

Draíocht na Scéalta Féile Fhine Gall de Litríocht na Leanaí

Caisleán Shoard • Dé Sathairn 26 Meán Fómhair 2026



Fingal's Festival of Children's Literature

Swords Castle • Saturday 26th September • 11am – 4pm

libraries.
fingal.ie



áras cultúir
culture house

Clár Éire Ildánach
Creative Ireland
Programme



Join us at

The Magic of Stories 2026

Fingal Festival of Children's Literature

Hi, I'm Dany!



The famous Magic of Stories festival returns to Swords Castle on Saturday September 26th, and it's bigger and better than ever before!

Fingal Libraries presents the FIFTH edition of Ireland's most magical

children's book festival, and it will be packed with awesome authors, epic illustrators, amazing art, majestic music and terrific theatre - and it's all free. Don't miss out!

Please note: Tickets help manage capacity. Walk-ins are welcome, subject to availability. Ticket holders receive priority access to Chapel events on a first-come, first-served basis.

All your favourites are back!

- The Storytent
- The Tall-Tales Tent
- The Chapel
- The Book Clinic
- The Creative Zone
- The Little Library Tent
- Mechanical Theatre
- Plus, a new roving theatre show 'Long-Legs Sheila'!

All events are FREE

but some may need a ticket for entrance! Pack a picnic, grab a blanket, & come celebrate The Magic of Stories with us.

Meet The Author Tent

Come along and meet your favourite writer, book signings throughout the day.



Book your festival ticket at:

<https://tinyurl.com/5y6z8n7w>





Did you know...

Scan to Join

Membership of all public libraries is FREE for everyone.

You can join at any age! To find out how to join Fingal Libraries, click on the QR code or call into your local branch. Our professional and friendly staff are always happy to help. When you join the library, you will get your own library card and a personal identification number (PIN).



Joining the library gives you access to lots of great services:

- Children's books for all ages • Audio books
- DVD's • CDs • Video games • Storytime's and Arts & Crafts • Author and Illustrator visits
- Computers, tablets and internet access
- Online services: BorrowBox, Kanopy, Libby, Tumble books and much more • Book clubs
- Dungeons & Dragons • 3D printers
- Makerspace • VR headsets
- Boardgames
- Sensory toys and games
- And much more!



Swords Castle Grounds

River Crossing

with Kristina Keegan

ALL AGES

Help the Owl and the Cat get the other animals across the river in this interactive, playful puppetry adventure. You'll learn how to handle puppets and operate pulleys to create your own versions of well-loved children's stories. Teatrino Meccanico is a handmade mechanical puppet theatre built by artist, illustrator and puppeteer Kristina Keegan.



Times: Performances throughout the day.

Suitable for all ages. Walk-in event, no booking required. All welcome.

Long-Legs Sheila

with Pierre & Éclair

ALL AGES

A brand-new family friendly performance featuring Sheila The Curious Heron, a bird of inordinate size and incredible inquisitiveness; accompanied by traveling birdwatchers extraordinaire, Pierre & Éclair. Sheila takes to the land to search out fish, frolics, and fun.

Times: 3 Performances across the day.

Suitable for all ages. Walk-in event, no booking required. All welcome.



The Chapel

11:00am

The Doomsday Club
with Kevin Moran

AGES 8+

Detention can wait – they have to save the world! What would you do if a beast stepped out of a portal into your school? The author of the prize-winning new Irish series is here with mayhem and mystery.

Space Limited. Free Day ticket essential.

Spaces are limited.

General ticket holders have priority for chapel events.

Booking via Eventbrite:

<https://tinyurl.com/5y6z8n7w>



12.15pm

PJ Lynch
Legendary Illustrator

AGES 6+

From Gulliver's Travels to fantastical dragons, the former Laureate na nÓg is one of the greats of Irish books – and this magical event about art and imagination is not to be missed.

Spaces are limited.

General ticket holders have priority for chapel events.

Booking via Eventbrite:

<https://tinyurl.com/5y6z8n7w>



The Chapel

1:15pm

From 'Milly McCarthy' to 'Effie is Offline'
with Karen Harte

AGES 8+

The amazing illustrator of the megahit *Milly McCarthy* books is here with her own brand-new story *Effie is Offline* – and she'll show you the magic!

Spaces are limited. General ticket holders have priority for chapel events.

Booking via Eventbrite:

<https://tinyurl.com/5y6z8n7w>



2:30pm

Daring Detectives
& Unique Thieves
with Alison Weatherby &
Brían Dungan

AGES 8+

Two great authors in one brilliant event. Hear about the inspiring inspirations and imaginations behind Alison's *Common Criminals Club* and Brían's *Wintour's Game*.

Spaces are limited.

General ticket holders have priority for chapel events.

Booking via Eventbrite:

<https://tinyurl.com/5y6z8n7w>



The Chapel

3:30pm

Magical Music

AGES 4+

with Bits and Bobs Orchestra

A Magic of Stories favourite, join the brilliant Bits and Bobs Orchestra in the historic Chapel to bop along to familiar songs and classical hits.

Spaces are limited.

General ticket holders have priority for chapel events.

Booking via Eventbrite:

<https://tinyurl.com/5y6z8n7w>



Story Tent

11:00am

AGES 4-6 *

Make Your Own Bird Ornaments

with Margaret Anne Suggs

Create your own decorative bird ornament to take home. A wonderful event that's perfect for little hands (and their grown ups!)

No booking required.



12:00pm

Magic Story-Time

with Sarah Sparkles

ALL AGES *

Fun, musical storytelling with puppets, songs and rhyme from the much-loved Sarah Sparkles. You'll be clapping and singing along!

No booking required.



1:15pm

I Am Not A Dog

with Peter Donnelly

AGES 4+ *

The man behind the *President's Glasses* and *The Dead Zoo* is one of Ireland's favourite author/illustrators. Come and hear about his new book – and learn to draw like Peter.

No booking required.



NOTE*: Children must be accompanied by an adult for these events

Story Tent

2:30pm

Don't Trust Fish

with Neil Sharpson

AGES 4+ *

What are fish talking about? Are they plotting our doom? We must learn their fishy secrets. Award-winning author of the best-selling *Don't Trust Fish* is here to help!

No booking required.



3:30pm

See You Later...

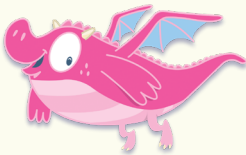
AGES 4+ *

with April Suddendorf

What happens when Gary the Alligator decides that a lovely human house is better than a swamp?

Find out at April's fun and creative event!

No booking required.



NOTE*: Children must be accompanied by an adult for these events

Tall-Tales Tent

11am-4pm ★★

With Ringmaster Alan Nolan!

After controlling the chaos at the Tall-Tales Tent last year, our Magic of Stories ringmaster ALAN NOLAN is back to keep the events – and laughter – flowing.



11:15am

AGES 6+

Little Irish History Heroes

with Niamh Donnellan
& Brian Fitzgerald

There's no better place to bring history alive than at Swords Castle. The author and illustrator of the brilliant *Little History Heroes* will do just that with stories and drawing.



No booking required.

12:15pm

AGES 7+

Ellora McGee: Trainee Banshee

with Una Woods & Sinéad O'Hart

Making friends at a new school is hard enough – but what happens when you tell your friends you're a trainee banshee? Magical mayhem is guaranteed at this fun event.



No booking required.



Tall-Tales Tent

1:15pm

AGES 8+

Our New Laureate na nÓg

Chris Haughton

A chance to meet one of the leading lights of children's books, taking us his beloved picture books such as 'A Bit Lost' and 'Shh! We Have A Plan' to his recent 'The History of Information'.

No booking required.



2:30pm

AGES 8+

Tales of the Darkside

with Dave Rudden

We're delighted to have the force of nature Dave Rudden back at the Magic of Stories to tell us all about 'Nell on Earth', the latest in his fantastic new series.

No booking required.



3:15pm

AGES 8+

The Great Irish Draw-off

with Peter Donnelly and Karen Harte

You the audience help master illustrators Peter Donnelly and Karen Harte go head-to-head in a fiery, dragon-themed draw-off! What weird creatures will be created?

No booking required.



The Creative Zone

The Creative Zone is the place to get arty and once again it's bursting with so many amazing activities for you to do. Make t-shirts or flower-crowns. Spray graffiti. Make your name in braille with ChildVision. This is where you can get your imagination moving and creativity flowing!



ALL AGES WELCOME!

Open from: 11am till 4pm
No booking required.

11:00am – 4:00pm

Street Art Ink Graffiti Workshops

ALL AGES

Become a Graffiti Artist in only 15 minutes! Suitable for all ages and abilities, this is a workshop like no other. Learn how to use stencils and spray paint skills to create your very own piece of bespoke street art!

No booking required. All welcome.



11:00am – 4:00pm

Flower Crown-Making with Aga Hutcheson

ALL AGES

Join the Wizard of Creation, Aga Hutcheson, for this wonderful hands-on workshop where you'll craft a stunning flower crown. Let your imagination bloom and take home your beautiful creation to treasure.

No booking required. All welcome.



The Creative Zone

11:00am – 4:00pm

Childvision

ALL AGES

Print your own name in braille, try out braille books and learn all about ChildVision's awesome work. One of our favourites every year!



No booking required. All welcome.

11:00am – 4:00pm

Lollipop Tie Dye Workshops

ALL AGES

Add a touch of colour to your life with an art experience that creates joy and brings a smile to everyone. This workshop is not like other ordinary rubber bands and dye workshops... Prepare for the great vibes and a truly fun and artistic adventure.



No booking required. All welcome.

11:00am – 4:00pm

Art and Story-making with Orlaith O'Sullivan

ALL AGES

With booklets of story prompts, you can fill in the blanks and colour your own story and unlock your imagination. A great walk-in workshop for all ages with the brilliant Orlaith O'Sullivan.



No booking required. All welcome.



The Book Clinic in the Castle Wall

11:00am - 3:00pm | All ages | Walk in event

What's your next favourite book? The Book Doctors are here from Children's Books Ireland with their famous Book Clinic – and this year we've got the Clinic Leabhar for great books as Gaeilge. Each child leaves with a Reading Passport with their 'prescription' they can fill in themselves over time.

Sign-up on the day for an appointment.

All welcome!



Dany's Den

Brand new to The Magic of Stories, Dany's Den is a secret space in the walls of the ancient Swords Castle. Inside, you'll find the brilliant Balor Otherworld telling legendary stories that will bring myths and history to life with storytelling sessions for younger ones and also for older children.

Children must be accompanied by an adult.



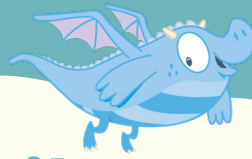
Times:

11.15am: Age: 4+

12pm: Age 8+

1.45pm Age: 4+

2.30pm: Age 8+



Little Library Tent

12:00pm - 2:00pm

ALL AGES

Paint a Pal

with award winning author-illustrators
Niamh Sharkey and Jennifer Farley

Come along with your pal (or sister, or brother, or cousin, or...) and take your seat at the portrait booth! It's all set up so you can make portraits of each other at the same time. Sign 'em, swap 'em, keep 'em – it's up to you!

All welcome, Sign-up on the day for an appointment.



11:00am - 4:00pm

Cup of Focals

Everyone loves Áine Gallagher and having a quick chat as Gaeilge or guessing the word with her funny, punny picture prompts.

Walk-in event. All welcome.

ALL AGES



11:00am - 4:00pm

Tarsila Krüse - The Magic of Stories Artist

Keep your eye out for our very own Magic of Stories artist Tarsila who will be roving around the festival and capturing the epic events through her drawings - and showing off her amazing art.



The Quiet Zone

Sensory Tent for Children, Teens & Adults with Fingal Additional Needs

Our Sensory Tent at The Magic of Stories is a peaceful, inclusive space designed for children, teenagers, and adults with additional needs who may benefit from a calmer, quieter area to unwind and explore.

Inside, you'll find:

- Fiber optic lights & gentle lighting
- Fidget toys, sensory trays & tactile objects
- Kinetic sand, playdough & textures
- Lava tiles & stepping stones
- Beanbags, soft mats & a chill-out zone

Whether you're young or older, the Sensory Tent is open to anyone who needs a sensory break, a moment to regulate, or simply a chance to explore in a safe and supportive environment.



Fingal Additional Needs

is a local community-based service supporting individuals with additional needs and their families.

Open all day, all welcome.



The Magic of Stories is 5 Years Old!

On the 17th September 2022, something very special began in Swords Castle. This was the first ever Fingal Festival of Children's Literature, now known as The Magic of Stories. Bestselling authors and illustrators gathered to tell stories, create art, and share their love of children's literature with the children of Fingal.

Since then, the event has gone from strength to strength. Each year, our brilliant curator Shane Hegarty works with the library team to add new ways to engage with and celebrate children's books. Now in our fifth year, we are celebrating what makes the Magic of Stories truly magical!

Homegrown talent is central to our stellar lineup. Over the years, the Magic of Stories has introduced attendees to sparkling newcomers in the world of Irish children's books as well as featuring award-winning authors and illustrators – and several Laureates na nÓg!

Just like everything run by the libraries, the Magic of Stories is completely free. Children can meet their literary heroes, get creative at one of the many art activities, find a new favourite book and much more, all without any financial barriers. Book gifting is also a big part of the festival and attendees go home with signed books after each event. Anyone who has attended since our first festival could have their own small library by now!

Children's Books Ireland's Book Doctors have been fixtures at the Magic of Stories, "prescribing" the right books to young readers. ChildVision Ireland have brought

accessible literature to the festival and shown attendees how to print their name in braille. For the past two years, we have had ISL interpreters to make the festival even more inclusive, something we are constantly working towards.

The festival atmosphere has grown more spectacular each year. We have had circus performers wandering through the crowd, Áine Gallagher's Cup of Focals engaging children through Irish, A Snail's Tale weaving stories and the Mechanical Theatre playing throughout the day. The castle is decorated with artwork made by children in Fingal libraries, so every year is different and personalised!

This year, we are introducing our new mascot, Dany the Dragon, and her pals - book-loving dragons bringing magic to Swords Castle. Dany was designed by author and illustrator Alan Nolan, a great friend of The Magic of Stories. Alan is also the creator of our very popular

Activity Book, which allows young people to get involved in the magic before the festival begins through games and activities that hint at what's to come on the day. They can also enter our art, poetry, and short story competitions to join in and become authors and illustrators themselves.

The Magic of Stories started with one great idea that has grown bigger and better over five years. We hope that it continues to bring joy to Fingal and engage young readers with Irish children's literature. If you've been attending the festival since 2022, or if this is your first time, we hope you enjoy celebrating with us!



5 Years of Magic!



"I love being part of the Magic of Stories. Fingal County Libraries' commitment to creativity, art and children's books is truly astounding... I hope the Magic of Stories continues to inspire the children of Fingal for many years to come!"

- Niamh Sharkey, author, illustrator and former Laureate na nÓg





"Each year we have brought the Children's Books Ireland Book Clinic to the wonderful Swords Castle to recommend and showcase excellent reads and highlight fantastic Irish artists. We have always enjoyed a very warm welcome from the fantastic young readers of the area as well as the team on-site."

- Elaina Ryan, CEO, Children's Books Ireland



"The Magic of Stories festival is every junior reader's dream come true. How I would have loved this festival to be around when I was a little girl!"

- Sarah Tully (Sarah Sparkles), children's entertainer





"Each year, our Children's Literature students are lucky enough to act as volunteers at this incredible festival. They always leave on a high, feeling truly inspired by their interactions with Ireland's brilliant writers and illustrators."

- Pádraig Whyte, Associate Professor in Children's Literature at Trinity College Dublin and director of the Children's Literature MPhil.





"It is very touching to see our youngest readers getting brilliant book recommendations and our young authors being encouraged by their favourite writers... Magic indeed! What an honour to be part of this."

- Orlaith O'Sullivan, mindfulness teacher and artist at the Magic of Stories Creative Zone.



Brilliant Events

Spot these spectacular entertainers wandering around the festival all day!

The Tall Gent

The Tall Gent is always up for stilt walking. Enjoy juggling, banter, and some very high fives. The Tall Gent has been touring Ireland as a stilt walker and juggler for over 15 years and is regularly praised for his high standards.



Gary The Great

Be amazed as Gary the Great defies gravity by juggling balls, clubs, rings, and plates. Join in on the fun as Gary loves to have all ages help out with tricks. See unicycling and fab displays of skill. This is an act you have to catch!

Brilliant Bubbles

Everyone loves bubbles! Watch shining spheres float freely through the sky as big and small bubbles are released into the air. Join in the fun as everyone is invited to join in the fun.



Lady Long

This spectacular stilt walker brings ribbons and flags with her to create captivating displays. You can also get some very high fives. A fun entertainer who stands tall at every event.



Swords Castle Festival Map



Map Key

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 StoryTent | 6 Little Library Tent |
| 2 Tall-Tales Tent | 7 Dany's Den |
| 3 The Creative Zone | 8 Meet the Author Tent |
| 4 The Chapel | 9 The Quiet Zone |
| 5 The Book Clinic in the Castle Wall | |

Cá bhfuil mo leabharlann is cóngaraí?

Where is my nearest library?

Balbriggan	01 870 4401	balbrigganlibrary@fingal.ie
Baldoyle	01 890 6793	baldoylelibrary@fingal.ie
Blanchardstown	01 890 5560	blanchlibrary@fingal.ie
Donabate	01 890 5609	donabate.library@fingal.ie
Garristown	01 835 5020	garristownlibrary@fingal.ie
Howth	01 890 5026	Howth.library@fingal.ie
Malahide	01 870 4430	malahidelibrary@fingal.ie
Rush	01 870 8414	rushlibrary@fingal.ie
Skerries	01 890 5671	skerrieslibrary.library@fingal.ie
Swords	01 890 5582	swordslibrary@fingal.ie
Mobile Library Service	01 890 6719	mobile.libraries@fingal.ie
Housebound Library Service	01 860 4290	housebound.library@fingal.ie
Local Studies and Archives	01 870 4486	Local.Studies@fingal.ie
Fingal Library eServices	Library.Eservices@fingal.ie	

Tá Leabharlanna Fhine Gall ar na Meáin Shóisialta

Fingal Libraries are on Social Media

