

To: All Parents and Carers

Date: Monday 4th September 2023

Re: Homework

Dear Parents and Carers,

A very warm welcome to the new school year. We hope you've had a good Summer, despite the rather mediocre weather!

There will be a full bulletin of reminders and updates later this week but for now, important news on homework.

### Context – your views and the research

Both the parent/carer and pupil surveys at the end of last year brought very mixed responses around homework. As many love it as hate it, as many think we set too little as think we set too much... Whatever way we look at it, opinion is very divided!

Quite a significant number of respondents expressed a wish to reinstate the more creative homework menus which we used to have, with tasks and challenges to enjoy doing together at home. Again, as above, some used to love this whilst others did not!

There was a strong expression that children who have not done homework should not be sanctioned.

The evidence in favour of homework is not strong. A meta-study by the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF), the main research body for the UK, suggests that children regularly doing homework **do** make some gains over those not doing, but this depends very much on the quality of task set.

However there is some stronger evidence (EEF and the very influential educationalist John Hattie) that there are clear benefits where children spend time at home reading, practicing spellings and reinforcing recall of number facts such as number-bonds and times-tables.



ParkdaleRoad  
Carlton  
Nottingham  
NG4 1BX



0115 911 0066



[www.parkdale.notts.sch.uk](http://www.parkdale.notts.sch.uk)



[office@parkdale.notts.sch.uk](mailto:office@parkdale.notts.sch.uk)



[@parkdalecarlton](https://twitter.com/parkdalecarlton)



Parkdale Primary Community



[www.transformtrust.co.uk](http://www.transformtrust.co.uk)



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### **Our View**

Additional time spent reading and practicing key facts is invaluable. We can see a clear correlation between children in our setting who do both of these and academic outcomes.

We devote as much time as we can to hearing children read, making time to practice spellings, times-tables etc as we can, but we have to teach a broad curriculum and can never spend as much time on these as would be optimal. With 30 children in a class, we can never provide the level of personalised, individual intervention as we would wish to. For example, a teacher cannot hear 30 children read daily. Ten minutes per children would be six hours, the entire school day. Increasingly, schools do not have the support staff available to facilitate this either – we are luckier than most schools in this respect and do still have some (though fewer) TAs in this sort of general support role. Sadly though, this is gone in most schools now and is diminishing here.

While we consistently achieve academic results in the top 10-20% of the country in all subjects, it remains that nearly a quarter of our children leave unable to pass the test and meet the expected standard of reading. This presents these children with a disadvantage on starting Secondary school. The quality of our reading teaching is continuously monitored and is considered to be right at the leading edge of good practice and was highlighted as a strength by Ofsted. We will continue to develop this, but essentially, the children just need to read more.

We also recognise the social value of the more creative tasks and that these can play a role in interest, engagement, deepening knowledge and understanding, following or developing interests, building vocabulary and generally having fun learning at home.

We agree philosophically that children should not be sanctioned when homework is not completed as it is generally not their choice whether it is done or not. We also recognize that there are some children with specific SEN who struggle when school crosses the boundary into home and that this can result in challenging behaviour and deteriorating relationships between parent and child. We would not wish to add to this.

### **Changes Arising From the Above**

**We will be clarifying and simplifying the general homework hopes and expectations.**

- We hope that all children will read/be heard reading at home daily.
- We hope that children will be encouraged at home to regularly practice key skills, such as spellings and times-tables.

**We will try to support with this.**

- Each year group will send out (attached) clarification of the recommended times to be spent on home learning.



- Each year group will send home advanced notice of the key spellings and facts that children will be assessed on in the coming half term.
- Each year group (or phase) will host an event this half term to which you will be invited to hear about how to support with home learning; tips on learning spellings and number facts; advice and techniques on supporting reading

**We will regularly assess progress with key fact knowledge in the form of quizzes and tests**

- Of course, we will be continuing to teach! We will target teaching on the identified areas of need.
- Naturally, we will focus individual and group interventions where we can on children who need them.
- We will update parents/carers on children's progress and any gaps in their knowledge.

**We will reinstate the popular menus of suggested home learning activities to support or extend learning in a range of subjects.**

- **These will be optional**
- They will be related to current learning topics
- Children will be encouraged to share anything they have done in a regular class 'show and tell' type session.
- Children who completed tasks may receive praise, recognition and reward in the form of house points, awards from members of Senior leadership etc.
- Those who don't will not be sanctioned.

We accept that we cannot please all the people all of the time on this. We hope that the above is a proportionate and empathetic response to the feedback received. We really do try to listen!

There follows more detail from the teachers in your child's year group.

Yours,

Peter Hillier, Headteacher



### **Revised Recommended Home-learning; Year 1**

- Daily reading (10 minutes per day)
- Spelling practice – can be practiced on Spelling Shed. The Year 1 spelling test will be every Friday.
- Maths Blast – to be completed on My Maths. We will set new tasks fortnightly.

Login details for Spelling Shed and My Maths will be sent home in the back of reading diaries in due course.

### **Optional Homework Menu for Autumn Term**

- Visit a local landmark and take a photo or draw it. Bring your picture into school to share with your class about your visit.
- We will be learning all about Spain in our week of European languages. Can you learn some Spanish words or learn to count to 10 in Spanish at home to share with the class?
- We will be looking at seasonal changes this term. Go for a walk and see what signs of Autumn or Winter you can spot. You could bring some natural objects into school that are signs of Autumn or draw and label a picture of your Autumn or Winter walk.
- We will be exploring painting and colour in Year 1 this term. Can you paint a colourful fireworks picture to share with the class. Perhaps watch the fireworks in November for some inspiration!
- Using household items and recycling make a percussion instrument to bring into school.
- Visit your local library and borrow a book to bring into school for a day and read with your friends.

We look forward to working with you as you support your child's learning at home. If you have any queries then please contact your child's class teacher. If you would like to hear more about how you can support your child's learning at home, please join us for a homework introduction meeting on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> September at 3:40pm.

With thanks,

Year 1 Team