

HOMEWORK POLICY FOR A PRIMARY SCHOOL

Introduction

At Pippins School we believe that homework forms an integral part of the education our pupils receive and parents are encouraged to work with the school to understand the nature of homework, support their children in its completion and develop good homework habits since homework is known to improve academic outcomes.

The purpose of homework at Pippins School changes as children progress through the school. Short activities of different kinds – simple games, learning spellings and number facts and reading together – provide a very important opportunity for young children to talk about what they are learning to an interested adult, and to practise key skills in a supportive and secure environment.

As children get older, homework provides an opportunity for children to develop the skills of independent learning. They should be able to work for regular, though short, periods by themselves. As children reach year 6 they will be given a range of tasks covering different curriculum areas. However, the emphasis will always be literacy and numeracy and there is a clearly defined weekly schedule so that children and parents know what work to expect.

It cannot be emphasised enough that co-operation between school and home in primary schools is an essential part of a child's learning process, and that parents and carers have a vital role in supporting, encouraging and celebrating a child's progress. Such co-operation is vital to the success of this school policy.

Parents will be consulted over changes to, or developments in, the school's homework policy.

Objectives and targets

The aims of the school's homework policy are to:

- Develop a consistent approach to homework activities throughout the school.
- Achieve progression towards independence and a pupil's responsibility for their own learning.
- Make sure the needs of individual pupils are taken into account.
- Ensure that parents and carers have a clear understanding about the school's expectations from themselves and their children.
- Extend and support the learning experience through reinforcement and revision, particularly in literacy and numeracy.
- Give opportunities for parents, pupils and the school to work in partnership.
- Provide opportunities for parents and pupils to work together to enjoy learning experiences.
- Encourage pupils to develop the confidence and self-discipline for study of their own as they mature.
- Prepare children in year 6 for secondary transfer.

Action plan

For homework to be really effective, parents and carers need to be involved for some of the time. The ‘finishing off’ of work set in the day and copying of notes is not a feature of the school’s homework policy except in extenuating circumstances and, on occasion, may be given to a small number of children. It is important that there is a balance of tasks so that the planning and feedback is manageable by the teacher and completion is achievable by the pupils. Therefore, there will be some differentiation over the homework set to take account of the children’s range of ability.

The table below, which can also be found on the school’s website, is a guide to the time expected to be spent each day or each week by different age children. However, it is stressed that the time spent on reading or reading activities should not be reduced. Apart from the daily reading activity, other tasks are set so that there is time for all pupils to complete the task. This may be over a whole week, within the school week or over a weekend. It is part of the purpose of homework to enable children to plan their time so that they are able to pursue outside interests at the same time as completing the work set.

Reception	Reading daily about five minutes. Letter formation practice every day (5 mins) Discovery tasks linked to numeracy and/or literacy (10mins) About 1 hour per week.
Key stage 1	Reading daily ten minutes. Spelling ten minutes per week. Times tables ten minutes per week. Project based homework consolidating numeracy and literacy (20 mins) About 1.5 hours per week.
Key stage 2	Reading daily about ten minutes. Spelling 15 minutes per week. Times Tables 15 minutes per week. Number work and literacy task 20 minutes each. A book review twice a term and topic work as required. Topic work 30 minutes a week. About 2.5 hours per week.

Reading

One of the most vital activities is reading. For reception and key stage 1/2 pupils, the main homework activity will be regular, daily reading with parents and carers sharing books together. Throughout their time in school, children will be supported in their reading by the use of synthetic phonics. The very youngest children may be given flash cards depicting key words, together with a first picture book to take home to share. During their time in school, they may engage in guided reading, shared reading, reading to themselves, listening to an adult read or, if they are fluent readers, reading on their own in the presence of an adult for a period of time. The book should be talked about, new words discussed and pictures and characters enjoyed together.

Reading practice and listening to others read continues to be essential throughout the primary years. Younger children may be doing this while reading a school reading book or a storybook from home; older children may be reading a reference book for a science or history project.

Spellings, punctuation and other literacy tasks

Children will be given spellings on a weekly basis from year 1 onwards. In the early years, the children are given a variety of words to learn, ranging from topic words, high frequency words (I, am, when, there, the, said, etc) and letter strings taken from the literacy framework. By the time children enter key stage 2, the high frequency words should be known both for reading and spelling. Topic words and letter strings are now focused upon.

Throughout the school, children are grouped according to ability, therefore there are a number of different spelling groups in each class. Some words may be common to more than one group. We use the 'look, cover, say, write, check' method for spellings (see appendix). Other appropriate tasks for year 3 onwards include the use of correct punctuation, book reviews and word exercises.

Numeracy

Children in years 1 and 2 may be given numeracy tasks, as appropriate, to support or extend classroom work. Finding buttons with 2, 3, 4 or more holes, collecting weight labels off cans, finding different length ribbons or string, are possible activities. Children in year 1 may be asked to learn all the sets of numbers that add up to 10, or year 2 children learn their 2x or 5x tables etc to support work already introduced in class. Older children may be given more formal, often written, tasks in addition to learning or revising their tables. By years 5 and 6 there will be more challenging tasks, such as investigations, set for the week or over the weekend.

Topic related work

Throughout the school, children may be asked, on occasion, to carry out work related to their topic. This will involve a variety of tasks including the bringing in of useful objects for display, filling out a questionnaire, conducting a survey in the child's home, preparing an illustration or referring to the local library. The school has the benefit of 29 story sacks for the use of the reception and key stage 1 children. They are not part of the compulsory curriculum but do provide a wealth of opportunities for valuable discussion and reading at home. For those children whose reading level is beyond the books offered, we suggest that frequent and regular trips to the public library be made to encourage children to select from a wide range of different authors.

Older, confident readers are given termly book lists to encourage them to extend their reading in terms of author and genre. Children in years 3–6 are asked to review two of these titles for homework each term. Younger children may be asked to complete a book review as appropriate.

Older children, particularly those in years 5 and 6, will gradually be given more demanding work. This may include pupils:

- Finding out information.
- Reading in preparation for lessons.
- Preparing oral presentations.
- Drafting and redrafting written work.
- Producing a final presentation
- More traditional written assignments.

Resources

Children require a book bag to keep their reading book clean and to carry the reading record book to and from school. The reading record book is to be used by parents and teachers to record comments

about the reading progress every time they read. The school, with regard to reading during school time, uses various abbreviations. Guided reading (GR) indicates a child has read out loud as part of a group with his or her teacher or in some cases a teaching assistant. Individual reading (IR) shows that a child has been heard to read on a one-to-one basis by an adult. If that adult is a teacher, a teaching assistant or a trained volunteer then a comment is made. The parent or carer making an appropriate comment on the child's performance indicates home reading prefaced by HR. All entries are dated and initialled or signed.

For other forms of homework such as spelling or topic work, younger pupils are given a separate book, which is kept in the book bag. The older pupils have separate homework and spelling books. Their homework tasks are collected at school in a named folder to ensure work is not lost. Some work is, of course, stuck into other books when required. Parents should check the homework book or diary to see what work is required and when it is needed back in school.

How parents can help to support children

- Provide somewhere peaceful for children to work without the distractions of television, other family members and pets.
- Provide a suitable place, equipped with a comfortable chair, clear table space, good light.
- Provide encouragement and support to children when they require it.
- Support the school in explaining to children that homework is valued and aids learning.
- Encourage pupils and praise them when homework is completed.
- Be actively involved in the homework of younger children in particular.

How the school can help to support parents

There will be many parents who want to help their children but are unsure whether they are using the right method, or the one that is used in the classroom. Some help is given in the guidance on spelling, reading and numeracy. Workshops can be arranged to support parents in both literacy and numeracy methods. Where parents or carers find it difficult to create a homework environment, the school will make arrangements for lunchtime working or immediately after school in the homework club, if appropriate collection arrangements can be made.

Mrs Manners is a teacher with designated responsibility for looked-after children and part of their role is to assist in advising these pupils on homework and in monitoring that the homework is completed where necessary.

Feedback for pupils from parents or carers and teachers

It is important that feedback is given to pupils as quickly as possible. This is given in a number of ways:

- Immediately by parents or carers.
- By discussion in class where homework is a part of the class work.
- Through tests such as tables or spellings.
- Through individual comment from the teacher on written assignments.
- By pupils reviewing the work done in small groups.

- Through presentation of homework in class and school assemblies.

Teachers are interested to know how children carried out activities, whether they were too hard/too easy/interesting etc. The reading record book (Communication Book in EY) is an ideal place for parents, carers and teachers to record any comments. Parents may also comment on whether the time allocation was appropriate or whether the activity was too short/too long. As with all school activity, parents are invited to discuss any queries with the class teacher, the key stage co-ordinator or the headteacher.