration. Expand the remit of the relationship, where appropriate, to foster new initiatives and insight sharing.
7. Continue active participation within the Creative Youth pillar of Creative Ireland, building on the work to date and advancing the national commitment to delivering arts and creativity for all children and young people.
8. Continue to collaborate with the National Council for Curriculum Assessment in the design and delivery of new curricula and subject specifications, particularly by drawing on the experience of skilled and committed artists, practitioners and organisations.
9. As curricula in arts education and creativity more broadly are redrafted, consider the establishment of a collaborative partnership between the Arts Council and others to collaborate in the wider imagining of arts and artists in schools. Consider what Creative Schools means in terms of supporting of the Arts Council role in supporting arts education in schools – i.e., the provision of curriculum experiences especially in art forms that are less explored currently.
10. Explore new partnerships and synergies across the education sector which would benefit the Arts Council's understanding and enable an expert contribution to developments in policy, professional development for teachers as well as initial teacher education.
11. Collaborate with relevant experts on the development of a levelled or developmental model of a Creative School from the perspective of school/centre as an organisation over time particular to understand how this can align with current development processes e.g., school self-evaluation processes.

For Creative Associates

While professional training and development should continue to be provided by the Arts Council, newly appointed CAs should consider the following recommendations:

1. Advocate for creative and artistic activity through horizon scanning, seeking information and networking with schools in the locality, encouraging participation in Creative Schools and highlighting successes from elsewhere.

2. Ensure that Creative Schools activity is founded on the voice of the child or young person, that s/he is listened to, that such ideas have influence, and that proposed activities are acted upon in meaningful ways.
3. Encourage dissemination of the initiative in local media – including through school digital or physical newsletters, local or regional newspapers and other online environments
4. Connect with other (arts/other) organisations and education centres who may be in a position to provide complementary support/input either to the local school or as an out-of-school additional or complementary event/mechanism.
5. Document the growth of your own artistic and professional experiences as part of Creative Schools and showcase this learning.
6. Reflect upon and share strengths of a particular Creative Schools experience in schools and how it might be further enhanced in a future iteration.

For School Leaders and Creative Schools Coordinators

1. Seek to empower children and young people as active, artistic citizens with the capacity to consider, imagine, generate and celebrate a wide range of creative and artistic experiences. To this end, find out about the Creative Schools initiative in the year prior to submitting an application; read reports of activities elsewhere, consult with colleagues in schools who are recent or current participants.
2. Discuss potential processes of consultation, development of committees, and other resources within the school and externally that could support Creative Schools, being mindful of potential impediments to progress.
3. At the application stage, involve a deputy coordinator and establish a staff committee to engage school leadership in support of the communication and organisation surrounding the initiative.
4. Identify key points in the school calendar and events, and through e.g., SWOT analysis, consider how Creative Schools could complement existing initiatives or curriculum development, while seeking to engage target groups.
5. Avoid the concentration of Creative Schools activities into one year group (e.g., Transition Year) where classes may already have significant external and internal events established and scheduled. Similarly, ensure that that Creative Schools experiences do not reside exclusively with those already teaching or studying arts subjects. Consider mechanisms for whole school involvement, including for examination classes, and related planning and communication at intervals throughout the Creative Schools year.
6. Employ the school website and the school's agreed social media platform to publicise events related to the Creative Schools initiative.
7. At primary level, ensure that curricular provision in all arts subject areas is not inadvertently assigned to the Creative Schools initiative in its entirety and that teachers

continue to provide a broad range and breadth of arts curriculum experiences to pupils at primary level according to class level and in accordance with the school plan.

References

Adams, J. & Owens, A. (2016). *Creativity and Democracy in Education: Practices and politics of learning through the arts*. London: Routledge.

Arts Council & The Department of Education and Science (2006). *Artists~Schools Guidelines: towards Best Practice in Ireland*. Dublin: Author.

Arts Council, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DAHG), & Department of Education and Skills. (2012). *Points of Alignment: Report of the Special Committee on the Arts and Education*. Dublin: Author.

Arts Council. (2018). *Creative Associate Information Booklet*. Dublin, Ireland: The Arts Council.

Arts Council. (2023). *Teacher Creative Associates*. Dublin, Ireland: The Arts Council.

Austin, S. (2022). The school garden in the primary school: meeting the challenges and reaping the benefits, *Education 3-13*, 50:6, 707- 721.

Banks, J. A. (2006). Race, culture, and education: The selected works of James A. Banks. Routledge.

Benson C. Ed. (1989). *Art and the Ordinary: Report of the Arts Community Education Committee*, Dublin: Arts Council.

Benson, C. (1979). *The Place of the Arts in Irish Education: Report of the Working Party appointed by the Arts Council*, Dublin: Arts Council.

Berezowitz, C. K., Bontrager Yoder, A. B., Schoeller, D. A. (2015). School gardens enhance academic performance and dietary outcomes in children. *Journal of Sch Health*, 85, 508-518.

Blair, D. (2009) The Child in the Garden: An Evaluative Review of the Benefits of School Gardening, *The Journal of Environmental Education*, *40*(2), 15-38.

Botella, M. Zenasni, F., Lubart, T. (2018). What Are the Stages of the Creative Process? What Visual Art Students Are Saying. *Frontiers in Psychology* 9.

Botella, M., and Lubart, T. (2015). "Creative processes: art, design and science," in *Multidisciplinary Contributions to the Science of Creative Thinking*, eds G. E. Corazza and S Agnoli (Singapour: Springer), 53–65.

Bowen, G.A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method, *Qualitative Research Journal 9*(2), pp. 27-40.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021).To saturate or not to saturate? Questioning data saturation as a useful concept for thematic analysis and sample-size rationales, *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 13*(2), 201-216, DOI: 10.1080/2159676X.2019.1704846

Bresler, L. (2011). Integrating the arts: Educational entrepreneurship in a school setting. *Hellenic Journal of Music, Education, and Culture*, 2(1), pp. 5-17.

British Educational Research Association. (2018). *Ethical guidelines for educational research* (4th ed.). British Educational Research Association. https://www.bera.ac.uk/publication/ethical-guidelines-for-educational-research-2018-online.

British Psychological Society. (2017). *Ethics Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research*. https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/ethics-guidelines-internet-mediated-research-2017

Burke, J. & Minton, S. J. (2019), Well-being in post-primary schools in Ireland: the assessment and contribution of character strengths. *Irish Educational Studies 38*(2).

Burnard & R. Murphy, *Teaching Music Creatively*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

Caracelli, Valerie J. and Greene, Jennifer C. (1997). Crafting mixed-option evaluation design. In J. C. Carvalho, S. and H. White. (1997) 'Combining the quantitative and qualitative approaches to poverty measurement and analysis', Technical Paper 366. The World Bank: Washington D.C.466

Chan, C. L., Tan, P. Y. & Gong, Y. Y. (2022). Evaluating the impacts of school garden-based programmes on diet and nutrition-related knowledge, attitudes and practices among the school children: A systematic review. *BMC Public Health. 22*(1):1-33. doi:10.1186/s12889-022-13587-x

Clarke, V., Braun, V., Terry, G., & Hayfield, N. (2019). Thematic analysis. In Liamputtong, P. (Ed.). *Handbook of research methods in health and social science* (pp. 843-860).

Cohen, L., Manion, L. & Morrison, K. (eds), Research Methods in Education. 8th edition. Abingdon: Routledge.

Collard, P. & Looney J. (2014). Nurturing creativity in education. *European Journal of Education*, 49(3), 348–364. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1111/ejed.12090

Cooper, L., Benton, T., & Sharp, C. (2011). The impact of creative partnerships on attainment and attendance in 2008-9and 2009-10. Slough, UK: NFER.

Craft, A. (2000). *Creativity across the primary curriculum: Framing and developing practice*. London: Routledge.

Craft, A. (2001). *Analysis of research and literature on creativity in education*. NACCCE: London.

Craft, A. (2001b). 'Little c Creativity'. In: Craft, Anna; Jeffrey, Robert and Leibling, Mike eds. *Creativity in education.* London and New York: Continuum, pp. 45–61.

Creswell J. W. (2015). A concise introduction to mixed methods research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cropley, A. J. (1995). Fostering creativity in the classroom: General principles. In M. Runco (Ed.), *The Creativity Research Handbook* Vol. 1 (pp.83-114). Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Cropley, A. J. (2011). Definitions of creativity. In M. A. Runco & S. R. Pritzker (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of creativity* (pp. 511-524). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Davies, D., Jindal-Snape, D., Collier, D., Digby, R., Hay, P. & Howe, A. (2013) Creative learning environments in education—A systematic literature review, *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 8*, 80-91.

DeNeve, K. M., & Cooper, H. (1998). The happy personality: A meta-analysis of 137 personality traits and subjective well-being. *Psychological Bulletin, 124*(2), 197–229. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.124.2.197

Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht & Department of Education and Skills (2013) *Arts in Education Charter*. Dublin: Author.

Department of Education (2021). *Statistical Bulletin Enrolments September 2020 – Preliminary Results (Revised)*. [Online] https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/annual-statistical-reports/

Department of Education and Skills (2020). *Statistical Bulletin. Enrolments September 2020.Preliminary results*. [Online] https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/annual-statistical-reports/

Dooley, B., O'Connor, C., Fitzgerald, A., & O'Reilly, A. (2019). *My World Survey 2: The national study of youth mental health in Ireland*. UCD School of Psychology & Jigsaw.

Dudek, M. (2000). Architecture of schools: The new learning environments. *Children, Youth & Environments, 13*(1). Boston: Architectural Press.

Eivers, E. & Murphy, R. (2022). *Evaluation of Creative Schools: Technical Report*. Author.

Eivers, E., Gilleece, L., & Delaney, E. (2017). Reading achievement in PIRLS 2016: Initial report for Ireland. Dublin: Educational Research Centre

Franzke, A. S., Bechmann, A., Zimmer, M., Ess, C., & Association of Internet Researchers. (2020). *Internet Research: Ethical Guidelines 3.0*. https://aoir.org/reports/ethics3.pdf.

Fraser, B. J., & Fisher, D. L. (1982). Predicting students' outcomes from their perceptions of classroom psychosocial environment. *American Educational Research Journal, 19*(4), 498–518. https://doi.org/10.2307/1162539

Glăveanu, V. P. (2018). Educating which creativity? *Thinking Skills and Creativity. 27*(25-32).

Government of Ireland. (2023). *Understanding Life in Ireland: The Well-being Dashboard 2022.* Dublin: Author.

Greene, J. (2007) *Mixed options in social inquiry*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.465

Greene, J. C. & Caracelli, V. J. (eds.), Advances in mixed-option evaluation: The challenges and benefits of integrating diverse paradigms. *New Directions for Program Evaluation, No. 74*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, pp. 19-32.460

Guest, G. MacQueen, K. M. & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied thematic analysis*. Sage.

Guilford, J.P. (1950) Creativity. *American Psychologist, 5*, 444-454.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: a synthesis of meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge

Hennessey, B.A., Amabile, T.M., 2010. Creativity. *Annual Review of Psychology, 61*, 569-598.

Irish Universities Association (2019). *Policy Statement on Ensuring Research Integrity in Ireland* https://www.iua.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/IUA_Research_Integrity_in_Ireland_Report_2019.pdf

Jones K. (2012) Power, democracy—and democracy in education. *Forum*, 54(2), 205–214. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.2304/forum.2012.54.2.205

Kaufman, J. C. & Sternberg, R. J. (2010) *The Cambridge Handbook of Creativity. Cambridge*: Cambridge University Press.

Kautz, T., Heckman, J., Diris, R., Weel, B., & Borghans, L. (2014). *Fostering and measuring skills: Improving cognitive and non-cognitive skills to promote lifetime success* (OECD Education Working Papers, No. 110). Paris, France: OECD Publishing.

Kavanagh, L., Shiel, G., Gilleece, L. & Kiniry, J. (2015). *The 2014 National Assessments of English Reading and Mathematics. Volume 2: Context Report.* Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Kim, K. H. (2011) The Creativity Crisis: The Decrease in Creative Thinking Scores on the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking, *Creativity Research Journal, 23*(4), 285-295

Kirkland, L., Apatu, E., Mease, A. & Largo-Wight, E. (2018). School-based nutrition and garden programs and parental dietary changes in low-income settings: A review, *International Journal of Health Promotion and Education,* 56(4-5), 226-236.

Lansdown, G. & O'Kane, C. (2014). *A Toolkit for Monitoring and Evaluating Children's Participation*. Save the Children, UK.

Long, H., Kerr, B. A., Emler, T. E., & Birdnow, M. (2022). A Critical Review of Assessments of Creativity in Education. *Review of Research in Education*, *46*(1), 288–323. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.3102/0091732X221084326

Lucas, B. (2016). A five dimensional model of creativity and its assessment in schools. *Applied Measurement in Education 29*(4), 278-290.

Lucas, B., Claxton, G. & Spencer, E. (2013). *Progression in Student Creativity in School: First Steps Towards New Forms of Formative Assessments*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 86, OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5k4dp59msdwk-en

Lundy, L. (2007). 'Voice' is not enough: Conceptualising Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. *British Educational Research Journal, 33*(6), 927-942.

McKeown, C., Denner, S., McAteer, S., & Shiel, G., with O'Keefe, L. (2019). *Learning for the future: The performance of 15-year-olds in Ireland on reading literacy, science and mathematics in PISA 2018*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre

Mertens, D. (2015). Mixed methods and wicked problems. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, *9* (1), 3-6.

Morrissey, D. (2022). *Creative clusters: A Collaborative approach to cultivating creativity in schools*. Department of Education.

Mumford, M. D., Medeiros. K., & Partlow, P. J. (2012). Creative thinking: Process, strategies and knowledge. *Journal of Creative Behaviour,* 46(1), 30-47.

Murphy, M., & Schulz, W. (2006). *Sampling for national surveys in education*. ACER.

Murphy, R. (2017). Assessing Creatively. In P. Burnard & R. Murphy, *Teaching Music Creatively*, 2nd edition. London: Routledge.

Nelson, J., Lynch, S. & Sharp, C. (2021). Recovery during a pandemic: The ongoing Impacts of Covid-19 on schools serving deprived communities. NFER. Slough

O'Brien, S., Macnamara, G. & O'Hara, J. (2015). Supporting the consistent implementation of self-evaluation in Irish post-primary schools. *Educational Assessment Evaluation and Accountability 27*(4), pp 377–393.

Odena, O. (2018). *Musical Creativity Revisited*. London: Routledge.

OECD (2019). *PISA 2018 Results (Volume II): Where All Students Can Succeed*, PISA, OECD Publishing, https://doi.org/10.1787/b5fd1b8f-en

Patston, T. J., Kaufman, J. C., Cropley, A. J., & Marrone, R. (2021). What Is Creativity in Education? A Qualitative Study of International Curricula. *Journal of Advanced Academics*, *32*(2), 207–230. https://doi-org.dcu.idm.oclc.org/10.1177/1932202X20978356

Payne, G., & Payne, J. (2004). *Key informants*. SAGE Publications, Ltd, https://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781849209397

Professional Development Service for Teachers [PDST]. (2023). *Restorative practice*. Accessed July 2022.

Perkins, R., & Clerkin, A. (2020). *TIMSS 2019: Ireland's results in mathematics and science*. Dublin: Educational Research Centre.

Plucker, J. A., Beghetto, R. A., & Dow, G. T. (2004). Why isn't creativity more important to educational psychologists? Potentials, pitfalls, and future directions in creativity research. *Educational Psychologist, 39*(2), 83–96.

Rejskind, F. G., Socrates, O. R., & Gold, D. (1992). Gender differences in children's divergent thinking, *Creativity Research Journal, 5*(2), 165-174.

Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Restorative Practices Ireland. [RPI] (2021). https://www.restorativepracticesireland.ie/ Accessed July 2022.

Runco, M. A., & Okuda, S. M. (1988). Problem discovery, divergent thinking, and the creative process. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 17*(3), 211–220. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01538162

Seligman, M. E. P., & Csikszentmihalyi, M. (2000). Positive psychology: An introduction. *American Psychologist, 55*(1), 5-14).

Stake R. E. (1995). The art of case study research. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stake R. E. (2005). Qualitative case studies. In Denzin N. K., Lincoln Y. S. (Eds.), The Sage *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 443-466). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Tardif, T. Z., & Sternberg, R. J. (1988). "What Do We Know about Creativity?" In *The Nature of Creativity—Contemporary Psychological Perspectives*, edited by Robert J. Sternberg. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 429-440.

Taylor, I. (1975). *Perspectives in Creativity* (1st ed.). New York: Routledge.

Torrance, E. P. (1977). *Creativity in the Classroom: What Research Says to the Teacher*. Washington DC: NEA.

UN (United Nations). (2020, August). Policy Brief: Education during COVID-19 and beyond. *United Nations.* Retrieved from https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/wpcontent/uploads/sites/22/2020/08/sg_policy_brief_covid-19_and_education_august_2020.pdf

Verschuren, P. J. M. (2003). Case study as a research strategy: Some ambiguities and opportunities. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology: Theory & Practice, 6*(2), 121–139. https://doi.org/10.1080/13645570110106154

Vincent-Lancrin, S. et al., (2019), *Fostering students' creativity and critical thinking: What it means in school, educational research and innovation*. OECD Publishing, Paris.

Wachtel, T. (2013). *Dreaming of a new reality: How restorative practices reduce crime and violence, improve relationships and strengthen civil society*. Bethlehem, PA: The Piper's Press

Wallas, G. (1926). *The Art of Thought*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company.

Williamson, P. K. (2011). The creative problem solving skills of arts and science students—The two cultures debate revisited. *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 6*, 31-43.

Yin R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Los Angeles: Sage.

Zeng, N. & Gallarza, M. (2022). P107 Effects of School Gardens on Children and Adolescents: Systematic Review, *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 54*(7), S69.

Zhao Y. (2015). A world at risk: An imperative for a paradigm shift to cultivate 21st century learners. *Society, 52*(2), 129–135. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-015-9872-8

Additional policy documents

Arts, creativity and participation:

1. Making Great Art Work Leading the Development of the Arts in Ireland Arts Council Strategy (2016–2025), Arts Council, 2015.
2. Arts in Education Charter, Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht/Department of Education and Skills, 2013.
3. Arts and Cultural Participation among Children and Young People, Insights from the Growing up in Ireland Longitudinal Study, Arts Council/ESRI, 2016.
4. National Strategy on Children and Young People's Participation In Decision-Making 2015–2020, Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2015.

Education and Skills:

5. Action Plan for Education 2018, Department of Education and Skills, 2018.
6. The Framework for Junior Cycle, Department of Education and Skills, 2015.
7. The Future of Education and Skills 2030, OECD, 2018.
8. Ireland's National Skills Strategy 2025, Department of Education and Skills, 2016.
9. Creative Youth – a plan to enable the creativity of every child and young person, Creative Ireland, 2017.

Wellbeing:

1. The Wellbeing Policy and Framework for Practice 2018-23, Department of Education and Skills, 2018.
2. The Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice builds on existing guidelines and frameworks:
3. The national Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines (2013)
4. The national Well-Being in Primary Schools Guidelines (2015)
5. Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines (2017, NCGE: A Whole School Guidance Framework (2017)
6. The Youthreach Soft Skills Framework (2015).

Education Evaluation Frameworks Currently Used by Schools in Ireland, Published by Department for Education and Skills:

- The Quality Framework for Early Years Education (Available in A Guide to Early Years Education Inspections – 2018)
- Looking at Our School 2016, A Quality Framework for Primary Schools
- Looking at Our School 2016, A Quality Framework for Post-primary Schools

Published by Department of Education Inspectorate:

- A Guide to Early Years Education Inspection (2018)
- A Guide to Inspection in Primary Schools (2016)
- A Guide to Inspection in Post-primary Schools (2016)

BACK COVER

Get in Touch

E: ioe@dcu.ie
P: 01 700 9161

dcu.ie/instituteofeducation