

St Peter's Church of England Primary School Aylesford
Homework – A Guide for Parents
September 2021

What is the purpose of homework?

Homework will always be a contentious issue with some people believing that we give too much and others that we don't give enough. We won't win. 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, and 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.

However, working at home is undoubtedly a crucial means of supplementing the learning which is taking place at school, and it is inarguable that children will best progress if they come from a home where learning is valued and promoted in every way possible.

So, the following guidance will provide parents with ideas as to what you may do at home in order to best support your child, *if you are so able*.

Government Guidelines

The government has provided guidelines as to the type of homework 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:

Years 1/2	1 hour per week	Years 3/4	1.5 hours per week	Years 5/6	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 would question the government's belief that homework grows in importance as children age and their assertion that a longer period of time should be spent on activities as children progress through school. The inverse is correct and 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 the period from birth up to and including the first few years when the children start school. If you are going to get involved in supporting your child's learning, please do it in those first few years – and above everything else, please focus on the development of language.



The following pages provide you with a breakdown of how you can support your children and the homework we will set, for each of the different year groups.

Activities for Year R and 1

What we will set and how you can help

Encourage them to Talk!

The development of language is the absolute priority for Year R and 1 children. We want children who don't stop talking! In order for your child to be able to write, they must be able to give voice to their thoughts. Spend every possible moment talking to your children about everything around you, and use as wide a vocabulary as you can. Talk to the children as you walk through towns, as you drive with them and when you are at home, and encourage them to talk to you. Develop the habit of sharing the newspaper or magazines and discussing photographs within them.

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 physical objects.

Please Read to Your Child

For our pre-readers, please try to spend at least 20 minutes per day sharing an appropriately sized reading book with your child. In some cases, as the children become more proficient, this may include listening to the child read a book, but initially it is more likely to involve you reading a story to them.



You may well be reading the same books continually on many days! Children will have favourite books and will bore you with wanting to have them read again and again. But please do it if this is what they wish. Enthuse over the books. Use the pictures in them as a stimulus for discussion; share what you believe people may be thinking, what may happen next in a story and why you think things have happened.

Please 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 etc.

It is particularly useful for children to see male role models reading, whoever this may be.

As the children begin to read, we ask that you try to spend at least 15 minutes a day if possible, listening to your child read. Initially a majority of this time will be spent helping them with sounds and discussing what is happening in the book, but as their skills develop and they read more fluently, you can listen to them and then question the child about what they think characters are feeling and what might happen next. This will help add to the process of reading.

Please write in your child's reading record when you listen to them read. In order for children to change their school reading book, they must have read to an adult, either at home or at school. This policy will continue through KS1 and into KS2.

Supporting Number Development

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. Relate number to a physical image.

Set Homework

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.

The children in Year 1 will receive weekly spellings. Each week, they will be given six or so words which we would like them to practise at home. There will be a weekly test. Some of the words will be drawn from the prescribed list which all of the children have to learn over the course of Year 1, whilst others will be selected to reinforce the phonics lessons which are taking place in class. If you wish to complete extra practice, the prescribed word list is available on our website.

In addition to this, the Year 1 children will have a small amount of maths or English work to complete on alternate weeks. The work will be related to what they are studying in class. We ask that you sit with them whilst they complete it to check that they don't have any problems understanding what has been asked of them. If they do, please let the teacher know.

Supporting Phonics

Most of you will be totally bemused by the letter sounds which we now teach in phonics lessons. They are very different to when a great many of you went to school. Don't worry, we will help you. At the beginning of the academic year, we will run a phonics course for you. This will be delivered virtually in the evening after school. If the situation allows, we will also offer parents the opportunity to visit the Year R and 1 classrooms to watch phonics lessons being delivered. You will be able to hear the letter sounds – or phonemes as they are known – being spoken by our teachers.



Don't worry if you can't remember them. We are currently overhauling our website to make an explicit Homework page. This will contain a link through which you will be able to see Mrs Maloney pronouncing the phonemes.

Activities for Years 2 and 3

Please spend as much time as 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.

Times tables and Number Bonds

Children will have home access to the Times Tables Rock Stars online site. The children generally enjoy using this site to practise their tables. Year 2 children will focus on the 2, 5 and 10 times tables. Year 3 will also practise these tables as well as covering the 3, 4 and 8 times tables. The children are expected to have immediate recall of all these tables by the time they finish Year 3. Teachers will set particular tables for the children to learn over the weeks, and they will be tested on these periodically.

Children in Year 2 must learn the number bonds to 10, and from there, they should use their knowledge to be able to identify what needs to be added to a number to make 20. Number bonds relate to which two numbers add together to make 10 – i.e. 9 and 1, 8 and 2 etc. Children in Year 2 will be tested periodically on their knowledge of number bonds.

Set Homework

Children will have alternate weeks of reading comprehension and mathematics homework. The comprehension is to develop the child's ability to read – and to take in and understand what they are reading. They will have developed the ability to decode words phonetically and to subsequently read

sentences. The comprehension work develops their ability to read for meaning. The mathematics homework will supplement what is being taught in class. Please monitor the children as they complete the set activities and if they struggle with any of it, please inform the teacher.

Spelling

Teachers will send home overarching spelling lists for those words which the children are expected to know. These will also be posted on our website. Please practise these independently at home. These spellings will be supplemented 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 children will have weekly spelling tests.

Supporting Reading

As the children develop their reading ability, please try to broaden the range of what they read. They will continue to receive reading books from school. However, they may wish to read independently from what is sent home. Children will have favourite authors and topics – please don't turn them off reading by not allowing them to read what they wish. But alongside this, please try to 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 be enhanced if they read stories written by better authors.

Activities for Years 4, 5 and 6.

Weekly Reading Comprehension/Mathematics

As in Years 2/3, children will have alternate reading comprehension and mathematics homework. The focus remains as outlined for Years 2/3. Again, if your child finds difficulty completing any of the work, please inform the teacher.

Times tables

Children will continue to have home access to the Times Tables Rock Stars online site. They will be expected to become proficient in recalling all of the tables by the end of Year 4 when they will sit a national test.

Spellings

Children will have weekly spellings and will be tested in class.

PESE

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.

SATs

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. 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.