

**Homework Booklet for
parents**



Homework Policy

Homework is any work or activity which students are asked to do outside lesson time either on their own or with parents or carers.

The purpose of homework

- To encourage students to develop the confidence and self-discipline to work on their own, an essential skill for adult life.
- To consolidate and reinforce skills and understanding.
- To extend school learning, for example through additional reading.
- To enable students to devote time to particular demands such as GCSE coursework or project work.
- To support the home/school relationship.

The amount of homework

The school has a fixed homework timetable with time allocated for different subjects on different evenings. Students will need to learn to manage their time so that they do some homework each evening. Teachers will not set homework to be completed for the next day, but will give students at least two days to complete the homework. The time devoted to homework should increase as the student progresses through the school.

Students in Years 7-9 should have homework per week for English, Maths, and Science; and for Humanities, Modern Foreign Languages (French/German), ICT, Art, PE and Music; which should take between 45 minutes and one hour. Additionally, year 8 should be set a Home learning project each half term, which will be appropriate to their current project.

Students in Year 10-11 should have between an hour and an hour and a half per subject, per week. Students are encouraged in addition, to read as widely as possible around their chosen subjects to broaden their knowledge. Homework will be differentiated where necessary to take into account individual needs.

Types of homework

Homework might include such things as:

1. Writing assignments.
2. Learning assignments.
3. Preparing an oral presentation.
4. Reading in preparation for a lesson.
5. Finding out information/researching a project.

It is important that students should have frequent and increasing opportunities to develop and consolidate their competencies as independent learners.

Organisation of homework

All students have a Personal Organiser which they should carry with them at all times to record their homework. Tutors and parents/carers are asked to check and sign these on a weekly basis.

Non-completion of homework

When homework has not been done, appropriate action will be taken by the department. This could include a break time, lunchtime or an after-school detention. Parents/carers should receive twenty-four hours notice in writing, via their child of the after-school detention so they can make arrangements for their child to get home safely. The after-school detention will last no longer than 30 minutes key stage 3 and one hour for key stage 4. The tutor should be informed of all detentions given by the class teacher.

School's responsibilities

The subject teacher is responsible for setting appropriate homework and marking it regularly. ***S/he should check that students are recording details of homework set in their organisers.*** In Years 7-9 homework should be set to ensure that there is more than one night in which to do it.

This allows students to plan their time, participate in out of school activities if they wish, and still be able to do their homework.

Heads of Faculty are responsible for ensuring that all teachers in their department are setting appropriate homework regularly and marking it. ***This should be checked each half-term as part of the faculty QA process.***

Parents'/Carers' role in homework

- Parents/carers should support students with their homework but accept that their role will become less and less important as students become more responsible and independent.
- Parents/carers should try and provide a reasonable place where students can work or encourage them to make use of the school's facilities.
- Parents/carers should encourage students to meet homework deadlines.
- If parents/carers feel that insufficient or too much homework is being set, they should contact the tutor who will investigate the situation.
- Parents/carers should make it clear to students that they value homework and support the school in explaining how it can help them to progress.
- Parents/carers should encourage students and praise them when homework is completed.

Students' responsibilities

- Students should always carry their Personal Organisers with them.
- Students should record the homework set even if they have written it in detail in their exercise book.
- Students need to accept that deadlines must be kept.
- If students are absent, they need to find out what work has been missed and catch up on it.

Being away on the day that homework is set is not an excuse for not doing it.

- Problems with homework should be resolved before the deadline. If necessary, students should see the member of staff concerned for help.
- Students should take a pride in doing their best.

Homework Guide for Parents

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Strategies to Make Homework Go More Smoothly

There are two key strategies parents can draw on to reduce homework hassles. The first is to establish clear routines around homework, including when and where homework gets done and setting up daily schedules for homework. The second is to build in rewards or incentives to use with children for whom "good grades" is not a sufficient reward for doing homework.

Homework Routines

Tasks are easiest to accomplish when tied to specific routines. By establishing daily routines for homework completion, you will not only make homework go more smoothly, but you will also be fostering a sense of order your child can apply to later life, including college and work.

Step 1.

Find a location in the house where homework will be done.

The right location will depend on your child and the culture of your family. Some children do best at a desk in their bedroom. It is a quiet location, away from the hubbub of family noise. Other children become too distracted by the things they keep in their bedroom and do better at a place removed from those distractions, like the dining room table. Some children need to work by themselves. Others need to have parents nearby to help keep them on task and to answer questions when problems arise. Ask your child where the best place is to work. Both you and your child need to discuss pros and cons of different settings to arrive at a mutually agreed upon location.

Step 2.

Set up a homework centre.

Once you and your child have identified a location, fix it up as a home office/homework centre. Make sure there is a clear workspace large enough to set out all the materials necessary for completing assignments. Outfit the homework centre with the kinds of supplies your child is most likely to need, such as pencils, pens, colour markers, rulers, scissors, a dictionary and thesaurus, graph paper, construction paper, glue and cellophane tape, lined paper, a calculator, spell checker, and, depending on the age and needs of your child, a computer or laptop. If the homework centre is a place that will be used for other things, (such as the dining room table), then your child can keep the supplies in a portable crate or bin. If possible, the homework centre should include a bulletin board that can hold a monthly calendar on which your child can keep track of long term assignments. Allowing

children some leeway in decorating the homework centre can help them feel at home there, but you should be careful that it does not become too cluttered with distracting materials.

Step 3.

Establish a homework time.

Your child should get in the habit of doing homework at the same time every day. The time may vary depending on the individual child. Some children need a break right after school to get some exercise and have a snack. Others need to start homework while they are still in a school mode (i.e., right after school when there is still some momentum left from getting through the day). In general, it may be best to get homework done either before dinner or as early in the evening as the child can tolerate. The later it gets, the more tired the child becomes and the more slowly the homework gets done.

Step 4.

Establish a daily homework schedule.

In general, at least into middle school, the homework session should begin with your sitting down with your child and drawing up a homework schedule. You should review all the assignments and make sure your child understands them and has all the necessary materials. Ask your child to estimate how long it will take to complete each assignment. Then ask when each assignment will get started. If your child needs help with any assignment, then this should be determined at the beginning so that the start times can take into account parent availability. A Daily Homework Planner is included at the end of this handout and contains a place for identifying when breaks may be taken and what rewards may be earned.

Incentive Systems

Many children who are not motivated by the enjoyment of doing homework are motivated by the high grade they hope to earn as a result of doing a quality job. Thus, the grade is an incentive, motivating the child to do homework with care and in a timely manner. For children who are not motivated by grades, parents will need to look for other rewards to help them get through their nightly chores. Incentive systems fall into two categories: simple and elaborate.

Simple incentive systems.

The simplest incentive system is reminding the child of a *fun activity to do when homework is done*. It may be a favourite television show, a chance to spend some time with a video or computer game, talking on the telephone or instant messaging, or playing a game with a parent. This system of withholding fun things until the drudgery is over is sometimes called Grandma's Law because grandmothers often use it quite effectively ("First take out the trash, then you can have chocolate chip cookies."). Having something to look forward to can be a powerful incentive to get the hard work done. When parents remind children of this as

they sit down at their desks they may be able to spark the engine that drives the child to stick with the work until it is done.

Elaborate incentive systems.

These involve more planning and more work on the part of parents but in some cases are necessary to address more significant homework problems. More complex incentive systems might include a structure for earning points that could be used to "purchase" privileges or rewards or a system that provides greater reward for accomplishing more difficult homework tasks. These systems work best when parents and children together develop them. Giving children input gives them a sense of control and ownership, making the system more likely to succeed. We have found that children are generally realistic in setting goals and deciding on rewards and penalties when they are involved in the decision-making process.

Building in breaks.

These are good for the child who cannot quite make it to the end without a small reward en route. When creating the daily homework schedule, it may be useful with these children to identify when they will take their breaks. Some children prefer to take breaks at specific time intervals (every 15 minutes), while others do better when the breaks occur after they finish an activity. If you use this approach, you should discuss with your child how long the breaks will last and what will be done during the breaks (get a snack, call a friend, and play one level on a video game). The Daily Homework Planner includes sections where breaks and end-of-homework rewards can be identified.

Building in choice.

This can be an effective strategy for parents to use with children who resist homework. Choice can be incorporated into both the order in which the child agrees to complete assignments and the schedule they will follow to get the work done. Building in choice not only helps motivate children but can also reduce power struggles between parents and children.

Developing Incentive Systems

Step 1.

Describe the problem behaviours.

Parents and children decide which behaviours are causing problems at homework time. For some children putting homework off to the last minute is the problem; for others, it is forgetting materials or neglecting to write down assignments. Still others rush through their work and make careless mistakes, while others dawdle over assignments; taking hours to complete what should take only a few minutes. It is important to be as specific as possible when describing the problem behaviours. The problem behaviour should be described as behaviours that can be seen or heard; for instance, *complains about homework* or *rushes*

through homework, making many mistakes are better descriptors than *has a bad attitude or is lazy*.

Step 2.

Set a goal.

Usually the goal relates directly to the problem behaviour. For instance, if not writing down assignments is the problem, the goal might be: "Joe will write down his assignments in his assignment book for every class."

Step 3.

Decide on possible rewards and penalties.

Homework incentive systems work best when children have a menu of rewards to choose from, since no single reward will be attractive for long. We recommend a point system in which points can be earned for the goal behaviours and traded in for the reward the child wants to earn. The bigger the reward, the more points the child will need to earn it. The menu should include both larger, more expensive rewards that may take a week or a month to earn and smaller, inexpensive rewards that can be earned daily. It may also be necessary to build penalties into the system. This is usually the loss of a privilege (such as the chance to watch a favourite TV show or the chance to talk on the telephone to a friend).

Once the system is up and running, and if you find your child is earning more penalties than rewards, then the program needs to be revised so that your child can be more successful. Usually when this kind of system fails, we think of it as a design failure rather than the failure of the child to respond to rewards. It may be a good idea if you are having difficulty designing a system that works to consult a specialist, such as a school psychologist or counsellor, for assistance.

Step 4.

Write a homework contract.

The contract should say exactly what the child agrees to do and exactly what the parents' roles and responsibilities will be. When the contract is in place, it should reduce some of the tension parents and kids often experience around homework. For instance, if part of the contract is that the child will earn a point for not complaining about homework, then if the child *does* complain; this should not be cause for a battle between parent and child: the child simply does not earn that point. Parents should also be sure to praise their children for following the contract. It will be important for parents to agree to a contract they can live with; that is, avoiding penalties they are either unable or unwilling to impose (e.g., if both parents work and are not at home, they cannot monitor whether a child is beginning homework right after school, so an alternative contract may need to be written).

We have found that it is a rare incentive system that works the first time. Parents should expect to try it out and redesign it to work the kinks out. Eventually, once the child is used to doing the behaviours specified in the contract, the contract can be rewritten to work on problem behaviour. Your child over time may be willing to drop the use of an incentive system altogether. This is often a long-term goal, however, and you should be ready to write a new contract if your child slips back to bad habits once a system is dropped.

Involving Siblings

Parents often ask how they can develop one kind of system for one child in the family and not for all children, since it may seem to be "rewarding" children with problems while neglecting those without. Most siblings understand this process if it is explained to them carefully. If there are problems, however, parents have several choices: (a) Set up a similar system for other children with appropriate goals (*every* child has *something* they could be working to improve), (b) make a more informal arrangement by promising to do something special from time to time with the other children in the family so they do not feel left out, or (c) have the child earn rewards that benefit the whole family (e.g., eating out at a favourite restaurant).

Basic Homework Routines Plan

Tasks are easiest to accomplish when tied to specific routines. By establishing daily routines for homework completion, you will not only make homework go more smoothly, but you will also be fostering a sense of order your child can apply to later life, including college and work.

Strategy	Action
Routine	Step 1. Find a location in the house where homework will be done.
	Step 2. Set up a homework centre.
	Step 3. Establish a homework time
	Step 4. Establish a daily homework schedule
Reward	Step 5. Celebrate success

Helping parents understand Levels and assessment.

Assessment procedure

11-12	Year 7	KS3	Ongoing teacher assessments
12-13	Year 8	KS3	Ongoing teacher assessments
13-14	Year 9	KS3	Teacher assessments in English, maths and science and the other foundation subjects
14-15	Year 10	KS4	Some children take GCSEs
15-16	Year 11	KS4	Most children take GCSEs or other national qualifications

National Curriculum Levels

Why are National Curriculum Levels so important?

The numbered attainment levels tell you what progress your child is making in comparison to national standards.

The sublevels show whether your child is working at the higher (A), middle (B) or lower (C) levels within each numbered level.

For example, 5C is higher than 4A.

Core Subjects

Level	Level descriptors
Level 3	Attaining below the national average standard expected of a pupil in Year 7.
Level 4	Attaining the national average standard expected of a pupil in Year 7.
Level 5/6	Attaining the national average standard expected of a pupil in Year 9.
Level 7	Attaining above the national average standard expected of a pupil in Year 9.
Level 8	Attaining significantly above the national average standard expected of a pupil in Year 9.

What Pupils will learn during Key Stage 3.

English

- Speaking and listening (Speaking, listening, group discussion and interaction, drama, standard English and language variation)
- Reading (Understanding texts, English literary heritage, texts from different cultures and traditions, printed and ICT-based information texts, media and moving image texts, language structure and variation)
- Writing (Composition, planning and drafting, punctuation, spelling, handwriting and presentation, standard English and language structure)

Mathematics

- Number and algebra (Using and applying number and algebra, numbers and the number system, calculations, solving numerical problems, equations, formulae and identities, and sequences, functions and graphs)
- Shape, space and measures (Using and applying shape, space and measures, geometrical reasoning, transformations and coordinates and measures and construction)
- Handling data (Using and applying handling data, specifying the problem and planning, Collecting data, processing and representing data, and interpreting and discussing results.

Science

- Scientific enquiry (Ideas and evidence in science and investigative skills)
- Life processes and living things (Cells and cell functions, humans as organisms, green plants as organisms, variation, classification and inheritance and living things in their environment)
- Materials and their properties (Classifying materials, changing materials, and patterns of behaviour)
- Physical processes (Electricity and magnetism, forces and motion, light and sound, the Earth and beyond and energy resources and energy transfer)

Home Learning Assignments

Homework resources