



Homework Strategy (February 2019)



Too much screen time?

Forward

The GCSE exam system has changed. Two years ago students were taking courses with as much as 60% coursework, often tasks that had to be completed in school. Now, in all but one or two courses, there is no coursework and all of the assessment takes place through exams. It's a different world, and while we have a range of homework clubs in school, it is one in which our young people need to be able to organise their time away from school and complete a lot more homework.

Our new homework strategy is written in light of this significant shift. Our aim is to let people know what we are setting in terms of homework as children move up through the Federation. We also want parents to be clear about how they can help their children to get their homework done to the best of their ability. You have a really important part to play!

We have noticed over the past 2-3 years that social media is becoming more and more of a distraction; hopefully this document will give you a heads up on social media and the pitfalls and challenges ahead as adolescence and exam preparation looms.

Key Stage 1: Reception, Years 1 & 2

<i>What work are we setting?</i>	<i>What are the pitfalls?</i>	<i>What can parents do?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → It's all about reading during these early years and you just cannot put a value on the importance of learning to read at an early age. → We have the reading scheme with children bringing home a reading book at their level to work on each week. It's the Read Write Inc (RWI) scheme and if followed correctly, it will lead to rapid progress and improvement. We introduced the scheme in September and so far it really has boosted things. → In RWI sessions the children will work through a book together, either with their Teacher or one of our Teaching Assistants. → Children have a number of common exception 'red' words to learn at home as 'sight vocabulary'. This builds up to spellings as children move to Year 1. → Maths homework is introduced as children move up from Park Fell to Cross Fell. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Children need to enjoy the work that they do away from school at this age. If it becomes a battle then the stage is set for that battle to continue for the next ten years or more – and we don't want that! → The children are going to need a high level of adult support to work away from the classroom. At this age they cannot really get on with 'homework' on their own. → The reading needs to be part of a daily routine. Parents need to be heavily involved and have a view on whether the books are at the right level, too easy or too difficult. → We know that one or two children, particularly boys are already spending too much time on video games at this age. It is getting in the way of more educational activities and also affecting children's ability to socialise and to communicate with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Reading with your child needs to be a nurturing experience; something your son / daughter looks forward to – the time when they get you all to themselves and gain lots of positive feedback. And it is important, where possible, that both parents play a full part in this activity. → Please talk to your class teacher / TA if you are the slightest bit uncertain about how to tackle readings, spellings and any writing at home. The simple truth is that your child can learn more from you at this early stage than they will in class. You need to be relaxed and confident about it, and hopefully enjoy it too! → Do not use video games as a reward. Limit access at weekends to short time periods. And no video games after 6.00pm! Too much access to these games will give your child a false sense of reality.

Key Stage 2: Years 3 to 6

<i>What work are we setting?</i>	<i>What are the pitfalls?</i>	<i>What can parents do?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Children should be reading for at least 15-30 minutes a day. This might be a reading scheme book. But as children become more fluent, they choose their books. → English work is set every week. It might involve learning some spellings. Sometimes a sheet will come home for completion. → Maths work is also set. Often this means a sheet of work set at the right ability for your child. → We also set a long term homework. Children can choose from a variety of different tasks, giving them the chance to focus on something that they are really interested in. → Year 6 students are set some secondary style homework on Fridays as we go through the year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Some children think that they have got beyond the need to read. They are bored by what is on offer to them. → Sometimes the work set for children at this stage is either too easy or too difficult. Either way it can have a negative effect on children's confidence, attitudes and progress. → Finding time for this sort of work when there are other siblings in the family is not always easy, especially if they are younger. → More and more children, particularly boys are becoming addicted to video games. With YouTube, DVDs and Television, it means that a lot of time at home is spent in front of the screen. This affects sleep patterns and relationships in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Continue to take an interest on what your son / daughter reads. Let them read to you and continue reading to them. Find books that interest them if they are losing interest in reading. → Check the English and Maths work to make sure that it is being done, but also to satisfy yourself that it is set at the right level. Contact the class teacher for clarification if necessary. → Talk through the long term homework options with your child. Find time for them to get the project started; nudge them along and offer support if things are not moving forward as you think they should. → Limit the time spent on video games. Not every day and not after 8pm.

Key Stage 3: Years 7 and 8

<i>What work are we setting?</i>	<i>What are the pitfalls?</i>	<i>What can parents do?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → We try to set short deadlines for students in Years 7&8. This means much work is due in the following day. We want students to get their work done as soon as possible. If left for a few days, it can be forgotten. → Students are set weekly homework in the following subjects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English • Maths • Science • History / Geography • Languages → As a rule this work should take about half an hour. Some students will take longer over it. → Homework will be set for other subjects (Art, Design Technology and Catering), but not necessarily every week. Again it tends to be roughly half an hour's work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Some students are going to worry about the homework that they have to do. → Others are going to struggle with the whole organisation of it. → This can cause stress for some students early on in their secondary school. → The enthusiasm that some students first have in Year 7 will wear off for some as their first and second years' of secondary school pass! They will begin to make excuses, to say that they have completed the work or that it hasn't been set. → Unlimited access to video games is going to severely hamper your child's growth and development. Sleep deprivation is not uncommon in boys who play these games well into the early hours. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Check the school website so that you know what work is set. → Ask to have a look at some of the completed work. Check it against what is on the website. → Get your son / daughter into a routine. Ideally homework will be done before any other activities later in the evening. → Contact the school if you are the slightest bit worried about the nature of the work being set or its impact on your son / daughter. → Encourage your child to use the internet positively. YouTube, for example, contains any number of lessons and relevant videos. → Restrict the time spent on video games. You are going to have to limit / restrict access to these games in the bedroom. Watch out for negative social media use too. The nightmare begins!

Key Stage 4: Years 9-11

What work are we setting?	What are the pitfalls?	What can parents do?
<p>→ Students are now taking five subjects. With a minimum of an hour's homework for each subject each week, that's at least five hours of work to be completed away from the classroom.</p> <p>→ The amount of work hots up just before and during the February half term break. With mock exams when we come back, students should be aiming to do at least five hours revision on each of their subjects during the holiday – that's 25 hours for Year 11 students.</p> <p>→ The Easter holiday should see a similar amount of work, and then when we get back students should be working for up to three hours each week on each of their examined subjects.</p> <p>→ May half term will be flat out revision, with up to ten hours for each of the subjects still to be examined.</p>	<p>→ Your son / daughter will quite likely tell you that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they got their work done at school; • no work has been set this week; • and the work does not have to be in for a few days yet. <p>→ Social media is really going to kick in. Posting something on Facebook or responding to the latest inane nonsense on Instagram, Snapchat or Messenger, could completely captivate your child.</p> <p>→ This means that homework will go on the back burner; so too will sleep. We know of students on social media at 2am or even 3am in the morning. Sleep deprivation will severely hamper a teenager's ability to function in school.</p>	<p>→ Check the school website for the homework that has been set each week.</p> <p>→ Ask to have a look at some of the completed work. Check it against what has been set on the website.</p> <p>→ Insist that your son / daughter is in some sort of routine. Ideally homework will get done before any other activities kick in later in the evening.</p> <p>→ Monitor the use of social media and online games late into the evening. If you think it is becoming an issue it probably is! Be ready to take the smart phone and other electronic devices away after a set time in the evening.</p> <p>→ You will likely be told by your child that you are the worst parent in the world! Chat to the school, be assured that you are up there with the best, and gain the confidence needed to hold the line and keep going!</p>

And finally . . .

Never underestimate the impact that your involvement can have on your son / daughter's completion of work out of school and the knock on effect that this has on their qualifications and life chances.

Whether it be their learning to read or final revision for a GCSE exam, your interest and support as a parent is crucial.

Of course, there will be times when it all feels like a bit of a grind! So thank you for sticking in there, quietly insisting and alerting the schools to any concerns.

Your son / daughter will not do it without you!



"You'll be pleased to know you haven't got any homework this evening."

GCSEs

and your part in them



We're a little unusual at SKS in that we start students off on their first two GCSE courses at the end of their Year 8 and into Year 9. This means that the first exams for your son / daughter are in May/June 2019. With two more GCSEs at the end of Year 10 and then two more at the end of Year 11 along with English Language, English Literature, Maths and Double Science, this means that students can gain up to at least 11 GCSE qualifications by the time they leave. Some gain more.

The GCSE exam system has changed. Two years ago students were taking courses with as much as 60% coursework, often tasks that had to be completed in school. Now, in all but one or two courses, there is no coursework and all of the assessment takes place through exams. It's a different world, and while we have a range of homework clubs in school, it is one in which our young people need to be able to organise their time away from school and complete a lot more studying and revision from home.

Parents have an important part to play in this. You need to know what homework is being set each week and must also be aware of the importance of revision during February and May Half Term and the Easter holiday to properly prepare for the mocks and final exams. You might just have to insist that work is completed if you want your son / daughter to do well.

✚ **Weekly Homework:** All of the homework we set each week is placed on the Alston Moor Federation website. If you go to the Samuel King's page and look under the students section, you should find that homework for each Year Group is detailed by Tuesday afternoon each week. The Options information is where you will find homework for this year's two GCSEs listed. It is essential that you check what has been set and look over your son / daughter's work when completed. They need to know that you are taking an interest.

✚ **February Half Term:** The mock exams take place the week after this holiday. Students will be tested on parts of the course with actual exam questions. We would expect them to have done at least ten hours revision work per subject during the holiday if they are to perform at their best.

✚ **Easter Holiday:** Another important time to revise and the second week may well see some additional classes in school. There are only about three weeks before the exams start when we all come back for the summer. If students have not done fifteen or more hours of revision for each subject they will be making life difficult for themselves.

✚ **May Half Term:** The two weeks before and two weeks after May half term are full of exams. The week off is a chance to have a bit of a breather, but it is also a time to refocus on the remaining exams. Again we are looking at about twenty hours of revision across the two subjects.

You will have a chance to come into school and catch up on how things are going with teachers in November and again in March. Of course, if you have questions in the meantime then just phone up and ask them. We want you to know what is going on, to be able to support your son / daughter with the exams ahead, but also to be able to challenge them if you feel that they are not putting enough effort and work in. It might be tough for you, but we will support you to hold the line even if that means restricting social media time later in the evening.