



Circular No 2015/11

Lisnagarvey High School

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Homework Policy

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Secretary to Board of Governors

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Homework Policy

What is the purpose of homework?

“Homework is not an optional extra, but an essential part of a good education.”

DE White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* 1999

The impact of homework has been extensively studied. It is difficult in any area of education to be certain of cause and effect. However, it is undoubtedly true that schools in which students are completing homework well tend to be successful schools.

It is our firm view that pupils' study habits and overall academic attainment will improve significantly as a result of the setting and completion of good quality homework throughout their school career.

Homework comprises any activities set to be completed independently by students, without direct supervision by the teacher, outside normal timetabled lessons.

Good homework:

- helps to develop good study habits, self-motivation and responsibility
- Reinforces what has been learned in class
- Develops independent learning skills of organisation, planning, time management, investigation, problem-solving and research
- Is challenging but attainable for students of all ability
- Provides challenge and extension for the most able students
- Is relevant, interesting and varied
- Has a clear purpose, which is explained to students
- Allows the student and teacher to assess how well the student has understood the content of lessons
- Develops numeracy and literacy skills

Poor homework:

- Has no clear learning objectives
- Is not clearly explained
- Offers no challenge
- Is not tailored to the different abilities of students

- Just involves finishing what was started in class, providing nothing to stretch those who are able to complete tasks in class

How much homework should students be completing?

The amount of time it takes different students to complete the same tasks will always vary, so it is not possible to be exact about the time which should be being spent on homework. However, the following guidelines apply:

Junior School, Year 8 – 10 will follow a set homework timetable which will be issued at the start of each academic year.

Year Group	Average Time	Average Hrs per week
11 & 12	75-90 mins (per school-day)	6.25 - 7.5
13 & 14	1.5 - 2 hours (per school-day)	7.5 - 10

To try and put the above into some perspective, a general rule of thumb would be **a minimum** of one piece of homework should be set for every two periods of class time.

Most pupils will often try to complete homework in the minimum time possible. It is important that they, and parents, ensure that it is completed to the highest possible standard, both in terms of content and presentation. The latter means that work should have an underlined title and the date, and be written neatly and carefully in the correct book.

When will homework be set?

The school no longer produces a homework timetable specifying what homework will be set each night. Such timetables are often ignored in practice or can lead to a low-value homework being set because it “has to be set tonight”. Instead, homework guidelines are issued for each Year Group, setting out the approximate amount and type of homework which will be set in each subject.

Overall, pupils should be spending approximately the times set out above on independent work outside of lessons, though this will be averaged out over the course of an entire week, including weekends. If students are completing all homework and not spending this amount of time, they should speak to their teacher, who should be able to offer guidance and direction for further, independent study.

Homework **should not be set for completion the following day**, except in exceptional circumstances. With good organisation and time-management, pupils should not have “pile-ups” with lots of homework to be completed in one night.

What marking/feedback can students expect when they complete homework?

The general principle is that when a student completes any significant piece of homework, there is an obligation to provide feedback in a timely manner.

Normally, a homework should receive written marking/feedback from the teacher. This should include comments to highlight positive aspects of the homework and specific areas for improvement and may include a level of progression grade or mark.

Homework should normally be returned to pupils by teachers within a week of completion and handing in. In some cases, homework may be reviewed in class and marked, either by students themselves or by their peers. Pupils learn not only through their own independent work but by seeing good examples of others' work.

There may also be verbal feedback on homework in the form of individual or whole class discussion about what has been achieved and how it could be improved.

High quality homework will be rewarded using "merits". Departments will also look for opportunities to display examples of excellent work by students.

Resources

Homework can often require the use of ICT to either carry out research or produce material for portfolio evidence. For some pupils, or for some tasks which require specific resources, it is sometimes desirable to complete these tasks in school, either in the school Library, at computer club, or in the homework club. Where resources are required for homework, the school will increasingly look to ensure that there is access to such facilities. These will also provide links to non-essential resources such as relevant websites or other activities which can enhance independent learning and research.

Responsibilities

Homework, like all aspects of learning, is a three-way process involving, first and foremost, the student; however, it also relies on teachers and parents to play their part. Each has very specific responsibilities:

Students should:

1. Listen carefully to homework instructions in class
2. Copy down instructions into their diary
3. Ensure that homework is completed to the best of their ability and on time
4. Inform their teacher of any difficulties as soon as possible

Teachers should:

1. Set meaningful homework which meets the description of “good homework” set out above.
2. Follow departmental policy and schemes of work in terms of the setting of homework
3. Give full, clear and comprehensive instructions, allowing enough time in the lesson to do this and to enable students to copy instructions down
4. Set clear deadlines for completion and provide access to all necessary resources
5. Mark and return homework promptly within one week of submission

The Head of Department should:

1. Ensure that Schemes of Work and teaching plans include homework which will consolidate and enhance learning, and develop study skills
2. Monitor, evaluate and enhance homework policy and practice within their curriculum area

The Form Teacher should:

1. Check that homework is being set, recorded and completed
2. Sign the diary and check that it is being signed at home
3. Note and respond to any comments written in diaries by parents
4. Liaise with parents, and the Head of Year, if there are concerns in school or at home

Parents should:

1. Provide a suitable, quiet place to work at home
2. Support good time-management at home. Often, it is better to get homework completed before other leisure activities take place.
3. Talk to your child about their homework.
4. Check your child’s diary and ensure that deadlines are being met.
5. Check the presentation and quality of work that is being completed. (In Year 8, sign and date each piece of work.)
6. Inform the school if there are problems.

What happens when homework is not completed, or completed to a poor standard?

When homework is set in line with the procedures above, including clear instructions and appropriate deadlines, then responsibility for non-completion of homework rests solely with the student. This also means that, when a student is absent, it is their responsibility to find out about homework which may have been missed.

The primary consequence of incompleteness of homework is that learning is affected. Consequently, it is the duty of the teacher to follow this up.

When a student first misses a homework deadline, the teacher will give a warning. This will normally be written in the student's diary. If this happens a second time, the student will be placed in a departmental detention. Should that same student miss deadlines for subsequent homework, he may be placed in departmental detention immediately.

In order to provide an immediate opportunity for missing homework to be completed, teachers may direct students to attend a lunchtime homework "detention", supervised by a member of staff. This will be written in the student's diary and they will be "marked" as present by the member of staff.

If the problem of non-completion of homework persists, then the Head of Department, Form Teacher and Head of Year will be informed, as will parents and a further discussion or meeting will be sought.

Conclusion

Homework is not an end in itself. It creates work for teachers in setting and marking it, and following up non-completion; for parents in supervising it; and for students in completing it. If we did not believe that it had value, in terms of improving pupils learning and developing in them essential habits of independence, organisation and motivation, we would not go to this trouble.

We as a school value the independent responsibility which homework fosters and realise the success that can be achieved by all stakeholders; teachers, pupils and parents working together to improve the educational outcomes of our learners.

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