

ST PATRICK'S COLLEGE, SUTHERLAND

HOMework POLICY

Beliefs about homework

- Homework can improve students' study skills, their attitudes toward school, and demonstrate that learning can take place outside of formal schooling.
- Students who complete homework generally outperform those who do not on some measures of academic achievement.
- There are more positives than negatives for student learning when homework: is appropriate to the student's age or stage of schooling and intellectual development; focuses on consolidation of learning; is set at consistent intervals; constructive teacher feedback is provided; and appropriate parental support is available.
- Some homework is better than none but a 'more homework the better' view is misleading and not a legitimate basis for homework policy.
- Homework can be a contentious issue: its value needs to be balanced against competing family and societal demands; there is a point of diminishing returns at which the amount and nature of homework can prove to be detrimental to student learning; and schools and parents need to work together so as to avoid any negative impact of homework.
- There is no absolute national or international agreement about the daily number of hours a student at any particular age or stage of secondary schooling should spend completing homework - there are only suggested hours and these vary across education jurisdictions.
- Homework is an educationally beneficial 'in partnership' activity between school and home.
- Homework policy and its implementation should be informed by educational research.

Why homework is considered to be so important

The beliefs statements above include reference to a number of important reasons for and benefits of homework. The following list provides some additional reasons as to why homework is so important and reinforces some previous statements:

Homework has the potential to:

- bridge the gap between learning at school and learning at home
- complement and reinforce classroom learning
- foster good study habits and lifelong learning
- help develop self-discipline and concentration
- provide training for students in research skills, planning and time management
- help develop a range of skills in identifying and using information sources
- provides parents/caregivers with the opportunity to see the progress of their child.

There is also evidence to show that homework completion can serve to improve the achievement of socially and educationally disadvantaged students as well as provide challenges and stimulus to gifted and talented students.

Types of homework

There is seldom, if ever, ‘No homework!’

At St Patrick’s College, there are usually four or five types of homework:

- ***Set Work*** - completion of set homework for the next lesson
- ***Assessment Tasks/Assignments*** – on-going completion of, or preparation for, assessment tasks or assignments that are due or set and which may count toward report grades and/or rankings (these may be across-the-year and/or individual in-class tasks or tests; or tasks/assignments that are due and were notified some weeks or days earlier)
- ***Study*** - revision and learning by way of such methods as re-reading and highlighting of key words; executive summaries and/or note-making in forms such as mind-maps, cluster diagrams, etc; traditional headings/subheadings and related points; learning of work completed that day and/or in prior lessons; practising of problem solving, essay introductions/conclusions; correction and learning of correct spelling, punctuation and grammar; learning of theorems, equations, formulae and definitions
- ***Reading*** – additional research and/or individual interest
- ***A Combination of two or more of the above.***

Recording of and communicating about homework

- The Student Diary is the primary means of recording and communicating about homework. If there is no ***Set Work*** for the next lesson, students are still expected to enter the word ‘***Study***’. This is to remind them that there are probably other types of homework for particular subjects which need to be addressed or completed.
- Teachers will check students’ diaries at regular intervals and may enter comments pertaining to homework or other issues. Parents may use the Student Diary to communicate to their child’s teachers about homework or other school related matters.
- Students are expected to note the due or set date of any homework, assessment task, assignment, class tests or examinations in the Student Diary. Communication to students and parents about formal assessment tasks and examinations is also by way of one or more of the following:
 - the annual Assessment Handbook for each Year group
 - the College Assessment Task Notification Form
 - the College website
 - the College Newsletter.

Time on homework

- As stated earlier, there is no local, national or international prescribed number of hours of student homework. However, an examination of overseas practices and many individual NSW school homework policy statements reveals that there are some notional minimum and maximum hours most schools use as guidelines.
- At St Patrick's College, **suggested** daily homework hours reflect the research and are as follows:

Year 11 & 12:	2 - 3 hours (but dependent on individual patterns of study)
Year 9 & 10:	1 ½ - 2 hours
Year 7 & 8:	1 – 1 ½ hours
- Suggested daily homework hours may fluctuate depending on such things as: the nature of the courses being studied; pending examinations; and times when assignments and assessment tasks are set or due.
- Various scenarios may require some hours to be assigned to the completion of homework on weekends.
- A golden rule is that whether or not homework has been formally set by the teacher, there is always some other work that can be attempted, for at least some of the suggested time, from one of the other types of homework outlined above (see ***Types of homework***). Furthermore, as stated earlier, some homework done at regular intervals is better than none at all.

Homework and time management

- The amount of time spent on any one specific type, or combination of types, of homework may vary from one day to the next. This will be determined by a number of factors but does require effective time management.
- Effective time management is a major challenge for most students throughout their school and post-school life. Students at all levels require regular, sometimes daily assistance from both teachers and parents in the development of this skill.

Teacher considerations when setting homework

Teachers will take the following into consideration when setting homework:

- the requirements of the curriculum
- the student's age, stage of schooling and intellectual development
- the extent to which the homework consolidates and/or complements learning experienced that day and/or during the programmed time period of particular unit of study;
- the limitations and possible negative impact of too much homework;
- student's other commitments outside of school
- the extent of individual student email and Internet access
- any other relevant pastoral issue(s) related to the completion of homework by a student.

Parental involvement in the completion of homework

- Research indicates that most parents expect schools to set homework. Positive parental involvement in homework is beneficial to students and is associated with higher levels of student achievement.
- The nature of parental involvement in homework may take a variety of forms that can have beneficial impacts on student achievement. Parents and caregivers can demonstrate positive involvement in homework by:
 - creating a homework environment that provides appropriate conditions for learning and encouraging their children to complete homework tasks.
 - adopting supportive approaches that help to improve students' attitudes towards homework and which reduce homework-related family conflict.
 - taking an active interest in the child's homework - research shows that interactive approaches to homework completion, particularly in the early years of primary and secondary schooling, have significant positive impact on student levels of achievement.
 - supporting their child in setting aside time each day for homework
 - providing a dedicated place for homework and study if possible
 - assisting teachers to monitor homework by signing completed work if requested
 - regularly observing homework entries and teacher comments in the Student Diary
 - being aware of the amount of homework set and due dates
 - communicating with teachers any concerns about the nature of homework or their child's approach to homework
 - encouraging their child to read and take an interest in current events
 - alerting the school to any domestic circumstances or extra-curricular activities which may need to be taken into consideration when homework is being set or marked.

Non-completion of homework

- Non-completion of homework may result in any one or more of the following:
 - a warning and Student Diary note to parents/care-givers by the teacher
 - a demerit notice
 - a phone call to and discussion with the parent/care-giver
 - interview with the relevant Studies Co-ordinator and subsequent follow-up action
 - in the case of formal Assessment Tasks, a zero notification.
- If illness or misadventure prevents a student from completing homework, students must present the subject teacher with a detailed note of explanation or, the student's parent/care-giver must contact the teacher or relevant Studies Co-ordinator direct by telephone.
- In cases of repeated failure to complete homework or provide sufficient and acceptable explanations, the student and/or parents may need to be called to the school for an interview with a senior member of the College Staff (appropriate Co-ordinator and/or the Assistant Principal/Principal). At such an interview the reasons for and consequences of repeated failure to complete homework will be discussed and determined.

References

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*St Patrick's College, Sutherland
November, 2009*