

The New School at West Heath

Policy on Work at Home

Introduction

Many of our students arrive with very negative feelings towards education. They have, in the main, experienced a lot of failure and unhappiness in the world of education. Often they have given up and perceive themselves as unintelligent and as "no-hopers". They often tell us so. They often avoid work as a strategy to avoid being seen as failures both at home and school. Homework has therefore to be seen within the broader context of restoring positive feelings towards education in general.

The Homework policy at our school is such that students are not pressured to take huge amounts home as, for most, their experience of school and in particular the process of learning leaves them lacking confidence to work independently. Additionally many students are also poorly motivated and find the prospect of homework so daunting that it further impinges on their willingness or ability to engage with the curriculum.

We want our students to appreciate that learning is part of life and not just something for the years of compulsory schooling. We would like them to understand that they can learn much from the world of home and recreation, their local community and social interactions and through experiences of life – both success and failure. This takes time.

For those who have made some progress towards becoming independent and self-motivated learners, work at home can be of immense value. It helps to break down the artificial barriers between formal and informal learning and cultivates interests, habits and skills that will serve them well long after they have left us.

The implementation of this policy is therefore a matter of sensitive professional judgement. Students are treated equally, in that they all receive according to their needs and capacity. For some this will mean a minimal amount of homework with plenty of latitude. For others it will mean a generous helping of stimulating and thought provoking work served with encouragement and high expectations!

Aims & Objectives

- To provide opportunities to *complete* work begun in lessons to a high standard.
- To provide opportunities to *extend* work begun in lessons by further reflection, research and follow-up.

- To provide opportunities for *practice* and *consolidation* of skills, knowledge and understanding
- To provide opportunities for careful *preparation* for work done in school
- To provide opportunities for independent enquiry and learning and for cultivation of the discipline of study

Strategies

Work set to be done at home should be easier to reinforce success and less demanding than when students have support and instruction from a teacher.

Those students for whom homework is a realistic and appropriate expectation are issued with a planner in which to record homework as it is given. There is space for a due by date and to tick when done. Parents are encouraged to sign on completion of homework set. Students are encouraged to keep their planners with them at all times and staff should exercise vigilance to ensure that students *use* their planners to record the setting of homework. Students who fail to bring their planners are given a substitute sheet that should be copied up.

There is a homework timetable that indicates when homework is set. Students are told that they may organise the doing of homework on other days provided that the due by date is met. A copy of this timetable is provided for the planner and one is also sent home to parents/carers.

Students who complete the work set for home should be given lots of praise. It is important to acknowledge the effort made - quite apart from the quality of the work itself. Merits may be used to reward such effort.

Students need to receive the message that they are doing the work for themselves. If it is not done, they are depriving themselves rather than the teacher. Therefore the use of sanctions is inappropriate for students who fail to do their work at home, though they certainly need to hear the message that they would be better off had it been done. This approach will, in the long run, stand more chance of bringing about the change we are seeking. The key is encouragement rather than demand.

The discipline of doing work at home is often one of the first targets set.

Special Circumstances

Parents also share the responsibility for work done at home. They are our partners. However, it can be counter-productive when there are unhappy relationships at home. In such cases parents prefer not to provoke ructions by making homework an issue.

Some homes are not conducive to homework. In such cases staff have to be flexible and tolerant. There may be no suitable room with a table and chair to work free from interruptions and noise. Sometimes students may need

particular support. On one occasion a desk was provided for a student to work on at home. There is also the facility of a homework club during lunchtimes on request. This is particularly useful for GCSE students completing coursework.

Our response to pupils not doing homework is flexible and decided in relation to the particular students needs and capabilities. In these cases the parents will be involved in the discussion and our aim will be to help cultivate a homework routine even if initially the steps are small. See the appendix for a copy of the letter sent to parents of students from whom an appropriate homework response is not forthcoming.

Staffing & Resources

Some of our students are fortunate enough to have a computer at home. This is an additional resource and students are encouraged to use IT and to bring their work in on disk or send it to the teacher attached to an E-mail. For further comments see the IT policy.

External Links

Parents, as discussed above, are our partners and we rely on them to exert their influence in the home. We encourage our students to use the local library for research material.

Work at Home	
This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies: Curriculum, Subject Policies	
Appendices: Letter to parents for homework defaulters	
Monitoring of Policy Implementation is the responsibility of: The Senior Leadership Team	
Lead responsibility:	Vice Principal - Education
Relevant Legislation:	To be detailed in the next release
Annual Policy Review Required:	Yes / No
Approved by: S.S. Committee	Date approved:
Ratified by: Trustees	Date ratified: 10/2003
Reviewed – no changes	Date:
Reviewed – with revisions	Date:
Revision No.	1.1

Appendix: Letter to parents for homework defaulters

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I am writing to inform you that homework is being set regularly as part of your son/daughters academic course. Unfortunately there has been a lack of work being returned to the member of staff for marking and recording. Please see the details below. We would appreciate your co-operation in encouraging your son/daughter to complete such tasks in the future and hand in the work as requested to the appropriate member of staff.

If you would like to discuss this further then please contact the member of staff concerned.

Subject

To date has completed pieces from a possible

Signed
(Subject teacher)

Subject

To date has completed pieces from a possible

Signed
(Subject teacher)

Subject

To date has completed pieces from a possible

Signed
(Subject teacher)