

Northside author tackles teen issues

by Jessica Magee

SEXUALITY, homosexuality, drink, drugs, teen pregnancy, the morning-after-pill... not usually the kind of subjects you would find in a novel written by an Irish author for young adults.

And yet they are all crucial issues for young people growing up today, things that are only just starting to figure on school curricula, things we want our children to be aware of so they can make informed

and wise choices.

It's all there in 'Flick', a brave and beautiful first novel written by Northside author Geraldine Meade. Published by Little Island, 'Flick' tells the story of Felicity Costello, an

Irish teenager like any other. Except for one difference that 'Flick' doesn't want to admit to anyone, least of all herself.

She tries to hide, drinks too much, goes wild, pretends she's interested in boys, gets into trouble and endures a rollercoaster of disasters.

But eventually this inspiring heroine finds the courage to realise that it's okay to be just who you are.

It's a gentle, fearless coming-of-age novel with a heart-warming message for adults and teens alike - you can't help who you fall in love with.

Due for release in early April, 'Flick' is a vital contribution to young adult literature in Ireland. The novel will be reviewed by Books Ireland later this month and is sure to receive widespread praise and attention.

Northside People caught up with author Geraldine Meade last week, and discovered a warm and relaxed supermum, who somehow finds time to write novels in between minding her six children, all aged under seven.

A primary school teacher living in Raheny with husband Johnny, Geraldine has been on extended leave for the past three years from her job, teaching infants at St Patrick's Boys' National School in Drumcon-

dra.

Her first daughter Aoibhinn arrived in 2003, quickly followed by five more siblings, the youngest of whom, Felicity, is just 13-weeks-old.

The day we spoke to Ger, she was on her way from a flying visit to the dentist to care for her four youngest who had

the vomiting bug.

"It's brilliant being at home with the kids at the moment, but writing gives me great head space.

"I usually work for a few hours at night when they're all in bed, but often I have the baby in one hand and the laptop in the other," she laughs.

Ger had never planned on being a children's author, but has always loved children's books and completed an MA in Children's Literature at St Pat's in 1997. She joined Children's Books Ireland, a voluntary organisation promoting children's authors and trying to get more children reading books.

Ger was chairperson of CBI from 2003 to 2006, and found herself wishing she could write books like those she was helping to promote.

She started with two children's picture books, 'Get That Mouse Out Of My House' and 'There's A Bear Out There', which were accepted by a publishing house that unfortunately went bust before the books made it to print.

Realising that the children's

book market was difficult to break into because of the need to match the text with suitable illustrations, Ger turned her hand to books for teenagers.

The first draft of 'Flick' was 150,000 words, but with advice from the Children's Literature Laureate Siobhan Parkinson, Ger managed to edit down the text to approximately 60,000 words.

"I had great help and support from Siobhan and from my friend Seamus Cashman, a poet and publisher," she says.

"And my husband Johnny is brilliant! He is really supportive, and you need that."

Ger is already in the middle of a sequel to 'Flick', and has lots of ideas for more novels. And more children too?

"I'd never say never," she adds.



● **SUPERMUM:** Northside author Geraldine Meade (left) tackles tricky teen issues in 'Flick'