

Northern Ireland Assembly Art Competition, Autumn Term, 2026

Closing Date – Friday 23 October (5pm)

Extra Information for Teachers

See poster attached about our biennial art competition for KS2 pupils.

The theme for the 2026 competition is 'Northern Ireland Wildlife'.

The picture should be original and A4 in size, with some room at the bottom of the page for name, class and school, and a short explanation of the picture.

Northern Ireland's main government buildings are on the Stormont Estate in Belfast. The Estate is a large park with woodlands and open green spaces. It also has a children's playpark, an outdoor gym, barbecue areas, a fitness trail, and a special park for dogs.

The Stormont Estate is rich in wildlife and much work has been done in recent years to attract more increase biodiversity (the variety of wildlife) on the estate. Wildflower meadows and pots planted with nectar rich flowers have attracted more pollinators, including bees, butterflies and hoverflies. There are lots of different kinds of trees on the Estate, including red-twigged lime trees, which line the main avenue to Parliament Buildings, Oak, Alder, Ash, Beech, Cedar, Holly and Blackthorn.

Many different natural habitats on the Estate mean that there are also lots of animals, including the pine martin, badgers, foxes, squirrels, and various wetland birds and amphibians. A recently constructed earth bank is home to mining solitary bees (excellent pollinators who don't live in hives but make their nests in soil on the ground). The path network throughout the Estate is attracting increasing numbers of human visitors in search of nature in the suburban outskirts of Belfast.

By taking part in the competition, the Assembly hopes that pupils will think about the importance of our natural environment and the role of government in protecting it.

In addition to a personal prize (of art materials), the winner's class will be invited to visit Parliament Buildings (transport paid by the Assembly), to find out more about how the Assembly works and how young people can have their say in the laws and decisions made by their elected representatives. We will invite the Speaker of the Assembly and MLAs to meet the pupils to discuss current environment issues. Also, one of the Assembly's beekeepers will tell pupils about the Assembly's own beehives!

This was the winning entry in the 2024 competition, by a P7 pupil:



"I drew a hawthorn tree, a very important image in Irish folklore, more commonly known as the fairy tree. It's considered unlucky to cut it down. It's a special species that supports lots of wildlife. My message is to show people the beauty of our planet and to give it respect and love because it protects us and provides for us."

Elsie May McLaughlin, St Patrick's PS, 2024

