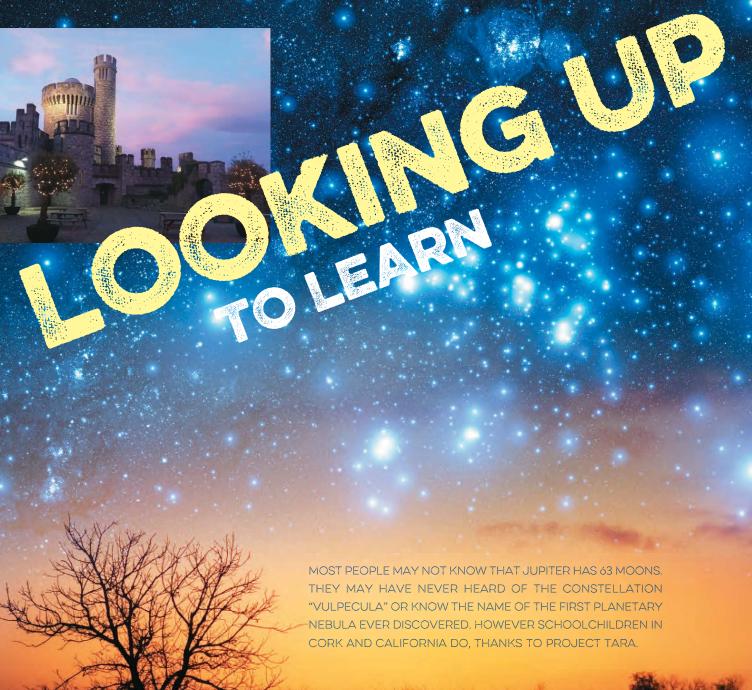
## THE IRELAND FUNDS SUPPORT A LOVE OF LEARNING THROUGH PROJECT TARA



Above: The Blackrock Castle Observatory in Cork



age cross cultural relationships between students around the world through the inspiring topic of astronomy and space science. Led by the Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) Blackrock Castle Observatory, Project TARA gives students in Ireland at the Blackrock Castle Observatory, and in Portola Valley, California at the Ormondale Elementary School, mutual access to two telescopes in each location.

Located in the Cork Institute of Technology (CIT) Blackrock Castle Observatory, the Irish telescope is the center of a far-reaching educational program enjoyed by children who visit from across Ireland. The late 16th century castle is a fascinating juxtaposition to the modern technology housed within. School children at both the primary and secondary level come to the Observatory to build their knowledge and excitement around science, technology, engineering also interacting with the sister telescope there in Cork.

"Thanks to The Ireland Funds, we've enabled over a thousand children to participate in Project TARA," explains Clair McSweeney of CIT Blackrock Castle Observatory. "Astronomy for us is an incredible vehicle for learning. No matter who you are, whatever your age, or where y<mark>ou're from. We'</mark>re all living under a sky that we share. Astronomy is something we find everybody can relate to."

The critical thinking and astronomy lessons delivered through Project TARA are clearly enjoyed by the schoolchildren (and their teachers) that visit and participate in the project. Visiting classes not only climb the castle roof to see the TARA telescope, they also create their own moon photos, crawl into an inflatable planetarium to see animations of the local night sky, and send email fully interactive and are proudly instilling a passion for science and astronomy.

The exchange of knowledge and shared-experience between San Francisco and Cork (which are sister cities) has been cemented with a visit to San Francisco by several Cork students to experience the California satellite. In addition, a visit to Cork was made by San Francisco Mayor, Edwin Lee when he launched the program in 2013. The visit was of note as it was his first official trip outside the USA as Mayor.

"THE IRELAND FUNDS' SUPPORT HAS BEEN CRUCIAL TO PROJECT TARA," explains Dr. Niall Smith, Head of Research at Cork Institute of Technology. "But it has also been symbolic. This is really an Ireland/US project that is anchored between the two countries. It's a two-way conversation and it benefits so many children who are under this one sky."