



BLAST Residency Initiative - Creativity and Arts in Education

Bringing Live Arts to Students & Teachers (BLAST) in Primary, Special and Post-Primary Schools and YouthReach Centres.

The Department of Education announced the launch of the 2025 creativity and arts in education BLAST Residency programme, which will bring creativity and arts in education to 425 new Residencies in the school year 2025/26.

To build on the successes of the initiative, in 2025/26 a BLAST+ extension will be piloted in Clare and Tralee Education Support Centres to extend and support existing partnerships between students, creative practitioners and teachers. Eight 10-hour BLAST+ Residencies will be offered to schools, YouthReach Centres and practitioners in partnerships established in BLAST Residencies during the academic year 2024/25.

This initiative aims to support the objectives of the Creative Ireland Creative Youth Plan (2023-2027) which builds on the principles and skills outlined in the *Arts in Education Charter* (2013) and the achievements of Creative Youth (2017-2022).

BLAST aims to provide pupils in schools all over the country, time and the space to work with a professional creative practitioner on imaginative and joyful projects. BLAST is a key Department of Education initiative of the Creative Youth Plan 2023- 2027 which aims to foster creativity in schools focus and to provide young people with opportunities to learn and develop the key skills and competencies of collaboration, critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation.

Innovative BLAST residencies are designed and developed between the creative practitioner, teacher, students and the school community under the coordination of the 21 full-time Education Support Centres Ireland (ESCI) network.

How will the BLAST Residency initiative work?

Education Support Centre:

Schools and YouthReach centres apply for a BLAST Residency via a centralised online application link (*see below*) which will be processed by their local full-time ESC. The programme is nationally coordinated by the National Arts in Education office, Tralee Education Support Centre.



Every local ESC has a *BLAST Register of Creative Practitioners* who are trained to deliver BLAST Residencies. The *BLAST Register* is arranged by creative practitioner and discipline. It includes required training, examples of previous work and relevant experience in an educational and community context. Schools and YouthReach centres may apply for a creative practitioner to work with them in their school. In excess of 600 creative practitioners are currently trained and registered on the *Register of Creative Practitioners* managed by the ESCI network nationally. Local ESCs administer the payment for creative practitioners which removes the administrative burden on teachers and schools.

Garda Vetting:

Garda vetting for creative practitioners for BLAST Residencies is organised by the local ESC. Some schools may separately request that creative practitioners apply for Garda vetting specifically to work in their school.

Creative Practitioners will have completed Tusla Children First Training and submitted their certificate to the local ESC. Schools must follow and make creative practitioners aware of their school's / centre's Child Protection Procedures, Safeguarding Statement and Designated Liaison Person.

Creative Practitioners:

Creative practitioners on the *BLAST Register of Creative Practitioners* have been trained and have engaged in school residencies under the Teacher-Artist Partnership+ (TAP+) professional development initiative which is approved and led by the Department of Education.

Creative practitioners from any creative discipline who have been trained in partnership working with schools will be registered with the 21 full-time ESCI. Creative disciplines include visual arts, crafts, music, dance, drama, literature, heritage and film. Creative disciplines will be expanded as the residency programme develops over the next number of years.

Schools & YouthReach Centres:

Schools and YouthReach Centres that apply for BLAST:

- Must be in the catchment of a local full-time Education Support Centre.
- Fee Paying Schools that are not in the free – education scheme cannot apply for BLAST Residencies.
- Schools in receipt of capitation grants from the Department of Education or Education and Training Boards scheme **can apply** for BLAST.
- Each School may submit only one application.



- Schools/Centres make their own selection of creative practices available on the BLAST Register of Creative Practitioners.
- Please note that schools may not always be partnered with their choice of creative practices - this is due to practitioner availability and demand.

Once a school / centre is approved for a BLAST Residency, the school has a commitment to the creative practitioner, who will have earmarked time for the project and could potentially turn down other work in favour of the Residency

BLAST Creativity and Arts in Education Residency Funding:

The creative practitioners fee is €1,100 per residency. This is funded by the Department of Education via the ESCI network. Local ESCs pay the creative practitioner in accordance with agreed guidelines after the creative practitioner and teacher/school project completion processes have been submitted. The school principal must support and facilitate in-school residencies, by approving and contributing to the BLAST application, and signing the final invoice. In certain instances, the BLAST residency fee may be paid in two instalments of €550 with the prior agreement of the ESC and creative practitioner.

The creative practitioner will be funded for 20 contact hours, including 6 hours for planning/development/evaluation. Participating schools must pay for materials associated with the project and also for any fees relating to documentation of the project (photographs, film, recording etc) and any other costs involved including insurance costs. Funded residencies can be delivered throughout the academic year commencing in September in the year the residency was approved.

Schools must acknowledge the Department of Education, Creative Ireland, their local ESC and National Arts in Education office in publicity relating to the project.

Successful applications:

Successful schools will be required to sign a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with their local ESC accepting the terms of the BLAST Residency prior to the commencement. Successful residencies can begin once written notification from the ESC has been received, Garda vetting is in place and this has been communicated to the school.

It is a specific condition of BLAST residencies that a teacher, creative practitioner and students work closely and collaborate to plan, develop and evaluate the residency.

Teachers must be present at all times with the creative practitioner while



working with students in the school and to enhance further collaborative partnership.

BLAST Residency Evaluation:

BLAST is an initiative of the [Creative Youth Plan 2023-2027](#) and is supported by the Creative Youth Evaluation Guidelines and the associated Post Project Forms for schools and creative practitioners (links issued by the ESCI network). BLAST Residency Guidelines will be issued to all successful applicants in September 2025. These guidelines will contain all the required information to support schools and creative practitioners to carry out their BLAST Residencies.

In instances where an ESC and creative practitioner have agreed to split the residency fee, the second instalment will be paid following the submission of required documentation outlined in the BLAST Residency Guidelines.

Images submitted by schools and/or creative practitioners on completing the project may be used to promote creativity and arts in education through print and other media including social media. It is therefore essential that schools ensure that informed consent is in place, and that NAE Consent Forms have been submitted for any images of students returned to the local ESC.

BLAST Assessment and Selection:

BLAST applications will be assessed by the local ESC. Applications will be assessed and scored against the following criteria.

1. BENEFITS TO TEACHING AND LEARNING

The extent to which the application demonstrates how participation in a BLAST Residency will support teachers and the school community in embedding creativity in learning and teaching.

2. CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT

The extent to which the application demonstrates the capacity and commitment for the school and school leadership to fully support the BLAST Residency, to celebrate and share its learning and outcomes.

The extent to which the principal and school leadership will support teachers in a BLAST Residency?

The extent to which the collaborating teacher will share and disseminate professional learning through the BLAST Residency?



3. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN DECISION MAKING

This includes the extent to which the application demonstrates a clear plan for ensuring children and young people play a central role in planning, implementing and evaluating their BLAST Residency.

4. SUPPORTING ACCESS TO CREATIVITY

The extent to which the BLAST Residency will support access to creativity.

BLAST Application Link

BLAST 2025/26 Application Form apply here:

<https://forms.office.com/e/dtMnZXaung>

Please note only **online** applications will be accepted.



BLAST Application - Questions Outline:

Outline of the online BLAST 2025/26 Application Form

- General information
- Local Education Support Centre
- School Name
- School Roll Number: use this link to find participating schools' Roll Number & Eircode: <https://www.gov.ie/en/directory/category/495b8a-schools/>
- School Address & Eircode
- School Email Address
- School Contact Number
- School Type
- School Principal's Name
- Lead Teacher Name
- Lead Teacher's Email
- Lead Teacher's Contact Number
- Proposed Timeframe of Project

Please note the maximum word count in responses below. Each response over the allocated word count will incur a penalty.

- **Benefits to Teaching and Learning:**

How will a BLAST Residency support you (as a teacher) / your school in embedding Creativity in learning and teaching? (200 words maximum)

- **Capacity and Commitment:**

Tell us about the capacity and commitment for the school and school leadership to fully support the BLAST Residency, to celebrate and share its learning and outcomes.

Principals: How will you support teachers in a BLAST Residency? (200 words maximum)

Teachers: How will you share and disseminate professional learning through your BLAST Residency? (200 words maximum)

- **Children and Young People in Decision Making:**

Children and Young people must play a central role in decision making. Please propose how you will facilitate this? See Hub na nÓg | Young Voices in Decision-making (hubnanog.ie) for guidance.

- **Creative Youth, Supporting Access to Creativity:**

Creative Youth aims to provide young people with enhanced opportunities to engage with creativity in a way that supports greater equity of access. It prioritises children and young people who may experience low levels of participation in creativity, culture and the arts. See [Creative Youth Plan](#) p.41

Will your BLAST project aim to support any of the following cohorts of children and young people?



- DEIS
- Youth Reach Centre
- All boys school
- Special Education School
- Project will be based in Special Education Class only
- Other (please advise)

BLAST Creative Practitioners & Creative Practices

Please see your local Education Support Centre's website to view the BLAST Register of Creative Practitioners and creative practices. Your Local Education Support Centre will aim to pair your school with one of your first three chosen creative practices; however, this is not always possible.

BLAST Scoring Criteria

Criteria

- Criterion 1: Benefits to teaching and learning
- Criterion 2: Capacity and commitment
- Criterion 3: Children and Young People Decision Making
- Criterion 4: Supporting Access to Creativity

Scoring

- 0 = Not Met
- 5 = Met: Satisfactory
- 10 = Met: Strong
- 20 = Met: Exceptional
- Max Score = 20

BLAST Timeline

Opening date for applications	18th March 2025
Closing date for applications	10th April 2025
Announcement of successful BLAST Residencies	Late April 2025
Residencies can begin	September 2025
Initiative completion and review	Mid May 2026

Applications will open on 18th March 2025. The closing date is 10th April 2025



Appendix 1 – List of full-time education centres and associated contact details

Education Support Centre	Address	Phone	email	Website
Athlone	Moydrum Road, Athlone, Co Westmeath	090 6420400	info@athloneeducationcentre.ie	www.athloneeducationcentre.com
Blackrock	Kill Avenue, Dún Laoghaire, Co Dublin	01 2365000	bec@blackrockec.ie	www.blackrockec.ie
Carrick-on-Shannon	Marymount, Old Dublin Road, Carrick-on-Shannon, Co Leitrim	071 9620383	office@carrickedcentre.ie	www.carrickedcentre.ie
Clare	Government Buildings, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co Clare	065 6845500	reception@clareed.ie	www.clareed.ie
Cork	The Rectory, Western Road, Cork	021 4255600	office@cesc.ie	www.cesc.ie
Donegal	2/3 Floor, Pier One, Quay Street, Donegal Town, Co Donegal	074 9723487	admin@donegaledcentre.ie	www.donegaledcentre.ie
Drumcondra	Drumcondra, Dublin 9	01 8576400	info@ecdumcondra.ie	www.ecdumcondra.ie
Dublin West	Old Blessington Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24	01 4528000	reception@dwec.ie	www.dwec.ie
Galway	Cluain Mhuire, Wellpark, Galway, Co Galway	091 745600	info@galwayec.ie	www.galwayec.ie
Kildare	Friary Road, Kildare Town, Co Kildare	045 530200	office@eckildare.ie	www.eckildare.ie
Kilkenny	Seville Lodge, Callan Road, Kilkenny, Co Kilkenny	056 7760200	kecsec@eckilkenny.ie	www.eckilkenny.ie
Laois	Block Road, Portlaoise, Co Laois	057 8672400	info@laoisedcentre.ie	www.laoisedcentre.ie
Limerick	1st Floor Marshall House, Dooradoyle Road, Limerick, Co Limerick	061 585060	info@lec.ie	www.lec.ie
Mayo	Westport Road, Castlebar, Co Mayo	094 9020700	eolas@mayoeducationcentre.ie	www.mayoeducationcentre.ie
Monaghan	Knockaconny, Armagh Road, Monaghan, Co Monaghan	047 74000	info@metc.ie	www.metc.ie
Navan	Athlumney, Navan, Co Meath	046 9067040	info@ecnavan.ie	www.ecnavan.ie
Sligo	Ballinode, Sligo, Co Sligo	071 9138700	info@ecsligo.ie	www.ecsligo.ie
Tralee	North Campus, Dromtacker, Tralee, Co Kerry	066 7195000	artsineducation@traleeesc.ie	www.edcentrtralee.ie
Waterford	Newtown Road, Waterford, Co Waterford	051 311000	info@wtc.ie	www.wtc.ie
West Cork	The Square Shopping Centre, The Square, Dunmanway, Co Cork	023 8856756	info@westcorkeducationcentre.ie	www.westcorkeducationcentre.ie
Co. Wexford	Milehouse Rd, Enniscorthy, Co Wexford	053 9239100	info@ecwexford.ie	www.ecwexford.ie

