Dear Parents

Homework is one of those things that is loved/ loathed by students, teachers and parents alike. As your child begins Middle Primary in 2016, the question of how to manage homework comes up. Earlier in the Middle Primary newsletter we briefly explained the procedures for homework. We wanted to provide a more detailed explanation of the 3 questions in the title so that homework can begin in an effective way for your child’s learning and for your sanity as parents!

**Why Homework?**

We understand that life after school can be very busy for a student with sports, commitments and more importantly, family time. Therefore we believe that any work that is set by the school to be done at home should not infringe significantly on these things. The tasks set are aimed at achieving one of three things:

- To consolidate recently learnt ideas
- To regularly practise a skill such as reading or times tables recall
- To develop independent and organised individuals who can complete a small task within a set time. This is really important for preparing to be a Senior Primary student.

**What Homework?**

The tasks that are set are varied so as to engage the student and deepen their understanding in what they are learning. Each week there are 2 varying homework tasks and 3 ongoing tasks to complete.

The 2 varying tasks are related to the learning taking place in Literacy and Numeracy and will often be a follow on task from what has already been learnt in class. This is to allow students to draw upon what they have studied and develop an understanding of where they might need further practice. It is important to understand that these tasks are not expected to be arduous or extensive on a weekly basis. The aim is for a student to spend approximately **15 minutes** completing it.

In the case of a term project related to a Core Studies unit or another topic, stages of the task will be broken down into small, achievable goals so as to maintain a low level of pressure for the student to complete independently.
The 3 ongoing tasks are ones where skills and knowledge are to be rehearsed and consolidated on a weekly basis. These are: **reading**, **times tables** and **weekly spelling**.

**Reading** – It is expected for your child to maintain regular practice at reading aloud for 10 minutes a day, three or four times a week. This serves to build confidence and fluency for the child as well as involving you in their discussion of what they’re reading. Great discussion can be had before, during and after reading together.

  e.g. What is happening? Who are the characters? What do you think might happen next? How were characters feeling when that happened? What do you already know about that topic?

**Time tables** – A student’s understanding of times tables helps greatly in multiple areas of Numeracy. We can’t emphasize enough how important a good foundation in times tables is. Each week there is a times table challenge in class and each student has their own times table they are working on. The goal of this is not about the highest level, rather it is about personal progress. We celebrate the hard work and progress of each student, regardless of the level of times table they are currently at.

**Weekly spelling** – Each week, we are studying a different letter pattern and throughout the week the students are given opportunity to play around with and study these related words. This culminates with a spelling assessment on a Friday to demonstrate their understanding. Although, the students choose 8 words of that particular spelling pattern, appropriate to their level of confidence, these are not a list of words to memorise. Instead, we expect the students to use the words both in school and at home to learn them, to understand how the words are formed by sounds, and how both their meaning and letter formation relate to other words. They are then assessed on their knowledge of both the letter pattern and the meaning of a select number of words, at the end of the week.

Eight spelling words will come home with your child on a Monday. At home they will need to practise and learn the structure of these words. During school they will then be doing deeper work on breaking apart and analysing the letter patterns, studying the meanings of their chosen words. On Friday, of the 8 words they took home will be assessed:

➢ on 3 directly from their list
➢ on 2 related words that share similar letter patterns
➢ on 1 word from their list by using it in context within a complete sentence.

**How Homework?**

There are always disruptions and challenges in the school calendar which means sometimes homework is not set that week. However, the common practice is that homework is handed out Monday and due back Thursday, that same week. Each term we allow a week of grace where the child may forget once. Work that is handed in on Friday is considered late.

We understand there are times when a valid reason for them not completing work is given, such as absence, unable to understand it or anxiety leading to it being left incomplete. We want to reiterate that we do not want homework tasks to be a burden or obstructions to family time. We would like a note from the parent or guardian to be provided to explain this, though.
Encourage your child as they show you their independence at getting on with things and getting their homework done, enjoy a times table’s race with them, laugh out loud and have great discussions around the books they are reading. Homework shouldn’t be isolating but should help you connect together about what is happening at school.

If there are problems or the task is too challenging for your child, or if there are any issues with completing it, please be in touch with us straight away so we can work out some solutions. No tears or arguments, just say “We’ll talk to your teacher. We can sort things out. It will be OK”.

We thank you for your partnership in supporting your child in their education. Feel free to get in touch with your class teacher if you have further questions or concerns.

God bless,

Alistair Coffey, Justine Brookes and Naomi Campbell

*Middle Primary Teachers*