

Emer McVeety

Laochra Academy



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It was while Emer McVeety was teaching in Australia that she saw the effectiveness of a model in which childcare service providers work in collaboration with primary school communities to offer onsite before and after school care throughout the academic year, and camp care during school holidays.

Coming back to her native Cavan in 2022, Emer set about exploring the possibility of applying this model in local schools. She was also pleased to find that the government was offering a national childcare subsidy to parents wishing to avail of this kind of service.

"I set up Laochra Academy, in May 2023 and reached an agreement with the first school I approached, emphasising both the need and benefit of such a service. We started working with them in September 2023 and within a month a principal from another school asked that we set up there as well. In July 2023, we opened our third location in the largest school in Cavan with 500 students, 72 of which we cater for each day. We're also starting in two further schools at the start of the next academic year," says Emer, who currently employs 20-plus staff in variety of admin and childcare roles.

A master's in educational management and leadership in DCU prior to departing for Australia revealed to Emer the transformational effects that autonomy and choice can have on children. Implementing that research in a real-life setting has worked wonderfully for the company and the children in its care.

"At snack time, there's platters, so children choose what goes on their plate. For activities, there's a range of choice. We are proud to have created spaces in which children build confidence, express themselves, and have their views valued," she says.

She continues: "The network I developed through ACORNS helped me to realise the need to get the governance, compliance and quality assurance pieces right from the outset."

