

## **WHY HOMESTUDY, NOT HOMEWORK?**

Homestudy is an integral part of pupils' learning, not a separate "bolt on" or extra activity. As staff and parents, we all have a part to play in ensuring pupils understand the importance of Homestudy and are supported to complete it as well as they can.

Homestudy is any school work that pupils do outside class time and falls into 2 interrelated categories.

Directed Work is set by the class teacher, who defines the assignments, outcomes and timescale, for example:

- research
- essay planning/continuation/completion
- answering questions, completing exercises in textbooks/from worksheets
- directed reading and/or note-taking
- learning formulae, vocabulary, factual material
- practising techniques/skills learned in class
- preparing for the next lesson
- preparing presentations.

Independent Study is where the pupil sets his/her own targets and timescales, using guidelines and materials which have been supplied and techniques which have been taught, for example:

- private reading and writing
- rereading texts
- organising and reworking notes
- learning and revising notes
- editing own written work.
- revising from past papers
- working through set internet tasks at own pace
- practising essays
- using revision materials and techniques.

## **Checking and Using Homestudy Assignments**

Given that Homestudy is an integral part of pupils' learning, the outcomes will be used in a wide variety of ways. Sometimes, parents have an unrealistic expectation that they will see written marking on all their children's work. However, there are many ways of checking that the work has been satisfactorily carried out, of which teacher-marking is only one; these include:

- spot tests/quick quizzes
- going over work with class
- peer marking
- self-checking
- teacher marking selected paragraph - pupil editing the rest
- discussion in groups/as a class.

## Homestudy – A guide for Parents of Pupils in First Year

The key to Home/School partnership is the Planner! Your child will be given an S1 Planner at the start of the year. The Planner is a diary, an organiser, a memory aid, a notebook, a Homestudy record - and much more.

At the end of each lesson, teachers will ask pupils to 'traffic light' what they have learnt. If a pupil has not marked the work green, you could usefully discuss with them how to improve their understanding of that topic. Pupils will also write down any pieces of homework they are given. Your child should never leave home for school without his/her Planner!

During Social Education, S1 pupils are shown how to use their Planners. Your child will ask you to check and sign it once a week. This is how you will know what work has been set and when it is due in. Occasionally, teachers may note information for you in the Planner. You can use it in the same way to communicate with the teacher.

You may already have expectations about how much work your child will bring home. Many pupils in the upper primary years are given steady amounts, by a single teacher. But your child now has a curriculum of 16 subjects on rotation and up to the same number of teachers. Even half an hour per subject would mean up to 6 hours additional work.

We hope your child will find the early months of secondary school exciting and challenging. He/She will be dealing with new social and organisational demands as well as academic ones. There are clubs, activities and teams to join, which mean lunchtime or after school meetings. It's a long day for many: some pupils leave home at 7.30 am and may not arrive back until after 5.00 pm. The amount of homestudy varies from subject to subject according to the number of periods per week a child spends in that subject and the nature of the work being undertaken in that class. For some practical subjects, departments only set assignments occasionally in first year.

These are examples of the sort of work your child may be asked to do at home:

- preparing for the next lesson
- learning vocabulary, facts or formulae
- planning, continuing or finishing a piece of writing
- doing a set amount of reading
- practising techniques/skills learned in class
- answering questions, completing exercises or worksheets.

If it is a short exercise, eg learning a few words of vocabulary or practising a skill taught in class, the work may be set for the next day. If a longer piece of work is involved, usually several evenings will be given.

If you feel your child is willing and able to benefit from spending more time and you wish to support him/her in this, here are examples of the sorts of independent study which are valuable:

- reading over classwork or textbook material
- learning and revising notes, vocabulary, factual content
- additional reading or research using books or the Internet.

Do bear in mind, however, that more does not mean better. It is the quality of the time which your child gives to the work, not the quantity which is important. The catchphrase for first year is "*a little and regular*".

The work done at home is used to extend classroom learning. Teacher

marking is only one of many ways of checking that it has been satisfactorily carried out. We say this because sometimes parents have unrealistic expectations that they will see marking on all their child's work. Other ways Homestudy is checked include:

- using it as the basis for the next lesson
- spot tests/quick quizzes
- going over work with class
- pupils marking their own or each others' work.

It is straightforward for children to understand the need to complete written assignments. They often find it harder to be conscientious about learning facts, vocabulary or revising material. Yet this sort of work is not only essential for progress, it is also the basis for future independent study. This is where your encouragement, assistance and testing make all the difference.

The Library is available after school for pupils to do Homestudy, use the Internet or borrow books. There is a 5.00 pm Activities Bus for which they can obtain a pass to travel home.

Do ask to see the Planner regularly and make sure you sign it each week. Your support for your child could make all the difference.

We look forward to working in partnership with you.

## Homestudy – A guide for Parents of Pupils in Third and Fourth Years

The third and fourth years in secondary school form the final phase of compulsory education, with the courses your son/daughter is now following leading to SQA certification in summer of S4. These courses require commitment to Homestudy if good results and firm foundations for future learning are to be achieved.

In February of S4 your son/daughter will be making an important choice: whether to continue full-time education, either at school or at college, or to seek work-based training. It is very important that he/she has developed the study skills and habits which will make this choice an informed one. Clearly, your support with Homestudy during third and fourth years is crucial.

During third and fourth year, pupils should be developing understanding of what independent study means and how to do it. The proportion of their Homestudy which is independent learning should steadily increase. Learning how to study effectively is therefore very important at this stage. Study Skills are taught, both by subject teachers and as a topic in Social Education. Class teachers will explain to pupils how to apply study techniques to their specific subjects. They will give examples and set assignments and targets to help pupils learn study habits. For their own part, pupils should never hesitate to ask their teachers if they are not sure how to study effectively in that subject.

Examples of study which may be set, but which pupils should start to plan and carry out on their own initiative are:

- reorganising, revising and learning course notes
- reinforcing knowledge of specific subject content, such as formulae, proofs, treaties and dates, vocabulary or quotations
- practising techniques or skills learned in class
- reading around a subject
- use of the internet for further research or interactive practice.

The central idea is that third and fourth year pupils gradually learn to take more responsibility for their own learning. The frequency and nature of homework depends on the subjects being studied. Pupils will need to spend longer on Homestudy at pressure points like:

- revision for tests or exams
- preparation for unit assessments
- prelims
- the completion of SQA course work for submission deadlines: March of S4.

To encourage responsibility for planning the work they do, pupils may be given more extended deadlines for the completion of assignments. They should find that they have some flexibility for studying different subjects over several evenings.

The amount of time and commitment your son/daughter gives to Homestudy will depend to some extent on the nature of the subjects chosen and the direction which they hope to follow post 16. By this stage, some pupils are already motivated by study and have ideas of going on to Higher Education. Others who will later choose this route are as yet unfocussed. Some will be starting to recognise their practical and vocational strengths and will wish to do no more study than is necessary for success in gaining entry to a chosen career or course at 16. Help your son/daughter to understand that the commitment he/she is willing to give to Homestudy will certainly affect future options.

Encouragement and rewards help to develop motivation. However, to be supportive it is important for you as a parent to accept that this is a time of growing independence for your

child. The catchphrase at this stage is “developing individual responsibility”.

You will be familiar with the Planner your child receives at the start of each school year. It provides the focus for Homestudy support. The customised pages for S3/4 contain information appropriate to the stage your son/daughter has now reached. Pupils were trained in the use of their Planners during S1 and you were asked to sign it weekly. As pupils grow up and become more independent, this changes. However, in the early months of third year, help with the routine of methodically recording and completing Homestudy assignments may be needed. Reinforce the idea that the Planner is the essential item for organised study. Reminders to carry the Planner at all times in school are helpful. It is a diary, an organiser, a memory aid, a notebook, a Homestudy record . . . and much more. The Planner can also be used to plan and record time spent on Homestudy.

Until they have acquired the habit, many pupils find it difficult to be conscientious about independent study: learning facts, vocabulary or revising material on their own. Your assistance - reviewing notes and encouraging their reorganisation, discussing content, asking questions, testing - can make all the difference. Try to help him/her establish the habit of doing this regularly - not just when a test or exam looms.

Different people learn in different ways; by reading, by listening, by seeing, by doing. Discuss these to encourage interest in the process as well as the content of learning. Providing a suitable environment for study helps a lot - though this may not be exactly what you would choose. Many teenagers study best lying on a bed or the floor, with plug-in music! Working with a friend, especially when revising, can be effective. Beware, however, of correcting written work. If course work is to be submitted to the SQA, teachers have to be able to certify that it is all the pupil's unaided work. Remember that your aim is to support your son/daughter in developing the skills of a self-sufficient learner.

If you are told *I have no homework* or the quantities seem minimal, be sceptical! Ask to check the Planner to see whether Homestudy assignments are being written down in a clear, organised way. If few or no assignments appear, help your son/daughter to spend the time on independent study. If the situation persists, contact the Guidance teacher to clarify what instructions subject teachers are actually giving.

The Libraries in both buildings are available after school for pupils to do Homestudy, use the Internet or borrow books. There is a 5 o'clock Activities Bus for which they can obtain a pass to travel home on.