



St Patrick's NS Greystones

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HOMEWORK



school policy

2020

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1. Introduction

1.1 Introductory statement

Homework fosters independence, self-reliance, self-esteem, co-operation and life-long learning. It is an essential part of primary education and it should be meaningful for the teacher and the student. It should be designed in such a way as to offer children opportunities for self-assessment, being integrated into a programme of teaching and learning that forms a part of Assessment for Learning (AfL), which emphasises each child's active role in his/her own learning. It should serve to re-enforce work done in class and that it should act as a bridge between the work of one day and the next. Homework also offers an opportunity for a more meaningful dialogue between school and home.

Homework helps children to build knowledge, develop deeper understandings and connections among concepts to which they have been introduced, and provides an opportunity for them to apply skills they have acquired in school. It also helps children to develop good study habits and it promotes self-discipline, responsibility, and an interest in learning that will benefit them throughout their lives.

1. 2 Rationale

The school's homework policy was reviewed at this time, aiming

- to maximise the benefit of homework to the child's learning
- to develop more positive homework practices for the pupils
- to address teachers' and parents' expectations about homework
- to reflect guidelines within the *Primary Curriculum* (1999), through the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

The development of this policy involved a process of

- review of existing policy and practice to identify the issues that needed to be addressed, and with reference to other school policies that have a direct link with homework (eg Special Education Needs, Home/School Communication, Parents as Partners, etc);
- reflection on educational publications; the *Primary School Curriculum*; relevant legislation; websites; and consultation regarding best practice;
- consultation involving teachers, parents and children.

2. Relationship to characteristic spirit of the school

In St. Patrick's NS, pupils are encouraged to reach their full educational potential, by developing intellectual skills combined with a spirit of inquiry and the capacity to analyse issues critically and constructively, while developing expressive, creative and artistic abilities.

3. Aims

Through this policy, St. Patrick's NS aims to promote consistency of approach to homework across the school

- to develop skills to enhance the children's learning
- to reinforce work done in class, through revision and practice
- to develop study skills and to assist in establishing an appropriate study routine
- to encourage children to become independent learners through revision, reinforcement and completion of assignments
- to strengthen links and communication between home and school.

4. Content of policy

Homework is an integral part of the overall plan for the school and is assumed to be an extension of the school's daily programme.

4.1 Types of homework assignments

The four types of daily homework assignments are

- preparation
- practice
- extension
- creative and enrichment assignments.

4.1.1 Preparation

This type of assignment is intended to help students get ready for the next day's classroom lesson. For instance, a reading assignment may be given prior to a lesson. Students might be asked to write their own discussion questions based on the reading assignment. Or, the student may be asked to complete answers to reading review questions from the text.

4.1.2 Practice

By successfully completing practice assignments, students have the opportunity to review and reinforce skills, knowledge, and information presented in a previous lesson. A simple example might be that after a grammar lesson, students are asked to write their own sentences and label the specific grammatical elements presented in the most recent classroom lesson.

4.1.3 Extension

Extension assignments ask students to expand on skills and/or concepts taught during a previous class. For example, after studying a period in history students might be asked to read an article or book pertaining to that period and report their findings to the class.

4.1.4 Creative/Enrichment

Creative or enrichment assignment includes analysing, synthesising and evaluating concepts or skills already taught. Students have an opportunity to develop and apply their own ideas about a topic and prepare a presentation for the teachers or class. One example would be to assign students the task of creating an invention that would solve a problem. Another might be to write a play or short story.

What is stressed here is that not all homework is alike in nature and purpose. In considering different types of homework to set teachers might usefully refer to the different kinds of questioning employed in class.

4.2 Homework content

Usually, homework contains a balance between reading, learning and written tasks. This balance is not always possible and can vary considerably from day to day. It will regularly contain reading, spellings, tables, and no more than two of the following:

- a written assignment (Language; Mathematics; or SESE)
- rote learning (poetry; Mathematics; SESE)
- Visual arts (eg design or construction activity)
- Music (listening or instrumental activity; learning a song, etc)
- PE (eg physical exercises or activities; ball handling, etc)
- SPHE (Stay Safe exercises, etc)
- preparation for individual or class project (research; collecting material, etc).

Homework time devoted to reading and learning is as important as written work. While homework tasks may vary between projects, research, hands-on activities, gathering data, etc they should be completed within a manageable time scale, remembering that sometimes completing an activity and recording outcomes may be the task rather than copious writing.

4.3 Assigning homework

All classes get some homework, the amount and level of expectation increasing in quantity and expectation as the children move through the school from Infant classes to Sixth Class, developing their literacy and numeracy skills as well as their level of independence and maturity.

Homework is usually assigned each day from Monday to Thursday. Assigned homework is explained to children by their teacher in advance, with opportunities for questions and clarifications as required.

As noted in 4.3, homework is normally assigned by the Class Teacher, however some pupils may receive homework from their Learning Support or Resource Teacher, in consultation with the Class Teacher. Such consultation is important, not only to ensure that pupils who receive LS/RT support do not get more homework than the rest of the mainstream class.

The purpose of particular homework assignments may include one or more of the following:

- reinforcement of work done in class on that day
- revision
- preparation for a future assignment (eg research, collecting data or materials)
- project work (individual/class-based tasks)
- special/occasional projects (eg baking for a Parish or school event).

4.4 Differentiation

Every class in the school is made up of children with a wide range of abilities in all aspects of the school curriculum, as well as including children who have special needs and challenges in certain areas.

Parents, and pupils, are aware that all pupils in a class do not always get the same homework, and that homework is usually assigned by the Class Teacher, but may also be assigned by the SEN teacher. The school's policy regarding in-class differentiation is reflected in homework assignments, where individual learning abilities and styles are taken into account when assigning work.

Having addressed differentiation in the assigning of homework, a high standard of work to the best of one's ability is expected from all pupils.

4.5 Homework materials

A system of homework pouches is operated in some classes. This helps to ensure the preservation of worksheets, textbooks, copies, etc

4.6 Homework Journal

A homework journal is used by all pupils from First to Sixth Class. As agreed through the school's *Behaviour Charter*, parents are expected to sign the homework journal each evening, having checked that their children have completed the required tasks to the best of their ability (ref *School Behaviour Charter*, parents' responsibilities).

4.7 Duration of homework

Different children will complete the same homework in different lengths of time, and time spent will vary from day to day and also from the beginning to the end of the school year. It is important to remember that it is the quality and not the quantity of homework that matters. The following are general guidelines:

Class	Duration
Infant Classes	up to 20 minutes
1 st and 2 nd Class	20 – 30 minutes
3 rd and 4 th Classes	30 – 40 minutes
5 th and 6 th Classes	40 minutes – 1 hour

4.8 Homework routine

It is strongly advised that a good homework routine be established by parents from the earliest stages. The following guidelines for parents may be of assistance in this regard:

1. Agree a suitable time for doing homework, taking into account the child's age, and the need for play time, relaxation and family time.
2. Provide a quiet place, with a suitable work surface and suitable seating, free from distractions, interruptions and TV/or other distracting devices.
3. Your child should be sitting comfortably at a table.
4. Consider allocation of time for oral as well as written assignments as oral work can effectively consolidate that which is learned at school.
(ref 5. Resources)
5. Encourage good presentation and neatness within a reasonable time.
6. If your child is working independently, be available to help and show an interest in what is being done. Praise your child's efforts at every opportunity.
7. Sign the homework diary (1st – 6th Classes) checking that all homework is complete to a standard that you find acceptable.
8. If, for any reason, homework cannot be done on a particular evening, parents should inform the teacher by writing a note in the homework journal. An e-mail is not suitable, as it is unlikely that teachers will have an opportunity to check e-mails during the school day

4.9 Maintaining a positive attitude to homework

It is important that all education partners present homework in a positive way, noting the role and value of homework, as outlined in the Introductory Statement and the Aims of this policy. It can be helped by teachers' inclusion of variety in homework assignment (incl health & wellness activities, etc as well as research-based assignments and supported by parents through their engagement with homework tasks as well as by giving encouragement, support and advice when needed.

4.10 Development of pupils' responsibility for homework

Pupils are encouraged to develop a sense of responsibility towards their homework.

First and Second Class pupils should learn good practice by:

- completing homework assignments carefully and to the best of their ability
- ensuring that homework is signed by a parent (or supervising adult).

Third to Sixth Class pupils should develop good practice by:

- entering homework accurately in homework diary
- ensuring they take home relevant books and copies
- completing homework assignments carefully and to the best of their ability
- ensuring that homework is signed by a parent (or supervising adult)
- handing in homework on time.

Sanctions may follow when homework has been neglected or presented in a careless manner. They include

- to redo work at home
- to redo work during break time in school
- to attend a parent/teacher meeting
- to attend a parent/teacher meeting with the Principal.

4.11 Assessment and feedback

Assessment

Assessment of a piece of homework should be based on the criteria assigned by the Class Teacher or SEN teacher in the particular task set, eg spelling and punctuation may not be criteria for assessment of a piece of creative writing.

Teachers follow individual systems for the checking of homework, depending on the age level and classroom circumstances. As children get older and learn to work independently, some items of homework are checked less often. Some work may be checked by children themselves, under the direction of the Class Teacher, which can be a useful part of the learning process for children as it promotes responsibility and develops self-esteem.

Feedback

Teachers usually use comment-only marking, which provides feedback in three key areas in the pupil's learning cycle:

- what has been done right
- what weaknesses there are in the work
- what the next step/s should be, to improve performance or understanding.

This kind of feedback is most helpful as it relates to the task in hand, the learning intention and the criteria for success. Parents are urged to support their children in responding to feedback. In this way, comment-only marking can become an important part of the school's practice of reporting to parents.

Marks or grades are rarely given for homework assignments as teachers' comments are considered more effective in acknowledging strengths and directing improvement. When marks are given to assignments, the teacher may record them and use them to build up a picture of summative achievement for the pupil.

Class Teachers keep records regarding homework, and follow-up on unsatisfactory homework by contacting parents, if and when necessary. If children persistently do not present satisfactory homework, the matter is referred to the Principal who will address the matter with the Class Teacher and parents.

4.12 Parents and homework

Many parents in the school are actively involved in supporting their children's homework and many

have also contributed to the development of this policy.

General guidance for parents on how best to approach homework with their child(ren) includes:

- encourage a positive attitude towards homework in all subjects from an early age
- encourage children to work as independently as possible, and resist over- helping and over-reliance on your support
- encourage children to organise themselves for homework - have all books and materials to hand, with the *homework journal* open to tick off work as it is completed
- check that your child has all necessary text books, homework journal, copies, pencils, mathematical equipment, dictionary, PE clothes etc that will be needed for the next school day
- communicate difficulties to the teacher using the homework journal, or a note.

In consultation with teachers, parents and support agencies, more specific guidelines are provided for parents who are unsure how to best support their child with homework. Parents are urged to establish the following routine from an early stage in their child's school life.

1. Set aside a quiet regular time.
2. The child should be sitting comfortably at a table.
3. Homework time should include time for oral as well as written work. Oral work, particularly in the early stages of schooling, can consolidate that which is learned through both Irish and English.
4. Encourage your child to keep books and copies clean and tidy.
5. If your child is working independently be available to help and show an interest in what is being done. Praise your child's efforts at every opportunity.
6. If working with your child you feel yourself becoming impatient you should stop. Don't bully or threaten as this will only have a negative effect.
7. If your child is persistently having problems with homework contact the teacher and discuss the difficulties.
8. If, for any reason, homework cannot be done let the teacher know.

It is essential that parents appreciate their vital role in the supervision of homework. Parents are expected to sign-off on homework, on the basis that they are satisfied that homework has been completed to the highest possible standard. They should appreciate that, if homework has been neglected or presented in a careless manner, their child may have to follow a range of sanctions (as listed above).

As noted previously, parents are encouraged to support their children in responding to feedback regarding their homework. Parents who have concerns regarding support role in relation to homework, should consult their child's Class Teacher or the Principal.

4.13 Homework and multimedia

Multimedia has a role to play within homework from time to time. Multimedia content refers to a combination of text, audio, still images, animation, video, or interactivity content forms. Children can learn a great deal and their language can be positively enhanced through a range of material available via multimedia sources. It is hoped that, through homework assignments, school may support the process of educating children in the best, most positive and most productive uses of multimedia in an appropriate way. Multimedia provides an endless source of information with enormous educational potential. It is incumbent on parents and teachers to educate children in its use, primarily from the point of internet safety (ref school's *Internet Policy*) but also to guide them in maximising the internet, as a positive learning tool.

Therefore, elements of homework may include on-line research. In order to facilitate children's positive use of the internet, it is important that parents take the appropriate steps to ensure internet security in the home and appropriate supervision so that children may undertake project work safely.

5. Reference and resources

Primary School Curriculum. Your child's learning, guidelines for parents, link: http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/primary/parent%20overview_eng.pdf

Curriculum, Introduction, Chapter 2

Primary School Curriculum, all subjects

INTO, *Your Child in the Primary School, tips for parents*, p 24

Brian Gilsean, *The essential parents guide to the primary school years*

Education Research Centre, *Drumcondra English Profiles*, Chapter 3 Oral Language Indicator Sets (www.erc.ie/documents/dep_chp3.pdf)

Websites:

DES	www.education.ie
NCCA	www.ncca.ie
INTO	www.into.ie
IPPN	www.ippn.ie
NPC Primary	www.npc.ie
SESS	www.sess.ie
Internet safety	www.webwise.ie

6. Success criteria

Success will be measured through

- satisfactory homework exercises and assignments submitted by pupils throughout the school
- feedback from teachers, pupils, and parents.

7. Roles and responsibilities

Teachers, children and parents all have individual responsibilities in the implementation of the various aspects of this policy. On-going assignment and monitoring of homework is the responsibility of each Class Teacher, with the support of the SEN teacher, as appropriate.

Pupils take increasing levels of personal responsibility for homework as they progress through the school, while parents have an important role in ensuring that homework is done to the highest possible standard and that all efforts are made to provide the best environment and conditions for doing homework each afternoon.

8. Ratification and communication

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management, after which it was made available directly to all staff, and to parents through the school's office and the school website.

9. Implementation

The policy was implemented following its ratification by the Board of Management.

10. Review

While this policy may be reviewed and revised from time to time, as required. A full and comprehensive review is scheduled for 2025.

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

Canon David Mungavin
Chairperson
Board of Management

Rachel Harper
Principal

Date: _____

Date: _____