



St Mary's School
Gerrards Cross

Homework Policy

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MONITORING AND REVIEW

Staff Responsible	Assistant Head (Teaching and Learning)
Reviewed by	SLT
Approved by	SLT
Frequency of Review	Annually
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The School refers to all staff and students in St Mary's School, which includes the Early Years/Foundations Stage (EYFS), the Preparatory Department (Years 1-6), Senior House (Years 7-11) and the Sixth Form (Years 12-13).

The term 'parent' refers to those who have parental responsibility for a child.

AIMS

When homework is seamlessly and routinely integrated into classroom learning, and when relevant support is provided, it can substantially impact student academic success and become a significant motivator for learning. Students who complete homework while practising self-regulation have a greater chance of achieving academic success (Nota et al., 2004; Ramdass and Zimmerman, 2011). To reach this level of self-regulation, it is necessary that students have self-efficacy (a belief of competency), high expectations of success and are explicitly taught disciplinary specific, metacognitive strategies.

If students believe that homework plays a major role in their learning, they allocate more attention to it and are more likely to buy in to the process. To boost motivation, McCrea (2020) advises that homework becomes part of a well-practised routine, with frequent discussions of the value of homework and a clear understanding of how it leads to academic success.

WIDER REFERENCES

This policy operates within a wider national framework, which includes:

- The Education Act 2011

RELATED POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Curriculum Policy
- Teaching, Marking and Assessment Policy
- SEND Policy
- EAL Policy
- Highly Able Policy
- Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- Academic Honesty Policy

THE PRINCIPLES OF HOMEWORK

Homework can have a positive impact on student outcomes, when it is set in accordance with these research-informed principles. The following principles provide a basis for departments to develop their own policy:

- *Students fully understand the purpose and value of homework*
- *Teachers should make explicit the expected outcomes of homework tasks*
- *Attention is paid to quality, not quantity*
- *Homework is set regularly, in small chunks*
- *Homework is an integral part of learning and not an add-on*
- *Tasks aim to prepare, practice and consolidate learning*
- *Tasks should make use of effective scaffolds where appropriate to ensure accessibility*
- *Homework should support the building of confidence and fluency with the taught curriculum*
- *Homework incorporates transfer of learning so students apply ideas to unfamiliar contexts*
- *Homework should foster independence and build student self-efficacy*
- *Metacognitive strategies to support tasks are explicitly taught within departments*
- *Feedback on completion is timely and specific so as to inform student progress*
- *Homework is valued by both students and teachers*
- *Homework should inform planning and teaching, creating a consistent loop*



Homework should be underpinned by efficient and regular formal communication between school, students and parents regarding setting, engagement, reward.

TYPES OF HOMEWORK

Homework should be either Mode A or Mode B.

It is expected students will experience a balance between Mode A and Mode B homework.

Mode A homework facilitates self-regulation. Students who are successful at school have learned how to study through tasks that support deeper and more fluent recall and provide extended practice. Revision, once it has been modelled through the explicit and intentional teaching of metacognitive strategies, is an ideal homework. Any revision set for homework should have clear parameters around it and come with specific guidance about what exactly is to be revised and how.

Mode B homework is a way of providing students with opportunities for independent learning without them becoming unwieldy projects that require excessive marking. At St Mary's, Mode B homework is provided through accolades. Each subject's accolade should incorporate tasks that encourage students to explore topics in self-directed and/or creative ways, to develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning. In Prep, Mode B homework could include subject projects as well as accolades. Because of the accolade system, students should never be in a position where they can honestly say that they have no homework. When Accolades are given as homework, they should be set on Firefly in the usual way.

GUIDANCE ON SETTING HOMEWORK

All homework should be set on Firefly.

Tasks should be available for students by 5pm on the day they are set. Task pages should always be visible to parents. Department expectations for the completion of homework, informed by the homework principle, should be made explicitly clear to students.

In Senior House, students should be given between 4 -7 days to complete homework. In Prep, students should generally be given between 2 – 4 days to complete homework.

It is not appropriate to set homework overnight to hand in the next day. It should be noted that completing work overnight does not encourage good learning habits or support students' long-term knowledge acquisition. Although, the specific needs of younger students in Prep may mean they need immediate consolidation. Students at St Mary's are encouraged to be involved in many extra-curricular activities. This means that students can struggle to find time to do both their activities and spend sufficient time on their homework. The wellbeing of our students is of the utmost importance, and we believe that a healthy school-life balance is an important part of this.

Homework set for homework's sake is ineffective, the quality of homework set is much more important than the quantity. However, a departmental approach that embeds homework as an integral part of the curriculum will mean it is rare for teachers to not set homework. Homework tasks that are 'finishing off work' should be exceptional unless there is a clear rationale that is linked to improving outcomes.

Homework Schedules

Homework timetables in Senior House for KS3 and KS4 are created by Heads of Year, in consultation with Assistant Head (Teaching and Learning), at the start of the academic year. Students are expected to take responsibility for managing their own homework timetable at KS5. In Prep, a homework timetable is given to support parents and girls with organising the completion of homework tasks.

The time guidelines refer to a maximum. It is acceptable to set homework that can be completed in less time, particularly when we consider the 25% extra time that may be required by SEND learners.

KS3 - Core subjects (English, Maths, Science), should set weekly homework that takes no more than 1 hour per week (ideally set as 2 x 30 mins homework) and that meets the needs of the students. All other subjects at KS3 should set weekly homework that takes no more than 30 minutes and that meets the needs of the students. In Expressive Arts, homework will be set infrequently and only when required. Homework should link to the curriculum, follow the principles and guidance in this policy and encourage metacognition.

KS4 - Subjects should set weekly homework which takes no longer than 1 hour and meets the needs of your students. Students will be set homework for all GCSE subjects. Homework should align with the GCSE specification, follow the principles and guidance in this policy and encourage metacognition. Students should also be directed to Firefly resources for ongoing independent work.

KS5 - Year 12 and 13 should be completing a minimum of 5 hours of additional independent study per subject per week. 3 hours of which should be a clearly defined homework task that is checked and / or marked by teaching staff with feedback given as a result. Students should also engage in proactive, independent study, which is guided by the teacher, for at least an additional 2 hours per week; this might be long-term preparation for examinations, their own research, or additional wider reading. Set homework tasks should align with the A-Level specification, follow the principles and guidance in this policy and encourage metacognition.

Failure to complete homework

Homework is expected to be completed to a deadline and to the best of a student's ability. This gives students valuable experience of working to deadlines and facilitates staff marking schedules. The first time that homework is not completed to a satisfactory standard or not handed in, then students should be given until 9am the next morning to hand in their homework. However, whilst we wish to recognise that we are all human and occasionally make mistakes, a repeated late submission, or a further poorly completed piece of homework, will receive a demerit on e-praise. The work still needs to be completed or redone by the student. In Years 12 and 13, failure to complete homework will result in an escalation process that involves the subject teacher, Head of Sixth Form and parents.

In Key Stage 2, if a piece of work remains incomplete despite an extension, or when a student fails to hand in homework a second time within a short period, then the subject teacher will inform the Form teacher and, if necessary, the student's parents to discuss strategies to support completion of work. Students in Year 5 and 6 may be given a break time detention to complete the work.

After School Supervised Prep

This provides an opportunity for students to focus on homework and complete it before they go home in the evening. It runs Monday – Friday in the Library from 4 – 6pm. In Prep, students may attend Homework Club which runs from 3.45 – 4.30pm in The Hub.

Holiday Homework

In Prep, some suggested activities are provided and reading is recommended. In KS3, these homework suggestions will be from core subjects of Maths, English and Science and will focus on the accolades. It is expected that appropriate and manageable homework will be set for KS4 and KS5 over the holiday period.

QUALITY ASSURING HOMEWORK

Heads of Department

- Ensure the department handbook makes the nature of homework in their department clear.
- Discuss excellent and effective homework practice and activities in departmental meetings.
- Build a consistent approach through developing and sharing effective resources.
- Lead on the development of metacognitive strategies in relation to homework.
- Hold department staff accountable for the setting of homework.

- Monitor the balance of Mode A and Mode B homework, ensuring effective uptake of Accolades.
- Ensure processes for providing feedback to students are consistent.
- Support members of the department in holding students accountable for homework including relevant sanctions.
- Ensure homework is included in departmental evaluations and work scrutiny.
- Report issues regarding homework to the relevant Form Tutor/Head of Year/Head of Section/Deputy Head as appropriate.
- Support members of the department with parental communication regarding homework issues.
- Celebrate good homework and ensure the department are using e-praise effectively for this.

Form Tutors

- In Senior School, use e-praise reports to monitor homework de-merits. In Prep use homework diaries to monitor issues – this can be used by parents and tutors to communicate regarding homework.
- Mentor students who are not meeting homework expectations.
- Report issues regarding homework to the relevant Head of Department/Head of Year/Head of Section/Deputy Head as appropriate.

SLT

- Monitor quality of homework, and students' efforts, in discussion with Heads of Department during line management meetings and through observations and learning walks
- Liaise with subject staff, students and parents where appropriate to ensure all students are meeting homework deadlines and producing work to the best of their ability.
- Carry out book looks and work scrutiny, having conversations about quality assurance
- Use the homework policy and guided questions to ensure staff are both supported and accountable
- Ensure the homework policy is explicitly communicated to students and parents.

APPENDIX A - METACOGNITION AND HOMEWORK

Metacognition is about the ways in which students monitor and purposefully direct their own learning. It offers strategies to foster independent learning. Therefore, it is an important aspect of building effective study habits and completing home learning. Ultimately, the goal is to have the students working harder than the teachers! However, in order to achieve this, we have to plan, model, teach, and repeat a range of metacognitive strategies to students.

We have clear expectations, for teachers and students, around the teaching of metacognitive strategies. These expectations are linked to knowledge, teacher practice and student behaviours.

We expect that teachers:

- have a deep understanding of metacognition and self-regulation in relation to homework.
- can teach students a range of effective strategies to deploy in their home learning.
- understand the science of learning and theories about cognition that apply to homework.
- are aware of the EEF toolkit and have read the metacognition guidance report, which leads to a confident understanding of metacognition and self-regulation and how this applies to homework.

In practice, for teachers, this looks like:

- Teachers who model their own thinking to help students develop their metacognitive and cognitive skills
- Teachers who consistently provide support for students in all facets of planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning in order to develop effective home learning and revision habits
- Teachers who explicitly teach students how to organise and effectively manage their home learning
- Teacher modelling that consistently takes account of the need to explicitly share the thinking behind each step, so students can self-regulate with homework
- Teachers who promote and develop metacognitive talk in the classroom

We expect that students:

- are self-regulating (aware of their own strengths and weaknesses) and can motivate themselves to engage in and improve their own home learning.
- understand how they learn, exhibiting knowledge of themselves as learners, understanding how to deploy a range of available strategies for different homework tasks.
- show a deep understanding of how planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning is different across subject domains and tasks, as well as understanding commonalities in their learning.

In practice, for students, this looks like:

- Students who consistently plan for tasks with independence, reflecting upon the success of their plans.
- Students who engage in metacognitive talk with their peers with relative independence.
- Students who effectively manage their learning outside of the classroom, utilising a range of strategies with increasing independence.
- Students who fully engage with feedback to monitor their home learning with increasing independence.

Guiding questions

- Can you describe an example of when you have supported students to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning—what was the impact?
- Moving forward, what adaptations could you make to your deliberate teacher habits to support students when faced with an independent learning task?
- What independent learning strategies do you consistently teach in your subject?
- What metacognitive language and approaches do you insist students engage with in your teaching and in your lessons?
- What deliberate strategies are agreed on in your department, and are put on repeat, to build habitual learning behaviours that will result in student success?
- Are your departmental expectations for the completion of homework crystal clear to students? Do you provide a checklist of expectations?

APPENDIX B - ADAPTING HOMEWORK TO THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS

When setting homework, it is important to consider the needs of all the students in your class. In the EEF's guidance report 'Special Educational Needs in Mainstream Schools', the summary of recommendations covers 5 areas, one of which is the recommendation that SEND students should 'have access to high quality teaching' as this improves outcomes for students with SEND. The guidance report identifies four teaching approaches are particularly well-evidenced as having a positive impact on outcomes, and that are particularly easy to adapt and apply to homework. Teachers should develop a repertoire of these four strategies, which they can use flexibly in response to individual student needs, using them as the starting point for setting homework for all students, including those with SEND.

Students who have EHC Plans will require consideration; we have an obligation to accommodate their specific needs and to adapt homework according to the requirements outlined in their plan. Liaise with LEAPS and any LSAs you work with to follow up and reinforce homework for SEND students.

Please follow the following four strategies that will support all students to successfully access and complete homework:

Explicit Instruction: Use clear and succinct language to explain homework, modelling a task before students begin to work independently. Before setting independent practice for homework ensure that there have been opportunities for guided practice.

Metacognitive strategies: Use homework for recall, retrieval, consolidation rather than new content. Help students to organise thinking by 'chunking' content. Include metacognitive questions that support students to plan, monitor and evaluate their own learning.

Scaffolding: Provide scaffolds to promote independence with homework. Supportive resources and scaffolds support students to know what equipment they need, the steps they need to take or what their work should look like or include.

Using technology: Technology can be used by a teacher to set, collect and mark homework. It can be used by a student to help them to learn, to practice and to record learning. Adaptive use of technology means students could use speech-to-text software.

Understanding the individual needs of your SEND students and following the strategies above, will help ensure that you set work that can be completed within the maximum time guidelines, and that is achievable by all. If the homework is not working for SEND students, then departments should make adaptations following the guidelines above and using this checklist:

- ✓ Learning goal is clear and ambitious
- ✓ Homework practises or develops taught content (not new content)
- ✓ Instructions are concise and structured
- ✓ Time expectation is stated
- ✓ Students know when to stop
- ✓ Model or an example provided if needed
- ✓ Alternative format allowed where appropriate
- ✓ Reading load is manageable
- ✓ Writing load is purposeful
- ✓ Extension deepens thinking, not just adds work
- ✓ No unnecessary copying

If you become aware that a SEND learner is spending an unsustainable amount of time completing homework, despite your adherence to the guidelines above, please liaise directly with LEAPS.

Guiding questions

- Is the homework set for students designed to accommodate all?
- In what ways do you exploit the potential of technology (*including AI where appropriate?*) to increase access of SEND students to the homework?
- Do you provide sufficient scaffolding for tasks? Would it help to provide a list of steps, a word bank, a writing frame, a video?
- Are homework instructions clear? How can you be sure that your explanations are clear and accessible?
- How do you encourage metacognitive thinking before students start homework? In your department, what would this look like?

APPENDIX C - AREAS TO CONSIDER WHEN DESIGNING HOMEWORK

Artificial intelligence (AI)

Teachers should consider the points set out in the Senior School Academic Honesty and Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence Policy when setting homework. Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. AI has many uses to help students learn but may also lend itself to cheating and plagiarism. When setting up any homework task, teachers should consider the potential for exploiting AI in its completion and use the St Mary's AI Assessment Scale (levels 1–5). Departments must have a robust homework policy in place to make clear to students what cheating and plagiarism looks like in their subject, and to explain how the planned homework tasks mitigate against any potential AI use amongst students.

- Does my department policy address the issues around AI in my subject?
- Do all department staff understand how to teach students about AI and the issues around it?
- At each key stage, is homework planned to mitigate the problems caused by AI?

Feedback

Any suggestions for developing feedback mechanisms around homework apply to 'some, not all'. Teachers should retain the capacity to exercise their professional judgement as to what best suits their students, their class and their subject discipline. However, it is an expectation that if homework is set then students get informative, timely feedback on this. This feedback can take many forms and does not have to be complex or time consuming; for example, using an online platform that gives immediate numerical feedback to the individual student, which is then monitored by the class teacher to inform whole class feedback in order to close learning gaps would be ideal. Feedback should be provided to move learning forward. It should not be deployed to please senior leaders, parents, or other external parties. Its primary purpose is encouraging student progress, rather than being used for accountability or for monitoring purposes.

- Do I lay the foundations for effective feedback? What do students need to know to complete the homework? What will the feedback look like so that it is meaningful?
- Feedback on homework should utilise time-efficient methods. It should be clear, concise, and focused. What are the methods for delivering feedback?
- Does feedback develop the student's own ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning?

Highly able students

- Does your homework provide sufficient depth, stretch and complexity for highly able students, without simply increasing the volume of work?
- How do homework tasks enable highly able learners to think beyond the core curriculum, make connections across topics, or apply ideas in unfamiliar contexts?
- How do we explicitly teach highly able students to plan, monitor and evaluate more ambitious tasks?
- Does our Mode A homework allow highly able students to deepen core knowledge and disciplinary thinking, not just recall it?
- Do Mode B accolades offer meaningful opportunities for extension—creative, research-based, analytical, or open-ended—while remaining accessible to all?
- Do we make clear what high-quality thinking and scholarship look like in our subject?
- How do we use homework feedback to move highly able students from competence to mastery?
- Do highly able students understand that challenge is about thinking hard, not simply doing more?
- How does the department review and refine its homework offer to ensure consistent challenge across classes and key stages?