

Homework Policy

Strand 1 2017- 2018

Castleknock Community College



Review Dates

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Mission Statement

In serving the needs of our community we, the pupils, parents and staff, in all our endeavours aspire towards excellence in a caring and supportive environment. By growing and developing through co-operation this will enable all to realise their full potential.

Introduction

A meaningful education gives every child the best possible start in life and it helps them mature and develop into responsible young adults. The purpose of our College Policy on Homework is to reinforce the work undertaken in class and to encourage students to develop good homework and study habit.

Importance of Homework

Homework should be meaningful for the teacher and the student. It should serve to reinforce work done in class and that it should act as a bridge between the work of one day and the next. It should be linked with and integrated into a programme of teaching and learning thereby forming part of the process of assessment for learning. IT should be designed in such a way as to offer the students opportunities for self-assessment. It offers an opportunity for a more meaningful dialogue between school and home.

Homework helps students to construct knowledge, develop deeper understandings and connections amongst the concepts to which they have been introduced, and provides an opportunity for them to apply the skills they have acquired. A properly co-ordinated homework policy in school will help students to develop and sustain good study habits. It fosters positive values such as self-discipline, responsibility, and an interest in learning, which will benefit them throughout their lives.

- We regard homework as an integral part of learning.
 - We include homework in our planning process.
 - We consider homework to be a central part of assessment for learning.
 - We consider that homework fosters positive values such as:
 - Self-discipline
 - Responsibility
 - Independent Learning
 - We ensure that all homework is noted in the student journal. We assess and give feedback on all homework assignments.
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Role of Homework in the Learning Process

We aim to use homework to:

- Reinforce work done in class.
 - Act as a bridge between the work done one day and that to be done the next
 - Help students construct knowledge
 - Develop deeper understandings and connections among new concepts.
 - Provide an opportunity for students to apply the skills they have acquired
 - Give students opportunities for self-assessment
 - Develop good study habits.
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Types of Homework Assignments

Here are four types of daily homework assignments - preparation, practice, extension, and creative/enrichment assignments.

Preparation:

This type of assignment is intended to help students get ready for the next day's classroom lesson. For instance, a reading assignment may be given prior to a lesson. Students might be asked to write their own discussion questions based on the reading assignment. Or, the student may be asked to complete answers to reading review questions from the text.

Practice

By successfully completing practice assignments, students have the opportunity to review and reinforce skills, knowledge, and information presented in a previous lesson. A simple example might be that after a grammar lesson students are asked to write their own sentences and label the specific grammatical elements presented in the most recent classroom lesson.

Extension

Extension assignments ask students to expand on skills and/or concepts taught during a previous class. For example, after studying a period in history students might be asked to read an article or book pertaining to that period and report their findings to the class.

Creative/Enrichment

This assignment includes analysing, synthesising and evaluating concepts or skills already taught. Students have an opportunity to develop and apply their own ideas about a topic and prepare a presentation for the teachers or class. One example would be to assign students the task of creating an invention that would solve a problem. Another might be to write a play or short story.

What is stressed here is that not all homework is alike in nature and purpose. In considering different types of homework to set teachers might usefully refer to the different kinds of questioning employed in class.

-Teacher Guidelines -

Homework should be assigned for the purpose of enhancing essential learning skills, not as a matter of routine. While all homework assignments will help students learn to work independently and encourage self-discipline and responsibility, each assignment should be appropriate for the learning goals being addressed. There are three purposes for homework:

- **Review and Practice** – Students are asked to review material or practice a skill with which they have a high degree of familiarity
- **Preparation** – Students are asked to start thinking about a concept for new content with which they have some, but not a high degree of knowledge.
- **Elaboration** – Students are asked to elaborate on a concept that has been introduced. They have some, but not a high degree of knowledge on the concept.

Before assigning homework you need to establish the success criteria and may yourself the following questions;

- What is the purpose of this assignment?
- What is the best assignment for the goal?
- How will you determine the amount of homework?
- How will you ensure that the assignment accomplishes your goal?

When assigning homework, make sure you define the purpose clearly, for example:

- Review and practice what they have learned in class
- Prepare for the next class
- Explore subjects more fully than classroom time permits
- Extend learning by applying skills they already have to new situations
- Provide clear instructions.
- Ensure homework is at the appropriate level of difficulty

Assessing homework and offering feedback

Our *Learning & Teaching Policy* encourages comment feedback to students. This gives teachers the opportunity to focus student attention on:

- What the student has done well
- What weaknesses may have been in the work
- How to improve the work or understanding.

We aim to use comments that relate to

- The task given
- The learning intention
- The criteria for success

Assessment of a piece of homework should be based upon the criteria for success in the particular task set. For example, there is little to be gained by drawing attention to lapses in the surface presentation (spelling, punctuation, etc.) of a piece of student work, if this had not been specifically articulated as one of the criteria against which success was to be measured. Neither is it helpful to set out too many criteria against which the work will be judged.

Teachers might usefully consider whether always giving marks or grades helps students to learn more effectively. In particular, the giving of marks can be counter-productive even when they are accompanied by the teacher's comments as to how students might improve. Students all too often ignore the helpful comments and pay attention solely to the marks. Those who have received low marks, then, merely see themselves failing to achieve while those whose marks are high can neglect to look for the specific direction as to the strengths in their work and the areas where they might need to improve.

Comment-only Marking

It is important to bear in mind that giving a mark in itself does not help students to understand how they might improve their work. The assessment is not formative in intention and it will do little or nothing for learning. In fact, giving marks or grades cancels out the impact of formative comments. In adopting the approach of comment-only marking the teacher gives feedback in three key areas in the student's learning cycle:

- what the student has done right
- what weaknesses there are in the student's work
- what the next step/s should be to improve performance or understanding.

This kind of feedback will be most helpful when the learning intentions and criteria for success are clearly understood by the students. The teacher's comments should relate to the task in hand, the learning intention and the criteria for success. Moreover, this should be explained to parents so that they understand what is happening and can be supportive to students in responding to feedback. In this way comment-only marking can become an important part of the school's practice of reporting to parents.

Comment-only marking does not preclude the giving of marks or grades to an assignment. The teacher can record the marks he/she awards to each assignment and use them to build up a picture of summative achievement for the student.

Subject Department Guidelines on Homework -

Subject Department policies and guidelines should include agreed statements on:

- Frequency of Homework
- Amount of Homework for each year group
- Types of Homework assignment
- Correction/Collection of Homework
- Feedback on Homework
- Link to DES examinations
- Information to parents/guardians
- Record keeping
- Any use of this information in the recommendation for Higher/Ordinary Level
- Link to Code of Behaviour if Homework is not completed in the prescribed time.
- Links to the Guidance, Learning Support and Language Departments if there are any concerns.
- How IT Developments can enhance the quality of teaching and learning and the assignment of homework.

- Parental Involvement -

Children can become dependent on parental support for homework. For the most part, homework should be independent work. Parents should not have to teach their children.

Parent involvement in homework should focus on support for and interest in their child's learning. Parents can facilitate learning by:

- Making sure their child has a quiet space to work
- Helping their child establish a homework schedule
- Being available for questions and clarifications
- Encouraging, motivating and prompting their child
- Tracking their child's time, if necessary.

- Homework Journal -

Each student is given a Homework Journal at the beginning of the year to record details of homework for each school day. The following practice should be observed by all students in relation to their homework journals.

- Date to be entered at the top of each page
- Separate entries for different subjects
- When homework is completed, a mark should be made to show this
- Due date should be recorded when taking down and completing homework
- Students should record carefully the instructions for their homework. They should ask questions, when necessary, to clarify the assignment. Before leaving school in the evening they should check that they have all the books, copies and any other material needed for that night's homework.
- Students should carefully plan for the completion of long-term projects.
- If a student is absent from class, she should find out what work was missed and what homework was given. Those involved in extracurricular activities must also complete their homework. For this purpose it is worthwhile having a contact number of another student who was present in class.
- Parents are requested to sign the journal at the end of each week.

Time Allocated to Homework -

Recommended time to be allocated to homework for each year group is as follows:

Junior Students:

- 1st Years – 1 ½ to 2 hours
- 2nd and 3rd Years – 2 to 3 hours

Senior Students:

- 4th Years – 2 hours including project work, participation in Transition Year activities and planned revision
- 5th and 6th Years – 3 hours **plus** planned revision time