

St Mary's School Homework Policy



Preamble

This Homework Policy takes into account a number of factors:

- community expectations about homework are variable
- research regarding the value of homework is inconclusive
- schools are best placed to make decisions about homework in consultation with their communities.

Our Homework Policy has been reviewed and developed with the key stakeholders including: teachers, students, the School Leadership Team and the St Mary's School Advisory Council. It is consistent with the school's Learning and Teaching program, current research and findings of the Victorian Parliamentary Paper 2014 ⁹.

There is little consensus in the literature as to whether homework raises student achievement. Most researchers conclude that for primary students, there is no evidence that homework lifts academic performance. ⁹

Overall it seems that some homework is better than too much, or none at all, however the time allocated to homework needs to be appropriate for the student's age and development. The research indicates that a 'more homework the better' view is misleading and should not be the basis for policy and practice.

Excessive homework may impact negatively on student achievement and "can reduce the amount of time available to pursue other activities and interests which may have equal or greater long term benefit". ⁹

Rationale

At St Mary's School we believe that there is strong evidence and general agreement that homework at the primary school level has little impact on academic performance.¹ However, we recognise that it may play a transitional role in preparing students for secondary school and beyond. ²

Homework provides senior primary students with opportunities to reinforce and consolidate their classroom learning, develop skills and establish disciplined behaviours to develop as lifelong learners and, to some degree, involve family members in student learning. It also provides a means of communication between the school and parents about their child's learning and progress.

We believe that contemporary research in partnership with our lived experience at St Mary's School indicates that homework does not value add to the academic and personal learning endeavours of our students. Furthermore, the formal expectations of recording book titles, page numbers and duration is detrimental to fostering a lifelong love of reading.

The formation of a revised homework policy and future revisions run parallel with our *Pastoral Care of Students Policy*. We identify that: 'Staff, students and parents/carers share responsibility for developing and maintaining open and cooperative relationships characterised by respect, trust, goodwill and a willingness to engage collaboratively.' An integral facet of our ongoing commitment to learning is to acknowledge and support the collaborative partnership between school and home.

Aims

The aims of homework at St Mary's School are:

- to strengthen home-school connections and reaffirm the role of parents and guardians as partners in education
- to develop positive study habits, concentration, discipline and organisational skills **6**
- to understand that learning takes place in different environments
- to assist the students in developing responsibility
- to reinforce and enrich the students' learning process
- to foster an enjoyment of reading by developing a '**reading habit**'. **10**

We believe that homework is useful when:

- practices endeavour to accommodate a variety of family circumstances
- timely feedback is provided **3**
- it allows for the fact that children learn and progress at different rates **4**
- it develops productive life long habits of learning and planning
- students engage willingly and are supported
- it is balanced with a range of recreational, family and cultural activities **5**
- allocated time spent on homework is appropriate for the age and development of students, and sufficient to provide an enjoyable experience without impacting adversely on family and child leisure time
- it is undertaken in partnership between home and school and it provides parents with an opportunity to be part of the formal learning process
- reading is a major focus.

Implementation

Homework time will vary in duration and frequency according to the age of students. For primary school aged students, there is little benefit derived with lengthy, formal homework sessions. It is recommended that parents engage meaningfully in reading with their child at the end of each school day. When homework is requested by staff, it will be consistent with the guidelines below.

Parents are advised of homework expectations at the beginning of each school year and are provided with a copy of the school's Homework Policy in The Parent Handbook and the School Website.

Roles and Responsibilities

The School Leadership Team will:

- develop a school homework policy, in consultation with the school community, particularly the teachers, students and the School Advisory Council
- distribute the school Homework Policy to staff, students, parents and guardians, at the time of student enrolment, and make it available on the School Website, the Parent and the Teacher Handbook
- ensure that homework expectations are consistent with the school's Homework Policy and effectively implemented throughout the school
- facilitate the communication process between school and home and support these partnerships in relation to homework
- facilitate a review of the school's Homework Policy at the scheduled time for review.

The teacher's responsibilities in relation to homework are to:

- ensure that homework expectations are consistent with the school's homework guidelines
- set expectations in an introductory letter to parents and guardians at the beginning of the school year
- provide students with opportunities to change their books regularly and to use of the library to select appropriate texts
- set homework and give direction to children regarding the completion of assigned tasks (Levels 5 and 6)
- monitor homework tasks (Levels 5 and 6) in order to provide timely and relevant feedback
- communicate with families when homework is not completed or submitted
- provide feedback to parents where required

The student's responsibilities in relation to homework are to:

- read for the prescribed amount of time each night
- hand in their diaries each week for the classroom teacher to sign
- take responsibility for choosing their level of engagement in reading
- take pride in and submit their best work
- be fully engaged with the homework task
- use technology responsibly
- bring completed work to school by the due date
- ask their teacher or parents if they are having difficulty understanding a task or need assistance.

The parents and guardian's responsibilities in relation to homework are to:

- affirm positive attitudes towards homework

- support the development of their child's time-management skills in order to meet homework deadlines
- celebrate their children's learning successes
- provide a suitable environment in which homework can be completed
- encourage their child to complete and submit the homework
- encourage their child to 'have a go' before providing assistance
- ensure that homework does not become a burden on the child by balancing 'work' and 'play'
- report to the child's teacher any concerns regarding the nature and quantity of homework, or any other homework concerns
- be aware of the role they play in homework and in particular the expectation of student's reading nightly.

Reading is Fundamental

As reading is an essential lifelong skill, particular attention is given to reading as a major component of the homework. We also aim to encourage a love of books and reading. The habit of reading every night is vital to support students in developing their reading skills.⁷ Therefore, we expect all students to set aside the specified time each night for their reading homework.

To help with this, home reading logs/diaries will be used to monitor the frequency of reading, the types of books read etc. Texts can include books borrowed from the library, newspapers, audio books, comic books and age-appropriate reading on the Internet (where appropriate).

As part of supporting reading homework, parents and students are responsible for:

- reading every school night, at every year level (also encouraged during weekends and holiday times)
- providing a wide range of reading opportunities daily (e.g. reading to the child, reading with the child, listening to the child read, allowing the child to listen to reading by an older sibling or adult (audio text))
- selecting appropriate texts
- taking care of books
- discussing personal reading goals

Prep to Level 4

In these levels no formal homework is set. However, many activities at home or play can assist children to develop literacy, numeracy and problem-solving skills. For example, preparing for the next day by gathering readers, lunchbox and notes to encourage organisational skills.

Parents are encouraged to read to their child so as to assist them in the development of skills and the enjoyment of reading. All junior students are expected to be involved in reading, for 10-15 minutes each day after school.

Levels 5 and 6

Students are to be given more responsibility for their learning with a strong focus on daily independent reading. They will be required to engage in independent learning to consolidate work undertaken in class. All senior school students are expected to spend no more than 45 minutes per night working on their homework, including 20 minutes reading each night.

Homework can be completed daily or over a weekly or fortnightly period.

Monitoring and Evaluation

During the course of the school year, teachers will be required to review their homework practices in relation to the school's Homework Policy, providing information to the School Leadership Team for monitoring purposes.

Evaluation of the homework policy will be on a bi-annual basis for relevancy and effectiveness.

Policy Ratified: 23rd June 23, 2021 by Ben Shields

Policy Review Date: June 2023

Notes: Policy will be in effect from the commencement of Semester 2, 2021 with communication of expectations to all teaching staff. The updated policy will be available on the school website and updates offered to parents via the school newsletter/SeeSaw.

References

- 1 Professor John Hattie, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, Transcript of evidence – Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian Schools, Melbourne, 29 April 2014,
- 2 Professor Mike Horsley, Co-author of ‘Reforming Homework’, Central Queensland University, Transcript of evidence – Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian Schools, Melbourne, 28 April 2014, 31.
- 3 Nicole Schrat Carr, ‘Increasing the effectiveness of homework for all learners in the inclusive classroom’ (2013) 1(23) School Community Journal 169, 176.
- 4 Parliament of Victoria, Education and Training Committee 2014, Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian Schools, Parliamentary Paper, p 40-41.
- 5 Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), School policy & advisory guide: Homework Expectations, viewed 7 November 2014.
- 6 Mr Chris Thompson, Director Priority Projects Branch, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of evidence - Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian schools, Melbourne, 28 April 2014, 2
- 7 Reading to Young Children: A Head-Start in Life, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Melbourne University
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/about/research/readtoyoungchild.pdf>
- 8 Homework guidelines: Victorian State Government Education and Training
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/guidelines.aspx>
- 9 Inquiry into Approaches to Homework in Victoria, Parliamentary Paper 2014
- 10 Reading for Pleasure: A research Overview, Clark, Rumbold, National Literacy Trust 2006
http://www.scholastic.com/content/collateral_resources/swf/i/Reading_for_pleasure.swf