

## Homework policy

Date: Autumn 2019

### 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.

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.

In Sphere Federation, we refer to educational research. Research indicates that homework can provide some impact on improving outcomes. Schools whose pupils do homework tend to be more successful, although this may not be a causal relationship. Research indicates the following two points, around which our policy is based, are important:

- ☛ Effective homework is associated with greater parental involvement and support.
- ☛ The broader evidence base suggests that short focused tasks or activities which relate directly to what is being taught, and which are built upon in school, are likely to be more effective than regular daily homework. (See Education Endowment Foundation's Teaching and Learning Toolkit.)

### Aims and principles

We value homework for our children in order to:

- ☛ enable them to make progress in their academic and social development
- ☛ promote cooperation between home and school in supporting learning
- ☛ enable aspects of the curriculum to be explored and enriched
- ☛ develop skills as independent learners
- ☛ consolidate and reinforce learning in school and to enable practice at home
- ☛ help children develop good work habits, increasing their chances of future economic well-being
- ☛ celebrate diversity and explore issues around SMSC (spiritual, moral, social and cultural development)

### Homework tasks

Whatever the task, homework that we set should be purposeful.

Children will be given one of the following types of homework each week (with a broad balance across all three over the year).

#### Talk Time

*usually centred around a question*

Talk Time homework should be an opportunity for a child to **engage in a conversation** with other people at home (or electronically eg Facetime, Skype), where each person can contribute.

This means children should be able to return to school to share a range of views and ideas with their classmates.

#### Creative

*usually centred around an 'I can...' statement*

Creative homework should be a **reflection on what has been learnt**, (not what is being learnt or what is about to be learnt). We avoid research-based homework.

This means children should be able to complete the homework without a lot of adult support.

#### Practice Makes Perfect

Practice Makes Perfect homework should **reinforce some recent learning** in class.

This means children should be able to complete the homework independently.

Occasionally, we may decide to differentiate homework to suit the task or individual pupil.

Homework tasks which are the same for the whole school are often set eg Talk Time linked to a Living and Learning question or Creative linked to a themed week. This means that a family is able to share a joint learning experience more easily.

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.

In addition, there is:

- an expectation for children to read daily; this should be a minimum of 10-15 minutes and can include books, comics, websites – any reading material (if a child has a Reading Record, we expect comments from a parent/carer at least once a week)
- a weekly spelling task; this will typically alternate between a spelling challenge (an activity) and a spelling list to learn (in preparation for a test on the following Friday)
- a weekly times table; each week, there will be a times tables to practise for a test on Fridays (these will gradually begin over the course of Year 2)

Teachers should make clear high expectations. Good homework should be celebrated. We will communicate to parents/carers if homework is of a regular poor standard, or which is regularly not handed in.

If a child gets a low score in tests 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

### **Homework amount**

We believe the frequency of homework set out here provides the right balance for pupils and meets the expectations of most parents. 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.

### **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.** 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. Talk Times help writing, too: it's hard to be a good writer if you're not a good speaker. Using ambitious words, useful phrases, interesting sentences is a great 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.)

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, we give verbal feedback during their talk time session in class.

#### **Creative**

**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*. Like Talk Time or Practice Makes Perfect tasks, your child should spend no more than around 30-40 minutes. 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 never to take over and do the homework! We always look forward to seeing how creative children can be. If you notice the work has not been marked, please don't worry. We'll 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 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: we welcome this.)

### **Practice Makes Perfect**

This is similar to what you might consider traditional homework: it may be a worksheet or a writing task, for example. **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!** Teachers mark these activities in line with our Feedback policy.

**Note:** Our cursive handwriting method is expected in written work if children are using it in school.

### **Additional information on expectations / roles of parents / carers**

Parents/carers play a vital role in their child's education, including homework. They 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/carers should contact the class teacher or head of school with questions or concerns.

Parents/carers are sometimes invited into school 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 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), homework might be adapted/differentiated. Homework requirements set out in the policy may, very occasionally, be adapted on an individual basis.

### **Social, moral, spiritual, cultural development**

We aim to promote SMSC in homework; sometimes, this will be by directly addressing SMSC development in specific weeks eg: 'I can talk about moral choices', 'I know what democracy is' or 'I can respond to some art' (provided the art work is included so people at home can join in).

We value and celebrate the 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.

Celebrating diversity can be especially pertinent around a religious festival. Therefore, teachers might present to their class a choice. For example:

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.

#### **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 a faith celebration 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.