

St Peter's Church of England Primary School Aylesford

Homework – A guide for parents

What is the purpose of homework?

It is of fundamental importance that we consider what value homework has as a learning tool. Homework will always be a contentious issue with some people believing that schools give too much homework and others thinking that we don't give enough.

There is the very sound argument that if the child is applying themselves fully and successfully at school, they should use the evenings and weekends to pursue their own interests, be they sport, art, music or simply learning the important skill of socialising with their friends. Further, for those families where both parents work and are late back to the family home, the evenings and weekends are crucial in providing an opportunity to bond as a family and to socialise together. Directing a hard working and academically successful child to spend extended periods of time on further academic study at the expense of these activities could be wasteful.

Government Guidelines

The government has provided guidelines as to the type of activities and how much time it feels that pupils of different ages might reasonably be expected to spend on homework. For children at primary schools the guidelines are:

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| Years 1 and 2 | 1 hour per week | Years 3 and 4 | 1.5 hours per week | Years 5 and 6 | 30 minutes per day |
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According to the government, the above will include 10 to 20 minutes of reading and, where "per day" is stated, this will sometimes be aggregated over more than one day. They state that children should not be expected to spend significantly longer on homework than the guide times set out and that activities may not take as long as the given guide times.

We ask that you ignore the government's guidelines, which suggest that homework grows in importance as the children age, and that a consequently longer period of time should be spent on the activities as the children progress through school. We suggest that the inverse is correct and that the most crucially important period of a child's education, and the period during which the parents must be most involved in home education, is in the period from birth up to and including the first few years when the children start school.



St Peter's School Policy

In order for your children to succeed in their learning in all areas of the curriculum, and to succeed in later life both socially and professionally, it is absolutely imperative that language development is identified as the priority activity for young children. We ask that you daily spend as much time as is possible talking to your children about everything around you and using as wide a vocabulary as is possible. Please talk to the children as you walk with them through towns, as you drive with them, and when you spend time with them at home. Take every possible opportunity to talk to your children and to have them talk to you.

Parents of our Year R children must share *at least* two books a day with their child. This may well include sharing the same books continually on many days! Children will have favourite books and will bore you with wanting to have them read and read again. But please do it if this is what they wish. Enthuse over the books. If the books have been read continually, use the pictures in them as a stimulus for discussion. But despite their love for certain books, please try to introduce your children to as many new books as possible. Use the library to do so if required.

In every other year group, please make the promotion of reading your priority and take every opportunity to read to your child and to have them read to you. Discuss with them everything which you see in the books; share what you believe people may be thinking, what may happen next in a story and why you think things have happened.

For children in Key Stage 2, please introduce them to good quality literature. Whilst it is great to see children reading any books, their vocabulary and their knowledge of story structure will only be enhanced if they read

stories and poetry which has been written by better authors. Please do all that you can to encourage them to read works by more established authors.

It is of fundamental importance that language development is seen as the priority building block for education, and the most important element of this should happen *prior* to your child joining school. However, we ask that you continue to focus on language development during the whole of your child's formal education, but particularly the first few years.

Time Requirements

Year R and 1

None of the following should take place with the television on.

Please spend at least 30 minutes per day sharing at least 2 appropriately sized reading books with your child. It is imperative that we try to encourage their own love of books. Please discuss every element of the books with them and take the opportunity to develop their vocabulary, using positional words such as behind, above, next to etc; comparative words, such as larger, largest, smaller; reinforce colours, numbers, the emotions you see on faces; the weather, places – introduce and reinforce as much language development as is possible. It is particularly useful for children to see male role models reading, whoever this may be.

Please spend at least 15 minutes per day having a conversation with your child. Discuss what they are doing, what they are wearing, what someone else is doing and wearing, what they can see from the window, what the dog is doing etc. In order for your child to be able to write, they must be able to give voice to their thoughts. If the child is going to be able to produce any form of writing, they must be able to construct sentences in their head. In order to develop this ability, we ask that you speak to them and have them speak to you as much as is possible.

A further way of developing this skill is to spend 5 minutes per day sharing magazines and newspapers with your child. Develop the habit of sharing the newspaper and discussing photographs within it, such as those of animals, aircraft, ships, cars etc.

In Year R the children have a learning journal. Every week it will contain a piece of work which the children are expected to complete. The work always relates to the week's learning whether this is phonics, number work or a piece of creative work based on our topic.

At the beginning of the academic year, we will run a phonics course for parents. This will be in the evening after school. We strongly encourage parents to attend. During the course of the evening, we will outline how we teach phonics. We encourage parents to support this very specific area of learning at home. Phonics knowledge is the fundamental building block for spelling and we ask you to spend as much time as possible reinforcing it.

Alongside the development of language, we also encourage you to reinforce number development whenever possible, by counting steps, stairs, or any amounts which are visible. Whilst it is important for children to be able to count on and count back, we would also ask that when possible you reinforce that number is a concept which relates to a physical representation; so please count things out, count them back when you put them away, count buses which you can see when out etc.

If you so wish and are so able, we would strongly advise that you introduce your child to a foreign language at this stage. Learning numbers in two languages, or the colours in two languages, will not confuse them. Rather, it will stimulate their ability to learn language and associate words with the physical.



All of the above can be supported by using local amenities. Please visit the library, local museums, the beach, lakes, visit fire stations when they have their annual open days, etc.

Years 2 and 3

Please spend as much time as is possible still completing the types of activities set out above. Their importance cannot be over stressed. However, in addition to this, your child will also receive very specific homework in

the form of times tables and number bonds. It is very important that the children develop an immediate recollection of both of these concepts. Teachers will set appropriate homework and the children will be tested.

Teachers will also send home spellings and there will be spelling tests. The spellings will take two forms. Firstly teachers will send home overarching spelling lists for those words which the children are expected to know. These will be supplemented, as and when the teacher decides is prudent, with focussed spellings for the children to learn. These may arise from a particular topic which is being studied, or from misconceptions which are being identified during marking. The teacher will test the children in their ability to spell these words.

Years 4, 5 and 6.

The focus for Years 4 – 6 will be on promoting independent learning. However, we would ask that you continue to promote language development with your child in all of its forms. The homework which the school sends out will be aimed at helping support the children's transition to secondary school, with emphasis placed on independent study. Independent project work encourages children to develop the skill of managing their time most effectively.

Each term, the children in Years 4 – 6 will be asked to complete a piece of individual work in whatever format they choose. The only caveat is that it must reflect the Christian value being studied during that term. Thus, when the value is Love, the children may choose to learn how to play a piece of music which has love in the title, they may write a story or poem on the subject, they may paint a picture or make a clay heart, they may research the Greek and Roman Gods of Love and complete a project on them, they may research bible stories about love, they and friends may act out a relevant scene from a film and record it for performance. They have the freedom to do as little or as much as they wish, in whatever form they wish, providing their work relates to the Christian value being studied.

Parents are asked to support their children in completing this work – but please don't take over! It isn't a competition for which parents can produce the best work for their child, which is what can happen. We simply want to provide our children with the freedom to complete work outside of school hours, in a manner which will stimulate them and which will facilitate associated learning, with research skills and time management to the fore. Given that we aren't setting a prescribed amount for the children to complete, coupled with them having at least five weeks to produce their work, with prior knowledge of what is being studied, we ask that all children participate. Children won't be admonished for producing only a little, but we ask that they all produce something.

In the penultimate week of each term all the pieces of work will be reviewed by the separate classes and a winner for each class will be chosen. If they so wish, they will then present their work during a school assembly in the final week. The children's parents will be invited into the assembly to see them present/perform their work.

Separate to this, teachers will still send home spellings and the children will be tested. Should the teacher require to address a lack of knowledge and complete remedial work as a result of the child still not yet knowing their times tables and number bonds, they may choose to do so.

In addition, for Year 5 children considering the possibility of attending grammar schools, the PESE assessment tests take place within the first few weeks of their joining Year 6. Schools are not permitted to tutor or prepare the children for these tests in any manner. However, parents are able to do so and many purchase practice tests over the counter at suppliers such as W H Smith.

At various times during Year 6, children may receive homework tasks which constitute revision tasks for the Key Stage Two Sats.

Should parents help with homework?

Parents should always help with homework. We have emphasised how crucially important it is for parents to take an active part in their child's learning during the earlier stages of a child's education. As they grow older, please still play an active part in developing their knowledge of number and language. As they enter Years 4 – 6, you should still encourage and praise them for the work they are completing, even if it is not necessary for you to be as actively involved. Children are likely to get more out of an activity if parents get involved.

If you are unsure about what your role should be, discuss it with your child's teacher. They will be pleased that you are interested and will want to help you get the balance right.