

**John the Baptist Community School**

**Homework Policy 2017**

**(A) In relation to classwork:**

* reinforces and helps learners to retain information taught in the classroom as well as increasing their general understanding of the content. It reinforces what the student has learnt in class so as to improve his/her understanding.
* Homework provides an opportunity for students to practise new skills and concepts and enable students to become more competent in their use.
* Homework provides continuity between lessons. It may be used to consolidate classwork, but also for preparation for the next lesson.
* Homework provides an opportunity to explore subjects in greater depth than is allowed by class time.  It allows for gaining a better understanding of the subject and enhances the educational experience.
* It provides the student with practice in specific aspects of class work.
* Homework is an integral part of ongoing learning such as project work.
* Homework may serve as a means to revise so as to reinforce the work learned last week/month.
* Homework provides an opportunity to encourage creativity

**(B) In relation to developing study skills homework can:**

* Encourage the skills needed for students to study effectively on their own and to develop skills such as self-discipline, research and time management, in line with our numeracy policy.
* Assist the student with examination skills.
* Aid the student in developing language skills and writing skills, in line with our literacy policy.
* Establish a revision routine.
* Develop good study habits and independent learning.
* Develop a student’s concentration and work ethic.
* Develop an understanding of journal entry, reminders, deadlines, and time management, therefore increasing organisational skills.
* Develop self evaluation.

**(C) In relation to monitoring progress homework can:**

* Help teachers to monitor the individual student’s progress.
* Assess whether a student understands the work being covered in class.
* Provide a link between home and school.
* Give parents the opportunity to see the progress of their child.
* Provide regular feedback to the student on his/her progress in learning.
* Encourages parental responsibility for the student’s progress

**(D) In relation to promoting student self-directed learning homework can:**

* Encourage associative learning.
* Establish the habits of study, concentration,research and organisation..
* Provide challenges and stimulus to gifted and talented children.
* Promote self-responsibility for learning.
* Allow students to work at their own pace.
* Allow students an opportunity to engage with feedback in a constructive manner.
* Encourage the development of self-discipline, responsibility and learner autonomy.
* Homework can be a useful assessment tool, in the form of formative assessment, comment only marking, student self-assessment, or as part of continual or portfolio assessment.
* To develop life long skills such as independent learning and research which are transferable to the future.

**Home learning/ managing home learning**

To keep with the school plan we are implementing learning strategies in accordance with SSE plan in the John the Baptist. These are used as strategies to encourage students to further their learning but also as a means of reflecting on the learning process and as a vehicle to achieve deeper learning

**Strategies to support home learning**

* Note making –mind mapping, graphic organisers, using 5W &1W template in their journal and reducing information in 5-10 keywords.
* Learning – definitions/spelling/keypoints: look, say, cover, write & check strategy
* Reflecting- using the Reflection Arrow students assess their learning on a scale of 1-10, identify how they will improve on this learning and set a time frame for achieving this.
* 3-2-1 Activity- Students identify three things they learnt today, two things they are unsure of and identify one question still remaining
* Create a tweet on the lesson area covered or maybe on a question that is still remaining
* Questioning- lower to higher order, summary to analysis (Blooms Taxonomy)
* Set criteria for success/ best practice
* Success criteria outlined consistently, “I must, I should, I could” reminding students of their role as active learner in the classroom
* Students are given a task such as watching a video, researching, reading, reducing and note making on a topic so that the teacher can advance the learning, tackling any queries, while integrating the practice of questions in the following lesson.
* Research various topics using a variety of mediums: Internet, videos, newspapers, books, magazines on various topics.

**Literacy:**

As part of the student’s homework, the keywords of the chapter may be learned and revised daily. Students are encouraged to use the ‘Look, Say, Cover, Spell, Check’ spelling strategy when learning and completing assignments at home.

They are also encouraged to develop their use of comprehension skills and tier two words in their descriptive tasks, using word wheels or marzonas template. In the coming academic year, 2017-18, we will continue our focus on spelling strategies, comprehension and tier two vocabulary developments. We will also be emphasising punctuation in line with our current assessment policy. Possible strategies to aid this would be use of the punctuation wheel.

(include look, say, cover here, include word wheel, tier two, marzanos and punctuation wheel)

**Numeracy:**

Numeracy is embedded within the teaching and learning in JTBCS and is reflected in the homework assignments also. Students will be encouraged to adopt numeracy strategies in their planning for and completion of homework assignments. Such strategies include:

* Calculations where appropriate.
* Graphing
* Conversion from fraction form to percentages and decimals and vice versa.
* Timing for completion of homework assignments, timed answers and questions.
* Grading/marks
* Marking schemes
* Minimum answer lengths etc.
* Careful reading of question e.g. when asked for specific number of reasons

An emphasis will be placed where appropriate on the awareness and use of integers, graphical analysis and conversions from fractions to percentages and decimals, in line with our numeracy policy and the numeracy strategies embedded in our teaching and learning in JTBCS. In this current year students will be encouraged to pay particular attention to *timing* in planning their homework, completion of tasks, research activities and so on.

When teachers are giving feedback on homework an emphasis will be placed on numeracy concepts and strategies, eg the students use of key phrases in numeracy, use of key symbols of numeracy, students using numerical vocabulary correctly and precisely, communicating the results of a statistical enquiry, their use of comparing by size, mass, etc, sequencing of points, timing.

**Assessment:**

 We are placing an emphasis on effective questioning, reflection and self-assessment using success criteria in line with our Assessment Policy. Homework or home learning is a continuation of the learning that has occurred in the classroom, and the inclusion of such strategies is encouraged at home also.

Students become more aware of the knowledge and skills that they have developed, through the use of effective questioning strategies and engaging in reflection ‘in’ and ‘on’ their learning at home through completion of appropriate assignments. They are then better able to identify their own strengths and areas for development and devise action plans to facilitate future learning. They gain greater understanding of themselves and how they personally learn and take on more responsibility for their own learning progress through reflection .

Students are encouraged to use effective questioning strategies and reflection strategies in their planning of and completion of homework assignments, eg Students are aware of Blooms taxonomy and are encouraged to develop their higher order thinking skills, assignments should reflect this in their scope and the challenge they pose students of varying abilities. Students will be afforded opportunities and encouraged to analyse, evaluate and create, as well as the lower order skills of recalling, identifying, describing and comparing.

Students are encouraged to use the ‘5 Ws and one H’ strategy to organise their thoughts, to develop mind maps or plans, and to probe for depth of thinking in their answers. This may also be used to revise a topic or aid the structuring and organisation of student responses.

Students are encouraged to use the reflection arrow to self-assess their own learning at home, to identify their strengths and weaknesses, and to highlight the gap for improvement in their learning. Following on from this the students are encouraged to use success criteria (I must, I should, I could strategy) to improve the depth and quality of their learning and responses. They may also use the tweet posters in conjunction with these strategies, as a homework assignment to devise questions (using 5 Ws and One H, or Blooms Taxonomy) or to offer feedback on their self-assessment and how they would improve using 3,2,1 or using I must, I should, I could.

Success criteria tell students “what they should know, understand and be able to do, and success criteria help teachers to decide whether their students have in fact achieved the learning intention”. By examining the success criteria during home work, students are able to determine whether they fully understand the content being covered during class and provides students with an opportunity to address these issues in class the next day.

The 5W AND 1 h are included in the students journals, so they can be referenced at home.

Students are encouraged to use these initiatives during every homework task, in order to increase the depth of their learning. This practice fosters self directed learning capacity within the individual.

**Feedback**

Feedback is seen as an integral part to homework in JTBCS. It can take on many forms. While marking of an assignment by the teacher is sometimes necessary, peer and self-assessment are seen as valuable ways of encouraging learner independence. In line with this the teachers may use reflection strategies such as the reflection arrow, tweet boards, success criteria (I must, I should, I could) as a means of encouraging students to think about and assess their own learning and to identify the means to further improve upon their learning and to progress.

Motivating students to do homework is an ongoing process in JTBCS, and encouragement may be given by written comment or/and verbal communication in order to demonstrate interest on the teacher’s part, particularly in the case of self-study and project work.

In adopting the approach of comment-only marking the teacher gives feedback in three key areas in the student's learning cycle:

* what the student has done right?
* what weaknesses there are in the student's work?
* what the next step/s should be to improve performance or understanding?

This may take the form of two stars and a wish, or using the 3,2,1 strategy. The worth of this kind of feedback is most helpful when the learning intentions and success criteria are clearly understood by the students, as outlined in our assessment policy this year in JTBCS

## Parental Involvement with Homework:

Parents are encouraged to help with homework by:

* Providing students with a suitable time and place to do their homework.
* Preventing interruptions and distractions e.g. electronic devices.
* Students should complete written work themselves and parents should be available and facilitate the student who has difficulty..
* Parents should check that the student’s homework is completed each evening.
* The journal should be examined and discussed with the student frequently.
* The student’s journal is an important record for the student’s homework. It is an invaluable means of communication between parents and teachers.

**Special educational needs:**

In setting homework for students with special needs teachers are encouraged to balance the right of students to share fully in the work of the class, including homework tasks, with their individual learning needs. These needs may include consolidation and reinforcement of specific skills.Teachers will collaborate where possible with Learning Support teacher to ensure class tasks are manageable, and individual skill practice can be incorporated without overloading the students.

**Supports for students**

* Students will be given regular advice on how to organise their homework efficiently throughout their years in John the Baptist Community School.
* Prior to Induction of first years Parents/Guardians receive a letter from school which include guidelines on the importance of regular monitoring of the school journal
* As part of the Induction programme first year are given clear guidelines by all subject teachers during the first week of the school year. No homework is given to students for the first week which allows time to teach homework study skills. This includes discussion on where to do homework, how to present it and how to make a homework plan.
* As a result of a pilot programme 2012/2013 a new study skills programme has been introduced to the second year programme with special attention to mind mapping, note taking, focused reading and time management.
* Guidance is also given at information sessions at the beginning of 5th and 6th year of the Senior Cycle. The subject teachers continuously reinforce this guidance in class. The focus is on maximising each student’s opportunity to realise his/her academic potential. Guidelines are given on the amount of time that homework involves at this level. In the Senior Cycle programmes, advice is given by teachers in their particular subject areas. The school’s Guidance Department offers regular advice, direction and support on how to plan homework and study effectively. A new study skills programme has been introduced this year to John The Baptist Community School at Senior level with the provision of one class per week per year grouping.
* Students should carefully record the instructions for their homework in the journal for each class. When homework is completed it should be marked as done.

 Published guidelines for amount of time spent at homework (ASTI) are as follows:

First year approx. 1.5 hours

Second year approx. 1.5 to 2 hours

Third year approx. 2 to 3 hours

Senior cycle (leaving cert est.) approx 3 hours

* These are guidelines and the amount will vary considerably with the programme that a student is taking. Tutors, year heads and the Guidance Counsellor are available to offer individual advice to students. Students and their Parents/Guardians are encouraged to discuss possible solutions where a problem exists. In the case of students with reasonable accommodation the resource department will provide appropriate advice on how to progress. The school always welcomes the chance to meet with Parents/Guardians, if not at the parent-teacher meeting, then by appointment at a suitable time. Teachers will, as appropriate, reward very good homework and significant improvement in homework. Notes to parents in the journal may be used for this purpose.