



**THE FALCONS PRE PREPARATORY SCHOOL
FOR BOYS**

**NURSERY AND RECEPTION CURRICULUM HANDBOOK
2011-2012**

The aim of this booklet is to give you an insight into what your son will be doing during his year with us, and how the Early Years Curriculum is structured.

Starting Nursery

In the first few weeks our main target is to help your son settle in comfortably and begin to form relationships with the staff and other boys in the class. He will learn where the play equipment is stored, and how to use it carefully. He will begin to find his way about the school and be shown how to use the lavatories, basins and dryers for himself. He will also start to become familiar with the routine of the day/week, and our expectations for his behaviour. It is important that we spend time really getting to know your son as he plays, so that we can lay a firm foundation for his happiness and successful learning, tailored to his individual needs.

Some children tell their parents what they have done at school in great detail, whereas others say very little, such as "I just played!" For young children however, Play is a serious business and underpins all development and learning. 'It is one of the key principles of Early Years Education, which is supported by a wealth of research.'*

Our Nursery and Reception classes are very busy places, and your son will cover a variety of areas as he pursues his chosen and directed agenda.



*National Strategies / Early Years 2009 QCDA

Our Ethos

‘The Nursery and Reception aims to provide a secure, happy environment in which the children will develop socially, emotionally, creatively, physically and intellectually.’

The key word in the above statement is *happy* because if your son is enjoying school, he will learn more easily.

Our Early Years curriculum follows the D.F.E.E. ‘**Foundation Stage**’ document, which addresses the development and learning of children from birth through to the end of the Reception year. There are four Principles which underpin the Foundation Stage Curriculum: A Unique Child, Positive Relationships, Learning and Development and Enabling Environments. The Foundation Stage is a developmental curriculum which is then divided into six Areas of Learning.

- Personal, Social and Emotional Development
- Communication, Language and Literacy
- Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy
- Creative Development
- Knowledge and Understanding of the World
- Physical Development

Each area has clear objectives and recognised ‘landmarks’ which the children reach as they progress through the curriculum at their own pace. These same targets are built upon and consolidated in the Reception Class, after Nursery. The curriculum is designed to equip your son with the necessary **skills, knowledge** and **attitudes** that will prepare him for Reception and future learning. Children who attend the Nursery adapt easily to the curriculum in the Reception Class. They are familiar with the staff, the building and whole school expectations and routines.

Our Approach

Our teaching centres on each child as an individual, with his own experiences and needs to help him gain the most from his learning. Activities in the Nursery and early Reception are play based and using our understanding of how children develop and learn we aim to provide a balance of, Child- initiated activity, child chosen play and adult led activities.

Play is freely chosen by the child and is under his control. The child decides how to play, what the play is about and who to play with. There are many forms of play but it is typically highly creative, open ended and imaginative. It requires the active engagement on the part of the player and is usually wholly pleasurable and satisfying.

Child Chosen Play is when the child chooses from a variety of resources, games and activities laid out and provided by the teacher. On arrival in the morning there will be a range of these covering the six learning areas between the two rooms.

Child- initiated activity has some of the characteristics of play as it is based on the child’s own motivation and remains under his control. It may involve play of many types or it may be seen by the child as an activity with a serious purpose to explore an idea or project. It

offers a powerful opportunity for learning and staff utilise this in a variety of ways e.g. as 'expert play partners', to introduce new vocabulary; encourage problem solving or demonstrating approaches. For example, in the Nursery, our Bits and Bobs Bar is designed to encourage child initiated play.

Adult –led activities are those that the adults initiate. The activities are not play, are not regarded by children as play but they should be **playful** to motivate and capture their natural imagination and interests. Such activities may be with individuals, small groups or in whole class situations. They provide opportunities for introducing new knowledge or ideas and for developing and practising skills.

All young children (and especially boys) need 'hands on' and 'brains on' experiences rather than endless, adult directed worksheets. Research has shown that boys tend to be kinaesthetic, visual learners and respond best to activities where they can physically take part. When work sheets are given, we try to make these as practical as possible, e.g. to include a cutting and pasting element. **A great deal of Early Years activities are practical in nature.**

The Nursery session will always start off with a period of child chosen free play and then adult -led group activities will be introduced. There are normally at least two main teacher-led activities each period, along with child initiated opportunities. Every member of staff has a clear teaching objective to focus on. Many of the small group guided activities (particularly in Language or Mathematics) are preceded by a period of teacher-led presentations, where the children are listening and contributing as a class group. Language and Mathematics presentations always start with a mental warm up.

Each activity has a clear focus or **learning intention** and it is this aim that is emphasised as the boys participate. For example, in a cooking activity the aim may be to develop specific vocabulary, or to observe changes in materials. It might be mathematical; using words such as 'more', 'less', 'heavy', 'light' to compare amounts, or it may be to promote social development. By bringing certain aspects to their attention, we extend their understanding in one or several of the six areas.

Below is an example of how a series of play activities helped the children explore the properties of sand:

How sand behaves

The children are playing freely with damp and dry sand at the sand tray
Adult led play – compare wet and dry sand with soil, sawdust and compost,
looking closely at the grains using a magnifier
Focus again on wet and dry sand by making castles, piles of different heights
Pour water into dry sand and mix sand into water

Questions

What happens when you press or squeeze the wet sand?
Which sand is best for building a tall pile? Why?
What do you notice about the colour of wet and dry sand?

Do they feel the same?
What happens to the sand if we mix it into the jar of water?
Make sand pictures with dry and damp sand
Look at sand paper and its uses

Knowledge

Sand is made up of tiny pieces of rock or grains. It **absorbs** water but does not **dissolve** in it, even when stirred. It can be of different colours and appears darker when wet, etc. It is important that the boys have plenty of opportunities to repeat experiences, to initiate familiar activities by themselves so they can practise and enjoy newly learned skills and knowledge.

Planning in Nursery and Reception.

Medium term

We plan a set of learning intentions for each curriculum area on a half term basis, and also a topic with suggested activities to meet these aims. We have a new topic each half term. You will be informed of the topics through the parent notice board and newsletters. Aspects that do not fit directly into the topic are taught separately. However, the children enjoy working around a theme and it provides a focus for their learning.

Short term

The teams meet each week to plan the learning intentions for the following week. Through observing the children and deciding what this tells us about their learning we can plan the next steps in the short term.

Assessment

As the children go about their learning journey staff are continually gathering information about their learning and progress through the six areas of development. Samples of work, photos and written observations contribute to your son's individual folder or 'Profile'. This will of course be shared with you throughout the year and you are encouraged to contribute to it with notes, photos etc.

Problem Solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

Children in the Nursery are introduced to numbers in a variety of ways. A well received scheme we use is called 'Ten Town' where lots of fun characters (such as King One) teach numbers with stories, songs and rhymes. Your son will soon be talking about them! Please see attached sheet.

Mathematics is presented in a practical way, which is relevant and meaningful to the children. The children will have many opportunities to understand and use the processes of mathematics that they need for later concepts. Matching, sorting, counting and ordering are practised regularly along with the relevant language. For example, children need to understand and use the vocabulary 'same', 'different', 'set', and 'group' and 'sort' in order

to classify objects. Many children can say number names in order, but do not fully understand the quantity a number represents, or how it relates to the number before and after it.

The Mathematics curriculum also includes learning about shapes, space, measures and developing mathematical language and problem solving.

Communication, Language and Literacy

The four areas of **Speaking, Listening, Reading** and **Writing** are addressed throughout the year.

Speaking

- Opportunities to speak in large and small groups. Contribute to discussion, express ideas, feelings or opinions. Tell news from home.
- Children are encouraged to initiate and respond to conversation with each other and the school staff. Using open-ended questions or comments develop thinking as opposed to direct questions that end the conversation, e.g. “tell me about your model”, “how did you build that part?”, rather than “what are you making?”

Listening

Good listening is vital for communication and relating to others, as well as for learning effectively. We use a number of strategies to develop this essential skill.

- Practical group games and board games specifically aimed at developing listening skills
- Music
- PE
- Circle time
- Using a visual element where possible to hold attention, e.g. puppets, posters, objects
- Praising quick responses to verbal or visual instructions

Reading

We concentrate on providing activities that develop the following pre-reading skills that are necessary for becoming a reader.

Pre-reading skills

- Developing an interest in stories, books, poems and non-fiction material
- Awareness of the structure and organisation of books
- Awareness of the directionality of print
- Developing a phonological awareness: general discrimination of sounds in the environment; listening for sounds at the start, end and middle of words; recognising and forming rhyme and alliteration

- Awareness of some of the purposes of print e.g. in lists, menus, letters, labels and signs
- Hearing initial sounds at the start, then end, of words
- Linking the letter shape (lower case) to its initial phoneme (sound). We teach these in a specific way e.g. 'mmm' for the letter M and 'sss' for S. Do ask your son's teacher if you would like us to go through the phonemes with you.
- Developing a visual memory for letter shapes and words
- Recognising their name in print.

If a child shows readiness to read, he will be given a book from the scheme used in the Nursery, which he will receive on a Friday and return to school the following Wednesday. All children will take a library book home each week, which they select from the range of fiction and non-fiction texts in the Nursery. Reading workshops are held for Reception parents to help them support their sons' early reading at home.

Writing

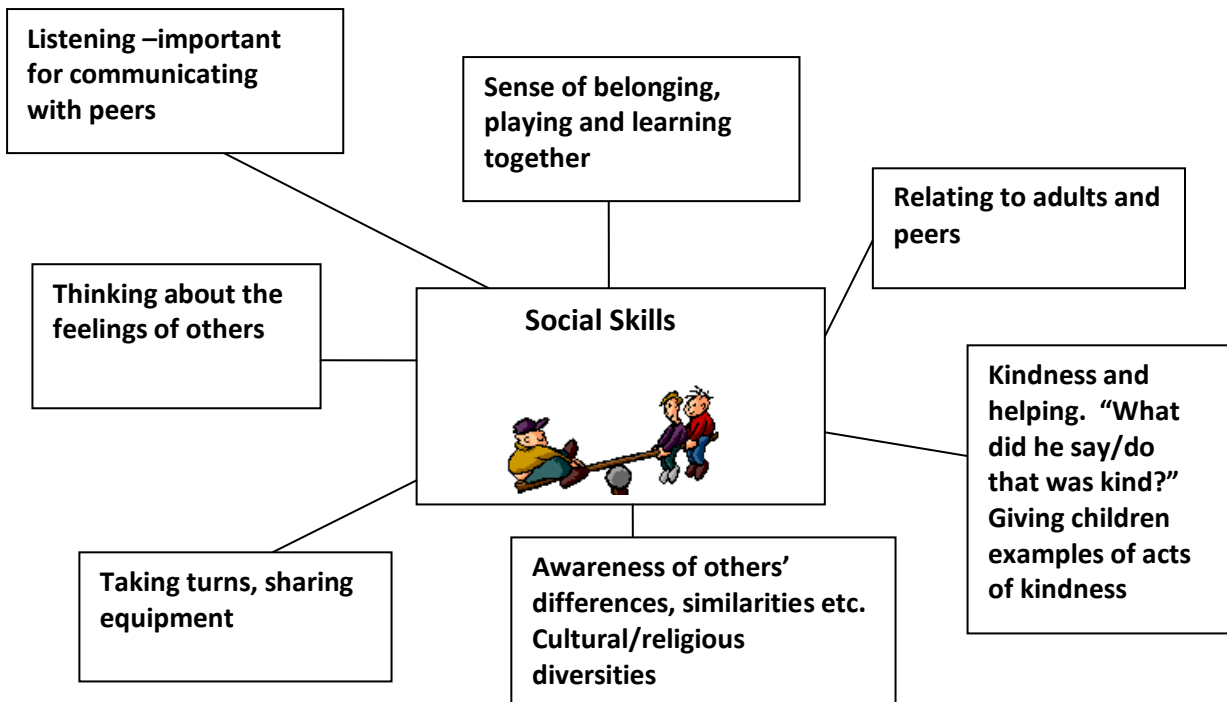
The children are encouraged to put pen to paper at every opportunity in their free and guided play e.g. writing prescriptions in the surgery, orders in the cafe, shopping lists for the fruit shop etc. Making marks on paper and attributing meaning to these (for instance, a child makes a squiggle on his shopping list and comments "That says eggs") is the first step to becoming a writer!

The role play areas also play an important part in promoting the children's imagination, which contributes to successful story writing in later years.

As they learn to recognise the letters of the alphabet, we also demonstrate and help the children practise the correct formation of these in lower case form. Writing their own name and labelling work is practised, as well as writing simple captions and sentences if ready to do so.

Personal, Social and Emotional Development.

Much emphasis is laid on this area of the curriculum, particularly at the start of the Nursery year. The diagrams below outline the aspects on which we base our planning for the boys' social, emotional and personal development. We use a social skills programme called PALS (Playing and Learning to Socialise) which the boys enjoy and which can be supported and reinforced at home.



A lot of the above is taught through using stories to promote the attitudes of kindness and other social skills. For example, in the story 'Dogger', the children will hear about the kindness shown towards a little boy by his sister. In the discussion following the story, we would encourage the children to talk about what the character actually said or did to show her caring, thus giving examples of what constitutes a kind act. Praising the children's kind deeds or comments as they occur also helps reinforce positive social behaviour.

Assemblies, circle time, group games and presenting a good role model for the children to follow also form part of an on-going process to aid social skills in the class. This will help the children quickly establish successful relationships with both peers and staff.

Personal and Emotional Development

Independence

This is one of the key skills we aim to develop in the Nursery. Independence is not only about learning to take responsibility or doing familiar jobs themselves. It is also about using initiative, and making a choice or decision without asking an adult first. Whilst this does not always work to the benefit of adults ... ("Why didn't you ask me first?") ... young children do however need to act for themselves, and take the odd 'risk' in 'having a go'. A lot of things in the class are aimed at promoting independence skills. For example, we encourage the boys to

- Do the morning jobs by themselves, e.g. hanging up their coat, putting their book bag away, collecting their name card and putting it on the 'tree'.
- Name their own work with the prepared labels or, when able, write it themselves
- Manage clothing and personal care. Go to the loo by themselves. Learn to undress and change into their PE kit or put on their coat
- Take turns at being 'Helper of the day' and take the register to the office, put out the name cards at snack time, lead the line out to play and tidy the book corner, etc.
- Notice when they need an item of equipment and locate it for themselves or ask the teacher how to get it
- Choose an activity or independently make a start on a task once they know what to do. Alternatively, ask again if they do *not* know what to do.
- Not wait for Mum or Dad to do things first!

Self Esteem

The more confident and successful the children feel about themselves, the more effective their progress will be and visa versa. We try to involve the boys in their own learning as much as possible, helping them begin to know how they like to learn best, and celebrate what they can do. Acknowledging and praising their individual successes, however small, helps build their self-esteem and their enjoyment of learning in school. Certificates are awarded for achievement, progress and effort and are presented in Assembly which we attend every week. Reward stickers are also given to the boys throughout the day as well of lots of verbal and visual praise. Sometimes we give the boys class 'challenges' for the week, e.g. everyone try to put on their coat by themselves or help at tidy-up time.

Some children are worried about getting things wrong (I can't). We try to impart the attitude that making mistakes is not a problem and that it is important to 'have a go'. Mistakes happen to everyone, staff included! Again we often use stories to help reinforce this positive attitude to errors, such as a staff favourite about a teacher who spills paint over a pupil's picture, loses her story book, knocks over a pile of bricks and forgets the time!. She apologises profusely to the pupils and they, of course, forgive her!

Physical Development

Physical development is divided into two areas: fine motor and gross motor. The boys have frequent access to the outdoor area, opportunities for indoor work in the gym, and of course on-going tasks and activities designed to develop their fine motor skills and use of writing, art, craft and other tools. PE is taught by the school PE teacher and also by the class teachers during outside learning.

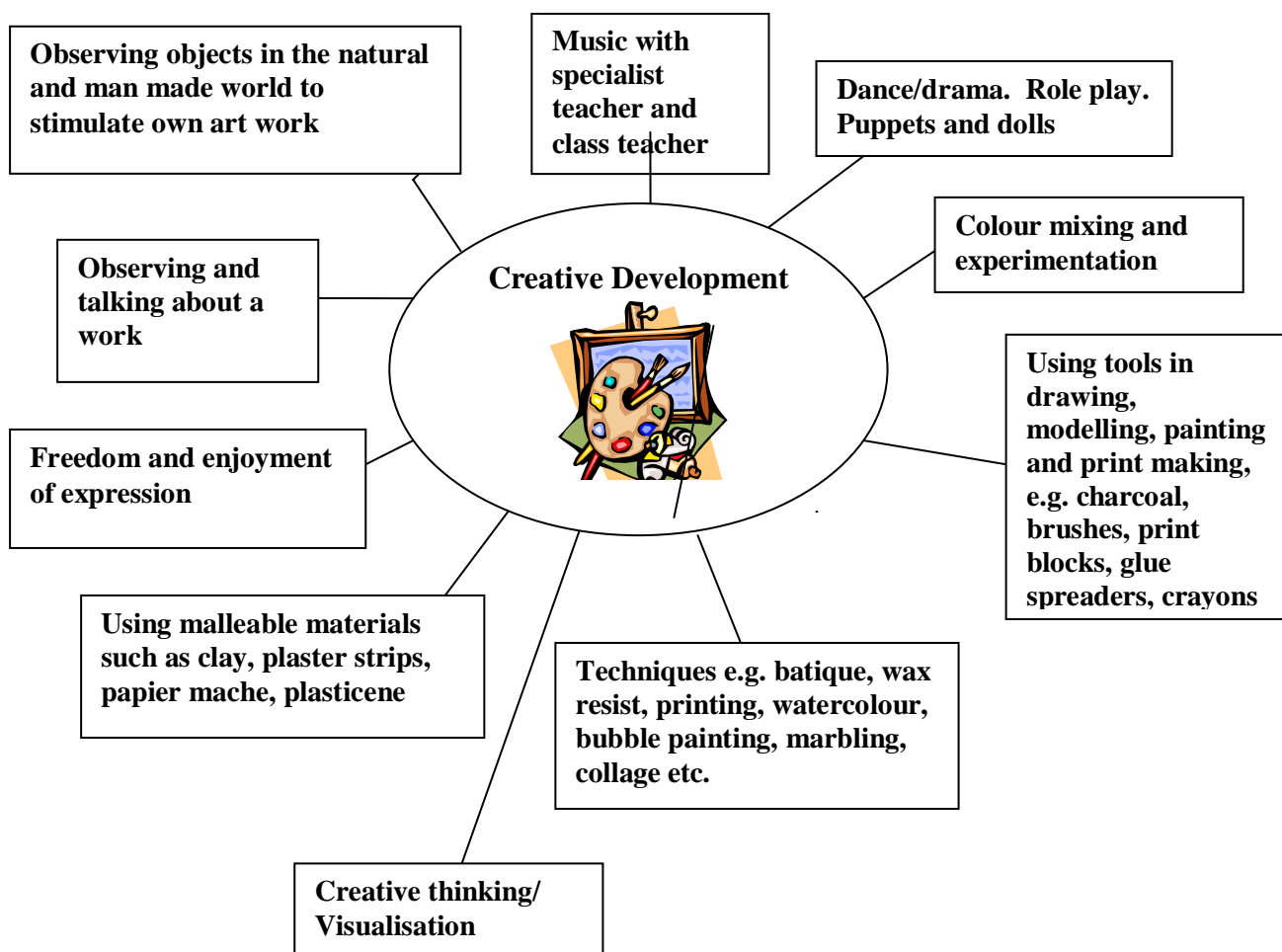
The Nursery boys take part in the school sports day at the end of the summer term.

Creative Development

Our Nursery aims to provide a stimulating, bright and creative environment for the children. The display boards around the room feature the *children's* work, and the boys are encouraged to contribute to, and/or comment on, the displays as they develop.

When models are made during free play, for example with a construction kit such as Duplo, the boys are often allowed to display these for a time. At tidy-up time, the boys are encouraged to dismantle their own model (or place it for display) accordingly.

Creative activities form a central part of the Early Years curriculum, and the children are introduced to a variety of tools, techniques, and knowledge of Drama, Music and Art.



Knowledge and Understanding of the World

This area addresses the skills and understanding that are necessary for children to make sense of the world around them. We provide a range of contexts in which such skills may be practised, i.e. contexts involving exploration and investigation, design and making, IT and communication technology, sense of time, sense of place, cultures and beliefs. The boys, through topic work and other activities, are encouraged to show curiosity by asking questions and use the associated skills to explore their surroundings. Visits and visitors to school support this area of learning as fully as possible.

At the beginning of each term a lot of what your son produces at school will go on the display boards, which need covering at the start! We also keep work to go in their individual folders that are kept in school, and given to you when they leave the Nursery. Of course the boys are always keen to take the fruits of their labours home with them, and we have a home box where many items are given out at the end of each session.

Transition to Reception

We work very hard to ensure that the move from Nursery to Reception is an easy one for all concerned and all the previous information applies equally to Reception as we continue with the same Foundation Stage. Reception teachers handover to the receiving teacher and the boys visit their new classes at the end of the Summer Term to familiarise them with their next stage of learning. We continue building on the excellent work that has been achieved in the previous setting and the boys move forward on the 'learning journey' they started in Nursery.

We look at each boy's individual Profile and lead them to the next step in all curriculum areas, remembering that they will all achieve these at their own individual pace and development.

When the boys have achieved all the points on the Early Years Profile they commence working on the Key Stage One curriculum.

Below are some key pointers to the six learning areas:

Personal, Social and Emotional Development

- Continue making friends,
- Learning rules
- Learning daily routines
- Learning about other cultures and respect
- Understanding boundaries
- Building relationships with adults.

How can you help?

You can help by encouraging children to have independence in their self care e.g. washing hands dressing and undressing themselves. This is especially important for them when they have to change for PE. Also, playing games which encourage sharing and turn taking will help your child to continue building their social skills. Parents are encouraged to allow their boys to have 'play dates' as this helps to build up friendships and social skills out of the school setting but the benefits can be seen within the classrooms.

Physical Development.

- Gross and fine motor skills
- Malleable area
- Mark making
- PE getting changed
- Dance
- Outdoor learning
- Pencil control

How can you help?

Give children time to jump, play, and climb and play outdoors.

Encourage children in activities such as building, drawing, threading beads, sewing and filling and emptying containers in water---all of which develop manipulative skills.

Communication, Language and Literacy

- Phonics—we use the Letters and Sounds programme which is linked to Jolly Phonics.
- Recognising and writing name
- Speaking
- Listening
- Reading—as your child is ready for formal reading he will begin to bring home readers to share with you.
- Writing
- Role Play

How can you help?

By reading books (stories, information books, newspapers, magazines etc.), encouraging your child to join in and talk about the texts and by singing songs and nursery rhymes.

Also, by modelling correct letter formation and grip. It is important to take *time to listen* to them talking about the things they have done and answering their questions. Joining your local library is also recommended, so that boys have a wide variety of books to explore and to show them how much you value reading.

Problem solving, Reasoning and Numeracy

- Counting
- Recognising numbers and what they mean
- Calculations
- Shapes
- Patterns
- Problem solving
- Measuring

How can you help?

Maths is everywhere! So do talk about the shapes, numbers, patterns etc you see in the environment. Help build your son's mathematical vocabulary by reinforcing words to describe mass, length, capacity, shape etc. Asking your son to lay the table (so that he is matching one knife, fork etc to each person's place setting) or to weigh out ingredients in a cooking activity is all useful for his mathematical development.

Singing counting songs and rhymes is a good way of remembering the order of numbers and for introducing addition and subtraction. In fact, count, add and subtract anything and everything.....socks, cars, shopping, cutlery, fingers and toes!

Creative Development

- Role play

- Art
- Dance and Music
- Puppets
- Singing
- Story and imagination.

How can you help?

Talk with your child about their imaginative play and join in if possible! Encourage them to visualise/picture things in their head so that even mathematical problems can be worked out more easily.

Encourage them to be flexible in their thinking and use of materials and praise them for their efforts and ideas.

Knowledge and Understanding of the World

- Exploring and investigating
- Learning about other cultures, places and things that happened in the past and living things.
- ICT
- Constructing
- Educational visits—in Reception we aim for one a term
- Outdoor learning

The topics covered in Reception are:

- Senses
- Dinosaurs
- Space
- Time
- Water
- Mini- beasts

How can you help?

Talk with your child about the places they go and things they see in the world around them, Answer their questions and ask them open ended questions which develop their thinking such as “what if?”, “Why do you think?”, “how did you ?“

Let your child join in with everyday activities –washing up, cooking, shopping, and helping in the garden.....

If possible let them have monitored access to ICT, CD players, computers etc.

As you can see, these areas interweave and overlap (cross curricular) so not all learning and activities in the Early Years is separate.

Other Curriculum Areas:

- French: Boys have two lessons per week

- Music: Boys have two lessons per week
- P.E: Boys have two lessons per week
- On Fridays we go for games, by bus

Reception boys also take part in the school Harvest Festival. They perform in the Nativity play at Christmas time and take part in the School Play in the summer term.

Reception boys are encouraged to take part in the school Poetry competition.

Homework

Reception boys will bring home a 'daily news letter', sound book, poetry book, reading book and message book.

We encourage you to share all these with your son at home.

You will be given information as to what your son is expected to do with each of these books.

Learning to read is a complex process and to help you understand this Mrs Beer and Mrs Knight run Reading Workshops to help you with "The best way to help your son to read"

There may also be incidental things that we encourage the boys to bring to share, maybe relating to the current sound being taught or our topic.

As the year progresses the tasks may require your son to make something or practise a mathematical concept. However, we always want the homework to be a pleasant experience for all, with no pressure on either your son or you!

By the end of the Reception year, our aim is that the boys are independent enough to come into the classroom alone, look after their belongings and are confident in all areas of the curriculum. They will then be ready to make a smooth transition to Year One where again they will be assessed to find out their levels.

Top Tips for Happy, Healthy, STRONG, Children!

Sleep: Ensure your sons are having at least 11- 12 hours sleep each night.

Touch: It has been proven that we ALL need 12 hugs a day!

Relaxation: Ensure that your child has some 'down time'.

Opportunities: to be active.

Nutrition: Good food allows children's bodies to grow well and their minds to think clearly.

Giving: things a go, learning and growing involves a good deal of trial and error

We hope you find this booklet useful. We aim to develop a close and successful partnership with you and your son throughout the year. We sometimes need the help of parents, e.g. when on a school trip, or for library sessions, and look forward to working with you from time to time. If you have *any* queries about the curriculum or indeed about anything at school, do ask one of the teachers, we are always available and keen to help you and your son make the most of the Early Years at The Falcons!

TEN TOWN

King One

Top to toe and there you go!

Tommy Two

Curve from his head to his knees, straight across please

Thieving Three

Here are the handcuffs, watch out Three, one hand, two hands, who's got the key

Freddie Four

Down, across, oar in the water

Fiona Five

Down her back, round her knees, back to the top, arms out please

Seal Six

From the top of his tail to his little wet nose, King One will have very wet clothes!

Sir Seven

Start at his helmet, across to his hips, down to his boots with the shiny tips

Eric Eight

Eric Eight starts like a snake. Back to the top, he's easy to make

Nicola Nine Bows

Around her head and back to the top. Down to the ground and then you stop.