



**St John's C of E
Primary & Nursery School
Kingston**

Learning at Home Policy

Written: Nov 2014
Review: Nov 2017

John Hastings

Introduction

This policy was reviewed in November 2010 and included discussions with pupils through the school council, with parents through the Parent forum and with teaching staff and school governors. This document reflects the various views of the school community in providing a whole school policy on home learning and we would like to thank all those involved in the establishment of this policy. We acknowledge that there are varying views and opinions about the types, amount and effectiveness of homework. This policy tries to encompass some flexibility to allow for this, however, consistency is also important and we wish to offer this policy as a way of ensuring this.

Rationale

Learning at home is a very important part of a child's education and can add much to a child's development. We are keen to rename homework "learning at home" because we very much value the learning that comes from day to day experiences which are offered to our pupils by their families at home. The teachers may guide these experiences in some ways but we want to recognise and value the spontaneous and independent activities that happen in many homes and influence and lead the educational development of our pupils.

The Government made clear its commitment to home learning in the 1997 White Paper, "Excellence in Schools", where home learning was seen as an essential part of good education. Children benefit greatly from the mutual support of parents and teachers in encouraging them to learn both at home and at school. Activities undertaken at home can lead to establishing a successful dialogue between teachers and parents. One of the aims of our school is for children to develop as independent learners and we believe that by encouraging pupils to continue their learning at home, with the support and encouragement from their parent's or carers, children will develop these skills.

We also acknowledge the important role of play and free time in a child's growth and development. While more formal tasks are important, these should not prevent children from taking part in the wide range of out of school clubs and organisations that play an important part in the lives of many children. We are well aware that children spend more time at home than at school, and believe that they develop their skills, interests and talents to the full only when parents encourage them to make maximum use of the experiences and opportunities that are available outside of school.

Aims and Objectives

Part of our vision at St John's Primary School is to create good relationships between home and school. We believe that a strong partnership between school and home is at the heart of successful education. Regular, well-planned activities can:

- Enable pupils to make maximum progress in their academic and social development
- Help pupils develop the confidence and self-discipline needed to study on their own and preparing them for the requirements of secondary education
- Promote a partnership between home and school in supporting each child's learning
- Enable all aspects of the curriculum to be covered in sufficient depth
- Provide educational experiences not possible in school
- Consolidate and reinforce learning done in school and to allow children to practice skills taught in lessons
- Help children to develop good work habits for the future
- Provide opportunities for contact between pupils and their parents

- Help parents gain an insight into their children's learning at school
- Enable learning to be personalised to the interest of individual children
- Home learning activities should prove to be a positive experience in helping children to take a more active role in their own learning.

It is important to stress that although planned activities are important they should not constitute more of children's free time than self initiated activities.

Types of Activities/Home Learning

There is a wide range of possibilities. The following lists a few examples.

- Reading with a parent/ discussing text/ being read to at all ages
- A family visit to a local museum
- Reinforcing tasks from class
- Learning parts for an assembly/production/
- Physical activity including swimming for example.
- Playing games which develop a variety of skills and promote good social understanding
- Undertaking individual research for a project or personal interest
- Learning number facts [tables]
- Learning to ride a bicycle
- Practicing musical instruments
- Research using the internet [school cannot be held responsible for the content of the web sites not recommended by the teachers]
- Cooking, gardening, making things
- Explaining how things work
- Helping with household tasks
- Designing and creating activities helping children to use colour, paint, draw, stick, glue etc
- Taking responsibility for a task and then clearing away afterwards.

Whilst the school is keen to promote interaction between parents, carer's and their children, we also recognise the benefits of activities which have been organised by other agencies and organisations.

At school we will send tasks home with pupils linked to their age and development. The types of tasks will vary but in general, as children get older, the tasks will vary more in complexity and expectations of time spent on these tasks will increase. As a general guide about the types of tasks and to help ensure consistency the following table explores what the expectations for each year group might be. Please be aware that this is the tip of the ice-burg, as the home learning taking place in all sorts of spontaneous activities which far out weighs the benefit of these tasks.

Learning done at home should be handed in on time unless a letter giving good reasons is sent in by the parent/ carer. As they move through the school, we increase the amount of homework that we give the children. We expect children in Key Stage 1 to spend approximately one hour a week doing homework, although this may well include reading with a parent. We expect children in Years 3 and 4 to spend approximately 15–20 minutes per night on home tasks, and children in Years 5 and 6 to spend approximately 30 minutes per night. This is in line with the DfES guidelines that were issued in 1998.

At St John's school we would like to give parents and carer's the following guidelines

Tasks Suitable for Everyday Where Possible

- Daily reading with and to children of all ages. It is important that we do not underestimate the role which discussion about reading materials makes to all children. Even fluent readers will come across concepts and words which they do not understand. Through discussion we will ensure children do not form misconceptions. Practising number bonds for example times tables.
- Learning to spell words given by the teachers or words which are connected to own interests. This should be done in a meaningful context e.g. as part of a sentence or as a family of words with a common spelling rule.
- Occasional Tasks
- Covering books for thematic learning diaries.
- Investigating topics connected to themes from school or from own interest.
- Finishing tasks which need to be brought up to date for whatever reason.

Practical Advice for Parents/Carers

- Teachers will have explained the learning fully to the children and where appropriate will include a written explanation to help parents/carers understand expectations.
- Please ask your child to explain the task to you [this will demonstrate their understanding of what they have been asked to do] and then support them by having the relevant materials and resources
- Agree the time and a time frame and a place to work and try to work within it.
- Sometimes gentle persuasion will be needed to get the session underway.
- Do encourage good standards of presentation and ensure the work is given in on time.
- It may be tempting to complete the task for your child if he/she is finding it difficult, please resist the temptation and use it as an opportunity to clarify misconceptions, and inform the class teacher.
- If your child regularly runs out of time or finds the activity too hard, please let your class teacher know.
- If your child regularly finishes in less time than recommended again you may need to let the teacher know but check first that the work is of good quality and that the child has checked their own work to ascertain that it has been completed properly and that any extension activities have been completed.
- Please feel free to extend the task or change it slightly if you can see there is a need for this.
- Please stop if your child becomes distressed and find another calm time to return to the activity at a later stage. A discussion with the class teacher may help.
- Please don't let tasks get in the way of clubs, activities and your child's own interests. Help your child to see that time for more formal home learning tasks needs to be agreed.
- If your child completes a self initiated project at home or has some interesting news to share about out of school achievements please encourage them to share these with their friends and teachers at school. Show and Tell is a good opportunity for this.
- Please feel free to add written comments where this adds to the context of the work completed.
- If one week you find it difficult to complete any tasks due to circumstances beyond your control please do let us know rather than trying to rush the task and therefore making it unproductive.

Role of Pupil

The school council has been instrumental in surveying pupil's opinions about home learning and we have endeavoured to include these views in our policy.

A summary of this survey is included in the annex of this policy.

Role of School

When teachers set tasks for pupils to complete they will ensure that:

- At the beginning of each term our curriculum newsletter will contain information about the themes your child will be covering.
- The task is made clear to the children and, as far as possible, matched to their abilities. An example of the method being used [especially in maths] should be given as an example to help parents understand expectations.
- Time scale for completion is made clear and an adequate amount of time is allowed [including one weekend].
- Not all tasks can be marked in great detail, as this would be an impossible task on top of the ordinary class work that is completed each week, but tasks will be monitored and work of a high standard will be celebrated and rewarded.
- Where tasks have not been completed to a high enough standard they will be returned to the children for further work.
- When home tasks are not completed without any extenuating circumstances parents/carers will be informed.
- Tasks will be given consistently and in line with the policy agreed.
- House points will be awarded for high quality work and/ or effort.
- The class teacher is responsible for monitoring all tasks set for home and all other teachers working with pupils in any one class should refer to the teacher before setting any tasks for home completion.

Role of Parent

- Set time aside to have one to one time with your child to either read/ play a game/ complete a home learning task/ or support an activity at home.
- Encourage turn taking.
- Organise activities that support the curriculum covered in school.
- Encourage a time for calm completion of tasks and praise good study habits, allow time for your child to relax and unwind.
- Talk with your child about their learning in each task and what has been successful.

Equal Opportunity

We set tasks based on the age, ability and aptitude of our pupils. We recognise that for some pupils tasks will need to be differentiated to allow for their special needs. Also, we recognise that we will need to offer more support for pupils where home learning is more difficult or interrupted due to circumstances outside of the normal remit.

When difficult circumstances create a lack of opportunity for home learning activities children will be supported by TA s in allocated support time. Children will be given access to the computer where this is not possible at home.

Use of ICT

The use of ICT and the Internet has made a significant contribution to the amount of reference material available at home, and the ease and speed with which it can be accessed. However, our teachers expect their pupils to produce their own work, perhaps by editing something they have found, or by expressing it in their own words. The children are not achieving anything worthwhile by merely downloading and printing out something that has been written by somebody else. There are many websites containing highly educational material which can have a powerful effect on children's learning. Parents or carers are advised always to supervise their child's access to the Internet.

Approved by the Governing Body:

Signed Chair of Governors

Signed Headteacher

Date