



October 2007

Dear Parents and next year's Form Ones

As a long-serving member, and Second Master, of Falcon College, I feel that I am in a position to be able to pass on a few words of advice that may help you to navigate the first few months at a senior boarding school with the minimum of fuss. Your own approach to the challenges presented to you over the first few months next year will largely determine how successfully you become integrated into the "Falcon Family".

Because more and more of our new Form Ones have no previous experience of boarding, let alone being away from home, will mean that the first few weeks could be difficult for some boys and parents. Good preparation and a determined attitude on the part of the boy, and a sensible approach by the parents, will minimise this situation.

I sent out a similar letter to this last year and by and large it appeared as if most parents and boys had taken my advice to heart, though many apparently never received the letter! So I am sending this one out even earlier! Again I will divide everything into 2 categories:

- Suggestions for parents and new Form Ones from me
- Extracts from "Advice to help you in your first year at Falcon" – an exercise I gave the current Form 1s a few days ago. Therefore right from the horse's mouth!

For the Parent

I am sure you would wish to make the passage into senior school for your son as easy as possible. Your love and support is obviously paramount, but how it is expressed can have either a positive or negative impact on his settling in period. As difficult as it may be you need to try and distance yourself from your son (and I don't just mean physically) for his first 3-4 weeks at Falcon. This is the so called 'Grace period' for Form Ones, when they learn the ropes. It has been proved to be easier for them if you are not in constant contact with them.

Communication is vital at all times and we cannot prevent that contact, but you will be doing your son a huge favour, in the long run, if you keep it to a bare minimum. If there is something worrying your son, and he cannot work it out for himself, then he should speak to his prefect and/or Housemaster. **You should contact your son's Housemaster, initially**, with any problems. Some boys will be homesick to start with, but be warned that they are very good at pulling the heartstrings of their parents.

There are a few things parents can do to help with the settling in process:

- Make sure that as far as possible your son has every item suggested on the Clothing List. Items such as a simple calculator, geometry set, rulers, pencils, crayons will be useful for the classroom

- Make sure that EVERY SINGLE ITEM of clothing, personal possessions, sport's equipment, etc., is marked clearly with his name, House and laundry number.
- **Be sensible in what you send with him** – over and above what is suggested on the Clothing list. E.g. :
- Cell-phones and other electrical gadgets **MUST NOT** be sent with him for at least the first half term, and many would say even longer. **PLEASE** be sensible about the type of cell-phone you send with your son. **Theft** of these items is an on going problem!
- Please ensure that the enclosed I.T. AGREEMENT DOCUMENT is read, signed by you and your son and returned to the school
- Pocket money – a small amount of cash (no more than \$500000) can be sent with him until he has worked out the system. He can always draw extra from the Housemaster, which is reflected on your disbursement account
- Tuck – refers to extras of food to 'supplement what is available'. Initially a few items would be acceptable to 'sweeten the blow of leaving home', again until he settles in. We do have a fairly well stocked Tuckshop, but perhaps initially you could send with him some juice cordial, noodles, biscuits and chips.

But please remember that all 3 of these items (above) can create jealousy (according to quantity and quality) and temptation for others to steal or 'borrow'– which is a big problem in this day and age

As the boys would say, don't send anything 'flash' with him. Quite simply obeying the rule of close community living – “blend in and don't be different” – will go a long way towards ensuring an easy transition into senior school

- It would be a good idea to ensure that your son knows:

How to clean his own shoes

How to clean windows

How to make hospital corners when making his bed

He has worn in any new *veldskoens* or shoes before he arrives – lots of running in the first few weeks!

- **Punctuality** is something we strive to instil in our boys (so having a watch is a good idea!) and our task proves more difficult when parents let their sons down! Admission time for your sons is between **8.30 and 10.00 am on the SATURDAY before school starts**. His anxiety will be increased if you get him here late on that day, and you will also miss the **PARENTS' MEETING WITH THE HEADMASTER AT 10.30 am**

Please ensure that your son is **dressed correctly in the full Number 1 uniform** with a short, neat haircut, when he arrives

- Once you have settled him into his dormitory, met his dorm prefect, Head of House and Housemaster and been to the Parents' meeting, you are advised to leave the College

- **Telephone contact** with your son by landline can be made through the telephone exchange (meal times are best), but day visits are discouraged until after the First Fixture Free Weekend. Please contact your Housemaster before making such a visit

For the new Form One

Probably the most important piece of advice that came out of the essays done by this year's Form 1s is: “ **listen and do as you are told .**”

Your whole world, and life style, is going to change early next year. If you approach it in the right way it will be an exciting new adventure for you. As I said at the beginning of this letter there are a number of things you can do to prepare yourself before you arrive, which will make life easier for you. I will mention these under a couple of headings:

In the Dormitory

- Learn now, if you don't know already, **how to make your own bed, neatly with hospital corners.** No fitted sheets are allowed at Form 1 level
- Learn to **polish your black shoes.** You need, therefore, to bring with you polish, brushes and/or cloths
- Learn to **keep your possessions/clothes neat and tidy** at all times in your bedroom at home
- Learn how to **clean windows properly** . You will need to bring some Windolene and some cloth for that. You also need some Brasso as you will have to clean the window latches (doing the **brasses** it is called)
- Learn how to **sweep your floor effectively** and don't throw litter around
- Practice **neatly folding the clothes**, which you will be using the next day, next to your bed. You will be taught how to **press your clothes using boards and a clamp** when you get here. **You need to bring two pieces of hardboard (approximately 40 x 40 x 2cms) and two G clamps of about 15 to 20cms in size for this exercise** (which happens every day!)

You will see from the above that at Falcon you are responsible for looking after yourself, your possessions, and your own sleeping area and in fact you will have different duties of a similar nature around the House. **The sooner you master these activities the sooner you will settle down at Falcon**

In the Classroom

- Make sure you have a reasonable sized bag/satchel for keeping your books in when you move between the House and different classrooms. You move from room to room, not the teachers!
- Make sure you have a good 'space box' to keep your pencils/pens etc. in, and have a reasonable supply of these pencils etc.

On the Sports Field

Everyone is required, in the first term, to do cross-country and then athletics. Therefore it is a good idea to **try and get fit** before the beginning of next term

- You have no option, no matter what your ability, but to play some sport so the sooner you accept that fact, **and try your hardest**, the sooner you will be accepted by your fellows. Asthma is not an excuse to get out of sport!

In General

During the first 3 weeks next term the **Grace period** exists. That means that you have that time to learn everything you can about how the dormitory, House and College operates. There are lots of rules and regulations so be determined to learn as quickly as possible

- During this period you have to learn who the College Prefects are, by sight, name and the job they have in the School. This is not easy and so to help I will try to send you a picture of these prefects with their names and jobs, once they have been selected, so that you can start learning them now!
- You will also have to learn the names of your own House prefects, in due course, plus a number of facts about the College. These will be given to you by your Dorm Prefect next term
- At the end of the Grace Period I will be giving you a test to see just what you have learned during these 3 weeks. **It is up to you to look, listen, learn and do as you are told.**
- **Be honest, caring (help your dorm mates if they are struggling), become actively involved in whatever you do, respect your elders, concentrate hard in the classroom, at all times trying your best and you will become a useful, and proud member of the Falcon Family**

Finally

If you should have any queries, please don't hesitate to contact either the Headmaster's Secretary, or myself.

Yours sincerely

DAVE FLEMING

SECOND MASTER