



Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc Handbook

Irish American Club of Berkshire County

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	1
Parent Introduction to Irish Dance	3
Program Overview	5
Classes	5
Assessments	5
Home Practice	5
Performance and Competition	6
Calendar	6
Private Dance Lessons	7
Scheduling, Payment, and Cancellations	7
Individual & Small Group Music Lessons	8
Lesson Options	8
Lesson Length	8
Enrollment Options	8
Scheduling and Attendance	8
Missed Lessons	9
Practice Expectations and Communication	9
Tuition	9
Instructor Placement	9
Tuition and Fees: General Information	10
Payments	11
Late Fees	11
Discounts	11
Refunds	11
Credits	12
Attendance, Makeups, and Cancellations	13
Costumes	14
Dress Code	15
Class Dress Code	15
Performance and Competition Dress Code	17
Conduct	18
Releases, Consent Forms, and Privacy Policies	19
Liability Release	19
Consent Forms	19
Privacy Policies	19

Parent Introduction to Irish Dance

Although Berkshire County is home to many people whose heritage includes Ireland, Irish step dancing is not well known here. When Riverdance aired on the Eurovision Song Contest in Dublin, Ireland in the early 1990s, it brought to worldwide attention an aspect of Irish culture that previously had been largely confined to St. Patrick's Day celebrations and cultural events. Since then, the popularity of Irish dance has skyrocketed, particularly in the United States. For those who are new to the world of Irish dance, this brief introduction may help.

In Irish dancing, a step is a sequence of foot movements, leg movements, and jumps, choreographed to fit a certain rhythm. Generally, the sequence is danced through 4 or 8 bars of music for the "right foot" of the step and is repeated through 4 or 8 more bars of music for the "left foot". Steps are choreographed for the various Irish music rhythms: reel, slip jig, single jig, light jig, treble jig, and hornpipe. There are many steps of each dance, varying in level of difficulty. Levels are bunghrad (pronounced BOON-grahd; beginner), ullmhuchan (pronounced OOL-vuh-kahn; intermediate), meanghrad (pronounced MAN-grahd; novice), ardghrad (pronounced ORD-grahd; advanced), and craobhghrad (pronounced CRAVE-grahd; champion). Some steps taught at Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc (pronounced SKOAL RIN-ka BREF-nee O RORK) are traditional material created by Ita Cadwell, one of the founding members of Cumann Rince Naisiunta (pronounced CUM-an RIN-ka now-SHUN-ta; CRN). Other steps are created by the instructors, and are unique to Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc. Still other steps are known as traditional set dances, which were created by traveling dance masters in Ireland, dating as far back as the 18th century.

There are two kinds of dance shoes worn for Irish step dancing – soft shoes and hard shoes. Reels, slip jigs, single jigs, and light jigs are performed in soft shoes. Treble jigs and hornpipes are the first hard shoe dances taught, first at traditional (fast) speed and later at a slower speed, which allows for more complicated footwork. Experienced dancers will also learn treble reels and set dances, both performed in hard shoes.

Ceili dances are performed in groups that comprise a set number of dancers, and are often named by the number of dancers in the group (e.g., 4-Hand reel, 8-Hand reel).

An Irish dancer's basic skills include (but are not limited to):

- Good timing (meaning the dance movements match the rhythm of the music)
- Pointed toes with arched feet
- Legs crossed, so that it looks like one knee is hiding behind the other
- Legs turned out (including hips, knees, and toes), so that the inside of each anklebone is facing forward, toes outward
- Upright upper body carriage with arms straight at the dancer's sides, chin level, eyes forward, head evenly balanced atop relaxed neck, with shoulders open (down and back)

- Graceful and energetic movement, including high elevation on the toes and snappy legs that kick the dancer's bum when feet move from behind to in front or vice versa
- Well-executed jumps that incorporate all of the above principles, and an overall sense of "lift" throughout a dance
- Confident and pleasant appearance

Some Irish dancers choose to dance in competition, which can be a great way to stay motivated while striving to master steps. A feile (pronounced FAY-luh) or feis (pronounced FESH) are Irish dance competitions offering dance events for multiple skill levels, each further divided by age groups.

Whether a dancer chooses to compete, perform, or dance recreationally, we're very glad that you've decided to join the Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc family!

Program Overview

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc is owned by the Irish American Club of Berkshire County. We provide Irish dance instruction in a fun, supportive, and inclusive environment.

Classes

Classes are designed to teach and reinforce traditional steps and proper technique.

- **Leveled Classes**
 - Dancers must be enrolled in at least 1 class at their assigned level.
 - Levels include Lions (beginner), Advanced Lions (advanced beginner), Emeralds (intermediate), Advanced Emeralds (intermediate), Crowns (advanced), and Advanced Crowns (championship).
- **Bréifne Ó Ruairc Troupe**
 - Dancers in the Advanced Lions through Advanced Crowns levels may join the Bréifne Ó Ruairc performance troupe.
 - Joining the performance troupe requires a high level of commitment, as there are class attendance and performance requirements. Details are provided at the Reverse Audition, which is required for all Troupe dancers. A Performance Troupe Agreement must be signed by each dancer and parent upon joining.
- **Foireann Cavan (Competition Team)**
 - Dancers in the Advanced Lions through Advanced Crowns levels may join Foireann Cavan.
 - Joining Foireann Cavan requires a high level of commitment, as there are class attendance and competition requirements. Details are provided at the Reverse Audition, which is required for all Troupe dancers. A Foireann Cavan Agreement must be signed by each dancer and parent upon joining.

Assessments

Individual assessments are conducted throughout the dance season to support each dancer's progress.

- After each assessment, dancers and their parents will be provided a report that will identify skills dancers should focus on to progress.
- The results of these assessments will help guide class placements and help determine readiness for competition and CRN grade exams.

Home Practice

Practice at home is highly recommended and encouraged. Irish dance is a sport as well as an art form, so repetition of the movements learned in class is essential for progress. While we encourage home practice and recognize its benefits, our main priority is to foster the love of the tradition of Irish dance. Nurturing the love of Irish dance often leads naturally to dancers taking it upon themselves to practice at home as they develop a passion for it.

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc maintains many home practice resources on Google Classroom. The director will provide access to the Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc Google Classroom.

Performance and Competition

Opportunities are available to all Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc dancers for performance and competition.

- Performances
 - Performances include shows run by Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc as well as those initiated by community groups.
 - All Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc dancers are eligible to perform at most shows. When signing up for a performance, dancers must ensure they are available for not only the performance itself, but any rehearsal(s) associated with the performance.
 - Performance is encouraged but not required.
 - Dancers who choose to perform must have a costume. Please see [costume information](#).
 - Additional performance opportunities are available for the Bréifne Ó Ruairc Troupe.
- Competitions
 - Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc is a member of CRN, an open platform Irish dance organization based in Ireland.
 - Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc dancers are eligible to participate in open platform competitions.
 - Competition is encouraged but not required.
 - Dancers who choose to compete must have a costume. Please see [costume information](#).
 - The director of Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc will determine readiness for competition and appropriate level.
 - The director of Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc will keep parents and dancers informed of upcoming competitions and classes designed for competition preparation.
 - Additional competition opportunities are available for Foireann Cavan.

Calendar

Class dates, times, and cancellations as well as special events will be posted on our [Google Calendar](#). Key dates include:

- Tuesday, September 8 - First Day of Classes
- Sunday, September 20 - Fall Meet & Greet
- September 12 - No class

- September 19 - No class
- Saturday, October 17 - Berkshire Feile
- November 14 & 15 - Regional Championships (no class)
- November 22-28 - No classes
- Friday, December 18 - Dress rehearsal for Winter Showcase
- Saturday, December 19 - Winter Showcase
- December 20-January 2 - No classes
- Saturday, January 30 - Class Feis
- February 13-20 - No classes
- March 7-20 - March Madness! Regular classes replaced by rehearsals and performances
- April 17 - No class
- April 25-May 4 - No classes
- Wednesday, May 26 - Last Day of Classes
- Thursday, May 27 - Dress rehearsal for Spring Dinner Dance
- Friday, May 28 - Spring Dinner Dance

Private Dance Lessons

Private lessons provide individualized coaching to help dancers make progress toward specific goals. They are intended to supplement regular classes, not replace them, and are most effective when scheduled with a clear objective and followed by independent practice.

Private lessons are one tool for growth. Consistent attendance in group classes, intentional practice at home, participation in workshops, and a positive attitude remain the foundation of every dancer's development.

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc offers private dance lessons by request. Lessons are generally 30 minutes in length and may be taught by Jennie or by approved experienced advanced dancers. All instructors use the same technical standards and curriculum.

Scheduling, Payment, and Cancellations

Private lessons are scheduled individually based on instructor and studio availability and the dancer's goals. Because lesson times are limited, recurring weekly appointments are generally not offered. Dancers may request another lesson after completing and practicing the work from their previous lesson.

- Scheduling: dancer/parent submits a request form indicating the goal for the lesson, preferred instructor, and availability
- Jennie schedules the lesson if a slot is available
- Dancer/parent pays the invoice; the lesson is confirmed only once payment is received

The rate for a 30-minute lesson is \$40. Private lesson fees are not included in the student or family tuition maximum.

Cancellation of a private lesson requires 24 hours' advance notice. If cancelling with less than 24 hours' notice, the lesson and fee are forfeited unless Jennie determines that extenuating

circumstances exist. If the instructor must cancel, the lesson will be rescheduled or the fee refunded.

Private lessons must be focused on a clear goal agreed upon by the student and instructor.

Appropriate reasons for a private lesson include:

- Preparing for a feis/championship
- Learning or cleaning a new step
- Improving a particular dance
- Mastering a difficult technical skill
- Recovering after an extended absence
- Confidence building before an important performance
- Setting goals and developing a practice plan

Students should arrive warmed up, with hard and soft shoes, knowing the material they want to work on, and having practiced independently. Every lesson ends with practice assignments, and meaningful improvement comes from practicing these assignments consistently between lessons.

Individual & Small Group Music Lessons

Individual and small-group music lessons provide students with the opportunity to develop strong technical skills, musical understanding, and confidence through personalized instruction. Lessons are designed to complement participation in Gaellica while allowing each student to progress at an appropriate pace.

Consistent attendance, regular home practice, and active participation are the keys to success.

Lesson Options

Lessons are available in violin, cello, and guitar, taught by trained music teachers under Alicia's guidance and supervision, offered as:

- One-on-one instruction
- Small-group lessons (2-4 students of similar age and ability)

Lesson Length

Families may choose 30-minute or 45-minute lessons. Lesson length may be recommended by the instructor based on the student's age, experience, and goals.

Enrollment Options

Music lessons are offered in 4 enrollment periods: 6-week sessions (dates chosen based on student and instructor availability), a Fall session (September–December), a Spring session (January–May), or the Full Season (September–May). Enrollment reserves a weekly lesson time for the duration of the selected session.

Scheduling and Attendance

Lessons meet at the same day and time each week throughout the enrolled session. Because each lesson time is reserved specifically for an individual student or group, families are committing to the entire enrollment period rather than paying only for lessons attended. Students should arrive on time with their instrument, music and lesson materials, and any assigned practice journal or notebook. Students arriving late will receive the remaining scheduled lesson time.

Missed Lessons

Because lesson times are reserved exclusively for each student or group, missed lessons generally cannot be made up. If the instructor must cancel a lesson, it will be rescheduled or refunded. If a student must miss a lesson due to illness or another unavoidable conflict, families are encouraged to notify the instructor as soon as possible; while make-up lessons cannot be guaranteed, reasonable efforts will be made to accommodate.

Practice Expectations and Communication

Progress depends largely on consistent practice between lessons. Students are expected to practice regularly at home using the assignments and goals provided by their instructor, and parents are encouraged to support younger students in establishing a regular practice routine. Parents are welcome to communicate with instructors regarding scheduling, assignments, or questions about student progress. Instructors will provide regular feedback and practice goals to support continued growth.

Tuition

Music lesson tuition reserves a weekly lesson time with an instructor for the selected enrollment period. Tuition is not reduced for missed lessons, and music lesson fees are not included in the student or family tuition maximum. Weekly rates are as follows:

Instrument	Individual 30 min	Individual 45 min	Small Group 30 min	Small Group 45 min
Violin	\$35	\$45	\$25 per student	\$35 per student
Cello	\$40	\$50	\$30 per student	\$40 per student
Guitar	\$35	\$45	\$25 per student	\$35 per student

Instructor Placement

Students are matched with an instructor based on age, experience, instrument, and scheduling availability. Instructor assignments may change from session to session to best support student development and program needs.

Tuition and Fees: General Information

Our tuition is all-inclusive, which helps families plan their Irish dance-related spending up front and minimize “surprise” expenses. All registrations automatically receive the Breifne Essentials package, which includes:

- Tuition for classes and teams September to May
- Costume rental
- Leotard & dance shorts or shirt & pants (1 set)
- Performance socks (1 pair)
- Annual registration fee
- Breifne notebook
- Access to home practice resources
- Student and family maximum
 - For classes that run between September and May, the maximum tuition per student is \$1615, and the maximum tuition per family is \$2730. The tuition maximum does not apply to package upgrades, private lessons, or music lessons.

Note: Students enrolled only in the Adults class receive a modified Breifne Essentials package that does not include costume rental, the leotard/dance-shorts or shirt/pants set, or performance socks. The Breifne Essentials package does not apply to Mini Sessions.

The commitment to class enrollment lasts from September through May. Tuition may be paid in full at the time of registration or families may choose an installment plan, which requires payment of a deposit of 10% of the cost of the student’s core dance and music classes, followed by 9 equal monthly installments, with the first installment due in September and the last installment due in May. The tuition installment amount is the same each month regardless of the number of classes in the month. Tuition will be prorated for students joining after September.

Optional workshops or other special classes may be offered outside of the regular class schedule and may be subject to additional fees. The tuition maximum does not apply to these classes.

All-inclusive package upgrades are available. The tuition maximum does not apply to package upgrades, private lessons, or music lessons.

- Breifne Traditions All-Inclusive Package (\$140): 2 Winter Showcase tickets, free Winter Showcase t-shirt, 3 Spring Dinner Dance tickets (2 adults and 1 child), free Spring Dinner Dance t-shirt.
- Breifne Progress All-Inclusive Package (\$280): tuition credit for Summer 2027, Bréifne Ó Ruairc jacket, 1 pair soft shoes.

Payments

Automatic payments are the default option, but other arrangements may be made. Each payment is due on the fifteenth day of each month. There is a 10-day grace period for all payments, after which late fees will be due. Payments that are received 11 days late or later are subject to a \$15 late fee. Returned checks and denied credit card payments are subject to a \$25 fee.

Tuition, fees, and package payments are not refundable and nontransferable. In the case of an installment plan, if a student wishes to withdraw from classes, they must do so in writing prior to the next installment due date, otherwise billing will continue, regardless of the student's attendance. Students enrolled in the Breifne Progress package must return shoes and the Breifne O Ruairc jacket/other Malley item obtained through the package upon withdrawal from classes.

Any credits will be applied to the payment due on the next billing date.

Payment through the Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc web site, check, or cash is accepted.

Late Fees

There is a 10-day grace period for all tuition and fee payments, after which late fees will be due. Payments that are received 11 days late or later are subject to a \$15 late fee. Returned checks and denied credit card payments are subject to a \$25 fee.

Discounts

Families with more than 1 dancer enrolled will receive a 5% discount on tuition.

Dancers who enroll in Gaellica will receive a 25% discount on Gaellica tuition.

For classes that run between September and May, the maximum tuition per student is \$1615, and the maximum tuition per family is \$2730. The tuition maximum does not apply to package upgrades, private lessons, or music lessons.

Refunds

Tuition and fees are not refundable and nontransferable. In the case of an installment plan, if a dancer wishes to withdraw from classes, they must do so in writing prior to the next installment due date, otherwise billing will continue, regardless of the dancer's attendance.

Credits

Any credits will be applied to tuition for the next billing date.

At any time, scheduled on-premises classes may need to be canceled and instead held virtually. Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc will give as much notice as possible in these cases. Payments will remain the same.

No credits are given for missed classes or weather-related cancellations. Makeup options are available for most classes.

Attendance, Makeups, and Cancellations

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc may need to cancel classes from time to time. Makeup options are available for most classes.

Saturday classes may be cancelled on performance or competition days.

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc will make every effort to communicate any class or performance cancellation as soon as possible via multiple methods of communication. Families should be on the lookout for an email or text message when weather is questionable.

Dancers with symptoms of illness should not attend class in person.

If a dancer is absent from class, they may make up the class within 1 month by attending another class at the same or a similar level after checking with the director before arriving at a class they do not usually attend. Missed classes affect personal progress and class progress. Missed classes before performance and competition events may prevent dancers from participating.

Please consult the season calendar for planned cancellations.

Dancers should arrive at class on time and prepared to dance with shoes on and tied securely. Some classes begin with a 15-minute independent warm-up period. Dancers should follow the instructions provided for this warm-up period.

Punctuality at performances and competitions is expected.

Costumes

Costume rental is included in tuition for all dancers for the September–May season, with the exception of the Adults class and Mini Sessions, neither of which include costume rental. Each dancer is assigned a costume for the season as part of registration; no separate rental fee is charged. Items worn with the costume (leotard and dance shorts, shirt and pants, and performance socks; 1 set per dancer per season) are supplied.

Costume fitting takes place early in the season. At the fitting, dancers should bring in their assigned costume so it can be checked for fit; a new costume or alterations will be recommended as needed.

Alterations must be approved prior to being made and must be done by a tailor approved by Jennie. Payment is the responsibility of the dancer's family.

Costumes must be dry cleaned and returned at the end of the season. Items worn with the costume (leotard and dance shorts, shirt and pants, and performance socks) need not be returned.

Dress Code

Class Dress Code

The class dress code has been established to prepare dancers to learn in comfort and safety.

Dancers may not wear street clothes in class. Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc apparel available for purchase complies with the dress code, but is not mandatory.

- **Shirt:** Shirts may be long-sleeved, short-sleeved, or sleeveless and must fit the dancer. Long sleeves should not cover the hands. Technical fabric is recommended instead of cotton for the dancer's comfort.
- **Bottoms:** Dancers may wear leggings, shorts, or a skirt/skort. Knees and ankles must be visible so the instructor may provide feedback on technique. Technical fabric is recommended instead of cotton for the dancer's comfort. Denim is not allowed. If a dancer chooses to wear a skirt, dance shorts are recommended to be worn underneath.
- **Hair:** Hair must be neatly and securely tied back with a hair tie or headband if it's long enough to fall into the face.
- **Footwear:**
 - Proper, well-fitting Irish dance shoes must be worn. These include ghillies, hard shoes, and reel shoes (with or without heels).
 - Beginners in the Lions and Tir na nOg classes may wear ballet slippers or jazz shoes until they are ready to purchase Irish dance shoes.
 - Shoes must be tied properly and securely prior to the beginning of class.
 - A [video](#) is available to learn how to tie ghillies.
 - Elastics may be used to cover the laces to help keep them secure.
 - Dance sneakers are only acceptable in cases of medical necessity or longer classes, such as workshops.

Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc

Dress Code

Shoes

- Ghillies, reel shoes, or hard shoes
- Snug fit
- Laces tied securely
- Dance sneakers allowed ONLY for medical necessity or workshops



Top

- Short sleeves, long sleeves, or sleeveless
- Not too loose
- Sleeves shouldn't cover hands



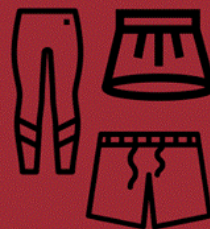
Hair

- Neat and out of face



Bottom

- Leggings, shorts, or skirt
- Knees and ankles visible



Performance and Competition Dress Code

For performances and competitions, dancers must wear the costume specified for the event.

Costume options include:

- School skirt, belt, and bow (beginner- and advanced beginner-level dancers)
 - Worn with long-sleeved black leotard, black dance shorts, and white poodle socks or opaque black stage tights
- School belt and bow tie (beginner- and advanced beginner-level dancers)
 - Worn with long-sleeved black, collared shirt, black pants, and black socks that cover the ankle
- School dress and crown (intermediate- and advanced-level dancers)
 - Worn with black dance shorts and white poodle socks or opaque black stage tights
- School vest and tie (intermediate- and advanced-level dancers)
 - Worn with long-sleeved black, collared shirt, black pants, and black socks that cover the ankle
- Solo dress, vest, or waistcoat
 - Advanced-level dancers are eligible to purchase a solo costume.
 - These costumes must be approved by Jennie before purchase.
 - For competitions, solo dresses may not be worn in the bunghrad or ullmhuchan levels, nor for team dances.
- Hair must be secured neatly out of the face.
- Proper, well-fitting Irish dance shoes must be worn. Dance sneakers may never be worn in competition.

Conduct

- Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc strives to create a fun, supportive, and inclusive environment for learning Irish dance. Dancers should show respect and courtesy for the teachers, their fellow dancers, and themselves. Behavior that falls outside of these ideals will be addressed by the director.
- A dancer's primary focus during class time should be on dancing. Socializing is fun and an important part of the overall dance experience, but it should be left for time outside of class.
- Dancers should bring a water bottle, notebook, and both pairs of shoes into the dance area, and leave all other items (cell phones, food, etc.) in the shoe changing area.
- Gum and food are not allowed in the dance area. Shoes must be clean and water bottles must have a lid. Please clean up water bottles, personal items, and trash after each class.
- Bathroom breaks during class should be limited to emergencies only. Visiting the bathroom before class begins should become part of every dancer's routine.
- Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc typically participates in many shows and competitions during the year. In order to maintain a reputation of excellence in our school, we require that dancers behave appropriately at these events, particularly while in costume or in Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc attire.
- Dancers and parents are responsible for checking emails frequently for important information.

Releases, Consent Forms, and Privacy Policies

Liability Release

Parents/guardians must sign a liability release upon enrollment.

Consent Forms

From time to time, photos and videos may be taken during classes, performances, competitions, or other events. Parents/guardians must provide consent for sharing of these photos and videos in marketing materials and on the internet, including the Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc web site and social media channels. Parents/guardians may elect to withhold this consent, however they should understand that this may limit a dancer's placement in performance pieces, as it is desirable to have the ability to share photos and videos of these dances.

Privacy Policies

Choreography and any reference materials made available to dancers and their families are the property of Scoil Rince Bréifne Ó Ruairc and may not be shared with anyone not currently enrolled in the school.

Contact information for dancers and their families is private and may not be shared with anyone not enrolled in the school without their permission.