FALKNER HOUSE
LONDON

Girls Moving On From Falkner House

2026 - 2027





Girls

19 Brechin Place, London SW7 4QB

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Falkner House prepares girls for leaving at 11+ which is the main entry level for the girls' secondary schools. Some junior schools have entry points at 7+ but we do not prepare for these tests as ultimately, we believe that we will give all girls the best education possible until Year 6 and that there is no gain in a voluntary move to another London school.

During the years at Falkner House we will discuss your child's progress and your thoughts as to their next school. There are meetings for all well ahead to discuss the details of the 11+ as well as information sheets. The system can seem complex and our job is to help you navigate the process in a stress-free fashion for both you and your child. All parents are also always welcome to meet individually with Mrs Griggs and Mrs Rogers to consider their child's options.

Creating a Short-List

Competition is fierce for many schools that you may be considering for your daughter and you will see vast numbers turning up for all the exams, however, in the end, each child can only go to one school. Because there can be no guarantee that your child will be offered a place at your "first choice" school, we recommend that you apply to a range: top end, safe-bet and insurance. (Please though, do not EVER refer to any school as 'fall back' or 'insurance' in front of the children. In truth, these are all good schools). The number of schools applied for will depend on how undecided you are and how many exams you feel are appropriate. In our experience, once the children are in 'exam mode', they tend to take exams pretty much in their stride, but there is a limit and too many in one week can definitely be too much. The most important thing is for you, and your child, to keep an open mind. They must not be given the impression that some schools are for the 'clever' children and others are not. It is very difficult to dispel this impression once it is set and the effect can be extremely negative.

When making your short list, take advice from Falkner House as to the chances of success. Do not be tempted to put your daughter in for an exam for a very academic school, 'just to see', or because she has insisted. You are the adults with the foresight and experience to anticipate and, within reason, success or failure is relatively predictable. It is not a lottery. Although your child (and you) might think they will not mind if they fail, the truth is that a rejection letter is a painful thing; if it comes at the beginning of the exam period it can have a very deleterious effect.

Geography is a key: there is no point applying for a school, however appealing, if it is logistically out of reach. It is essential to evaluate the journey time by school bus or public transport, bearing in mind that most secondary school children will wish to travel independently, and it may also be quicker.

All schools offer open days or evenings when you can visit and get a flavour of the school. They will also all have, to

varying degrees, representative and informative websites. At this stage it is pointless and we feel unhelpful to take the children along on a physical tour as they can become overwhelmed or fixated on a school that is inappropriate for them and it is unlikely to benefit your child to spend hours listening to headteachers saying largely the same thing as each other each time! In contrast, there is plenty for your daughter to gain from simply perusing a school website. You may wish to take your daughter to visit a school once you know what offers she has; even then, as you the adults are making the decision, think carefully as to whether touring a school will potentially give rise to family arguments if she wants a different school to you.

When visiting, real or remotely, it is advisable to take notes to help you remember which school was which – they all have wonderful art rooms, science labs. This potentially allows you to give pointers to your daughter if she is asked at an interview, 'What do you particularly like about our school?'.

Registration

Each school has its own registration system; some have a very narrow window, some require early registration, and some do not allow early registration! Registration is always done by parents – not Falkner House. There is a very wide variation in deadlines with boarding schools generally preferring interest to be expressed earlier (some have June in Year 5 as the last date for registration for the 11+) as they like to try and get to know families. Parents considering such schools for their child should thus get in touch with them in good time. London day schools generally allow registration up until varied dates in the autumn of the previous year with each school having a different closing date. Girls can sit exams for boarding as well as day schools, so your choices can include both types of schools. Girls can sit exams for an unlimited number of schools but: logic should prevail - it makes no sense to have a child sit for a school that, for whatever reason, you would never send her to!

Irrespective of any school grouping arrangements, parents must register individually at each and any of them. You will probably be asked for a copy of your daughter's birth certificate and a recent photograph for each school so it makes sense to take a number of copies of both. Many schools ask parents to return an additional form confirming that their daughter will sit the examination.

Preparation for Exams

The key determinants to success in these exams are determination, calm, speed and logic. The exams ask for relatively little recall of facts but instead there is the far harder challenge of applied logical thought.

Some of the London day schools set their own separate entrance exams but for girls at 11+ a number of schools are in a consortium with the one exam. There are a variety of pre-tests at 11+ e.g. ISEB, Atom and CEM tests. The exams are increasingly multiple choice and online and tend to consist of an English paper, a maths paper and are likely to include verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests (VR and NVR). There is constant flux as to what is included in the examination process as well as the individual nuance for each school. We keep abreast of these developments

and teach your children what they need to know. We give them plenty of exam practice using papers of all different kinds so that they are prepared for virtually anything that might be put in front of them. Some schools post past or sample exam papers on their websites but we would request parents not to use these (or any other) papers with their daughters as this will "spoil" our use of them.

How to prepare children for exams is a subtle art – it is not a matter of more is better. Instead, it is the right teaching at the right time in the right way for each child. We will always go the extra mile – we want your child to be able to do their very best, just as much as you.

Tutoring

Points worth noting:

- It often involves just 'doing more papers' or drilling rather than anything more constructive.
- Many schools are very good at spotting the 'tutored child' and in some cases are even able to identify a particular tutor's style. This will NOT add to your child's chances!
- Irrespective of their possibly stellar academic CVs, our view is that most tutors are simply not good enough.
- All schools want children who are individual, with their own backgrounds, ideas, interests, quirks and differences to contribute to their community. This will never be achieved by coaching.
- Please believe that we are as ambitious as you. If, despite all of the above, you engage a tutor, please let us know so that we can liaise with them.

Preparing for Interview

Interviews start in the autumn term and the girls are prepared for these. Many schools only interview girls who have achieved a certain mark in the examination. The timing of being "deselected" can be brutal with notification just before another exam. Bad news comes before the good.

The best way to prepare your child for an interview is to get her used to talking about what really interests HER, not what we consider might be impressive. Senior schools interview hundreds of children every year and can spot the over-prepared ones a mile off. If you want to help, spend time discussing 'what if?' questions – stretch their imagination, show that it is good to make guesses and sometimes get them wrong. It is the willingness to have a go that is interesting. If asked about a favourite book, the idea is not to tell the story but to say WHY she likes it. Equally, not to say "Pride and Prejudice" because she thinks it sounds impressive. One-word answers are not helpful. They should aim to follow up with 'because...'. Successful interviews at this stage are about genuine enthusiasm (usually shown not only by tone of voice but also through depth of knowledge), being able to go beyond the literal, being ready for the unexpected, having a question for the interviewer, a firm handshake and good eye contact. Children need to be ready to deal with mundane questions such as "why do you want to go to this school" and "what is your first choice school". To help prepare and also to help us write our reference (sent generally at the end of the Autumn Term) we will ask you for your child's interests, achievements and passions in and out of school. Please be honest

and do not exaggerate. If a reference mentions a love of archery but in an interview your daughter clearly knows nothing about it, the effect will not be good! We will give the children as much interview practice as is necessary but over preparation is definitely counter-productive. Being natural is key.

Scholarships

Every school has a different scholarship system and we are happy to discuss the matter with parents on an individual basis. At 11+, most schools offer music and some also sport and art scholarships (art scholarships require a very significant sized portfolio requiring at least six months preparation and sports scholarships look for a girl who is at a serious standard - not just good at school sport!) If you think that your child might qualify for such a scholarship please discuss this well ahead; parents, not Falkner House, enter children for these .

Academic Scholarships

We do not operate separate 'scholarship classes' but prepare all to the maximum of their potential at every stage. Most of the London schools do not have separate scholarship exams or interviews –though we would of course give individualised assistance if there were a specific requirement.

Scholarships/Bursaries

Scholarships are merit based whilst bursaries are based on perceived financial need and will be means tested with a very high financial bar. Merit and need may, of course, coincide! The secondary school's registrar or website will be able to give further information.

Once the Exams Start

The time period for the examinations is now somewhat tortuously drawn out. The first exam may be in October / November with some very early in January. Interviews generally take place in January.

At this point, what the children need most from you is CALM. You may well be feeling pressure – you love your child and want the best for her – but she has a right not to have your concerns transmitted to her. Please do not let her overhear you discussing schools and fretting – they will be taking in every word and it is not beneficial. If humanly possible pretend you do not care! Provided your child does the work set and has a regular, quiet, comfortable space to do homework, the job is done. We can be totally confident that she will try to do her very best. It is essential to remain upbeat, to demonstrate that family life and fun go on regardless of what happens in the exams and that love is unconditional.

The Results Process

The day schools will email results in mid-February though boarding school results come out faster. We strongly recommend that parents should open the results letters/emails beforehand and not with their daughters. It is helpful if parents are prepared to let us tell other parents the individual children's results – saves tiptoeing round and helps

to make sure feelings are not hurt.

The great majority of schools have a common acceptance date early in March though some of the boarding schools request early acceptance but this is not enforceable – they have to await the results of the London day schools. It is hugely helpful if parents can decide on their preferences in advance of the results. It is illogical and disconcerting for the girls if their parents are wavering for days.

Waiting Lists

If you are offered a waiting list place, this may or may not "clear" and be converted into a definite offer before the deadline for acceptances. Without such a definite offer, you will need to accept a place elsewhere before the deadline closes, pay a deposit and wait to see whether a firm place is later offered at your preferred school before September. Offers off the waiting list before the deadline will only be made at the 11th hour (e.g at 11am before a noon deadline). Every year it varies wildly as to whether a school will go to their waiting list and how far down it they go. They will not tell you (or us) where your daughter is on the list.

Deciding on a School

In the end you are likely to finish by choosing between two or more schools. There are all manner of considerations: location, mixed or single-sex, general ethos and so on as well as 'gut instinct'. Although it may seem good to involve your child, in the end the decision should be yours. You have the life experience to bring to bear and you should use it. Do not be too influenced by where friends might be going – it can be a wonderful new start to be the only Falkner House child going to a given school. Think about where you could see her in about two or three years' time but equally realise that she could change schools for sixth form.

Particularly with boarding schools, it is crucial to understand the rhythm of the individual school's day/week/term. What would your child be doing at 7.30 am or 4.00 pm or 6.00 pm or 9.00 pm? Which of the amazing facilities are freely open to the children and when? What are the weekend arrangements, and will they suit your family? How many children go home on weekends? How easy will it be for you to visit? All of these factors are as important as the academics when choosing a boarding school. Above all, the "fit" of a boarding school is key – there is much less of a margin for error than with a day school.

Always remember, we are here to help and support you and your daughter through the process.