



St. John of God G.N.S. Kilmore Road, Artane, Dublin 5

Introduction

In April 2021, we reviewed our Homework Policy which had been ratified by the Board of Management in 2017 following extensive collaboration between staff, parents and the Board. The review was carried out to make it more progressive educationally and to ensure it was more family friendly while still enhancing the learning experiences of children in school. Parent opinions on their thoughts about homework were collated and a draft policy was brought to the staff on Tuesday 27th April for discussion. This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 10th May 2021.

Rationale

Here in St. John of God G.N.S., we take a holistic approach to education. This means that we value the development of the whole child – socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically and intellectually. To achieve this we take a multi-faceted approach to teaching and learning. This approach involves collaborative and individual work; it takes place in the classroom and the wider school environment; it is based on engaging the children in playful learning experiences that are age and developmentally appropriate. Effective home learning should be a reflection of these school practices and methodologies and should only contain tasks which will help the child to develop and learn in a real, engaging and meaningful way. Research and experience has shown us that some homework can be ineffective and a drain on precious family time as well as taking away from active teaching and learning in the classroom. We are aware of the important role family life and free time to relax and play has in a child's over- all development. We are also aware that children can get wonderful informal educational experiences from parents/care-givers and by participating in extra-curricular activities. This home learning policy affirms these beliefs and practices.

The purpose of home learning

Homework can be a contentious issue with widely varying opinions on the purpose of homework and its importance. We assign home learning for the following reasons:

1. To reinforce & consolidate learning
2. To extend learning beyond the classroom
3. To act as a home - school link
4. To promote independent learning

In relation to point 3, recent research from Marino Institute of Education contends "If one of the key functions of homework is to involve parents in their children's learning, the fact that homework feels mostly stressful to many parents does not warrant positive involvement in learning and may therefore

not function as the best tool for parental involvement in children's education." It is important therefore when setting home learning to try to set activities that can be a positive and enjoyable experience between parent and child.

What type of home learning?

- Literacy and oral language development is always a high priority in our school, as it is on these foundations that everything else is built. Reading regularly to and with your child is one of the most valuable things you can do to support your child's learning. Your child will be provided with appropriate books weekly to facilitate this. Children should read aloud daily whether they are in Senior Infants or 6th class. This is so important for developing their reading fluency and fostering a love of reading for pleasure.
- Some skills, such as spelling / tables / phonics / sight words / counting, need frequent practice to master. A *little* time devoted to these at home can be very beneficial to the child. Activities to guide you in this will be set weekly.
- We place a high emphasis on the physical and mental wellbeing of the children in our school and this will be reflected in the assignment of relaxation practices and physical activities for home. A stressed or anxious child will find it more difficult to concentrate and engage in learning so physical activities and mental relaxation techniques are really important skills for the children to develop and practice for their overall health, wellbeing and development.
- Play is an incredibly powerful and often over-looked way of learning and developing for children. We hope the changes we are making will facilitate more time for the children to engage in imaginative play and more time for parents to enjoy playing with their children.

Role of teachers:

- To assign weekly learning activities
- To provide clear instructions for any activities set
- To provide the children with weekly reading materials for home use
- To differentiate tasks as necessary
- To relay expectations to pupils
- To affirm efforts at home learning that pupils engage in and talk about

Role of parents:

- As home learning activities will be set by the teacher weekly, we hope this will give parents and children increased freedom of choice to fit homework in around family life and extra-curricular activities.
- While formal maths activities will not be set as home learning, we would still encourage parents to use maths skills such as measuring / telling time / looking for shapes in the everyday environment as much as possible. This helps to show the purpose of developing maths skills for real life. For example, if you are cooking/baking include your daughter and help her to measure

out the ingredients. Encourage your daughter to tell the time and use the clock regularly throughout the day.

- Parents should set aside time to support their child with the suggested home learning activities. This time should be when you can give your daughter your full attention and support.
- Enjoy the time spent with your child on the home learning activities. If it is a positive and happy time spent together, both parent and child will look forward to engaging with home learning.
- Encourage your child and praise their efforts at the home learning activities. When children experience success they thrive.

Role of pupils:

- To complete tasks to the best of their ability
- To communicate to the teacher if a task is causing difficulty

General outline of what home learning will look like at each class level:

The following is an example of what 1 week's home learning activities might look like:

Junior Infants:

- ✓ Nursery Rhyme of the week
- ✓ 1 story book to read to your child and discuss at home (twice a week)
- ✓ Sight words
- ✓ Counting activity
- ✓ 2 suggested physical activities
- ✓ 2 sessions of play with your child

Senior Infants:

- ✓ Nursery Rhyme of the week
- ✓ 1 story book to read to your child and discuss at home (twice a week)
- ✓ 1 book the child will be able to read aloud to you (twice a week)
- ✓ Sight words/phonics
- ✓ Counting activity
- ✓ 2 suggested physical activities
- ✓ 2 sessions of play with your child

1st Class:

- ✓ 1 story book to read to your child and discuss at home (twice a week)
- ✓ 1 book the child will be able to read aloud to you (twice a week)
- ✓ Sight words/phonics
- ✓ Counting activity
- ✓ 2 suggested physical activities
- ✓ 2 sessions of play with your child

2nd Class:

- ✓ 1 book for parent and child to read aloud together – (twice a week)
- ✓ 1 book the child will be able to read aloud to you (twice a week)
- ✓ Spellings
- ✓ Counting activity
- ✓ 2 suggested physical activities
- ✓ 2 mindfulness/relaxation techniques the teacher will have shown the children to practice at home

3rd-6th Class:

- ✓ Paired reading – children will have been taught how paired reading works in school and have practiced it in pairs so they can explain it to their parents (4 times a week)
- ✓ Spellings
- ✓ Counting activity/Tables
- ✓ 2 suggested physical activities
- ✓ 2 mindfulness/relaxation techniques the teacher will have shown the children to practice at home

Success Criteria

The effectiveness of the school policy in its present form is measured by the following criteria;

- Feedback from parents/teachers/pupils

Ratification and Review

This policy was ratified by the Board of Management on 10th May 2021.

It will be reviewed every three years.

Implementation

The policy has been implemented since September 2021.

Signed: Brendan Prunty
Chairperson of BoM

Date: 10th May 2021

Signed: Aoife McNicholas
Principal

Date: 10th May 2021