

Moortown Primary School

Policy for Homework



Latest policy review: September 2014
 Person responsible: David Roundtree (Headteacher)
 Date of next review: September 2015

Definition

Homework is anything children do outside the normal school day, in response to school guidance, encouragement or prompt, which contributes to their learning.

Rationale

Educational experience that a school by itself provides is limited; children benefit from wider, complementary experiences out of school. However, some prompts and guidance from school can direct these experiences and develop greater learning. We see homework as an important example of cooperation between teachers and parents / carers. An aim of our teaching is to promote independent learners; homework is one of the ways in which children can acquire the skill of independent learning.

We recognise the importance of quality family time; this policy should help to promote opportunities to be creative rather than labour over frequent worksheets or carry out activities that pupils and / or parents / carers may not understand.

Whilst homework develops children's learning and independence, quality family time, play and free time are also important. Homework should not prevent children from taking part in wider activities such as those offered by out-of-school clubs and other organisations. Children develop their interests and skills to the full only when parents / carers encourage them to make maximum use of the opportunities available outside school.

Aims and principles

We value homework for our children in order to:

- ✘ enable them to make maximum progress in their academic and social development
- ✘ develop skills as independent learners
- ✘ promote cooperation between home and school in supporting learning
- ✘ enable aspects of the curriculum to be explored and enriched
- ✘ consolidate and reinforce learning in school and to enable practice at home
- ✘ provide experiences not possible in school
- ✘ help children develop good work habits thereby increasing their chances of future economic well-being
- ✘ celebrate diversity and explore issues around SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development)

Homework tasks

There are various types of homework:

Talk Time	Creative	Practice Makes Perfect
roughly, these two types should alternate each week...		...but there is likely to be more of this type with younger children and with children who need it due to a specific learning need or family background issue
occasionally, and more so with older children, a task might combine these two elements to investigate a topic and prepare a presentation (eg a speech with some creative elements)		this might be a good homework option rather than Talk Time or Creative for those children with a specific learning or contextual need
	at the start of a topic, the rule of restricting homework to an A4 side might be lifted so pupils can produce homework which can be displayed on the Big Topic displays	this should be differentiated as teachers would with class work

Sometimes, homework tasks will be set which are the same for the whole school eg a task linked to a theme week. Equally, a child may be asked to do something different than others. This will be based on the child's needs (they may need extra practice or challenge in something, for example). We might also invite a child to share some aspects about their own background (sharing key vocabulary in a home language, perhaps – this should only be done if the child is comfortable and confident to do so).

Over the course of the year, children in Reception will increasingly be asked to do some of the elements noted; they will be working towards the expectations set out.

Teachers and TAs should adapt homework to meet individual / group needs eg

- a child might need some specific Practice Makes Perfect homework to develop skills worked on in class, whilst others have some Talk Time homework;
- SEAL issues might mean that Talk Time homework is not appropriate / relevant and the child would benefit from some Creative homework, perhaps of his / her own choice.

In addition, there are weekly tables and spellings to learn for most classes. These are set on a Friday for a test on the following Friday. Teachers should make clear high expectations. If a child gets a low score for a series of weeks, teachers should take action:

- due to some specific SEN issue: teachers should differentiate the lists in order to cater for this
- due to the child not learning them: the child would need to stay in for some playtimes to learn; teachers will need to alert parents and / or arrange a meeting with parents / carers, possibly attended by the learning mentor and / or headteacher

Homework amount

We believe the frequency of homework set out here provides the right balance for pupils and meets the expectations of most parents (whose opinions we sought in the Annual Survey, 2014). Staff may occasionally provide additional homework; this will amount to two or three extra pieces across the year. As an alternative, staff will be happy to suggest to parents other ways they can support their child's learning at home.

There will be no homework during holiday periods. Occasionally, there will be exceptions to the daily and weekly routines eg during the Y6 residential trip; towards the end of a busy term.

We do not authorise unnecessary term-time absence. Because of this, extra homework will not be given to children whose families are going on a term-time holiday. Where a term-time absence is necessary and unavoidable, staff encourage parents to do extra reading and practise / revise spellings, tables, handwriting etc; staff also refer families to the website where additional ideas and activities are described to support their child's learning. In the case of a long-term illness, teachers will provide some tasks if parents / carers ask.

For all children, there is the opportunity for further learning at home using Mathletics, and, for many, using Lexia. We also expect children to read frequently.

Role of parents / carers

The following text will be used by teachers occasionally; it might be pasted into Homework Books or posted on the website.

Talk Time

The purpose of Talk Time homework is to encourage a conversation around children's current learning. Children shouldn't spend a lot of time on the presentation of the Talk Time homework. Instead, children should make notes, which will act as a prompt when it is discussed in class the following week. For this reason, teachers tend to give verbal feedback during their talk time session in class. We want our children to be expert talkers, using a variety of sentences and expressions, and able to back up their points or disagree with others in a polite way - this is more important than written notes for Talk Time. Simply: it's hard to be a good writer if you're not a good speaker, so Talk Times using ambitious words, useful phrases, interesting sentences is the best way to support your child. (Please don't forget we also want your comments in homework Books about the Talk Time and how your child has contributed to discussions.)

Creative

This is where your child's creative juices can flow! **Creative homework is an opportunity for your child to choose whatever they want to demonstrate some learning.** For example, *I can show what I know about food chains*. Your child could present all their learning in so many different ways, from a diagram with notes to a story or comic strip. Parents' and carers' role is to support, encourage, help but (obviously) never to take over and do the homework! Teachers always look forward to seeing how creative children can be. If you notice the work has not been marked, please don't worry. Teachers will have looked at and celebrated the homework in another way - the work might have been viewed by the whole class using a visualiser which allows the work to be projected to the whole class and a discussion of 'stars and steps' will happen. Peer assessment is also effective - children are very able to share what's good and what needs improving! These sorts of verbal feedback strategies are often more effective than a written comment because it's more instant and it makes sure the child understands - and their work is praised publicly! (If you'd like to add a comment about the homework and how your child went about it, please do: teachers would welcome this.)

Practice Makes Perfect

This is similar to what you might consider traditional homework: it may be a worksheet or a writing task. **Practice Makes Perfect is useful homework when something has been taught in school**

but needs consolidation. The work should be fairly straightforward for the child as **there should be no need for new learning**, so just some encouragement from you is needed. **However, it would be a great time to get your child to teach you - they should be able to explain the key points or processes!** We use this type of homework less often because usually the best practice is where a teacher can keep feeding back and presenting new challenges when they see it as appropriate. Teachers mark these activities in line with our marking policy.
As always, please ask if you've any questions or concerns.

Note: our cursive handwriting method is expected in written work.

Additional information on expectations / roles of parents / carers

Parents / carers play a vital role in their child's education, including homework. Parents / carers should help by encouraging and discussing ideas (see Homework Guide, particularly Top Tips) and by ensuring their child has a good working space at home. Parents should contact the class teacher or headteacher with questions / concerns. Parents / carers are sometimes invited in to view homework by pupils in the class – this is an opportunity for children to develop their speaking skills and to feel proud of their achievements.

They are also encouraged to comment about their child's homework: the content, their child's approach to the homework, how the child felt, the finished homework etc. This can be done by writing a comment in the Homework Book or during a meeting with the class teacher.

Inclusion and equal opportunities

We set homework for all children as a normal part of school life. We ensure that the tasks set are appropriate to the ability of the child. Often, tasks are open-ended so each child can enjoy and achieve to their full potential. If the task is not open-ended (eg Practice Makes Perfect Homework, for example; see Guide), homework will be adapted / differentiated. Homework requirements set out in the policy may, very occasionally, be adapted on an individual basis – this takes account of pupils who are keen to produce some homework without any family support, for example.

We value and celebrate the cultural diversity of our pupils and their families and we appreciate the enrichment that this brings. Often, homework tasks can encompass this diversity eg:

'I can describe a home.' → present information about a country of origin or a country where a relative lives.

'I know how instructions are used.' → present a sequence of steps to make some particular food.

Social, moral, spiritual, cultural development

We aim to promote SMSC in homework as part of on-going good / outstanding, but we will directly address SMSC development in specific weeks. Below are examples:

19 April 2013

Homework this week is **creative**. It's the second of three homework tasks this school year when we invite children to respond to something from a cultural or spiritual perspective (we've timed these so they fall close to religious festivals, from Eid to Easter).

I can respond to a programme or film I've seen.

We'd like children to present their responses about a recent programme or film they've seen. We're interested to hear your child's opinions and any connections they might have made between the programme or film and their own life. This might include pictures, an interview (you could write a fictional script between an interviewer and a character), a letter (eg to or from a character) – anything which might include your child's responses!

However, your child might prefer to do the following:

I can show what Passover or Easter means to me and my community.

Recently, some children will have celebrated the Christian festival of Easter or the Jewish festival of Passover. We invite children to respond to the sentence above – they might include a recount (like a diary entry), pictures, an interview (perhaps in a script), or any other creative response.

07 June 2013

Homework this week is **creative**. It's the third of three homework tasks this school year when we invite children to respond to something from a cultural or spiritual perspective (we've timed these so they fall close to religious festivals, from Eid to Easter).

I can respond to a piece of art.

This week, we'd like children to present their responses about a piece of art. Your child might think about the colours used in the artwork or the line or shapes. They may discuss the mood of the piece and decide if they like or dislike it.

However, your child might prefer to do the following:

I can show how I celebrate an occasion.

We invite children to respond to the sentence above – they might include a recount (like a diary entry), a report, draw pictures or use photographs to show how they celebrate an occasion.

Homework:

Parents' / Carers' Guide

I work and learn at school...



...and at home, too!

Children should do these each day – a little and often works best!

Daily Expectations

<p>Spellings Practise learning spellings in preparation for a Friday spelling test is important. Y1 – Y2: 6 – 10 words Y3 – Y6: 8 – 12 words Spellings might relate to tricky words, high-frequency words, or important spelling rules / patterns. Daily practice for a short while is more effective than last-minute 'cramming' on Thursday night.</p>	<p>Reading Reading is so important: it could be fiction, non-fiction, magazines, websites – anything! Reading to your child is really valuable for all children, so even a bedtime story counts! A variety of different reading activities and texts is important for your child to broaden his / her skills. A minimum of 10-15 minutes daily reading is expected. If your child has a Reading Record (younger children), we expect comments at least once a week.</p>	<p>Times Tables (Y2 – Y6) Times tables facts should be known by the end of Y4 – this means being able to say the answer to a multiplication or division question (up to 12x12) within five seconds. Tables tests take place on Fridays. Daily practice for a short while is more effective than last-minute 'cramming' on Thursday night. Mathletics is a great way to support other Maths learning at home.</p>
<p>Top Tips: <i>Parents / carers could also work with the child by using the words in written sentences or stories (to also practice handwriting and punctuation) or even in conversations (speaking and listening for the words).</i></p>	<p>Top Tips: <i>Reading aloud to an adult is encouraged, even for older children. Also very important is discussing the texts with the child eg asking questions about the characters in a book, the layout of a factual book and the views of a website or magazine.</i></p>	<p>Top Tips: <i>Parents / carers should work with the child by working out different strategies and 'top tips'. Practice in the car, walking to school etc all helps. Chanting forwards, backwards and alternating as you count through can all help, as can CDs and internet games.</i></p>

Weekly Expectations

Homework is handed out on Friday and returned on Wednesday. It should take a minimum of around 30-40 minutes, possibly carried out over a few days. Parents' comments in the homework books are welcome.

<p>Creative homework This involves a creative piece of open-ended work based around an 'I can...' statement eg 'I can use research skills to find out about a country.' 'I know how instructions are used' Only one rule: don't use more than one page of A4 (unless your teacher says otherwise!). Content will be a balanced mix of subjects.</p>	<p>Talk Time homework This involves a discussion topic eg 'Should animals be kept in zoos?' Children should make notes (even pictures, diagrams etc) ready to participate in a class / group discussion on the topic. Please make sure you write a comment about the Talk Time discussions in the homework books.</p>	<p>Practice Makes Perfect homework For younger children, this might be less frequent than the other two pieces, but sometimes a worksheet or series of questions might be useful to develop skills and speed eg practising column addition. Children in Y5 and Y6 should expect weekly Practice Makes Perfect alongside one other task.</p>
<p>Top Tips: <i>Be as creative as you like! Chat about ideas with your child: Could the homework be in the form of a poster, a letter, a comic strip, some writing, a PowerPoint...? Could it use photos, drawings, fold-out 'extras' on the page...?</i></p>	<p>Top Tips: <i>Turn the telly off! Sit around the dining table! Have a chat and share opinions and ideas! Children should talk with family, friends and each other. (Your child should write some notes in their Homework Books.)</i></p>	<p>Top Tips: <i>Take care not to confuse your child! This homework will be given out when the teacher knows your child can do the work using a particular method taught. Ask your child to explain methods and to check their answers.</i></p>