



RIVERSTON
SCHOOL

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Homework Policy

Introduction

At Riverston School and College we define homework as being 'any activity that pupils undertake outside of school lesson time, either on their own or with the support of family members.'

We recognise the importance of homework. Many parents and all staff at Riverston have identified that homework is important because:

- It helps young people develop positive study skills and habits.
- It allows young people to review and practice what has been covered in class.
- It encourages young people to explore subjects more fully than classroom time permits.
- It helps young people integrate learning.
- It allows parents to be involved in the child's work.
- It prepares them for their exams and a larger workload later in education.

However, as a community we also recognise that our students often find independent study very difficult, and that homework can impact heavily on family life. For example, issues specific to our young people, who all have a diagnosis of autism spectrum condition (ASC)/other areas of additional needs, and sometimes:

- The young person has used up all their energy at school and needs to prioritise relaxation at home.
- Homework causes undue stress for the young person and their family and may result in challenging behaviours. They may also struggle to begin a task because of anxiety.
- The young person does not understand why they must do work for school when they're at home and there are too many distractions at home for them to concentrate.

The students at Riverston require specialist support in a friendly, purposeful environment to access the curriculum to their full potential. While homework should only ever consist of activities and concepts previously taught, it stands to reason that our young people could require support at home to complete tasks.

This policy outlines our approach to homework and the reasoning behind this approach.

Our Reasoning

Homework can be a contentious issue but can be beneficial for consolidating learning and developing important independent study habits.

The recent Ofsted Inspection Framework ([2019](#)) mentions homework under *Quality of Education - IMPLEMENTATION*. It asks - To what extent do teachers use homework to prepare for new topics and/or to consolidate classwork? How do they encourage broader reading, enquiry and thinking outside of contact time? Therefore, it is important that teachers understand the school's policy and explain their ways of working within it.

Large scale research ([The Sutton Trust](#)) suggests that homework has only a moderate effect on outcomes particularly at the Primary stage. However, at GCSE level and beyond, content increases significantly, and research suggests that homework at Key Stage Four and above is an effective tool for improving outcomes. To achieve favourable results and have the same opportunities as their mainstream peers, students need to complete study outside of school time at GCSE level and beyond. For our students, 'study' is a skill that needs to be taught explicitly, modelled, and practised over time to ensure success. Therefore, if they only begin this skill at GCSE level, they may not have had the practice to succeed, and this may cause them to respond with challenging behaviours.

[Tony Atwood](#) outlines a range of strategies for Learners with additional needs which are designed to minimise impaired Executive Function, accommodate their profile of cognitive skills and help the child complete their homework assignments with less stress for the child and family. These include:

- Open communication with staff over what is expected and when.
- Creating an optimised and purposeful environment in the house for schoolwork, which is free from distractions.
- Used visual supports, social stories etc.

- Scaffolding and breaking down instructions.
- Rewards and/or motivators.
- One to one support and prompting.
- Help with organisation and timing.
- Scheduling and calendars.

This puts the onus on parents to ensure the young person is supported when completing homework. Atwood states that when strategies are unsuccessful, ASD students should not be made to complete homework.

During lockdown all parents stated that support was required in the completion of schoolwork, and the levels of support for home learning required (above and beyond what was provided online) varied from some support to very high levels.

Some of our parents have expressed great difficulty in supporting their children with homework and therefore think it should be kept to a minimum. Some parents want regular homework as they find that it provides structure and routine.

Our Homework Guidelines

We aim to meet the individual needs of our students and to support their success but also to consider the impact on families in our approach. We strongly believe that having the time to socialise with friends and family, take part in sporting and other leisure activities is of equal importance to our students. However, we also want our students to be given the opportunity to be successful in their academic endeavours.

The following are only guidelines, and reasonable adjustments may be made for individual students, especially if homework is causing anxiety and/or behaviours that challenge.

As a school we have decided that the aims of homework for us will be:

1. *To develop reading, spelling and basic maths skills.*
2. *To consolidate knowledge and reinforce skills learnt at school and in subjects*
3. *To develop skills needed for independent study ready for KS4 and beyond.*

As a rule, students will be rewarded and praised for completing homework rather than penalised for non-completion. We will also seek individual parental views and respond accordingly, for example, if a parent specifically requests less homework, we will consider it as long as it is agreed to be beneficial, and that a decision is made after reasoned discussions.

If parents, choose or are unable to support their child to complete homework at home then students will be encouraged to complete it during study skills at lunchtime, but will not be required to complete it during their enrichment time (school hours) as this contradicts the idea of students growing through enrichment.

All homework will be written into the Riverston Student/College Planner.

KS3

Teaching staff will send home suggested homework tasks via the student planner and in accordance with the Homework Timetable. If this does not happen parents must contact their child's Form Tutor as a first point of contact. It is expected that students will complete a total of an hour of homework per week for all subjects – so 1 hour in total.

We will incorporate the explicit teaching of study skills into lessons in order to support students in the lead up to KS4. We will also ensure that subject teachers prepare students for the future expectations related to their subject.

It is also recommended that parents support the acquisition of homework skills by setting up an appropriate working space in the home and setting tasks such as special interest projects or revision workbooks. Parents should speak to their child's form tutor if they have any questions.

KS4

It is our expectation that students will complete at least an hour of homework per week in each exam subject. Teachers will keep parents informed about missing homework and chase as and when required. This is a guideline only and reasonable adjustments may be made for individual students, especially if homework is causing anxiety and/or behaviours that challenge.

We will always work together with parents and students to find a pathway to success.

KS5/College

By the time students enter the college, it is expected that they will have some functional study skills. However, we do understand that students will require continued support with this.

Students in the college may be resitting their GCSEs or attending college courses. These courses require several hours of study and homework per week each. Therefore, it is important that families support their young people in having an effective home study routine.

Students should have some flexibility in their timetables which means that supported study sessions will quite often be scheduled during the week as well, though these are put in place depending on what the individual students need. These should not be in place of home study, but rather should supplement it.

Monitoring And Review

This policy will be monitored by the Headteacher, Deputy Head Teacher and SEND Director every two years.

Reviewed September 2023

Next Review due: September 2025