

# St. Mary's Academy CBS, Carlow

## Homework Policy

### *Introduction*

Students are encouraged to achieve at the highest level, academically and otherwise. Homework is an integral part of the learning process, not an optional extra. The responsibility for setting, giving and correcting homework lies with the subject teacher.

Students who have difficulty in presenting and completing homework are referred to the Homework Club, which takes place on Fridays from 2 pm to 4 pm. Students who do not do homework on a regular basis are dealt with on a graduated scale, as follows:

- Warning, unless there is a genuine excuse
- Recorded in journal for parent's/guardian's signature
- Recorded in the Homework Book, as appropriate, and dealt with by the co-ordinating teacher
- Subsequent offences are dealt with by a combination of methods including detention and meeting parents

Fortunately, the vast majority of students see a value in homework and carry out prescribed work. Teachers explain and discuss the value of homework with students and it is worthwhile noting that **a pastoral intervention is always adopted before any sanctions are imposed.**

### *Support Systems*

The **Homework Book** is used by staff to record students who do not produce homework on a regular basis. It is monitored by a designated teacher who will meet and interview students entered in the book. The designated teacher consults with the class teacher and year head to establish whether the problem is genuine. Follow-up meetings with parents/guardians may be required.

The **Homework Club** is run by a teacher from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Fridays. The teacher helps students who are unable to do the homework assigned to them during the previous weeks. Students may be referred here by the Year Head or by the teacher operating the homework book. Parents/guardians may also request to have their child placed in the club. It is important to note that this is a support system to help students to complete their homework unaided and **is not used as a sanction for misbehaviour or poor work ethic.**

Subject teachers will advise students who have difficulty in developing a homework/study plan for their subject area and will also meet parents, by appointment, if necessary.

## ***The Purpose of Homework***

- It extends learning beyond the classroom and promotes independent, autonomous, learning.
- It reinforces skills and understanding developed at school and fosters the habit of class preparation.
- It provides an opportunity for the student for self-assessment and to check if he has understood the work done earlier.
- It encourages students to develop the skills, confidence and discipline to establish study plans and to manage their learning and research effectively. This is an essential component of life-long learning.
- It provides opportunities for parents/ guardians to monitor and become involved in their children's education and provides insight into the curriculum
- It helps teachers to monitor individual progress.

It should be noted that homework is given in most subjects after each class but may not always be written work. Some other examples are as follows:

**Learning assignments, reading, listening comprehension, phrase acquisition, personal reflective journal, drafting and essay writing, research, experiments, problem solving, visiting the library, drawing, making a model, word processing, doing a project, interviews, investigating and writing up reports, revision, preparing for a debate, watching a documentary etc.**

The same homework is given to all students in a class even though the students are of mixed ability. Teachers will take ability-level into account when providing feedback to students.

## ***Getting Started***

From the beginning of First Year students are encouraged to develop the following routine:

- The homework is recorded in the Student Journal in a neat fashion
- The student should have a different copy for each subject (some subjects have more than one copy) and the assigned work should be done in the appropriate copy.
- The work should be referenced by dating it and by writing the number of the page and the question being done above the homework
- All copies should be retained by the student for revision even when they are used up.

All students should spend time at home on their studies whether or not written work has been assigned. If no homework has been set then students are expected to revise material they have recently studied in class to make sure that they have fully understood it.

## ***How much Homework?***

Research and best practice suggests that the amount of time that should be spent by students at Second Level on homework should be around:

- First Year 1½ hours – 2 hours, approximately 10 hours per week
- Second Year 2 hours – 2 ½ hours, approximately 13 hours per week
- Third Year 2 ½ – 3 hours, approximately 15 hours per week\*
- Transition Year Varies, depending on projects etc. Students should spend about 1 to 1 ½ hours per night, to maintain momentum for senior cycle.
- Fifth Year 3 hours, approximately 17 hours per week
- Sixth Year 3 – 3 ½ hours, approximately 20 hours per week\*

\*Weekend study and revision are essential in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Year.

**The school expects that all homework is completed and presented on time, to the best of the student's ability.** Work should be neat and tidy. If a student has been absent on extra-curricular activities the onus is on the student to establish the work assigned and to complete and present it.

### ***The Role of Parents/Guardians***

Parents/guardians are encouraged to provide a quiet, suitable place in which students can do their homework free of distractions such as television, mobile phones etc. Where a computer is used for homework/study, parents/guardians are asked to monitor this use and satisfy themselves that this is necessary. Adequate heat and light are essential. If possible, a regular time should be set aside and a homework/ study timetable should be posted in the study area.

**It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to inform the school or class teacher if their student was unable to complete a homework assignment. A parent/guardian may communicate this through the student's journal.** If a parent/guardian feels that their son has a problem with the amount or difficulty of homework he/she may communicate this to the subject teacher. Parents/Guardians are expected to check and sign the Journal weekly. Individual notes from school personnel should also be acknowledged by signing the note.

Parents may also play an active role by supervising work and checking the quality of presentation of written work. **Discussions with your son on school and homework are an invaluable means of assessing progress and the quality of learning.** Questioning your son on spellings, definitions and areas where the answers are provided in texts can be very useful.

### ***Study Skills***

Intensive Study Skills seminars are organised for Third and Sixth Years each year and these seminars are provided by external agencies for a small fee. The Guidance Counsellors provide a programme for all other students annually. The topic is also addressed in the SPHE syllabus. Each individual subject teacher provides tips on the specific requirements within his/her own subject area.

### ***Study Provision***

Evening Study takes place from 4.15 pm until 6 pm, Monday to Thursday, and from 2 pm until 3.45 pm on Fridays. This facility is available to all students for a fee determined by the number availing of the facility. A strict Code of Conduct is drawn up by the coordinating teacher and this is signed by students and their parents/guardians. Disruption of the study facility by a student may necessitate his removal.

Night Study, for Sixth Year students only, takes place from 6 to 9 pm from Monday to Thursday. Extension of the facility to Fridays is currently being investigated. Similarly, a strict Code of Conduct is in place.

### ***Special Educational Needs***

Students in this school are taught in mixed ability settings, apart from Maths, English and Irish. In setting homework for students with special needs teachers are encouraged to balance the right of students to share fully in the work of the class, including homework tasks, with their individual learning needs. Subject teachers will collaborate where possible with the Learning Support teacher to ensure class tasks are manageable, and individual skill practice can be incorporated without overloading the students.

### ***Feedback for Pupils***

Students will get a response from their teachers on the quality of the work they have submitted. Effective marking and feedback are essential. The staff has explored the effectiveness of the principles of Assessment for Learning (AfL) over the past two years and teachers have adopted these principles in providing feedback. Teachers check homework on a regular basis and a variety of methods are used to correct homework: e.g.

- Teacher correction by taking up copies, marking the work and returning it with appropriate feedback
- Teacher correction by walking around to every student during class and checking work
- Class correction by doing the solutions on the board or using a projector, discussing the result and asking students to assess their work
- Peer marking and assessment, where students exchange work for correction.

### ***Feedback to Parents***

Written reports on the progress of students are provided to parents, at Christmas and summer. Third and Sixth Year students also receive a report after the Mock Exams. From January 2009 parents will be able to access data on their sons relating to exam results, attendance and general progress. These reports contain a mark and a comment from subject teachers and from the Year Head. Comments from teachers are also included in the Student Journal and the teacher in charge of the Homework Book will also make contact with parents/guardians of pupils whose work is not up to the required standard. Parent/teacher meetings also offer valuable opportunities for the school to present more comprehensive assessments of progress. As well as allowing a focus on

progress achieved, such meetings provide an opportunity to nominate areas that need specific attention and to indicate what needs to be done to improve student performance.

Teachers may also require students to get class tests signed by parents/guardians.

### ***Evaluating the Homework Policy***

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and evaluated by students, parents and teachers. Teachers will do this on an individual basis and at subject department level and will evaluate the quality of homework and the contribution it is making to learning.

Students are asked to note the length of time taken to do homework and check if it is in line with our suggested targets. They will also be asked to comment on the helpfulness of the feedback they receive. This evaluation will be done by survey (appendix 1). We hope that the policy will provide solid foundations to develop their learning and develop a love for learning.

Parents will be appraised of the policy at year group meetings with the year heads and their comments will be sought by survey also (see appendix 2).

In addition to monitoring arrangements, the homework policy will be reviewed annually to assess its effectiveness. The key criterion will be the extent to which the policy is contributing to the progress students make at school and their attitude to learning.

***Ratified by BOM on 19<sup>th</sup> May 2009.***