

Learning at Home at Newport Primary School



Information Leaflet for Parents/Carers

Created September 2019

What do we mean by Learning at Home?

At Newport Primary School, our philosophy is to encourage children to see that learning does not just happen in school. We recognise the important part that family activities and attendance at clubs etc plays to a child's learning and development. Furthermore, we recognise the importance of supporting parents to engage with their child's learning.

At Newport Primary School we believe that learning at home tasks should be designed to maximise pupil and parent/carer discussion, to offer an opportunity to share learning at home, to practise taught skills, develop research skills and creativity.

We understand that family life is very busy and children are given opportunities for a wealth of rich experiences within their home. Learning at home tasks are designed to allow families to be flexible about what, how and when they complete activities.

Scottish definition of learning at home

'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)

'Learning at Home' vs 'Homework'

'Cultural change is required to move away from common assumptions that learning at home is confined purely to homework. Furthermore, practitioners should be cautious regarding their communications to parents to ensure that learning at home is also not promoted solely as homework'

(Education Scotland: Review of Learning at Home, 2018)

Time for a change ...

In session 2018/2019, we identified the need to engage with parents, children and staff around the current model for homework. Our aim was to gather views and to plan a way forward where learning at home tasks would be an efficient use of time for all and which would impact positively on learning. Our rationale behind rethinking our homework model was because ...

- ✓ School staff had engaged with research which suggested the type of homework we were sending at that point would not necessarily benefit pupil's attainment in the long term
- ✓ We suspected that homework, for some families, was adding an additional burden to family life
- ✓ We had identified that there was not a consistent approach across the school
- ✓ There were diverse views around the idea of home learning and therefore we wished to create a statement of learning at home at NPS to be shared and understood by all

What did you say?

Feedback we received was very varied from each group (parents, children and staff). As a staff we then looked at what each group had said and tried to find a middle ground that would give us a starting point.

Parents

- 94 families responded to the survey (approximately 60% of our families from P1-P7)
- Of the 94 families who responded, 87% felt that home learning should be reviewed in school
- 62% of the respondents stated that they enjoy completing homework tasks with their children
- 51% stated that their children appear to enjoy homework tasks
- 55% stated that they think that home learning tasks set by school puts too much pressure on families
- 11% of families felt that children should get more home learning tasks set by school
- Common comments made in the 'currently working well' question included reading, number-based tasks and being able to practise spelling words
- Common comments made in the 'not working well' question included too much homework being given

Children

- 84% children felt that the current homework model at Newport needed to be changed
- 77% children felt that they got too much homework
- Suggestions on what children would like homework to look like included...

- ✓ “making it fun and active”
- ✓ “practising our own hobbies”
- ✓ “linked to work for our later life”
- ✓ “making it less stressful”

Staff

- ✓ By surveying our teachers over a 4-week period, it highlighted the huge amount of time that teachers spent planning for, preparing, issuing, discussing and marking homework pieces. No member of staff could comment on whether the pieces of homework that were issued had made a positive impact on learning.
- ✓ Children did not return pieces of homework.
- ✓ There were inconsistencies across the school on how homework was being promoted/managed.

Research

- There is little evidence to suggest that traditional set homework in primary school impacts positively on children’s learning in the long term. Effective homework is associated with greater parental involvement and support. Short focused tasks practising basic skills in a different context (i.e. at home instead of at school) tend to be more effective than regular set homework.
- Research shows that ‘parental engagement’ with school has significant effect on pupil progress and learning (Hattie, 2010).
- 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). Around 80 per cent of the difference in how well children do at school depends on what happens outside the school gates and so learning at home is crucial for children to learn and develop (Rasbash et al, 2010; Save the Children, 2013).
- 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-analyses, ‘there is stronger evidence that it [homework] is helpful at secondary level but there is much less

evidence of benefit at primary level' (Education Endowment Foundation, 2017; Hattie, 2008).

Our approach

Below is our new 'homework' model which will be rebranded Learning out of School. The school will trial this model and will invite feedback at the start of term 3.

The aims of our model:

- To be flexible and give parents control over when they do learning tasks with their child, how often and how much.
- To support parents to engage with their child's learning so that we work in partnership to develop strong numeracy and literacy skills.
- To provide consistency throughout the school and to make opportunities for siblings to work together on a task.

Our Model

- Reading: There will be a weekly reading task in P1-7. This might be a reading book or it might be an activity. For younger children, it might be information to support parents to work with their child to learn skills for reading e.g. learning initial sounds.
- Spelling: We encourage parents to practise common words and spelling rules at home with their child and each class will provide information to support them to do this. A 'Spelling Toolkit' will also be available on our website for parents and families to access.
- Numeracy: at the start of each learning block (August, October, January, March and May) we will update our class webpages with intended learning in numeracy and maths. This will give parents an indication as to the skills they could be practising at home. A 'Numeracy Toolkit' will also be available on our website, containing helpful hints and tips for parents and families to access. Your child will also have their Sumdog account which can be accessed at anytime and is a useful site for consolidating learning.
- Other curricular areas: at the start of each learning block (August, October, January, March and May) we will send home a grid containing 15 ideas for tasks – 10 of these tasks are sent to all P1-7 children and 5 are specific to your child's class. None of these tasks are compulsory but all work brought into school for sharing will be valued by the

class teacher. We hope that the 10 tasks throughout the school will allow siblings to work on these together.

P1 and P7

P1 – routines for P1 are slightly different to the rest of the school. As the children begin to learn initial sounds at the beginning of the session, it will be important for families to help support daily practise of these initial sounds. This might include practising songs, actions and letter formation. There may also be sight words to learn.

We also offer a weekly lending library for P1 where books, games and jigsaws will be available to go home. The children will work with their P7 buddy first with the book, game or jigsaw before it comes home.

P7 – As is routine at our local secondary school, Primary 7s have also been issued with a home learning diary. This will support them to record and meet deadlines for any other tasks that may be asked of them throughout the school year out with the whole school sheet, spelling and reading.

Sharing Tasks and Celebrating Success

Tasks can be shared via Glow and/or can be shared with class teachers at any point. Teachers will always value any learning done at home and children will be given opportunities to discuss and share these within school. Tasks can also be sent to newportps.enquiries@fife.gov.uk which will then be passed onto class teachers.

We are always keen to hear about successes and achievements out with school. When these are shared at school, they are recorded within each class's wider achievement scrapbook and are also acknowledged on class blogs. Please be forthcoming with all successes and achievements – we want to celebrate with your child!

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If the teacher isn't sending weekly homework, how will I know what my child is learning from day to day?

A: The information you can view on our website at the start of each block will tell you the broad learning areas and will give you ideas for supporting your child's numeracy. Regular practice of numeracy skills will impact positively on your child's learning. The

weekly reading task provides an opportunity for you to support your child's literacy progress and to communicate with the teacher by writing a note on the task.

Q: Will this model show me where my child is at in their learning?

A: This is not one of the aims of the model. Details on class webpages, class blogs and the discussions at Parents' Night will share that with you. You are welcome to get in touch between Parent's Night meetings if you would like more information. You will also receive your child's Learning Log/EPortfolio four times each year to allow you to see examples of their work.

Q: A traditional homework model is a piece of work set and marked by the teacher and it is compulsory. Why don't you do this?

A: There is little evidence to suggest that this traditional model impacts positively on children's learning. It is very work intensive for teachers and removing this workload can make time for planning and preparation of quality classroom experiences. Spending 10 minutes with your child playing a game, practising a skill orally or reading is more effective than sitting your child down to do a worksheet.

Q: Why don't you give deadlines and make homework compulsory?

A: Every family is different and we do not want to provide a model which will be a chore for families where the children attend a lot of clubs out of school. Each family needs to develop their own routines around learning out of school and a significant number of our families do not find compulsory homework useful.

Q: If you don't give deadlines and make homework compulsory how will my child fare in the future?

A: Self-motivation is an important part of developing as a learner. Engaging with your child over their learning and making it fun is more likely to develop a love of learning and a person who will be motivated to learn in the future than if tasks are mandatory and children get into 'trouble' if they don't do it. Through the primary years, your family can develop its own routines which will then support your child to study and do tasks independently at their secondary stage. There is nothing to stop your family making its own deadlines within the tasks that are sent home if you feel that would be helpful.

Q: I don't want my child to do any homework – will they get into trouble?

A: No – we respect your right as a parent to make that decision and our model gives you the room to do that.

Q: Our family life is very hectic and I don't feel we find enough time to do the tasks sent home. Should I worry or feel guilty?

A: Absolutely not! Every family is different. The ideas we send home are available for you to use as little or as much as you like and which fits in with your family and routine.

Q: My child gets upset when I try to do tasks with them at home – what should I do?

A: Follow your child's lead – particularly if they are very young. Don't try to do a task when they are tired or disinterested and don't make them feel stressed about a learning task. Put it away, use the time to do something you both enjoy and try again another day.

Q: My child goes to a lot of clubs after school and I don't always find time to do tasks with them. Are they losing out?

A: No – your child will gain a lot from their attendance at clubs. Each parent should feel able to support their child's learning in the way that works best for their family and taking your child to clubs is a valid way of doing that. You know your child best.

Q: I'd like to know more about supporting my child at home.

A: You can contact Miss Crichton (Headteacher), Miss Allan (Principal Teacher) or Mrs Mitcham (Support for Learning Teacher) in the first instance.

Useful websites to support Learning out of School

- www.topmarks.co.uk
- www.sumdog.com
- www.corbettmaths.com
- www.bbc.co.uk/schools/websites/4_11/site/numeracy.shtml
- www.doorwayonline.org.uk/
- www.transum.org
- Jolly Phonics app
- Teach your monster to read app