FALKNER HOUSE
LONDON

Falkner House Reading

2026 - 2027





Boys

20 Penywern Road, London SW5 9SU

Girls

19 Brechin Place, London SW7 4QB

Reading

Learning to read is one of the most exciting and important skills your child will learn at school. We outline below key points that will enhance reading at home and school.

Reading Scheme Reception – Year 3



Falkner House deliberately uses a variety of publishers and reading schemes, with books banded and coded according to difficulty. This allows the children to consolidate their skills at each level, using texts presented in a range of styles and with different requirements. Each child will move up to the next level at the appropriate point in his/her development, irrespective of year group and of how many books have been read in the current level. We never require any child to read all the books in a given band; they might move up having only read a few or all of the books. It is totally bespoke.

We take great pride in making sure that children are in the "right" reading band. Children will come off the scheme at some stage (the earliest being in Year 2) and at the latest in Year 3 or 4. Please trust our judgement: the children gain a huge amount from the books on the scheme, both in terms of vocabulary and themes. The reading scheme is not a race - Dickens, Austen and Dostoyevsky will always be there - coming off the scheme sooner doesn't mean you'll be reading them quicker (if you even want to)!

The Falkner House reading scheme is varied and is updated constantly with lots of fiction and non-fiction books and is an amazing resource. That said, upon a few occasions your son or daughter may say a book is "boring" – but, it is homework, and part of school life is learning to continue to the best of our abilities, which we may not wish to do! School reading books are not designed always to appear "challenging" – the aim is for your child to become a confident, fluent reader at each level.

Reading from any book is pointless unless one understands what one is reading; your child is not just reading words from a page for the sake of it! Fundamental skills are acquired through practice in the process of de-coding (understanding how the words are assembled) and, increasingly, taking in the structure of the whole sentence.

Comprehension is key

The reading scheme is a tool, not an objective in itself. Reading is about inference, understanding, comprehension, critical appreciation and learning. Reading with a parent or teacher for 10 or 15 minutes is not about just reading the text, it is a time when an adult can have a crucial dialogue with a child. As can be gleaned from the above, the capability of the adult concerned is key – they have to understand what they are doing and have a very good standard of English. Parents are asked to support their child with a range of questions about the text, for example:

Literal comprehension questions – these require the children to locate or recall specific information directly stated in the text e.g. What are the two uses of the swimming pool?

Inferential comprehension questions – these require the children to draw a conclusion by combining information not directly stated in the text with some degree of prior knowledge:

- Why do you think…
- What is the problem...
- Why did the character…
- What is most likely true about…
- Predict what would happen if/when…
- What lesson does this text teach…
- How does the author/character feel about/when…
- What lesson did the character learn…
- From this story, you could probably guess…
- What would happen in a sequel to this story…
- Why is it important to have signs about the depth of the water on the side of the swimming pool? Why are modern tankers double skinned? Why is the word skin used in that context?

Applied knowledge questions – these require the children to explain generalisations and extend information beyond the text through personal response e.g. explain why children younger than twelve years of age are not allowed in the deep pool.

Vocabulary check – choose a word to replace from the passage? A "bolt from the blue" what does that mean? What does "fed up" mean? – how do we get to this expression? What other kinds of bolts are there (doors, horses, lightening)? Ask the child if they know another word with the same meaning. We are building a crucial understanding of nuance that will serve your child lifelong quite apart from helping towards academic success.

However, having said that reading is all about comprehension, it is still necessary for the adult to follow precisely what the child is reading. Total accuracy in this scenario is important as reading accurately out loud or to yourself is a vital skill in itself. Clearly when reading for pleasure, an adult may skim read rather than read with accuracy. Both are equally important but different skills.

When we hear a child read at school, we will ask them to identify (as appropriate to their level) sight words, magic "e" words, blends, etc. We help them to become aware of implication and to make their own inferences. Illustrations are discussed before and during the reading, and stories are analysed: what has happened and what might happen next? It is important to ensure that there is involvement in the storyline. The picture is a vital part

of the process and should never be covered up!

The school reading scheme books are unrelated to what your child chooses to read in his/her free time. We applaud children of any age reading tricky, complicated chapter books if those are what are enjoyed – as ever, though the key is balance, there is generally little purpose in skipping and racing through long sophisticated stories. Equally your child may want to read newspapers, comics or the same style of books over and over. They may prefer audio books. Any of these are wonderful and essential additions to life but quite separate from carefully reading a school reading book with an adult who is promoting and prompting all the vital skills noted above.



Routine at School

Reading is built into the school day. From Reception up to the end of Year 3 the children are heard individually four or five times a week in Reception and Year 1 and c. three times a week in Years 3 and 4 with the focus being on quality reading time. The school reading book goes home with the child to allow him/her to read to the parent or carer. With the shorter books the children will usually re-read all/part of the book at home and this re-reading is hugely valuable. Any child experiencing specific difficulties is given extra help and / or referred to the Head of Lower School. Once a child is off the scheme, they read to a teacher once a week from a book of their own choice.

All school reading is recorded in the child's reading record book, which goes between home and school. Parents/carers are encouraged to use this book to communicate queries about home reading.

Reading Assessments

Children move up the reading scheme only after a detailed assessment is carried out by a member of the expert Falkner House team. Such assessments take approximately 35 minutes to complete: accuracy, inferential and comprehension skills are all examined. On average children move up a band a term but this is not a race and there is NO gain in a child moving up too fast.

Communication

It is crucial that the school and parents work together to ensure that the development of reading skills is supported through mutual understanding and good communication. There may be occasions when a new book is sent home and it appears too difficult, or indeed too easy. Please be patient and give us your feed-back so that we can "get it right". The whole process requires constant fine-tuning and with your help we can quickly address any problems. Remember that children are changing and developing all the time; we have no magic solutions but we do have a commitment to do our very best.

Paired Reading

Reading in unison (paired reading) with your child is known to have a high success rate. It is particularly useful when you read a 'home' book or library book with them, or when they move to a new level of reading. Paired reading also provides a different approach that can relieve the perception of boredom from either the child or the parent!

Routine at Home

All children from Reception to Year 4 are expected to read to their parents on a daily basis for 10 -15 minutes. Regular practice following the guidance within this handbook will be vital for your child's enjoyment and progress. The best time for reading a book together or reading aloud to your child is often just before bed-time; this is not, however, the moment for structured, supervised reading.

Practical points to encourage a child to read:

- Read aloud to your child on a regular basis even after they have become a free reader.
- Children love new books and enjoy being taken to bookshops or libraries and allowed to choose.
- Audio books can be very helpful for reluctant readers and for all on long journeys. They can also be an excellent means for a child to enjoy and benefit from a more advanced book.

The Reluctant Reader

Many children lose interest in reading from time to time. Please do not panic, because the surest way to exacerbate the problem is to make an issue out of it. There are many reasons why a child may be unwilling to read, ranging from a lack of confidence to tiredness. The most important first step is for you to alert your child's teacher if you are experiencing problems at home. There are various strategies which can be used to encourage reluctant readers, but remember that children learn best when a task is enjoyable and meaningful. We can work together to achieve this.

Quantity / Quality

There can be a tremendous amount of competitiveness surrounding children's reading but this is unhelpful. . Far better than rushing through a text, or to be reading too advanced a text is for your child to read a few pages, with an adult checking their understanding and raising awareness of, for example, sight words and blends.

Children are <u>not allowed</u> to bring a Kindle into school.

The Libraries

We are very proud of our Falkner House libraries which contain both fiction and non-fiction books - children use the libraries to develop their reading range and stamina. There are also small stocks of books in the classrooms for general perusal. Years 3 - 6 have a weekly timetabled session in the library to take out a book which can be changed during the week, as necessary. It is expected that children read at least one school library book a week. Some upper school library books are deemed 'extended reading' either in terms of vocabulary or content – parents

may wish to keep a check on books in this category. Non-fiction is categorised by topic. We always are culling and restocking – we have a constant debate over the popularity of easy reads being a route to developing a love of reading versus a striving for excellence! Please let us know of any books you have discovered and would recommend us to buy.

Essential Reading Lists



Do review our 'essential reading' lists, which are the same for both the boys and the girls (girls' website and boys' website). The lists are in broad age bands e.g. picture books for reading to your child (Early Years – Nursery and Reception), emerging readers (Reception – Year 2), upper school (Years 3 – 6). Many of our suggestions are also available as audiobooks.

Your child's free reading will be monitored in school. They may well be reading books recommended for older year groups; this is entirely his or her choice - the key is that they should be really enjoying their reading. The recommendations are our top picks – an eclectic selection of books that, in our opinion, all Falkner House children should have read by the time they finish Year 6! We have generally selected just one book of an author; if it appeals, then we hope your child is enticed to read more of the series. We hope that it goes without saying that the "essential" list is just a start and that all children will read voraciously and access any/all of the books in the Falkner House library.

Children's reading ability and interests vary considerably and our libraries are far from definitive. Amongst many excellent new books, there are an inordinate number of 'fantasy' stories, many are extremely popular but often of very slight content. Historical fiction can be very appealing to children as is biography or autobiography; many children love learning about "real lives".

"Lighter" books by authors such as Daisy Meadows or Francesca Simon are perfectly acceptable as part, but not all, of a child's reading. Children should be encouraged to try a variety of books but never forced to finish a book that they really dislike.

It is impossible to be precise as to what is the "right" age range for a book for an individual child. Some children will be avid readers of books recommended for much older children whilst others are far happier and gain much more from a book that parents might consider to be "too young". It all depends and parents need to use their judgement and be flexible. Most authors write for a fairly specific age range but others e.g. Roald Dahl, Dick King-Smith and Michael Morpugo span the ages.

Parental Quality Control

It is crucial that parents keep a close eye on what their child is reading. This particularly applies to Kindle home purchases when it is all too easy to click and buy. Most children at junior school are too young to appreciate or gain from the adult classics such as Charles Dickens, Jane Austen or Emily Bronte and future enjoyment can

often be spoiled by too early an introduction to their works. Perhaps more important is to avoid current "sensations" such as Game of Thrones or indeed anything with a definite adult flavour in terms of subject matter or vocabulary: it is surely essential that children are allowed to be children. Furthermore, your child will genuinely gain far more intellectually from something 'childish' than from reading overly mature content. It is interesting to note that all of the children – even in Year 6 – relish the Usborne Young Reading series.

Speaking and Listening are the Route to Reading

The key to developing successful reading skills is regular 'chatter' with adults who speak good English. Children need to have lots and lots of opportunities to discuss all manner of things from family relationships to why a children's cartoon has a certain ending. You can expand your child's vocabulary by adding in new and 'bigger' words and playing word games with unusual synonyms. For instance, 'that giant is huge / enormous / gigantic/ humongous'. If your son or daughter gets the sentence structure wrong when in conversation with you, simply repeat it back to them correctly.

Pupils who speak another language at home tend to do very well indeed at Falkner House but if they say a certain sound "incorrectly" then they are likely to write that sound incorrectly – for instance saying 'den' instead of 'then'. Again, don't say that this is wrong, merely repeat the word correctly. Children need to have lots of opportunities to converse and should be encouraged to ask meaningful questions. Children who enjoy analysing and questioning are good learners.

Finally…each child is an individual with their own strengths and weaknesses. Avoid comparison, "*which is the thief of joy",* and is not helpful, but do praise – frequently! Learning to read is a highly complex task and progress at every stage should be acknowledged and valued.

Film and TV

Some suggested films and TV adaptations of favourite books (we realise some of these are very old-fashioned but they are tried and tested and very popular). They can also be an excellent "way in" to books that can seem too tricky.

Brambly Hedge	My Friend Flicka	Swallows and Amazons
Peter Rabbit (TV not film)	White Fang	Robyn Robin
Chitty Chitty Bang Bang	National Velvet	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
Babe	Just William	The Secret Garden
Heidi	The Sound of Music	Ballet Shoes
Paddington	Peter Pan	Tom's Midnight Garden
Charlotte's Web	The Wizard of Oz	5 Children and It
Black Beauty	Charlie and the Chocolate Factory	Bedknobs and Broomsticks
Wind in the Willows	A Little Princess	Swiss Family Robinson
Famous Five	The Borrowers	Homeward Bound
Lassie	Oliver	Anne of Green Gables
Togo	Swallows and Amazons	The Railway Children
Nanny McPhee	The Polar Express	The BFG
The Secret Garden	Mrs Doubtfire	