

children's  
books ireland  
reading list

# STARTING SCHOOL

AGE RANGE 2-8

#EveryChildaReader



children's  
books  
ireland  
every child a reader



**Overall Editor & Production:** Jenny Murray  
**Content:** Juliette Saumande and Claire M. Dunne  
**Design:** fintanwall.com

**Children's Books Ireland Team/Foireann Leabhair Pháistí Éireann:**

**CEO:** Elaina Ryan

**Deputy CEO:** Jenny Murray

**Programme & Events Manager:** Aoife Murray

**Children & Young People's Projects Manager:** Daiden O'Regan

**Marketing & Development Manager:** Julie Jones

**Laureate na nÓg Project Manager:** Aingeala Flannery

**Administrator & Office Manager:** Ciara Houlihan

**Research & Evaluation Officer:** Mairéad Mooney

**Awards Administrator:** Julianne Siron

**Children's Books Ireland Board/Bord Leabhair Pháistí Éireann:**

Jane Alger, Elena Browne, David Field, Patricia Forde, Eileen Jackson, Eddie Murtagh, Anne O'Gorman, John O'Donnell, Patrick Thorpe and Sarah Williams

**Children's Books Ireland/Leabhair Pháistí Éireann**

receives financial assistance from

**The Arts Council/An Chomhairle Ealaíon,**

70 Merrion Square,

Dublin 2, Ireland

**Children's Books Ireland/Leabhair Pháistí Éireann**

First Floor, 17 North Great Georges Street, Dublin 1, D01 R2F1

Telephone: 00 353 1 8727475

info@childrensbooksireland.ie

childrensbooksireland.ie

**About Children's Books Ireland**

At Children's Books Ireland, we believe that every child should have access to the joy of reading, regardless of their circumstances. Our mission is to make books central to every child's life on the island of Ireland. We work with families, teachers, libraries, publishers and communities all across the island to get books into children's hands and to inform adults who can make a big impact on their reading. We advocate for the changes Ireland needs to grow a new generation of readers, and we support artists so that they can make excellent work for children and young people. Sign up to our newsletter to stay in touch!

**childrensbooksireland.ie**

**#EveryChildAReader**

 **@KidsBooksIrel**

 **@kidsbooksirel**

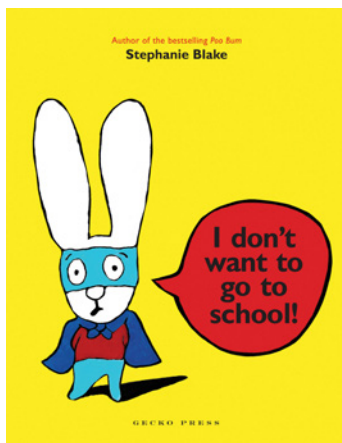
 **@childrensbooksireland**

 **Children's Books Ireland**

**About this themed book list**

This is a curated list of titles our expert reviewers recommend under the assigned theme. It is by no means an exhaustive list and we have tried, where possible, to include a spread across age ranges and genres under the theme. Our policy is to include titles dating from five years to date in English and ten years to date in the Irish language. Any titles by an Irish author, illustrator, publisher or in the Irish language will be denoted with a shamrock. After initial publication, these lists will be revisited annually and updated with new titles where suitable. Go to **childrensbooksireland.ie** for more themed book lists and resources.

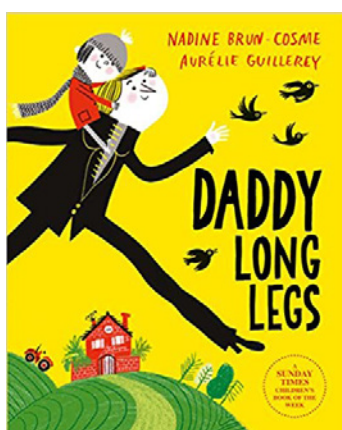




**STEPHANIE BLAKE** translated by **LINDA BURGESS**  
**I DON'T WANT TO GO TO SCHOOL!**

GECKO PRESS 2015 (PBK) 32PP £9.99 ISBN 9781877579080

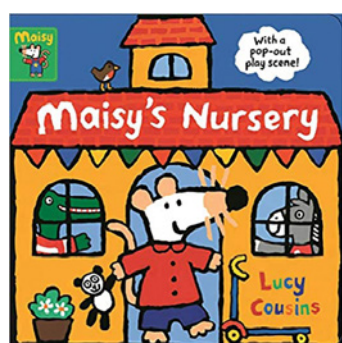
Simon is a bunny who is often found wearing his Super Rabbit costume. But will it be enough to give him the extra boost of confidence he needs to face his first day of (pre) school? Simon comes across as a cheeky and lovable youngster, a real character! The repetition and the comic-like layout in places will ensure that young readers soon feel confident enough to 'read' the book themselves. And there's no stopping them after that! (Age 2–4)



**NADINE BRUN-COSME** illustrated by **AURÉLIE GUILLEREY**  
**DADDY LONG LEGS**

TWO HOOTS 2018 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781509842728

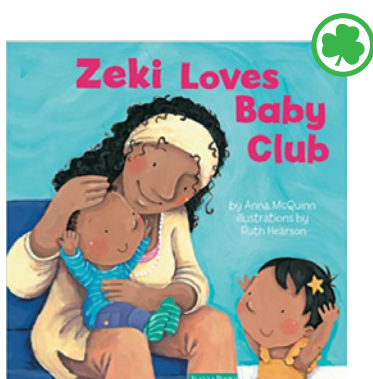
Matty worries that Daddy will not be able to pick him up from nursery because of some car trouble. But Daddy can think of several zany ways he could reach him ... on teddy bear back or sailing down the stream made by the neighbour's hose. No matter the obstacle, Daddy will come for Matty. This delightful book wonderfully addresses the commonly felt anxiety of pre-schoolers at drop-off time. This book is perfect for story time read-aloud, particularly for anxious pre-schoolers who find it hard to say goodbye. (Age 2–4)



**LUCY COUSINS**  
**MAISY'S NURSERY**

WALKER BOOKS 2019 (BOARD) 16PP £7.99 ISBN 9781406384307

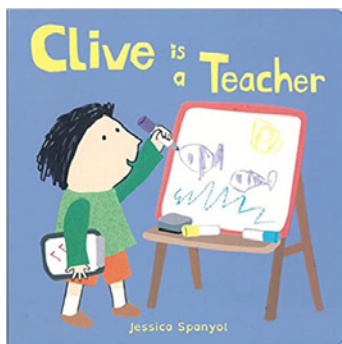
Through the iconic figure of Maisy the mouse, Cousins gives us a relaxed tour of preschool. We follow Maisy over a day filled with friends and things to do, from playing with blocks to painting pictures and 'trying to count to five'. A bright storybook full of familiar things, this comes with a sturdy pop-out play scene for hours of beyond-the-book fun. This child-friendly look at a day in the life of a preschooler is one that newcomers and seasoned pros alike will be happy to share. (Age 2–4)



**ANNA McQUINN** illustrated by **RUTH HEARSON**  
**ZEKI LOVES BABY CLUB**

ALANNA BOOKS 2014 (PBK) 24PP £7.99 ISBN 9781907825101

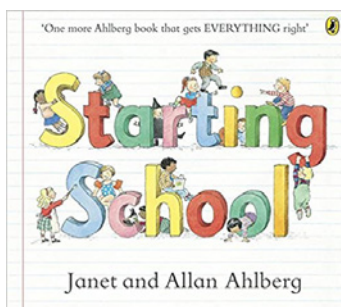
Sturdy and bursting with fantastically warm and inclusive illustrations, the Zeki books make for a great introduction to the many 'firsts' your little one will go through, from the medical check-up to going swimming. In *Zeki Loves Baby Club*, our hero can't wait to go through the routine of a parent and toddler group that makes lots of space for songs, games and cuddles. Expect to sing along and rehearse all your head-shoulders-knees-and-toes move! (Age 2–4)



**JESSICA SPANYOL**  
**CLIVE IS A TEACHER**

CHILD'S PLAY 2017 (BOARD) 14PP £4.99 ISBN 9781846439902

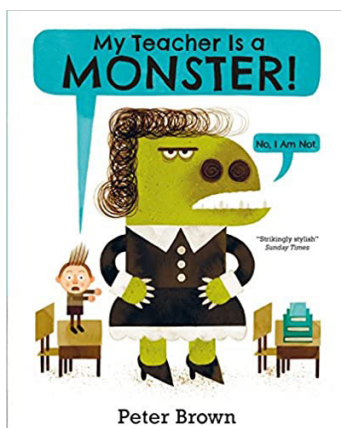
Today, Clive is a teacher. He uses special markers on the white board, he teaches Cat about snails, he reads a story to Asif and calls for snack time. Clive in turns leads by example, joins into activities initiated by others and lets his 'pupils' decide for themselves what to play with: the ideal teacher! The simple text and relatable situations will spark numerous conversations between child and adult readers, and the illustrations are brilliantly inclusive. (Age 2–4)



**JANET and ALLAN AHLBERG**  
**STARTING SCHOOL**

PENGUIN RANDOMHOUSE (PUFFIN BOOKS) 2013 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9780723273462

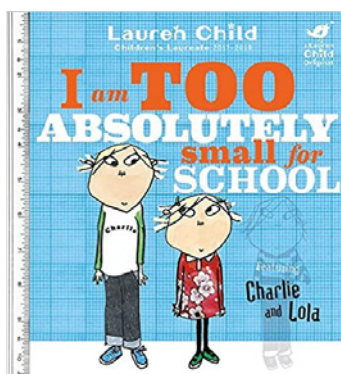
In this brilliant picturebook, the Ahlbergs take us through a class's first term at school, all the way from their first day to their school nativity play and the Christmas break. This wonderful book provides answers for all sorts of questions a new student might have about how schools work and what their day is going to be like. A great read from the creators of classics such as *The Jolly Postman*, *Peepo!* and *Each Peach Pear Plum*. (Age 2–5)



**PETER BROWN**  
**MY TEACHER IS A MONSTER! (NO, I AM NOT)**

TWO HOOTS 2014 (PBK) 40PP £6.99 ISBN 9781509831234

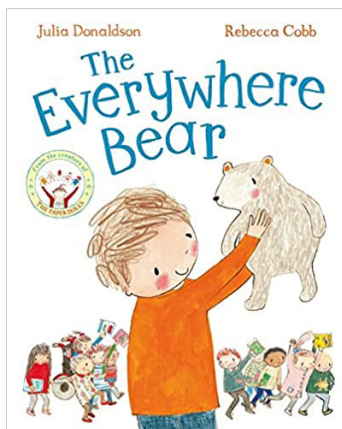
Bobby is absolutely convinced that his teacher, Ms. Kirby, is a monster, a big, green, reptilian monster, until, one day, he meets her at the park and realises there might be more to her than stomping and roaring, and disapproving of paper airplanes in class. A funny story with an important message about misjudging others and, (SPOILER ALERT) seeing that even teachers are people too. (Age 2–5)



**LAUREN CHILD**  
**CHARLIE AND LOLA:**  
**I AM TOO ABSOLUTELY SMALL FOR SCHOOL**

ORCHARD BOOKS 2017 (BOARD) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781408351550

This Charlie and Lola book follows Lola as she insists that she is much too small to be starting school and has far too much to do at home anyway. Of course, big brother Charlie helps to put her at ease. A wonderful story for any child in need of a little reassurance, full of Lauren Child's stylish mixed-media illustrations and the humour that is integral to the Charlie and Lola series. (Age 2–5)



**JULIA DONALDSON** illustrated by **REBECCA COBB**  
**THE EVERYWHERE BEAR**

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781447280743

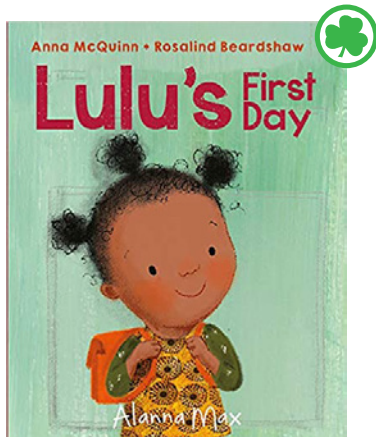
*The Everywhere Bear* is a great introduction to school and gives children an idea of what others do at home through the bear's travels. He even gets lost on his way to school and has his own big adventure. This rhythmic, rhyming and humorous story from Donaldson is brought to life by Cobb's beautiful illustrations. The cadence of the text when read aloud is a joy! Once your little one starts school, it won't be long until they are reading this one to themselves. (Age 2–5)



**CORI DOERRFELD**  
**SAY GOODBYE ... SAY HELLO**

SCALLYWAG PRESS 2020 (HBK) 40PP £12.99 ISBN 9781912650439

Little changes can be a cause of worry for little people. But from leaving Mum at the school bus, to the sad departure of a family pet, every heartfelt goodbye opens a door of opportunity – full of hope, friendship and new adventure. With a strong focus on starting school, delightful vignettes capture the emotional ups and downs that our connections to others can bring. It is refreshing to see little ones not afraid to cry, be scared or fill their hearts with love. (Age 3–6)



**ANNA McQUINN** illustrated by **ROSALIND BEARDSHAW**  
**LULU'S FIRST DAY**

ALANNA MAX 2019 (HBK) 32PP £11.99 ISBN 9781907825217

Part of Anna McQuinn's series of picturebooks featuring the book-loving Lulu sees her preparing for her first day of school and thoroughly enjoying the experience. The full-page illustrations are lavish, bright and colourful, and the subject matter will appeal greatly to those preparing to start school or kindergarten. Readers can join in the fun as Lulu chooses her clothes, packs her schoolbag and makes new friends. (Age 3–6)



**LYDIA MONKS**  
**MOUSE'S BIG DAY**

MACMILLAN CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2017 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781509828432

It is Mouse's first day at school and he is full of worry and stress. But when he meets some new, kind and encouraging friends, he soon comes to realise that school is a lot more fun than he thought! With beautiful, bright illustrations, this warm and funny story is a must read for those starting school or moving to a new school. It teaches us that sometimes the things we fear aren't so bad after all, if we just give them a try! (Age 3–6)

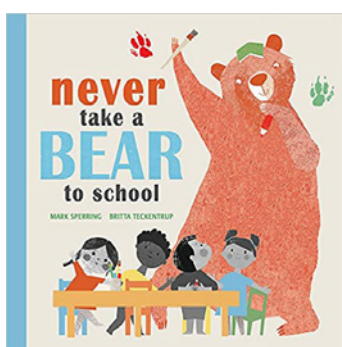




**ALEXANDRA PENFOLD** illustrated by **SUZANNE KAUFMAN**  
**ALL ARE WELCOME**

BLOOMSBURY CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2019 (PBK) 40PP £6.99 ISBN 9781526604071

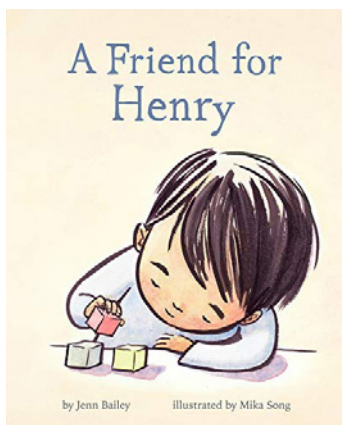
A beautiful book about a school where everyone is welcome no matter where they're from or what they look like. We follow this wonderfully inclusive class through a day at school as the community prepares to celebrate Lunar New Year together and learn from each other's traditions. With gloriously colourful illustrations that burst with warmth, this is a welcoming picturebook that celebrates diversity and gives encouragement and support to all kids. (Age 3–6)



**MARK SPERRIN** illustrated by **BRITTA TECKENTRUP**  
**NEVER TAKE A BEAR TO SCHOOL**

ORCHARD BOOKS 2017 (HBK) 32PP £12.99 ISBN 9781408339725

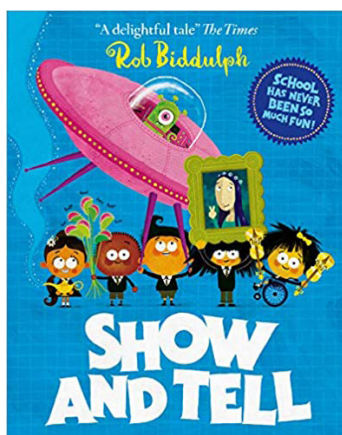
What if you brought your bear to school on your first day? Not the teddy kind, the grizzly kind! It could be a comfort ... or a complete fiasco! A perfect story for little people starting school, explaining through rhythmic storytelling what to expect on their new adventure. Mark Sperring tells the tale of a rogue bear and Britta Teckentrup provides wonderful illustrations to accompany it. This book is enjoyable to read aloud and will help children to navigate this daunting next step with positivity and humour. (Age 3–6)



**JENN BAILEY** illustrated by **MIKA SONG**  
**A FRIEND FOR HENRY**

CHRONICLE BOOKS 2019 (HBK) 36PP £11.99 ISBN 9781452167916

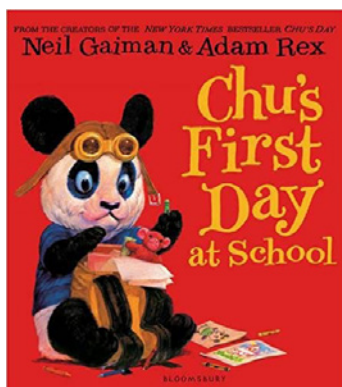
In this story the reader is immersed in Henry's world, a place where it's difficult to find a like-minded friend. The story shows the daily sensory and interpersonal challenges that a child with autism may need to navigate. It gently guides the reader through these moments and ends with a sweet connection to another person. The illustrations echo the gentle message, with their inky style and simple clarity. (Age 4–7)



**ROB BIDDULPH**  
**SHOW AND TELL**

HARPERCOLLINS CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2019 (PBK) 32PP £12.99 ISBN 9780008317911

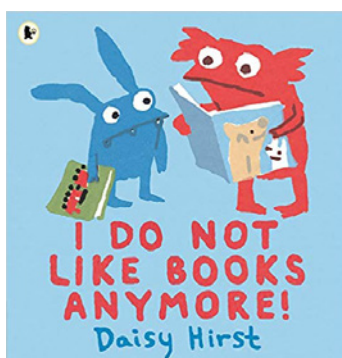
A wonderful story from Rob Biddulph about a class's extremely unique show and tell. In this beautifully illustrated picturebook the objects on display grow more and more elaborate as the students compete to win the prize for the most impressive presentation. Lively, textured illustrations depict twenty-five diverse children whose offerings include Big Ben and even the moon! A great book to show children that sometimes the smallest, most unassuming things are the most magical and that each of us has something to offer. (Age 4–7)



**NEIL GAIMAN and ADAM REX**  
**CHU'S FIRST DAY AT SCHOOL**

HARPERCOLLINS CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2015 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781408847046

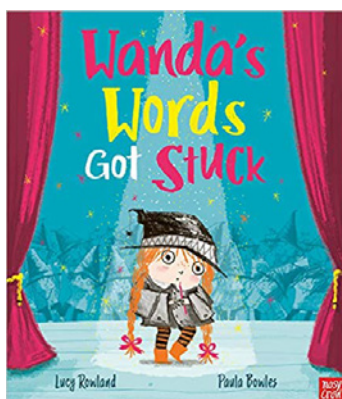
In the second of the Chu books from the team of Gaiman and Rex, we follow Chu the young panda during his first day of school. Chu is worried: will the other kids be nice? will they like him? Will he find the courage to speak up in front of everybody? And what will they make of his rather ... explosive talent? A funny story about the fear of not fitting in at school, sure to make children laugh and put them at ease. (Age 4–7)



**DAISY HIRST**  
**I DO NOT LIKE BOOKS ANYMORE!**

WALKER BOOKS 2018 (PBK) 40PP £11.99 ISBN 9781406382914

Natalie loves books and stories and is delighted to be starting school. Now she will, at last, be able to read all the books in the world wherever and whenever she wants! Alas, things are not as simple as she had hoped and soon Natalie is overwhelmed by text that resists deciphering and insipid stories about cats who sat on mats. Hirst depicts Natalie's frustration with heaps of humour and empathy, and offers a solution you too can try at home ... (Age 4–7)



**LUCY ROWLAND illustrated by PAULA BOWLES**  
**WANDA'S WORDS GOT STUCK**

NOSY CROW SEPT 2020 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781788006811

Wanda the Witch finds her voice in this delightfully illustrated picturebook. Wanda can't find her words, but when another shy witch joins her class, she and Lou find they don't need many words to strike up a friendship. When the talent show goes wrong, Wanda discovers she can use her voice when she needs it most. An engaging story about feeling shy and learning how to use your voice, illustrated in a textured, crayon style that is sure to appeal to young children. (Age 4–7)



**MO WILLEMS**  
**THE PIGEON HAS TO GO TO SCHOOL!**

WALKER BOOKS 2019 (PBK) 40PP £6.99 ISBN 9781406389012

Pigeon is back and this time he absolutely HAS to go to school. However, he is convinced that school is not for him. After all, doesn't he already know everything? And school starts in the morning and you know what he's like in the mornings (not pretty!). Pigeon has so many reasons why he shouldn't go to school. Is there anything that might help him change his mind? A brilliant read-aloud book with simple and distinctive illustrations and the pigeon's brilliantly funny voice. (Age 4–7)

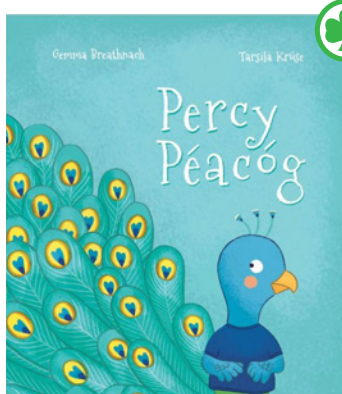




**DAVINA BELL** illustrated by **ALLISON COLPOYS**  
**ALL THE WAYS TO BE SMART**

SCRIBE PUBLICATIONS 2019 (HBK) 32PP £11.99 ISBN 9781911617556

This is a great big hug of a book. It affirms, empowers and loves children. Different kinds of intelligence are named and elevated: from emotional intelligence to creativity, self-awareness, physical prowess, from critical thinking to scientific curiosity and more. Of particular note is the care taken to avoid perfectionism. The thing that unites all these children is their sense of joy in engaging with something they love. The reward they get is this joy alone. A wonderful, helpful and loving book. (Age 4–7)



**GEMMA BREATHNACH** maisithe ag **TARSILA KRÜSE**  
**PERCY PÉACÓG**

FUTA FATA 2018 (BOG) 32LCH €9.50 ISBN 9781910945414

Scéal cumhachtach simplí é seo a dhéanann plé ar dheacrachtaí páistí agus iad ag tosú ar scoil. Tugann an scéal teachtaireacht dhearfach do pháistí gur chóir na rudaí atá speisialta fúthu a cheiliúradh. Tá dathanna mealltacha geala in úsáid síos tríd an leabhar. Tá nasc éifeachtach idir an téacs agus na híomhánna; gluaiseann siad le chéile ó thús deireadh an scéil. Leanaimid Percy, carachtar atá faiteach ach a léiríonn crógacht agus féinmhuinín faoi dheireadh an scéil. Beidh sé iontach furasta do pháistí ionbhá a bheith acu leis. (Aois 5–8)



**KERSTIN BRICHZIN** illustrated by **IGOR KUPRIN**  
**FELIX'S NEW SKIRT**

MINEDITION 2018 (HBK) 32PP £12.99 ISBN 9789888341580

Felix likes wearing skirts. He likes the way they feel and how he's more comfortable in them. Everything is easier when he wears them. But when he starts school, he realises not everyone feels the same and he must believe in himself like never before. This is a wonderful picturebook about self-acceptance and family love. Igor Kuprin's illustrations have a timeless, dream-like feel, along with a fluidity that especially draws the eye to the skirts and dresses. Highly recommended. (Age 5–8)

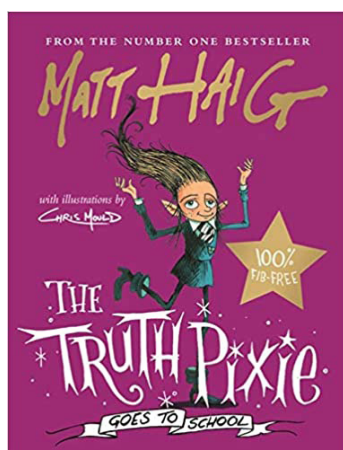


**MARIE-LOUISE FITZPATRICK**  
**THE NEW KID**

HODDER CHILDREN'S BOOKS 2015 (PBK) 32PP £6.99 ISBN 9781444908190

Ellie is the new girl in town and even though the other kids have asked her out to play, they laugh at her and make her feel excluded. But Ellie's got a big imagination and it isn't long before the other children are following her lead. Great for any child moving schools or worried about making friends and not fitting in, with an equally important message for other children about empathy and the power they have to make newcomers feel welcome. (Age 5–8)

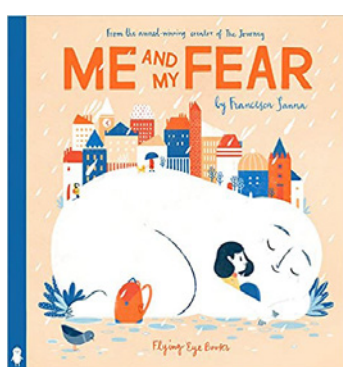




**MATT HAIG** illustrated by **CHRIS MOULD**  
**THE TRUTH PIXIE GOES TO SCHOOL**

CANONGATE BOOKS 2019 (HBK) 128PP £9.99 ISBN 9781786898265

Truth Pixie's back and she's bringing her brutal honesty to school with Ada. A true friend speaks the truth, even when it's hard to hear. Ada struggles with many problems at home, not to mention starting at a new school and the rollercoaster of self-acceptance. Bold gothic illustrations grace the pages, while spirited rhymes peak and trough at a frenetic pace. The Truth Pixie arms children with a workable philosophy on life. It's not happy ever after – it's sometimes happy and sometimes hard and that's OK. (Age 5–8)



**FRANCESCA SANNA**  
**ME AND MY FEAR**

FLYING EYE BOOKS 2018 (HBK) 40PP £12.99 ISBN 9781911171539

A young girl has travelled to a new country with her little secret friend, Fear. But since they've arrived, Fear isn't so little anymore. She starts a new school and Fear tells her to be alone and afraid. But then she meets a boy who also has a secret friend. When they share their fears, the world doesn't seem like such a scary place; everyone has a secret fear. This heartwarming, hopeful story with its bold, vibrant illustrations relays a message of friendship and courage. (Age 5–8)



**MÁIRE ZEPF** maisithe ag **TARSILA KRÜSE**  
**NÁ GABH AR SCOIL!**

FUTA FATA 2015 (CRUA) 26LCH €9.95 ISBN 9781906907983

Nuair a thagann an lá mór faoi dheireadh, an chéad lá ar scoil don bhéirín óg seo, tá go leor de na gnáthmhothúcháin le fáil sa teaghlach ach an é Cólín nó a mháthair atá in umar na haimléise faoi? Is scéal siamsúil é ina léirítear an malartú ról idir páiste agus tuismitheoir ar bhealach atá éasca do dhaoine óga agus aosta ionannú a dhéanamh leis. Is cinnte go mbainfidh sé saobhgháire asat le léaráidí teolaí agus téacs a mhúsclaíonn raidhse mothúchán ionat. (Aois 5–8)



**HARRIET MUNCASTER**  
**ISADORA MOON GOES TO SCHOOL**

OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS 2016 (PBK) 128PP £5.99 ISBN 9780192744319

Isadora Moon is half fairy, half vampire and it's now time for her to go to school. But which one will she choose? Vampire school, where her dad went, and where she can indulge in her love of bats and the dark? Or fairy school, like her mam, where she can be as pink as she likes and use her magic wand? School-bound readers will enjoy Isadora's whimsical education options and feel reassured that if she can find her own space, then so can they. (Age 6–8)

# children's books ireland reading list

## STARTING SCHOOL

### AGE RANGE 2-8

Children's Books Ireland produced this resource with the expert assistance of Juliette Saumande and Claire M. Dunne. We also wish to acknowledge the work of our *Inis* magazine and *Recommended Reads Guide* reviewers.

**childrensbooksireland.ie**

*This list was published in 2020.*

Follow us on social media!

-  childrensbooksireland
-  @KidsBooksIrel
-  @kidsbooksirel
-  CBI-Children's Books Ireland

the arts  
council  
na chomhairle  
ealaíon

funding  
**literature**  
artscouncil.ie



children's  
books  
ireland  
every child a reader