



The Polesworth School
ENSURING EXCELLENCE

Homework Policy

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Approved at SLT	May 2017
Approved at Governing Body	June 2017
Policy review cycle	Annual
Policy review date	June 2018

Homework Policy

Introduction

At The Polesworth School we set homework tasks for all our students. We do this because we believe that it can help students to achieve their potential more fully than if we simply relied on study conducted during the timetabled curriculum. There is clear evidence that successful students make progress when they embrace homework and where they take the opportunity to enjoy, consolidate and extend their learning. Through homework, students become flexible independent learners able to cope with the demands of a future working life.

Key Principles

Extensive meta-research conducted by the *Educational Endowment Foundation* reveals a number of key principles in the setting of homework which allow for that work to have the most significant impact. These principles underwrite this policy:

- homework is most effective when used as a “short and focused intervention” (e.g. in the form of a project or specific target connected with a particular element of learning);
- the most effective homework is an “integral part of learning”, rather than an add-on;
- there is an optimum amount of homework of “between 1 and 2 hours per school day (slightly longer for older students), with effects diminishing as the time that students spend on homework increases” beyond this point;
- it is important that “students are provided with high quality feedback on their work”.

(Educational Endowment Foundation, April 2017)

Principles into Practice

1. Years 7 and 8

a. Independent Learning Projects

A key component of the homework system for Years 7 and 8 is the Independent Learning Project. Independent Learning Projects (ILPs) are a series of structured tasks which are designed to encourage a degree of independence in the student. Students are expected to complete these tasks “under their own steam” and hand them in to their teachers at school. Through ILPs, students are encouraged to become more independent in their learning. Many ILPs require students to research information and to manage their time. These are valuable life skills and ones which are prominent in the National Curriculum.

The tasks follow a set timetable throughout the school year and are available through the MyChild parent portal. Each ILP begins with a cover page which gives brief details of what the project is about, what needs to be done, the hand-in date, etc. Students are free to use computers and printers on the school site if any issues of access to computers or printers arise.

Students complete one ILP on one subject per week. In this way we aim to make homework clear for students and parents. In any given week it is clear which ILP any child in Year 7 or 8 will be studying at home. The project is handed in during the relevant subject's next lesson after the ILP week.

The ILPs are of a set length. A Year 7 student should spend 1 hour on ILP homework in a week; a Year 8 student should spend 2 hours. Some students may choose to spend longer on a project and they may if they wish. However, this is not an expectation of the school. Students should aim to complete their projects within the specified time. One of the ways in which the projects encourage independence is by getting students to plan their work to fit the time available.

b. Short task homeworks

In addition to ILPs, students in Years 7 and 8 will receive other homework tasks. These will be set by individual class-teachers and are designed to extend and reinforce the learning which takes place in the classroom - as "short and focused interventions". There is, therefore, no 'homework timetable' so as to allow for flexibility so that work is an "integral part of learning". Tasks will vary from subject to subject but the following general principles apply:

- All homework set should have a deadline of at least three days. As a general rule, homework is not set for collection the following day.
- Each piece of homework should take about 30 minutes to complete. This guideline falls within the parameters of the EEF research in terms of the total amount of time that students should usefully spend on homework over a week.
- High quality feedback is provided when students produce homework tasks. This feedback is given in line with the school's *Assessment Policy*. Verbal feedback is possible and valuable.

2. Years 9, 10 and 11

Homework in Years 9, 10 and 11 is also set according to the principles found in the EEF research:

1. **The school does not impose a homework time table on each day of the week. Homework is set on the day which is most appropriate so as to be an “integral part of learning” (EEF Toolkit). All homework set should have a deadline of at least three days.** As a general rule, homework is not set for collection the following day. This gives students the time to balance other subject needs and to time manage effectively. It also means that the school does not need to produce unworkable timetables. Only on rare occasions is it necessary to set work which requires evidence the next day.
2. **There is no exact set length for each piece of homework** but, as a ‘rule of thumb’ the following guidelines are set:

English, mathematics and science	2-3 hours per fortnight
All other subjects	90 minutes per fortnight
Total	13 ½ hours - 16 ½ hours per fortnight

This amount is likely to be higher in the lead up to controlled assessments and examinations and in the cases of those courses which are coursework-intensive.

These guidelines fall within the parameters of the EEF research.

3. **A variety of types of homework is set.** It is recognised that non-written assignments are just as essential and valuable to good learning progress as a piece of writing set to be handed in on a particular date. Wider reading and note-making are crucial and in some subjects there is a significant written element.

The types of tasks that students undertake include:

- I. extended work - sustained writing;
- II. research, including use of internet, surveys or market research;
- III. prepare work to be completed in class, e.g. read an article, make notes, etc;
- IV. private reading;
- V. study and learn notes/vocabulary;
- VI. drafting and redrafting work;
- VII. watch or listen to particular TV or radio programmes;
- VIII. collect information from newspapers, etc;
- IX. projects;
- X. preparation for presentations;
- XI. artistic/creative tasks, e.g. the preparation of visual or sound stimulus;
- XII. practising skills/concepts learned during the lesson, e.g. exam questions;

- XIII. tasks which involve parents or other adults, e.g. interviews, testing vocabulary;
 - XIV. an opportunity to provide the teacher with feedback about a topic eg. notes, report-back preparation, self-assessments;
 - XV. revision in preparation for a test or assessment;
 - XVI. individual and group tasks.
4. **High quality feedback is provided when students produce homework tasks.** This feedback is given in line with the school's *Assessment Policy*. Verbal feedback is possible and valuable.

Homework in Years 12 and 13

Sixth Form students must become autonomous - or independent - learners who can manage their time, solve problems, demonstrate higher order thinking skills and meet new challenges. This is absolutely crucial, not only for Advanced Level study, but in order to make the transition to Higher Education or the world of employment.

The demands of Advanced Level Study

Courses at AS and full A Level are extremely intensive and students can not expect to fulfil their potential without devoting a considerable number of hours each week to private study and homework. Sixth Form students are given the responsibility for organising and managing their own time so that all work deadlines are met and they are expected to develop strong independent work and study skills.

When students register and sign the contract for their A Level courses in The Polesworth School Sixth Form @Tomlinson Hall, they accept our private study and homework policy.

As a rough guide, every hour spent in the classroom should be matched by another hour spent in private study.

Private study time and homework tasks encourage students to develop good independent work and study practices, reinforce knowledge and skills learned in class, enable teachers to assess a student's progress and identify possible areas for improvement and give students the opportunity to read more widely around their subjects and pursue their own academic interests. Students are also expected to use homework and study time to complete the action points arising from staff marking and feedback on their work.

Coursework: Some subjects require students to complete coursework assignments or portfolios which form part of the final grades awarded at either AS, full A Level or both. In order to access the higher grades, students must spend many hours researching, planning, developing and producing their coursework. This is what makes advanced level coursework very different from that done at GCSE or Level 2.

For those students who intend to move on to Higher Education, developing good independent working habits in the Sixth Form are a must. Students will not gain the top A Level grades without putting in the hours at home or in private study in school during the day, reading around their subjects, making notes and extending their thinking. Potential university students need to demonstrate these skills and schools are asked to comment on a student's independent work and study skills in the academic reference.

External examinations in both Years 12 and 13 take place at the end of the year in May/June. For those students taking reformed A Level subjects which do not require them to sit the AS examinations, internal assessments will take place at the end of July. There is a real squeeze on teaching time and if students do not work on their own, then they will not cover course requirements in sufficient depth or detail to secure the higher grades which are designed to stretch and challenge students.

What can students expect?

Taking a subject at Level 3 in the Sixth Form involves 10 hours a fortnight of designated curriculum time; this includes 1 hour of timetabled independent study time per subject. During lessons teachers will cover the required examination syllabus content and will set homework and extension tasks on a regular basis over and above this allocation of time. Sometimes teachers will arrange extra after-school lessons or revision classes or lunch-time workshops to ensure that students are fully prepared for examinations and students should take full advantage of these.

Assignments and tasks set for homework in Years 12 and 13 will be many and varied. Not all will be written tasks; not all will be formally marked. Students must realise that non-written assignments are just as essential and valuable to good learning progress as a piece of writing set to be handed in on a particular date and marked! Wider reading and note-making are crucial and in some subjects there will be a heavy essay commitment. If students fail to complete homework, then they are jeopardising their own chances of examination success.

The types of tasks that students can routinely expect to undertake will include:

- Essays
- Notes
- Observations
- Calculations
- Wider reading
- Experiments
- Research
- Revision

- Preparation for debate/discussion/the next lesson
- Planning a presentation
- Preparing Powerpoint presentations
- Working on a part of the syllabus to teach or feed back to the rest of the class
- Preparing resources
- Thinking
- Artwork
- Reports
- Recordings
- Mini productions/performances/video clips
- Short answer questions
- Extended coursework assignments
- Practical work
- Case studies
- Data analysis and response
- Past exam paper practice
- Textbook exercises
- Completing action points arising from marking, feedback, assessments or examinations.

There is no set homework timetable in the Sixth Form as students need to become more flexible in their work and study routines. Teachers generally, but not always, give a week or sometimes more for the completion of tasks which means that students must plan and manage their time sensibly. However, it must be accepted that at certain times of the year there may be considerable pressure on students, especially if they take a number of subjects that demand coursework.

Expectations

Students will ensure that:

- homework tasks are completed to the best of their abilities;
- homework is presented on time and in the correct format. Failure to complete homework tasks will incur sanctions in line with the school's *Behaviour Policy*.

Teachers will ensure that:

- homework is set for all classes in line with this Homework Policy;
- students are told exactly what is expected from their homework and how they can achieve success;
- students' homework is marked and assessed in accordance with the school Assessment Policy;
- rewards are given in line with the school Behaviour Policy when students produce very good homework and/or display progress in their learning, e.g. VIVOs.

Heads of Departments/Subject Leaders will ensure that:

- homework is set for all classes in the department in line with this Homework Policy;
- students' homework in the subject is marked and assessed in accordance with the school Assessment Policy.

Key Stage Co-ordinators (where applicable) will, as directed by the Head of Department, assist the Head of Department in ensuring that:

- homework is set for all classes in the department in line with this Homework Policy;
- students' homework in the subject is marked and assessed in accordance with the school Assessment Policy.

Lead Practitioners (where applicable) will:

- assist the Head of Department in ensuring the quality of homework, including ILPs, and particularly that all homework set promotes student progress;
- advise and assist teachers in the relevant departments in setting and assessing student homework which will promote student progress.

Raising Standards Leaders will ensure that:

- homework is set for all classes in the cluster in line with this Homework Policy;
- students' homework in the cluster is marked and assessed in accordance with the school Assessment Policy;
- they evaluate the implementation of the policy and provide feedback on how homework across the school can be further developed.

The Strategic Leadership Team will ensure that:

- homework in each linked cluster is conducted in line with school policy;
- students, parents and governors are made aware of the school's expectations regarding homework.