



CASE STUDY

Sandford Award Criteria 3

The programme has been developed through consultation with educational customers and advisers

Festival of Kerry Culture at Muckross Traditional Farms, Republic of Ireland



The Féile Chultúir Chiarraí (Festival of Kerry Culture) is held annually over 5 days in May. It is hosted by Muckross Traditional Farms, which are located in the grounds of Muckross House in Killarney National Park. It is organised and delivered jointly between teams of staff from Muckross House Research Library and Muckross Traditional Farms along with the curriculum support of a Principal Teacher from a local primary school. This popular festival for Irish primary school children in the third to sixth classes (8-12 year olds) explores the traditions, customs and chores of everyday country life in 1930s and 1940s Kerry before rural electrification changed things.

The Session:

On the day of observation there were four school groups booked to attend the festival and 88 children were expected. Each group arrived by coach and were met in the car park by members of the Muckross House Research Library team who were to be their chaperones for the day. The library team is largely made up of historians, archaeologists, and archivists and the team leader – the Research and Education Officer - had carefully assigned each of the members of her team to a different class and provided them with a timetable and rotation plan for the workshops. The library team members informed the judge that they all really enjoy the week-long festival and see it as an exciting and integral part of their work on the Muckross House estate. The Farm and Events Manager – originally from a farming background – was also on hand at this point to help out with the drop-off and parking logistics and the organisation of the delivery staff.

Sandford Award Judge's Comments

'The festival is linked to the current Irish Curaclam na Bunscoile (Primary School Curriculum) for which the staff have additional guidance and support from a Principal Teacher in Killarney.'

'The Trustees and the Manager of Muckross House are key stakeholders and give full backing to the festival. Members of the staff teams from both Muckross Traditional Farms and Muckross House Research Library are fully engaged with festival planning and delivery during the week itself. The festival has run since 2001 and the Principal Teacher of one of the largest primary schools in Killarney has been there with her expert curriculum support, and other guidance regarding school and pupil management, from the beginning.'

'Wider support is drawn from guest delivery specialists (one of whom works extensively with the Country Life division of the National Museum of Ireland) and from consultation with the Department of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore at University College Dublin.'

'Feedback from teachers and children is taken 'on the spot' during the festival by members of the Research Library and tweaks are made accordingly. A 'pupil voice' is captured by an annual competition that invites those that have attended the festival to describe the activity they enjoyed best in either a story, a poem, or a drawing. This gives the library staff an opportunity to measure the quality of what the children are taking in and make changes to the programme if necessary. The completed competition examples from the 2017 festival that I saw – presented in both English and Irish – were excellent.'

'The festival is very popular and occupancy is usually at full capacity (up to 100 children a day) with many schools returning year after year. A simple evaluation form is mailed out to the teachers after the festival and the return rate is a healthy 90%. Likewise, the competition draws a lot of attention and winners are invited to a prize giving ceremony held on the Muckross estate.'