

Homework at St Peter's: Notes for parents

Homework is the part of a child's education that is most visible to parents/carers and, as a result, parents/carers often ask about the St Peter's approach to homework. In this note I have put together what I hope are useful insights to our homework policy. If you have any questions about a specific piece of homework please email the class teacher direct. If they are unable to answer your questions please contact Ms Mehta (KS2) or Ms Sayer (KS3). I also hold drop-in sessions every week on a Thursday when parents/carers are most welcome to come to see me about any aspect of their child's education.

At St Peter's we want all of our students to reach their full potential in body, mind, heart and spirit and to be prepared for life's journey. We want to strike a balance for our young people that enables them to enjoy learning from a wide range of experiences with family and friends outside of school and helping students reinforce their learning, independently, at home. We want children to do homework that supports and promotes the learning they do in school, but also have time for all the extracurricular, social and recreational activities that help them to grow and develop.

Our vision is to 'Rise above the Ordinary', inspired by our faith in Christ and in fellowship with our parents/carers, churches and communities. There are many activities that will help students achieve this but some have a greater impact than others and so we look to evidence from educational research to guide us to what works best.

Research by Professor John Hattie and the Education Endowment Fund, point us towards those actions that have the greatest impact. If you want to hear John Hattie talk about his findings I warmly recommend the radio programme 'The Educators' which is still available online on Radio 4.

This research tells us that homework is much more effective in promoting learning when;

- Students' are older, often secondary aged, when they have developed a mature approach to learning, and they can complete the work independently.
- Particularly for younger children, the most effective homework involves practice or rehearsal of subject matter i.e. learning of facts, spellings, times tables because this can be completed independently.
- Homework is specific, not complex or too challenging, or when it has a novelty aspect, (we all find a break from the routine can be motivating).

This is why we

- have different expectations for KS2 and KS3,
- ask staff to ensure the homework is well-explained
- ask children to complete their homework diaries so that they are clear what homework is required of them
- post the homework and its deadline on the website as a back-up to the homework diary (and to help parents know what is expected of the child)
- emphasise having a clear purpose for homework with focus on advanced learning e.g. spellings of key words or rehearsal and practice post learning

What about the marking of homework?

Our policy states that the child should always receive feedback on their homework, both to acknowledge the child's effort and to support their learning. Often this means that written homework is marked in the conventional way, by the teacher. But feedback may be given through a wide range of means such as computer scoring, verbal feedback, peer marking and self-assessment. Sometimes homework is preparation for class work and the feedback will come as the classwork is produced and marked: after all the better the preparation, the better the finished piece of work. We want all our students to accept challenges and take responsibility for improving their work and for their own learning, particularly in editing and drafting skills, which is why our policy promotes the use of examples of finished homework to show the standard expected and the use of success criteria, where relevant to the homework set, so that students can begin learning how to independently self-assess their own efforts and 'rise above the ordinary'.