

Parent forum – Homework

A number of parents gathered for the forum on Homework hosted by the PTA. The majority of people present were parents of yr8 pupils.

Mrs Siddle gave a presentation on the purpose of home learning. In it she said that the purposes of setting homework are as follows:

- To provide pupils with the opportunity to practise tasks covered in class
- To help pupils to work towards improving and developing important skills
- To promote independent learning
- To support pupils in gaining examination success

Following Mrs Siddle's presentation the floor was opened for an informal discussion.

The opening comments reflected concerns about too much homework being set for younger pupils, particularly over a holiday period. The example given was a project which required internet access being set shortly before October half term, when a family had plans to be away. The holiday ended up being dominated by the need to find internet cafes so the child could complete the homework set.

Other parents raised concerns about too much homework being set, which meant that their child was working late into the evening, and having to miss other worthwhile activities like Scouts because of the level of work expected.

Other parents however said that they had come to the meeting to raise concerns that their child had far too little homework, and that they felt the school should be setting more.

Mrs Jackson said that she felt that a KS3 child should be expected to complete 3-4 tasks a night, up to 20 minutes each (giving a total of 60 – 90 minutes homework each evening). In KS4 the 3-4 tasks should take up to 30 minutes each (giving a total of 90 – 120 minutes homework each evening). If parents felt that their child was taking a significantly longer time over homework then it is acceptable for the parent to intervene.

- If the time is being taken colouring or decorating the work then this is not necessary, and the parent can ask the child to stop. However several parents said that their child enjoyed the colouring and found it relaxing, also they wanted to achieve a high standard in their work. Mrs Jackson said that she supported a positive work ethic, but the parent needed to make a decision as to whether the child was enjoying the work, or finding it needlessly stressful. This came down to a judgement call by the parent.
- If a written task was taking a disproportionately long amount of time parents are welcome to write a note to the teacher in their child's exercise book, saying that this is where the child had got to after the allocated amount of time. Staff at ATS don't want pupils to be distressed over homework, and may not be aware of problems, because the child is working very hard to cover up where they are struggling. Stopping a child working may enable a teacher to see problems which the child is trying to hide.

MyMaths was discussed. It was agreed that it is an effective way for pupils to practice mathematical skills, but that more acknowledgement from teachers about the work done on MyMaths would be welcome, and also that when it is used the link between the MyMaths task and the work covered in class is explicit.

The discussion did end up concluding that in the experience of this group, gender stereotypes do seem to hold some truth when it comes to attitudes to homework i.e. girls overwork and boys under-work!

The conclusion reached was that the school welcomes dialogue with parents about the issues raised during the evening. No member of staff would want a child to be distressed about the homework they have been set. Mrs Jackson and Mrs Siddle encourage all parents to talk to a particular teacher, or the child's form tutor or head of house if their child is being given homework which is inappropriate, rather than struggle through and become upset.