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1. Introduction

At Northern Counties School (NCS), opportunities for homework can be an effective tool to reinforce learning that has taken place within the classroom environment. It can offer a way for parents and carers to share in their child's education and can promote a learner's functionality of independence skills.

Aims

Through this policy, we aim to:

Ensure parents are clear about what their child is expected to do.

Ensure consistency of approach throughout the school.

Improve the quality of the learning experience offered to pupils and extend it beyond the classroom environment.

Provide opportunities for parents, learners, and the school to work together in partnership in relation to learning.

Encourage learners and their parents to share and enjoy learning experiences.

Reinforce work covered in class by providing further opportunities for individual learning.

To practice or consolidate basic skills and knowledge, especially in English and maths.

Encourage learners where appropriate to develop the responsibility, confidence and self-discipline needed to study independently.

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3. Roles and Responsibilities

Role of the Class Teacher

To explain homework tasks to parents and carers when necessary and guide them on how they might assist their child. This may be done by a note with the work or written in home school diaries.

To set up regular homework in a quickly followed routine.

To ensure that homework is set consistently, if appropriate to the learner

To ensure any homework is purposeful.

To ensure the homework links directly to the curriculum being taught.

To mark homework when necessary and give feedback to pupils.

Role of Parents/Carers

To support the school by ensuring that their child attempts the homework.

To provide a suitable place for their child to complete their homework.

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4. Homework expectations for each Curriculum Pathway

Pre-formal Pathway

Due to the complex needs of the learners who follow our pre-formal pathway, paper-based homework is not appropriate or expected. Consistent communication and learning strategies between home and school are more important for these learners. This involves close liaison between teaching and therapy staff and family. For example, some learners access augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) aids to interact with others. These might include paper-based symbols, switches, or eye gaze technology. Whichever is being used with the student is shared with the home to ensure families can continue integrating the AAC into daily use. Similarly, many learners require individualised physical programmes, often requiring school-based equipment such as rebound therapy, hydrotherapy and using the “Innowalk” machines. The physiotherapy team facilitates access to these during the holidays to enable ongoing therapy provision.

Semi-Formal/Informal Pathway

For learners on the semi-formal pathway, some learners access augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) aids to interact with others. These might include paper-based symbols (PECS), (Communicate in Print), or VOCA's. Whichever is being used with the student is shared with the home to ensure families can continue integrating the AAC into daily use. Learners take home reading books or sensory stories to facilitate a love of reading at home. Phonics programme information is shared with parents and carers to ensure learners practice their sounds at home. Suppose learners are studying a particular topic where family input would benefit classroom learning, e.g., learning about festivals, homes, families, transport, personal hygiene, and preparation for adulthood. In that case, families may be asked to complete some tasks at home and send in photographs, a short written/symbol task, or information.

Formal Pathway

For those learners following our formal pathway, homework will be given weekly. This will be in the form of one piece of maths and English homework. Math's homework will be connected to learning that week or linked to their core number skills, i.e., place value or multiplication. English homework may come in the form of spelling, grammar or a short writing piece linked to their learning that week. The homework should take at most 15 minutes to complete. Your child's class teacher will send home a reading book weekly; please share this with your child to promote a love of reading.

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5. Reading

Love of Reading

To develop fluency in reading, learners are provided with books by school to go home with. The book a learner will go home with depends on their reading pathway. This could be a decodable book and a reading-for-pleasure book. When a learner takes a decodable book home, these will be matched to the sound set or code their child is working on. This will usually be the sound previous to the one they focus on in school so that the child is more confident and fluent when reading with their parents/carers, providing both with a more enjoyable experience. Parents and carers will receive written guidance on how to read with their child and are also invited into school to attend sessions explaining phonics and how their child can be supported at home.

Reading for pleasure books will go home with learners, which can be shared with family members to promote a love of reading. Where learners are accessing our pre-formal phonics approach, activities such as sound spellings (graphemes) may be provided with their books, appropriate to each learner. For those who access our BSL pathway, appropriate books will be sent home which have been colour-banded according to progression levels.

While parents and carers are encouraged to read with their child, we acknowledge that this depends entirely on the learner's willingness to engage with this. We also recognise that our parents/carers have additional responsibilities, which may impact how frequently they can read with their child. Learners are provided with reading diaries; however, we appreciate feedback from parents at any level, including both written and verbal feedback. We also recognise that it is not often easy to get our learners to read books they associate with school at home, and **any** reading is encouraged. So, even if your child is reading their own books, magazines or newspapers or watching stories online, this will all help to promote a 'Love of Reading', and we welcome any feedback on this in reading diaries.

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