



# **Dowson Primary Academy**

## **HOMEWORK POLICY**

July 2022

Review Cycle: Annual



Authors: Kathryn Thornburn



## Introduction and Rationale

As pupils' first educators, parents are vital in ensuring children develop key life skills at different stages of their development in order that they are well equipped for each stage of their learning. They are also able to support and enhance their children's academic progress through various means and this policy sets out the ways in which Dowson uses homework as a vehicle to make the most of these opportunities.

This policy reflects the importance Dowson places on a 'well-rounded child', family values, communication skills and affording children a wide range of experiences that build 'cultural capital' and allow children to draw upon a rich and extensive general knowledge which in turn enhances their ability to achieve well in a challenging curriculum and ensures they don't lose sight of basic skills in the demands of a 21<sup>st</sup> century world.

The policy for homework was developed and agreed by the teaching staff and takes account of pupil voice and parent consultation in July 2019.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the National Curriculum and the Early Years Foundation Stage curriculum, the school's Vision and Values document, Curriculum and Teaching, Learning and Assessment statements, Home-School PACT document and all subject constructs and skills progressions.

## Aims

Our policy on homework aims to do the following:

- Ensure that parents are clear about key, age-related, skills their child is expected to be able to do to support each stage of their learning and development.
- Ensure children acquire the basic skills of English Spelling and Mental Maths Arithmetic which are key in securing a high standard and ability in Writing and Mathematics
- Support the development of a love of reading as well as rehearse reading skills to improve fluency, stamina and understanding.
- Provide opportunities for families to engage in family talk about interesting topics or undertake activities / experiences together and share and enjoy the learning opportunities, knowledge and vocabulary building these opportunities create.

Occasionally homework will also:

- Reinforce work covered in class by providing further opportunities for individual learning, where necessary.
- Be research or project based to enhance children's knowledge of a topic or demonstrate their learning for a particular purpose such as exhibition.
- Encourage children to develop the responsibility, confidence and self-discipline needed to study independently.
- Provide revision or practice activities in preparation for statutory testing.
- To prepare Year 6 pupils for the transfer to secondary school.

## HOMEWORK TYPES:

### KEY LIFE SKILLS

With the ever increasing demands upon a 21<sup>st</sup> Century family and the challenges they face, fewer children enter school meeting 'school readiness' criteria and then throughout their primary school years, often do not acquire the life skills, traits or attributes required to achieve their full potential, be a 'well rounded' child and well equipped to face an unknown future. With this in mind, and to support our vision and values, each key stage has an overview document for parents which sets out the types of skills and traits vital to children's secure and rounded development and asks that they are continually referring to and developing these with their children throughout this key stage so that they are secured in readiness for the next stage of their education. Sometimes teachers may set a homework task in relation to one of the skills on their grid that they notice is not yet acquired securely for a group or class.



## **READING**

In addition to the homework cycle, children of all ages are expected to read daily. Younger children should be supported by reading aloud to and discussing their books with an adult. Older children should still have opportunities to read aloud to an adult regularly but they are also expected to read silently for sustained periods of time independently and with longer texts. As part of reading practice, children, particularly in Foundation Stage and Key Stage One, may be sent home with flashcards containing key words for them to learn by sight.

In Reception and Key Stage 1 the minimum expectation for children's reading time is 10 minutes, building to 15 minutes by the end of Key Stage 1 as they become more fluent. This should be daily, with a minimum expectation of 5 times a week in order to build their stamina for the longer and more complex texts they will be facing in the next stage of their education.

In Key Stage 2, the minimum expectation for children's reading time is 20 minutes, building to 30 minutes by the end of Key Stage 2 in preparation to build sufficient stamina to access and comprehend age-appropriate texts in preparation for High School. This should be daily, with a minimum expectation of 3 times a week.

All children have a reading record to complete each time they read and an adult should sign this to show they have read for the expected time and occasions. Children who have been unable to complete their reading practice at home will be given the opportunity to do so in their free time in school in order to sustain a good rate of progress.

## **CHALLENGE CARDS**

Because we recognise the vital importance of 'the basics' in contributing to and, in fact, underpinning the whole of children's achievement, children also have spellings and number facts for quick recall set as part of their homework and the expectation is that they learn these by heart. Children are tested on these as and when a parent signs the card to indicate that they feel these have been learned and their child is fluent. Children move through the series of challenge cards set for their year group. When the challenges for the year group are complete, children continue to be tested weekly at random from all the cards to ensure they are remembering and mastering these skills. Teachers also continue to look out for the application of these skills in day to day lessons in order to ensure they are secure.

When challenge cards are introduced in Reception, children are expected to learn to read the words by sight first and when they are ready, begin to spell them. This may also be the case for some children in Year 1 where they do not yet recognise by sight the high frequency words on their cards.

## **FAMILY TALK**

To support children to learn the art of conversation and allow families quality time together to discuss learning and develop children's (and sometimes their own) knowledge and vocabulary, our main homework approach in addition to reading and challenge cards is a talk piece. This may be in the form of a picture, a topic or theme, a question or a news item and will be framed by teachers in a way that inspires families to engage in purposeful dialogue, allowing children to have opinions, be curious, ask and answer questions, debate, suppose, theorise, emote and imagine. It may also be an invitation to engage together in an activity in order to promote talk and / or extend children's experiences and general knowledge.

The idea of family talk is that it can be accessed by all and can fit in with the busy life of many of our families; it reignites the idea of traditional 'round the tea table' conversations and gives families precious time together without the battle of too much recording and paperwork which can be onerous and not as satisfying and beneficial for family relationships as talking can be. The tasks are also designed in such a way that all ages can take part so families with multiple children get everyone's homework done at the same time and siblings benefit not only from parental input but each other's too. Finally, it's a great way for parents to have direct insight into the levels of their children's knowledge and understanding and therefore enable them to directly influence these via these simple activities.



## **LEARNING LOGS, RESEARCH AND PROJECTS**

In some circumstances, we may set the children a research style project or a 'learning log' to complete for their homework. These methods of home learning have many positive features which ignite children's enthusiasm and intrigue for topics and allows them to take their learning in a direction which interests them as well as gaining some subject knowledge that will, in turn, support their access and engagement with a topic back in class.

The basic idea of a learning log is that the children are given a project to complete, usually using a two page spread in their books to cover the theme given. They can extend this space with fold outs, pop ups, pockets etc. as much as they want and in any creative way they choose. Pictures, diagrams, tables and charts can be included alongside the text that they write or print out (although we discourage just lots of printed text from internet searches!)

We also recognise that Learning Logs require a lot more parental support for younger children whereas we would expect the older children to become increasingly more independent with their learning in preparation for High School. Therefore, this type of homework would be much less frequent and less complex in nature for younger children.

## **INTERVENTION**

Where children have found class work difficult or need to secure a concept or method, teachers may send additional practice home for parents to support their children with on an individual or group basis. Occasionally, teachers may also think additional practice of something for a whole class would be beneficial and therefore send worksheets home to support learning and progress. This is definitely the case for early acquisition of skills such as letter and number formation for the youngest children and will sometimes be beneficial with other areas of learning too. This type of homework, its nature and frequency is down to a teacher's discretion to set and within a cycle decided upon by them. It may also be set but not expected to be returned (such as letter formation practice) and we encourage parents to ensure this is still completed and to the same standard as if it was being submitted.

## **REVISION**

Finally, in the later stages of Key Stage 2 – and in particular Year 6 – there may be times when children are given homework in addition to the usual set. This could be additional reading for research, an English or Maths based task for further consolidation of classroom learning or homework linked to intervention groups or revision for end of Key Stage tests. The duration for these tasks will be set by the adult issuing them but would usually be more than one night. It is crucial that children at this age learn to take responsibility for their homework and additional tasks and deadlines in order that they begin to prepare for homework of this nature at High School.

## **The Homework Cycle**

Challenge cards will be changed when the children know the facts / can spell the words on the card. The talk homework cycle at Dowson will usually be 2 weeks. This will consist of a two week period in which children will be set, complete and hand in their talk homework task in the first week and in the second week the teacher will support feedback time for the children where they are invited to contribute to a group conversation using their learning and home discussions to support this. The chance for children to share these with their peers for their appreciation, reflection and comments are considered an important part of the learning process and are also chance for teachers to monitor homework completion.

Homework through this cycle will normally be set on and due in on a Friday.

## **Homework Tasks**

Listed below, is an outline of the homework and activities that will be set regularly for each year group. All additional homework tasks and activities will have a clear purpose and assist pupils in the process of their academic development as outlined in the aims and descriptions of homework types above.



## **NURSERY:**

- A library book is sent home to share with an adult each week and children draw/mark make to depict their favourite part of the book. Children may change their books as frequently as they want.
- Sometimes challenges may be set through Class Dojo which invite parents and children to engage in something that will support their upcoming learning e.g. send in a picture of me when I was a baby to discuss growing and changes.
- Later on in the nursery year, sheets to support letter and number formation may be sent home for practice.
- Talk or experience homework as appropriate

## **RECEPTION:**

- Daily reading of Library or Reading Book (progressive throughout the year)
- Challenge cards
- Letter or number recognition and writing formation practice weekly once ready.
- Talk or experience homework as appropriate

## **KEY STAGE 1:**

- Daily reading of a home reader (10 minutes, building to 15 minutes and minimum of 5 x weekly)
- Challenge cards for their year group
- Talk homework
- Basic skills practice worksheets where needed or appropriate e.g. letter formation

## **KEY STAGE 2:**

- Daily reading of a home reader (20 minutes, building to 30 minutes and minimum of 3 x weekly)  
***NB:** until children are reading lime level reading books, they should continue to follow the KS1 model of 5 x a week and 15 minutes a session in order to accelerate progress to this level of book.*
- Challenge cards for their year group
- Talk homework
- Other types of homework (as outlined in this policy) as and when necessary or appropriate and at the discretion of the teacher.

**NB:** Year 6 may have additional activities with specific SATS foci and revision as and when necessary and with varying lengths of deadline.

## **The Role of the Teaching Staff**

- To provide an explanation of homework tasks to parents when necessary and give guidance of how they might assist their child.
- To ensure that homework is set consistently using the cycle and guidance set out in this policy.
- To ensure any homework is purposeful and links directly to the aims of this policy, the curriculum being taught or skills needed to be acquired.
- To monitor homework is being completed and reward and praise children who regularly complete homework tasks.
- To guide children who may not be completing homework or need support by allowing them to complete relevant elements of homework in their free time in school.
- To communicate with parents where children are having to complete their homework during their free time in school in order that the expectation is that this is completed at home.
- To monitor the changing of challenge cards to ensure the spellings and maths facts that are assigned to the year group are being rehearsed and learned.
- To provide feedback for homework and provide time for pupils to share the outcomes of their family talks and their learning.
- Liaise with parents and / or SLT where there are concerns regarding a child's homework.



## Role of the Principal

- To check compliance of the policy.
- To meet and talk with parents when appropriate.
- To discuss with staff how far the policy is being successfully implemented.
- Inform new parents to the school so that they are aware of the home/school PACT and what it entails.
- To review the policy annually, accounting for the views of parents and pupils in the review.

## Role of Parents/Carers

- To sign the home school PACT which accounts for homework.
- To support the school by ensuring that their child completes homework and the family engage in the talk task.
- To provide suitable time and place for their child to carry out their homework.
- To encourage and praise their child when they have completed their homework.
- To encourage their child to read regularly from a range of fiction and non-fiction texts and listen to them read aloud regularly – daily wherever possible – particularly for younger year groups.
- To become actively involved and support their child with homework activities, particularly reading and the rehearsal of facts on the challenge cards they bring home.
- To note the life skills grid in their child's homework book and ensure their child is in line with these expectations wherever possible.
- To make it clear that they value homework and they support the school by explaining how it can help learning.
- To liaise with school regarding their child's homework or any concerns they have.

## General

- As a general rule, homework is not given during holiday time. However, it is expected that children continue to read regularly and keep 'on the boil' number facts and other key skills learned during the term or year so far.
- If children are absent due to illness we will not send homework home. We would assume the child was too ill to work.
- If a child is absent for a length of time and cannot attend school due to medical reasons, the Pastoral Manager will support the teacher and the parent to agree what should be done, how it should be marked and what sort of help needs to be given. **In such circumstances the teacher should consult the Principal first.**
- It is not possible to give homework when parents take holidays in term time.
- Parents/Carers who have queries about homework should not hesitate to make an appointment to see their child's class teacher in the first instance.