



Homework Policy and Guidance

Meaningful

Manageable

Motivating

NDHS Homework Policy and Guidance – September 2017

1. Preamble

Homework has always been a contentious issue. It dichotomises opinion in parents, staff, students and the practice of education systems around the World. Students in Finland, work less hours at school, get no homework and their schools rank highly within the PISA system. In contrast the hot housing of South Korea and Singapore and the take home pressures that their students face also produce very high ranking PISA outcomes. Notre Dame's Homework Policy therefore needs to be looked at within the cultural expectation of the school and its families. It needs to fit the school ethos of giving life to the full!

2. Summary of Research

The Educational Endowment Fund Toolkit shows that the impact of homework is consistently positive, leading to an average of five months additional progress across an academic career. Beneath this average there is wide variation, suggesting the 'how' of homework is hugely important. **Short focussed interventions are seen as most effective.** In the most effective examples of homework setting, the homework is seen as an integral part of the learning, rather than an 'add on'. It was also shown that **high quality feedback on homework** is a crucial factor in its worth. Several studies show **optimal time is between 1 and 2 hours per school day**, longer for older students. Effect diminishes beyond that timeframe.

The work of John Hattie shows homework has an effect size of 0.29d, below the highly significant 0.4d. However, 0.29d is taken as an aggregated whole that when split into primary and secondary education shows 0.15d and 0.64d respectively. This shows **that high schools really should consider homework as an integral part of learning and progress.** It would seem that more complex, open ended and un-structured tasks lower the effect size. Therefore, we should aim for **simplicity and structure throughout much of our homework planning.** Hattie's work also reinforces the necessity for feedback (in whatever form is best – See Marking and Feedback Policy).

A Summary from the Huntington Research School has shown that Males spend about 17 fewer minutes per day on homework than females. This gap is largest in high achieving students. Underlying factors, such as **interest and motivation are malleable and should be at the forefront of teacher's understanding and planning.**

Finally, Notre Dame completed its own research using student, staff and parental voice. Much of which has influenced this policy. Perhaps the key findings that come from said research are 1) The absolute necessity for consistency of practice, for example, the need for **all staff to use Bromcom to record homework.** 2) The need for balance between drawing the gifts out of our young people and having **a genuine concern over their mental health**

and well-being. Notre Dame must allow time for families to be with each other and time for Children to rest and relax.

3. Summary of Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Lay out the importance of homework in the context of Notre Dame High School.
- Provide clear and consistent guidelines for all staff that still allows departments the freedom to set homework as they see fit.
- Reduce intra-departmental variation in homework setting.
- Ensure that the setting of homework is rationalised and not simply set for the sake of it.
- Create the framework that allows staff to set optimal homework that maximises our students’ potential without harming their well-being or mental health.

4. Teacher Standards

i. Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils	ii. Promote good progress and outcomes by pupils
v. Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of pupils	vi. Make accurate and productive use of assessment

5. Policy

Types of Homework

Department Areas are the experts on what is effective for their subject, however, habitual practice needs to be avoided and HODs, TLR holders and all staff need to question why they are setting homework. The Summary of Research above provides a good start point for determining the specific nature of each departments homework setting. It is advisable that homework is set into schemes of work. This will provide consistency and reduce intra-departmental variation. It goes without saying that some homeworks will work for some groups and not others. For example, low attaining groups may struggle with some aspects of flipped learning and careful scaffolding would be required. Some examples of the types of homework that might be built into SoW are set out below...

Rote Learning

Exam Practise

Flipped Learning

Structured research

Blue Pen Editing

Structured Revision

Mastery practise questions

Essay Writing

Extended writing

Extended projects and large construction activities need to be used cautiously. Much of the research points against these being effective forms of homework. If used their needs to be a careful rationale and any enjoyment factor

needs to be weighed up against the time taken on the project. If extended projects are used, then these should be highly structured with regular deadlines and regular feedback. However, staff should always consider, 'what is the simplest route to the learning?'

It is absolutely crucial that when homework is set, the reason for its importance is explained. **Staff must explain the value of homework.** This will aid motivation and avoid habitual, non-functional routines.

Frequency of Homework Setting and Deadlines

Much of the feedback from students has shown that there are apparent pressure points, for example half terms, November, Christmas and the New Year. The logistics behind and rigidity of a homework timetable mean it is not a viable option at Notre Dame. That said the frequency of homework and generosity of deadline should allow all students to successfully hand in all homework. Careful mapping of homework within a SoW should avoid peaks and troughs in the volume of homework distributed.

The amount of homework should taper up from year 7 through to year 13. Although Notre Dame does not set out a strict amount of homework to be set for each subject. A good guideline would be between 30 minutes and 1 hour per subject per fortnight in year 7 and between 1 and 2 hours per subject per fortnight in year 11. A sensible sixth form amount would be between 2-3 hours per subject per teacher per fortnight.

Between years 7 – 11 students must be given a minimum of 1 week to complete a piece of homework (with the exception of short Maths homework). This allows students to manage their own time effectively, being able to attend after school activities, social events and have the necessary 'down time' that we all need. Staff should work with Parents and Carers to encourage students to avoid last minute homework completion.

Some parental and student feedback points toward resentment over homework being set over half term and the Christmas Holidays. Senior Leadership at Notre Dame encourage staff to rest in their holidays. The same mantra should come from staff to students. Students work hard during the term, therefore **no homework should be set over the brief half term holidays and minimal to no homework set over the important and busy Christmas Break.** That said the importance of deadlines and impending exams in year 11,12 and 13 may on occasion over rule this guideline.

For students getting close to exams or mocks homework set should be designed to support student revision. Knowing your classes is crucial, some students have their own effective routines and it may be wise to provide optional support at these stressful times. **Homework not associated with a mock or exam should not be set in the run up to a mock or exam.**

Recording of Homework

Staff always use Bromcom to record all homework. A brief outline of the task will inform parents/carers who need to support their child. The assumption that homework is recorded in the planner is not a reason to avoid using Bromcom.

Students always use their Planners to record all homework, with a brief summary (or greater if additional guidance isn't provided separately) of the task and the deadline for hand in. **Staff will remind students to use their planner effectively as part of your classroom routine.**

Form tutors and heads of year are responsible for guiding students on how best to use their planner.

Failure of student to Complete Homework

Staff will sanction in accordance with the Behaviour for Learning Policy but should acknowledge that failure to complete homework is best dealt with at a departmental level. **Departments should have their own guidelines on how missing homework is dealt with.** This needs to be applied consistently. Other associated/secondary behaviours, like defiance may require the use of Pastoral Sanctions. Concerns around well-being or safeguarding issues that may arise from discussions around a lack of homework may require additional guidance and support

from the Head of Year or Safeguarding team. A good phrase to use for the student that forgets their homework for the *first time* is 'How are you going to make this situation right?'. This is then associated with the expectation that they will hand the homework in first thing the next day or at the earliest opportunity. Notre Dame acknowledges the fallibility of humanity and the need for compassion.

6. Additional Guidance

A good rule of thumb for setting homework is to use the 3M's from Independent Teacher Workload Review on Marking. Make homework **Meaningful, Manageable and Motivating**.

Inform students of how the work will be fed back upon. Let them know if you will be marking it, if it will be peer assessed or if you will simply give whole class feedback. This helps the students that often go above and beyond to impress their teachers to manage their time and effort more effectively.

Ensure you are following your departmental guidance on setting and marking homework. This is published in departmental handbooks and on the school website for parents and carers to see on the school website (see [here](#) or go to Parents → Subjects) but is ultimately laid out so that students get a consistent diet and staff are given achievable guidelines.

Avoid setting a homework quickly because you haven't set one for a while. Make a mental note and set a well thought out and useful homework the next lesson, ask your HOD for support/guidance if you need it. **Use your staff planner/Bromcom to keep an eye on your own consistency of homework setting**

Always question why a homework is being set. Is it the simplest route to the learning? Will it provide a wider understanding of subject knowledge? Will it create a hook or memorable experience? You should be able to rationalise why homework is set. Avoid habituation.

Consider the work of Dunlosky et al. Do you re-visit old material and interleave it with newer material? Do you use spaced practice (little and often)?

Are you differentiating for groups? Individual students? If unsure on this, talk with learning support and your HOD. It is crucial that every student is challenged by homework but that it is ultimately achievable.

7. Other Policies linked to this Policy

- Notre Dame Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Notre Dame Marking and Feedback Policy

8. Links to Additional Reading

<https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/resources/teaching-learning-toolkit/homework-secondary/>

<https://teacherhead.com/2012/10/21/homework-what-does-the-hattie-research-actually-say/>

<https://huntington.researchschool.org.uk/tag/homework/>

<https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/dunlosky.pdf>

Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them.

- Romans 12:6