First Chances
Project
2017
The First Chances Project aims to contribute to the national access framework, raising educational attainment and breaking down barriers to higher education.

In partnership with the Robertson Trust and Fife Schools, the University of St Andrews works with pupils from Primary 7 through their entire secondary education and into university or further education.

“By working with the University of St Andrews and First Chances Foundation our children are being exposed to opportunities they otherwise would not have had. The commitment and professionalism from the University staff and students has allowed for motivating and inspiring shared activities. I look forward to further developing this partnership.”

Lorna Robertson, Headteacher at Pitteuchar West Primary School and Chair of the Auchmuty cluster group
First Chances Foundation

First Chances Foundation works with P7, S1 and S2 pupils, encouraging them to develop their skills, motivation and self-esteem in order to achieve their full potential as they progress through their education.

Each year pupils follow a specially-designed programme, culminating in an annual residential summer school at the University.

The programme is delivered through a series of workshops and events both in St Andrews and the local community by schoolteachers and University staff, supported by current University students. Pupils develop their learning in literacy, numeracy, science and technology as well as reflective thinking and critical analysis.

The First Chances Foundation project also encourages pupils to work hard by rewarding success. Pupils gain points as they progress through their school education and over the course of the project which can be converted to vouchers for educational purposes.

Primary 7 – Books and Blogs, Perfect Paragraphs and Posters

The main focus of this unit is to develop literacy skills through a variety of approaches.

Books and Blogs
Pupils are tasked with reading a selection of books, sharing their views and developing their writing skills through ‘blogging’. Books are available to pupils from the University’s mobile library.

Perfect Paragraphs
Through exploring different genres of writing and using complex grammar, punctuation and sentence structures, pupils are tasked with producing their ‘perfect paragraphs’.

Posters
Working with specialised software, pupils look at the purposes of different poster styles and design their own.

Secondary 1 – World of Science
World of Science focuses on an interactive learning experience for pupils to increase their understanding of scientific ideas and approaches as well as the impact of new developments in science. Pupils will develop skills in conducting experiments, laboratory work and understanding new technologies. This unit includes contributions from the following academic Schools:

- Chemistry
- Earth & Environmental Sciences
- Mathematics & Statistics
- Medicine
- Physics & Astronomy
- Psychology & Neuroscience

“These new skills that I have learned will really help me with my future work.”

S1 pupil
Secondary 2 – Living Local, Thinking Global
Through Living Local, Thinking Global, pupils explore the value of their local community in a global context by investigating its history, looking at how the past has shaped its current environment and thinking about the future. Pupils focus on enhancing skills in research, conducting surveys and interview techniques. This unit includes contributions from the following academic Schools:

- Economics
- English
- Geography & Sustainable Development
- History
- International Relations
- Social Anthropology

Progression to First Chances
Pupils who successfully complete First Chances Foundation can progress on to First Chances where they will continue to be supported throughout S3 to S6 and into higher or further education.
First Chances

First Chances aims to equip S3 to S6 pupils with the skills necessary to achieve their full potential and enhance their chances of being offered a place at a competitive university or course of their choice wherever this may be.

Pupils engage in a programme of workshops, tutoring, project work, e-mentoring and summer schools. These are designed to meet their needs at each phase of their education. Flexibility within the programme structure has also been created to support all care experienced young people within the local area.

Pupils are selected at the start of S3 or continue on from First Chances Foundation.

S3 – Investigation and Presentation

During the first year of the programme, pupils complete a project based around health or sustainability. They complete a 1,500 word essay, five minute PowerPoint presentation and a research log book. Pupils are supported by a University student mentor throughout the year. Additional support is also provided by their school and University staff.

Progression to the next year of the project is dependent on pupils achieving an overall mark of 50/100.

Senior phase S4, to S6

From S4 to S6, First Chances provides a variety of workshops and resources focused on supporting pupils in their academic studies. These include:

- **Tutoring** – group sessions designed to suit all levels of study (National 4 or 5, Higher, Advanced Higher).
- **Revision camps** – an opportunity for pupils to develop specific skills, talk to tutors and access a quiet space for study.
- **Residential summer schools** – an opportunity for pupils to sample university life and expand their network of contacts.
- **Confidence and teambuilding workshops.**
- **Monthly tasks based on numeracy and literacy skills.**
- **Access to a secure online mentoring platform.**
- **Access to study resources** – including revision guides and past papers designed to suit all levels of study (National 4 or 5, Higher, Advanced Higher).

Targeted workshops designed to focus support to pupils relevant to their year of study are also provided (page 6).

Progression to subsequent years of the programme is subject to the pupils completing all requisite parts of the course.

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<tr>
<th>% of Final Mark</th>
<th>Communication with Mentor</th>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Presentation</th>
<th>Research Log Book</th>
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“First Chances helps pupils realise that things are not handed to you on a plate, you have to work hard but when you do, you get rewards.”

Lynsey Jack, First Chances coordinator, Viewforth High School

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**S4 – Developing Skills in the Senior Phase**

Emphasis is placed on supporting pupils develop the necessary skills needed to succeed in their S4 exams. Each pupil is provided with a National 5 English and Maths revision guide to use in their own time throughout the year. Pupils are also required to attend workshops which focus on critical analysis and formulising well-reasoned arguments whilst further developing their presentation skills.

“First Chances has given me more confidence not only in school but out in the real world too. It’s given me a taste of university life and helped me with future decisions.”

*S4 pupil*

**S5 – Developing Knowledge and Exploring Future Career Paths**

The S5 programmes focuses on developing pupils’ knowledge and awareness of different career paths as well as raising their aspirations and confidence to reach these goals. Pupils are also required to attend workshops which help pupils identify where they may need to develop their skills or experience further to reach their positive destination. Support focused on interview skills and CV building is also provided.

“First Chances has opened my eyes to a world of opportunities at university and after. It has been a huge confidence boost and a very enjoyable experience.”

*S5 pupil*

Senior pupils also have the opportunity to apply for a position on our First Chances Leadership Team to further enhance their skills and develop their CV.

**S6 – Making a Competitive Application**

The First Chances coordinator provides individual support for pupils and parents as they navigate through the UCAS application process and the transition to university. Sessions cover financial support (including scholarships and bursaries), accommodation, academic and pastoral support.

Pupils who graduate from this part of the programme and who study at St Andrews will continue to receive support from the University and the Robertson Trust, including access to a range of scholarships and bursaries, a graduate network and first year mentoring.
In Care Flexibility

Care experienced young people have the opportunity to access the programme at any stage and are offered a flexible structure allowing them to attend workshops and events based on their availability. Transport can be provided if pupils have difficulties accessing these opportunities.

Additional sessions are also incorporated into the programme for young people aimed at building confidence and expanding peer and support networks.

“The First Chances Project gave me confidence and help throughout exam periods with knowing how to deal with stress. It provided many opportunities to meet new people and learn new things.”
First Chances (in care flexible) alumni

Teachers and Parents

The following events provide additional support to pupils whilst they are on the programme.

Teacher liaison
This provides a platform for school co-ordinators to receive updates and discuss project developments they feel would benefit pupils.

Parent and carer information sessions
These are held at the start of every academic year to provide project information relevant to them. Parents and carers are encouraged to engage with the project through meetings like these as well as contacting staff.

“The First Chances has given my daughter a positive insight into university life and what is expected of students. The help and support with study sessions has helped her gain excellent exam results.”
Parent

“First Chances gave me the boost I needed to get into and succeed at university. I’m lucky enough to now be supporting the pupils in the place that I used to be, so that they can achieve anything. Having support from parents/carers, schools and the university is hugely important, especially at the age where children are transitioning from primary school and preparing for the later years of secondary school.”
First Chances alumni
“Our relationship with the University of St Andrews is built on a shared belief that a young person’s journey to success should be determined by talent as opposed to financial constraints or non-academic factors.”

Kenneth Ferguson
Director, The Robertson Trust