

Our Lady and St Patrick's College, Knock



Homework Policy

This policy will be reviewed three years after it has been ratified by the Board of Governors of the College.

Policy Details

Legal Status	Adopted	Version Date	Last Review	Next Review	Responsible
Non-Statutory	March 2020	January 2020	May 2012	January 2023	Mr P McCormick

Related Policies and Documents:

1. Learning and Teaching Policy
2. Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy
3. Curriculum Policy
4. Literacy Policy
5. Numeracy Policy
6. Positive Behaviour Policy
7. Special Educational Needs Policy
8. Vatterott, C. (2010). Five hallmarks of good homework. Educational Leadership, 68(1), 10–15
9. The Case for (Quality) Homework – Bempechat, Education Next, Winter 2019, 3
10. Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? Cooper, Robinson & Patall, Review of Educational Research, 76(1), 1-62

All policies are available on the College Website and Private Folders

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1. Aims of the Homework Policy

- To promote learning outside of lesson time as an essential part of a good education, helping all students achieve their full potential.
- To develop student responsibility by encouraging independent learning.
- To enhance and extend classroom learning.
- To reinforce student self-evaluation.
- To encourage life-long learning.
- To involve parents in their children's learning.

2. Definition of Homework

Homework refers to any learning activities that students are asked to complete outside of lesson time.

3. Rationale for Setting Homework

Research supports the view that students who complete homework academically, outperform students who do not (e.g. Cooper, Robinson & Patall, 2006 and Bempechat, 2019). It can improve students' study skills, improve their attitudes towards school, and demonstrate that learning can take place outside of formal schooling. However, excessive homework may impact negatively on student achievement, by reducing students' access to extra-curricular activities that can help them to develop important life skills.

How homework is set is likely to be very important. There is evidence that homework is most effective when used as a short and focused intervention, e.g. in the form of a project or a specific target connected with a particular element of learning. Benefits are likely to be more modest if homework is more routinely set, e.g. every day. Evidence also suggests that how homework relates to learning during normal school time is important. In the most effective examples homework is **an integral part of learning**, rather than an add-on. To maximise impact, it also appears to be important that students are provided with **high quality feedback** on their work, which recognises their efforts and explains how they could improve.

Homework is set primarily to:

- develop the habit of independent study, fostering responsibility, organisational skills, perseverance and the ability to manage distractions;
- reinforce and extend what has been learned in the classroom;
- build on the Assessment for Learning approach used in the classroom;
- provide an indication of student progress;
- help students prepare for future lessons and assessments;
- help students to cultivate positive beliefs about learning.

Before giving a specific homework assignment, teachers should ask themselves whether it is likely to improve student learning. Giving students homework tasks that do not help their understanding is likely to demotivate them and stymie their progress. All representatives on the Student Council agreed that overall, homework is useful "but only give it if it is beneficial for learning" (Student Council Meeting, 5/12/19).

4. Teachers' Responsibilities

Teachers should set regular and meaningful homework tasks that are appropriate for each student's age and ability, including tasks for those with special educational needs and the gifted and talented. Some homework may be set for the next lesson, others such as project work, essays or research may be given well in advance of a stated deadline thus encouraging the development of good time management skills. Teachers should provide

sufficient guidance on any homework set and allocate an appropriate period of time for the homework to be completed. They should also allow provide sufficient time for homework tasks to be written into Student Planners. At pressure points in the school year, it may be appropriate for teachers to be flexible in terms of the time that they allocate for homework assignments. Many researchers emphasise the importance of setting **differentiated homework tasks** that relate to where the students are in their learning. A variety of tasks with different levels of challenge is likely to be beneficial and the purpose of a homework should always be clear.

Homework should be marked promptly and accurately, using the **Common Marking Grids for Literacy and Numeracy** (see Appendix 1 and 2) when appropriate, and in accordance with subject department guidelines. For Junior School students in particular, guidance should include the length of time that the homework task should take. **Feedback** should be constructive and given in a way that lets students know:

- how well they have done;
- how they can improve.

Depending on the type of homework set, feedback may be in the form of written comments or annotation. On other occasions it may be in the shape of verbal comments to individual students, or whole class discussions on aspects of the homework.

Students are permitted to work after school in the **Homework Club** in the Library, or alternatively in the Dining Hall if the Library is closed.

Teachers should reduce the amount of homework they give at those times of the school year when students are also being asked to prepare for internal or external examinations or assessments. Teachers are encouraged to liaise with their students so that they are aware of times in the school year when their students are under pressure to complete homework, coursework or revision tasks.

5. Students' Responsibilities

Each student in the College is given a **Student Planner** at the beginning of the school year to record details of homework set and to help ensure that deadlines are met. The Student Planner should be brought to every lesson and the following practices must be observed:

- all entries are to be made in ink on the date the homework is given;
- the date that the homework is due should also be recorded;
- students should plan the completion of their homework tasks within the timescales they are given;
- Student Planners should be kept neat and tidy;
- parents of students in Years 8, 9 and 10 should sign Student Planners at the end of each week.

Classroom assistants should ensure that the SEN children that they are responsible for, are aware of the homework that has been set, along with the timescales for completion. Where appropriate, parents should also be informed.

It is also the responsibility of every student to ensure that they catch up as soon as possible with any work missed through absence from class. This can be done by contacting the relevant teacher or a fellow student at the earliest opportunity. As an alternative to this, some teachers may upload homework tasks onto MS *OneDrive*, MS *OneNote*, MS *Sway* or the *Fronter* virtual learning environment, to allow students to access them via the internet at home. For some subjects, homework will have been incorporated into the interactive notes distributed at the start of the school year.

6. Parents' Responsibilities

Parental involvement with homework can be an effective way for students, especially younger students, to

improve their learning. It can give parents a first-hand idea of what students are learning and how well they are doing in school. However, it can also have a negative impact on learning; for example, if the parent ends up completing the homework task instead of the student.

Parents can help by:

- assisting teachers to monitor homework by signing the Student Planner or completed work if requested;
- checking Student Planners for notes left by teachers, either to compliment students on the quality of their homework or to alert parents that homework has not been well done;
- taking an active interest in homework;
- ensuring that there is time set aside for homework;
- encouraging and supporting students to complete homework providing, where possible, a quiet place to work.
- communicating with teachers any concerns about the nature of homework and their son/daughter's approach to homework;
- encouraging their son/daughter to read and take an interest in current affairs;
- alerting the school to any extenuating circumstances which may need to be taken into consideration when homework is being set.

See Appendix 3: **How Can I Help with My Child's Learning?**

7. Homework Activities

The amount and nature of homework set varies according to the subject and the Year Group. Homework should be related to work that students are doing in their lessons. Representatives on the Student Council suggest that homework tasks should be given before the end of the lesson, to ensure that they are clear about what they have to do and have time to record it in their Student Planners (Student Council meeting, 5/12/19).

Examples of homework activities include:

- reading;
- essay writing;
- summarising;
- further examples of questions undertaken in class, to reinforce what has been learned;
- completing work started in school;
- follow-up work after an assessment has been marked;
- learning or revising for assessments;
- preparing a presentation;
- carrying out research – e.g. for a project or coursework;
- flipped classroom activity, e.g. listening to a podcast or watching a video clip on YouTube;
- making something;
- participating in an online discussion group;
- answering examination questions;
- analysing model answers and examiners' reports;
- catching up on work missed due to absence from lessons.

8. Effective Homework

Cathy Vatterott (2010) identified **five fundamental characteristics of good homework**: Purpose, Aesthetic Appeal, Competence, Efficiency and Ownership.

- **Purpose** means that all homework assignments are meaningful. Teachers should give students assignments that are purposeful for them and methods that work for their learning. Teachers should not assign

homework as a matter of routine, rather, only when there is a specific purpose. Homework should provide teachers with feedback about student understanding.

- **Aesthetic appeal**, the way homework looks, is important. Students at all levels are more motivated to complete assignments that are visually uncluttered. Less information on the page, plenty of room to write answers, and the use of graphics make tasks look inviting and interesting.
- **Competence** is the third hallmark of effective homework. Students should feel competent in completing homework. In order to achieve this, it is beneficial to abandon the one-size-fits-all model. Homework that students can't do without help is not good homework; students are discouraged when they are unable to complete homework on their own. Homework should be *differentiated* so that it is the appropriate level of difficulty for individual students. This can be achieved in a variety of ways: different instructions, shorter assignments, or more challenging requirements for gifted students. Teachers also need to consider accommodations recommended for students with SEN as noted on their Personal Learning Plans. In addition, it is of great importance that teachers adequately explain and scaffold homework assignments to ensure success.
- **Efficiency** means that homework should not take an inordinate amount of time to complete and should require thinking. Tasks that are of moderate difficulty are most likely to enhance student motivation. Assignments that are too easy can lead to boredom, and assignments that are too difficult lead to frustration. Well-structured assignments that are adequately difficult are key.
- Students who feel connected to the content and assignment learn more and are more motivated. Providing students with choice in their assignments is one way to create **Ownership**. Connecting assignments with student interest is also essential for promoting ownership. In addition, homework should be structured in a way that the students can accomplish it with relatively high success rates. When students can take pride in a job well done, they feel more ownership of their work.

9. Recommended Time for Homework

Some research studies indicate that there may be an optimum amount of homework time per school day, which will be slightly longer for older pupils, with effects diminishing as the time that students spend on homework increases.

It is expected that students should spend a reasonable amount of time on homework and private study each evening. The emphasis should be on how homework helps a student to learn, rather than on whether it takes a certain amount of time. Some students will work more quickly than others and get more done in less time. When students move into the **Upper School** there should be a greater emphasis on independent study as they start to prepare themselves for life after school, and for the great majority, higher education.

Students in all Year Groups should note that when homework has been completed the remaining time should be devoted to **personal study or revision**.

Year Group	Recommended Daily Time
8	1 hour 30 minutes
9	2 hours
10	2 hours
11	2 hours 30 mins
12	3 hours
13 and 14	3 hours (which is in addition to study time in school)

10. Monitoring of Homework

A subject teacher concerned about the quality of a student's homework should report this to the student's

Tutor, who may contact parents if an improvement is not observed. The Student Planners of Years 8 to 12 students may be inspected at regular intervals by teachers, Tutors, Heads of Year, Heads of School. Teachers are encouraged to write short notes in Student Planners for the attention of parents; either to compliment students on the quality of their homework or to alert parents that there is an issue.

Appendix 1: The Common Marking Grid for Literacy

When a piece of work is returned to you, you may find some of these abbreviations and markings on it. This table explains what each of these means and what you should do if one appears on your work.

SYMBOL	MEANING	WHAT YOU SHOULD DO
✓	Correct answer; good idea or good use of language.	Keep this up; aim to do as well in other work.
Sp	Spelling error.	Check the spelling and write the word correctly at least three times.
P	Punctuation error.	Write out the sentence once with the correct punctuation.
Gr	Grammatical error.	Rewrite the sentence with your error corrected.
//	New paragraph needed.	Make sure you get this right if you are redrafting work; e.g. in your good book.
Exp	Your expression is weak/ imprecise/inappropriate.	Rewrite the sentence(s) improving your expression.
Cap	Capital letters have not been used correctly.	Write out the sentence once with the correct use of capital letters.
Ap	Apostrophe has not been used correctly.	Correct the phrase three times.

When you do your corrections if there is anything you are unsure about, ask your teacher for help.

Appendix 2: The Common Marking Grid for Numeracy

Code	Meaning
RE	Rounding error
WO	Show your working out
U	Include your units
✓	Correct follow through work after a mistake
RP	Use a Ruler and Pencil for diagrams
RQ	Read the question carefully
SA	Simplify your answer
A	Use an algebraic method
CC	Check your calculations – your method is correct
I	Incomplete working
+/-	You have made a mistake with the signs
F	Incorrect formula used

Appendix 3: How Can I Help with My Child's Learning?

Getting involved with your child's education can make a significant difference to his/her chances of success.

Research has shown that children whose parents are involved get higher marks, have a better attitude towards learning and develop more confidence. As your child gets older, of course, he/she needs to become more independent. Helping your child to get organised, providing equipment and a quiet place to work and offering lots of encouragement will get him/her off to the right start. Your child's **Student Planner** should outline the homework that has been set and when it is due. You should check the Planner regularly and **sign it at the end of each week if your child is in Year 8, 9 or 10.**

How to help – some general advice

- Make sure that you are familiar with your child's Student Planner.
- Watch out for letters and text messages about Parent-Teacher Meetings and Option/Induction Days and make every effort to attend (see the College website at www.knock.co.uk).
- Nominate somewhere at home as a homework area and have a set time for homework.
- Set up a daily routine. Plan a homework timetable in line with the College's homework guidelines in the Student Planner, so that your child knows what to do and when.
- It is a good idea if your child has a break and something to eat before starting homework.
- Ask your child to explain the homework task and how it follows on from what he/she was studying at school.
- Be interested and be on hand to talk to your child about what he/she has learnt.
- Help your child to become an **independent learner**. Explain how to look up information rather than simply giving an answer in order to get the task finished.
- Parents who maintain a positive outlook on homework and allow their children room to learn and struggle on their own, stepping in judiciously with informational feedback and hints, do their children a much better service than those who seek to control the learning process.
- Try to ensure that your child can access *MS OneDrive*, *MS OneNote*, *MS Sway* and *Fronter* from home.
- Turn off the television and mobile digital devices while homework is being done but do let your child listen to music if he/she finds it helpful and it does not annoy others.
- Read carefully any comments that your child's teacher makes about his/her work.
- Discourage your child from copying without editing when he/she is asked to do research tasks.
- Be positive about your child's attempts. If you have concerns about his/her progress, make an appointment to see your child's Tutor.

The College is keen that parents become fully involved in their children's education. However, please do not be tempted to do their homework, controlled assessment or coursework for them. If your child is to progress, we need to know how much your child understands and can do independently.

Helping with homework

Here are some ways you can help:

- Suggest doing homework as soon as it is received.
- Encourage your child to talk to you when in difficulty, as you may be able to help.
- Make sure your child has a good work-life balance and does not spend too much time going out with friends, working in a part-time job or sitting at home doing homework.
- Find out about educational reading materials and programmes on radio, television or online.

Helping with controlled assessment or coursework

Good controlled assessment or coursework marks can boost your child's grades. You can help by:

- Finding out about the curriculum and how much work needs to be done.
- Knowing when controlled assessment or coursework is due and helping to make out a schedule to complete it on time (See *School-based Assessment Contributing to GCSE Grades - Summary Information for Year 11 Parents*).
- Making sure your child is clear about what he/she is required to do.

- Locating internet sites that can help with his/her research (e.g. www.bbc.co.uk/schools).
- Advising your child to print, save and backup his/her computer work regularly.
- Encouraging your child to talk to his/her teacher about any problems.
- Making sure your child has the right books and resources (including IT).

If parents have concerns about homework, controlled assessment or coursework they should contact their child's Tutor

How to Raise a Concern or Make a Complaint about the Administration of this Policy

If you have a concern or complaint about the administration of this policy, please contact Mr McCormick, Vice Principal, in the first instance. If necessary, you may then access and follow the College's Parental Complaints Procedure which is available on the College website at www.knock.co.uk. Should you remain dissatisfied with the College's response after completing the internal complaints procedure, you can bring your complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman within six months. Contact details for the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman are provided on Page 11 of the Parental Complaints Procedure.

Signed: Mr Leo O'Reilly
(Chairperson of Board of Governors)

Date: 10th March 2020

Signed: Miss Deborah McLaughlin
(Principal)

Date: 10th March 2020