



St Mary's School  
CAMBRIDGE

# Home Learning Policy

*This policy is the responsibility of Deputy Head Academic and Head of Juniors.*

*Last review: September 24*

*Next review: September 27*

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## Rationale

Home learning is a discipline necessary to practise skills and develop resilience, independence and self-confidence.

The purpose of home learning is to provide an opportunity to reinforce and synthesise learning and to practise skills learned in class. Home learning is an important opportunity to learn independently and acquire life skills of self-discipline, organisation of time and tenacity in problem solving. Home learning is an important expression of the partnership between home and school. It also reinforces the principle that learning is for life and not just for school. Homework should not be set that requires pupils to teach themselves new material or skills in order for it to be completed.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Marking, Assessment and Tracking Policy and is intended for the benefit of all our pupils including Early Years and the Sixth Form.

## Guidelines

The type of home learning set will vary from subject to subject. Literary subjects, for example, English, will set more assignments requiring sustained prose than practical subjects or sciences. Best practice is for teachers to explain to their pupils the objective of the home learning and how it fits into the 'reinforce, synthesise, practice' framework.

In the Senior School, teachers should set home learning tasks according to the Home Learning Timetable devised annually by the Deputy Head Operations. Teachers set home learning on the parent portal which is accessible to pupils and their parents. Teachers should set assignments requiring substantial pieces of extended writing over more than one slot. Deadlines are set mindful of the lengthy journeys many pupils undertake. Teachers collect home learning at the next or another lesson, or at an agreed collection point in school, or by electronic submission.

Pupils are not generally set home learning tasks to be completed during school holidays.

Home learning is not set simply because it is the allocated day for the subject. 20-minutes spent thinking through a lesson, recalling how particular activities met learning objectives can be just as effective as a formal assignment. The home learning task might take a variety of forms. It may give pupils the opportunity to practise skills taught in the

lesson; it may be that pupils will encounter new concepts for the first time as preparation for material developed in subsequent lessons.

Heads of Department and subject teachers should be prepared to exercise flexibility on occasions when events such as parents' evenings, theatre trips and performances in or outside school can make it difficult or impossible for the pupils to complete work in the evening. At such times it is appropriate to waive the home learning requirement completely in the case of younger pupils, and to give extended deadlines or less substantial pieces of work in the case of older ones. Similarly, when setting catch-up tasks to pupils on their return to school after a period of absence for illness, it is appropriate to require pupils to undertake only such tasks which are essential to their understanding the topic missed.

## Recommended time allocation

Pre-school have a library book daily and suggested game style activities for the weekend

Reception have daily phonics activities, a weekly reading book and a phonics-based home learning task for the weekend

Year 1 have a 20-minute home learning task once a week, weekly spellings and reading 3 nights a week.

Year 2 have a 30-minute home learning task once a week, weekly spellings and reading 3 nights a week.

Year 3 work for 20-25 minutes 3 nights a week with the addition of reading and spelling practice every day

Year 4 work for 30 minutes 3 nights a week with the addition of reading, times table and spelling practice every day

Year 5 work for 30-35 minutes 4 nights a week with the addition of reading practice

Year 6 work for 40 - 50 minutes 4 nights a week with the addition of reading practice

The Senior School Home Learning Timetable falls within these ranges. Home learning for Years 12 and 13 necessarily requires a greater time allocation.

The Home Learning Timetable allocates a set amount of time to each subject on given days during the week. This will normally fall on the day on which pupils have a lesson in that subject. However, in order to achieve an even workload across the week, it will sometimes happen that home learning set on one day will be included in another day's home learning allocation.

## The importance of feedback to pupils

Feedback about work done independently is an essential part of the learning process. Home learning is marked promptly in line with the School's Marking, Assessment and Tracking Policy.

Specific written feedback is given according to each department's marking guidelines. This may:

- identify things that the pupil did well;
- state what they need to improve by referring to clear targets.

## How parents/guardians and teachers communicate regarding home learning

Parents/Guardians receive feedback about home learning in reports and at parents' evenings. Where a pupil is working to the expected level, this is standard practice. When expectations are not being met, this is communicated to the parents/guardians by the class teacher, subject teacher, Head of Department, Head of Year, or the Deputy Head

Academic or Operations, depending on the severity of the problem. A parent/guardian who may be concerned about home learning is welcome to contact St Mary's School, Cambridge (the "School").

Queries about home learning are a valuable source of feedback for teachers. When experiencing problems pupils are expected to ask their teacher for help as soon as possible.

## Differentiation

As in classroom teaching, home learning activities are differentiated in recognition of the needs of the pupils with Special Educational Needs and those learning English as a second language or for any other reason. An element of pupil choice in home learning task is actively encouraged. Given the demands of the day at school, the distances travelled by many pupils and their necessary participation in extra-curricular activities, differentiation by time is not encouraged.

## The role of parents/guardians

It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to ensure home learning is completed. In the Junior School, the parents are asked to sign the School Planner as proof that they have seen the completed home learning task. Comments about the time taken to complete the work and perceptions on the content are also welcome. If a problem arises, and work cannot be completed, the parent/guardian should make a note in the diary so that the teacher can follow up with the child appropriately. The class teacher will endeavour to respond to the comments via the Homework Diary. The School informs parents if home learning objectives have not been met. Pupils are expected to work within the allocated time. If home learning is completed unsatisfactorily and without an acceptable explanation, in the Junior School, the pupil will be asked to redo the work, and a note is written to the parent/guardian in the Homework Diary. Completion of this work might be in addition to other home learning or given over a weekend with a specified due date. In the Senior School the pupil may be asked to redo the work. If home learning is regularly unsatisfactory parents are contacted by the School.

Parents/Guardians are expected provide a quiet and comfortable space for their children to complete their home learning. Distractions should be kept to the minimum. Some assignments may depend on collaborative work undertaken through social media but the School supports parents/guardians in monitoring appropriate internet usage at home, and will answer any queries about such assignments as they arise.

Parents/Guardians and the pupils themselves should monitor how long a pupil takes to complete a home learning assignment. Should the work take either substantially longer or shorter than the allocated time, we recommend parents/guardians should inform the teacher, as appropriate. The Homework Diary is essential in the Junior School for home-school communication.

Up to and during Key Stage 3 parents are encouraged to monitor home learning each evening. This usually becomes less appropriate for older pupils but the School may ask parents to resume this practice should a pupil be struggling with work or organisation. Parents should not do the home learning for the pupil, nor are they expected to help the pupil, although encouragement or prompting can be appropriate.

## Roles and responsibilities

### Senior School

Subject teachers ensure that purposeful and useful home learning is set within the guidance of this policy and that the instructions are clearly presented both verbally within a lesson and in writing via the Parent Portal. Teachers endeavour to set home learning in good time within the lesson, but always in time for the home learning time as dictated by the Home Learning Timetable.

Heads of Year are an important conduit of feedback about home learning from both pupils and parents.

## Junior School

In the Junior School, the individual class teachers are responsible for setting, marking, and recording of home learning. In marking, the teacher will give positive, constructive feedback and a target or 'think about' (as indicated by (T) in the written comment) to extend the concept or skills. The Deputy Head has an overview of the home learning across the year groups; however, home learning is scrutinised termly as part of a book scrutiny. Comments and observations made during this process are fed-back to the subject coordinators and class/subject teachers. There is an element of flexibility in the home learning timetable and there are exceptions made for school events and individual occurrences.

In Pre-Prep, the children are responsible for accurately recording their set home learning in their Homework Diaries. They must ensure that they understand what is expected of them and if not seek assistance from the class teacher in a timely manner. It is the responsibility of pupils who are absent for all or part of a lesson to find out what homework was set, if they reasonably can, so that they can meet the deadline. Exceptions are made for pupils who have been unwell or are absent for a sustained period of time. They should demonstrate their commitment to learning by completing the work and handing it in on time.

In EY and Pre-Prep, the class teacher might write out the home learning and give the children this to take home with the appropriate book or sheet on which to complete the work. If a child is absent, the class teacher will endeavour to cover the work that was missed at an appropriate time and may give some reinforcement home learning to be completed over time. If a child is absent for an extended period, then learning, including home learning, will be gathered and sent home for completion.

The Deputy Head devises a schedule for home learning once the timetable has been published. They ensure an even spread each evening across the cycle within the recommended time allocation.