

FIGHTING WORDS

THE WRITE TO RIGHT



Mission Statement

*Our aim is to help children and young people, and adults who did not have this opportunity as children, to discover and harness the power of their own imaginations and creative writing skills. At its core, **Fighting Words** is also about something much broader and more inclusive: it is about using the creative practice of writing and storytelling to strengthen our children and teenagers – from all backgrounds – to be resilient, creative and successful shapers of their own lives.*

2017 REPORT

Fighting Words is a free creative writing organisation whose headquarters is located beside Croke Park in Dublin's north inner city. Co-founded by Roddy Doyle and Seán Love in January 2009, we operate on the premise that creative writing is an essential part of every child's education: that giving children a real dedicated chance and space to explore the limitlessness of their imaginations does great things. The raw skills that are passed on here are some of the key ingredients for succeeding in life with marked improvements in self-expression, literacy, self-esteem and self-confidence. We have no purpose other than providing opportunities to engage their creative talents for as many children as possible, providing free workshops, programmes and publishing. *Fighting Words* worked with 18,000 students during 2017, and since opening has hosted more than 90,000 students.



Marian Keyes at Fighting Words



Students

We work with primary schoolchildren in the mornings and second level students in the afternoons. We host dedicated sessions for children and adults with “additional needs” ranging from mental health issues to intellectual/physical disability to social marginalisation. We also send teams of tutors out to groups who cannot physically come to us, including places of institutional care and juvenile detention centres.

We run free week-long summer camps in more specialised forms of writing for children aged 6-17. This includes fiction, prose, scriptwriting/film-making, playwriting, songwriting, poetry, graphic fiction, feature journalism, online media and radio documentary. We host Write Club, providing mentoring for teenagers who want to take their writing to another level and who come, in their own time, working on their novels and filmscripts.

Volunteers

Tutoring and mentoring is all provided by volunteers, of whom there are 750+ countrywide. All volunteers are subject to interview, reference checking, police vetting and training. Our Child Protection Policy is comprehensive and complies with best practice requirements. Anyone over 18 can apply to be a volunteer, If you are interested in getting involved as a volunteer, please see contact details below.

Demand

Since we opened in Dublin in 2009 students have been coming from every county on the island of Ireland. On the basis of the applications we have received for every programme and workshop we knew we could regularly fill another 4 or 5 centres. In order to try to meet the ongoing demand, more *Fighting Words* venues have been opening around the country.

More *Fighting Words* Venues

Fighting Words opened in Belfast in March 2015, located at the Skainos centre on Lr. Newtownards Road in east Belfast, with workshops also taking place at the Duncairn centre in north Belfast.



Workshop at FW Belfast



Skainos, Belfast

In September 2015, *Fighting Words* opened in Castlebar, Co. Mayo.



Workshop at National Museum of Country Life, Co. Mayo.



In September 2016, *Fighting Words* opened in Co. Wicklow.



Fighting Words in Glencree, Co. Wicklow



In January 2017 *Fighting Words* opened at the Graffiti Theatre in Cork



Fighting Words at Graffiti Theatre, Cork.



And in March 2017 at Kilcornan, Clarinbridge, Co. Galway

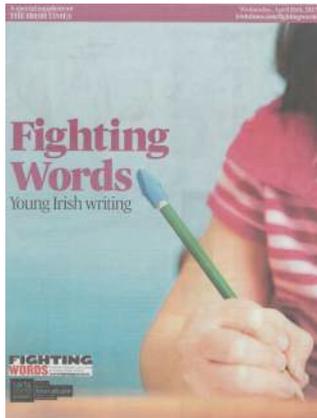


Fighting Words at Kilcornan woods, Clarinbridge, Co. Galway.



Publishing

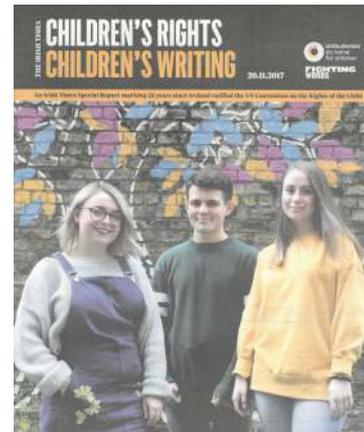
Every primary school child who comes to write a story at *Fighting Words* leaves with their own personalised book of their story, printed in-house. In 2017, 9,000 primary school children around the country received their own free books. In 2017 we also published our award-winning seventh annual magazine in partnership with the Irish Times of new writing by children and young adults. We published *What's the Stories?* an anthology of short stories by 4th Year students from Collinstown Park Community College, Clondalkin, with an Introduction by Marian Keyes - our thirteenth anthology by teenagers. We also published *Next of Kin*, our fifth collection of plays by teenagers in partnership with the Abbey Theatre.



Irish Times/Fighting Words 2017



What's the Stories?



Fighting Words/Children's Ombudsman

Creative Collaborations

Another way in which we have expanded access to *Fighting Words* services has been through creative partnerships with arts, media and educational organisations. These collaborations allow a substantial number of children to take their interest to another level, with greater resources, facilities and expertise generously made available to us. During 2017 these creative partnerships have included Dublin Unesco City of Literature, Dublin City Libraries, the Abbey Theatre, the Irish Times, Science Gallery, Yellow Asylum films, National Print Museum, JAM Media, Axis Ballymun, Marsh's Library, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin City University, Little Museum of Dublin, Croke Park Museum, the Children's Ombudsman and several more. We have received many prestigious awards over the years for the creative output arising from some of these collaborations.



Dublin the ever-changing city is a city often defined by its gregariousness and literary tradition. *Dublin in the Coming Times*, a free, citywide programme of creative writing, set out to harness those two attributes and to creatively engage with ideas of what Dublin might become in the future. This *Anthology of Imagined Futures* showcases some of the magnificent responses from writers and artists of all ages and backgrounds who envisioned the future of their city.



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Dublin in the Coming Times: An Anthology of Imagined Futures

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TIMES

Dublin in the Coming Times, in partnership with Dublin Public Libraries, saw citizens young and not-so-young imagine their city in the future

Finance

Our 2016 audited accounts are available on our website beside this document. Our 2017 accounts will be available by June 2018.

Fighting Words is funded primarily by philanthropic individuals and organisations. though we also receive support from Dublin City Council and the Arts Council We work with thousands of children, young adults and people of all ages with “additional needs” every year, providing a completely free service for all. Demand for the service is such that we are constantly booked out a year ahead. There are now six *Fighting Words* venues in Ireland, and more will open during 2018. If you are interested to help us do that, or to help keep the current show on the road, or interested in getting involved as a volunteer, please get in touch.

Governance

Governance information is all available on our website on the same page as this document. Policies on Child Protection, Equal Opportunities, Data protection and privacy are available on our homepage.

Feedback and Complaints

Fighting Words is committed to ensuring that all our communications and dealings with the general public and our supporters are of the highest possible standard. We listen and respond to the views of the general public and our supporters so that we can continue to improve.

Fighting Words welcomes both positive and negative feedback. Therefore we aim to ensure that:

- it is as easy as possible to make a complaint;
- we treat as a complaint any clear expression of dissatisfaction with our operations which calls for a response;
- we treat it seriously whether it is made by telephone, letter, fax, email or in person;
- we deal with it quickly and politely;
- we respond accordingly - for example, with an explanation, or an apology where we have got things wrong, and information on any action taken, etc;
- we learn from complaints, use them to improve, and monitor them at board level.

If you have feedback or a complaint

If you have a complaint about any aspect of our work, you can contact Mr. Sean Love, Executive Director, in writing or by telephone, who will deal with your complaint in the first instance.

Write to:

The Executive Director
 Fighting Words
 12-16 Behan Square
 Russell Street
 Dublin 1
 Tel: 353 1 8944576
 Email: info@fightingwords.ie

We are open Monday to Friday from 8am to 6pm.

What happens next?

If you complain in person or over the phone, we will try to resolve the issue there and then. Similarly, if you complain by email or in writing, we will always acknowledge your complaint within 7 days and do everything we can to resolve it within 21 days. If this is not possible, we will explain why and provide a new timeframe.

What if the complaint is not resolved?

If you are not happy with our response, you may get in touch again with the Chairperson of *Fighting Words*. The Chairperson will ensure that your appeal is considered at board level and will respond within 2 weeks of this consideration by board members.

Roddy Doyle & Seán Love

FOUNDERS

FIGHTING WORDS

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IRELAND

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FIGHTING WORDS COMPANY LIMITED BY GUARANTEE No. 437119

Registered Charity CHY18262

DECEMBER 2017