

Maidenhill Primary School & Nursery Class



Home Learning Policy January 2023

Rationale

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 (OECD, 2014).

Parental investment in learning at home is considered to 'make a positive contribution to child development by enhancing skills such as organisation, planning and monitoring and language that are conducive to learning, as well as motivation towards learning by developing academic interests and making connections between curriculum subjects and everyday experiences' (Hartas, 2011).

Introduction

High quality learning and teaching within Maidenhill Primary School and Nursery Class places a fundamental emphasis on interaction, investigation, enquiry, creativity and curiosity.

This emphasis remains key across all modes of learning and directs our provision whether we expect learning to occur within a classroom or at home. The lessons learned from the periods of remote learning in 2020 and 2021 have further steered and enhanced the learning provision for children as part of our home learning programme.

We strongly believe that home learning should go beyond previously-held concepts of 'homework'. At Maidenhill, home learning should always be about encouraging learning opportunities which children and family members can engage in collaboratively. When children are able to share their learning with someone else, talking about the strategies and methodology they employ and the thinking processes they undertake, conceptual understanding and skills become embedded.

Families (and the wider community) already provide a wealth of learning opportunities, far beyond the strictures of the school day. Our home learning provision seeks to enhance this.

Aims

Our home learning provision aims to:

1. Maximise learner engagement and progress
2. Encourage parental and family engagement in collaborative learning experiences
3. Promote wellbeing
4. Provide an alternative platform for high quality learning and teaching

Our Digital Platform

Our home learning programme is predominantly digital and we currently use the Google Classroom platform to organise this. On almost all occasions, learning and teaching will be communicated through this digital platform. Completed evidence of learning may be uploaded to the Google Classroom or submitted physically to the class teacher. Where children are required to regularly submit physically completed homework tasks, class teachers will ensure that their learners have suitable resources, for example a dedicated homework jotter.

Communication across the Google Classroom platform is between learners and teachers. All parent communication regarding home learning should be by e-mail via schoolmail@maidenhill.e-renfrew.sch.uk

If a child is unable to access their Google Classroom because they do not have access to an appropriate device, we encourage parents /carers to get in touch with us so that we can discuss options for support.

If a child has access to a device but is struggling with the functionality of their Google Classroom, we also encourage parents/ carers to get in touch in order that we can tailor our support.

On occasion, with prior arrangement, we may be able to organise paper copies of some homework tasks if required. Please note however, that there may be some aspects of our digital home learning programme that may not easily be replicated in paper format. In this instance, there is no expectation that teachers will provide alternative 'paper-based' homework.

Issue and Submission

In almost all instances, teachers will upload homework tasks on a Tuesday. Tasks should then be completed and evidence uploaded or returned by the following Monday.

Although we appreciate this will not always exactly suit each and every family's individual circumstances, feedback has shown that families generally appreciate this as the best system for allowing flexibility across the week and weekend as required.

Time Allocation

The following is a suggested recommendation of the approximate amount of time learners at each stage should be spending on homework in any one week:

Primary 1- up to 40 minutes (equivalent to 4 X 5-10 mins)

Primary 2 and 3- up to 60 minutes (equivalent to 4 X 10-15 mins)

Primary 4 and 5- up to 80 minutes (equivalent to 4 X 15-20 mins)

Primary 6 and 7- building up to 100- 120 minutes (equivalent to 4 X 25/30 mins)

This is just an approximate guide and may obviously vary from week to week depending on the nature of the learning planned. Don't forget- the very best homework is a child and an adult sharing (either reading together or simply talking about) a text together. There is no time limit on this quality interaction and as long as your child is engaged and the text is an enjoyable 'real' book then the more time spent, the better!

Best Practice

In our best practice, the following key features will be exemplified:

- A variety of approaches used to communicate home learning tasks and to allow learners to evidence their learning, ie. message boards, pre-recorded videos, PowerPoint presentations, games, quizzes, investigative-based tasks, written tasks, collaborative tasks etc.
- Weekly opportunities to develop core Numeracy & Mathematics skills, including mental mathematics, and Literacy skills, including reading, writing, talking & listening and spelling.
- Learning experiences clearly linked to curriculum planning with Learning Intentions and Success Criteria identified either for or with the learners.
- Differentiated tasks to meet the needs of all learners. Children only have access to the tasks which are relevant to them to avoid confusion and streamline the process.
- A focus on problem solving and enquiry-based learning that encourages collaboration with parents/ families as well as peers.
- The use of a range of formative assessment approaches to enable teachers to track progress, give feedback and inform their professional judgements.
- A focus on oral feedback given directly to learners.
- Opportunities for children to learn collaboratively.
- A balance of child-led and adult-led learning experiences, with children given opportunities to lead their own learning and/ or work independently.
- A focus on emotional and physical wellbeing, including plentiful opportunities for learners to engage in tasks away from a screen.

The Use of 'Real' Texts

From our opening in 2019, we set our stall out early in advocating the use of 'real' texts to foster and promote a love of reading for enjoyment and for information.

In school we use a range of commercial resources (including Big Cat Readers) to help teach reading skills, from developing an understanding of narrative concepts, phonological awareness, letter and sound recognition, phonological decoding, sight vocabulary and higher order comprehension and evaluation skills. Whilst the content and context of these readers can be enjoyable, they are primarily designed to be used by teachers to develop the 'mechanics' of reading in a structured progression or as guided readers. We would not encourage these readers to be used at home, firmly believing that the use of commercial reading schemes as home readers can actually be counter-productive in fostering children's love for and appreciation of text.

Rather we would encourage parents and families to use 'real' texts at home to create a shared reading experience and positive reading role models. Reading at home should be a pleasurable opportunity for a child and a family member to share, discuss and enjoy a text together. Here the focus would be on the discussion and the literary and conceptual understanding that the text generates rather than simple mechanical decoding.

As part of our home learning programme and when COVID-19 guidelines permit, our children are regularly encouraged to bring home 'real' texts from our school library to share with someone at home. The majority of these books have been 'banded' and our teachers will direct children to particular bands as appropriate.

Please see more information in our reading guide for parents:

[Developing Reading at Early Level](#)

[Developing Reading at First Level](#)

[Developing Reading at Second Level](#)

Responsibilities

Class teachers have responsibility to plan for home learning experiences and these should be linked to their current curricular planning. Learning experiences should be planned to meet the needs of each learner within the class. Class teachers should plan and implement a range of assessment approaches to ensure they can track progress, identify next steps for each learner and make sound professional judgements. **Whilst acknowledging online submissions, they should always try to focus their feedback on face to face interactions with the children back in class.** Teachers will ensure children have access to the materials they require to complete tasks, including home learning jotters if appropriate.

The Leadership Team have the responsibility to set a clear strategic direction and expectations for home learning. They will offer practical support and guidance and seek out opportunities for professional learning to enhance practice as appropriate. They will track learner and family engagement at whole-school level and plan for interventions to maximise this engagement. If an extended period remote learning is again likely, the Leadership Team will coordinate communication with parents/ carers in a timeous manner. They will coordinate whole-school self-evaluation approaches, gathering evidence from all stakeholders to inform improvements in home learning at least once during a session. The Leadership Team will facilitate opportunities for communication, moderation and peer collaboration during extended periods of remote learning.

Learners have the responsibility to engage in home learning in an appropriate manner, following the expectations and protocols set by the local authority (including the Responsible User Agreement), school and by their class teacher.

Parents/ carers have the responsibility to encourage their children to engage in home learning, to follow the expectations and protocols described above and to use appropriate offline channels of communication (by telephone on 0141 570 7090 or via schoolmail@maidenhill.e-renfrew.sch.uk) to raise questions or to discuss concerns.

Further practical guidance for practitioners and parents/ carers on the use of Google Classroom has been developed and can be found here:

[Google Classroom Information for Parents and Carers](#)

Monitoring and Review

The Head Teacher, using the aims as stated in page 2, will monitor the policy in liaison with relevant stakeholders. The policy will be reviewed in January 2024 and updated as required.

Next review: January 2024

Policy author: A McDonald, January 2023