

St Mary & St John CE Primary School

Headteacher: Elizabeth Burton

September 2019

Dear Parents and Carers,



I am writing with our plans for homework over the academic year 2019 -2020. It is basically the same as the last few years with a couple of tweaks in line with changes nationally.

Homework is often raised by parents as a cause for concern. These concerns vary. The most common are: too much homework, too little homework, unmarked homework, inappropriately pitched homework, family and individual stress caused by homework. We have discussed homework as a whole staff, leadership team and in the full governing body. There are no statutory guidelines for homework. Headteachers must decide how much extra study, if any, their pupils require.

I need to explain my position before I set out our plan. I am expected, as the headteacher, to monitor the standards of teaching and learning across our school. This is done in a variety of ways including analysing data, observing lessons and giving feedback, looking at children's work in books and the quality of the teachers' marking. My focus is on the quality of education delivered during the school day. Research demonstrates that good quality marking and effective feedback has a high impact on children's progress. Teachers do not have time to mark homework in enough detail to be useful and it can be frustrating for parents and children to see homework unmarked or just given a smiley face or a well done stamp! It is more useful and manageable to set clear tasks which can be checked in school but do not need detailed marking. Project work is potentially divisive with some parents admitting to practically doing the projects for their children and others leaving their children to do projects unaided with no suitable resources! The impressive projects get displayed and paraded but do not always reflect the children's abilities. Natural curiosity is marvellous and needs encouraging but it is very unlikely that the same topics will grab all children's interest.

This is our homework plan:

- Every child will have a **homework book**;
- Homework books will be monitored at least once a year by the leadership team;
- Every term some classes will **bring home a short story to learn and retell**. This may be in the form of a story map. This is to build up confidence with speaking to an audience as well as supporting language development for reading and writing. Other classes may be working on a novel so it may not be appropriate to learn and retell;
- **Daily reading** is highly recommended. In the younger age groups parents will be guided by the teacher;
- **Weekly spellings**. These will be tested in school most weeks. Spelling is an area that we need to monitor carefully and the spellings will link to spelling patterns, lists in the National Curriculum for English or topic work covered in school;
- **Times tables to learn** until children are **secure with their tables up to 12 X**. We are introducing a challenge element this year to encourage learning as times tables are tested at the end of year 4 from Summer 2020 with the expectation of all children being secure up to 12X;
- **Online maths resource Mathletics** for children in Years 3 – 6;
- **Year 6 will get additional homework** to prepare for their assessment tests which are in May every year. The class teachers will recommend practice books;
- Some children **who are receiving extra help in school for English and maths may get specific tasks** to practise at home to support work done in school;
- Some classes will be encouraged to keep a **holiday diary**. These were very successful in some year groups in the last academic year;
- Some classes may get a **piece of writing** set as a holiday task e.g. using a story starter to prompt a piece of creative writing.

There will be no project work set by school. However, if your children have a genuine enthusiasm for a topic and want to do something independently, we will be delighted to share and celebrate it at school.

Talking to your children about school is vital. The 'What did you do at school today?' with the stock response 'nothing' can be frustrating but it is surprising what children come out with at unexpected moments!

We want our children to be motivated, confident, independent learners. We hope that reading fluently, spelling accurately, recalling times tables facts quickly, retelling stories with confidence and following up natural interests will contribute to this.

It is, in summary, an approach to homework with the aim of clarity, consistency and manageability.

Best wishes, Liz Burton