

Scoil San Treasa

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HOMEWORK POLICY

Introductory Statement and Rationale:

This policy was redrafted during the 2018-19 school year in the light of experience and on the basis that the existing policy/approaches were due for review. It reflects considerations around current developments in education – including curriculum methodologies and approaches - and developments in various education-related matters.

The consultation process regarding this review involved teachers, pupils, parents and Board of Management.

It is intended that our homework policy will give clarity to the whole school community about the purpose of homework and what is expected in broad terms at each class level.

Our mission statement underpins our thinking with regard to homework:

At Scoil San Treasa, our mission is the provision of primary education of the highest quality for all our pupils in a happy, safe, Christian environment. While we value high academic achievement, the social, personal and moral development of our pupils is of primary importance and we view the school as a learning organisation which is open to change and innovation while it cherishes the best educational, cultural and religious traditions of our society. Acknowledging that their parents are the primary educators of our children, we are inspired by a shared vision of excellence and we espouse a partnership approach in its pursuit.

Of particular relevance with regard to our homework policy are

- the value placed on high academic achievement,
- the importance afforded to the social, personal and moral development of our pupils and
- the role of parents as primary educators of their children.

Why does my child get homework?

Children get homework so that they can

- practise and reinforce the work already done in class, thus building up skill and competence in various areas
- work independently, develop self-discipline and develop a good work ethic
- avail of opportunities to use non-school resources (parents and others, library, environment, practical materials, media and internet, for example...in an appropriately supervised fashion)
- avail of additional opportunities to develop their learning further in areas of exceptional ability and/or specific learning need
- share and discuss with their parents the sort of work that they are doing in school, thus providing parents with day-to-day opportunities to monitor and support their progress, understanding and all around development. This is fundamental in engaging parents as partners in their child's education in an active way.

What type of homework should be expected?

- Homework will come in many forms, reflecting the multi-faceted nature of how children learn. It may consist of reading, oral, aural, written, memorisation, mental and/or practical work or physical tasks.
- Reading (*including reading aloud*) and discussion of reading material is a core element of homework. This serves to develop fundamental literacy skills during the crucial primary school years, helps to foster good comprehension and critical thinking skills, furthers learning in cross-curricular ways and lays the foundation for a wonderful lifelong pastime and interest.
- Generally speaking, aspects of Gaeilge, English and Mathematics are assigned on most evenings and work on other subject areas is assigned as the teacher sees fit.
- In the early years, while the focus is predominantly on simple literacy/numeracy-based work, home-school link material such as that related to the 'Grow in Love' programme (Religious Education), Maths programme and SPHE scrapbook, for example, may be drawn on to facilitate parents in supporting and enriching their child/ren's learning. Variations in the homework (e.g. simple tasks) will reflect the broad nature of the curriculum and the importance of inculcating positive learning dispositions.
- Some homework assignments may need to be completed by the next day; others - including projects, for example - may span across a few days or longer. This is a useful exercise in many respects, including with regard to preparation for transition to secondary school where different subjects are often timetabled for different days etc.
- Some homework assignments may be of a medium to long-term nature e.g. project work, model-making, drafting & redrafting stories or articles. Again, this type of approach has many benefits, including developing a child's skills around planning and time management.
- By agreement with parent, supplementary assignments/activities may be given for children who may have exceptional needs/ability in some areas.

How much homework should my child expect?*

- **Junior Infants/Senior Infants** – 15 minutes with parent.
- **First Class** – 20-30 minutes with parent.
- **Second Class** – 30-40 minutes with parent.
- **Third Class** – 30-40 minutes
- **Fourth Class** – 40 minutes approx.
- **Fifth Class** – 50 minutes approx.
- **Sixth Class** – 60 minutes approx.

Usually, homework is assigned on the following days: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday...with Friday being free of homework. However, specific reading tasks (short) are regularly assigned to some of the infant/junior classes over the weekend – in a bid to optimise the child's potential for literacy learning at this key stage of early/emerging reading skills. Approaching such tasks in a positive and relaxed fashion has many far-reaching benefits for your child. Additionally, all parents are advised to encourage their children read generally in the course of the weekend. Remember: reading to your child can be very beneficial also.

*It is important to note that these are suggested target times. In practice, the time taken will depend on the individual child. Please consult with your child's class teacher if you have a query/concern in this regard. If the homework appears to be taking over and above the time guidelines, you may choose to allow your child to do what they can on that day within the suggested timeframe and then write a brief note in the child's homework journal for the teacher's attention.

Please bear in mind that homework may be differentiated in cases where warranted.

How can the parent help?

As a parent, you have a really important role to play in supporting your child's learning. The following tips are designed to help you to help your child. (These tips include material drawn from a National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) handout and the National Parents' Council (NPC) booklet.)

- Make sure the child is not hungry or very tired when starting on homework. Provide a snack and or rest before expecting the child to start homework.
- Have a specific time and place for homework. Bear this in mind when planning other activities for your child. Stick to this routine consistently and explain it to the child. If necessary, use the clock to show how long the homework will take. Ensure that your child has a quiet environment in which to work. TV/Playstation/various devices etc. should be switched off.
- Ensure your child has all the necessary books and equipment e.g. pens, pencils, eraser, sharpener etc. before beginning.
- Try and remain calm and positive with your child. Praise and encourage your child throughout the homework session.
- Be nearby in case of questions; be there to hear and support reading and to discuss the content of what is read
- Acknowledge and respect effort, honesty and enthusiasm.
- Acknowledge that your child will make mistakes and encourage them to check back over their work and to find and correct their own mistakes. Making mistakes is part of the learning process.
- For children with attention/reading difficulties, consider breaking homework into chunks with brief movement breaks.
- Depending on your child's age/needs, it may be helpful to have some supports available. For example, in some cases it may help to have a pre-written alphabet and number line (on card) at hand e.g. attached to the table. Provide counters/money for maths work where necessary. A 'mind map' may be of help when planning assignments.
- For writing exercises, if your child is becoming frustrated give help with writing the beginning of the sentence and encourage him/her to finish, or write some words and encourage him/her to fill in the blanks.
- Help your child to check back over his/her written work. Using editing symbols to help your child to self-correct can be helpful, depending on the age/ability level of the child. (It is planned that editing symbols will be made available in a separate appendix.)
- If your child is struggling to read a sentence, give them the word and move on.
- Keep the teacher informed of difficulties that your child may be having with homework, particularly if the homework seems to take a long time or if the child often has difficulty in certain areas.
- All parents should check their child's homework *and* sign their child's homework sheet (*infants*) journal (*first to sixth class*) daily.
- Alert your child's teacher to a change in home circumstances e.g. a new baby or illness that might have an impact on how your child approaches homework.
- Check out and engage with the resources and links on our school website, www.sstreasa.ie These resources include tips on using Gaeilge informally with your child, extension and enrichment activities around Mathematics, comprehension tips and suggested websites in various subject areas, for example. It is our intention to add to these resources over time.
- Parents have reported that they see merit in enhancing learning in various ways that suits their particular context and preferences...citing, for example: *board games to enhance socialisation, critical thinking and numeracy skills or discussion at home about parental experiences and topics related to their studies in school.*
- Be vigilant at all times around any homework associated with internet use. Children should not use the internet for any homework without parental supervision. Please refer to our Internet Acceptable Use Policy. Please engage with the internet safety resources on our website on a regular basis.

Miscellaneous notes:

- Following consultation with the parent body and the school community, a practice was established in the school whereby the SPHE scrapbook normally goes home with each child on a Thursday evening. This affords parents and children an opportunity to engage with matters relating to Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) together on a weekly basis. The child is permitted to keep the scrapbook at home until the following Monday if the parent so wishes, thus affording parent and child to have a relaxed discussion about a particular SPHE item in the course of the weekend. This initiative has proved popular to date. Please remember to sign and date the scrapbook each week.
- All children in infants, first class and second class are required to have a 'tuff-bag' (a type of zipped plastic folder - check with office or class teacher if unsure about this). We are fortunate to have a large bank of supplementary and parallel reading material for pupils at this level. So that the borrowing, recording and maintenance of these resources will run as smoothly as possible, these books are brought to and from school in the child's tuff-bag.
- Parents are encouraged to check their child's schoolbag regularly to ensure that it is not overloaded with unnecessary items. A frequent 'tidy-out' of the bag will help ensure that the bag does not get too heavy.
- Ideally, teachers like to check homework on a daily basis. However, with large class numbers it is not always possible to fully check all aspects of a child's homework each day. As children get older and learn to work independently, some items are checked less often. Some items of homework (and classwork) may be checked by children themselves under the direction of the teacher. This can sometimes be a useful part of the learning process for children.
- Parents are encouraged to support their child's learning by assisting them in editing projects such as book-writing or large-scale creative writing projects and in managing time with regard to co-curricular/extra-curricular pursuits.

Ratified by the Board of Management on 22nd January 2019