

Cabinteely Community School



School Policy on Homework

(Reviewed 2014)

Homework should be meaningful for the teacher and the student. It can be seen as having a number of functions:

- It should serve to re-enforce work done in class
- It should act as a bridge between the work of one day and the next.
- It should be linked with and integrated into a programme of teaching and learning thereby forming part of the process of assessment for learning.
- It should be designed in such a way as to offer the students opportunities for self-assessment.
- It offers an opportunity for a more meaningful dialogue between school and home.

“Homework helps students to construct knowledge, develop deeper understandings and connections amongst the concepts to which they have been introduced, and provides an opportunity for them to apply the skills they have acquired. A properly co-ordinated homework policy in school will help students to develop and sustain good study habits. It fosters positive values such as self-discipline, responsibility, and an interest in learning, which will benefit them throughout their lives.”

(NCCA 2009)

Homework includes both written and learning work.

All students should go back every day over the work they have done in each subject that day, whether written homework has been set or not. This is a significantly important study skill.

1. Setting Homework:

- The Student Journal should be on the desk and ready for use at the beginning of class.
- Teachers should, as far as possible, check that the homework has been recorded in the journal by each student.
- Homework should be set at the beginning of class or at least 5 minutes before the bell signals at the end of class.
- The homework given should, as far as possible, relate to the topic covered in class. It should enhance and re-enforce the classroom learning.
- The teacher should check that students understand what they have to do for homework.
- The teacher should set expectations about the length of time to be spent on homework depending on the subject level and programme course/year. This is discussed and agreed upon at subject planning meetings.
- Exam related questions should be given for homework to all 3rd and 6th year students.
- Teachers should establish high expectations for the delivery of homework assignments from all students irrespective of subject levels. With regard to differentiation, extra assignments may be set for exceptionally able students.

2. Correction and Feedback:

- The correction and feedback on homework should be consistent and regular.
- Correction of homework should be a priority in the lesson. Teachers should start lesson with a check on homework.
- Learning homework should be examined orally.
- Regular testing should be conducted to assess learning and test results should be entered in the student journal and staff diary/roll book.
- Written and verbal feedback should be given. Copies should be collected regularly and written comments should be included to assist the student in improving homework. These may include:

-what the student has done right

-what the next step/s should be to improve performance or understanding

-exam classes should be provided with graded feedback on assignments. (*See*

Appendix 2 for Custom and Practice Policy on Project and Practical work for the State Examinations).

3. Recording of Homework

Senior and junior students should be treated the same in terms of checking that homework is recorded in the student journal.

The teacher should write the homework on the board or display on the data projector with ample time provided for students to record it in the journal.

The teacher should clearly explain to students where to find the homework in the book and provide some tips on where to find the answers.

3. Communicating with Parents and Students:

-Communicating with parents about homework can be done by a phone call, a note written in the journal or at Parent/Teacher meetings.

-At the annual 1st Year Parent Induction Night the journal system is explained to the parents and practical advice given to parents for assisting and checking their child's homework.

-The School handbook contains a section on Homework and Study and is provided for all first year students and their parents.

-The student journal also includes a section on homework, including the time a child should spend on homework and revision.

-The journal pages entitled Academic and Personal Achievement should be used for test results and notes about homework.

-The teacher should record a mark in the journal when homework is not produced. Three or more homework marks in a row in a subject area should result in a detention supervised by the subject teacher with further graded sanctions in accordance with the school's Code of Conduct if the problem persists.

- Written constructive feedback on corrected homework should be provided for all students.
- Subject teachers take responsibility for checking homework and following up in instances where homework is not done or is incomplete. This follow up may entail detention or additional relevant work given to the student or may require a phone call home to the parent.
- The teacher keeps a record of all homework given to students and also a record of where a student fails to complete homework.
- When a student persistently fails to complete homework the matter should be discussed with the relevant Year Head and a decision made about sanctions.

Whole school approach to improving Homework:

Parents

General guidelines exist in the Journal to help parents and pupils recognise the value and significance of homework. As well as reinforcement of the class work covered, homework can be seen as exam practice, at times, if the student learns his work then answers the set question in a limited time and without using notes. Thus, homework is an important part of exam technique. It should not be allowed to 'ramble on' indefinitely but be seen as the student taking control of his own learning.

Parents need to be actively involved in the monitoring of homework to ensure their child's success. They should sign the journal on the weekly pages and the 'yellow pages' at the back of the journal.

Parents should contact the tutor or subject teacher if there are concerns regarding homework.

Students

All students need guidance and support on taking responsibility for the delivery of homework and the establishment of good study skills. This can be achieved by support from the Pastoral Care structure in the school - class teachers, subject teachers, the Year Head and the school's Guidance Teacher.

Students should record homework in every subject area and fill in subject titles on the daily pages at the beginning of every week. This work may be done in C.T. time.

Students should be encouraged to take responsibility for completing their homework consistently and to the best of their ability.

Teachers

Test verbally and check that homework is complete. Follow up with relevant additional work if homework is not completed.

Send a message home if homework is frequently incomplete. Record this fact in school reports if appropriate.

Subject teachers should follow the agreed sanctions for homework not completed by a student on a regular basis.

Record all homework and ensure that students record homework in the homework journal.

Teachers should correct homework regularly.

Teachers should adhere to the homework policy. The consistent application of the homework policy by all teachers is essential for developing and improving homework and study across the school.

Senior students should be encouraged to take personal responsibility for their homework. However, they should be treated the same as junior students in relation to recording homework and sanctions for non-completion of homework.

Principal/Deputy Principal and Guidance Team

Inform parents about the importance of homework and the monitoring of the student journal at all meetings and Information Nights.

Issue a reminder for parents at the start of the school year about the importance of reading the journal before signing the Positive Behaviour Code with their children. This will help ensure that they read the extracts from the school's policy on homework and the parental support required in the area of homework and in monitoring the journal.

Subject Department

Consistency in approach is vital across all departments - all subject departments incorporate the Homework Policy into schemes of work.

All subject departments decide on relevant homework, ideas on homework, differentiation, time allocation and resources.

Homework Support Programme (HSP)

Where the Year Head, in collaboration with the subject teachers/class teachers, recognises that a student is struggling to organise his study and/or consistently fails to cope with the homework assignments, the Homework Support Programme may be recommended to the parent and student. This consists of two evenings per week of supervised study lasting for 1 hour each. A teacher is on hand and mentors from the TY Gaisce programme provide support to help the student. This service is free to all junior students.

This policy was adopted by the Board of Management on _____ [date].

Signed: _____ Signed: _____

(Chairperson of Board of Management) (Principal)

Date: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX II

(NCCA – Guidelines on Homework as recommended by Whole school inspections)

TYPES OF HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT

Here are four types of daily homework assignments - preparation, practice, extension, and creative/enrichment assignments.

PREPARATION

This type of assignment is intended to help students get ready for the next day's classroom lesson. For instance, a reading assignment may be given prior to a lesson. Students might be asked to write their own discussion questions based on the reading assignment. Or, the student may be asked to complete answers to reading review questions from the text.

PRACTICE

By successfully completing practice assignments, students have the opportunity to review and reinforce skills, knowledge, and information presented in a previous lesson. A simple example might be that after a grammar lesson, students are asked to write their own sentences and label the specific grammatical elements presented in the most recent classroom lesson.

EXTENSION

Extension assignments ask students to expand on skills and/or concepts taught during a previous class. For example, after studying a period in history students might be asked to read an article or book pertaining to that period and report their findings to the class.

CREATIVE ENRICHMENT This assignment includes analysing, synthesising and evaluating concepts or skills already taught. Students have an opportunity to develop and apply their own ideas about a topic and prepare a presentation for the teachers or class. One example would be to assign students the task of creating an invention that would solve a problem. Another might be to write a play or short story. What is stressed here is that not all homework is alike in nature and purpose. In considering different types of homework to set, teachers might usefully refer to the different kinds of questioning employed in class.

ASSESSING HOMEWORK AND OFFERING FEEDBACK.

Assessment of a piece of homework should be based upon the criteria for success in the particular task set. For example, there is little to be gained by drawing attention to lapses in the surface presentation (spelling, punctuation, etc.) of a piece of student work, if this had not been specifically articulated as one of the criteria against which success was to be measured. Neither is it helpful to set out too many criteria against which the work will be judged. Teachers might usefully consider whether always giving marks or grades helps students to learn more effectively. In particular, the giving of marks can be counter-productive even when they are accompanied by the teacher's comments as to how students might improve. Students all too often ignore the helpful comments and pay attention solely to the marks. Those who have received low marks, then, merely see themselves failing to achieve while those whose marks are high can neglect to look for the specific direction as to the strengths in their work and the areas where they might need to improve.

COMMENT- ONLY MARKING.

It is important to bear in mind that giving a mark in itself does not help students to understand how they might improve their work. The assessment is not formative in intention and it will do little or nothing for learning. In fact, giving marks or grades cancels out the impact of formative comments. In adopting the approach of comment-only marking the teacher gives feedback in three key areas in the student's learning cycle:

- What homework the student has completed correctly
- What weaknesses there are in the student's work
- What the next step/s should be to improve performance or understanding

This kind of feedback will be most helpful when the learning intentions and criteria for success are clearly understood by the students. The teacher's comments should relate to the task in hand, the learning intention and the criteria for success.

Where a school (or a subject department within a school) adopts a policy of comment-only marking, this should be explained to parents so that they understand what is happening and can be supportive to students in responding to feedback. In this way comment-only marking can become an important part of the school's practice of reporting to parents.

Comment-only marking does not preclude the giving of marks or grades to an assignment. The teacher can record the marks he/she awards to each assignment and use them to build up a picture of summative achievement for the student.

APPENDIX III

CUSTOM AND PRACTICE POLICY PROJECT & PRACTICAL WORK FOR THE STATE EXAMINATIONS

It is recognised that teachers in Cabinteely Community School regularly provide students with opportunities in class and with additional classes both at break time and after school to assist students in completing project and practical work for State Examinations.

However, it is equally recognised that some students do not accept responsibility for their work and fail to fully avail of these opportunities. This may lead to a frustration among teachers coupled with a concern that they may be responsible for a student's poor result for the practical/project element of the exam.

In relation to practical/project examination work please note the following:

- Teachers must inform all students of the necessary project/practical work to be completed and the timescale involved for completion of work. This information is provided annually to the school by the State Examinations Committee and is disseminated to staff by the Exam Secretary.
- Teachers must make every effort to ensure the secure and safe storage of the students' work.
- Teachers should inform the parents of any student who is not attempting the work or is failing to meet the deadline for submission of project/practical work.

This may involve:

A phone call home. The teacher should use the parental contact form for this purpose. The report should be given to the Year Head for the student file and a copy/note kept for the teacher's own record.

A letter home. The letter should be a standard letter devised as part of the subject plan for the department. The letter should be typed by the office staff in the interest of uniformity.

Teachers should keep the Exam Secretary, Guidance Counsellor, Deputy Principal and Principal informed of any actions planned or taken.

Teachers must pass any certificates of illness relating to absences during the period of exam project or practical work to the Exam Secretary as a matter of urgency.

Teachers should keep all correspondence from parents relating to the practical/project work as part of their records.