

Blackwood Comprehensive Homework Policy

The Rationale

Homework can be a controversial topic. There has been much debate over its benefit in supporting the progression of pupils' learning. However, used wisely and meaningfully it can support the development of pupils' independence in learning, consolidating their understanding of topics, practising skills and even igniting the spark for learning for learning's sake.

Homework enhances pupil learning, improves achievement and develops pupils' study skills. It requires careful planning and integration into the scheme of work of each curriculum area.

*In this policy, homework is defined as any work or activities which pupils are asked to do outside lesson time, either on their own or with parents/carers. **Not all homework is done at home; in fact, for some pupils who find it hard to work at home, or for some tasks which may require resources (books, software, equipment) more readily available at school, it is necessary or desirable to carry out the task at school. Staff need to be mindful of giving sufficient time to students to complete a task to the necessary standard.***

Contents:

1. Mission statement of Blackwood Comprehensive
2. Types of meaningful homework
3. General guidance on setting homework
4. Setting homework for ALN pupils
5. Setting homework for MAT pupils
6. Setting homework for eFSM pupils
7. Setting spelling / vocabulary `tests`
8. Setting research homework
9. Setting prior reading
10. Setting presentations as homework
11. Setting collaborative / group / paired homeworks
12. Setting numeracy work as homework
13. Setting of homework that includes the use of digital resources
14. Support for homework within each department
15. The marking of homework
16. Rewards and sanctions

Appendix:

- (i) Examples of letters for homework sanctions
- (ii) Example of spelling / vocabulary test template employing look / say / cover / write / check
- (iii) Example of homework frame for additional support
- (iv) Example of teacher homework record

Mission statement of Blackwood Comprehensive

Homework should be meaningful, relevant and designed to further consolidate and stretch the skills and knowledge of pupils based on their prior attainment. Every pupil should have the opportunity to develop their learning through the use of homework and support given so that every pupil has the same chance of completing the work to a high standard.

Homework should:

- Consolidate and extend work covered in class or prepare for new learning activities
- Access resources not available in the classroom and develop research skills
- Provide students with an opportunity for independent work
- Show progress and understanding
- Provide feedback in the evaluation of teaching
- Enhance study skills e.g. planning, time management and self discipline
- Encourage students to take ownership and responsibility for learning
- Engage parental co-operation and support and create channels for home school dialogue.

Types of meaningful homework.

Meaningful homework is that which consolidates and furthers the skills, understanding and knowledge of the pupil relevant to the topic being studied. It does not include colouring in, underlining headings or copying out chunks of text. **It should be planned for and prepared in readiness for the pupil and differentiated in the same way that classwork is differentiated to suit the needs of the individual / groups of pupils.**

The list below is not exhaustive.

Homework can take the form of:

- A specific self-contained project, exercise or task, based on previous class work.
- Further examples of tasks undertaken in class and is designed to reinforce what has been learned
- Completing work begun in class
- Reviewing, and, if appropriate, memorising what has been learned in class
- Follow-up work to assessment, in ensuring that the pupil learns from errors – close the gap responses
- Planning for an individual presentation
- Prior reading activities (text marking / highlighting / true or false / summarising 66 words or less etc)
- Spelling / vocabulary learning
- Responding to a safe `blog`
- Individual planning of a programme of homework/study. This is seen as a key study skill, central to the successful organisation and completion of homework programmes.
- Researching at home or in libraries using a variety of sources including ICT.
- Past paper practice
- Self assessing or peer assessing using criteria

Most of students find homework useful and recognise its place in the curriculum. Nevertheless it is important that the students know and recognise the **purpose** of a particular piece of homework.

This is how many students prioritise the purpose of homework:

Key Stage 3

1. Preparing for assessments.
2. To get used to revising.
3. Proving you have understood what you have done in class.
4. To build up subject knowledge.
5. Practising the skills needed in different subjects.
6. Finding out new information.
7. To promote independent lifelong learners.

Key Stage 4

1. To get used to revising.
2. Proving you have understood what you have done in class.
3. Preparing for GCSE questions.
4. To build up subject knowledge.
5. Practising the skills needed in different subjects.
6. Finding out new information.
7. To promote independent lifelong learners.

General Guidance on setting homework

(i) *Timing*

Pupils must be given at least a week in order to complete the homework that has been set although homework projects can take place over a fortnight, three weeks or even a half term. It is important however, that when setting homework projects over the half term that pupils are given regular `check points` in what they should have completed by each stage with the teacher completing `spot checks` to support the pupil in organising their time.

(ii) *Recording of homework*

Teachers must ensure that homework is recorded in the pupil planners with clear instructions about the deadline and title of homework. Spot checks should be undertaken to ensure that pupils have recorded the homework correctly. It is advisable that homework is set either at the start of the lesson, or at least 10 minutes prior to the end of the lesson to allow pupils enough time to record it correctly.

It is a good idea to have a `homework notice board` in the classroom so that any pupils who have been absent during the lesson when homework is set are aware of what they have to do. The homework notice board should include the following information – date set. Homework task. Deadline.

Teachers should keep a record of the homeworks set and whether pupils have completed the homework task on time to a satisfactory standard, were late, completed the homework but not to a satisfactory standard or failed to complete the homework at all. (see appendix)

Teachers should ensure that any homework tasks completed in exercise books / booklets are clearly labelled as Gwaith Catref.

(iii) Amount of homework given

Departments may choose to set short, frequent tasks or an extended investigation/task that the students complete over a longer period of time. In order to replicate the above guidelines we would hope that the **'average'** (please use this as a guide) amount of time each pupil spends each week on homework tasks reflects the following:

Key Stage 3	Time per fortnight		
Subject	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9
English	2 x 30 mins	3 x 30 mins	2 x 45 mins
Maths	2 x 30 mins	3 x 30 mins	2 x 45 mins
Science	2 x 30 mins	3 x 30 mins	2 x 45 mins
Technology	30 mins	30 mins	45 mins
Geography	30 mins	30 mins	45 mins
History	30 mins	30 mins	45 mins
ICT	30 mins	30 mins	30 mins
PE	30 mins	30 mins	45 mins
Art	30 mins	30 mins	45 mins
Welsh	30 mins	30 mins	45 mins
MFL	30 mins	30 mins	45 mins
Music	30 mins	30 mins	30 mins
Total	7 ½ hours	9 hours	10 ½ hours

Key stage 4 allocation of time:

In Key Stage 4 students should plan to spend 1 - 1 ½ hour each fortnight on each of their GCSE choices. This may involve consolidation and revision of work previously covered in lessons.

(iv) All departments should have a homework policy, detailing:

- When homework will be set
- How much homework should be set
- Types of homework used
- Place of homework in the scheme of work
- Expectations: How much and by whom?
- How it will be delivered?

Setting homework for ALN pupils

Pupils with ALN will require further support when completing homework tasks. The following list is not exhaustive:

- Homework frames to be given to support the organisation of their homework (see appendix)
- An appropriate font and size of font to be used – eg comic sans 14
- research tasks to be highly structured with advice given, clear questions to find information, guidance on websites to use, glossaries to support reading skills, pictures and symbols used to aid contextual clues to reading
- spelling / vocabulary `test` preparation to be limited to 5 words using the look / say / cover / write / check strategy (see appendix)
- support materials to be provided e.g. writing frames / speech frames / graphic organisers to capture information or to develop thinking / squared paper for numeracy / graph paper or part of the graphs already completed to help with presentation skills
- reminders of homework club and / or support within the department over the time period of the homework task.

Setting homework for MAT pupils

Homework can be a very effective way of extending MAT pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills by allowing them greater freedom to innovate, think creatively and pursue their own lines of interest within the topic. The following list is not exhaustive:

- allowing pupils to `teach` a section of the topic of their choice
- allowing pupils to collaborate on complex tasks / issues, for example safe blogs
- thinking not about quantity but the quality of the task being set for pupils. Is there any need for pupils to complete 30 questions easily when you could give 1 really demanding question that is more likely to stretch their capabilities? Find the point where they find the task difficult.
- Giving pupils greater choice in how they would like to present their information / skills
- Giving pupils suitable demanding reading material and asking them to condense the information
- Ensuring that pupils are tackling the higher order thinking skills such as evaluation, comparison, problem solving.

Setting homework for eFSM pupils

Studies have shown the greatest area where eFSM pupils often `fall short` of their non FSM peers is homework. This is not surprising given that these pupils might not have the same access to resources of other pupils in their home environment. No pupils should be disadvantaged from completing homework tasks. In order to support eFSM the following strategies are suggested, although this is not an exhaustive list:

- If homework set requires internet access / word processing / powerpoint etc for the teacher to offer time(s) when pupils who might not have access to these resources at home to complete the homework in school, ensuring that enough time is built into the homework task for completion
- To ensure that the pupil has access to the equipment needed to complete the homework e.g. paper, pens, dictionaries etc
- To ensure that the pupil has the option of completing the homework during after school time if a quiet place and desk is needed to complete the task(s)
- To ensure that the pupil has the option of discussing the homework further with the teacher as this support and guidance might not be available at home
- Departments to consider the use of `the homework pack` loan available to pupils for the duration of the homework task.
- To ensure that all homework that is set has as much visual stimulus as possible so that pupils who might not have travelled very much or had experience of things that some might take for granted have a chance of `connecting` with the information.
- To ensure that all homework set has very structured guidelines on how to complete the task as pupils may not have had support with organisational skills.

Setting spelling / vocabulary homework

Sometimes, it is necessary for pupils to learn new vocabulary and be reminded of spelling rules, but it can prove a challenge for some pupils and it should not be assumed that they will just `cope` if the teacher gives them a bundle of words to learn. The following list is not exhaustive:

- Before giving spelling and vocabulary homework explicitly teach the strategies that are useful in memorising new words – e.g splitting words into syllables / finding words or recognisable patterns within words / reminding of spelling rules / saying the word as it is spelt rather than how it is pronounced ie business etc
- Provide images to help pupils understand new vocabulary
- Use the look / say / cover / write / check strategy and form as an aid to the homework and check completion (see appendix)
- For ALN pupils no more than 5 spellings over the week, for mainstream pupils no more than 10 spellings over the week, MAT pupils a maximum of 20 a week.
- Teachers are to be careful in how they record the spelling / vocabulary tests to avoid demotivating pupils.

Setting research homework

Research homework is only as useful as the way in which it is planned and prepared for. All too often, pupils who are asked to `research a topic` will just print off 60+ pages of Wikipedia. This is not helpful to the pupil or the teacher. The following list is not exhaustive:

- Teachers should explicitly teach / remind pupils of research skills before setting the task e.g. how to find out information (asking people, how to use content and index pages, how to conduct a safe internet search, how to skim and scan and select information by highlighting and making notes, how to gather that information)
- Teachers should provide graphical frames for capturing information such as the spider diagram / mind map / concept map / tree diagram / 66 words or less – depending on the type of information being researched.
- Teachers should ensure that pupils understand how to check the reliability of their sources for information. HWB has Encyclopaedia Britannia which can also be differentiated for the level of reader. This is useful to direct pupils towards as the information will be reliable.
- Teachers should ensure that pupils are given enough time to complete the research homework and make it clear how they want the information presented.

Setting prior reading

This can be an important way for pupils to be fully prepared for lessons, with greater knowledge and understanding but if pupils have not completed the task then they might be disadvantaged during the lesson. The following list is not exhaustive:

- Ensure that you have taken into account the reading ages of your pupils before setting prior reading as homework. You should take into account how much you want them to read and the level of vocabulary and difficulty of sentence structure.
- Ensure that the reading material has glossaries for unfamiliar vocabulary and visual images to help decode the text.
- Ensure that the reading material is written clearly with a suitable font and size (e.g. comic sans 14)
- For ALN pupils ensure that the reading material is `chunked` for ease of reading. Sometimes you will need to edit the information so that it is easier for pupils to access the information.
- Decide how you are going to check that pupils have completed the reading task e.g. questions, 66 words or less, true and false grids, PISA style questions etc.

Setting presentations as homework.

The following list is not exhaustive:

- Explicitly teach the skills for presentation if you are setting this as a homework. For example, how to structure a presentation, thinking about their audience and their engagement, the use of clear and precise language.
- Avoid encouraging pupils to use powerpoint presentations as often pupils will merely read information that they have cut and pasted from an internet source. It is suggested that they are only allowed 10 key words throughout their presentation on the powerpoint but unlimited signs and symbols to remind them of the content they wished to use.
- Be aware that some pupils are very nervous at presenting and be sensitive to their needs. Could some pupils complete presentations to a smaller group rather than a whole class?
- Provide support by means of a speech frame or some other graphical organiser to help them when speaking.

Setting collaborative /group / paired homeworks

Pupils often enjoy working together and build essential social skills whilst doing so. However teachers need to be mindful of the following potential difficulties:

- Ensure that pupils are able to collaborate with each other outside of school times and how they are going to be able to do this
- Give pupils enough time to collaborate properly throughout the homework task
- Ensure that pupils feel comfortable collaborating with each other for the homework task and have strict guidelines on what is expected behaviour and treatment of people in their group
- Have spot checks on who is doing what, with specific roles so that the pupils are working equally hard!
- Consider how you will manage the task if one or more people of the group are absent.
- Think carefully about how information and resources amongst the group will be shared so that the task is completed.

Setting numeracy tasks as homework

This list is not exhaustive:

- Ensure that the numeracy skills are explicitly taught before the homework is set
- Ensure that pupils know whether they are able to use a calculator or not
- Ensure that pupils have access to the right equipment to complete the homework for example, squared graph paper or protractors or 30cm ruler
- Ensure that pupils understand that they have to demonstrate their workings out

Setting of homework that includes digital resources

This list is not exhaustive:

- Ensure that pupils have access to the resources that they need to complete the homework
- Ensure that pupils are able to complete the homework **safely**

Support for homework in the department

Not all homework is done at home; in fact, for some pupils who find it hard to work at home, or for some tasks which may require resources (books, software, equipment) more readily available at school, it is necessary or desirable to carry out the task at school. Staff need to be mindful of giving sufficient time to students to complete a task to the necessary standard.

- It is suggested that departments might have a set time for KS3 and KS4 when pupils are able to gain further support (either teacher guidance or resources)
- Departments can also remind pupils of the additional support available from the homework club run at lunchtimes throughout the week and the use of the LRC and LRC manager.

The marking of homework

Pupils deserve to be given feedback on the work that they have completed. There is nothing worse for pupils than to spend a great deal of time completing a homework task only for the teacher not to give any kind of feedback at all or feedback that is several weeks after the completion of the exercise. This soon leads to disengagement and pupils feeling that homework tasks are a waste of time. This list is not exhaustive:

- Success criteria marking
- Peer / self assessment with guidance
- Code marking
- WWW and EBI
- Red / green marking – where red signifies areas of improvement and green signifies areas of strength linked to success criteria
- Target marking
- Oral feedback

Responsibilities

The role of the pupil

- To listen to homework instructions in class
- To copy down instructions for the task and deadline date into the planner
- To ensure that homework is completed and handed in to meet the deadline
- To attempt all work and give of their best
- To inform the class teacher of any difficulties.

The role of the Form Tutor

- To include homework in pupil mentoring where appropriate
- To see that homework is being set and recorded
- To check that the diary is being signed by the parent/guardian
- To note and respond to any comments written in diaries by parents.

The role of the Class Teacher

The class teacher controls the direction of homework and the nature of tasks undertaken. The teacher will:

- Set homework according to the timetable
- Give full and comprehensive instructions
- Set deadlines for completed work and ensure that they are met
- Mark and return all homework promptly
- Provide help and support
- Inform the Head of Department and/or Head of Year when homework is not completed.

The role of the Head of Department

- To seek to enhance the quality of homework set

- To monitor and evaluate homework policy within their curriculum area.

The role of the Parents

The role of the parent is crucial if a child is to gain success from homework. To reinforce the value of homework via positive feedback will give students the confidence to persevere, to work hard and continue to elevate standards of achievement.

- Negotiate with the student when homework is to be done
- Check the time spent on individual tasks
- Check presentation and content of all homework being returned to school
- Sign the homework diary each week
- Provide the school with information about any problems through the planner or by contacting the school directly.

Monitoring

Homework diaries will be checked by:

- The form tutor (fortnightly)
- The Head of Year (as part of the review cycle)
- Member of the Leadership Team (sampled half termly).

Subject Staff

- Will keep a record of homework tasks as part of lesson plan
- Make the record available to the head of department.

Head of Department

- Will look at examples of homework and talk to pupils and staff
- Will evaluate and update action plan.

Blackwood Comprehensive School
Ty Isha Terrace
Blackwood NP12 1ER

Homework alert letter

Causing concern

Serious concern

Dear Parent / Guardian

Pupil name: _____

Class: _____

Date:

I am sorry to inform you that your child has

- a) Not returned the appropriate homework in his/ her class
- b) Made a poor attempt at homework in his / her class

It is very important that all homework tasks are completed to a satisfactory level and are handed in on time.

Please discuss the importance of completing homework with your child. I am sure that with your support your child will realise that completing homework on time will help to improve his / her progress.

Please complete the tear off slip below and give it to your child to return to me along with the homework. This will let me know you are aware of the present difficulties.

Yours sincerely

Teacher

_____ Department

Child's name _____ Class: _____

Spelling / vocabulary frame

Look / say / cover / write / check

Word	1st attempt	2nd attempt	3rd attempt

Homework frame:

Title of task: _____

Purpose (why you are doing it)

Success criteria:

-
-
-

Equipment needed:

Black / blue pen		Compass	
Pencil		Calculator	
Coloured pencils		Protractor	
Ruler		Highlighters	
Felt tip pens		Eraser / rubber	
Pencil sharpener		Other (specifiy)	
dictionary			

Added resources needed:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Work to be completed by: _____

Handwritten		Word processed	
A4 plain paper		A3 plain paper	
Squared graph paper		A4 lined paper	
Exercise book		Completed in booklet	

Instructions:

Step one:

Step two:

Step three:

Step four:

Remember to check over your work.

Headings underlined	
Neat writing	
Spellings checked	
Full stops and capital letters checked	
Make sure it makes sense	
Calculations checked	
Does it fulfil the success criteria?	