INTRODUCTION

Homework is educationally beneficial and is designed to meet the realistic expectations of students, teachers, parents and caregivers. It also affirms the partnership in learning between parents and teachers and ensures that the importance of family and leisure activities is recognised in the amounts and type of homework that is set.

Tumbarumba Primary School regularly reviews its existing school homework policy to ensure it is relevant to the needs of its students. The following incorporates Department of Education and Training guidelines.

PURPOSES OF HOMEWORK

Homework:

⇒ is a valuable part of schooling
⇒ allows for practising, extending and consolidating work done in class
⇒ provides training for students in planning and organising time
⇒ develops a range of skills in identifying and using information resources
⇒ establishes habits of study, concentration and self-discipline which will serve students for the rest of their lives
⇒ strengthens home-school links
⇒ reaffirms the role of parents and caregivers as partners in education
⇒ provides parents and caregivers with insights into what is being taught in the classroom and the progress of their children
⇒ challenges and extends gifted and talented children

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

Homework is most beneficial when:

⇒ it reinforces and extends classwork and consolidates basic skills and knowledge

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⇒ it is challenging and purposeful, but not so demanding that it has adverse effects on the student’s motivation
⇒ students take responsibility for their homework, supported by their parents or caregivers
⇒ it is well co-ordinated and teacher expectations are well communicated
⇒ it is set on a regular basis and establishes a routine of home study
⇒ teachers set suitable amounts of homework which are varied and at an appropriate level considering the age, stage of schooling and capabilities of students
⇒ it takes into account students’ home responsibilities and extracurricular activities such as clubs and sport
⇒ it is marked promptly and accurately
⇒ feedback and follow-up are provided regularly to students
⇒ it develops and extends the core learning skills of inquiry and independent study

TYPES OF HOMEWORK

The amount of time that students are expected to spend on homework will depend upon the age, ability, home environment and extracurricular activities of students, including family and cultural obligations. It is important that students of all ages have opportunities for free time, leisure and physical activities outside of school.

The three main types of homework are:

**Practice exercises** - providing students with the opportunities to apply new knowledge or review, revise and reinforce newly acquired skills, including:

⇒ consolidation exercise, eg Maths, including memorisation of tables
⇒ practising for mastery, eg spelling words
⇒ revising information about a current topic
⇒ practising words or phrases learnt in a language other than English
⇒ reading for pleasure
⇒ essay writing

**Preparatory homework** - providing opportunities for students to gain background information on a unit of study so that they are better prepared for future lessons, including:

⇒ background reading
⇒ reading, eg English text for class discussion

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⇒ researching topics for a class unit of work
⇒ collection items, eg geometric shapes

**Extension assignments** - encouraging students to pursue knowledge individually and imaginatively, including:

⇒ writing, eg a book review
⇒ making or designing something, eg an art work
⇒ investigations, eg science, social science
⇒ researching, eg history, local news
⇒ information and retrieval skills, eg using a home computer to find material on the Internet
⇒ monitoring, eg advertising in particular newspapers

Wherever possible homework should recognise the place of technology in today’s world and the benefits of using technology such as home computers, E-mail and the Internet for organising and accessing information. Tumbarumba Primary School, however, does have regard for equity issues when setting homework that relies upon the use of technology. Students who do not have access to such technology at home will not be disadvantaged.

**SUCCESSFUL PRACTICE**

**Kindergarten to Year 1 (Stage 1)**

Generally teachers will not set formal homework in the earliest year of Stage 1. However, all activities at home or in play can assist children to develop a wide range of knowledge and skills including literacy, numeracy and problem solving. It should also be remembered that self-directed play in unstructured time is important. Language and number concepts can be introduced and consolidated in many family activities, including:

⇒ shopping
⇒ preparation of food
⇒ listening to stories, learning songs and nursery rhymes
⇒ conversations about what is happening at school
⇒ interactive video and computer programs
⇒ reading
⇒ library borrowing
⇒ family outings
⇒ collecting items

In the latter stages of Stage 1 consideration will be given to the setting of formal homework as, for example, in completing simple computations, copying letters or words, or completing an activity sheet.

**Years 3-6 (Stages 2 and 3)**

Although as students progress they increasingly work independently on

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their homework, teachers will continue to provide guidance and assistance, particularly in the development of study skills.

Students will have the opportunity to experience different types of homework and the amount of time students are expected to work on homework will be realistic.

Although most homework is likely to be set in the areas of English, Mathematics and Human Society and its Environment, it could be set across all areas of the curriculum.

## HOME READING

Tumbarumba Primary School considers home reading to be a vital part of homework. This is seen as an important link between classroom and home and is vital in promoting positive reading habits. Both student and parent reading is useful.

By all means, read to your child. The modelling parents, teachers and other adults do is very important and there is some wonderful literature around to share. But also make students engage frequently in print at their level and read aloud to practise phrasing and pronunciation.

## EXPECTATIONS

**Parents and caregivers can help by:**

- taking an active interest in homework
- ensuring that there is time set aside for homework
- encouraging and supporting students to complete homework
- providing, where possible, a dedicated place and desk for homework and study
- encouraging their children to read and take an interest in current events
- assisting teachers to monitor homework by signing completed work if requested and being aware of the amount of homework set
- communicating with teachers any concerns about the nature of homework and their children’s approach to the homework
- alerting the school to any domestic or extracurricular activities which might need to be taken into consideration when homework is being set or corrected

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Teachers will help by:

- explaining to students and their parents or caregivers the purpose and benefits of homework
- ensuring students and parents or caregivers are aware of the school’s homework policy
- providing quality homework activities related to classwork
- setting a suitable amount of relevant homework which is appropriate to the ability of each student
- ensuring that students are aware of what is expected of them and how their work will be assessed
- giving students sufficient time to complete their homework, taking into account, as far as possible, competing home obligations and extracurricular activities and homework set by other teachers
- marking homework promptly and appropriately, maintaining homework records and providing feedback to students and parents or caregivers
- alerting parents or caregivers of any developing problems concerning their children’s homework and suggesting strategies that they can use to assist their children with their homework

Students can help by:

- being aware of the importance of homework
- being aware of their school’s homework policy
- completing homework within the given time frame
- alerting parents or caregivers to homework expectations
- seeking assistance from teachers and parents or caregivers when difficulties arise
- showing their homework to their parents or caregivers
- ensuring homework is of a high standard
- organising their time to ensure that sufficient time is given to quality homework within set deadlines.

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SPECIFIC HOMEWORK PRACTICES OF TUMBARUMBA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Homework will be given in all grades K-6. In general, homework should reflect what is occurring within the classroom in that week. This way it remains as a conduit between home and school.

Homework will normally be given out on Monday and be required in by the Friday. This allows teachers time to mark the work and it also allows families a homework-free weekend. Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own time management, especially in senior classes. If work cannot be completed, a simple letter to the teacher from the student should provide an explanation.

If they have access to technology, students are encouraged to use it to present their work. However, the handing in of downloaded information from the Internet in an unedited form is strongly discouraged.

Spelling and Reading are seen as almost nightly essentials in our homework program. Students need to know that the homework is for their benefit, not the teachers or parents. It also sets patterns of learning behaviour for later life when they become more independent learners. Homework in high school is very important to success at this level.

HELPFUL HOMEWORK HINTS

⇒ Negotiate with your child a time when it is best to do homework. Make a regular time slot and a regular place for homework completion, eg 6pm at the kitchen table.

⇒ Don’t do it when the child’s favourite television show is on. Work out a time together.

⇒ Sometimes it is best to let them have a rest after school. Have something to eat and drink. Have some play time rather than “Let’s do it now and then you can play”.

⇒ Be positive about it. Offer help if needed but don’t get cross if they can’t do something.

⇒ In Maths, offer some concrete material to help work out tasks, eg matches, beans, marbles. Let them manipulate things to help themselves.

⇒ If they are still having trouble, that’s OK. Write a little note for the teacher. “Fred is having trouble with multiplication. Can you help?” It helps the teacher immensely and they will find a few minutes for one to one conferencing with your child.

⇒ With spelling, please use LOOK-SAY-COVER-WRITE-CHECK method so children are using all senses and developing checking habits.

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⇒ Also with spelling, if a word is nearly correct, let them have another go. Tick the letters they got correct to guide them.

eg s_hool skhool school

⇒ More able children might like the added challenge of writing a little story or sentences using their words.

⇒ With reading, encourage the use of picture clues to help reluctant readers. Let them flick through the book first to get the idea of what it is about before attacking the print. Discuss the pictures using words that are in the story so they might recognise it when they get to it in the print.

⇒ Also with reading, let children self-correct themselves. They know it should make sense so if it doesn’t, let them try again. Encourage them to “have a go”. Use the starting letter as a clue. If they fail to get the word after several attempts, help them out. If they read a word which makes sense but isn’t correct, accept it at the time. Go back and really look at it later.

⇒ By all means, read to your children. The modelling parents, teachers and other adults do is very important and there is some wonderful literature around to share. But also make them engage in print at their level frequently.

⇒ On holidays, shopping or just at home encourage reading and writing as real life experiences. Write a note to Dad. Write a shopping list. Read signs. Write a letter to Nan. Read an invitation. All these activities are excellent.

⇒ Sometimes challenging work is set to encourage children to extend themselves. The expectation is that the core will be done but that more may be done. This allows the child to extend themselves and exercise their individuality and creativity.

⇒ Homework should be a sharing time for parents and child. If it causes problems or conflict between you, either work it out or don’t do it.

**When to help, when to stand back**

How much help should you give children as they struggle through their after hours assignments? Don’t be too quick off the mark - apart from reinforcing their academic abilities, homework helps children develop these emotional and behavioural skills:

⇒ **Responsibility.** Homework is a child’s “job”. If parents get too involved the lessons might get done, but the real lesson remains unlearned.

⇒ **Independence.** Accomplishing a task alone encourages initiative and self-discipline as well as a sense of achievement.
⇒ Perseverance. It's all right for the child to wrestle with a problem for a while; if parents step in every time the going gets tough, they're simply programming the child to give up easily.

⇒ Time management. Tell the child how long s/he's got to do homework, not just when to start it; that way the child learns to manage rather than waste time. Set a consistent deadline - the same time every evening - so that s/he knows to call it quits at a reasonable hour. This can be temporarily suspended for special projects or when extra study time is needed for tests.

When should parents become involved? If the child asks for help, give it if s/he has tried her/his best, is stuck and truly needs guidance. And always be ready to check over your child’s finished homework.