

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/carers 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



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spend time at home reading, practicing spellings and reinforcing recall of number facts such as number-bonds and times-tables.

### 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 recognizes 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Peter Hillier', is positioned to the left of the printed name.

Peter Hillier, Headteacher



## **Revised Recommended Home-learning: Year 4**

### **Reading**

- At least 10 minutes, five times a week – please record in reading diaries (by the adult or child)

### **Spellings**

- Practise the weekly spellings, given out at the start of the term and on Spelling Shed.
- Practise spelling year 3 and 4 common exception words (see in the center of reading diaries)

### **Maths**

- Timetable Facts up to 12 x 12 (this can be practiced on TTRS)

### **Optional Extras**

- MyMaths – this will be updated as we progress through the maths units.

### **Topic Activities Menu (Nottingham)**

- Research some local artists. Which are your favourite? Why? Do you have a particular style that you prefer? Why do you prefer that style?
- Can you visit any of the local landmarks? Wollaton Hall? Lace Market? Windmill? Rufford? Take a look at the architecture, surroundings and nature. Sketch your favourite view.
- Can you listen to any new music by local artists? Write a review and recommendation about what you have listened to.

We would like to invite you to a Year 4 meeting to discuss how to support your child with their home learning this year,

This will take place on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September at 3.40pm in 4 Poplar.

Thank you for your continued support.

The Year 4 Team.