



# Teaching and Learning newsletter: information for parents and carers

Edition 2, March 2018

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

The purpose of this newsletter is to focus in depth on **homework**. Homework was identified by the Parent Voice Group as an area that would benefit from better communication and consistency.

Brine Leas recognises the importance of regular homework and all teachers are required to set appropriate homework. We publish details of homework on My Child At School so parents and carers can check what homework is being set. Parents and carers identified that there was some inconsistency here and, as a result, it has been a whole-school focus from middle and senior leaders. Our analysis shows that the regularity of homework being published has improved significantly. However, we teach approximately 3,000 lessons per fortnight and omissions will inevitably occur. Therefore, **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](mailto:info@brineleas.co.uk)**

Brine Leas is an evidence-informed school and a key element of our teaching and learning model is to teach responsively and prioritise the planning of lessons. Planning is the first thing to take the hit, when teachers are busy. Therefore, in line with DfE and Ofsted recommendations, we do all that we can to remove unnecessary workload to allow the detailed planning of lessons to be prioritised.

Although homework is one way for a teacher to assess a student's progress, it is not the only reason for setting homework. We need to be clever about the homework we set and be clear about what it's designed to achieve. Homework allows opportunities for students to consolidate learning, to drill and practise key concepts, to memorise key information. It follows that not all homework assignments necessarily need to result in a pile of books for marking. A 'learning homework' that can be assessed by a low-stakes quiz is an effective route to responsive teaching. If a teacher is marking everything your child does, it's bad teaching. It is using time in a way that does not have the greatest benefit for students.

What is important is adhering to the system to ensure both that staff set regular homework and that the students complete and return it on time. Alerting parents to what homework is set, and when it is to be handed in, means that parents and carers are fully aware of the homework that can be expected and can ensure that it is submitted on time.

A reminder...

Homework at Key Stage 3 (Years 7-9)		
Core:	English, Maths, Science, Languages	2 per fortnight
Non-core:	History, Geography, RE	1 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)
- \* Home Learning Projects are set to years 7-9. These are set for one or two subjects per half-term and generally replace the 'standard' homework for the half-term. When exams are calendared, the project will be amended to allow revision as priority.
- \* 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.

Regular users of MCAS will have noticed the recent changes. Here is a reminder of how to access it:

The screenshot shows the MCAS dashboard for a user named Brine Leas. The dashboard is titled 'Dashboard Homepage and Launchpad'. It features a navigation menu on the left with a 'photo' placeholder and various menu items. The main content area is divided into three sections: Homework, Attendance, and Behaviour. The Homework section has a red header and a table with columns for Assigned Date, Homework Title, and Due Date. A blue arrow points to a 'More' button in the top right corner of the Homework section. The Attendance section has a green header and a table with columns for Period, Subject, and Mark. The Behaviour section has a blue header and a table with columns for Date, Description, and Status. Below the Behaviour section is a Reports section with a yellow header and a table with columns for Published and Report.

The red homework widget has an overview of work and deadlines. Clicking on 'more' gives detail on each assignment as well as attached documents, when used. For regular homeworks, e.g. reading quizzes or vocab tests in languages, teachers will set the homework to last all term (or all year!) but the detail on the assignment will specify exactly when and how often the assessment will take place.

If you have any difficulties accessing My Child At School, please email [info@brineleas.co.uk](mailto:info@brineleas.co.uk)

### Learning as homework

Aside from the advantages of pushing students to memorise key content, which turns short-term ability into long-term durability, setting learning as homework has other advantages. The paradox of homework is that the students with the least supportive parents or most chaotic homes are least able to profit from its benefits. This in turn widens the achievement gap between disadvantaged students and non-disadvantaged. Roughly 16% of our students are recognised as disadvantaged. We should have high expectations of our pupils' work ethic but must also design our homework system thoughtfully, allowing all our students to succeed. Regular learning homework facilitates this: students always know what they need to do; it doesn't change; parents know what to expect; students can't 'get stuck'; there are no new concepts (the keywords are initially just a memory task); they need few resources; all homework set is of the same quality. As and when subjects are provided with the time to make 'knowledge organisers' (module summary sheets), we will have the means to set this up more formally, for the subjects where it is appropriate.

### Holiday homework

We don't set homework that requires students to use the school holidays to complete it. Homework may be set over the school holidays, but there will be enough school days either side between setting and collecting to allow students to complete work in term time. This does not apply to revision for exam classes, when it is inevitable that students will use holiday time as part of their revision timetable.

### And finally...

A huge thank you to the parents and carers who volunteered their time and thoughts to form the Parent Voice Group. Their observations and ideas are leading to some exciting changes here, such as a new transition programme for parents and carers of new Year 7 students.

# What does homework look like?

## English

- \* Homework may be learning key words, researching, note-taking, reading or extended written responses.
- \* Students should read for 20 minutes per evening (more at GCSE)
- \* Key Stage 3 students take regular Accelerated Reader quizzes
- \* Some students are set fortnightly Lexia tasks
- \* Home Learning Projects foster creativity, independence of thought as well as allowing students to produce responses that differ somewhat from more traditional homework tasks.
- \* At GCSE, reading is essential: set texts for literature courses; reading fiction and non-fiction to prepare effectively for exams; reading for pleasure.
- \* Wider reading lists are available on the school website

## Maths

- \* At key stage 3, homework may sometimes be set on MyMaths or other consolidation tasks, but usually it looks like this, with references to online clips:

Sequences Homework		
<b>Literacy</b> Write a definition for these words: Pattern, Sequence, Term, Common difference	<b>Research</b> Find out about the Fibonacci Sequence:	<b>Memory</b> Clip A10 Given that $a=1$ , $b=-2$ , $c=5$ , find the value of <b><math>bc - a</math></b>
<b>Skills</b> Clip A11c Find the 10 <sup>th</sup> term and the n <sup>th</sup> term of the following sequences: a) 4, 7, 10, 13, 16...      b) 5, 9, 13, 17, 21...		<b>Stretch</b> Find the 10 <sup>th</sup> term and the n <sup>th</sup> term of the following sequences:

- \* At key stage 4, homework may be consolidation worksheets, MyMaths, actioning targets on MathsWatch or completing past exam papers.

## Science

- \* At key stage 3, homework may be Home Learning Projects, assessment pieces, revision, ActiveLearn (online) tasks, practical write-ups, worksheets. The weekly homework will take approximately one hour.
- \* At GCSE, homework may be exam-style questions, revision, practical write-ups, webquests or calculations. Students should be spending 2 hours a week (trilogy) or 3 hours a week (triple) on homework. This may be from 1, 2 or all 3 sciences.

## What does homework look like?

### French, German, Spanish

- \* At key stage 3, students have a fortnightly '70 words' test. The second fortnightly homework may be learning key verbs or vocab, writing or memorising Key Questions, reading work, grammar drills, translation or redrafting extended writing.
- \* At GCSE, students have a fortnightly vocab test out of 20. Other homework includes learning key verbs or vocab, reading work, grammar drills, or translation. Writing and memorising Key Questions is a regular part of homework.

### History, Geography, RE

- \* At key stage 3, the fortnightly homework may be researching topics, memorising material or completing assessment questions. An example is:  
*Research the Ku Klux Klan and Dutch Reformed Church as organisations who are racist and arguably religious. What do the groups suggest about our evaluative statement?*
- \* At GCSE, homework is set weekly. This is often exam-style questions. An example is:  
*"Divorce is never right" Evaluate this statement using the '12 mark' criteria.*

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

- \* At key stage 3, musicians who have lessons should practice at home; drama and PE set homework as it's needed, e.g. performance preparation or planning a warm-up. Art set worksheets to consolidate skills, e.g. tone, line, pattern, and research projects which are presented in sketch books. No media is taught at key stage 3.
- \* At GCSE, there is significantly more homework for all iCreate subjects and these are closely linked to exam requirements, e.g. memorising key terms, revising theory content, exam-style questions, learning lines, musical composition, research, extended writing or sketch book work. Media sets a project over summer between year 10 and year 11.