

St. Clare's N.S.
Ballyjamesduff
Co. Cavan

Homework Policy

Introduction:

In St. Clare's N.S. we aim to provide a positive, creative working and learning environment where pupils, parents and teachers can work together to ensure that children are reaching their full potential. To this end, the school relies on the support and co-operation of parents, who are invited to keep in contact with the school in regard to all aspects of their child's progress.

The school appreciates the important role played by parents and guardians (from here on referred to as parents) in supporting the work of the school. The regular undertaking of homework provides a very obvious and practical way in which parents as the primary educators can demonstrate their interest in and commitment to their child's education.

In order to prepare pupils for the life ahead of them, we actively encourage a positive outlook to the whole question of homework and here parents have a large part to play.

The Purpose of Homework

Homework is part of a continuous process and in St. Clare's School we regard homework as valuable for the following reasons:

- it allows pupils the opportunity to revisit, revise and consolidate skills learned in class
- it can help pupils to make more rapid progress in learning
- it can involve parents and family in the pupil's work to their mutual benefit
- it gives pupils the valuable experience of working to a deadline
- it provides an opportunity for independent study and learning
- it forms a link with the methods of study crucial to success at secondary school and in later life.

It also enables the teacher

- to monitor pupil progress with a view to improving standards

- to provide pupils and parents with clear and relevant feedback
- to suggest strategies for improvement and goals to be achieved
- to seek extra resources to support those pupils most in need of help

Homework along with schoolwork, teacher observation, projects, portfolios, profiles, diagnostic and standardized tests all lay the foundation for providing an overall picture of the child's progress and development as they progress through the school. This enables the teacher as class manager and, in turn, the principal to maintain standards throughout the school, to strive for excellence and to ensure that all children achieve their full potential.

The Nature of Homework

Normally, homework is given on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, leaving the weekend free for children and parents to relax. However, pupils may be asked to complete unfinished work at weekends or be assigned extra homework in accordance with our Code of Good Behaviour & Discipline.

The nature of the homework varies from class to class, but a gradual progression in the variety and amount of homework given will take place from Junior Infants to 6th class. The needs and abilities of individual pupils are taken into account by their teachers in consultation with learning support teachers.

Spellings and **tables** (or revision of formulae etc. in senior classes) as well as **reading** will usually form an integral part of the homework and it is expected from time to time that certain facts, prayers, songs, poems, etc. would be committed to **memory**.

Written exercises will also be assigned varying in length and in difficulty from Junior Infants to 6th class. Guided **project work**, which challenges children to engage in research maybe given in the senior classes.

Outside of the time spent on homework, children are encouraged to read for a short time every night. Books and reading have a very important place in the life of our school and we place a strong emphasis on the joy and benefits of reading.

Homework will only be given in areas already covered, taught or discussed in school and should therefore be within the children's capability.

The nature of the homework will inevitably change during such times as the week of Parent-Teacher Meetings, Christmas, Confirmation time etc.

Occasionally, children may be given an item or a night off homework as a reward for a special effort made by the class or by an individual.

Time Spent on Homework

Just as the nature of homework will vary from class to class, the time spent on homework will vary from pupil to pupil. A healthy balance between work and play is

crucial to the child's development and so homework should not take too long to complete.

The table below gives a general guideline for the amount of time to be spent on homework in each standard. However, the amount of time spent will also depend on the effort and application of each child:

Junior Infants:	Up to 20 minutes including reading
Senior Infants:	Up to 25 minutes including reading
Rang 1:	Up to 30 minutes including reading
Rang 2:	Up to 30 minutes including reading
Rang 3:	Up to 40 minutes
Rang 4:	Up to 40 minutes
Rang 5:	Up to 1 hour
Rang 6:	Up to 1 hour

Within the above guidelines, we must remember that it is unrealistic to expect some children to focus their concentration for very long periods of time. Parents may decide that the homework should be divided into manageable periods of time. Some children may wish to use a clock or watch to help them manage their own time effectively.

At the start of the year in particular, parents are asked to record in the homework journal the length of time it takes to complete homework each night. This gives the teacher an idea of the range of time it takes the class to complete the homework given and how individual pupils are performing within that range.

If a child has given of his/her best and is still struggling with homework, parents are asked to advise him/her to stop and to write a note to this effect in the homework journal to let the class teacher know of a difficulty being encountered.

Organisation of Homework

Every pupil has a homework journal in which s/he records the homework for each night. We try to ensure that our instructions concerning homework are clear to everyone in the class, and that all pupils have plenty of time to write down what is set.

In tackling the homework, it is a matter of personal choice whether oral or written work is done first, as long as memory work isn't left too late when the child is tired.

Copies **and** homework journals should be signed by the parent every night once homework is complete to ensure that parents are aware of their child's progress and standard of work. This will be regularly checked by the teacher.

Guidelines for Pupils

- write homework down clearly from the whiteboard
- If you are not sure what to do, check with your teacher before going home

- Listen in class – the homework is based on what happens during the day
- Remember to bring home the books and copies you need for the night's homework. If you do forget, contact a classmate and do your best to get the homework done
- Don't forget to learn tables, spellings, poems and prayers. The learning is just as important as the written work
- Reading is also an important part of the homework – practice reading out loud sometimes. Take time also to read a book for enjoyment
- Rule and lay out your copy as your teacher advises
- Time yourself as you do your homework
- Take care of your books and materials – do not write or scribble on books or copies. Cover all books at the beginning of the year
- Never have food or drink near books or copies for fear of accidental spillages.

How can Parents Help with Homework?

In St. Clare's, we believe that homework well done can give children a sense of pride and confidence in their achievements.

- Make sure your child has basic equipment to complete homework such as copies, ruler, pens and pencils, dictionary, etc.
- Try to ensure that the child can work in a regular, quiet, well-lit room without distraction. Turn off the television and radio until the homework is completed
- When doing written work, make sure that the child sits at a table or a desk, where there is plenty of room
- Try to ensure that homework is done as early as possible, to allow for play, relaxation and family time
- Praise and encourage the child when work is done well
- Establish a routine. Be firm, but flexible. Children appreciate boundaries and learn best when they know what is expected of them.
- Take a positive and active interest in your child's work at home rather than just insisting that it is done. Ask your child to show you his/her work – they really appreciate this

- Help your child organise his or her time to best advantage so that homework is not left to the last minute or even forgotten
- Do not accept untidy or incomplete work – if necessary ask the child to repeat the work
- Identify areas of improvement one at a time and work on those areas
- Give children as much responsibility as possible – allow them to think for themselves.

Parents can also help their children to learn by

- talking to children about the work they are doing in school
- encouraging children to use the Irish phrases they learn each week
- joining a library – many local libraries hold regular activities/workshops relevant to primary school children
- watching children's television programmes with your child and talking about them – your child can talk to you but not to the television !
- reading to your child and allowing them to share their reading with you
- attending talks in relation to school and curriculum organised in the school
- monitor closely the amount of time spent by children watching television, play station etc especially on school nights
- ensure the children get to bed early on school nights

Presentation of Work

Presentation of work is a paramount importance. Emphasis on layout and neatness of work encourages accuracy and also gives children confidence and pride in their own achievements.

Children progress to joined writing at the end of 3rd or at the beginning of 4th class. Once they have mastered joined writing, they are encouraged to change from pencil to pen, although a pencil may continue to be used for maths.

Poorly presented work will not be accepted and children will be asked to repeat unsatisfactory exercises. In order to ensure consistency as children progress through the school, we give pupils the following advice:

- All exercises should have a margin and the title and date should be underlined
- Full answers to questions should be given and all questions should be numbered in accordance with the textbook
- In Maths copies sums involving computation and problem-solving should always have a clear answer Answer = / Freagra = assigned to them. A pencil should always be used to work out sums
- Copies should always be ruled with red biro

Failure to hand up homework

If homework is not done on a given night, children will be asked to complete the homework the following night.

Homework repeatedly not signed or repeatedly left at home or not attempted will be investigated.

If there are good reasons for not doing the homework, a written note from parent to teacher, by way of explanation, is required.

The class teacher will contact parents if problems with homework persist. Likewise parents are encouraged to contact the class teacher if the child is experiencing problems at home.

Home-School Liaison

Homework is the joint responsibility of parents and teachers. We believe that children are more likely to learn if they feel the work they are doing is being valued both at home and in school.

The homework journal is an important bridge between home and school and may be used as a vehicle of communication between parents and teachers.

Perhaps your child seems to be doing too much, or not enough, or is finding homework too easy or too difficult. If there are problems with homework that you cannot resolve, please contact the class teacher who will be glad to help.

Marking Homework

Marking homework forms an integral part of the teacher's assessment and we aim to mark or respond to homework regularly and in a way that is helpful to pupils.

While each teacher will have his/her own ideas and consideration about marking work, as a school, we aim to mark homework in a simple, positive and child friendly way.

In checking the homework, personal effort rather than perfection of results will be considered although pupils will always be encouraged to aim for the

highest standards possible. Homework well done can give children a sense of pride and confidence in their achievements.

Completed exercises are returned to children as quickly as possible so as to maximise the benefit to them. In particular we aim to give 'same day return' on short exercises such as spelling tests etc.

Teacher feedback on homework will have a balance between written and verbal comment. Once exercises have been marked and returned, pupils are expected to correct and modify work accordingly.

Standards and Assessment

A significant feature of the curriculum currently in use in primary schools is the central position given to assessment in the teaching and learning process. Homework forms a part of that assessment.

Using assessment strategies that are directed towards the identification of children's needs and providing experiences that will fulfil these needs adds enormously to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning process.

Homework is one of a wide range of factors that affect the quality of education provided in our school. While each teacher holds responsibility for homework within his/her own classroom, the principal teacher has overall responsibility for creating an environment which encourages and fosters learning among all the pupils.

Homework and the Board of Management

The principal – in consultation with teachers – reports on a regular basis to the Board on educational standards generally throughout the school. Homework review together with standardised tests and discussions generally within the staff body help to formulate Board policy in allocating resources to ensure the highest standards of education for the children in our care.

Review of Policy

Members of the teaching staff along with the Board of Management have been involved in the preparation of this policy. A copy of this document is made available to parents of all pupils in the school.

This document will be reviewed at regular intervals in order to monitor, evaluate and review the quality of education provided in St. Clare's School.

Ratified by Board of Management on _____
Date

Signed: _____
Chairperson, Board of Management