

Homework Policy

Brunswick South Primary School

Policy	Review Date:	Responsible for
Implementation Date:	2022	Review:
2019		Policy Subcommittee

Purpose

This policy sets out the school's policy for setting homework and expectations regarding homework for different year levels.

Definitions

Homework:

Homework may be defined as 'tasks assigned to students by school teachers that are meant to be carried out during non-school hours'.¹

Homework consists of two main types:

- (1) **Practice exercises**, which provide opportunities for students to apply new knowledge or to review, revise and reinforce newly-acquired skills, such as practising spelling words, completing consolidation exercises for Mathematics, or practising words/phrases learnt in a Language Other Than English.
- (2) **Extension assignments**, which encourage students to pursue knowledge individually and imaginatively, for example, writing a book review or finding material on the Internet.²

Compliance requirements

The Victorian Department of Education and Training does not have a direct role in the development or enforcement of homework policies. It does require schools to:

- develop a homework policy in consultation with their school community (including the principal, teachers, school council, parents/carers and students) and
- ensure that the policy is communicated to all parents.³

The Department states that schools 'must have a documented approach to homework which takes into account the personal and developmental needs of students. The setting of homework needs to

¹ Education and Training Committee "Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian Schools" Final Report (August 2015), p. x. Available from: <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/57th-parliament/etc/article/2173>

² Department of Education and Training (Vic.), School Policy And Advisory Guide <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/expectations.aspx>

³ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/guidelines.aspx>

take into consideration the need for students to have a balanced lifestyle. This includes sufficient time for family, sport and recreation, cultural pursuits and employment where appropriate'.⁴

Background

The value of homework

According to the Department, homework is one way of supporting and fostering life-long learning and connecting families with the learning of their children. The departmental view is that homework 'helps students by:

- complementing and reinforcing classroom learning
- fostering good lifelong learning and study habits
- providing an opportunity for students to become responsible for their own learning
- developing self-regulation processes such as goal-setting, self-efficacy, self-reflection and time management
- supporting partnerships with parents by connecting families with the learning of their children.'⁵

However, the usefulness of homework in supporting student learning at primary school level is not clearly supported by evidence.

In August 2014, the Education and Training Committee of the Parliament of Victoria completed an inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian schools, focusing on the impact on student learning.

Specific findings of the committee relevant to this homework policy included:

- 'Homework can reduce the amount of time available to pursue other activities and interests which may have equal or greater long-term benefit' (Finding 3).
- 'There is strong evidence and general agreement that homework at the primary school level has little impact on academic performance, but may play an important transitional role in preparing students for secondary school and beyond' (Finding 5).
- 'Measuring homework by the time spent doing it is an imprecise and inadequate measure that does not take into account the quality of the work or the ability of the student or, increasingly importantly, student access to technology' (Finding 6).⁶

One of the submissions to the committee was from Professor John Hattie, Director of the Melbourne Educational Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, and considered one of Australia's leading educational researchers. Hattie has completed a "meta-study" (study of studies) of more than 800 meta-analyses (covering 50,000 studies) concerning the issue of what works best for student achievement. This meta-study, "Visible Learning" (2009), found that amongst all the influences on student achievement, homework had a very small influence.⁷ At the primary school level, the effect is close to zero. Hattie suggests that, rather than abandoning homework (because of parental attachment to it), traditional homework approaches should be improved, and that homework policies should be required to demonstrate that the school's homework approach is having a positive impact on students.⁸

⁴ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/guidelines.aspx>

⁵ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/guidelines.aspx>

⁶ Education and Training Committee "Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian Schools" Final Report (August 2015), pp. xix-xx.

⁷ <http://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/>

⁸ Professor J. Hattie testimony to Education and Training Committee "Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian schools" (April 2014). <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/57th-parliament/etc/article/2172>

Policy points

In accordance with departmental guidelines, Brunswick South Primary School will strive to ensure that homework set by teachers is:

- appropriate to the student's skill level and age
- purposeful, meaningful and relevant to the curriculum
- interesting, challenging and when appropriate open-ended
- assessed by teachers with feedback and support provided
- balanced with a range of recreational, family and cultural activities.⁹

At Brunswick South Primary School, homework will be set according to the following guidelines:

Year level	Homework type	Time expectations
Foundation to Grade 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will mainly consist of daily reading to, with, and by parents/carer or older siblings.• May involve simple extension tasks associated with classroom activities and gathering of additional information or materials.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 15 minutes per day (reading only)
Grades 3 to 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should include daily independent reading• May extend class work, projects and assignments, essays and research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will generally not exceed 30 minutes per week (plus independent reading).• May be set on weekends or school holidays.
Grades 5 to 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Should include daily independent reading• May extend class work, projects and assignments, essays and research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Will generally not exceed 2 hours per fortnight (plus independent reading).• May be set on weekends or school holidays.

The homework types specified above are consistent with departmental guidelines. The Department no longer provides an indication of appropriate homework duration,¹⁰ and there is no evidence to support a specific minimum amount of time being spent on homework.¹¹ The above guidelines as to time are therefore provided on an indicative basis only.

⁹ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/expectations.aspx>

¹⁰ <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/guidelines.aspx>

¹¹ Education and Training Committee "Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian Schools" Final Report (August 2015, p 60).

Communication

The school's homework policy will be distributed to parents at the commencement of each school year and on enrolment of new students.

Related school policies

The school's homework policy will be distributed to parents at the commencement of each school year and on enrolment of new students.

Breaches

Not applicable

References

Department of Education and Training (Vic.), School Policy And Advisory Guide
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/guidelines.aspx>
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/principals/spag/curriculum/Pages/expectations.aspx>

Parliament of Victoria, Education and Training Committee "Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian Schools" Final Report (August 2015). <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/57th-parliament/etc/article/2173>

Professor J. Hattie testimony to Education and Training Committee "Inquiry into the approaches to homework in Victorian schools" (April 2014). <http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/57th-parliament/etc/article/2172>

Visible Learning website: <http://visible-learning.org/hattie-ranking-influences-effect-sizes-learning-achievement/>