

HOMWORK POLICY

2009-2010

Purpose of homework

Research over a number of years in the UK and other countries has shown that homework can make an important contribution to pupil's progress at school¹. This is achieved when homework:

- Helps students to develop the skills and attitudes they will need for successful, independent lifelong learning.
- Consolidates and reinforces skills and understanding developed at school.
- Helps to ensure that teaching time is used to maximum effect.
- Extends the challenge and opportunities for learning open to the student.
- Meets the needs of parents to be involved in their children's education.
- Supports the need to deliver course work.

Policy Aims

This policy aims to set a framework in which these objectives can be met and homework can therefore form an important part of achieving outstanding outcomes for our students.

Development of the Policy

This homework policy has been reviewed in consultation with parents, staff and students to take account of changes to the national curriculum, the increasing focus on skills, the increase in vocational courses, changes in the availability and use of technology and concerns from parents about both too much and too little homework being set.

From this review we have drawn the following principles:

PRINCIPLES FOR HOMEWORK

Purpose

The purpose of homework is to contribute to the achievement of outstanding outcomes for students in terms of high standards of progress and attainment. It is a valuable learning tool which teachers will use where appropriate, but it is not an end in itself. Where homework has no value to learning it will not be set.

To ensure that homework is purposeful, the contribution to learning expected from a homework task will be made clear to students in each case.

Relevance

In order to maximise the contribution which homework can make, there is a need for teachers to set work which:

- Relates appropriately to the course being studied,
- Is carefully planned and structured to support progression in learning and linked to schemes of work and relevant class activities.
- Is personalised, so that it enables students (including those with SEN) to expand their learning in line with their abilities, setting high but reasonable expectations.
- Reflects the new national curriculum and the focus on skills.
- Offers opportunities to develop a range of skills and knowledge, sometimes working across the curriculum.

¹ (OFSTED 1995 (Homework in Primary and Secondary Schools, HMSO, London)

Flexibility

To respond to the needs of students working within a modern and changing curriculum there is a need for greater flexibility in setting work so that:

- Artificial timetables do not limit its effectiveness and prevent linking to class work.
- Innovative approaches are embraced as acceptable homework as part of outstanding teaching.
- Cross-curricular work can be set in addition to subject based tasks.
- Substantive pieces of individual study can be delivered over a number of weeks.
- Best use can be made of technology (e.g. learning platforms, website areas)

Demands on students.

Balanced against the flexibility needed to meet the demands of courses and strive for outstanding outcomes, there is a need to ensure that students are not overburdened. Where homework demands are too great, they can place unacceptable stress on students and lead to declining motivation and achievement.

Students require a healthy balance between life and schoolwork. Homework should not therefore be so onerous that it prevents students from participating in other activities such as sport, music and clubs of all kinds, many of which have significant educational and social value. Homework should also clearly not prevent students from preparing appropriately for public examinations which may occur at various times during the year. Whilst students do need to learn how to deal with workloads and to manage their time effectively, this can only be achieved where demands are reasonable.

Feedback

Feedback is absolutely vital if homework is to be worthwhile. Homework will therefore always be marked in an appropriate way. Feedback will be given to students and parents which:

- Is prompt,
- Is consistent,
- Is in-line with the school and subject marking policy,
- Offers praise where possible,
- Offers guidance on how to improve further (a target),
- Contributes to improved achievement in the future.

Sanctions which are to be imposed where homework is not delivered on time, or as requested, will be clear and consistent across the school.

Families

- Parents/carers should be involved in their children's education.
- Parents should be given clear information about expectations for their involvement.
- Students who are already economically or socially disadvantaged or who have disabilities will not be placed at a further disadvantage through the nature of homework. Where appropriate, support/facilities will be offered so that such students can complete their homework to the best of their ability.
- Where students consistently fail to deliver appropriate homework, parents should be involved as partners in resolving the issue.

Implementation

The range of responsibilities and approaches for implementing these principles are set out in the attached table.

Review

This policy will be reviewed in 2010.

November 2009

IMPLEMENTATION

	Responsibilities
Head teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversee the implementation of the policy. • Monitor the effectiveness of the policy by assessing the contribution of homework to outstanding outcomes for students. • Ensure that sanctions which are to be imposed where homework is not delivered on time, or as requested, are clear and consistent across the school. • Encourage working across the curriculum.
Subject leader	<p>Ensure that programmes of study include homework which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relates appropriately to the course being studied, (e.g. some vocational courses have little or no homework, others may have a heavy research element at the start of a topic then little demand after that, maths requires frequent short tasks to reinforce learning, while a more substantial project may be best in science). • Is carefully planned and structured to support progression in learning and outstanding outcomes for students. • Is purposeful and clearly linked to schemes of work. • Reflects the new national curriculum and the focus on skills. • Offers opportunities to develop skills and knowledge, sometimes working across the curriculum. • Makes best use of available technology. • Embraces innovative approaches where appropriate. (e.g. outdoor activities, visits to the theatre, watching a particular TV programme). <p>In addition, to :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor homework across the subject through the year to ensure consistency in setting and marking. • Monitor outcomes to ensure that homework makes an appropriate contribution to outstanding outcomes for students. • Ensure that subject teachers are aware of relevant factors such as public examinations in other subjects.
Subject Teacher	<p>Set homework which is relevant and purposeful and contributes to learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring that tasks have a clear purpose which supports and enhances learning. • Communicating this purpose clearly to students and parents. • Planning tasks so as to coincide with relevant class activities. • Personalising tasks so that they enable students (including those with SEN) to expand their learning in line with their abilities. • Setting high but reasonable expectations. • Providing clear information about the expectations for the content and quality of the work in each case. • Providing clear information about the appropriate role of parents/carers in the task. <p>Set homework which gives students a reasonable opportunity to complete work successfully and enhances students' ability to manage their time by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting homework with a minimum and guideline time for the task. • Giving students a reasonable length of time to produce any piece of work. Next day deadlines will be avoided and usually at least 3-5 days will be given. Where possible a longer time should be given to allow students to plan their work. Periods of several weeks may be appropriate where substantial project work or coursework is required. • Providing an opportunity for students to consult staff to ask questions about the task or to seek support within this period of time. • Avoiding setting work which may place students who are already economically or socially disadvantaged or who have disabilities at a further disadvantage. • Ensure that where appropriate support/facilities will be available so that students can complete their homework to the best of their ability.

	<p>Ensure that homework does not impose unreasonable burdens on students by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Giving fair consideration to requests for extensions of time from students who happen to be given many pieces of work at the same time due to their individual combination of options. Taking account of the views expressed by form teachers in this process. • Staff may also take account of any unusual personal or family circumstances which may make it difficult for a student to deliver their work on a particular occasion (e.g. injury to the student, family bereavement, damage to the home). They may also consider exceptional demands on a student from external activities such as performing in a play or concert, participating in a major sporting competition. In most cases the work will still be required, but a longer timescale may be allowed. <p>Help students improve their work by providing feedback in line with the expectations set out in the policy above taking account of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all work will result in written feedback, for example, research or evaluation of a topic or issue to be discussed in the lesson. Teachers will, however, ensure that all students have undertaken the task and that they know how to improve their achievement in the future. “Finishing off” tasks may occasionally be set to ensure that class work is completed and these might not be marked until the book is reviewed. • Parent, peer and self review are of value, but cannot replace teacher input. Teachers will ensure that such review is overseen and any errors of fact or assessment corrected. • Where students work together on homework a fair assessment will take account of individual inputs and difficulties of working together. • Sanctions will be applied consistently and involve parents where appropriate.
Form Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check student planners regularly to ensure that students are recording homework and do not appear to have an inappropriate load of work. • Consider requests for extensions from students as above and where necessary assist students in negotiating an appropriate workload.
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record tasks in their planner including purpose, date for completion and minimum and guideline times. • Complete tasks as requested and within the deadline. • Take a responsible attitude to workload making every effort to manage tasks. However, where it does not appear possible to deliver work within the deadlines because too many tasks have been set, or where personal circumstances make this unachievable, take a sensible approach to seeking an extension for one or more pieces of work from the teachers concerned or the form teacher.
Parent/carer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an appropriate place for students to complete homework. • Encourage students to complete their homework to the best of their ability. • Offer support and advice in line with the expectations provided by the teacher. • Monitor tasks in the planner and sign as requested.