

DUNDALK GRAMMAR SCHOOL: POLICY ON HOMEWORK

1 Introduction

1.1 Homework is an integral part of the learning process and learning continues through the completion of homework. Homework plays an important part in helping students to develop to their full potential and should be a positive experience.

1.2 Homework is valuable for the following reasons

- It helps students to progress through learning outside the classroom.
- It allows students to develop the practice of independent learning without the constant presence of the teacher or other students and the external discipline of the timetable. This way of working is vital at the later stages of secondary education and thereafter.
- Homework can provide the quiet conditions needed for creative and thoughtful work of all kinds.
- It enforces valuable practice of skills learned in the classroom and helps the absorption of classroom learning.
- It allows students to use materials and other sources of information that are not always available in the classroom.
- It involves parents/guardians and others in students' work for their mutual benefit.
- It encourages opportunities for long-term research and other work.
- It forms an important part of students' notes.
- It gives students valuable experience of working to deadlines.
- It forms a link with the study techniques crucial to success at secondary school.
- It enables teachers to evaluate students' work and to assess its standard.
- It can help with preparatory work for the next day's class.
- Learning is strongly reinforced if students revise in the evening what was learnt during the day.
- Schools which set and correct homework regularly achieve better examination results.

2 The Nature of Homework

2.1 The school operates a system whereby subject teachers set homework in class. The nature of the homework will vary between year groups, different classes and topics of study.

2.2 Homework may be assigned to a class or group within a class or individual student according to student needs. It may be short term (i.e. due for the next class) or long term e.g. the writing of an essay or the completion of a project.

2.3 Marking homework forms an integral part of our assessment. Teachers aim to return marked homework to the students as soon as possible (normally within one week), to reinforce that topic of work while the exercise is fresh in the students' minds.

2.4 In order to achieve, students must be prepared to spend time studying and revising as well as doing their homework.

2.5 Homework may involve the following:

- Reading/writing/spelling/learning/summarising.
- Accessing the internet to research or discover further information on a study topic.
- Carrying out a project. This may involve research, collection of information for an individual or group project.
- Observing/recording.
- Making a model to exemplify an item of work.
- Watching a TV programme related to a study topic.
- Completing an exercise to practise, reinforce or apply aspects of the class work, e.g. writing up practical work or notes.
- Revising or taking notes on material covered in class that day.

2.6 The task selected by the class teacher will be commensurate with the ability of the students. Where appropriate, for differentiation purposes, teachers may ask students to complete alternative tasks.

3 How the School helps Students to organise their Homework

- 3.1 Students are given a homework diary at the beginning of the year. They must record homework on the page assigned to the day when it was set and also should note the day when the homework is due. Students are expected to plan their homework so that assignments do not accumulate.
- 3.2 Teachers try to make sure that instructions concerning homework are clear to everyone in the class, and that all students have plenty of time to record what is expected.
- 3.3 Teachers aim to mark or respond to homework regularly, and in a way that is helpful to students.
- 3.4 Students may reasonably expect that homework set will be corrected by the teacher either in class or at home. Where it is not considered necessary/appropriate to formally check homework this should be explained to students. Homework taken from students to be corrected outside of class should, under normal circumstances, be returned in a timely manner and where at all possible within one week of collection.
- 3.5 Homework may be assessed by a variety of means. Marking/grading may not always be appropriate and feedback to students on how to improve their work may involve focusing on specific aspects of the assignment and the relative merits/demerits thereof.
- 3.6 Form teachers periodically check that homework details are filled in the homework diary for students.
- 3.7 There is organised study for boarders Monday to Thursday nights as follows (Day students would be expected to allocate similar periods of time to their homework):
- Forms 2, 3, 5 and 6: 2hrs 55mins,
 - Forms 1 and 4: 1hr 45mins.

Additionally access to the school library is provided to boarders for 1hour each afternoon. Supervised access to the computer rooms for internet use and digital project work is also available to all boarders and regular sessions are organised for Transition Year students.

- 3.8 After school study (one hour per day Mon/Tue/Thurs and two hours on Wed) is available to day students who apply for places in September and January. Places are limited and a small charge applies.
- 3.9 When students are having problems with poor organisation or completion of homework, the teacher may use the diary as a communication with parents and may ask parents to sign that homework has been completed. Parents should check students' diaries on a regular basis and sign notes written by subject teachers.

4 Suggestions for students regarding organising homework

- All homework and related instructions should be carefully recorded in the Student Journal, the due date noted, and when the work is completed a tick should be entered in the assigned column.
- Ask questions, when necessary, to clarify the assignment requirements.
- When absent from class due to school activities ensure that set work is obtained from a student who was present – for this purpose a contact number should be sought in advance.
- Ensure that all necessary books, copies etc are gathered together before leaving school.
- Find a quiet place and establish a homework routine; preferably have a desk that can be left set up.
- Design a personal homework timetable (see sample in student journal). This timetable should allow for short breaks as well as allocating some time for study and general revision.
- Try to avoid all obvious distractions, television, radio, mobile phone, social media etc.
- When possible, homework should be completed early in the evening rather than late at night.
- Try to complete homework (or at least begin it) on the night it is set, even though it may not be required immediately.
- Carefully plan the completion of long term projects preferably identifying intermediate goals and associated dates.
- Take notes when studying, highlight key areas, headings etc. These will be useful later for revision.
- Where the homework involves solving problems, study the examples given in class first, before attempting the problems.
- When content such as vocabulary, grammar, definitions, diagrams or formulae have to be memorised regular self testing is advised.
- Make sure all written work is neat, tidy and clearly legible.
- When homework is completed, timetable and schoolbag should be checked to ensure that all books, PE gear, Art materials etc are ready for the next day.

5 How Parents/Guardians can help with Homework

- Encouraging a positive attitude is most beneficial and parents/guardians can play a major role in this.
- Help your child organise his or her time to best advantage so that things are not left to the last minute or forgotten. Parents/guardians play a crucial role in shaping good attitudes and habits in relation to homework.
- Try to make sure that there are suitable working conditions (space, light, heat, quiet, ventilation) at home.

- Take a positive and active interest in your child's work at home rather than just insisting that it is done.
- Valuable learning comes from attempting as well as completing work. Students benefit from parental support and encouragement in persevering with difficult assignments.
- Perhaps your child seems to be doing too much, or not enough, or is finding it too easy or too difficult. Contact the subject teachers or the Form Teacher if there are problems with homework that you cannot resolve.
- Check that homework details are filled in clearly and regularly in the homework diary; a space is provided for your weekly signature.

6 Failure to hand in Homework

- 6.1 Teachers expect completed homework to be submitted on time. If homework is not submitted appropriate action is taken.
- 6.2 The subject teacher may write a note in the Student Journal. This note should be read and counter signed by parents/guardians.
- 6.3 Persistent failure to do homework will result in a note in the Form Book and will be noted by the Form Teacher and/or Year Head and parents contacted as appropriate. (The Form Book contains a record of what may be a general or specific problem which will be dealt with by the Form Teacher and/or Year Head.)
- 6.4 Students may be placed on report card by the Year Head, or at parents'/guardians' specific request. Friday detention may also be set for persistent failure to engage with homework.