

Hagen Kavanagh Intro to Feis-ing Info Packet:

For Our New-ish Families Interested in Attending a Feis:

Hagen Kavanagh

The Hagen-Kavanagh School is directed by Jean Hagen Duffy, A.D.C.R.G. and Tara Kavanagh Ryan, T.C.R.G. which means they are certified adjudicators/teachers by An Chomhdháil na Muinteoiri le Rinci Gaelacha Teoranta in Ireland. HK belongs to the [USA Irish Dance Alliance](#) which offers our students the chance to compete, perform, and be assessed in their technical dance skills. There are opportunities for competitive and non-competitive students alike.

Here at the Hagen-Kavanagh School, not only is Irish step dancing learned, friendship and team spirit is stressed as well. Students are very supportive and respectful of one another. The dancers work hard and are challenged to do their best not only by their instructors, but also by their classmates. All of us at the H-K School are dedicated to preserving and expanding the beautiful art form and wonderful tradition of Irish dance.

What is a Feis? (pronounced “fesh”)

A feis is an Irish Dance Competition. It is loud, crowded, exciting, exasperating, exhilarating, fun, and tiring. The word "Feis" comes from a Gaelic word meaning "festival".

Throughout the year, there will be many opportunities for your dancer to participate in a feis. Hagen Kavanagh is very proud to offer two local feiseanna (plural of feis) each school year. The first usually takes place in October and the second usually takes place in January.

Each Feis provides an opportunity for your dancer to compete against others in the same age group and level. For your dancer, this is a fun and exciting occasion. For a “feis parent”, the experience can be very overwhelming! Following is some information to help make the event a little less stressful!

What are the competition levels at a Feis?

- Pre-Bun / Pre-Cup (our very youngest dancers)
- Bun Grad A (equivalent to Beginner)
- Bun Grad B (equivalent to Advanced Beginner)
- Bun Grad C (equivalent to Novice/Prizewinner)
- Pre-Open Champs (equivalent to advanced Prizewinner & Preliminary)
- Open Champs

How does a dancer move up through the competition levels?

In An Chomhdháil, dancers move up a level in a specific dance as soon as a first place is achieved in that dance. ***For the win to count, there must be 10 dancers in the competition, or the judge may indicate an advancement if there are not 10 entered.***

It is possible (& likely!) that competitors will have dances in various levels at any given time. For instance if your dancer is dancing the Reel and Light Jig in Bun Grad A, but places first in a competition with more than ten dancers in the Reel, for the next Feis they will dance in Bun Grad B for the Reel and stay in Bun Grad A for Light Jig.

There are times when even if there are less than 10 competitors a judge can decide that the child danced well enough to move up. In this case Ms. Pat or your child's instructor will let you know once they have received copies of the judges' results.

Dancer's Feis Age

Your dancer's age level for the year is whatever age they are on January 1 of each year. If your dancer is 7 years old on January 1st, they will dance in the Under 8 category for the entire year, or January 1st through December 31st (even after their birthday passes).

Sometimes, due to the number of registrations, age groups will be combined at a feis. For example, instead of U6, U7, U8, U9, & U10, the only available categories for registration will be U6, U8, & U10. Your child may be in U9 but will dance in the U10 at that particular feis.

So you are interested in attending a Feis, now what?

First Feis:

Whether your child has just begun dancing at Hagen Kavanagh or it has been a few years now, we highly recommend our dancers try their very first feis competition at a Hagen Kavanagh Feis. Our feiseanna are held locally and they help our younger dancers (and their parents!) get acclimated to the feis format and environment.

Signing Up:

The first step is speaking with your child's instructor or Ms. Pat Kelly or Ms. Jean Duffy. They can help you figure out the events that your child is ready for. Tip: Write down whatever events they tell you to sign up for and keep that paper somewhere so that you will have the information for the next feis. When your child is ready for Bun Grad A and beyond, check back in periodically with your child's teacher as your child will learn more and more dances until they are ready

to dance them all (Reel, Light Jig, Slip Jig, Hop Jig, Treble Jlg, Horn Pipe, Traditional Set(aka St.Patrick's Day!)).

Once you speak with your child's instructor about signing up for a feis, you will head to [Welcome to FeisWeb!](http://feisweb.com) (feisweb.com) where you will need to set up an account and register your child before you can sign up for any feiseanna. **Please refer to the document [How to Create a FeisWeb Account](#) for detailed information.**

The feiseanna we participate in are Open Platform. Once you click on the appropriate feis you will follow the instructions and sign your child up for the appropriate events. This is where you will enter the events for your dancer. You will need their level, age group, and dance. (ie Bun Grad A, Under 8, Reel and Light Jig)

Registration for the feis usually begins 1-2 months before the date of the feis. There is a deadline for registration and you can be shut out. So be sure to check feisweb.com OR usairishdancealliance.com for a look at all the upcoming feiseanna for the entire year. HK will also send out emails with reminders for sign-ups - so make sure you are on the email listserv and that they aren't going to spam!

Once you have paid for the feis events on Paypal, you can go back into Feisweb a few days before the actual feis to print out your child's number card. This number card is important for the feis. It must be safety-pinned to the **center** of your child's dress/vest near the bottom. The judges use this number to identify your dancer. If you forget to print out the number card, the registration desk at the feis will usually have a number card printed out for you. The number is also what the presenters use when calling out awards.

If this is your first Hagen Kavanagh feis and you discover that you signed up for the wrong thing, don't worry! The Hagen Kavanagh Feis is hosted by our own parents and teachers, so it is easy to make a change at the registration desk upon arriving. If you need to add an additional event that you forgot, that's okay too.

If you sign up your child for the wrong event or too few events, please know you have officially become a feis parent! It happens to all of us and most schools are okay with making changes at the registration desk.

What to Wear at a Feis

Outfit:

Skirt/Shirt:

If it is your daughter's first feis, a black skort or skirt and a white, collared, button down, short sleeve shirt or white polo would work just fine. (Most of these items can be found at The Children's Place).

School Jumper:

There is also the school recital uniform (jumper) that your daughter can wear. This can be ordered through the school and is used for the recital, feiseanna, parades, and any St. Patrick's Day performances. This order can take up to two to three months, so if you are interested, make sure to talk to Ms. Pat or Ms. Jean as soon as possible. Alternatively, there also may be someone that is willing to sell you a hand-me-down school uniform. Ms. Pat or Ms. Jean can help you with this as well.

School Dress:

The school dress is what you will see on some of the Bun Grad dancers who have been dancing for a little longer and attending Feiseanna, but other dancers choose to get this as their first School Dress instead of the jumper. This dress is more expensive and can be purchased directly through the designer but can last up to two years or more (depending on growth spurts). And again many families are willing to sell their school dresses that don't fit their dancers anymore. These dresses are also worn many times throughout the year: at feiseanna, the recital, parades and any of the St. Patrick's Day performances.

Black Out Attire:

Girls choosing to wear a black leotard and black skirt must also wear dark tights in Under 10 and older.

Bloomers:

Put a set of black bloomers in your supply bag. This will go on under the skirt or school dress. You will need black bloomers for many years to come!!

Boy's Gear

If it is your son's first feis, black pants and any color button down short sleeve shirt or polo is an acceptable uniform. Black socks and a belt are also necessary, as well as their soft shoes and/or hard shoes. As your son gets more involved, and participates in more feiseanna, Ms. Jean may recommend a vest.

Hair:

Pre-Bun: For our littlest, pre-bun dancers we ask that their hair be worn half up or in a neat bun.

Bun Grad A, B, & C: You can still wear hair half up or in a neat bun but you will eventually want to get a small bun wig.

Feishead is a local vendor that visits the school at various times throughout the year to give tutorials to parents and to sell the simple bun wigs. These bun wigs can at times also be found for purchase at a feis.

Camelia Rose is a vendor who attends feiseanna to sell bun wigs. At this stage it is a very simple child's bun wig, so it can also be found on the internet for purchase. Please speak with Ms. Jean before purchasing a wig or buncover.

Make-Up:

Dancers up to and including the age of 12 are prohibited from wearing face make-up.

Shoes:

Our littlest Pre-Bun / Pre-Cup dancers can wear the black ballet shoes that they wear to class.

Once the child gets a little older and is ready for their first pair of soft shoes and eventually hard shoes, there are two ways to go.

The school keeps broken in pairs of shoes that other dancers have grown out of. If you speak with Ms. Pat Kelly or Ms. Jean Hagen they can help you navigate finding a pair of used shoes to purchase from the previous owner.

If you are interested in new shoes, Fay's Shoes is the main distributor to Hagen Kavanagh. His store is located in Westchester, but he or a representative attends most feiseanna. HK also tries to set up a sale right before the start of the school year in late August or early September. So keep an eye open for communication regarding a visit from Pat Fay. Just tell Pat that your child is a Hagen Kavanagh dancer and he knows exactly what to get you, soft shoe, hard shoe, or both. Generally speaking you will need black shoe laces for the younger dancers.

As the dancers get older and are doing solos, they switch to using white laces and white tape.

Socks:

Pre Bun / Pre Cup little ones can wear white ankle socks. Bubble socks are worn with the school uniform or dress. Bubble socks are available to purchase at all feiseanna (Fay's carries them), at the studio depending on stock, or online. You may also want to purchase the sock glue which is a roll on adhesive that keeps the bubble socks up on the girls' legs!

Other Items To Bring:

- Printed Out Number Card
- Black electrical tape - to tape down laces.
- Hairspray
- Hairbrush
- Fine-tooth comb
- Hairpiece such as a bow if you are wearing the School Jumper / Dress
- Bobby pins (If you are wearing a wig and put the wig on before you go to the feis, be sure to bring extra bobby pins in case the wig needs to be adjusted. You can NEVER have enough bobby pins on hand.)

**** PLEASE NOTE - NO VIDEOS OR PHOTOGRAPHY ARE PERMITTED DURING DANCING - This is an An Chomhdháil rule!!!****

Volunteering at the Hagen Kavanagh Feis

In order to run a smooth and successful feis we do ask that all families participating in the feis volunteer their time in one way or another. There are many ways to volunteer: *registration desk*, *baking*, *kitchen help*, *trophies and awards*, *shopping for food*, *picking up judges from airport*, *bringing judges to feis from hotel*, *serving hospitality to judges*, *selling raffles*, *making gift baskets*, *selling gift baskets*, *lining up dancers*, *decorating*, *cleaning up*, *getting items from storage to feis (and back again)*, and the list goes on!

You can let us know what your talent is and we are happy to match you with your talent. This event is an “All hands-on deck” for all of our Hagen Kavanagh families. If you wish to only volunteer when your child is not dancing, then we can assign you a time that we know will be before or after your child dances. We always need extra helpers with serving food and selling raffle tickets.

Hagen Parents Corp (HPC)

HPC is a non-profit organization that was formed many years ago by Hagen's parents. This organization helps out the school in any way they may need but specifically in raising and providing funds for all the expenses involved in a feis, such as:

- Judges' salaries
- Venue
- Trophies, plaques, medals
- Sashes
- Cost of food
- Cost of drinks
- Transportation for judges (including airfare)
- Musicians' salaries

There is a lot of expense that goes into running a successful feis. Hagen Parents Corp is responsible for making it happen. The registration fees alone are not enough to cover the expenses of hosting the feis. Other expenses that HPC pays for throughout the year are pizza parties, subsidizing expenses for each family going to the provincial, and giving a small stipend to each Champ Dancer that goes to World's. EVERY dancer benefits from HPC! This is also why we ask / expect that every family volunteers their time at our local Feis. In addition, we usually sell raffle tickets, raffle baskets, superbowl chances, etc. throughout the year! All of this money goes right back to our dancers, so please encourage family and friends to participate in these fundraising events. The more we raise, the more we can give back to our dancers!

What to Expect the Day of the Hagen Kavanagh Feis:

- The feis is normally two days long with the older dancers / Pre-Open/ Non-Championship Holders / and Open Champs taking place on a separate day from the Pre-Bun / Bun Grads.
- The stage schedule and start times for the dancing will typically be released a few days in advance and can be found on the USA IDA website and/or the HK facebook page All listed times are rough estimates. Dances can run ahead of or behind schedule by up to an hour. It is better to get to the venue around 45 minutes early to be safe and to plan on putting some time in!
- A feis syllabus is a tricky thing to learn to read - however, check out [FEIS 101 – How to Read a Feis Schedule](#) for detailed information.
- The feis will go roughly in Level order, Bun Grad A, Bun Grad B, and then Bun Grad C. Within those groups dances will proceed in age order, first U6, then U7, U8, etc. Once all the Bun Grad A dances are complete, there will be a break where scores are tabulated and then an award ceremony for all Bun Grad As. After that award ceremony the Bun Grad B competition is held, followed by the Bun Grad B awards, and then the Bun Grad C competition and awards. If your child has dances in different Bun levels they will have to wait and be there for both.
- The hall will be crowded. And there will be a lot of downtime/waiting between dances and while waiting for awards. Encourage your little one to watch / cheer on other dancers from Hagen Kavanagh, but it would also be helpful to have quiet downtime activities /snacks for them to occupy their time.
- There will be food / snacks / drinks to purchase at the feis.

- There will be two stages going at once, usually right next to each other and separated by stanchions. Each stage will have a designated judge that will judge all dancers on that stage.
- For the Pre-Buns and Bun Grad A dancers there will be an instructor or older dancer there to count them in and let them know when to start.
- Two or three dancers will dance at the same time on each stage. The dancers can be from different schools and can be doing different steps. That is completely normal!
- Try to keep track of the dances going on (there will be announcements and also an easel with current dances). Stay close to the stage if your dancer is going soon - volunteers will line the dancers up 1-2 dances prior to their performance and you don't want to miss checking in.
- Unfortunately, there is **no photography allowed while girls are dancing**. This is an An Chomhdháil rule and will be enforced during the feis.
- Each of the Bun Grad levels (A, B, and C) will have one dance during the feis that is designated as the Cup Competition. This dance can be different for each level. The winners of this dance will receive their awards on the podium and the top 5 dancers will receive a "cup" or trophy as opposed to a medal.
- ****All dancers must be in full costume in order to receive their awards, NO EXCEPTIONS. ****
- **Please note that except for Pre-Bun/Pre-Cup, most judges do not "place" or award all dancers in a competition. Generally, about half of the dancers will receive a placement/award, but this can be even less. This is something you may wish to discuss with your dancer in advance.**

Final Thoughts

If you still have questions or concerns, or you would like more clarification on what to expect, how a feis runs, or what your son/daughter needs to dance, please just ask! Ms. Pat, Ms. Jean and the instructors as well as most of the seasoned parents are happy to give you tips and help guide you in the Irish Step World. Our championship dancers are also a good source for asking any questions that you may have.

The biggest thing to remember in all of this is to try to stay stress free as much as you can and don't take anything too seriously!!! Trust the process!

Through the Irish Step / Feis process, your child will learn the incredibly important skills of resilience, goal setting, fortitude, & determination! There is no set time-line for dancers to move up to the next level and it is not unusual to have dances at different levels. Also, individual judges will have different things they are looking for.

Encourage your child to do their best and to work hard and improve the next time! The most important thing is for you and your dancer(s) to have bonding time and enjoy the art of Irish dancing. Time will go by quickly so enjoy every moment!!!

Websites to Check out:

[Welcome to FeisWeb!](#) - to sign up for Feiseanna

[About USA IDA — USA Irish Dance Alliance](#) - All about the USA Irish Dance Alliance. This is where to go to find out more info about the different upcoming Feisanna - the syllabus (start times / order), hotel info for Feiseanna that are further away and any other info you may need!