



**Firhouse Educate Together National School,**

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Dear Parents / Guardians,

I would like to welcome you and your child to Firhouse Educate Together National School. This booklet is intended to provide you with an introduction to all aspects of school life and I hope you find it useful as you prepare to send your child to our school.

The staff and I hope to get to know you, our parents, as well as we get to know your child / children. Together we want to continue developing our warm, friendly and inclusive atmosphere and vibrant school community with the joint aim of providing the best possible education for all the children in the school.

A high level of parental involvement is a feature of our school and sadly this is restricted by Covid-19 concerns. We still encourage you as a parent / guardian to become involved in the life of the school, via Zoom, and the PGTA (Parent Guardian Teacher Association). We know that once you become involved here, be it online or in person, you will realise the value of this for yourself, your child and our school.

We are also looking forward to getting back to our usual level of parental involvement in person in our school when the challenges of Covid-19 are behind us.

Please be assured that you will always be welcome in our school online, by telephone and in person.

Very best wishes,

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Collette Dunne, School Principal

## Holiday List 2021 - 2022

School begins on **Wednesday 1st September 2021 at 8.25am**

School will be **closed** on the following dates (inclusive):-

<u>October / November</u>	<b>Monday 25<sup>th</sup> October – Friday 29<sup>th</sup> October</b>
<u>December / January</u>	<b>Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> December – Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> January</b>
<u>February</u>	<b>Monday 21<sup>st</sup> – Friday 25<sup>th</sup> February</b>
<u>March</u>	<b>Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> March - Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March</b>
<u>April</u>	<b>Monday 11<sup>th</sup> April – Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> April</b>
<u>May</u>	<b>Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> May</b>
<u>June</u>	<b>Monday 6<sup>th</sup></b>

Please note all dates are inclusive.\*

**School will close on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2022 for Summer Holidays.**

We are delighted to welcome all parents and children to Firhouse Educate Together N.S. and look forward to seeing you on the first day of school at **8.25am** on **Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2021.**

- **The school will be closing for half days at the start of the three main holidays in Winter, Spring and Summer. The school will close at 11.30am on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2021, Friday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2021 and Thursday 30th June 2021.**

**The Junior Infant schedule is as follows:**

<b>Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> September – Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> September</b>	<b>8.25am to 11.00am</b>
<b>Monday 6<sup>th</sup> - Friday 10<sup>th</sup> September</b>	<b>8.25am to 12.15pm</b>
<b>Monday 13<sup>th</sup> September onwards</b>	<b>8.25am to 1.05pm</b>

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\*If the school needs to close due to unforeseen circumstances, parents and guardians will be notified, as early as possible via text. In the event of the school closing due to dangerous weather conditions, it's possible the holiday list will be amended to make up the lost time.

**Please Note: School starts at 8.25 sharp and finishes at 13.05 for Infant Classes and 14.05 for all other Classes (1<sup>st</sup> Class – 6<sup>th</sup> Class).**

## A Typical Junior Infants' School Day



8:25am School opens

8:25-8.55 Assembly & Play of Choice in Class

8.55-10.10 Teaching and learning

10.00-10:20 Morning lunch break and free play

10.20-12:00 Teaching and learning

12.00-12:20 Lunch break and free play

12:20-13.05 Teaching and learning

13.05 Junior Infants go home

## What is an Educate Together School?

Educate Together is the national organisation of Educate Together equality based schools in the Republic of Ireland. There are now 95 Educate Together primary schools in the country and this figure is growing. The schools are fully recognised by the Department of Education and Skills. They are non-fee-paying and operate under the same rules applying to all national schools.

Where did the name Educate Together come from?

The name 'Educate Together' was carefully chosen by the national organisation to reflect the coming together of children and families of different faiths and beliefs, from different social, cultural and ethnic backgrounds.

## Ethos and Core Principles

Firhouse Educate Together National School is founded on four core principles:

1. Equality based - children of all creeds and none have equal rights of access, and the social, religious and cultural background of each child is equally respected.
2. Co-educational - the school is open to boys and girls on an equal basis. Every effort will be made to ensure that girls and boys are actively integrated, and sexual stereotyping is avoided, both in attitude and teaching materials.
3. Child-centred - the school aims to establish an environment which encourages, nurtures and facilitates each child so that they will explore their full range of abilities and work towards realising their highest potential. Children in Firhouse ETNS have a right to have their opinions listened to at all levels and acted upon

where appropriate. They are also encouraged to contribute to the way the school is run and this is further facilitated through our Student Council from first class onwards.

4. Democratic - the school will be run by management committees which are democratically elected and run, and the involvement of all parents is sought and encouraged. Children are encouraged to become involved in school structures through their representatives on the Student Council.

### Religion

Educate Together Schools are legally prevented from favouring any particular religion or thought system over another. We provide a programme of information about major religions and thought systems, called Learn Together. Further information on the Learn Together curriculum is available on the Educate Together website; ([www.educatetogether.ie](http://www.educatetogether.ie)).

We look at the similarities and the differences between religions. We also provide religious education programmes based on morality, human rights and responsibilities, ethics and good citizenship. We are committed to making school facilities available to parents who wish to organise doctrinal or religious instruction for their children outside of school hours.

## School Management Structure

Firhouse Educate Together National School operates under the Rules for National Schools which are drawn up by the Minister for Education ([www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)). The Department of Education and Skills (DES) provides a percentage of funding and pays teachers' salaries. The DES Inspectors monitor the implementation of the curriculum in the school.

National schools are managed by a Board of Management which is set up according to Departmental guidelines with elected parent and teacher representatives, nominees of the Patron and members from the wider community.

In the case of Firhouse Educate Together National School our first Board of Management was established in December 2013. The Board is responsible for the appointment of teachers and of other staff and for the day-to-day management of the school including heating, cleaning and maintenance of the building. The Board is also responsible for ensuring that all school policies are up to date and the finances necessary for running the school are available.

### Current Board of Management:

1. Chairperson: Francis Fullen\*
2. Patron Representative: Luke O Shaughnessy\*
3. Principal and Secretary to BOM: Collette Dunne
4. Teacher Representative: Paul O'Dwyer (Deputy Principal)
5. Parent Representatives: Brian Buckley & Catrin Prys Cummins
6. Community Representative: Mary Carron

*\*Both nominated by our patron Educate Together*

## Enrolment Policy

The enrolment policy of Firhouse Educate Together National School for mainstream Junior Infant places is based on the following 4 priorities: 1. Siblings, 2. Catchment Area (see map within our enrolment policy on our website), 3. Outside Catchment Area, 4. Applications submitted outside of allocated timeframe.

Enrolments are ONLY accepted between the allocated October window of the year prior to the child commencing school. If the demand for places exceeds the number of places available, places will be offered to the eldest children on the list first.

Children must be four years old on or before May 1st in the year that they are due to start school to be eligible for Category 1, 2, and 3.

When a child has been offered a place parents are asked to complete a confirmation form and either accept or reject the place offered. If a response is not received in the time limit given, the child's name will be removed from the pre-enrolment list. Offers of places may not be deferred.

Please see Admission Policy for full details - <http://www.firhouseetns.ie/policies.html>.

### Contact Details

It is very important that you keep us up to date with contact numbers in case of an emergency. Please let us know, if you or an emergency contact change your mobile or landline number or email address.

### Absences

All absences must be explained in writing to the class teacher on the day your child returns to school and recorded on Aladdin Connect (Please see page 10 for further information on Aladdin Connect). Please state the date/s of absence in the note and the child's name and class.

As a school we abide by the Education and Welfare Act 2000. Under this act if a child is absent for more than twenty days a report must be sent by the school to TUSLA - Child and Family Agency. We urge parents not to book holidays or trips abroad during term time. This practice has a very bad effect on the education and well-being of your child in school and is very disruptive of your child's learning.

### Communication

It is important for you as parents, for your child and for us at Firhouse Educate Together N.S. to have good communication with each other. If you have any queries, problems or concerns regarding your child please have a chat with your child's teacher. As it is not always possible for a class teacher to meet you 'on the spot', particularly with current Covid-19 restrictions, and to ensure both teacher and parent get the most out of meeting, please contact the school in advance so arrangements can be made to give you the attention and the privacy you may need.

When making an appointment please indicate the general nature of your concern so that the teacher can be prepared to deal accurately with the issue. In addition, if there is a change in home circumstance (illness, separation or anything that you feel

may affect your child) please let your child's teacher know. We assure you of our utmost sensitivity in such matters.

### Parent Teacher Meetings

Teachers will have a class group meeting for all parents during the first term of school. They will then hold individual meetings before the Winter holidays in December with all parents. Parents and teachers will also meet on an informal basis daily as children arrive for and go home from school. Currently all meetings are via Zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions.

However, if you have concerns or questions about anything in our school, please talk to us or make an appointment to discuss these at an appropriate time that suits both parties and does not interfere with classroom teaching. We will also send home an end of year report during the month of June.

### Uniforms

We have no school uniform in Firhouse Educate Together National School but would recommend that your child wears comfortable clothing. We ask that you teach your child to take off/on his/her coat and how to open and close zips, buttons, buckles and to tie laces. Zips are preferable to buttons and elasticised clothing is ideal.

### Special Education Teaching

Support Teachers are allocated to children who have special education needs. Children accessing SET hours may include: children having hearing difficulties, speech and language difficulties, learning difficulties, dyspraxia, ASD etc. The support teacher will work in and out of class with the children.

When the Support Teacher is in the class, the pupil-teacher ratio is dramatically reduced. The reduced pupil-teacher ratio has huge positive effects on the children's learning. Pupils who find a specific area challenging may also receive extra support in the form of withdrawal. Withdrawal usually takes place in small groups and parental consent will be sought for same, in advance.

### The Curriculum

The curriculum of Firhouse Educate Together National School, is the same as all National Schools in the Republic of Ireland, and is laid down by the Department of Education and Skills. Firhouse Educate Together National School aims to create a warm and stimulating environment so that each child may work towards realising

his/her highest potential. Parents, children and teachers are on first name terms, which aims to create a relaxed and informal atmosphere for everyone. In co-operation with parents, the school will work to instil feelings of self-confidence, self-awareness and self-respect in the children.

Within the parameters of the Primary School Curriculum, the objectives are as follows:

- The achievement of academic excellence for each child according to his / her individual potential.
- The promotion of cultural enrichment.
- There are 12 subjects in the curriculum that are taught at every level in our school.

## Department of Education and Skills 12 subjects

English, Irish, Maths

History, Geography, Science (SESE)

Music, Visual Arts, Drama (Arts Education)

Physical Education

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE)

In E.T. Schools the Learn Together Curriculum is taught instead of RE (Religious Education)

All 12 subjects are taught at all levels in our school. Copies of the Primary School Curriculum are available at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) and public libraries.

### Aistear

Much of children's early learning and development takes place through play and hands-on experiences. Through these, children explore social, physical and imaginary worlds. These experiences help them manage their feelings, develop as thinkers and language users, develop socially, be creative and imaginative and lay the foundations for becoming effective communicators and learners.

In our Junior Infants class much of the children's learning will be through structured, child directed play and with dedicated Aistear sessions each week. There is a theme each month e.g. Hairdressers, Vets, Pirates, Supermarket, Doctors etc. During these sessions children will play, dress up, role play using a variety of resources such as water, play-doh, sand, blocks, junk art etc.



## Language Acquisition

If English is not your child's first language please note that we encourage children to speak English or Irish at school except when sharing their native language with the class. Total immersion in a language is the easiest way for children to become fluent and this will enable them to learn better in our school. However we encourage parents to use their native language at home as this is also really important for the child's development and acquisition of languages.

## Parental Involvement

Parents/Guardians have a range of talents, abilities and skills that have the potential to enrich and extend the educational opportunities provided for the children.

In line with the principles of equality based education, we actively seek and welcome parents to participate in and make a valuable contribution to our new Educate Together school in Firhouse at every level, including:

- Going forward for election to the Board of Management in October 2023
- Becoming a member of other committees e.g., our P.G.T.A. (Parent Guardian Teacher Association), or a School Community Development Committee; Green Schools Committee; Building Committee etc.
- Fundraising
- Participating in working groups to review policies
- Giving time to share a hobby, skill or interest during school hours in association with Class Teachers and the Principal
- Helping the Principal and Teachers with extracurricular activities, school outings, art, library etc. whenever possible.
- Gardening, Painting and Decorating etc.
- Suggesting and getting involved in interesting projects for the children e.g. our Forest School Initiative
- If you wish to become involved in any of the above please contact our Principal, Collette, a Class Teacher or a Board of Management Member.

### Shared Calendar

On our website [www.firhouseetns.ie](http://www.firhouseetns.ie) there is a shared calendar which is kept up to date with school events. This is a great way to keep track of everything that is happening in the school including celebrations, fundraisers, community events and holidays.

### Aladdin Connect

Firhouse Educate Together National School uses the Aladdin Schools software service for administration purposes. Aladdin Schools offer a 'Connect' service which gives parents/guardians access to messages from the school and to details of your child's attendance, test results, report cards etc via a secure login from your internet browser or Aladdin Connect App. We will send you full information on how to register for this service when the 2020/21 school year commences.

### Code of Positive Behaviour

The Code of Positive Behaviour at Firhouse Educate Together has as its basic tenet, a respect for each child as an individual; it aims to foster a positive atmosphere in which every child can learn, develop, reach his/her full potential and enjoy school. The Code of Positive Behaviour enables teachers and pupils to work in a well organised environment where acceptable patterns of behaviour are followed and where self-discipline, based on respect for everyone, is fostered. The Code of Positive Behaviour and other policies are available on our school website: [www.firhouseetns.ie](http://www.firhouseetns.ie) . Parents/Guardians agree with their child to follow the FETNS Code of Positive Behaviour when they accept the offer of enrolment to Firhouse ETNS.

We also encourage all families to read our school Policies which can be found on our website under the Board of Management tab:  
<http://www.firhouseetns.ie/policies.html>

In particular we ask you to read our Child Protection and Anti-Bullying Policies in addition to our Code of Positive Behaviour which you have already received when receiving your offer.

## Health Matters

Like most other primary schools, Firhouse ETNS is under the administration of the Health Service Executive. Childhood vaccinations and screening tests for sight, hearing and dental problems may be offered to your child whilst attending the school. You will be asked to sign a consent form before any health test or intervention. If necessary your child can be referred to the Health Centre for treatment.

Head Lice: No matter how careful you are about your child's hair, there is still a chance that it can become infested with head-lice if he/she comes in contact with other children. It is part of school life! Please check your child's hair regularly. It is very important that you inform your child's teacher immediately if you find head-lice, as they are highly contagious. We will then notify all parents to check their children's hair.

Health Problems: If your child has a particular health problem such as allergies, asthma, diabetes etc., you should advise the school. The school should also be made aware of the name and address of your family doctor.

If your child needs medication on a regular basis you may need to make special arrangements. As a general rule teachers should not be involved in the administration of medication to pupils. However, where a teacher must become involved the following procedure should be adhered to:

1. The teacher must obtain authorisation from the Board of Management to administer the medication.
2. The Parent(s) should write to the school management requesting permission for the teacher to administer the medication enclosing details of the procedure and indemnifying the teacher for same. This request must be in writing for school records.

Healthy Eating Policy: In Firhouse Educate Together School, we encourage healthy eating. Please read our Healthy Eating Policy available on our website [www.firhouseetns.ie](http://www.firhouseetns.ie). We also have a No Nut Policy due to some current students being allergic to nuts.

## Covid-19 Response Plan

A copy of our school's Covid-19 Response Plan will be sent to each family prior to school commencing. Please make sure you are familiar with this plan and the precautions that are currently in place to keep our school community as safe as possible. This will be updated as public health information is updated and the updated plan will be posted on our website [www.firhouseetns.ie](http://www.firhouseetns.ie)

### Helping your child in Junior Infants

There are many ways in which you can help your child to settle into and enjoy school life and, in particular, their year in Junior Infants:

- Write their name on their coats, bags, books, lunch boxes, flasks, and particularly their clothing etc.
- Teach your child how to take off and put on his / her coat, and how to open and close zips, buttons, buckles and tie laces.
- Show your child how to use and flush the toilet properly, and how to wash their hands properly.
- Encourage your child to share their toys and to tidy up after playing.
- Choose a lunch box and flask that are easily opened.
- Give some thought to lunches. Peeled oranges for example, are easier for your child to manage. Set yoghurt may help to avoid spills.
- Talk with your child about how they are getting on in school.
- Read stories with your child daily.
- Practise words and reading with your child when he / she starts to bring them home.
- Encourage good behaviour and respect for others.
- Come to the meetings or workshops arranged by the school for parents.

It's also a good idea to ensure your child is as **independent as possible** - physically, emotionally and socially. For example, if they can remain contentedly for a few hours in the home of a relation, friend or neighbour, then separation from parents when they start school will not cause any great anxiety. Meeting for play dates with future

classmates is also helpful. Such experiences will help your child to feel more secure and self-confident and they will be able to settle into school more easily.

### **The First Day....**

- Don't make a big deal about starting school as this can make children anxious. It helps if you prepare your child coming up to the first day. Ideas are: let your child choose their clothes for the first day/choose their schoolbag/pencil case/lunch etc.
- When you arrive at the classroom be as casual and calm as you can. Help your child find a coat hook (there are no assigned hooks) and encourage them to hang up their coat. You will meet the teacher who will encourage your child to sit with a group and play with the other children.
- Assure him/her that you will be back to collect them, wish them goodbye and make your getaway without delay.
  
- We will be having a coffee morning in the school so that you can meet other new parents and remain on the premises a little longer while your child settles in.
- In spite of the best efforts of both teacher and parents a small number of children will still become upset. If your child happens to be one of them please remain calm. Patience and perseverance always work wonders.
- Trust the teachers. They are experienced at helping the children settle into their new surroundings.
- We understand that parents may be feeling anxious inside but it is vital that you appear to be positive and calm.
- Tell your child that the teacher will look after him / her until home time. When you have reassured him/her leave promptly. The teacher will comfort your child and help them settle into the morning.
- You can always check back in with the office in a short while. You will invariably find that calm has been restored.

### **Going home...**

- Be sure to collect your child on time. Children can become very upset if they feel they are forgotten.
- The teacher will call each child in turn to return to their parent/guardian. Your patience at this time will be very much appreciated.
- If at any time the collecting routine has to be changed please ensure you tell your child and the teacher.
- Please check your child's bag each evening for letters/notes from the school.
- If you have any concerns please talk to your child's teacher.

So let's get started!

With every good wish to you and your child for your first year in Firhouse Educate Together National School..... which we are building together into a thriving and fun centre of learning for life.....

**"Never doubt that one person can make a difference.....  
.....it's the only thing that ever has." -Eleanor Roosevelt**

