



# DOHA ENGLISH SPEAKING SCHOOL

Learning Together • High Expectations • Celebrating Success

## Home Learning Policy

# November 2016

This policy has been written in conjunction with staff, the Parent council and the Student Council



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## HOME LEARNING POLICY

This Learning at Home policy has been written to help parents and teachers work successfully together. It closely follows guidance published by the Department for Education on raising standards. It aims to make the purpose of learning at home clear and give clear guidance on the nature and frequency of learning at home for different ages of children.

From 2012 government guidelines on how much homework should be expected was taken away and it is now a matter for individual schools to decide. This is not necessarily an easy decision to make. Research into the effectiveness and validity of homework is divided and tends to follow the trends of received wisdom at any particular time. Critics have maintained that too much homework set in the wrong way, could result in children switching off from learning altogether, while for teachers it creates obvious workload issues.

We prefer to use the term “Learning at Home” rather than “homework” because we believe that it is essential that we, parents and teachers, encourage children to “learn to learn”, enjoy learning and recognise that we continue to learn throughout our lives. We believe that the word “work” can also put some children off learning.

It is always difficult for schools to get the quantity of home learning activities correct. Some parents want more, others less, some during holidays and weekends others during the week. At Doha English Speaking School we try to achieve a balance that supports all pupils. Parents can of course add to pupils home learning if they wish and staff can recommend a variety of books, resources etc. Obviously Home Learning in Foundation Stages 1 and 2 will look different to Home Learning in other parts of the school. Tasks will be age -appropriate. This policy has been written with the help of our school’s Parent council and also our staff. The school’s Leadership team has gathered the Council’s and teacher’s thoughts, feelings and opinions in order to form the basis of this new Home Learning Policy. The Council and senior staff have discussed the following questions:

- Why is Home Learning given?
- What sort of Home Learning is most effective to improve learning?
- What sort of home Learning is least effective?
- What Home Learning tasks do children enjoy the most/least?

Overall the senior staff and Parent Council felt that Home Learning is important for a variety of reasons; to reinforce class-based learning, to extend the most able pupils, to promote independent working, to give parents an opportunity to be involved in their child’s school work and to spend quality time with them.

Nevertheless, at DESS homework is not compulsory and any parent who does not want their child to complete a particular homework must let the class teacher know in writing.

## **WHAT IS LEARNING AT HOME**

The term 'learning at home' means any learning activity that takes place outside normal school times. For all children, we believe that a sensible amount of learning at home helps children progress. It also involves parents being actively supportive and encouraging their child's learning and this partnership approach to learning is an aspect of learning at home that we seek to promote. Learning at home will focus primarily on Math's (number bonds and multiplication tables) and English (learning to read and spell.) The approach to learning at home is through parents and guardians supporting their children.

## **WHY HAVE LEARNING AT HOME ACTIVITIES?**

Individual attention is very important for all children and this is more difficult to provide for sustained periods at school. Regular individual learning at home gives children this individual attention. Interest from parents and guardians should help children to value their learning and feel more motivated and confident about themselves as learners, especially if parents talk positively about their own learning and time at school.

Learning at home provides an opportunity for children to share what they have enjoyed and learnt at school and the chance to consolidate and reinforce skills and understanding. Research has found that learning at home does make an important contribution to children's progress.

Learning with children at home enables parents and guardians to become aware of what children are learning in school, their success and problems and so helps parents to develop a meaningful partnership with school.

It is important that children get into the habit of regularly devoting some time to learning at home. As children grow older learning at home will take longer periods and will be of a more independent nature. Support from parents and guardians will help to establish a habit of learning at home and the confidence to tackle all types of learning.

At DESS there will be flexible timing for home learning where tasks can straddle the weekend or a full week can be given between assignment and submission. This will then allow for home learning to be arranged around pupil and family commitments throughout the week. There will be good quality guidance from teachers including the effective monitoring of progress and timely feedback.

## **TYPES OF HOME LEARNING READING**

Reading is probably the most important skill that children learn in the primary stages. Children of all ages will regularly bring books home and parents are asked to spend time looking at the pictures and discussing what is happening, what happened yesterday, what might happen later in the story, reading and discussing the words with their child every day. Parents are also asked to encourage their children to take responsibility for looking after school books, reading bags, making sure the bags and books are brought back to school every morning. Children will have a home school reading record for parents to comment in. We ask parents to check and sign this book daily throughout their child's time at DESS.

## **SPELLING**

Spelling homework is sent home regularly. Words are chosen by the teacher and are high frequency words taken from the English National Curriculum Spelling list.

([https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/239784/English\\_Appendix\\_1\\_-\\_Spelling.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/239784/English_Appendix_1_-_Spelling.pdf)) These include words with common spelling patterns and thematic words.

## **MATHEMATICS**

The school uses the Math's National Curriculum for teaching Math's. Opportunities are provided for parents to experience Numeracy Sessions-for example at the Math's workshops that are organised for parents. There are also useful resources on our school web site. This allows parents to develop the strategies at home and support their child with learning at home. There will be "Learning at Home" activities set on a regular basis. These activities will reinforce/ support/ extend learning in the classroom. It is very important for pupils to practise number bonds and multiplication tables to enable fast and accurate recall.

## **PROJECT WORK**

The school will sometimes set a Home Learning project for children to complete at home. Both staff and the Parent Council feel this is effective and engaging for children as it promotes independent learning and it appeals to children with a variety of learning styles. Teachers will set the project and communicate timescales where the children and parents will know what is expected and when work and progress is to be brought into school. A Learning Objective will be shared for each piece of set Home Learning so the children fully understand what they are learning from completing the Home Learning.

## **DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CHILDREN**

Children's attitudes and abilities vary greatly. Some children struggle to learn and others achieve with little effort. Some are emotionally and academically more mature than others and so more ready to learn.

Positive attitudes to learning are fostered throughout the primary years by encouraging children to use their own time to support their learning. Parental help is essential in establishing routines, good attitudes and approaches to learning. We encourage parents to help their children on a daily basis. A few minutes each day is far more useful than an hour at the weekend.

Children are more motivated about learning at home if:-

- it is done regularly every day (a habit is developed)
- it is done at a time that suits them as well as the parent (not straight after school or immediately before bed)
- time spent on each aspect of home learning is not too long.
- it is done at a quiet time (no television/music in background)
- it is fun and learning is discussed
- children are encouraged and praised.

Some children are keen to learn all through school, others are much less inclined and will try to avoid learning at home. Children are more likely to achieve and complete work of an appropriate standard if parents are actively involved.

If parents are having problems with children being reluctant to learn at home then Teachers are willing to discuss the problems and offer support and suggestions to help.

## **FOUNDATION STAGE AND KEY STAGE 1 - READING**

Children will be given a book from their very first day at school. Parents will be able to purchase a book bag and a reading record book. The purpose of sharing books is to help your children to become aware of the wonderful variety of books and so to motivate them to share the book together with the parent/guardian doing most of the reading but the child reading when they are able to.

The 'Reading Book' is chosen to be at the correct reading level for the child and will be from a selection of appropriate reading schemes. The key aim for using these books is for children to learn to read words and develop a sight vocabulary.

When helping with the Reading Book, parents/guardians are asked to help children focus on each word as the text is read by helping the child point a finger at each word. Children should be encouraged to 'hold a sentence' (listening to, orally repeating and then writing a sentence linked to the book they were reading) the aim is for the children to begin to read these books themselves. Parents/Guardians need to support their child sensitively and praise any progress and effort the child makes. Learning to read at these early stages can be a slow and difficult process for children and the key to success is patience, praise and support. Any criticism is likely to reduce motivation and confidence.

Children will also bring home word sheets from Read Write Inc. to help reinforce reading, phonics knowledge and spelling. Parents/Guardians are asked to use these with their children for a few minutes each night to help consolidate the learning begun at school. As the children progress, and they have learnt all the letter sounds, parents/guardians can also help children to work out words they cannot recognise by looking at the initial and other letter -sounds in words. By using their knowledge of sound patterns ( e.g. oo as in look, book), and picture and context clues children can be encouraged to make a good try at words not immediately recognised.

As children progress through KS1 the Reading Books become more demanding and longer and may be from reading schemes or non-scheme books chosen to be at the correct reading level. As children move towards the end of Year 2 they may prefer to read books on their own and to read quietly to themselves rather than aloud with a parent/guardian. In this case parents/guardians can help by showing interest in the book and discussing it with the child after reading.

Above all, reading should be an enjoyable experience for both parents/guardians and the child.

## **FOUNDATION STAGE AND KEY STAGE 1 - MATHS**

Children in the Foundation Stage 1 classes will have the numerals 0-10 to learn. They will be expected to recognise them and write them correctly.

Addition facts within 10 will be sent home to learn during Year one, and facts to 20 and beyond during Year two.

Other mathematical activities will be given out for learning at home where appropriate.

## **KEY STAGE 2**

In Key Stage 2 learning at home will continue to focus mainly on English and Maths. Occasionally other learning at home will be set which will develop children's research skills and support, extend or reinforce other curriculum areas. Teachers will set these learning at home activities on a regular day each week and parents will be informed of the day in the termly newsletter. However on some occasions it may be necessary to set additional learning at home activities to ensure completion of unfinished tasks.

All learning at home is given to reinforce and consolidate the work being taught in the classroom. Pupils in the same class/year group may at times receive different learning at home activities depending on their levels of understanding. Alongside set learning at home activities it is also essential that children continue to read at home and practise their tables and mental maths work and learn spellings on a daily basis.

Also we feel it is important to prepare children for Secondary School where obviously a larger amount of home learning takes place. The staggered approach we endeavour to provide will hopefully help our children with the routine of home learning.

## **LEARNING AT HOME - A PARTNERSHIP**

We aim to foster a spirit of partnership between teacher and parent. At parents meetings teachers will discuss progress and set learning targets in English and Maths. Learning at home activities that help achieve these targets can be discussed. At any other times we welcome parents' comments and queries about learning at home - it is important for us to know how our learning at home policy is working in practice. We hope that helping your child at home will be a rewarding experience that will foster a positive attitude towards learning.

