



Teaching and Learning newsletter: information for parents

Edition 1, December 2017

Welcome to the first teaching and learning newsletter, designed to keep parents & carers informed about what's happening in lessons so that you can best support your child.

Feedback

Feedback is vitally important. It may be one of the most important elements of successful teaching. Feedback is not the same as marking. Written comments in a book may at times be the most effective way of giving feedback, but often won't be. Feedback can take many forms. It can be verbal, written or delivered via 'whole-class feedback' models (this is where all the comments, targets and actions for all members of a class are shared on one sheet instead of written directly in to books).

We do not have a whole-school feedback policy at BLS. Instead, every department designs and implements a model that suits *their* style and *their* frequency of lessons at each key stage. With a curriculum as diverse and varied as ours, one size cannot fit all.

The outcomes, however, are the same:

- 1. When reviewing work, teachers will use the information gathered to inform their planning** (for example, when reviewing the books of my year 8 class, I will identify a gap in their learning; a common misconception that I, as the teacher, need to revisit in the next series of lessons to 'plug' the learning gap).
- 2. Feedback will support learning and move the student forward. Students will act on feedback to make progress over time.**

Key questions to your child are:

- * **What have you improved on recently, in [French]?**
- * **What have you struggled with lately, in [French]?** (nb. the 'struggle zone' is the optimal zone for learning. If work is too easy, students are in the 'comfort zone'; too hard, and they are in the 'panic zone', neither of which is conducive to optimum learning.)
- * **What are your next steps, to improve in [French]?**

Useful acronyms

DIRT: dedicated improvement and reflection time *After reviewing work, teachers will allocate part of a lesson (or set as a homework) tasks to ensure that students act on their feedback. The time is dedicated to improving and reflecting on learning.*

T: shorthand for 'target'

EBI: Even Better If...

Final thought: as a school, we no longer write annual written reports so please do ask the questions above, do look at the data on My Child At School and do read comments in books / folders, where written feedback has been used. **If you have any queries on feedback, please direct your questions to your child's teacher for the individual subject, via info@brineleas.co.uk**

Homework

Homework is a key part of learning. It allows opportunities for students to consolidate learning, to drill and practise key concepts, to memorise key information. In a saturated curriculum (which the new GCSE and A-level specifications create) homework is a valuable opportunity for DIRT, too.

That said, homework is a balance. We recognise (and encourage) that our students engage in extra-curricular activities, be this Army Cadets, sporting activities, musical commitments, etc.

To achieve this balance, we publish a 'homework timetable' for years 7-11, designed to ensure a regular and manageable homework load. However, this is proving to be a barrier to effective learning. Instead, we are simplifying the process by removing the timetable and can confirm:

Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)		
Core subjects:	English, Maths, Science, Languages	2 homeworks per fortnight
Non-core:	History, Geography, RE	1 homework per fortnight
	Technology, Art, PE, Music, Drama, ICT	Homework set occasionally if needed

* Key Stages 4 & 5 (Years 10-13) will have homework set at least weekly, for examination subjects.

* Homework will be set with realistic timescales (submission will be at least 48 hours from date set)

* Homework will be recorded on My Child At School so that you can monitor and support your child.

* Home Learning Projects will continue to be set to years 7-9. These are set for one (occasionally two) subjects per half-term and generally replace the 'standard' homework for the half-term.

* Homework will vary in format: some will be learning / memorising, some will be lengthy written pieces, some will be practice questions, but all will support learning. For core subjects, homework may even be to 'finish classwork', but if this is the case, the other homework set in the cycle will be more robust.

* Homework is likely to take more time to complete, as your child grows up. There are no 'set' rules for how long homework should take. The balance between supporting learning and supporting well-being is key and, of course, your judgement is recognised here. Please use your child's planner as a means of communication: "My child spent 1.5 hours on this then I sent them to bed" is fine!

If you have any queries on homework, please direct your questions to your child's teacher for the individual subject, via info@brineleas.co.uk

Independent Study

We are always striving to build on our successes and maintain our excellent standards. We are proud of the quality of our teaching and learning. However, one area we are currently focusing on is tailoring our teaching to ensure that your child's books and notes are an effective platform for independent study. This may be as simple as explanatory notes, an end-of-topic summary sheet or similar. We recognise that you are keen to support your child, but need the tools to do so. Over the next few weeks, please keep an eye out for these notes or resources which will facilitate independent study. **If you have any queries on using class notes to support independent study, please direct your questions to your child's teacher for the individual subject, via info@brineleas.co.uk**

And finally...

I am looking to establish a working-group of parents to support me in strengthening home-school cooperation, for teaching and learning. If you would be interested in joining, please email me directly on emma.bentley@brineleas.co.uk (Assistant Headteacher – teaching and learning)

Noticeboard for individual subjects

English

- * Information on topics and resources, including recommended reading lists, at www.brineleas.co.uk/curriculum/english
- * Students in all year groups should be reading for a recommended 20 minutes per day
- * Look out for emails sent to parents / carers of Y11 students

@b1s_mfl

French, German, Spanish

- * Information on topics and resources at www.brineleas.co.uk/curriculum/modern-languages
- * Y7 - 9: fortnightly test on '70 words' (or key verbs once 70 words are mastered)
- * Y10 - 11: weekly or fortnightly GCSE vocab test
- * Y8 - Y11: 'Key questions' must be written & memorised

@BrineLeasDT

Technology

- * Information on topics, Pinterest boards and Y11 revision booklets for textiles, product design and graphic products at www.brineleas.co.uk/curriculum/technology (from there, go to the subject specific curriculum page)
- * Key words list for textiles on the website
- * Y11 revision booklet for engineering on the VLE

iCreate (art, PE, dance, drama, music, media)

- * Information on topics at www.brineleas.co.uk/curriculum/icreate (from there, go to the subject specific curriculum page)
- * Check out our twitter feeds to see what we are working on!

@b1s_pe

@BLS_CArts

Maths

- * Information on topics and resources at www.brineleas.co.uk/curriculum/maths
- * To support independent study, parents / carers should refer to the sheet stuck in books at the start of each unit which links to www.mathswatch.co.uk
- * Look out for monthly emails sent to parents / carers of Y11 students

BITE

(business, ICT & economics)

- * Information on topics at www.brineleas.co.uk/curriculum/bite (from there, go to the subject specific curriculum page)

@Science_BLS

Science

- * Information on topics and resources at www.brineleas.co.uk/curriculum/science
- * KS3 Topic summary sheets and revision check-lists are on the VLE (students have log-in details)
- * Doodle log-in details are in your child's book. Please refer to the 'rota' spreadsheet on the VLE to know what topics are being studied and when.

History, Geography, RE

- * Information on topics at www.brineleas.co.uk/curriculum/humanities (from there, go to the subject specific curriculum page)

@HistoryBLS

@GeographyBLS