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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of homework at Hillingdon Manor School is to:

- Reinforce the work covered in class in different ways
- Access resources not available in the classroom
- Further research topics covered in class
- Have an opportunity to work independently
- Demonstrate progress and understanding for moderation
- Provide feedback in the evaluation of teaching
- Enhance their study skills e.g. planning, time management and self-discipline
- Attempt to take ownership and responsibility for learning
- Engage parents in the pupils learning at school
- Create channels for home school dialogue

Homework is not “busywork” nor should it be a replacement for work not covered in class.

Implementation: It is the responsibility of line managers to ensure that staff members are aware of and understand this policy and any subsequent revisions.

Compliance: This policy complies with all relevant regulations and other legislation as detailed in the Compliance with Regulations & Legislation Statement.

2.0 DEFINITION

Homework by definition is any schoolwork that a teacher sets for pupils to do at home. Homework is designed to reinforce or consolidate classroom skills in order to further develop pupils as independent learners with a sense of self-discipline. It is also an invaluable opportunity for parents, teachers and pupils to cooperate and be involved with each other.

Hillingdon Manor School consists of a diverse range of individuals of different ages and abilities. Within our pupil population there are those who have the ability to work independently and progress with minimal support from adults. There are also those who require varying levels of adult support and different prompting methods



to access learning, varying from small verbal prompts to remain on task to pupils that are dependent on one-to-one adult support to fully access their education.

According to the current National Curriculum, homework is a recommended part of schooling, though not a compulsory one. For pupils with autism, homework is a commonly cited cause of stress at home. Considering the diverse nature of our pupils, it is necessary that a fair homework policy be implemented in order to provide all of our pupils with the equal opportunity to access homework at a level that will further their education.

Over the course of 2011, we conducted a research project into the impact of homework on both the livelihoods and academic successes of our pupils. A questionnaire was distributed to all parents/carers of pupils at Hillingdon Manor School and their responses were used to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of current homework procedures. The project collated the current understandings of homework and autism and how homework fits in with academic achievement. This homework policy has been informed by this study.

See Appendix A for reasons why pupils with autism struggle with homework

3.0 EXPECTATIONS

Homework should be personalized and differentiated for the individual. To clarify, differentiation is concerned with correctly matching the work expected from pupils with their ability to do it. It is the responsibility of teachers to ensure that the homework sent home is reasonable for the pupil that receives it. When setting homework, teachers should consider the possible difficulties that pupils may have completing the set task. The section above details some of these. Additionally, many pupils with autism will need carer support to complete tasks, so homework should be written in a format that is clear and concise so that a third party, such as a parent, will be able to provide the support needed for their child to complete homework. It is also recommended that if a particular method is involved in solving problems that examples are provided so as to assist carers in supporting their child in a way that is consistent with what is being taught at school.

Homework should not require pupils to use new concepts; it should be a reinforcement of existing knowledge.

Homework can be a very stressful experience for pupils and those that assist them with homework. It is the responsibility of the class teacher to explore different methods to engage pupils in homework the best way possible. However, in some cases homework will not always benefit the individual and could be detrimental to the pupil's well-being. In these situations, where all possible avenues have proved to be unsuccessful, these pupils should be exempt from doing homework.

4.0 WHEN WILL HOMEWORK BE SET?

Pupils with autism benefit from structure and routine. Form tutors should develop a homework timetable that delegates:

- Which subject, or subjects, will be sent home on a particular night
- The nights that pupils will not have homework

5.0 HOMEWORK TASKS

The task that a pupil receives for homework is set at the discretion of the subject teacher, who should ensure that the homework given is both meaningful and useful for the pupil who receives it.

The following are examples of possible homework activities:

- Rehearsing a particular intervention that a child may be involved in, such as a communication program like PECS
- Reading or continuing with a reading scheme



- Rehearsing social activities with carers
- Occupational therapy activities, such as handwriting schemes
- Activities that support targets outlined in the pupil's Individual Education Plan
- Using ICT
- Consolidation of work in class
- Reflective journal or a diary
- Completion of course work assignments
- Research
- Drawing
- Recording

6.0 INCENTIVES & SANCTIONS

It is encouraged that form tutors develop positive reinforcement strategies that cater specifically for the pupils within their group. Additionally, the school provides the following incentives:

- Pupil of the week awards each Friday; completing homework can contribute towards this
- Special mention certificates to be presented each week at a whole-school assembly
- The opportunity for verbal praise from the Head Teacher or Deputy Head Teachers, who will meet pupils individually to praise them for good work

7.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

Role of Teacher

- At the beginning of each academic term parents will be informed of homework expectations
- Set homework according to the timetable
- Provide an incentive for the pupil to complete the homework
- Provide simple and concise instructions
- Set deadlines for completed work
- Mark homework according to APP guidelines
- Provide support for parents and pupils with homework

Role of Pupil

- Where appropriate, record homework in their homework diaries
- Demonstrate that they have put effort into their work
- Attempt homework to the best of their ability
- Return homework to their subject teacher to be marked

Role of Parents

- Provide the necessary support for their child when completing homework
- Communicate and collaborate with the class teacher as to how their child is responding to homework, and to discuss any possible areas of improvement and how they can assist.
- If a child is unable to complete the homework on time or is having difficulty, then the parent should contact the teacher

Role of Management

- To assist teachers and parents in finding the best possible avenues to embrace homework so that it is a positive learning experience.



8.0 MONITORING & EVALUATION

Homework is not sent home simply because it has to be sent, it needs to be valued as highly as in-class work in order for it to be valued by the pupil. Homework should be marked like in-class work according to the Assessing Pupil Progress guidelines.

It is recommended that, where appropriate, all pupils have a diary to record the homework that has been sent home on a particular night.

In light of the information gathered in the initial research project, this policy will be evaluated by:

- Assessing the effectiveness of the policy via feedback from teachers, pupils and parents
- Assessing the impact it is having on pupil learning and pupil progression
- Looking at whose needs are not being met and why
- Examining how our policy and planning can be more effective

9.0 APPENDIX 1: WHY DO SOME PUPILS WITH AUTISM STRUGGLE WITH HOMEWORK?

- Pupils with autism have to concentrate on an extra curriculum by having to learn to respond to their environment and the people within it, leaving pupils emotionally and intellectually exhausted by the end of the day.
- There is a distinct difference between school and home, some pupils with autism can be compliant and quiet at school yet become aggressive and intolerable at home
- Pupils with autism can struggle with time-management, often making it difficult to delegate how much time should be spent doing an assignment
- Work that is easily completed at school can be extremely difficult at home due to the change of setting and the prompts that existed within the school setting.
- Many pupils with autism are not able to look at a task and discern the sequence of steps the task needs to be completed.
- Parents have to sustain a great deal of stress from their children after a hard day at school. If the high stress-levels of pupils are matched by high stress-levels of the carer, the potential for family conflict rises, impacting on a negative attitude towards homework for both parties.
- Some pupils with autism do not know when to stop researching, do not cope with lack of structure or have an inability to make choices: all of which affect the homework they produce.
- There may be a lack of differentiation and/or personalisation in homework for specific pupils
- Pupils with autism may have difficulty remembering exactly what was set for homework and remembering relevant information during homework; a characteristic of impaired executive function.
- Pupils with autism may have difficulty getting started or knowing what to do first.
- Procrastination can be an issue and a parent may have to supervise the start of the homework
- Children with autism are notorious for their difficulty coping with frustration and criticism, and their inability to manage their emotions. They can become quite agitated when confused or having made a mistake.