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## **Homework Policy**

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### 1. Introduction

Here in St. Mary's we are committed to the provision of high quality education in an environment, which is conducive to effective learning, teaching and discipline. Our central objective is the development of the personal, spiritual, physical and academic potential of each student in our care in a compassionate, supportive and happy environment. The uniqueness and dignity of each individual are values enshrined in the Holy Faith philosophy of education.

This Homework policy is rooted in the school's fundamental aim to foster in students a spirit of independence, co-operation and responsibility, to provide them with skills for life-long learning and to nurture their intellectual growth in the constant search for truth.

We believe that regular homework is an essential part of the learning process and requires co-operation on the part of the students, teachers and parents.

## **2. Objectives of Homework**

Homework is an integral part of the learning process. The purpose of homework is to:

- Reinforce material taught and learned in the classroom that day
- Explore subjects in greater depth, with the aim of enhancing academic achievement and developing student skills
- Supplement what is currently being taught in the class
- Practice new skills and concepts and enable students to become more competent in their use
- Develop study skills and encourage independent learning, self-discipline and responsibility
- Encourage parents to take an interest in and to share responsibility for their daughters' work and progress.

## **3. Guidelines on Homework**

### **I. Guidelines for Teachers**

- Teachers in the school are expected to set regular homework on topics covered in class
- Teachers should explain homework assignments clearly and share the success criteria with their students
- Teachers should give clear guidelines as to how homework is to be presented
- All homework should be written on the classroom white board and time should be allocated to allow students to record homework in their journals
- Teachers are expected to check homework regularly and give formative feedback to their students (See Appendix A)
- Records of homework, feedback and grades should be kept by each teacher
- Homework should not be pitched beyond the ability of pupils. Homework set should be purposeful and meaningful to the work of the class or to some future work. Special consideration will be given to the students with special educational needs

- Teachers should ensure that no single subject would take up a disproportionate amount of a pupil's time to the detriment of other subjects
- A balance will be maintained between written/practical and oral/learning within each subject
- Adequate time should be given to pupils to complete major assignments such as essays
- Homework during holiday periods, mid-term breaks can be given at the teacher's discretion
- Students should be made aware that it is their responsibility to get details of homework assignments from classmates or their teacher if they are absent from class/school for any reason
- The amount of homework given to students may be curtailed or deadlines extended when students are involved in school related activities such as attending a play, debate, etc.
- When students do not carry out set homework tasks the subject teacher will record this in the student's journal, which must be signed by the student's parent/guardian at the end of each week.

## **II. Guidelines for Students**

- Students are expected to complete all homework assignments given to them by their teachers
- Homework should be done on time, in full and should be properly presented
- Each student in St. Mary's must record all homework in her homework journal as outlined by subject teachers. Both written work **and** learning work must be recorded in the journal
- Before leaving each class, students should be sure that they understand clearly what their teacher expects them to do for homework. If in doubt, they should seek clarification.
- If a student is absent from class/school for any reason, it is her responsibility to find out the details of the work missed. This applies also to students who miss classes due to sporting or other extra-curricular activities
- Copying homework is counter-productive and is regarded as a serious matter by the school
- A student must present their school journal to their teacher, if homework is not completed. The teacher will record this in the student journal
- Parents may be notified by the school if a student's homework is not being submitted regularly or if homework does not meet the school's expectations
- Supervised study is available in the school for students in 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year who wish to avail of this service.

## **III. Guidelines for Parents/Guardians**

Parents have a vital role to play in helping their daughters achieve their full potential, by shaping good attitudes and habits in relation to their daughter's homework. Monitoring of homework by parents/guardians ensures that homework is being recorded and completed. Students benefit from such parental/guardian support and encouragement in persevering with difficult assignments.

- Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide a quiet, suitable place in which students can do their homework free from distractions such as television, mobile phone, iPads etc. They are encouraged to also provide a suitable space with a desk, chair and adequate light and heat
- A good diet, including plenty of water, is essential to maintain and sustain your daughter's hydration and concentration. In addition it would be advisable to encourage exercise on a daily basis
- Where possible, homework should be completed early in the evening rather than late at night
- Parents/guardians should encourage students to avail of after-school study
- It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to inform the subject teacher of any reasons why a student was unable to complete a homework assignment. A parent/guardian may communicate this through the student's journal
- If a parent/guardian feels that their daughter is struggling with the amount of homework or degree of difficulty of her homework, they may communicate this to the subject teacher/Year Head
- Parents/guardians have the opportunity to discuss issues relating to homework with the subject teacher at parent/teacher meetings
- Parents/guardians are encouraged to monitor their daughter's use of the Internet if she needs to use it for research for homework (See Acceptable User Policy)
- Parents/guardians are expected to check and sign their daughter's journal weekly.

#### **4. Homework Defined**

The term 'homework' should not be narrowly defined. It consolidates and supplements the work done in class and includes not only written work but also learning, memorising and researching, to name but a few. It also involves regular revision work and exam preparation. A wide variety of homework assignments are set by teachers. These include:

- |                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| • Reading                  | • Designing                                   |
| • Problem Solving          | • Using Computer/Internet                     |
| • Investigations           | • Revision                                    |
| • Interviews               | • Model making                                |
| • Experiments              | • Drawing/painting                            |
| • Essay writing            | • Projects                                    |
| • Learning work            | • Listening to radio programmes               |
| • Research                 | • Watching recommended T.V. programmes        |
| • Visits to Public Library | • Using recorded materials for languages etc. |
| • Report writing           |   |
| • Spelling                 |   |

#### **5. Time Allocation for Homework**

The value of the homework is more important than the precise amount of time devoted to it. The amount of time taken to complete homework will vary from student to student and from year to year. Nonetheless, parents/guardians and students may find it useful to be given broad guidelines as to how much time is reasonable for students to spend on homework. Best practice suggests that the amount of time spent on average by students at second level on homework should fall within the following ranges:

- First Year: 1 ½ hours
- Second Year: 1 ½ - 2 hours
- Third Year: 2-3 hours
- Transition Year: varies depending on project work and activities
- Fifth Year: 3-3 ½ hours
- Sixth Year: 4 hours. Weekend study and revision is also essential.

Students who are sitting State Examinations, Christmas, mock and summer exams will probably require more time as the exams approach.

## **6. Study Skills**

It is very important that students would have frequent and increasing opportunities to develop and consolidate their competence as independent learners. Study skills are taught through a variety of initiatives in the school. These include:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Year/Tutor Session - all 1<sup>st</sup> years have a morning session with their Tutor to help them organise their books and lockers in September
- 1<sup>st</sup> Year Organisation Module - all 1<sup>st</sup> years complete an organisation module on how to organise themselves and their workload. This module is developed by the Guidance Department
- Wellbeing – there is a short session on ‘Learning to Learn’ as part of the Wellbeing module for all 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> years
- SPHE - there is a Study Skills module for all 3<sup>rd</sup> years
- Supervised Study - 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years focus on ‘Learning to Learn’ for the first number of sessions in September
- Coffee Morning - Parents/guardians of SEN students are invited into the school for a Coffee Morning and session on ‘Learning to Learn’
- Library Induction - all 1<sup>st</sup> years are brought to the library during English class in September for an induction in how to use the library.

## **7. Students with Special Educational Needs**

In setting homework for students with special needs, teachers are encouraged to balance the right of students to share fully in the work of the class, including homework tasks, with their individual learning needs. These needs may include consolidation and reinforcement of specific skills. For some students, the continuing involvement of parents is very valuable. Subject teachers will collaborate where necessary with Learning Support teachers to ensure that the special educational needs of students are being met when completing homework.

## **8. Student Feedback**

Students look mainly to teachers for a response on the quality of their work. Effective assessment and feedback are fundamental to helping students make progress. As an integral part of St.

Mary's Formative Feedback Strategy (Appendix A), teachers use a wide variety of methods to give students feedback on their homework. Feedback will vary depending on the type of homework assigned. Subject Departments continue to develop methods of feedback, which are appropriate to their subject area.

Parent/teacher meetings offer a further valuable opportunity for teachers, students and parents/guardians to move beyond student grades and to discuss student progress more comprehensively. As well as allowing a focus on progress achieved, such meetings provide an opportunity to nominate areas that need specific attention and to indicate what needs to be done to improve student performance.

Reporting is a crucial part of the relationship between our school and parents/guardians. The school formally reports to parents/guardians on their daughter's progress at Christmas, for mock exams and in the summer. School reports take the form of a grade or mark, along with a detailed comment from each subject teacher highlighting how students could best improve their learning.

## **9. Failure to Complete and Submit Homework**

Teachers expect all homework to be completed to the student's best ability and submitted on time. If a student fails to complete or submit homework, the following actions will be taken:

- Students will be asked to complete or resubmit the homework in question
- Regardless of the reason, the subject teacher will record any incomplete homework or homework not submitted in the Report Card section of the student journal. This Report Card should be monitored and signed weekly by parents/guardians. In this way, the school journal provides an opportunity for all students and their parents/guardians to identify gaps in students' learning and endeavour to rectify these together.
- If a student persistently fails to submit homework, the subject teacher, in consultation with the Year Head, will phone home to discuss this matter with parents/guardians. This is in keeping with our commitment to Restorative Practice in St. Mary's
- In the school reports issued at Christmas, for the mock exams and at summer, subject teachers will record if a student persistently fails to submit homework
- In the event that this issue continues, the school will adhere to the Ladder of Referral (St. Mary's Code of Behaviour).

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Formative Assessment Strategy**

Students look mainly to teachers for a response on the quality of their work. Effective assessment and feedback are therefore fundamental to helping our students make progress in their learning.

As an integral part of School Improvement Plan following a process of school self-evaluation, our agreed Formative Assessment Strategy is as follows:

#### **1. Criteria for Success List for each Assignment**

- A Criteria for Success list details how students can achieve their potential in a specific task
- The Criteria for Success can be used for an often repeated task (essay) or a once-off assignment (project)
- Teachers may use a less detailed Criteria for Success list in junior cycle more a more detailed list in senior cycle.

#### **2. Comment Only Feedback**

- Feedback is related specifically to the Criteria for Success

- Feedback can be oral or written (students should be encouraged to make a note of oral feedback)
- No grades are given with the feedback.

### **3. Get Your Comment, Earn Your Grade (additional option)**

- Any student wishing to receive a grade may do so if they resubmit the assignment, having made the necessary changes suggested in the teacher's feedback.

### **4. Dedicated Time for Feedback**

- Dedicated time is allocated in class to allow students review and reflect upon their feedback
- Feedback can be reviewed individually, with peers or the whole class.

### **5. Reporting**

- Formative Feedback is given in Christmas, mock and summer reports.