

*Fenwick*  
*Primary School*



*Homework &*  
*Learning at*  
*Home Policy*

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## **Background Information and Rationale**

At Fenwick Primary School, we have recently conducted a survey to gather views on how we deliver homework and how our families feel about undertaking the various tasks that are set.

In total, there were 34 responses. Just over **91%** of parents said they would like homework. Of the respondents who wanted homework, **52%** preferred a balance of both digital and traditional style activities, whereas **42%** said they would only want traditional (Examples of traditional and digital styles were given as part of the survey). Only **6%** of our families preferred to have 'only' digital homework activities.

As well as the survey results, there were many very informative comments and feedback has also been given to the Head Teacher by means of individual meetings and conversations with parents, children and staff. In creating this new policy for our school community, we have tried to strike a balance based on the feedback we have gathered. We hope to ensure that we all have a shared understanding and knowledge of what can be achieved by engaging in homework. However, we fully respect families who for specific reasons, do not wish to engage in homework at this time.

## **What does the Research Say? – Homework and Learning at Home**

In creating this policy the research and information given by Education Scotland has been used as the main source of information. Further details can be found by accessing <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/research/review-of-learning-at-home/>

For the purpose of our policy at Fenwick Primary School, the following information summarises and acknowledges the national position in relation to research and current guidance. A key feature of the research is the idea that homework is only a part of 'learning at home' and is one of a number of ways in which a child's development progresses.

The Scottish definition of learning at home is:

*'Learning at home is the learning which happens in the home, outdoors or in the community. It can take place through everyday activities that families already do and can overlap with aspects of organised or active learning activities'.  
(Scottish Parental Involvement Officers Network, 2018)*

Whilst homework is defined as:

*'Tasks given to pupils by their teachers to be completed outside of usual lessons (Education Endowment Foundation, 2017). Such tasks can include literacy, numeracy and activities to develop inquiry or problem solving skills.'*

In line with Education Scotland guidance, we promote the idea that learning at home can happen through a range of events including play, leisure activities, fun events, sports, trips, cultural or volunteering experiences. It can also happen through curriculum related activities, homework, reading and sharing books. Activities for learning at home can be specifically designed to enable parents to engage in their child's learning and build upon the learning from school or early learning and childcare setting. It can also provide intergenerational learning opportunities for the child, family and extended family and the community.

We fully understand that homework can often be an additional source of stress for families with the least capacity to undertake the tasks (for various reasons), whilst learning at home can often provide much wider and fulfilling experiences. The role of parents and families in relation to learning at home can't be underestimated. Children in Scotland only spend around 15 per cent of their waking hours in school. The remaining 85 per cent of children's time is spent at home or in their communities and this presents a potentially significant opportunity for learning.

Parents and families can engage in a range of activities in the home learning environment as part of the everyday characteristics of family life. These may include 'time spent reading to children or encouraging children to read, the activities and materials available to children, access to resources such as computers and visits to museums and libraries and other sources of learning' (Clarke and Younas, 2017). This investment of parental and family time in the home learning environment has been shown to significantly aid children's development....and also helps with literacy and mathematics performance (Dickinson and Tabors, 2001; Reynolds et al, 2008). Engagement with and being actively involved in other learning activities such as gardening, baking, cooking and outdoor learning can instil motivation, curiosity, the value of learning as well as a desire to learn in children (Clarke and Younas, 2017).

Although homework is only a part of the whole idea of learning at home, we know it has many potential benefits. Homework serves to give children extra practice in skills which they have learned in school. The additional practice can help the child's confidence and reinforce what they have been taught. Engaging in homework can have a positive and significant effect on children's achievement and attainment in school.

Research shows that this is more apparent in the Secondary school sector. Extensive studies have been undertaken on the subject of homework. Many of these studies have considered the correlation between homework and the school's performance. Debates continue as to whether homework is the reason why schools perform better and are more successful rather than other school related factors. Indeed, following a number of reviews and meta-analysis, 'there is stronger evidence that homework is helpful at secondary level but there is much less evidence of benefit at primary level' (Education Endowment Foundation, 2017; Hattie, 2008).

Positive learning habits, along with the increased development of core skills in literacy, numeracy and skills for life-long learning are all relevant advantages of homework. Homework can also be an important way of establishing a successful dialogue between teachers and parents and is undoubtedly one of the main ways in which children can acquire the skills of independent learning.

## Aims of our Policy

The aims of our policy are to highlight the potential benefits of homework within the context of learning at home. We hope that the research summarised will help parents when deciding to what extent they engage in homework. We understand this is very much a personal decision for each of our families and we will respect all views on this subject. However, when we do set homework, it will be done with the following purposes:

- To enable pupils to make maximum progress in their academic and social development
- To encourage children to work independently
- To consolidate and reinforce learning done in class/school by providing opportunities to practise skills taught in lessons
- To make parents aware of the work children are doing in school and to promote strong partnership working to support every child's learning
- To promote good study/work habits, thus supporting pupils to plan and organise their time effectively as they grow up

## Content and Types of Homework

The content of the tasks set may vary from stage to stage and at different times throughout a session, but generally the following key areas will be the main focus:

- Spelling, punctuation and grammar
- Practising pages of reading
- Reinforcing new words
- Reinforcing sounds
- Practising writing
- Learning core skills in numeracy and mathematics i.e. addition, subtraction, division, multiplication and times tables
- Researching topics or themes based on class/whole school activities
- Personal reading (library book)
- Spelling

It is important that homework is always:

- Clearly understood by pupils and closely related to ongoing class work
- At an appropriate level of ability for the child
- Able to be completed without specialised resources

\*As well as core work in literacy and numeracy/maths, cross-curricular and topic work will be given at various times across the school year.

### **Preparation**

Sometimes children will be asked to prepare a piece of new work at home, ready for discussion or follow-up in school e.g. older children looking up a reference to some topic in a book, newspaper, on computer or the like. However the piece of work that is set will always be within the children's understanding and range of skills, otherwise it may be simply a burden to children and parents.

### **Collecting Information and/or Materials**

Occasionally, children will be asked to collect information and/or materials from home, for example in connection with a class or topic related project... e.g. photographs of themselves when they were younger, or pictures of items from magazines. This is a great help to the teacher who can incorporate the children's contributions into the classwork. However, children will not be asked to bring items to school which parents may find difficult or costly to provide and children will not be penalised if they are unable to produce items from home.

### **Setting and Giving out Homework**

The setting and marking of homework takes considerable planning and preparation time. As well as this, there are implications for the use of resources and budget considerations in respect of photocopying and replenishing materials used for homework. Therefore, it would be really helpful to know if parents do not wish their child to be part of our homework programme. From our survey we know that 91% of parents want homework for their child but for those who don't, please call the school office, or speak with the class teacher or Head Teacher to let us know your intentions. As each term progresses, we will have ongoing conversations with pupils and our class teachers will also track the engagement of homework across the school year.

Your child's class teacher will set homework weekly, in line with the Fenwick PS annual homework calendar. This means that parents will know when homework will be given out across the various weeks and terms of the school year.

During each block, tasks will cover core learning in numeracy and literacy, as well as cross-curricular themed work, which will link to topics or whole school learning activities such as Scottish Week, British Science Week, World of Work Week, Maths Week etc.

The programme on the next page shows how homework will be set out between January and June, across the various weeks of the term. In line with our survey the homework will be a mixture of traditional and digital style tasks.

It is important to note that this programme represents an overview of the areas covered and the homework that will be given each week. This is an example of how it would look, but each class will be different to suit the age and stage of the children. The finer detail will be clear from the guidance given out by the class teachers. Hence, the cross-curricular/topic column will have a range of different activities and tasks, appropriate to the work of each class.

Block 1: January 16 <sup>th</sup> – February 3 <sup>rd</sup>			
Week No & Dates	Literacy	Numeracy & Maths	Cross-Curricular/Topic
Week 1 (16 <sup>th</sup> – 20 <sup>th</sup> Jan)	Poetry Task	Addition & Subtraction	
Week 2 (23 <sup>rd</sup> – 27 <sup>th</sup> Jan)	Scottish Week Related Activities		
Week 3 (30 <sup>th</sup> Jan – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Feb)	Written Task	Addition & Subtraction	
Block 2: February 20 <sup>th</sup> – March 24 <sup>th</sup>			
Week No & Dates	Literacy	Numeracy & Maths	Cross-Curricular/Topic
Week 1 (20 <sup>th</sup> – 24 <sup>th</sup> Feb)	Reading Book or Handwriting & Spelling	Addition, Subtraction & Number Bonds	
Week 2 (27 <sup>th</sup> Feb – 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mar)	Reading Book & Spelling	Addition, Subtraction & Multiplication	
Week 3 (6 <sup>th</sup> Mar – 10 <sup>th</sup> Mar)	Reading Book & Writing Task	Addition, Subtraction or Multiplication & Division	
Week 4 (13 <sup>th</sup> Mar – 17 <sup>th</sup> Mar)	Science Week Related Activities		
Week 5 (20 <sup>th</sup> Mar – 24 <sup>th</sup> Mar)	Writing Task	Multiplication & Division	Rights Respecting Schools
Block 3: April 24 <sup>th</sup> – May 25 <sup>th</sup>			
Week No & Dates	Literacy	Numeracy & Maths	Cross-Curricular/Topic
Week 1 (24 <sup>th</sup> Apr – 28 <sup>th</sup> Apr)	Reading Book & Spelling	Time & Fractions	
Week 2 (2 <sup>nd</sup> May – 5 <sup>th</sup> May)	Reading Book & Spelling	Time & Fractions	
Week 3 (9 <sup>th</sup> May – 12 <sup>th</sup> May)	Novel Study & Writing Task	Time & Fractions	Titanic Task
Week 4 (15 <sup>th</sup> May – 19 <sup>th</sup> May)	Novel Study & Writing Task	Time & Fractions	
Week 5 (22 <sup>nd</sup> May – 25 <sup>th</sup> May)	Health Week Related Activities		
Block 4: June 5 <sup>th</sup> – June 16 <sup>th</sup>			
Week No & Dates	Literacy	Numeracy & Maths	Cross-Curricular/Topic
Week 1 (5 <sup>th</sup> June – 9 <sup>th</sup> June)	Reading Book & Spelling	Angles & Symmetry	
Week 2 (12 <sup>th</sup> June – 16 <sup>th</sup> June)	Reading Book & Spelling	Angles & Symmetry	Transition Task

### Guidance Notes for Parents

The most important thing you can do is simply take an interest in your child's work. Ask what has to be done and check the task is understood by your child.

- Please sign your child's homework when you are satisfied that he or she has done this to the best of his or her ability
- Contact the school if a problem arises through commenting on your child's homework or by speaking with the class teacher
- Encourage your child to think independently as much as possible. Suggest how he or she can find answers for themselves but don't do homework for them
- If your child is having to work hard to solve a homework problem, encourage him or her to see this positively – this is how we learn!
- Plan to do homework at regular times and find a routine that works
- Do not miss something really important to the family, a parent or any child because of homework. Plan a time which will avoid this and agree this with your child
- If you have a busy time at home then leave homework to the next night or miss it out if necessary. Homework is not there to cause worry or add stress to children or families

## Guidance Notes for Children

Children should try to:

- Make sure homework is taken home and returned to school
- Complete homework on time
- Take responsibility by asking a parent to check and sign any homework given
- Do their best when doing work at home, just like they do at school
- Don't worry about homework – it is there to help learning, not to cause difficulties!!
- Think of a good place where you can concentrate and give your when doing homework
- Try teaching what you've learned to a parent, sibling or other family member
- Take a few minutes to check over what you've done at the end

## In Summary

We sincerely hope that this policy gives our families a starting point for making decisions about homework and how much emphasis they wish to put on it. We have tried to highlight the position of Education Scotland in relation to the idea of 'Learning at Home' and this is clarified by research and reviews undertaken across a number of years.

Finally, we hope that this policy comes across in a manner which shows we fully understand the balance required in relation to getting it right for all of our families. Homework is not for everyone and must not be something that adds undue stress to family life or the children in a school. However, there are clear benefits to many children who engage in homework as part of balanced 'Learning at Home' and these have been highlighted in this policy.

Thank you for taking the time to read this policy and please don't hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss anything further in relation any of the contents.

Sincere thanks to everyone in our School Community for their contributions to this policy.

Regards,

Mr Houston and all Fenwick PS staff.