



# Whitehall Nursery and Infant School

## Homework Policy

### What is Homework?

Homework is an important part of a child's education, and can add much to a child's development. Homework refers to any work or activity which pupils are asked to do outside lesson time, either on their own or with parents/guardians.

It could be short activities of different kinds such as simple games, revising RML sounds, number facts and, of course, reading together. These provide a very important opportunity for young children to talk about the things they have been learning in school and to practise key skills in a supportive environment. Homework doesn't have to stop at academic activities; just talking to your children opens so many doors. As adults we have the power to ignite the awe and wonder of the world around us; this is one of the most powerful types of 'homework' there is and we actively encourage this at Whitehall.

Homework plays a positive role in raising a child's level of attainment. However, we also acknowledge the important role of play and free time in a child's growth and development. While homework is important, it should not prevent children from taking part in the activities of various out-of-school clubs and of other organisations that play an important part in the lives of our pupils. We are well aware that children spend more time at home than at school, and we believe that they develop their interests and skills to the full only when parents and carers encourage them to make maximum use of the opportunities available outside school.

As they get older, homework provides an opportunity for children to develop the skills of independent learning. Children should gradually get into the habit of regularly devoting periods of time, which may not be long, to study. Homework should cover a wide range of tasks and curriculum content. This approach will benefit their learning and also ensure that, in relation to homework as much as to other aspects, their transition to Year 3 at the Junior School is as smooth as possible.

Therefore it is to be expected that as children get older, their homework demands will increase gradually. Again, this should be differentiated/matched where appropriate to take account of individual pupil's needs.

### Our aims at Whitehall:

- to develop an effective partnership between the school and parents/guardians and other carers in supporting the development of the child
- to enable pupils to make maximum progress in their academic and social development
- to help pupils develop the skills of an independent learner and help them to consolidate and reinforce skills and understanding, particularly in literacy and maths; extending the time that children spend on learning

- to support the attitude that learning is not confined to the classroom and that children can have ownership over their learning experiences
- to help children develop good work habits for the future

## **How does homework differ across the school?**

### **Nursery**

In nursery, the main focus to begin with is settling the children into nursery setting and establishing good routines. This extends to home life too as routine at home hugely benefits how they do during the day at school.

As the children settle, they will start bringing books home to share with family members. During the school day, the children will have the opportunity to choose which book they would like to take home. We strongly encourage parents/guardians to share books with their child regularly. This includes reading to them so that they can hear how the voice is used when reading stories aloud. It also includes discussing the pictures, the vocabulary and the characters in the book. Story 'telling' is also a powerful way of broadening a child's knowledge of stories and developing their imagination; this could be telling them a fairy tale or cultural story or making your own stories up together. Later in the school year, children may start to bring home some RML sound cards to practise but this will be discussed with the parent directly.

One of the biggest expectations of 'homework' in the Early Years is to scaffold and enrich the children's spoken language. It is crucial that parents/guardians spend time talking to their child as much as possible; explaining what they are doing around the house, talking about what they can see when they are outside, as well as talking to their child about what they did at nursery and what they will do at the weekend so that they are experiencing a range of tenses in spoken language. Parents/guardians are encouraged to extend their child's language by remodelling what they say or by offering opportunities for their language to be developed further. i.e. Child: 'Look, a bus.' Adult: 'It is a bus, well done. It's a big, red bus. Where do you think it's going?'

Children may be encouraged to create a 'project' at the beginning of each half term for the new topic in nursery. Parents/guardians will receive relevant correspondence about this when this work is set.

### **Reception**

Reception children will bring a library book home from school with them every week. This book will be matched to their ability level by the teacher. They will also have the opportunity to pick another 'free choice' book that is not ability matched. This will allow them to continue to develop their passion for reading at home as well as in school. The children will be taught the importance of respecting books in school and we urge parents to do the same at home. Children will be encouraged to share the books that are sent home for at least 10 minutes a day. This might be with a parent, a sibling or another adult. 'Sharing' a book encompasses being read to or reading to someone else. It also includes the discussion of the features of a book, characters, story setting and plot. Whilst sharing their book, children should be questioned to check their understanding.

Reception children will bring home RML sound homework which will allow them the opportunity to continue practising the sounds that have been introduced to them in their daily RML phonics lessons.

Every so often, children may bring home a soft toy and a diary to complete over the weekend. It is given to a different child each weekend. This is an exciting way to encourage the children to speak

openly to their peers about their home life and experiences. It is also exposure to a different purpose for writing.

At the first parents evening, parents are given a pack of ideas that they can do with their children at home.

Parents/guardians are still encouraged to continue to talk to their child and scaffold and enrich their language development.

## Year 1

Year 1 children also take an RML phonics book home that is matched to their reading ability. They should read this book every day to embed the skills that they have learnt in school. They will also bring a 'free choice' book home that may not be matched to their reading ability level. This book is to encourage children to read for pleasure with their family members. Year 1 children are expected to read for at least **10 minutes** each day.

Additional homework in Year 1 includes a piece of either maths or writing homework; this is alternated each week. The homework is matched to the child's ability level and provides the opportunity for the children to practise skills or strategies that they have been taught in school that week.

Every half term Year 1 children have the opportunity to engage in a project relating to their next topic. They are able to be as creative as they wish as to what they create and how they present it. The projects usually expect the children to research before they complete the project.

Each Friday, Year 1 children take spellings home to practise ready for an informal test the following Friday. Spellings are selected based on their phonic ability and include the common exception words, days of the week and months of the year. Topic words are also included in spelling lists at the beginning of each half term. Parents are given some guidance to support spelling practise at home at the parents evening in the autumn term.

## Year 2

Like Year 1 children, Year 2 children also take an RML phonics book home that is matched to their reading ability. They should read this book every day to embed the skills that they have learnt in school. They will also bring a 'free choice' book home that may not be matched to their reading ability level. This book is to encourage children to read for pleasure with their family members. Year 2 children are expected to read for at least **20 minutes** each day. When children complete the RML phonics programme in school, they move into a group that focusses the children's reading development around comprehension, inference and deduction skills. These groups get additional reading homework to help to develop their fluency. These children will have an extended text to read twice a week and a book review to complete.

Year 2 children are set two lots of homework that is closely linked to the maths and literacy work covered in their classes that week. The homework is differentiated to meet the needs of each child. Children should be able to access the work independently and it will allow for further practise to embed skills introduced in school.

Every half term Year 2 children have the opportunity to engage in a project relating to their next topic. They are able to be as creative as they wish as to what they create and how they present it. The projects usually expect the children to research before they complete the project. Someone from each class group is selected through an anonymous voting system by their peers to receive a prize for their efforts.

Each Wednesday, Year 2 children take spellings home to practise ready for an informal test the following Wednesday. Spellings are selected based on their phonic ability and include the common exception words, days of the week and months of the year. Topic words are also included in spelling lists at the beginning of each half term. Parents are given some guidance to support spelling practise at home at the parents evening in the autumn term.

## **What is the role of the school?**

It is important to note that the organisation and preparation of good quality homework takes time. At Whitehall Nursery and Infant School homework will be discussed and celebrated, however it will not be subject to detailed marking.

We hope the homework arrangements are manageable for everyone: parents/guardians and, not least, teachers.

We will:

- discuss and explain homework at Reception Induction Meetings and initial parent/guardian consultation meeting
- ensure children and parents/guardians are very clear about what they need to do
- treat parents/guardians as partners in their children's learning
- ensure tasks are carefully planned and structured to support progression in learning, as part of school's schemes of work
- ensure there is a regular programme so that everyone including teachers, children and parents/guardians – know what to expect each week
- maintain channels of communication between home/school
- ensure there is a team approach to ensure consistent practice
- regularly monitor and evaluate homework policies to check that they support children's learning in the best possible way
- ensure homework is set at the right level so that all children's needs are met. Some children may benefit from special tasks separate from the homework set for other children in the class. Setting appropriate homework, which does not demand too much or too little of children and their parents/guardians, needs close co-ordination between class teacher, special needs co-ordinators and parents/guardians.

## **What are parents/guardians expected to do?**

When enrolling, parents/guardians and children are asked to discuss and sign Whitehall Nursery and Infant School Home/School Agreement.

Speaking and Listening is perhaps the most important part of English and, as a skill, comes before Reading and Writing. Please encourage your child to discuss with you what he/she has done in school during the day.

As stated above, we encourage parents/guardians to take an interest in the work that their child brings home. In general terms, parents/guardians, in addition to regularly reading with their child and checking reading record books, should provide:

- a reasonably peaceful, suitable place in which the pupil can do their homework
- time to work together, especially with younger children. (A little often is better than trying to complete everything in one go.)
- encouragement and support

Parents need to make it clear to pupils that they value homework, and support the school in explaining how it can help their learning. This is easily achieved by offering encouragement in completion, remaining positive and celebrating their achievements.

## **How long should children spend doing homework?**

In Reception, we encourage children to share a book with someone at home for 10 minutes a day. Additional homework set should be spread over the course of the week and should not take more than 5-10 minutes a day dependent on the activity.

We expect children in Key Stage 1 to spend approximately **one hour a week** on home activities, and this may well include reading with a parent. This may be more by the end of year 2 depending on the type of homework set and the additional reading that children are likely to take home. We encourage children to spread their homework out over several days.

## **Inclusion**

We set homework for all children as a normal part of school life. We ensure that all tasks set are appropriate to the ability of the child, and we endeavour to adapt any task set so that all children can contribute in a positive way. We value and celebrate the cultural diversity of our pupils and their families, and we appreciate the enrichment that this brings.

## **Can I use a computer or mobile device to support homework?**

A copy of the school's e-safety policy should be read in conjunction with this policy. Children's safety is paramount in all matters regarding use of the internet and we advise parents and carers to always supervise their child's access to the internet.

There are many websites containing highly educational material which can have a powerful effect on children's learning. The school website's 'Pupil' page directs you to some that we feel are valuable for the children's learning. Some homework may be set using some of these websites.

Although we encourage the safe use of the internet to support homework, we do not encourage all homework to be completed using computers.

**This policy will be reviewed every three years.**

Signed: N. Dogan

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