

St. Munchin's College

Homework Policy



Philosophy of St. Munchin's College

“By developing an environment that is favourable to learning and is committed to a just and equitable treatment for all, the College Community tries to ensure that its students are given an education and a value system which will enable them to become responsible members of an ever-changing society.”

From the Educational Philosophy of St. Munchin's College

The purpose of homework:

- It consolidates and reinforces skills and understanding developed at school.
- It encourages students to develop the skills, confidence, self-discipline and motivation needed to study effectively on their own. This is vital given the importance for students in the future of life-long learning and adaptability.
- It extends school learning, for example through additional reading.
- It sustains the involvement of parents in the management of students' learning and keeping them informed about the work students are doing.
- It allows the students to manage particular exam course work.
- It directs research.

From the beginning of First Year each student is expected to establish a homework routine. Each student is expected to keep a record of all homework in his Journal, which is given by the school to the students specifically for this purpose. Journals are regularly monitored and are available to all teachers should they wish to communicate with parents. Every student should enter the written homework into the correct subject copy. It should be dated e.g. homework for day/month/year. The questions and answers should be clearly written. This assists with revision.

A class teacher will communicate initially through the journal if a student fails to present written assignments or has failed repeatedly to complete learning assignments. Homework slips will also be issued by a class teacher when homework is not complete, poorly done or not handed up. Please note that 3 homework slips in any one week will automatically result in the issuing of a Saturday Detention.

The amount of homework appropriate for students of different ages:

The intrinsic value of homework activities is far more important than the precise amount of time devoted to them. Best practice suggests that the amount of time that should be spent by students at Second Level, on average, on homework should fall within the following ranges:

- First Year 1½ hours
- Second Year 1½ – 2 hours
- Third Year 2 – 3 hours
- Transition Year varies depending on project work and activities
- Fifth Year 2½ – 3 hours
- Sixth Year 2½ – 3 hours. Weekend study and revision is also essential.

Able students will complete all tasks quickly and correctly and may appear to have given very little time to their homework. Weaker students and those with learning difficulties may put in huge amounts of time and effort. Teachers and parents need to consider the varying abilities of students when setting homework or when inspecting homework.

Students should not be employed in part-time work during term.

The school expects that all homework is completed on time, presented on time and to the best of the student's ability in a neat and tidy fashion. It is very important that homework, including sanctions for not completing it, should be consistently applied across the school so that all pupils see the arrangements as fair. If a student has been absent the onus is on the student to discover what work has been set and to endeavour to complete it within the time given in as far as is possible. If the student has been ill a period of time will be given to the student to complete missed assignments.

The role of parents in supporting pupils:

- Parents are encouraged, as far as possible, to provide a reasonably peaceful, suitable place in which students can do their homework free of distractions such as television. e.g. Provide suitable desk, chair, adequate light and heat.
- A regular time should be set aside for homework.
- Students may attend after-school study in St. Munchin's College.
- It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school or class teacher of any reasons why a student was unable to complete a homework assignment. A parent may communicate this through the student's journal.
- If a parent feels that his/her son is struggling with the amount of homework or degree of difficulty of same he/she may communicate this to the class teacher.
- Parents are expected to check the Journal regularly and sign notes from school personnel.
- Parents may communicate with class teacher when their son cannot do homework due to family circumstances.
- Parents may communicate with class teacher at parent/teacher meetings regarding homework.
- Since computers are an integral part of today's world, it is inevitable and essential that the Internet is a source for much of their research. Parents are encouraged to monitor their son's use of the Internet. See the school's "Acceptable Use Policy" document.

Study skills:

It is very important that students should have frequent and increasing opportunities to develop and consolidate their competence as independent learners. These can be achieved through tutorials on study skills, target setting and mentoring schemes. Intensive study skills programmes are organised for students. The Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support teacher as well as the SPHE team

address study skills for First and Second Year students. Each individual class teacher provides regular guidance on study methods within his/her own specialist subject area. Meeting homework deadlines may not be always easy for students. They should not be excused homework but may need extra help with strategies to manage it.

Appropriate tasks for homework:

The range of tasks which are appropriate for students of various ages are many and varied. Some examples are as follows:

- Written assignments
- Learning assignments
- Listening assignments
- Essay writing
- Reading
- Investigations
- Interviews
- Drill practice
- Simple experiments
- Research
- School library visit
- Public library visit
- Drafting
- Report writing
- Designing
- Revision work
- Practice of some procedure
- Problem solving
- Preparing for debates, role-plays etc
- Preparing for class tests or exams
- Making a model
- Drawing
- Word processing
- Projects
- Watching a television programme.

The above list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive.

Tasks should have a clear objective, linked to study programmes. Teachers are encouraged to check that their overall homework programme is balanced in the type and scale of tasks and manageable for students. This balance is not always possible and can vary considerably from day to day. However, it should be noted that homework time devoted to reading and learning is as important as written work.

All students should spend time at home on their studies whether or not work has been assigned. If no homework has been set then students have an obligation to go over material they have recently studied in class to make sure that they have fully understood it and that they can use it to answer examination-style questions.

Feedback for pupils:

Students look mainly to teachers for a response on the quality of their work. Effective marking and feedback have always placed demands on teachers, but both are fundamental to helping students make progress. Teachers check homework on a daily basis in as far as is possible.

A variety of methods are used to correct homework depending on the content and the age of the children:

- Teacher correction
- Class correction
- Class discussion
- Students exchange work for correction
- Students write out answers in the form of a test
- Some items of homework (and class work) may be checked by students themselves under the direction of the teacher. This can be a useful part of the learning process for students.

“Although it can offer an accurate measurement of achievement, a simple grade or mark without supporting comment provides students with little support or guidance for future learning. The effective monitoring of homework and the adoption of a policy of comment-only marking can provide the kind of positive and constructive feedback that will assist students to understand their own abilities and learning needs.

In adopting the approach of comment-only marking the teacher gives feedback in three key areas in the student's learning cycle:

- what the student has done right
- what weaknesses there are in the student's work
- what the next step/s should be to improve performance or understanding.

This kind of feedback will be most helpful when the learning intentions and criteria for success are clearly understood by the students. The teacher's comments should relate to the task in hand, the learning intention and the criteria for success.”

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All schools report to parents on the progress of students and indeed reporting is a crucial part of the relationship between school and parents. The value of regular discussions, both formal and informal, between parents and teachers cannot be overemphasised. Generally speaking, parents want to be involved in decisions that will have an impact on their son's schooling and they should be provided with opportunities that will facilitate this involvement. Traditional school end-of-term reports that take the form of a grade or mark and a generalised comment for each subject can be reassuring and supportive for the parents of students. Parent/teacher meetings offer valuable opportunities for the school to move beyond the marks, as it were, and to present more comprehensive assessments of progress. 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 by teacher, parents and students to improve student performance. Also, the school will issue Academic Reports in late October and March which will be comment based covering areas like quality of homework, class participation and areas of improvement required.

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 possible with Learning Support teacher to ensure class tasks are manageable, and individual skill practice can be incorporated without overloading the student.

Where possible subject teachers will guide the gifted student in their learning and research.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating homework policy:

The effectiveness of this homework policy needs to be monitored and evaluated. It is envisaged that each subject department monitors homework within the department at subject department meetings. Teachers need to evaluate the quality of homework and the contribution it is making to learning. The system can also be evaluated through staff appraisal at staff meetings. In addition to monitoring arrangements the homework policy needs to be reviewed within two years to assess its effectiveness. The key criterion should be the extent to which the policy is contributing to the progress students make at school and their attitude to learning.

Signed: *Marion Cummins*

Chairperson BOM

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