

Helping your daughter with homework

A Parents' Guide



Introduction

Gone are the days when teachers asked children to colour as a regular activity, let alone set it for homework.

‘I miss the days when homework was just
Colouring.’

Education has moved forward and it is recognised that there are clear benefits from setting worthwhile homework.

Homework:

- Consolidates and reinforces concepts taught in class.
- Provides opportunity for the regular practice of key skills e.g. reading, times tables etc
- Provides opportunity for sharing the learning through discussions and exploration of ideas with parents.
- Encourages independent working, organisation and self-discipline in preparation for the demands of Senior School life and work.
- Gives parents an insight into the content of work learnt a school.

You, as parents, are one of the most valuable learning resources your daughter has.

The aim of this booklet is to give you some information on how best to support your daughter in key homework areas and offer some general tips on making the homework experience happy and productive for all.

I leave homework to the last day because I'll be older and therefore wiser.

Reading

Reading and its related tasks will form a core part of your daughter's homework throughout Melrose. The learning your daughter does at home with you and at school with her teacher, helps her to want to read, to enjoy talking about what she read and what she thinks, and to find out things by reading. She will learn new words, learn to spell words correctly and to read & write confidently.

Although the emphasis will move from simple decoding in the Early Years to greater complexity of comprehension by Year 6, there are similar strands which run throughout the process. The main emphasis of the Guided Reading homework will be noted in the homework diary.

Phonics

In the early stages of learning to read, your daughter will be taught to recognise and blend sounds. She may have phonics homework in the form of *Word Time!* pages to revise and complete. Through these she will learn to recognise, blend and write the sounds.

Word Boxes

In the Preparatory Department your daughter will also bring home a *word box* containing words for her to learn to read **on sight**. Whilst she needs to be able to decode words using phonics, there are words that she will not be able to decode and so it is beneficial for her to recognise these without the necessity of sounding them out. Through the word box we aim to teach 350 of these high and medium frequency words. Your daughter will thus build up her sight vocabulary.

On occasion your daughter may have a 'sound' in her word box. This will be a sound which assessments have indicated your daughter is less familiar with. If your daughter has a word box please help her to practise her words (or sounds) every day, you may wish to devise various games such as pairs, fishing or 'posting' the words so that this learning remains fun.

Reading – listening to your child read

With younger children who are taking their first steps towards becoming a reader, modelling the process is beneficial. When reading

any book sit alongside your child so that she is able to follow the text as you read and model how to read, pointing to each word, using intonation and expression. She will not immediately be able to do the same, however she will be assimilating this knowledge for use at a later stage.

Before reading, talk about the title and the pictures on the cover of the book, discuss what you think the story might be about. Find out who the author and illustrator of the book are. Is the book one of a series? Where is the story set?

When listening to your child read there are two dimensions: word reading (decoding) and comprehension.

Decoding

Skilled reading involves decoding and at the early stages your daughter will be focused on 'sounding out' (decoding) the words and attempting to read the story. Don't be concerned if she seems to be memorising rather than reading and don't cover up the pictures. The pictures are there to help her decode unknown vocabulary, to aid comprehension and to add detail to the story. So much of the full meaning of the story is in the pictures.

When you are listening to your child read and she is stuck on a word, encourage her to:-

- 'sound out' the word – how does it start and end?
- look at the picture for clues
- read on to the end of the sentence omitting the word, then to go back and using the picture clues, story context and phonic knowledge attempt the word

Praise her for trying and tell her the word if necessary, particularly if it is a tricky word which is phonetically irregular.

When approaching longer books or if your daughter is tired or finds the task challenging, then share the book by reading alternate pages. In this way you are 'in it together' and she will feel less 'tested'. As your child's confidence and ability to read increases she will begin to read silently and to attempt longer books.

Reading

She will learn to self-correct and to make meaning of the text as she reads. She should still be encouraged to 'sound out' longer and more difficult words. At this stage children may 'skim over' words and phrases they do not fully comprehend. Look out for these, as whilst your daughter may still understand the story, her comprehension will be enhanced by discussing these words and phrases more fully.

Comprehension - 'Discuss the Story'

From the early years your daughter will almost always be asked to 'discuss the story'. This is code for comprehension! To make reading meaningful there has to be secure comprehension of the text. Good comprehension skills will develop through high quality discussion. As part of the discussion you can help your daughter's understanding by talking about all aspects of the book and questioning in a discursive, supportive manner.

On occasion when your child is reading, stop to talk about what is happening and what might happen next. This is not to 'get it right' i.e. predict what the author has written, but rather to make plausible suggestions.



In this way your child will learn

that there are many ways in which a story might develop. In discussion encourage your child to express opinions about the book, the characters and the plot. Allow them to say if they don't like a book and why. Discuss the characters and their actions. Why has a character behaved in a particular way? What might they be thinking or feeling and why?

In the Junior Department the homework may include a range of written tasks. These may relate to any of the following comprehension focuses.

Below are examples of the types of questions which will aid and extend comprehension:

Find it!

Who? What . . . ? Where . . . ?

These questions focus on literal meaning and require your daughter to select and retrieve information directly from the text.

Think about it!

Why do you think . . . ?

This requires your daughter to deduce or interpret information from the text.

Look at it!

Discuss how the text is organised. Why is there a diagram here? Why has the author used bold print/italics here? Why is the text presented in this way?

Listen to it!

Discuss the author's choice of vocabulary or phrasing. Why has this word been chosen & not . . . ? How does the author create this feeling?

Respond to it!

Discuss the overall effect of the text. Did you enjoy the story? Which part did you enjoy most? What is the main event? What does the author want us to think? What is the message?

Connect it!

What does it remind you of? Have you read any other books like this? Relate the text to a child's own experiences or previous reading if applicable.

Your daughter will not always have reading homework, but we hope that she will read every night. With younger children in particular, read as much and as often as you can. Make it fun; make it special and an important part of your daily routine. The more opportunities children have to enjoy reading, the sooner they begin to be confident about it. Encourage your child to read different genres, fiction, non-fiction, poetry, newspapers, TV guides, DIY manuals and catalogues.

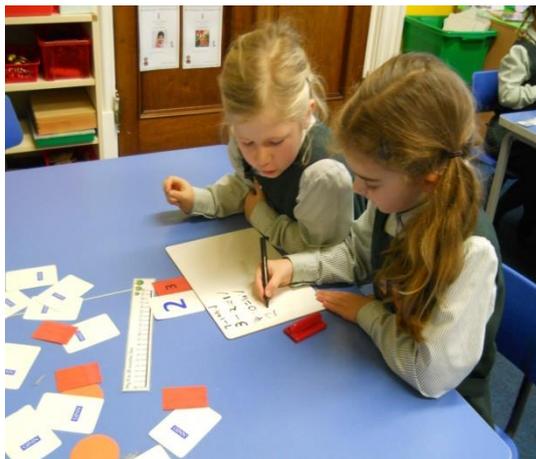
Remember that as with many things in life we all make progress at different rates. Try not to compare your daughter with others or get anxious about her reading. Keep positive, offer lots of praise and enjoy reading together.

Maths

Your daughter will be set Maths homework at least once a week in most classes. This will often be from Busy Ant Maths or Target Maths or it may be a special Mathletics activity or tables practice.

Staff may set homework that is similar to work in class that week, or it may be a week or more after that topic was covered. This helps to embed these skills and consolidate learning. Brand new work is not set, so if your daughter is unsure of the work then it may show that she has not yet fully grasped the mathematical concepts, or forgotten them completely and the extra practice will be very beneficial. Any serious problems will then be revisited in class.

Busy Ant Maths and Target Maths work is set at 3 different levels. Staff will have suggested the level that will suit your daughter best; girls should do this level work and if there is time left over, they can always try some extra if they wish. Mathletics work often offers work at harder or easier levels and Mathletics Live ranges from level 1 to level 10. Again staff will have given guidance.



Mathletics can be practised at any time and the Mathletics Live work is a really good way to develop speed of mental calculations. A recent University of Oxford survey of 13,000 schools found that those students using Mathletics on a regular basis made significantly more progress.

Staff will always have given guidance on the method or methods suitable for the written homework. You may use a different method. You may find it interesting to work alongside your daughter and support her in the school method and then compare it with your method (probably more suitable for older girls). Hopefully both will lead to the same correct answer!

Useful websites

<http://resources.woodlands-junior.kent.sch.uk/>

<http://www.mathletics.co.uk/>

www.topmarks.co.uk/maths-games/hit-the-button

<http://nrich.maths.org>

www.mathsisfun.com

Other activities that can be enjoyed by all the family in a more informal manner include- family games such as bingo, card games, measuring, cooking, adding digits in car number plates etc.



Make maths practical and fun!

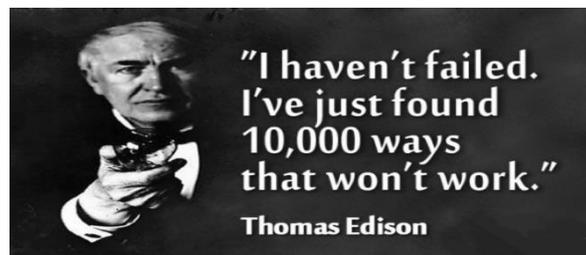
Top Tips to help and support your daughter

- **Offer non-critical assistance** - be a good listener and don't criticise if your daughter is struggling or if she gets the answers wrong, this can turn her off asking for help in the future.



- **Praise effort as much as achievement** – this shows appreciation of the work she is putting in to a task and will build self-esteem, confidence and the willingness to try - all of which are key to individual progress and achievement.
- **Encourage your daughter to set her own goals** – giving her some ownership of her own learning. Remind her that the journey towards the goal is as valuable as attaining it.
- **Ask trigger questions** – this may help your daughter make connections between prior knowledge and experiences and current work. Try not to give the answers but use questions to guide her to discovering the answers for herself.
- **Don't be afraid to fail** – encourage your daughter to keep trying when faced with challenges and tell her that things don't have to be perfect first time. That is often how we learn the most

First Attempt In Learning!



Top Tips to help and support your daughter

- **Be a coach, not a tutor** – help your daughter by testing her in a relaxed environment, for example the car on the way to school is a great time to practise times tables or spellings.
- **Keep calm and pace yourselves** – try to allow enough time to split homework into small manageable chunks. Ten minutes trying to do homework whilst eating breakfast will not be a worthwhile experience for anyone! Also try not to nag, instead encourage your daughter to take responsibility for meeting deadlines and to accept the consequences if she doesn't.
- **Share your values of education** – try not to pass on any negative ideas about your own education, instead talk about your favourite subjects, teachers and experiences.
- **Do not overload** – Nowadays there is a wealth of extra-curricular activities on offer, and we, as parents want to offer as much opportunity to our daughters as possible. However, the result is often that they lead such busy lives and each day can become a juggling act. Please remember that it is important not to overload your daughter as being stretched in too many directions can result in the enjoyment element lessening and the stress level increasing!

And finally.....

Learning should be fun. By helping and supporting your daughter, you will enable her to grow in confidence and independence and be ready for future success.



HAPPINESS IS

...when you forget to
do your homework....



...and the teacher is absent.

Funny Pictures on www.LeFunny.net

The information in this booklet is not exhaustive. If you have any other questions on how you can help your daughter with homework, please contact her class teacher.

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