

FALKNER HOUSE ACADEMIC GUIDE



We believe that the most successful Falkner House children (in all senses):

- Have the most sleep;
- Do the fewest external structured activities;
- Have the least 'screen time';
- Do not have tutors
- Experience play at home: building lego spaceships, cutting, glueing and sticking, baking etc.;
- Are encouraged always to think for themselves;
- Are not waited on hand and foot; and
- Enjoy time with their parents.

BEDTIME

The earlier the better! Experience shows that the children who have the most sleep are the most ready to learn and are the most cheerful.

WELCOME MEETINGS

Each class has a meeting for parents in September.

EXAMS

We do not put much emphasis on internal school exams as, in themselves, they have no importance. The results do not go to the secondary schools and should give rise to no teacher surprises. If relevant then results might be included in reports; they are always available to parents. The children will generally have maths and English assessments in Years 1-3 and exams in Years 4-6 usually in November / January and May/ June. In Years 4-6 there may also be reasoning exams as well as end of topic tests for most subjects during the school year. Children need to practise taking exams to familiarise themselves with the process, but exams do not make a child clever—(pigs are not fattened by weighing them)!

Minimal revision is needed or indeed beneficial for Falkner House exams/tests. High marks are not achieved by revision but by listening and being engaged in class and by reading the questions carefully. Children are anyway not generally able to “revise” until they are aged at least nine and the revisable content is but a tiny part of both Falkner House exams and the vast majority of external exams taken by the children. We feel very strongly that all exams (internal or external) should be taken as part of day-to-day life –normal activities e.g. sport should thus continue regardless in the run up to or during exams. Rain should not stop play!

EARLY YEARS FOUNDATION STAGE (EYFS) - Nursery and Reception

Falkner House is exempted from the learning and development aspects of the 2022 EYFS, but the EYFS is still used as a guide by the school to help ensure that children learn and develop as well as possible. The safeguarding and welfare requirements of the EYFS still apply.

GRADING/ MARKING

Work is marked as quickly as possible. Marking is developmental and appropriate to age and subject material. Grades are kept to a minimum and are used mainly for tests. All staff always give constant and immediate oral feedback to the children which is the best way of promoting progress. The Headteacher awards Falkner House 'Well Done' stickers to pupils on staff recommendations.

HANDWRITING

Falkner House has a school handwriting method with a common approved formation of letters. Joined up script is started as appropriate with ink (roller ball) used by each child in the upper school once that child is ready. Try and encourage your child to hold pens/ pencils with a tripod grip which is not only correct but also the most comfortable. The pencil is held between the index finger and thumb with the other fingers.



HOLIDAY WORK

Some holiday work may be set for your child to keep them ‘ticking over’. This should never be or feel burdensome to child or parent. If it ever does seem burdensome; pull back, as work done under protest will have, at best, no value! Any recommended holiday work should be done little and often. As the years progress and external exams loom there will be more formal and examination preparation work set for the holidays. This work is never intended to be arduous and again should be spread out so that the children are ready to move forward at the start of the new term. They need time to have a well-earned rest over these holidays– they will gain greatly intellectually as well as emotionally by having time to recuperate, to do “nothing” to spend time with their family, relax and play!

HOMEWORK

Falkner House is a "homework light" school. We see the role of homework as a reinforcement of schoolwork and a link between school and home. It is also part of an important routine for a child remembering to organise themselves for the day ahead, to complete set tasks as independently as possible and to bring in books, etc. as required. In the younger years homework is virtually all oral - reading and learning poems by heart. Poetry has an important role throughout the school: children recite poems on an individual basis which boosts self-confidence. Homework increases in importance and volume as the children move up the school and parents will be given information at the start of the academic year as to what homework will be set.

MATHS

The true and fundamental understanding of basic mathematical concepts such as counting, place value and number bonds is the critical step to becoming a competent mathematician. In time, children also need to have a secure knowledge of mental maths including times tables. Regular exposure to, and manipulation of, numbers in all contexts both in school and at home (for example when walking to school or in the car) is very helpful to strengthen and consolidate knowledge as well as to boost confidence. These facts and skills are the building blocks for mathematical development; daily practice will ensure that your child has the strongest possible foundations. We strongly feel that the most beneficial way for children to consolidate the maths learnt at school is by regular and repeated mental maths practice at home. Falkner House does not feel that Kumon is of value. On the other hand, use of Numicon (practical maths equipment) can be very helpful. There are also some good times table apps; Squeebles, Ten Minutes a Day and Monty’s Quest for example, which can be useful in Year 3.

MUSIC

All children have class music lessons and from Year 1, children may also take individual music lessons. Please see the parents’ Music notes guide for further information.



PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT (please see Relationships and PHSEE policy on the website)

The broad and balanced Relationships and PHSEE (Personal, Health, Social, Emotional and Economic) and science curriculum includes sex and relationship education. It is delivered in an honest, unbiased and sensible way in lessons in Years 4, 5 and 6 and potentially before if the occasion arises, (with an additional adult in the room) and is intended to complement and support what parents teach in the home.

REPORTS AND PARENTS MEETINGS

Written reports are sent to parents at the end of the Summer term. These reports are designed to be read by the parent and should not be shown directly to the child. Marks for exams may be included on the written reports for the older children. Parent teacher meetings are held regularly. If, however, there are any concerns or anxieties or indeed if parents would just like to 'catch up', please feel free to make an appointment to see your child's form or relevant subject teacher or headteacher. There are scheduled parents' evenings throughout the year.

SPORT

There are selected school squads in football, rugby, netball, rounders, cricket, swimming and athletics from Year 3 onwards (in some cases Year 2 for the boys) with frequent matches, galas, meets and tournaments against other schools. Every attempt is made to include as many children as possible. Where applicable, children selected for squads should attend the weekly squad training sessions regularly. A variety of venues are used including Kensington Gardens, Battersea Park, Latchmere Leisure Centre, Holland Park, Chelsea or Fulham Pools.



TIMETABLE

The timetable will be available on the school website at the start of the Autumn Term.

TUTORING and LEARNING SUPPORT

The school believes that additional external tutoring does not benefit the vast majority of our children. All Falkner House children have a very full programme of academic work and indeed we feel external tutoring is often counterproductive and damaging to both academic performance and self-confidence. We believe that external tutoring:

- Blurs our perception of a child's abilities (he or she might do brilliantly on a particular paper because it has just been done with the tutor);
- Gives a child even more work at a time when they are already at full stretch;
- Gives less time for things like reading (very important for English), simply relaxing (they do need to do this!), observing life and people around them, questioning, discussing, pursuing hobbies or just using some imagination;
- Gives less time for spending time, talking to and learning from you; and
- Reduces independent thinking.

Please see the go to guides – Moving on from Falkner House (Boys and Girls) - for further details.

We do, however, believe that some children may need additional learning support from our own staff at points during their time at Falkner House. By giving support 'in-house' we are able to tailor the learning precisely to meet your child's needs at exactly the moment we feel it is necessary and also to give it by the people who will know how your child learns and how best to complement what they are doing in their classes. This can be in the form of support groups and 1:1 support to selected children. Additional tailored support and extension Reasoning, English and Maths groups are available for Years 5 and 6. One to one and two to one support is charged (please see fees list) retrospectively with the forthcoming term's fees.

