

Homework (Prep) Guidance

Aim

At St John's, the main purpose of setting Prep is to maximise a child's engagement with learning. Where appropriate Prep tasks have been set, they will increase the child's engagement with learning through one or more of the following ways:

1. Reinforcement of key concepts: Prep is a good opportunity to revise key skills taught in class and rehearse them in order to commit them to memory. Examples might include practising multiplication tables, learning vocabulary or revision for tests.
2. Introduction of new ideas: learning in class can be enhanced where children have been introduced to ideas or vocabulary in advance (sometimes referred to as 'flipped lessons'). Examples might include reading part of a story or text ahead of discussion in the lesson, writing definitions of some key vocabulary that will be used in the lesson, gathering ideas into a mood board ahead of writing a story or poem, or doing some background research into a topic ahead of writing an article or participating in a discussion. Flipped lessons mean that there is more time to do the hardest part of learning (applying, synthesising, analysing) in lesson time when children can be supported by the teacher.
3. Extension of skills: Prep can provide a good opportunity to develop a child's strengths in a particular subject, for example through developing a research project or addressing higher order thinking questions.
4. Developing skills of a learner: all Preps should develop a child's study skills such as independence, time management, perseverance and organisation.

Kindergarten to Transition 2

There is no formal amount of time designated for homework for children in Kindergarten to Transition 2. It is, however, recognised that early learning benefits greatly from home support and children are encouraged to share books and participate in a variety of language and number activities. These home/school activities are tailored to meet the individual needs of the children.

Form 1 and 2

Again, no formal time is set for homework in Forms 1 and 2. The children are encouraged to read each night and a tables and spelling activity is sent home weekly. We encourage and welcome parents working with their children in these areas in order to practise and reinforce the work done in class.

Form 3

The allocation of Prep in Form 3 is one Prep per night (Monday to Friday) which is made up of one English, one Maths, one Science, one French and one History or Geography in alternate weeks. Tables, spelling and reading remain on the agenda.

Form 4

This is the first year in which the children are introduced to 'double' Preps. In Form 5 they will receive two Preps on four nights of the week and, as a way of introducing them to this, they are asked to do a double Prep twice a week in Form 4. No Prep is set that has to be completed on a Wednesday evening so that children involved in matches are relieved of the pressure of completing a Prep after a late arrival back at school. Children can of course complete their Prep on the Wednesday evening should they so wish.

Form 5

Pupils in Form 5 receive two Preps on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. The same arrangement, as in place in Form 4, applies to Wednesday evening.

Form 6

Pupils in Form 6 receive two Preps on each night of the week, Monday to Friday.

Recording of Prep

In Forms 3 – 6, all Prep tasks are recorded digitally through the Google Classroom and appear in the Calendar in each child's account.

To view the Prep online:

1. Log in using the child's Google account name and password
2. Go to the child's Google 'Drive'
3. Click on 'calendar'

Preps will appear at the top of each day in the calendar under the date that the Prep is due.

We do provide a Prep timetable (that children can view on their weekly timetable), which gives a suggestion about when Prep from each subject could be completed. However, children sometimes find that it suits their week better to complete Preps on other days. Management of Prep is something that each child's tutor will discuss with them and the tutor will support children in finding the best Prep routine.

General Advice

Prep is given to encourage pupils to work on their own, to exercise self-discipline in their approach to learning and to provide an opportunity for further development of skills and knowledge. The work will typically consist of activities most suited to home learning - the learning of vocabulary, essential facts and dates etc. - exercises to consolidate skills in the process of being acquired and research/project work.

It is most helpful for pupils to do their Prep at a regular time each evening, though this will not always be possible given other commitments such as clubs and music practice as well as away games and travel time. However, the more established the routine, the better will be the child's ability to settle to the work. Older pupils can gradually decide for themselves, given a choice of activities, how to organise their evening. If settling to the work is becoming an issue at home, please do not hesitate to contact your child's tutor. Work conditions are important. A quiet place in which to work will make a considerable difference - free from the distractions of siblings, pets and television. For some, complete silence is daunting and it may be allowable to have music playing quietly in the background.

As a general guide, each Prep should take about 30 minutes with an absolute maximum of 70 minutes in total if two Preps have been set. It is important for pupils not to 'struggle' for long and the maximum time should be observed in these circumstances (as long as a sensible and reasonable attempt has been made). After a hard day at school, Prep should not overwhelm the evening. If your child is regularly not coping with the workload within the given times (or if it is too easy) please let his or her tutor know.

We fully recognise and encourage the valuable role played by parents in supporting good work at home and promoting Prep as a positive activity (particularly in the earlier years). However, there should be a 'weaning' process as a child grows older, and it is helpful, as part of the development of independent work habits, to let a child learn that unfinished or poorly completed Prep has consequences at school. This should help to alleviate the tensions which can sometimes occur at home when parents feel 'overly responsible' for their children's homework. In such circumstances, it is important and helpful to bear in mind that the vast majority of a child's learning takes place in school, that resistance to parental intervention is a natural characteristic of dawning adolescence and that a negative approach to homework will not necessarily correlate in any way to a child's approach to work within school. However, the best approach in cases of concern is for the tutor to be informed so that a solution can be shared between home, child and school.

Senior House Homework Club

This is held in the Library from 1.20-1.50 pm on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. All children at Senior House are encouraged to make use of this facility if they have a very long journey, a particularly busy schedule etc. Children wishing to do their homework at these times queue for a priority lunch.