



Strathearn School

Frequently Asked Questions

Information Leaflet for Pupils



Welcome



Welcome to our Frequently Asked Questions booklet. As we are unable to hold our usual Open morning, the booklet contains many of the questions we are asked each year. We hope they give you a true feeling for who we are as a school. Our prospectus will cover many of your questions but this booklet offers some

further insight. To further understand who we are, feel free to follow us on Instagram (*strathearn_school*) or Twitter (*Strathearn_Sch*) as we use these channels to share much of our information, celebrations etc.

Strathearn Life

How many Form 1 pupils join Strathearn each year?

We expect to have an intake of 110 pupils starting in August 2022. In total, we have 813 pupils aged between 11-18 at Strathearn School.

What happens if I am the only pupil from my primary school going to Strathearn?

Don't worry, there will be other pupils in a similar situation. To help ease the transition from primary school we place pupils, who come on their own from primary school, together in form classes.

Will pupils, coming from the same primary school, be in a form class together?

We try our best to keep pupils from the same primary school together. Where there are large numbers of pupils coming from one school, we spread them out across the five form classes.

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How many teachers work at Strathearn?

There are around 50 teachers in Strathearn who work full or part-time. Overall, there are around 120 members of staff at Strathearn School.

Are the teachers nice and can I go to them if I have any queries?

We totally understand that new pupils will feel nervous about making the move from primary school. Remember, we were all in Form 1 once (although some of us were there quite some time ago). As a school community we work hard to ensure our pupils settle as quickly as possible and encourage each of them to speak to their teacher, form tutor or pupils, if there is anything they are unsure of.

Is there any guidance on school bags?

No – although backpack-type bags are very popular. Your school bag should have enough space for the things you will need each day e.g. books, iPad, lunch bag, pencil case etc.

Am I allowed to wear my hair down?

Absolutely. However, for practical subjects like Home Economics, PE, Science and Technology & Design you will be asked to tie long hair up for safety reasons.

Transition



We will write to P7 pupils in May with an offer of a place at Strathearn School. Our first opportunity to meet you will be in June when we hold an Induction evening. Here, you will have an opportunity to see the school and meet your new form tutor and other members of your form class. You will also meet Mrs Connery (Principal), Miss Stewart (Head of Form 1) and other key staff. In August there will be an Induction morning when you will get your timetable and be introduced to life at

Strathearn. Mid-way through September, Form 1 pupils go to the Ulster Folk Museum for a Bonding Day where you will get to know the pupils in the year group.

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School Transport



How can I travel to school?

If you live locally, we encourage you to walk or cycle to and from school. We have bike parks where you can safely store your bicycle during the school day. However, if you are travelling from further away school buses are available from Bangor, Newtownards and Comber. They drop pupils outside school each morning and collect them at the end of the school day.

Route	AM	PM
Bangor	7.50am Direct from Bangor Bus Station. 7.52am Bangor Bus Station and stops at: - Crawfordsburn - Helen's Bay - Holywood	3.35pm Direct to Bangor Bus Station. 3.40pm A Shared bus with Bloomfield Collegiate collects pupils from the Belmont Road. Drop off points are at: - Holywood - Helen's Bay - Crawfordsburn
	8.10am Newtownards Bus Station to Strathearn via Quarry Corner.	3.40pm Travels along the Upper Newtownards Road with the first drop off being at Cherryhill, Dundonald. Priority will be given to those travelling to Newtownards as there is a Metro Service available for pupils living in Dundonald.
Comber and Killinchy	7.40am Comber Cemetery to Strathearn. A connecting bus leaves Killinchy at 7:12am stopping at Comber Cemetery.	3.45pm Direct to Comber dropping off at the bridge and Comber Cemetery before travelling on to Killinchy. Pupils travelling to Killinchy will have priority on this bus. 3:50pm Bus leaves from Belmont Primary School bus stop and stops at all locations along the route to Comber. There is no onward connection to Killinchy.

Please note that these times are approximate and morning buses may pass earlier or later than scheduled. Translink advise that passengers are at the bus stop at least 5 minutes before the times listed. Routes and times are subject to change, so parents are advised to check with Translink before initial travel.

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The School Day



What time does school start?

School begins at 8.45am with registration. You will be in your form class, with your form tutor, for 20 minutes each morning before lessons begin at 9.05 am.

What does the school day look like?

Time	Period	Time	Period
8.45am-9.05am	Registration/Assembly	12.15pm-12.50pm	Period 6
9.05am-9.40am	Period 1	12.50pm-1.40pm	Lunch
9.40am-10.15am	Period 2	1.40pm-1.45pm	Warning Bell
10.15am-10.50am	Period 3	1.45pm-2.20pm	Period 7
10.50am-11.05am	Break	2.20pm-2.55pm	Period 8
11.05am-11.40am	Period 4	2.55pm-3.30pm	Period 9
11.40am-12.15pm	Period 5		

How many form classes are there in each year group?

There are five form classes in Forms 1-5 and four in Lower and Upper 6th. Each form class has its own form tutor. There is a Head of Year for each year group. The Head of Form 1 is Miss Stewart.

How many pupils are in each form class?

In Forms 1-5, there are approximately 24 pupils in each form class.

Do you stay with your form class for all lessons?

In Junior school (Forms 1-3) you will move around the school for different subjects and are largely taught with pupils from your form class. As you move into Form 4, and beyond, you will be taught with pupils from different form classes based on your subject choices.

Do we stay in our registration room for all lessons?

No – you will register in the same room each morning but will move around the school for all your other lessons.

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When will I get my timetable?

This always causes great excitement amongst all pupils (and teachers). You will receive your timetable from your form tutor during the Form 1 induction session in August.

How will I find my way around the school?

Each pupil will receive a student planner which includes a map of the school. Your form tutor will also take you on a tour of the school and show you some of the key rooms/spaces you will spend time in. There are also signs around the school which will direct you. If in doubt, other pupils or a member of staff will be happy to help.

Will we be able to study Art, PE and Music at Strathearn?

Absolutely ... and a whole lot more including Geography, Religious Studies, Technology & Design and Home Economics. You will study 13 different subjects in Form 1 including:

Form One

- | | |
|-----------------|---------------------------|
| •Art & Design | •Learning for Life & Work |
| •English | •Maths |
| •French | •Music |
| •Geography | •PE |
| •History | •Religious Studies |
| •Home Economics | •Science |
| •ICT | |

Form Two

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| •Art & Design | •Learning for Life & Work |
| •English | •Maths |
| •French | •Music |
| •Geography | •PE |
| •German or Spanish | •Religious Studies |
| •History | •Science |
| •Home Economics | |
| •ICT | |

All pupils study French in Form 1. When you move into Form 2, you will continue to study French and choose either Spanish or German as a second language.

How many classes will I have each day?

There are nine periods per day, each lasting 35 minutes. However, some classes are taught as double periods (70 minutes) or triple periods for example, Home Economics.

How many subjects will I study at GCSE level?

You will study nine GCSE subjects. We encourage you to study a broad and balanced curriculum by ensuring you take at least one science subject and one foreign language, alongside the core subjects of Maths, English Language and Literature and Religious Studies.

What percentage of pupils achieve grade C or above in Maths and English?

Usually, 100% of pupils achieve an A*-C grade in their GCSE Maths and English Language.

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Classwork and Homework



Will I use exercise books or files in lessons?

Each subject has their own way of working but you will be guided by your teacher. Some use exercise books, some use booklets. The school provide Form 1 pupils with a stationery pack on their first day. This will include various items of stationery that you will need in school, including exercise books, ring binders and file paper. You will need to purchase your own pens, pencils etc.

Do we receive school iPads?

Yes – pupils receive a school iPad at the start of Form 1 and return these at the end of Form 5. iPads are used in lessons to complete classwork and should be brought to school each day, fully charged.

What other IT facilities are available?

We are fortunate to have a wide range of IT facilities here at Strathearn. There is a large Learning Centre which is available to pupils at lunchtime and after school, and there is also a dedicated ICT classroom. Art, Music, Technology and Home Economics also have computer suites in their department areas. Pupils also have access to remote trolleys with 125 chromebooks which are often used to support classroom learning.

How much homework is given each week?

Homework can vary according to how many periods of each subject you may have in a week. When your teacher issues homework, they will indicate how long they recommend you spend on the activity and will let you know when you need to hand it in. The teacher will also give you an indication of how your homework will be assessed. It may be a task that is collected in and marked by the teacher or you may be asked to revise a topic and be quizzed during the next lesson. You will be provided with a school planner where you can record each homework.

Assessments



Are there Christmas exams for Junior School?

We don't hold Christmas assessments for pupils in Junior School. Each department will assess through end-of-unit tests and homework throughout the year. Pupils in Forms 1-4 sit formal internal assessments in May. For pupils in Forms 5-Upper 6th, we run two assessment weeks (November and February) in

preparation for external examinations.

Do we target set?

Whilst some schools choose to set targets for their pupils at the beginning of each year we prefer not to do this at Strathearn. Teachers will always encourage pupils to work hard and

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offer advice on how to improve if they feel they are not fulfilling their potential.

How many school reports will I receive each year?

Pupils will receive a short Pupil Progress Update with a percentage and effort grade, for each subject, once each year. A longer report including percentage, effort grade and teacher/form tutor comments will also be provided once per year.

Lockers & Library



Will I have access to a locker?

Yes – all pupils are assigned a locker for use throughout the school year. These are located in the main teaching block.

When can I use my locker?

You will be able to access your locker before and after school and at break and lunchtime. You will be shown how to use these during the induction day in August.

When can I use the Library?

The Library is available at break and lunchtime or after school for work. Pupils also attend the Library during some English lessons.

Break & Lunchtime



Where will I eat my lunch?

Miskelly Deli is our beautiful canteen facility which pupils use at break and lunchtimes. There is a variety of food available to purchase, including vegetarian and gluten-free options, using a cashless system. We also have a sandwich deli which sells hot and cold sandwiches, baguettes and wraps and these can be pre-ordered, using our DishUp app, if necessary. Miskelly Deli is open to pupils before school, during break and at lunchtime. You can also bring a packed lunch to school and eat this in Miskelly Deli. There are several common rooms available once you have finished your lunch. These are organised by year group and provide a space for you to meet with friends.

Mobile Phones



Can I use my mobile phone in school?

If you have a mobile phone, you can use it at break and lunchtime. Mobile phones are not to be used in the corridors.

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Parent Consultations



We are very proud of the links we have developed between home and school. In June, we hold an induction evening for our new Form 1 pupils. During this session, parents will meet with the Principal, Vice Principal and Head of Year and hear vital information about the year ahead. In September, parents will have an opportunity to meet with their daughter's form tutor to discuss how she is settling in.

There is also a parent consultation, with your daughter's subject teachers, once each year. For pupils in Forms 2 – Upper 6th, there is one parent consultation per year.

School Nurse



What happens if I become unwell at school?

We have two School Health Nurses who oversee the health of our pupils. If you are feeling unwell during the school day, you can visit the Medical Room where the nurse will assess you and provide the necessary support.

Pastoral Care



Who should I speak to if I am worried or have a concern?

We have a well-structured, caring pastoral system here at Strathearn. This starts with the Form tutor and subject teacher who you will engage with each day. If you are unsure about your classwork or even your homework, you should speak to your subject teacher. If you are worried about something else, you should speak to your form tutor who will help you address these. Form tutors are supported by a Head of Year and by a senior member of staff in the pastoral team including Mr Atkinson (pastoral senior teacher) and Mrs Sinnerton, the pastoral vice principal. If a parent/carer is concerned about their child, they can contact staff using our dedicated email address (info@strathearn.belfast.ni.sch.uk) or by phoning the school on: **02890 471595**.

Does Strathearn have a mentor/buddy system for Form 1 pupils?

In Strathearn, 30 of our senior pupils in Upper 6th act as mentors. They visit the form class each week and support pupils throughout the year.

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How many reports of bullying do you get each year?

We wish there were none, but there are very few and most are very minor. Bullying is horrible and we don't want it to be a part of our school. If pupils, or parents, have a concern they can speak to the Form tutor who will take steps to help.

House System



How are students assigned to a house?

There are four houses in Strathearn:

Barbour, Boucher, McCaughey and Watts.

If you have a sister at the school, we tend to place you in the same house. If a family member is a past pupil of Strathearn, and you let us know, you will be placed in the same house. We assign students evenly to each of the four houses.

What House competitions are there?

Pupils take part in a wide variety of house competitions each year including Strathearn's Got Talent, House Bake-Off, Photography competitions, House Plays, General Knowledge Quiz as well as different sporting challenges.

If you are in a different house than someone else, can you still be in the same class?

Yes – you will be in a class with pupils from other houses.

Extra-Curricular Activities



What is on offer beyond the classroom?

As a school, we actively promote participation in extra-curricular activities. They play an important role in developing friendships beyond the classroom. We have so many clubs on offer that it is difficult to list them all.

What school trips are available?

Form 1 pupils usually attend a bonding day with all pupils in their year group. This takes place during the first few weeks of term and gives pupils the opportunity to meet new friends. There are lots of opportunities for trips as you move up the school. In recent years (pre-Covid) there have been trips to Italy, Berlin, Lanzarote and London.

Are there any stage productions?

Yes- there is a school production every two years.

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Just some of the things to look forward to!

Junior Choir **LIBRARY CRAFT**
Miskelly Deli - paninis
HOUSE BAKE OFF **Kayaking**
DANCE CLUB *Hockey Club*
SCRIPTURE UNION **house plays**
BADMINTON CLUB **New Subjects**
New friends **CHARITY SPORTS**
FORM 1 BONDING DAY

Music Tuition



What instruments can I learn at Strathearn?

We have ten experienced specialist music tutors, who teach singing, piano, guitar, violin, viola, flute, clarinet, saxophone and upper brass instruments.

Who can join the music tuition programme?

Anyone who wants to. Access to lessons is on a first come, first served basis. There are

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no auditions, and equal priority is given to students starting lessons for the first time and those who have sung or played an instrument before.

Can you learn several instruments?

Only one instrument (or voice) can be studied in school.

How much do lessons cost?

£16 for each 35-minute lesson. Students pay for a set of ten lessons.

When do the lessons take place?

Throughout the school day. Students miss one of their classes each week to attend their music tuition lesson. They are responsible for catching up on all work and homework missed as a result of being at their music lesson. The time of the lesson changes each week so that you are not missing the same subject each week. It's not possible to have lessons just at lunch time or after school as this time is used for extra-curricular music groups including traditional group, orchestra, junior choir etc.

How can I sign up for lessons?

An online application form is made available in June.

School Council



Does Strathearn have a School Council?

We feel it is important to listen, and respond, to the views of our pupils and so we have a very active School Council here at Strathearn. Each form class is represented on the School Council by the form captain, who is voted into the role by their peers. The School Council is chaired by two senior school pupils and supported by Dr Haire, our School Librarian. The School Council play a fundamental role in shaping the direction of the school and have supported the development of many initiatives relating to school life including our merit system, outdoor furniture to support wellbeing and participation in the first joint school council meeting with ten other school councils from the East Belfast area.

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Sport at Strathearn



What sports will I do in PE?

In Form 1 you will have the opportunity to play hockey, netball, gymnastics, dance, swimming, athletics, tennis and rounders. We also have a wide range of extra-curricular clubs including all of the sports mentioned above as well as cross country, volleyball, badminton, table tennis, football and cricket.

Will I get an opportunity to play on a school team?

Strathearn has a great sporting reputation, and we have pupils competing at District, Ulster, National and International levels in many of the sports mentioned above. In addition to that we also have pupils who compete in trampolining, equestrian, golf and squash competitions. Whilst not all pupils compete against other schools, there are also a number of Inter House sports competitions which you will be able to get involved in. One of our favourites is the annual Christmas fancy dress hockey competition.

Can I join an extra-curricular sport I have never played before?

All our extra-curricular clubs are open to all pupils regardless of experience. Some pupils want to participate in the club for recreational purposes, while others are keen to compete on school teams and so there will be team selections as you progress through Form 1.

How many periods of PE will I have each week?

You will have a triple period of PE once a week (1 hr 45mins).

What do I wear for PE?

We have a school PE kit which includes a hoodie, tracksuit bottoms and polo shirt plus either a skort or shorts depending on the sporting activity.

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Communication with School



Our Reception staff are usually the first people to respond to any queries, should a parent/carer need to contact the school. They will be able to identify who is best placed to deal with their query.

How does the school communicate with parents/carers?

As a school, we have a variety of communication channels with which we share information. We currently use ParentMail but are moving towards a school-wide use of SIMS app. This new communication app will allow us to share information on individual pupil attendance, achievement and behaviour incidents. This app will also be used to distribute school reports and share details of the school diary. Like any app, it will provide alerts and notifications and allow us to communicate in a convenient and accessible way.

Website & Social Media



We also have a school website which includes information on what life is like here at Strathearn. There is a section for prospective pupils and parents

(https://www.strathearn.org.uk/admissions/transfer_assessment.php) and we would encourage you to take a look at the videos and information posted here. Our current pupils prefer to receive information via social media and so we have an active Instagram and Twitter account as well as a dedicated YouTube channel. These are used to highlight pupil achievements as well as updates about school life.

Still got a Question?



If you still have a question about life at Strathearn we would encourage you to view our website <https://www.strathearn.org.uk>. Alternatively, please call us on **02890 471595** and we will do our utmost to answer your questions.



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