

Introduction

The Ark is a dedicated cultural centre for children. Founded in 1995, we create opportunities for children, along with their families and friends or with their school, to discover and love art.

Through our work with leading Irish and international artists, children can attend and enjoy performances in our unique child-sized theatre and via online channels, view engaging exhibitions or participate in creative workshops. The Ark actively advocates for children's right to art and culture and advocates as rights holders.

The Ark mission, vision and values are inspired by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which was ratified by Ireland in 1992. In particular by article 31:

"States Parties shall respect and promote the right of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity."

Key to The Ark's rights respecting ethos is our focus on the inclusion of **all** children. It is for this reason that, in alignment with *The Ark's Strategy Statement (2021-2023)* we have reviewed and revised our 2018 Diversity and Inclusion Policy to develop this Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

Fundamentally, we wish to ensure that all children have access, by whatever means, to visit, participate and enjoy all the artistic experiences we offer and that a diverse range of artists and staff work at The Ark. This revised policy has been developed with the input of Ark staff, artists, The Ark Children's Council and The Ark Board.

In line with sector best practice, and with equality legislation including the Employment Equality Acts (1998-2015) and Equal Status Acts (2000-2015), as well as the Public Sector Equality and Human Rights Duty (Section 42 of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Act 2014), The Ark actively seeks to ensure equality in terms of access and engagement regardless of gender, race (including ethnicity), age, orientation, membership of the Traveller Community, socio-economic status, family or civil status, disability, or religion.

In particular, The Ark is keen to welcome children who experience barriers to arts participation and engagement, such as migrant and refugee children, and vulnerable and disadvantaged children, with their families.

The Ark's Policy on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - what does it mean to us?

At the heart of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is our commitment to ensuring that all children have access to The Ark and the artistic experiences we offer.

Aligned to the four pillars of The Ark's Strategy, this policy focuses on delivering our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion goals in the following areas:

1. Excellence: Create brilliant art experiences for children.
2. Engagement: Ensure that more children experience art through The Ark.
3. Sustainability: Build the infrastructure and capabilities that ensure The Ark's future as a cultural centre and resource for children.
4. Advocacy: Advance children's right to art and culture.

Each pillar is defined by an overarching principle, which is underpinned by key actions in the policy's implementation plan.

Pillar 1: Excellence

The Ark is founded on the principle that children are entitled to great art made especially for them. Our particular focus is on enabling the widest diversity of artists to make outstanding and experimental art for children. We believe that in order to do so, we must take a proactive approach to promoting diversity across our programming, as well as finding new ways for artists to engage with diverse audiences. To measure our progress, we will also actively monitor representation and report on it annually.

Furthermore, we will continue our ongoing commitment to fair and equitable remuneration for all artists across all disciplines, by maintaining a consistent focus on best sectoral practice.

Pillar 2: Engagement

Ensuring that more children experience art is at the heart of everything we do, and their voices are critical to every element of our work. Over the next few years, we will build on our experience and achievements in opening up opportunities for children to experience art. This will involve the development and expansion of decision-making structures, including a new Advisory Group comprised of artists with disabilities. We will continue to promote participative decision-making in our work through the Children's Council. Through our Ark Access programme, we will actively seek to increase free opportunities for children to engage with The Ark, and continuously pursue collaborative partnerships that promote inclusion.

Pillar 3: Sustainability

Enhancing The Ark's infrastructure and knowledge is key to developing our organisation and our people, now and into the future. We are cognisant of the need to maintain an active focus on accessibility, across our physical and digital infrastructure, and in our team's knowledge and capability.

Alongside our own work, we will also partner with all relevant stakeholders to champion access modifications to the local area.

Pillar 4 : Advocacy

We are passionate about advancing children's right to art and culture. As a duty bearer, The Ark plays a key advocacy role in building awareness of this right. We do this by promoting the voice of the child, through participative decision-making as well as our work with partners across education, media, government and the arts.

Through our programming, we seek to champion diverse narratives and experiences, through exciting new work for children that resonates with their individual perspectives. On an ongoing basis, we assess how best to research and understand our audiences, in order to promote children's engagement in the arts.

Our People

The Ark is a vibrant, fun and dynamic organisation, led and managed by a passionate and committed team. We wish to build a team — encompassing staff, Board, and artists — that is representative of the wide diversity of our society. In order to do so, we will continue to promote The Ark as an employer of choice for all potential employees, by effectively communicating our interest in receiving applications from a diverse pool of candidates when vacancies arise. We will also ensure

that Board diversity is a priority in succession planning.

We will ensure that our marketing, advertising and other relevant materials represent and celebrate the diversity of our artists, audiences and colleagues.

The Ark's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Promise - how will we implement and monitor this policy?

As with any policy, plan or strategy – ultimately its success will be determined by how effectively it is implemented and monitored. In order to ensure The Ark's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy's objectives are measured and progress monitored, we will mainstream reporting throughout all organisational meeting agendas, including team and Board meetings. Additionally, we will actively solicit feedback, insight and ideas on the policy and its progress from The Ark's Children's Council and other relevant working groups or structures, as appropriate.

Policy Timeframe

The Ark's Diversity and Inclusion Policy runs concurrently with *The Ark Strategy Statement: 2021-2023*, and will be reviewed in 2023, at the conclusion point of the strategy.