

PARENT/GUARDIAN GUIDE TO FIRHOUSE ETSS 2026.2027



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WELCOME

Hi everybody,

We are delighted that you are part of our community! As we begin our ninth year as a school, we have welcomed our new 1st Year students and some new students into existing year groups. As we settle into the new academic year, we wanted to provide some information about our school and our practices to help you as you journey with us. Many of you will be familiar with our guide and it's always helpful to refresh ourselves after the holidays.

For those of you new to the school, this guide will give you a good sense of who we are and how we do things in our school as we are guided by our Educate Together ethos and our restorative school culture. We have an exceptional team of educators who facilitate rich learning experiences for our students. The wellbeing of our community and positive engagement in learning take priority as we support each other to be our best selves! We hope you enjoy reading this guide to our school and make sure to check out our website too where you will find lots more information.

Keep smiling,

Claire

Claire Matthews
Príomhoide | Principal



FIRHOUSE ETSS SCHOOL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The Firhouse ETSS SCA functions like a Parents' Association in other schools, however, the aim is to be more inclusive and reflective of all aspects of the wider community of our school – including Board of Management members, the staff team and any interested members of the Firhouse community. All parents/guardians are considered members of the SCA and for those interested in being more involved, there is a committee and it meets approximately once a month during the school year.

The SCA has planned and organised some fun events for the school community in the past few years – highlights have included bake sales, raffles, pancakes for the students on Pancake Tuesday and virtual events such as a clothes collection and a quiz night.

The SCA is looking forward to growing in the coming school year – to continue to come up with fundraising ideas for the school and other ways that they can help the wider community. We would love for any interested new parents to join us!

Email: scachairpersonfetss@gmail.com

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IN FIRHOUSE ETSS

Restorative Practice is a values-based philosophy; it aims to consciously build relationships, respond to harm/conflict in a way that honours relationships, and connects us to our best selves and to one another. The values of this philosophy promote relational ways of being. They inform how we think, engage, speak, listen, and approach situations, all day, every day. In our school we live our RESPECT values (Relationships / Empathy / Safety / Personal Accountability / Equity / Community / Trust), and they are our compass to ensure that we are being our best selves.

Our intention in being a restorative school is to develop a culture of care and respect that allows people to flourish and to learn, to realise our individual and collective potential as a relational school community. When in conflict, being restorative supports us to move away from blame and attack, and instead ignites a path towards connection, solutions, and empathy. A restorative approach cultivates active responsibility and accountability over conformity. It also develops our capacity to regulate, recognise and communicate emotions.

Ultimately, being restorative is about connection – to the self and to others to bring out the best in our community.

WHAT DOES RESTORATIVE PRACTICE LOOK LIKE IN OUR SCHOOL?

Restorative Practice is seen throughout our school in the ways that all in our school community interact with one another and learn together. Relationships come first and this is central to our school values. Check-in circles are regularly done to support the building and maintaining of positive relationships. When things go wrong, we respond restoratively and seek to support all involved through conversations/meetings to build empathy and personal accountability. The goal is to respond to the harm caused, to learn from what happened and to move relationships forward in a positive direction.

The 6 restorative questions are:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking of at the time?
- What have you thought about it since?
- Who has been affected and in what way?
- How could things have been done differently?
- What do you think needs to happen next?

COMMUNICATING WITH HOME

In our school, we make sure that relationships are central to all we do, and we enjoy communicating with parents/guardians.

Class teachers or tutors may contact you to communicate how things are going and to celebrate successes. However, sometimes when things go wrong, members of the team may have to communicate this to you. Being faithful to our ethos, we take a restorative approach and give the students the tools to communicate in a healthy way. The focus is always on the amends. When you know better, you can do better!

Occasionally, the progress leader may be in touch in relation to student focus-ins and meetings. At every step on the way, we support students and guide them to make the best choices possible.

JUNIOR CYCLE CURRICULUM

We are committed to the Framework for Junior Cycle (2015) and making sure that junior cycle offers quality learning experiences for our students. Since we opened, we have aimed to offer as many subjects as possible so that students feel they are getting as much choice and variation in their subjects as possible.

The junior cycle curriculum is designed in such a way that it provides breadth in 1st Year, whilst allowing greater depth for the students in their learning in 2nd and 3rd Year. Students complete 8 subjects for certification (English, Irish, Maths, History & 4 others) in addition to short courses in CSPE, SPHE and PE.

WHAT DO STUDENTS STUDY?

1st Year

- Core Subjects: English, Irish, Maths, History, CSPE, SPHE, PE, Ethical Ed., Learning to Be, Learning to Learn, Check & Connect
- Optional Subjects (4 chosen): Business Studies, French, Geography, Home Economics, Music, Science, Spanish, Visual Art, Wood Technology

2nd Year

- Core Subjects: English, Irish, Maths, History, CSPE, SPHE, PE, Ethical Ed., Chosen Short Course, Check & Connect
- Optional Subjects (4 chosen): Business Studies, French, Geography, Home Economics, Music, Science, Visual Art, Wood Technology

3rd Year

- Core Subjects: English, Irish, Maths, History, CSPE, SPHE, PE, Ethical Ed., Chosen Short Course, Check & Connect
- Optional Subjects (4 chosen continued): Business Studies, French, Geography, Graphics, Home Economics, Music, Science, Visual Art, Wood Technology

Subject Choice

You will notice from the junior cycle curriculum breakdown above that students make some subject choices in 1st Year. Students choose 4 subjects from the subject lines at the end of October in 1st Year. This is only done after the subject taster programme is complete.

Andrew (Deputy Principal) and Eoin (Guidance Counsellor) support students and parents/guardians with subject choice.

Please note, that all subjects that have class size limits, and should there be more students looking to join a subject, a lottery will be done to allocate subject places.



Classroom-Based Assessments

Classroom-Based Assessments take place in 2nd and 3rd Year and build on the learning that the students have engaged in since beginning secondary school. They are part of regular classroom practice and capture aspects of the students' learning to be reported on to parents/guardians as part of the progression in junior cycle. CBA Calendars are up on our website (Curriculum > 2nd & 3rd Year).

Subject Levels & Final Examinations

One major difference between junior certificate and junior cycle is that only English, Irish and Maths have different levels for final examination. These levels are higher level and ordinary level, and this does not affect the Classroom-Based Assessments. At the end of 2nd Year, for Irish and Maths only, students will be advised on what final examination level to take as this will be important for class groupings in 3rd Year. All other subjects are common level for final examination purposes.

Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement (JCPA)

At the end of junior cycle, the JCPA details the CBA descriptors for the subjects and short courses undertaken by the individual student, the final examination descriptors for subjects and a section outlining their involvement in school life (Other Areas of Learning).

TRANSITION YEAR CURRICULUM

In Firhouse ETSS, Transition Year provides the space to dive deeper into our whole-school learning culture of creativity, curiosity, and collaboration. Learning will be rooted in experiential, cross-curricular, project-based and phenomenon-based methodologies. Our vision is to provide experiences and opportunities to enable students to find their element and contribute to society.

Our focus areas are:

1. Expanding students' interests
2. Fostering self-awareness
3. Advancing and harnessing self-motivation
4. Maturing personal accountability
5. Growing creator rather than consumer learners
6. Developing active and ethical citizens.

Continuous assessment is a pillar of TY and parents/guardians should check the 'Class Assessments' section to see the feedback provided by the class teachers.

WHAT DO THE STUDENTS STUDY?

Core Subjects

- Check & Connect
- English
- Ethical Education
- Gaeilge
- Guidance & SPHE
- Maths
- PE
- Science & Sustainability

Option Subjects

- Students get 14 option subjects to choose from. They complete 6 of these over the course of the year. The option subjects vary from year to year depending on team availability.

Short Courses (examples in the past include:)

- Graphic Design
- Legal Studies
- Irish Sign Language
- Survival Skills

Work Experience & Community Placement

Students engage in 2 separate weeks of work experience and 1 week of community placement off site that are built into the school calendar.



SENIOR CYCLE CURRICULUM - LEAVING CERTIFICATE APPLIED & LEAVING CERTIFICATE ESTABLISHED

Both Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) are well established in our school at this stage. For a school the size of ours, we are proud to have both programmes running, and also to have as wide a range of subjects available in each. Towards the end of TY, the school runs information sessions so that students and parents/guardians can be fully informed before any decision-making takes place.



WHAT DO THE STUDENTS STUDY IN LCA?

Vocational Preparation

- Guidance
- Vocational Preparation
- English

Vocational Education

- Mathematical Application
- Hotel Catering & Tourism
- Graphics & Construction
- Introduction to ICT

General Education

- Social Education
- Visual Art
- Irish/Modern Foreign Language
- Leisure and Recreation

Elective Courses

- Music
- Science

WHAT DO THE STUDENTS STUDY IN LCE?

Core Subjects

- Check & Connect
- English
- Gaeilge
- Career Guidance
- Ethical Education
- PE
- SPHE

Option Subjects

(8 of these are offered, and depend on student preferences in any given year)

- Art
- Biology
- Business
- Construction Studies
- French
- Geography
- Home Economics
- History
- Music
- Physics and Chemistry (combined subject)
- Politics and Society



ATTENDANCE

At the beginning of the school year, you will get reminded of your username for VSware via the school text system and it is important that you keep the details of this text safe. The VSware app is used to record full day and multiple day absences rather than phoning the school or sending emails. If you are not using the app, you can access it through your VSware account on desktop (e.g., Chrome, Safari, etc.). To let us know of an absence, click your **Child's Name > Attendance > Absence Requests > Submit Absence**. You will then be asked to choose the date(s) and one of the following options for the absence: Illness, Urgent Family Reason, Other (Appointments), Holiday. We ask that holidays are not booked during school time.

At this point, you can give some more details of the reason for absence for our records. Note that for partial absences where a student is absent for only part of a day, these will have to be notified to the office via VS-Mail. The reason for this is for the office to know so that collection/drop-off arrangements can be made.

There are explainer videos on our website (Parent/Guardian Page) that guide you through this process using VSware.

SINGLE DAY ABSENCE & MULTI DATE ABSENCES

Single Day Absence

The school should be notified **in advance** of any full day absence. This helps us to know where all of our students are at the beginning of a school day and puts safety at the core of the morning routine.

We ask for full day absences to be recorded using VSware in advance of 08:25 on the morning of the absence. We will not be using email for attendance monitoring. By letting us know the day before or the morning of the absence, it stops you getting a notification from the school to say your child is absent without explanation.

If you forget to record the absence using VSware, you will get a text message from the school letting you know there is an unexplained absence. At this point you can then login to your VSware account and record the absence.

Multi Date Absences

The school should be notified in advance of any multiple day absences. The same VSware system is used for multiple day absences as in 'Full Day Absences'.

PARTIAL DAY ABSENCE

A partial day absence is when a student is missing for part of the school day (e.g. dentist appointment) but attends for some of the day. Mostly, these partial day absences are as a result of appointments that cannot be avoided.

When notifying the school of a partial absence, we ask that you use VSware. Choose 'Single Day Absence' and it will then give you the option of putting in a 'Partial Day Absence'. The details you provide will then be put into the system and help us to prepare our daily student schedule. It is important that the school knows **in advance** of any partial absences. When we know in advance, it helps with the smooth running of the day.



LATES

Being on time for school is very important as we know that a calm start to the day is important for positive engagement. If a student is late for school, they sign in at the office so they can be correctly marked in as late.

A student must go to the office and get signed in, not go directly to class as they haven't yet been signed in on the system.

Tutors will be in touch if lateness is an issue. As a parent/guardian, you can check this out under the 'Attendance' section on VSware.

If students are late, important class time will be lost that will be difficult to get back.

We ask that **students be in school for 8:20am** to prepare for the day as class begins at 8:30am.

ATTENDANCE RECORDS

Between 1 and 10 Days Absent

At tutor level. Expect phone calls from the tutor.

Between 11 and 20 Days Absent

At progress leader level. Expect phone calls and potential VSmails and meetings with the progress leader.

More than 20 Days Absent

Meeting with school attendance officer. This type of meeting is a serious one as attendance is key in making sure a student gets the most from their school experience.

Once a student goes beyond 20 days absent, we are legally mandated to report this information to TUSLA. We cannot make exceptions to this and we know that you will understand this.



TEACHING & LEARNING

In support of our student-centred approach to learning and teaching, there are three concepts that inform our planning here in Firhouse ETSS. They are:

- Restorative Practice
- Universal Design for Learning
- Student Voice

These three concepts ensure that there is a safe classroom environment in which to learn, that there is flexibility and choice when it comes to accessing content, and that students are encouraged to become independent and critical thinkers by using their voice.

Here are some of our considerations when planning for learning:

Learning Outcomes

Learning outcomes are outlined in the various subject specifications. They detail what we want our students to know, to understand, to be able to do and to value. In planning for learning, subject department teachers come together to choose suitable learning outcomes, taking into consideration prior learning, the age and stage of their students, and their interests.

Assessment

As part of planning for learning, assessment is designed to be in support of, and aligned with, the intended learning. There are many ways for students to demonstrate their learning and students are often given options as to how they can do this. Quality feedback is important for students to receive as this gives them the necessary information about what went well and how they can improve even further.

Learning Activities

Well planned learning activities play a very important part in motivating students and ensuring that they can access information in a student-centred way. Our team ensures that the content and activities used are designed with our students in mind. Again, access, choice and flexibility in learning is important, ensuring that every student is appropriately challenged.

Learning Intentions

Learning intentions are created and shared with students to ensure that everybody is clear on the learning taking place. They act as touchstones to support students to keep their focus on the intended learning and to reflect on their progress during a lesson or series of lessons.

Reflection

Reflection on the learning is encouraged at all stages of learning to support students to think about their progress and how to develop their learning further. A culture of reflection and feedback builds student confidence, engagement and ownership.



TECHNOLOGY

iPad

Blended learning, incorporating appropriate digital technology to support learning and teaching, is central to what we do in Firhouse ETSS. All students use an iPad, while ensuring that they have a hardback/copybook/scrapbook for each subject. Textbooks are not in use for junior cycle and TY as teachers content create via OneNote and Teams.

Students must use the iPads appropriately in school and not engage in any activities that take away from their learning experiences. Further details can be found in our *Digital Technology Acceptable Usage Policy* on our website.

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft Teams is a digital hub that brings conversations and content together in one place, allowing our team to build on their vibrant physical learning environments. Think of Teams as the online class. Within Teams, teachers can quickly communicate with students, and share their files and useful website links. See our [website](#) for a brief video of how Microsoft Teams is used in our school.

Microsoft OneNote

OneNote is a digital notebook that allows students to keep their notes organised and to access worksheets. It also allows teachers to provide feedback on any work that is documented and saved on the OneNote. See our [website](#) for a brief video of how OneNote is used in our school.

Other Apps in Use

To support our wide curriculum, students use many apps that support them with their learning journey. These apps include and vary according to the subject or area of learning: Quizlet, Duolingo, Flat, Garage Band and Kahoot.

Mobile Phones

Mobile phones are kept **turned off** and in the school bag at all times during the school day. Students should not use them at any time. During break and lunch, it is important that our students are socialising and away from screens. Communication with home can be made via the school office as needed.



UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a way of thinking about teaching and learning that helps give all students optimal opportunity to succeed. This approach offers flexibility in the way students can access material, engage with it and demonstrate their learning. Developing lessons this way is helpful for all students, not just students for whom we traditionally would have differentiated.

The goal of UDL is to remove any barriers to learning and to use a variety of teaching methods that will support students to access the learning as well as supporting student choice and voice by creating a variety of options for learners. It's about building in flexibility that can be adjusted for every student's strengths and needs; that's why UDL benefits all students.

The 3 principles of Universal Design for Learning are:

- Multiple Means of Engagement (The Why of Learning)
- Multiple Means of Representation (The What of Learning)
- Multiple Means of Expression (The How of Learning)

ASSESSMENT

OUR VISION FOR ASSESSMENT

For us, assessment is in the all day, every day. Assessment is in support of learning; it shows an understanding of where the student is at on their learning journey and gives information in terms of student readiness to proceed in their learning. As professionals, our teaching team is guided by the subject specifications, assessment guidelines and syllabi. In line with the *Framework for Junior Cycle* (2015), and our innovative approach to senior cycle, we have a balanced approach to formative and summative assessment, with the majority of assessment being formative as is supportive of student learning at this stage in their development.

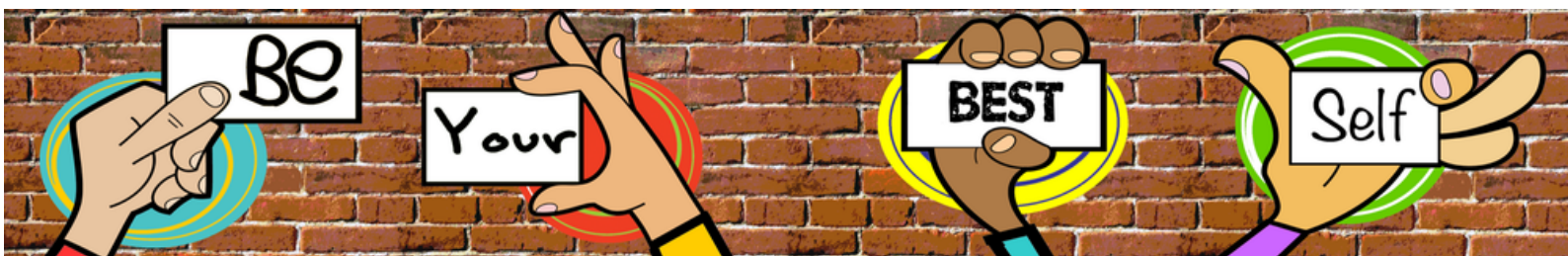
Observation, questioning, meaningful feedback and reflection all combine to move the learning forward and are valid forms of assessment. In order to provide feedback to students on their learning, and to ensure teachers are in a position to make a professional judgement on student progress, teachers need to gather evidence of the learning. As they plan for teaching, learning and assessment, teachers reflect on the intended student learning and design learning experiences accordingly.

ASSESSMENT AT JUNIOR CYCLE

Assessment and learning go hand in hand as we support students to learn and to demonstrate their learning. In order to ensure meaningful learning and feedback, rich tasks are designed for students to demonstrate their learning. When it comes to capturing the learning, an assessment moment will usually involve a task, or a series of tasks, in the unit of learning and not necessarily at the end. Tasks typically capture the intended student learning in the unit of learning. We call these 'Learning Checkpoints' with the students. Tasks are generally accompanied by success criteria and explained to, or co-created with, the students.

To support student learning, the emphasis is on formative feedback to move the learning forward for our students. Percentage grading is not used in order to keep students focused on the process of learning, to improve their engagement in learning and overall experience. Students receive regular detailed feedback on their learning based on observation of activities and completion of tasks. Students are introduced to CBA descriptors in the second half of 2nd Year and CBA descriptors are only used to report on CBAs. CBAs are a reflection of normal classroom practice and allow students to showcase their learning.

Over the course of 3rd Year, students are introduced to final examination grade descriptors. Students sit 'Checkpoint' exams around February that are timed exams that happen in class time. The intention of these is to support students with their learning and for them to develop their understanding of time management.



ASSESSMENT AT SENIOR CYCLE | TRANSITION YEAR

Transition Year is a great year for students to expand on their understanding of assessment and for them to showcase their work at the Festival of Learning. This event takes place during the final term of the school year.

During TY, students are provided with meaningful tasks that culminate in assessment moments. These assessment moments provide the basis for our teachers to give feedback regularly to students. Students have a 'Studio' class each week with their tutors, and this supports them to work on applying the feedback they are given.

To support students with accountability, planning and time-management, we have a continuous assessment model in place for Transition Year. Each subject has at least 3 assessment moments over the course of the year. Students will know what specific assessment moments are in focus from term to term. The feedback is reported via VSware when the assessment moment window is complete.

ASSESSMENT AT SENIOR CYCLE | LEAVING CERTIFICATE

When students transition into Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) or Leaving Certificate Established (LCE), we do not abandon our focus on the balance between formative and summative assessment as this continues to be highly effective practice to support student learning.

LCA

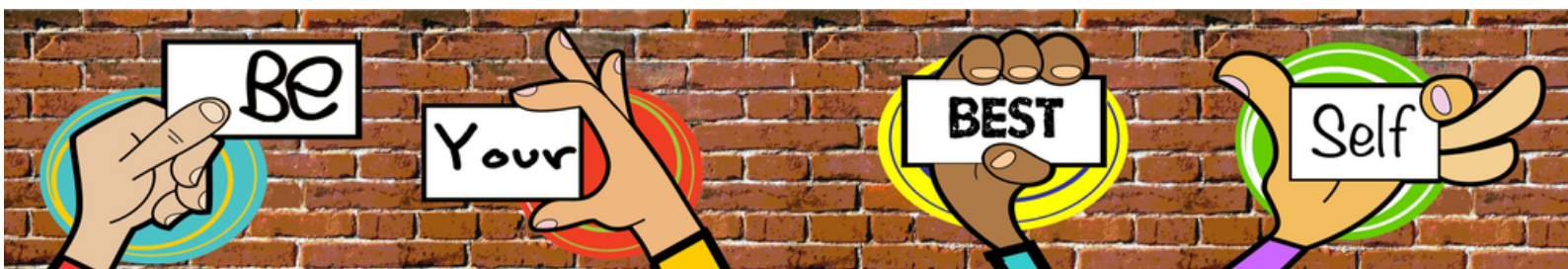
Students completing the LCA programme have regular continuous assessment in the form of key assignments and tasks. LCA students sit mock exams in these 6 subjects in February of 6th Year. At the end of 6th Year, LCA students sit 6 final state examinations in June to accompany their continuous assessment.

LCE

Students are provided with a wide range of assessment opportunities over their 2 years of study and we very much believe that each subject is worthy of exploration without being a slave to the final examinations.

LCE students sit timetabled examinations at the end of 5th Year. Each examination is approximately 2 hours long. In 6th Year, LCE students sit mock examinations around February that provide them with the experience of sitting a full timetable of exams similar to the Leaving Certificate timetable. The intention of these is to support students with their progression in learning and to further develop their time management skills in preparation for the final examinations in June.

Senior Cycle is an important time in the development of our young people as we support them to develop the knowledge, skills, understanding and values they need for the life they choose to lead on leaving second level education.



REPORTING

Reports are sent out twice a year, once in December and the other in June. The December report is known as the Winter Check-in and the June report is known as the Summer Check-out. Winter Check-in and Summer Check-out reports are available to view on VSware. A notification will go out via the VSware App when they are available.

In addition to this, 3rd Year students sit checkpoint examinations that are then reported on in early March. Around this same time, 6th Year students sit mock exams which are also reported on. A notification will go out via the VSware App when they are available.

To find the reports on VSware, go to your **Child's Name > Assessments > Term Reports > Select an Exam**.

It is possible to create a PDF copy of any report by logging into the desktop site and clicking **Actions > Download > Results**. You can print it at this point. Teachers regularly give feedback to the students which helps progress the learning. Some of this formative feedback is available in OneNote and be sure to ask to view the OneNote regularly so that you have an understanding of your child's learning and progress.

WHAT IS REPORTED?

In the Winter Check-in and Summer Check-out, there are two areas of feedback: Personal Growth and Engagement in Learning.

The Personal Growth section focuses on the student as a person and teachers use our RESPECT values to inform the feedback.

The Engagement in Learning section focuses on subject curriculum specific areas, relating to learning outcomes, key skills and task completion. Teachers may use the structure of 'What's working well' and 'Even better if' when scaffolding this feedback.

HOW IS TY REPORTING DIFFERENT?

TY reporting is different as it is fully based on continuous assessment. In the 'Class Assessment' section on VSware, parents/guardians can view regular reporting on the assessment moments in TY. At the start of each half-term, TY parents/guardians are notified as to what subject assessments are in focus for the half-term ahead.

CLASSWORK & HOMEWORK - REPORTING ON VSWARE

As a school that places huge value on formative assessment, as supported by the national curriculum for junior cycle and international research, it is key that students engage in classroom activities, complete their homework, and submit tasks/projects when they are due. The expectation is that classwork and homework are completed to the best of the student's capacity on any given day. If classwork or homework have not been completed, we use VSware to let you know. If there is nothing noted in relation to homework or classwork you can presume that your child is engaging positively and completing the work. In the case of a more significant piece of work like a task/project, the teacher will let you know if it has or has not been submitted, with feedback normally being available on your child's OneNote in due course.

To find this information on VSware, click on your **Child's Name > Behaviour**.

(The name of this section on VSware is 'Behaviour' but we are using it to let you know about engagement in learning. We have requested that the name be changed to 'Engagement in Learning' and will be in touch if this happens.)

- **Classwork** – Students achieve and build confidence by engaging in activities and working well with others to achieve this. If there are classwork issues they will be noted on the app.
- **Homework** – Our teachers give quality homework activities to support the learning happening in class. If there are homework issues they will be noted on the app.
- **Tasks/Projects** – If a student has submitted a task/project we will update the app so that you are aware of the submission and this is a great way to open a conversation about student learning. The same will be done if a task/project hasn't been submitted to keep you informed.

We ask that you check in weekly on the VSware portal so that you can get a sense of how your child is getting on with their learning and if classwork or homework is an issue. Tutors will also be in touch if they notice any engagement issues.

COMMUNICATION

We have grown so much since we opened in 2018, and as a result we endeavour to ensure our systems are responsive to our growth. Our VSware app plays an important role and we now use VSware and the inbuilt VS-Mail as the primary method of communication. We provide VSware guides and videos to help you set the app up, how to use it for attendance and VS-Mail messages. These can all be found on the 'Parent/Guardian Information' section of the website. For ease of use, we recommend that the app be downloaded, but alternatively it can be accessed via the desktop site.

FROM THE SCHOOL TO YOU

VSware Notifications & VS-Mail

- Updates and emails from the school are done on VSware, via VS-Mail.
- Any notifications sent can be found in the 'Notifications' section and for access to your mail section, click 'VS-Mail'.
- There is no 'Reply' function on the group VS-Mail you receive.

Phone Calls

- From time to time, it is helpful and may be necessary to contact home.
- Tutors are usually the contact point for calls home and we encourage positive calls to be made.
- Progress leaders may also call depending on the issue and in more serious cases, particularly concerning incidents in school, the principal or deputy principal will be in touch via phone.

FROM YOU TO THE SCHOOL

VS-Mail

- The best way to contact a member of the team is by emailing Julie via your VS-Mail account. All correspondence must be directed to Julie on VS-Mail.
- Once Julie has received this, it will be forwarded on to the correct person.
- We ask that you identify who the mail is for and what the message is about to help us make sure the right people get the right messages.
- We hope to reply as soon as we can. School is a busy, active place and our team is engaged primarily in the classroom.

Phone Calls

- VS-Mail is the best way to contact the school and phone calls should only be for emergency contact.
- The phone number is 01-961-8199.
- Office Hours are 08:30 – 14:00.
- If there is nobody available to take your call, please leave a message and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Notes in Journal

- On the rare occasion that a student has not completed homework, please write a note in the back of the journal notifying the teaching team of this.

VSWARE ACCESS

Parents/guardians of incoming 1st Year students receive a VSware username when the school year starts. Keep this username safe as it will not change. For students transferring into a year group, a VSware username is emailed out to parents/guardians as soon as possible once the transfer is complete.

WELLBEING SUPPORT

Wellbeing is very important to us, and our restorative culture confirms our commitment to ensuring that students feel school is a safe and supportive environment for them to be their best selves.

Each student is part of a base class with a tutor. The role of the tutor is hugely important, and this is why they meet for 15 minutes each day during Check & Connect. Tutors are well-placed to be the first port of call for any wellbeing concerns a student may have. Check with your child to find out who their tutor is.

Each year group has a progress leader and our progress leaders plan for the wellbeing of the whole year group. Our students are also supported by Ann-Marie as our Additional Needs Coordinator and by Eoin as our Career Guidance Coordinator

OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS LEADERS 2026-2027

Year	1st Year	2nd Year	3rd Year	Transition Year	5th Year	6th Year
Progress Leader	Zoe Cullen	Siobhán Lee	Phil Marillat	Deirdre Brennan	Niall Halpenny	John Dinneen

ILLNESS

It is important to use VSware to keep us updated when a student is out sick so that we can help the student as much as possible on their return to school.

From time to time, students may feel ill in school and want to go home. It is important that the students do not use their phones to communicate with home and make plans. This disrupts the communication in the school and can cause unnecessary distress. We encourage students who become ill in school to let the teacher or SSA know. With permission, the student can then go to the office where communication is made with home.



SUPPORT FOR YOU

IF YOU, OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN CRISIS, PLEASE REACH OUT FOR HELP. ASKING FOR HELP TAKES STRENGTH.

24/7 Support

Emergency services – 112 or 999

EDOC – 01 223 4500 www.edoc.ie

Emergency Dept – Children's department
Tallaght – 01 414 2000

Reach Out for Support

BeLonG To – 01 6706223 – www.belongto.org

Bodywhys – 01 210790 – www.bodywhys.ie

Jigsaw – 01 472 7010 – www.jigsaw.ie

SpunOut – 016753554 – www.spunout.ie

Here to Help

Parentline – 01 8733500 –
www.parentline.ie

SVP East – 01 8550022 – www.svp.ie

Barnardos – Children's Bereavement
Service – 01 4732110

HUGG– Suicide Bereavement Peer
Support Group – 01 513 4048 –
www.hugg.ie

You Are Not Alone

Samaritans – Listening & emotional
support – 116 123 – jo@samaritans.ie

Pieta House – Suicide/self harm – 1800
247 247 or Text HELP to 51444
www.pieta.ie

Childline – 24h listening service – 1800
666 666 or text TALK to 50101 –
www.childline.ie

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre – 1 800 77
8888 – www.drcc.ie

Crisis Text Line – Text HELLO to
50808

Unplanned Pregnancy – HSE Helpline
1800828010 –
www2.hse.ie/unplanned-pregnancy

Women's Aid – 1800 341 900 0
www.womensaid.ie

Men's Aid – 01 554 3811 –
www.mensaid.ie

STUDENT SUPPORT

CO-TEACHING

Co-teaching is an important part of our collaborative culture in Firhouse ETSS. Co-teaching is when there are two teachers for the lesson.

Types of co-teaching include team teaching, parallel teaching, station teaching and alternative teaching.

SUPPORT FOR SOME

There are times when some students require time in a more personal environment to focus in on specific learning needs. Students may be withdrawn from regular class for short periods of time to get some learning support in smaller groups. These withdrawals are for set time periods with clear targets in mind for the students. This is resource dependent.

COLLABORATORY CLASS

For students who are exempt from Irish, Collaboratory class happens where they get to focus in on units of learning that support literacy, numeracy and social skills. These classes are usually small in numbers and take place in the Collaboratory.

STUDENT SUPPORT ASSISTANTS

Our student support assistants (SSAs) are key members of our team and provide invaluable support for our students. SSAs provide a wide range of supports for many students to ensure that the school day is as smooth as possible, and students can engage to the best of their ability.

Some primary care needs include:

- Supporting mobility and orientation
- Supervision
- Toileting/personal hygiene
- Sensory processing support
- Sensory/movement breaks

Some secondary care needs include:

- Social inclusion
- Communication
- Organisation
- General classroom support
- Assisting with documentation
- Participating in meetings
- Promoting independence





FIRHOUSE

EDUCATE TOGETHER SECONDARY SCHOOL



We hope that this guide will
help us all with
communication as we
continue to grow.
Thank you!