



## Home Learning Policy

Date: March 2022

Dear Families,

We have recently undertaken an investigation into the purpose and value of Home Learning (Homework) in primary school. We have unpacked the research, in order to gain a renewed understanding of the impact of Home Learning on student outcomes. From the evidence, we have identified the strategies related to Home Learning which are effective, as well as those which are not. We have spent much time in discussion about the implications of the research for us here at St James. We have invited perspectives of the benefits and challenges of Home Learning from students, families and teachers and have taken these into account when formulating our new Home Learning policy. The policy aims to draw together contemporary research, outline consistent expectations and provide clarity for all stakeholders.

### A SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH RELATED TO HOME LEARNING IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

John Hattie, Professor of Education and Director of the Melbourne Education Research Institute at the University of Melbourne, found that the influence that homework has on student achievement is more effective for secondary students than primary age students. He concludes that for primary students it is about quality not quantity. He believes that it's not about *getting rid* of homework but about getting it right.

*"Homework in primary school has an effect of around zero. In high school it's larger. Which is why we need to get it right. Not why we need to get rid of it. It's one of those lower hanging fruit that we should be looking into in our primary schools to say, "Is it really making a difference?" If you try and get rid of homework in primary schools many parents judge the quality of the school by the presence of homework. So, don't get rid of it. Treat the zero as saying, "It's probably not making much of a difference but let's improve it". Certainly I think we get over obsessed with homework. Five to ten minutes has the same effect of one hour to two hours. The worst thing you can do with homework is give kids projects. The best thing you can do is to reinforce something you've already learnt."* (Visible Learning John Hattie)

### In relation to Home Learning (Homework) in primary schools, research suggests that;

- the impact on learning outcomes for students is limited OR there is no academic gain from home learning
- there may be other benefits such as parental engagement or promoting effective learning habits
- the quality of tasks assigned is more important than quantity
- effectiveness is enhanced by providing students with choice
- opportunities for revision and consolidation should be incorporated
- conversations between the child and their family member(s) are vital
- five - ten minutes has the same impact as one or two hours
- short and focussed tasks work best
- life skills as part of home learning are significantly undervalued (playing board games, cooking, household jobs, gardening, sport, craft, etc.)

### STUDENT PERSPECTIVES

Students thoughts about Home Learning (Homework) ...

"Sometimes I just want to sit down and relax after a big day at school and don't feel like doing more work. Sometimes I want to spend time with my family or play with my pets or do something mindful." (Year 6 student)

"I work on the same topics at home that I work on at school. It helps me because it gives me more of an understanding." (Year 6 student)

"There should be no homework! Or there should be only a little bit." (Year 6 student)

"I think it is helpful in some ways, but it gets in the way sometimes and stops me from playing sport and spending time with my family." (Year 6 student)

"I think it's good that we have some in Year 6, because in Year 7 we might have a lot." (Year 6 student)

"I don't really like it because at school you do lots of work. At 3.30pm you go home and it is time to relax and spend time with your family. I don't mind if it is finishing off something. School is for learning. Home is for spending time with your family." (Year 6 student)

"School is for learning, home is your time. I don't mind finishing off but if it's unnecessary, it's a bit boring." (Year 6 student)

"We already do school for 6 or so hours a day, so at home it should be for resting. It gets really stressful when you don't have time to do homework." (Year 5 student)

"What I like about it is that when you do it, you feel very independent." (Year 5 student)

"It makes me organised." (Year 5 student)

"I feel grown up!" (Year 5 student)

"If I have after school activities, trying to find the time for homework is tricky." (Year 5 student)

"Sometimes you don't have someone there to help you or to answer questions." (Year 5 student)

"I just try to get it over and done with the moment I get home so I don't worry about it later. It can be annoying if you have a sport afterwards but it is also good because you can pick your own books to read and I like that." (Year 5 student)

There are other things I need to do at home. Reading every night is okay and one small activity is fine, but not heaps of activities." (Year 4 student)

"I like reading at home. It is fun." (Year 4 student)

"I like mathematics because you can play with other people." (Year 4 student)

"I find homework kind of annoying and it's hard to be motivated, but once I start doing it it is okay." (Year 4 student)

"I don't like layers and layers of homework, I just like a couple of bits." (Year 4 student)

"When I don't do the homework I get nervous I'll get in trouble." (Year 4 student)

"Sometimes there is a good amount but sometimes there is too much." (Year 4 student)

"I enjoy it but sometimes I think it can get a bit too long." (Year 3 student)

"It starts off fun but it gets a little bit boring at the end." (Year 3 student)

#### COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

Families think home learning should:

- relate to that which is taught during school time
- provide opportunities for children to revise and consolidate learning
- not include any new learning
- provide opportunities for children to share their learning with their families
- provide valuable insights for families into how their child learns and how they are progressing
- include short achievable tasks which place minimal stress on families
- not intrude on family life or extra curricular activities such as sport, dance, etc.
- support the development of positive study habits (effective time management, a sense of responsibility, self-discipline and independence) for senior students
- be minimal for younger children who need time to rest and play
- be fun, light and not a chore

#### SCHOOL PERSPECTIVES

Teachers think home learning should...

- consolidate and reinforce learning
- connect to the learning within the classroom
- focus on quality over quantity
- be consistent each week
- be sighted, stamped / signed each week by the teacher
- include achievable short tasks (since 5-10 minutes has the same effect size as 1-2 hours)
- incorporate some choices for students
- provide opportunities for parent engagement in their child's learning
- not be imposed or forced, since all family circumstances are different and should be taken into consideration
- not impact negatively on the time families spend together or prevent students pursuing areas of interest and passion

The opinions about Home Learning are vast and varied. It is impossible to cater for all perspectives, so ultimately we look to the research for guidance, keeping in mind the best interests of the students themselves. Below is an outline of Home Learning from each Collaborative Community. This may be adjusted slightly throughout the year, as teachers continue to reflect upon the effectiveness of the structures.

<p>JUNIOR SCHOOL Foundation, Year 1 &amp; Year 2</p>	<p><b>Reading (10-15 minutes each night)</b> Students will bring home a book each night to read. The text can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- read to the child</li><li>- read with the child</li><li>- read by the child</li></ul> <p>or all of the above!</p> <p>Families are to support their child by recording the reading on 'My Reading Record.' The children will then return the book to school the next morning and swap it for another. Children are guided by teachers to take home books which are <b>easy and encourage fluency</b>. As the students build their skills in reading, the types of texts they take home will change. Another option for reading is to use the PM e Collection. Students have their own personalised login details. Teachers allocate texts which match the child's reading level. Again, the texts should be easy so the children experience success, develop fluency and build confidence.</p> <p><b>High Frequency Words</b> Students also bring home a book of 'Magic words' to practice each night. Children need multiple exposures to these words in order to build automatic recall. Teachers will monitor students' progress and assign new high frequency words when the students are confident and recall the words without hesitation. Teachers will check how students are progressing with the words periodically. If your child is able to read all the words, we encourage you to practise writing/spelling them.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b> Students have access to their own code so they can login to Mathletics. Tasks are assigned which relate to the learning within the classroom and provide an opportunity for revision. Students are encouraged to work through these tasks at their own pace.</p> <p><b>Inquiry</b> Once a term, teachers may create a learning activity related to the Inquiry topic for students to take home to complete with their families. Children will return to school to share their learning with their peers. The focus is on building home - school connections but also on the development of students' oral language skills.</p>
<p>MIDDLE SCHOOL Year 3 and Year 4</p>	<p><b>Reading</b> Students may choose texts of personal interest to read from their classroom library, from the school library, from friends or from home. Since many students will be reading chapter books and short novels, students may keep the same text for a number of weeks, until they have finished reading it. Students are responsible for using a timer to ensure they read for <u>20 minutes</u> and for recording their home reading in their diary; title and page numbers. It is the responsibility of the child to complete these tasks. Families are to support their child by encouraging them to read for 20 minutes each night and ensuring their child has access to a timer. Parents may choose to sign the student diary, which teachers check on a Monday.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b> Students have access to their own code so they can login to Mathletics. Tasks are assigned which relate to the learning within the classroom. Students are encouraged to work through these tasks at their own pace, throughout the week. Students may choose to complete these tasks one night per week, or alternatively they may like to spend a little time each night.</p> <p><b>Spelling</b> Students will bring home some spelling words each week, which relate to the SMART spelling focus within the classroom. Students practise writing their words each night. They attempt 1-2 spelling activities each week, which</p>

	<p>can be selected from the SMART Spelling home learning grid.</p> <p><b>Inquiry / R.E. / STEM</b> Students may choose to complete one additional home learning task each week relating to the term's curriculum focus. It is designed to be a fun and engaging task which promotes family involvement and conversation. For example it could be: cooking a meal, writing a family prayer, undertaking a science experiment, completing a family challenge, helping with household jobs, creating an art piece, researching a 'wondering' or doing a STEM activity.</p> <p><i>Note: The amount of time Year 3 students are expected to spend completing home learning tasks will vary to the amount of time expected of Year 4 students.</i></p>
<p>SENIOR SCHOOL Year 5 and 6</p>	<p><b>Reading</b> Students may choose texts of personal interest to read from their classroom library, from the school library, from friends or from home. Since many students will be reading more complex novels, students may keep the same text for a number of weeks, until they have finished reading it. Students are responsible for using a timer to ensure they read for a minimum of <u>20 minutes</u>. They are to record the title and pg number(s) of the text read in their diary. Students may also be asked to complete a reading comprehension task in their home learning book.</p> <p><b>Spelling</b> Students will bring home some spelling words each week, which relate to the SMART spelling focus within the classroom. Students practise writing their words and attempt 1 spelling activity each night, which can be selected from the SMART Spelling home learning grid.</p> <p><b>Mathematics</b> Students have access to their own code so they can login to Mathletics. Tasks are assigned which relate to the learning within the classroom. Students are encouraged to work through these tasks at their own pace, throughout the week. Students may choose to complete these tasks one night per week, or alternatively they may like to spend a little time each night.</p> <p><b>Inquiry / R.E. / STEM</b> Students will complete an Inquiry / STEM / R.E. task each week relating to the term's curriculum focus. They are designed to promote family involvement and conversation. For example: cooking a meal, writing a family prayer, undertaking a science experiment, completing a family challenge, helping with household jobs, creating an art piece, researching a 'wondering' or doing a STEM activity.</p> <p><b>Pomodoro Effect - beginning to develop effective study habits</b> The Pomodoro technique is a method for staying focused and mentally fresh. It suggests alternating pomodoros (focused work sessions) with frequent short breaks to promote sustained concentration and prevent mental fatigue. Its biggest strength is its simplicity. A list of actions, outlining how this study technique may be used by our students is seen below:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Get a to-do list and a timer.</li> <li>2. Set your timer for 10-25 minutes, and focus on a single task until the timer rings.</li> <li>3. When your session ends, mark off one pomodoro and record what you completed in your diary.</li> <li>4. Then enjoy a five-minute break.</li> <li>5. After four pomodoros, take a longer, more restorative 15-30 minute break.</li> </ol> <p>3 Rules...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Break down complex projects.</li> <li>2. Small tasks go together.</li> <li>3. Once a pomodoro is set, it must ring.</li> </ol> <p><b>Building independence and a sense of responsibility</b> It is the responsibility of the child to complete home learning tasks. Families are to support their child by encouraging them to read for 20 minutes each night and ensuring their child has access to a timer. Families may like to encourage their child to complete home learning tasks in a central space, so time management skills can be supervised. This will ensure students do not spend too little or too much time completing activities.</p> <p><b>Weekly Structure</b> Teachers distribute weekly Home Learning tasks on a Monday. Students complete tasks on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings. Students record their reading and a record of the activity they did each night in their diary. Any extended responses / workings out are to be kept in their home learning book. Diaries are sighted &amp; marked by the teacher on Fridays. Home Learning books are collected on Fridays also.</p> <p><i>Note: The amount of time Year 5 students are expected to spend completing home learning tasks will vary to the amount of time expected of Year 6 students. Students should not be spending any more than 45 minutes per night on their home learning, unless of course they'd like to do extra reading for enjoyment.</i></p>

## HOME LEARNING AT ST JAMES

At St James Home Learning is seen as an opportunity to reinforce learning that occurs within the classroom and for families to engage with the learning of their child. We acknowledge that parents are first and foremost the primary educators; children learn more from their parents than anyone else. Children flourish when their parents are actively involved in their education, spend time in rich conversation and support them with learning in the home.

After school, children need time to connect with their family, as well as to play and rest. These are vital elements in children's development. Opportunities for children to participate in activities within the wider community, which focus on building confidence, developing social skills and extending interests are also valued. Additionally, activities and conversations which involve children in home family life, including cooking, cleaning, walking the dog, gardening, setting the table, packing for a trip away, writing a shopping list, etc. teach important life skills. Even though these types of activities aren't traditionally seen as 'Homework' they are nonetheless valuable learning experiences, guided by parents. Home Learning tasks set by the teacher should not diminish these experiences. If at any point, Home Learning is impacting negatively on family life please speak to your child's teacher.

Since teachers have no control over what happens at home, we rely heavily on families to support Home Learning. We understand that families are busy and time poor, however Home Learning is ultimately the responsibility of the home. Specific Home Learning tasks such as reading, will be sighted and stamped / signed by the teacher each week. Please note that students' participation / engagement with tasks will be 'tracked' however **there will be no consequences at school for students not completing home learning.**

Teachers will not be using Home Learning as a form of assessment. Teachers use a wide range of assessment strategies each day at school to gauge students' understandings and misconceptions and use this valuable data to drive future lessons. Assessing students' Home Learning provides minimal insight into their 'next steps' in comparison to that which the teacher observes the child say, make and do each day.