

## **The Hills Academy Homework expectations and Q&A**

### **What is homework?**

Homework is set in year groups (increasing in quantity throughout the school) with a focus on reading (and phonics in Reception, Year 1 and 2), writing (including spelling) and maths (including times tables). There will be optional homework in other subject areas at the top end of the school.

If your child learns a musical instrument, he/she will be expected to carry out regular practice as part of their homework schedule.

### **Why do we do it?**

Homework is aimed at rehearsing and embedding core skills. It is also a good way for children to see their parents engaging in their learning (and it helps to keep parents informed of what skills their child needs to grasp).

A child who has a culture of reading in the home is more likely to learn a love of books and develop a depth to their reading, as well as a more complex and powerful vocabulary. But be aware, for some children reading comes quickly and easily and for others it is hard work – that is okay as with persistence and positivity both types of children will be fine in the end!

Some things just have to be learned – the spelling of those tricky words – times tables – and rehearsing at home helps to embed them in your child's long-term memory.

Homework, particularly in years 5 and 6, is also aimed at getting your child ready for secondary school. Taking responsibility for completing homework is an important lesson in being independent and it is beneficial for this to happen now so that she/he is fully prepared for the expectations as they make the exciting leap to their new school.

We know that the only way for a child to master a skill – such as a musical instrument, dance or a sport – is to practice.

### **What does the research say?**

There is a wide range of research views on homework. These go from the bold challenge that homework is a waste of time and schools mainly get it wrong, to the belief of some educators that setting vast quantities of homework makes the school look more serious, diligent and successful.

Drawing on a range of educational research from the Education Endowment Fund, the Institute for Effective Educational Research and a notable PISA study there are a few clear pointers:

- Engagement in homework by secondary age pupils does have a significantly positive impact on their outcomes at GCSE
- Homework in younger pupils has less impact
- Homework should require pupils to rehearse and extend skills already taught and should be relevant to their learning that week

- Homework should be time-limited and children should have time to engage in play and outside interests after school
- Homework may perpetuate inequalities for our most vulnerable children who may not have access to resources and support at home

Many parts of Northern Europe do not start formal schooling until children are six and certainly don't teach them to read until this point. In the UK we start formal schooling at 4, children are baselined at this point and then have a phonics test at the end of Year 1, Year 2 SAT's at the end of Year 2, times tables screening at Year 4 and Year 6 SAT's before their transition to Secondary School. Whatever our individual beliefs about our children's readiness we have, in some respects, to conform to the system in place for our child (there may be exceptional reasons for some children why this may not be the case). This means that they do need to learn their phonic sounds in Reception and Year 1, they must read, and that basic rehearsal of mathematics skills is advantageous to them.

But homework at The Hills is planned to link into what is being taught, when it is being taught, and help our children secure key skills. We understand that it is a topic, which we will not always agree on.

### **Does my child have to do homework?**

In short – no he/she does not have to do homework.

However, we would really urge you, if nothing else, to prioritize reading, spelling and times tables (from Year 3 up)

### **Does it matter if my child misses a week because life has got too busy?**

Absolutely not. You are **not** a failure as a parent, if for the odd week, it does not happen. We all understand that there are times when something has got to give! You can always drop the teacher a note if you are worried.

### **How much help should I give my child when he/she is doing homework?**

One of the most positive things about homework is that dialogue between parent and child; them experiencing your interest in their learning. You can help your child as much as you think feels right (there is some guidance at the end of this document). Feel free to model answers to set a higher expectation and tweak homework that isn't quite right but do also find time to stand back a little and let them try it themselves – make it ok for them to fail and you will create a more resilient and future proofed learner. However, tricky try to make sure your praise outweighs any corrective feedback.

### **What should I do if, even with support from me, my child cannot do his/her homework?**

Stop, find something different to do which they can succeed at and let the teacher know. That way we can make sure that a pre-teaching session addresses any misconceptions and concept gaps, or more appropriate learning activities are provided.

If homework is consistently not appropriate for your child this should be an ongoing conversation with the class teacher and the Special Needs Co-coordinator. For some children homework needs to be different and that will be managed by the school on a case-by-case basis.

### **What should I do if the homework is too easy for my child?**

For some children the homework will be rehearsing skills they have already mastered and therefore be boring or pointless. Homework is quite generic by nature and teachers are not able to differentiate with homework in the way they can in the classroom.

Consider adding challenges of your own, encouraging them to borrow more complex literature from school, accessing other activities available on MYMATHS or using spellings in complex sentences. Open ended tasks are great ways to extend your child if he/she needs it. You could give them story starters and set them writing or a real-life mathematical problem to solve, or a piece of independent research to do. Many children don't need an adult to set them off on something, they are already brimming with ideas of interests they'd like to pursue.

Again, if this is a consistent issue, have a chat with your child's teacher and they will point you in the direction of alternatives or make suggestions about what you should focus on.

### **Homework is a chore for them and for me – what should I do?**

- Check how long you are spending doing the homework – if it is going on too long, stop.
- A timetable on the wall for the week with a plan of what is going to be done when, which is being ticked off with a reward system might help.
- If it becomes a point of confrontation, take the wind out of your child's sail – set an achievable target and a clear statement of what will happen once that is done, then walk away.
- Praise, praise, praise
- Never refer to your child as not being clever or compare him or her to others, always compare to themselves – “Wow you did that so well, great progress.....”
- Talk to the teacher and ask for help.

### **Will my child get told off or mentioned publicly in school if she/he doesn't do their homework?**

The teachers may refer to the homework in lessons and in Years 5 and 6 there is more pressure from teachers for the children to complete their homework. Your child will not be publicly named and shamed for not doing their homework. Few children under 8 will have the skills, confidence or awareness to independently make the decision to do their homework – it is you the parent/carer that has to drive that – and therefore your child cannot be reprimanded for not completing homework.

### **Why doesn't the teacher mark my child's homework and give detailed feedback?**

We know this is a contentious issue. You spend valuable time with your child, helping him/her to produce a stunning piece of work for homework and get nothing back from the teacher – it feels as though hard work has been ignored.

This is not the case; the teachers do look at the homework completed and acknowledge when it is handed in on TEAMS (through the system). The reality is that teachers are required to do

detailed marking in school as part of our 'in the moment' and formal assessment processes. This detailed marking is done in the knowledge of how much (or little) support a child has to do an activity and therefore how securely concepts are grasped (or not). This is very time-consuming and teacher workload is very high, many of our staff are working far too late at night and far too much at the weekend. We have to rely on you to challenge your child to do his or her best and to praise them for their efforts. Their readiness to learn will show in school and that will, of course, be recognised and praised.

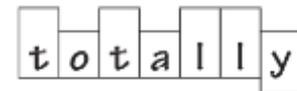
I have copied below some learning spellings strategies, and you can refer to the documents on the website about skills to encourage reading for KS1 (years 1 and 2) or KS2 (years 3 to 6)

**Strategies for practising spellings**

1. *Look, say, cover, write, check*



2. *Trace, copy and replicate*



3. *Word shapes (this can support handwriting – ascenders and descenders)*
4. *Writing in sand, paint, clay, chalk etc.*
5. *Syllables/chunks – Breaking the word into parts and clapping the sounds.*
6. *Look for the small words inside the word.*
7. *Drawing an image around the word to make it memorable*



8. *Blue vowels (write words with vowels in blue) or no vowels*



9. *Pyramid words*



10. *Rainbow words*



11. *Speed spelling – How many times can you write the word correctly in one minute? .*
12. *Bubble writing*
13. *Saying the word in a funny way, e.g. knee (say k –nee), February (say 'Fe'brrr'uary') etc. to make it memorable.*



*said*

14. Mnemonics *silly ant is dancing*

15. Jigsaw puzzle – reorder the mixed up letters to make your spelling word

**Yseertyad**