

FÍS Film Awards

The Pupils of 5th class, in Ballyadams National School, were overjoyed when they were presented with the Aileen Mac Keogh Award for Outstanding Achievement in the area of film making at the recent FIS Film Festival in The Helix for their film 'Nightmare in Toy Town'. Their film also received the award for 'Best Adaptation'. This is the school's fourth time to attend the National Film Awards and their first time to win the overall award.

FÍS is a national project through which pupils are taught film production skills. They are encouraged to use these skills to create cinematic stories to share with other children. Their stories link the children's technological skills to a broad spectrum of curricular objectives across the Primary Curriculum, Language and Literacy, Drama, Geography, History and Science to name but a few.

One of the highlights of the project is the annual regional screening, when each group see their film on the big screen in front of an audience of their peers. The children of Laois and Offaly are fortunate to receive the full premiere treatment when their films are screened in The Storm Cinema each May. Films are then forwarded to the national judging panel. This panel have the unenviable task of choosing just 24 for inclusion in the annual FÍS Film Festival held in November. Schools travel from as far away as The Beara Peninsula to attend and all present receive the red-carpet treatment. This year Laois was well represented as the children of Ballyadams were joined by Gealscoil tSlí Dála,

Borris-in-Ossary, whose film ‘An Gorta Mór’ received the award for best Irish Language Film.

Following a life-long commitment to the arts and culture, President Michael D Higgins chose , during his first week of office, to accept an invitation to attend the award giving ceremony, honouring not only the 24 schools whose films received special recognition, but all of the children throughout Ireland who had engaged with the FÍS project in 2010.

When speaking to the children about the importance of their work, President Higgins spoke of a world in which media plays such an integral part and encouraged all present to remember that in such a world they should strive to “be the arrow, not the target’, a message being spread by all those present through their schools today. Following the President’s speech, the assembled schools waited in anticipation to see whose film would receive the Outstanding Film of the Year Award. The children from 5th Class could hardly believe it as they were ushered onto the stage to meet President Higgins and accept their award. Following the all-important photographs, various groups were interviewed for television and radio and later on that evening excitement turned to disbelief when the children saw themselves on the RTE 9 o’clock news. It was most certainly a day to remember; an exciting day out at the ‘Junior Oscars’! Maybe this is just the beginning for some of these young film makers!