



St Mary's School
CAMBRIDGE

Home Learning Policy

This policy is the responsibility of Deputy Head (Academic) and Head of Juniors.

Last review: February 2023

Next review: September 2023

Rationale

Home learning is a discipline necessary to practise skills and develop resilience, independence and self-confidence.

The purpose of home learning is to provide an opportunity to reinforce and synthesise learning and to practise skills learned in class. Homework is an important opportunity to learn independently and acquire life skills of self-discipline, organisation of time and tenacity in problem solving. Home learning is an important expression of the partnership between home and school. It also reinforces the principle that learning is for life and not just for school. Homework should not be set that requires pupils to teach themselves new material or skills in order for it to be completed.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Marking, Assessment and Tracking Policy and is intended for the benefit of all our pupils including Early Years and the Sixth Form, including the Boarders.

Guidelines

The type of homework set will vary from subject to subject. Literary subjects such as English will set more assignments requiring sustained prose than practical subjects or Sciences. Best practice is for teachers to explain to their pupils the objective of the homework and how it fits into the 'reinforce, synthesise, practice' framework.

Teachers should set home learning tasks according to the Home Learning timetable devised annually by the Director of Teaching and Learning. In the Senior School, teachers set Home Learning on the parent portal which is accessible to pupils and their parents.

Teachers should set assignments requiring substantial pieces of extended writing over more than one slot. Deadlines are set mindful of the lengthy journeys many pupils undertake. Teachers collect homework at the next or another lesson, or at an agreed collection point in school, or by electronic submission.

Pupils are not generally set home learning tasks to be completed during school holidays.

Homework is not set simply because it is the allocated day for the subject. Twenty minutes spent thinking through a lesson, recalling how particular activities met learning objectives can be just as effective as a formal assignment. While the homework task might take a variety of forms, there is generally the expectation that it will give pupils the opportunity to practise skills taught in the lesson; it is not usually expected that pupils will encounter new concepts for the first time through their homework, although reading ahead in a novel, undertaking research or pre-reading a topic may be appropriate.

Heads of Department and subject teachers should be prepared to exercise flexibility on occasions when events such as parents' evenings, theatre trips and performances in or outside school can make it difficult or impossible for the pupils to complete work in the evening. At such times it is appropriate to waive the homework requirement completely in the case of younger pupils, and to give extended deadlines or less substantial pieces of work in the case of older ones. Similarly, when setting catch-up tasks to pupils on their return to school after a period of absence for illness, it is appropriate to require pupils to undertake only such tasks which are essential to their understanding the topic missed.

Recommended time allocation

Reception pupils are given a reading book and related phonic work daily.

Reception, Year 1 and Year 2 are given a 20-minute home learning task twice a week and nightly reading practice.

- Year 3 work for 20-25 minutes each night with the addition of reading practice.
- Year 4 work for 30 minutes each night with the addition of reading practice.
- Year 5 work for 30-35 minutes each night with the addition of reading practice.
- Years 6 work for 35-40 minutes each night often split between several subjects.

The Government recommends that the time allocated to homework falls within the following ranges:

- Year 7 45-90 minutes per day
- Year 8 45-90 minutes per day
- Year 9 1-2 hours per day
- Year 10 1.5-2.5 hours per day
- Year 11 1.5-2.5 hours per day

The Senior School homework timetable falls within these ranges. Homework for years 12 + 13 necessarily requires a greater time allocation for Advanced Level study.

The homework timetable allocates a set amount of time to each subject on given days during the week. This will normally fall on the day on which pupils have a lesson in that subject. However, in order to achieve an even workload across the week, it will sometimes happen that a homework set on one day will be included in another day's homework allocation.

The importance of feedback to pupils

Feedback about work done independently is an essential part of the learning process. Homework is marked promptly in line with the School's Assessment and Marking Policy.

Specific written feedback is given according to each department's assessment target menu. This will:

- Identify things that the pupil did well

- State what they need to improve by referring to clear targets

How parents/guardians and teachers communicate regarding homework

Parents/guardians receive feedback about homework in reports and at parents' evenings. Where a pupil is working to the expected level, this should suffice. When expectations are not being met this is communicated to the parent/guardians by the class teacher (in the Junior School), subject teacher, Head of Department or Head of Year or the Deputy Head (Academic) or Deputy Head (Data and Operations), depending on the severity of the problem. A parent/guardian who may be concerned about their daughter's homework is welcome to contact the School.

Queries about homework are a valuable source of feedback for teachers. When experiencing problems pupils are expected to ask their teacher for help as soon as possible.

Differentiation

As in classroom teaching, homework activities are differentiated in recognition of the needs of the pupils with language and learning difficulties and those learning English as a second language or for any other reason. An element of pupil choice in homework task is actively encouraged. Given the demands of the day at school, the distances travelled by many pupils and their necessary participation in extra-curricular activities, differentiation by time is not encouraged.

The role of parents/guardians

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardians to ensure homework is completed. In the Junior School, the parents are asked to sign the homework diary as proof that they have seen the completed homework task. Comments about the time taken to complete the work and perceptions on the content are also welcome. If a problem arises, and work cannot be completed, the parent should make a note in the diary so that the teacher can follow up with the child appropriately. The class teacher will endeavour to respond to the comments via the homework diary. The school informs parents if homework objectives have not been met. Pupils are expected to work within the allocated time. If homework is completed unsatisfactorily and without an acceptable explanation, the pupil in the Junior School will be asked to redo the work and a note is written to the parent/ guardian in the homework diary. Completion of this work might be in addition to set homework or given over a weekend with a specified due date. In the Senior School the pupil may be asked to redo the work. If homework is regularly unsatisfactory parents are contacted by the school and the matter discussed.

Parents/guardians are expected provide a quiet and comfortable space for their children to complete their homework. Distractions should be kept to the minimum. Some assignments may depend on collaborative work undertaken through social media but St Mary's supports parents in monitoring appropriate internet usage at home and will answer any queries about such assignments as they arise.

Parents/guardians and the pupils themselves should monitor how long a pupil takes to complete a homework assignment. Should the work take either substantially longer or shorter than the allocated time, we recommend parents/guardians should inform the teacher as appropriate. The homework diary is essential in the Junior School for home-school communication.

Up to and during Key Stage 3 parents are encouraged to monitor their daughter's homework each evening. This usually becomes less appropriate for older pupils but the school may ask parents to resume this practice should a pupil be struggling with work or organisation. Parents should not do the homework for the pupil nor are they expected to help the pupil although encouragement or prompting can be appropriate.

Roles and responsibilities

Senior School

Subject teachers ensure that purposeful and useful homework is set within the guidance of this Policy and that the instructions are clearly presented both verbally and in writing via the portal. Teachers endeavour to set homework in good time within the lesson.

Heads of Year are an important conduit of feedback about homework from both pupils and parents.

Junior School

In the Junior School, the individual class teachers are responsible for setting, marking, and recording of homework. In marking, the teacher will give positive, constructive feedback and a target or 'think about' (as indicated by (T) in the written comment) to extend the concept or skills. The Curriculum Coordinator has an overview of the homework across the year groups; however, homework is scrutinised termly as part of a book scrutiny. Comments and observations made during this process are fed-back to the subject coordinators and class/subject teachers. There is an element of flexibility in the homework timetable and there are exceptions made for school events and individual occurrences.

In the upper part of the Junior School, the children are responsible for accurately recording their set homework in their homework diaries. They must ensure that they understand what is expected of them and if not seek assistance from the class teacher in a timely manner. It is the responsibility of pupils who are absent for all or part of a lesson to find out what homework was set, if they reasonably can, so that they can meet the deadline. Exceptions are made for pupils who have been unwell or are absent for a sustained period of time. They should demonstrate their commitment to learning by completing the work and handing it in on time.

In the younger years, the class teacher might write out the homework and give the children this to take home with the appropriate book or sheet on which to complete the work. If a child is absent, the class teacher will endeavour to cover the work that was missed at an appropriate time and may give some reinforcement homework to be completed over time. If a child is absent for an extend period of time, then work – including homework - will be gathered and sent home for completion.

The Head of Juniors devises a schedule for homework once the timetable has been published. They ensure an even spread each evening across the cycle within the recommended time allocation.
