

# Queen's College, London

## *Homework policy*



## Introduction

Homework plays an essential part both in the curriculum and the educational development of the pupil. In this document, the term 'homework' refers to any school work done out of normal lesson time, including work done at school in Private Study periods.

## Aims of homework

The aims of homework are:

- to give pupils the opportunity to work independently and to take responsibility for their own development;
- to enable pupils to accomplish work that is more appropriately completed outside the classroom environment.

## Research into effective homework

The Homework Policy has been developed through both a mixture of experience and evidence from research. Research shows that, at its best, homework has an impact rating of five months additional progress (over five years). Importantly, the most effective homework tasks are those which are integrated with the lesson and not an 'add on'.

It is also important that individual feedback on learning should be linked to homework so that pupils see homework as a normal part of their learning. For example, classwork feedback might link to a homework task or vice versa.

## Characteristics of effective homework

The research evidence is clear regarding what makes effective homework. This states that:

- Planned and focused activities are more beneficial than homework which is more regular but may be routine or not linked with what is being learned in class.
- Homework should not be used as a punishment or penalty for poor performance (i.e. homework tasks should not include completion of classwork which pupils have found difficult to access during the lesson).
- Homework which includes a variety of tasks with different levels of challenge is beneficial.
- Pupils should receive specific and timely feedback on homework.
- It is essential to make the purpose of homework clear to pupils (e.g. to increase a specific area of knowledge, or fluency in a particular area).

Good homework tasks are, therefore, likely to have as their objectives one or more of the following:

- to allow for individual deliberation, speculation and problem-solving;
- to enable pupils to develop their ability to express themselves in writing;
- to practise techniques and to do exercises designed to reinforce skills learned in class;
- to read, research or prepare for later lessons (flipped learning);
- to learn, memorise and revise;
- to give pupils the experience of planning their own work schedules and to encourage self-discipline and the ability to cope with pressure;
- to complete work over a longer time span than can be given in lessons (possibly using several homework slots but with careful scaffolding and clear expectations of what should be attempted in each homework slot, particularly for School classes).

## Responsibility

The overall responsibility for managing and monitoring the homework policy lies with the Principal and the Deputy Head - Academic. The Assistant Head - Teaching and Learning, Heads of Department, Heads of Section and Form Tutors also need to monitor the effectiveness of the work that is being set and the length of time needed to complete the work.

Setting, accomplishing, monitoring, assessing and recording the results of the assessment of homework require the co-operation of teachers, pupils and parents.

## The role of parents

Parents can be of great help in encouraging pupils to accomplish homework properly, both by providing a suitable environment for the work to be done and by supervising and monitoring the work of their daughters. In particular, it is hoped that parents will encourage pupils to complete homework in the allocated time. It is recognised that, without good communications, homework can be a source of friction in the three-way relationship between parent, pupil and school.

Parents can also usefully help pupils accomplish their work where appropriate. In some cases, for example in help with revision, parental help can be given as a matter of course. In cases where their contribution might confuse the teacher's assessment of the pupil's achievement, parents should record such help on the work or in a note to the teacher. Furthermore, external tutors should be discouraged from helping pupils with homework tasks as this can give class teachers an inaccurate representation of pupil learning and

makes it difficult for pupils to develop the independent learning skills which will ultimately allow them to succeed academically. Should an external tutor provide any such help, this should be recorded on the work to enable teachers to gain a full understanding of the pupil's understanding and ability.

## **Recording time spent on homework**

From September 2022, all homework assignments will be recorded in the 'Task' area of the online Firefly platform. As such, pupils will have an accurate record of the homework which has been set (even if they miss the lesson when homework was set) and parents can also more effectively monitor homework.

Pupils may also record tasks set in their homework diaries and so parents should refer to these for specific information about homework assignments: these details may refer to textbook-based tasks, paper-based resources distributed in class or task areas on the Virtual Learning Environment, Firefly. In the School and the Junior College, homework diaries will contain a copy of the homework timetable, showing the maximum time allocated for each subject and the day of the week on which each subject has its homework time allocated (which will usually, but not always, be the same day as that subject's lesson).

Pupils in the School should record the time taken on each homework task in their homework diary. The signature of the parent at the end of the week is taken by the Form Tutor or Co-Form Tutor in the School as a verification of the amounts entered by the pupil for the time she has taken.

Pupils may seek help from other pupils in their class if they are unsure about the requirements of a specific homework task. However, it is absolutely vital that pupils understand that copying another pupil's work constitutes a serious act of plagiarism and will be sanctioned accordingly. The issue of plagiarism in all of its forms will continue to be a focus in PSHE and during study skill sessions in 2022-23.

## **Amount of homework**

The amount of time allocated for homework is decided by the Deputy Head – Academic, in consultation with the Principal, the Assistant Head - Teaching and Learning, the Heads of Section and the Heads of Department.

Research into homework shows that one to one and a half hours of homework is the optimum total time for pupils in the School (Years 7-9), increasing, but only by a little, for the Junior College (Years 10-11). Importantly, the impact rating diminishes if too much time is devoted to homework. Taking this into consideration, in the Senior College (Years 12-13), departments are advised to set around 4-5 hours of homework per week per subject. A-level teachers should give guidance on independent learning tasks which pupils can do to consolidate and extend their learning if less homework has been set during a particular week. Pupils in the Senior College should plan their time carefully and make full use of time when they do not have scheduled lessons on their timetable, in addition to working at home: this is also true for Junior College pupils who have timetabled Private Study lessons.

The homework timetable for the School and the Junior College is published at the beginning of the academic year. The times allocated are informed, as much as is practicable, by the advice offered from research into homework.

Both the total amount of time allocated to homework and its variability increase in the Junior and Senior College. Variability is a natural consequence of pupils' having a choice of subjects and the nature of examination assessment in their subjects. This may be particularly pronounced in GCSE and A-level subjects with a significant non-examination assessment component (e.g. Art, Drama, Music, Dance).

## **Thrive Focus Week**

Each term, a Thrive Focus Week will be scheduled during which no homework will be set. The aim of this week is to allow pupils to rest, spend quality time with their friends, read, do more sport, and take part in a number of Thrive well-being activities, suggested by the Senior Tutor. The Thrive Focus Week will apply to all pupils in Years 7-12. (Year 13 may still be set homework, reflecting the heavier A-level course content which needs to be covered.)

Teachers must ensure not to set any homework during the Thrive Focus Week, including revision for future tests.

The timing of each Thrive Focus Week will be planned carefully, aiming to ensure that they take place during the natural pinch points of the term when pupils would most benefit from a break in homework. The dates will be agreed by Heads of Section/SLT and teaching staff will be notified with a term's notice to allow them to plan accordingly.

## Guidance for teachers when setting homework

The homework timetable is designed to provide pupils with a range of homework from different subjects and homework that takes a reasonable amount of time to complete. The following guidance should help to support both teachers and pupils with managing homework:

- It is essential that teaching staff follow the homework timetable, both in terms of the day when homework should be set and the time allocation. Teachers should only set homework for their classes on the allocated day or days for their subject.
- Teaching staff should not save up homework slots to set a larger amount less frequently. Related to this, teachers must not set open-ended, unstructured projects which run over several successive homework slots. If departments wish to set meaningful extended studies which require more than one homework slot, there should be clear structure given to pupils and expectations of what should be completed in each slot. Teachers should check pupil progress throughout any extended study task.
- Homework does **not** need to be set on every occasion it is scheduled on the homework timetable: it should only be set when beneficial.
- It is essential that teachers build in sufficient time within their lessons to explain homework tasks and ensure that pupils are able to ask questions/seek clarification before the lessons ends.
- Teachers should not set homework to revise for tests if these tests are being scheduled largely to gather data for parents' evenings, interim grades or reports: the timing of tests should be informed by departmental curriculum plans and schemes of works, not the reporting or parents' evening schedule.
- It is not possible for subjects to swap or share homework slots. If, in exceptional circumstances and not more often than once per term, a subject without a homework slot in the School requires a slot on an ad hoc basis then the relevant Head of Department should in the first instance ask the Deputy Head (Academic) if this can be arranged.
- Within the School, homework should not be set that is required to be handed in the following day.
- When giving homework to Class 3 pupils during their first half term at the College, teachers will be mindful that pupils are managing the transition to being at a new school with different work routines. They will be taking a new and possibly much longer journey to school: this means they may well be tired and so could take longer than expected to complete tasks

## Holiday work

Pupils in the Junior College and Senior College (Years 10–13) can expect to be set work to do over the holiday. In the School (Years 7–9), however, no holiday work should be set.

## Late homework in the School and the Junior College

Pupils are expected to adhere to homework deadlines and therefore failure to hand in homework on time is not acceptable. If a pupil knows in advance that she is unable to hand in a piece of work on time, she should inform the teacher, either directly or via a parent; failure to do so will usually result in a sanction. The College and parents should work together to ensure that all pupils reach their maximum potential in all their subjects and manage their work successfully and good and effective communication between home and the College is paramount.

### Monitoring and managing late homework: roles and responsibilities

| <b>Member of staff</b>            | <b>Role and responsibility</b>   |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| <b>Teaching staff</b>             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss with the pupil concerned why the homework is late and agree a new deadline.</li> <li>• Record late homework on SchoolBase, using the 'Day Book' function, by the end of the day. Give one sentence to summarise nature of homework and any context (eg X has promised to hand this in tomorrow).</li> <li>• If a pupil has been unwell and /or absent from school then please negotiate with the pupil about any outstanding homework and bear in mind that she will also have class work and homework to catch up in all her subjects. It may be advisable to discuss this with the pupil's Form Tutor.</li> <li>• Record late homework in your mark book.</li> <li>• If the piece of work has not been completed by the next lesson, a further entry should be made on SchoolBase.</li> <li>• Discuss with or email Head of Department and relevant Form Tutor and Co-Form Tutor if you have ongoing concerns about a pupil or teaching group.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Form Tutor / Co-Form Tutor</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Check SchoolBase records of pupils in form group on a weekly basis in order to see if there are any recurring patterns (eg a pupil routinely forgetting homework across several subjects or a pupil missing homework deadlines for one subject repeatedly).</li> <li>• If there are three missing homeworks over a one week period, or using your professional judgement and discretion, you notice a recurring pattern of difficulty meeting homework deadlines which does not fall neatly within this</li> </ul>  |



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|---------------------------------------|---|
|                                       | <p>time scale, contact parents by email or by phone to flag up concerns or initiate discussion. It may be appropriate to request a meeting with parents.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Record all email or phone contact or details of meetings on SchoolBase as a secure note.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Year Tutors / Heads of Section</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If the above interventions do not yield improvement, then the relevant Year Tutor or Head of Section will contact parents and meet with pupil to agree a programme of support, structure and close monitoring to help with meeting deadlines.</li> <li>This programme may include, at the discretion of the Year Tutor / Head of Section: placing the pupil on homework report; compulsory and logged attendance at the after-school Study Club in the Library; ad hoc drop-in sessions with Year Tutor / Head of Section / other named member of staff to monitor homework organisation (this latter approach may be more appropriate for pupils in the Junior or Senior College).</li> </ul> |
| <b>Senior Leadership Team</b>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If there are still ongoing concerns about homework punctuality - where the above measures have not resulted in improvement – pupils and parents will meet with one or more of the Deputy Head (Academic) / Senior Tutor / Principal.</li> </ul>  |

## Illness and long absences

In cases of a lengthy absence from College, parents are consulted throughout by the Head of Section and/or Year Tutor. Arrangements are made either for an extension to the homework deadlines, which usually commence on the pupil's return to school or for the regular transportation, or collection from College, of homework during the period of non-attendance.

In the case of short absences, e.g. a week or less, we advise parents to make sure that their daughter recovers fully and on her return to College she can make arrangements with her subject teachers to catch up. Pupils should be proactive in their approach in catching up on work missed, particularly those pupils in Years 10-13.

If a pupil is able to do some work at home then they should use Firefly to complete homework tasks which have been set for the class. It may not always be possible for subject teachers to provide suitable tasks to be completed at home, in which case the pupil should meet with those teachers when she returns to College to agree suitable catch up tasks.