

Homework and Independent Learning Policy



1. Rationale and Aim

This policy aims to set out the key principles for homework and independent learning at Samuel Whitbread Academy (SWA). Homework is work that is set to be completed outside the timetabled curriculum. It contains an element of independent study and is not directly supervised by a teacher. However, not all homework will be done at home, in fact for some students who find it difficult to work at home, or for tasks that require resources (books, software, equipment) more readily available at school, it may be necessary or more desirable to carry out the task at school, during lunchtime or in after school clubs.

Homework is a way of preparing for, consolidating and extending the learning that takes place in school. The Teachers' Standards say teachers should 'set homework and plan other out-of-class activities to consolidate and extend the knowledge and understanding pupils have acquired'. Research funded by the Education Endowment Foundation has shown that homework that is purposeful, focused, and linked to the Scheme of Learning has a positive impact on students' learning.

2. Policy

Supporting students through a comprehensive and effective homework and independent learning programme:

- Provides students with opportunities to refine and extend their knowledge, and skills
- Helps students to acquire the habits of mind needed to study and learn independently (as required in higher education)
- Increases students' chances of securing top grades (research suggests that the more independent learning a student does, the better their achievement)
- Teaches students the benefits of application, self-motivation, initiative, and resourcefulness, essential in all walks of life
- Enhances the classroom experience for students and teachers.

3. Procedure

Homework and independent learning at SWA will be guided by the following key principles and procedures:

- Advice and guidelines on both the content and expectations of homework tasks will be made available by the class teacher on Bromcom. Bromcom is where all homework will be set with a deadline date recorded.
- Homework will be set on Bromcom by teachers that enable students to achieve a variety of different outcomes. This may include researching topics and preparing for future lessons or applying and demonstrating what they have learned in class. It should provide opportunities linked to PEEP (see appendices).
- Alongside Bromcom, Google classroom is used as a widely used platform for resources, setting and submitting homework. This platform is linked to student user areas and email addresses.
- A minimum requirement for the number/amount of homework set will be stipulated by each department and be incorporated into their assessment/curriculum calendars. This will appear on the course/department curriculum mapping/sequencing.
- For sixth form students, the guidance states that homework/prep work and private study should be set, totally 8-9 hours per course, per fortnight.

- The homework tasks will be planned and integrated into the Schemes of Learning.
- Specific feedback will be given on literacy and numeracy skills at every opportunity.
- Differentiated homework and independent learning opportunities for student groups such as Higher Attaining students and SEND.

Associate Principal elements (AsP leading on homework and independent learning):

- Embedding the process of independent learning at KS3 and KS4 will enable students to progress onto KS5 more effectively and will assist with the step up to Level 3 qualifications.
- Future options after year 11 where students think and plan ahead for applications after year 11.
- Use of SWA alumni to assist students in aspiring towards future options.
- Promotion of continued application to examination style questions at level 2 (GCSE) and level 3 (A-Level) for all students in all courses.
- Students at all levels have an awareness of the different types of independent learning and types of independent learners.
- An independent learning course guide (each course has specific resources for students to access), resources, and supra-curricula area on the website, uploaded to Google classroom so it appears every cycle for every student as a reminder.
- Assemblies delivered to ensure all students understand the benefits of academic independent learning outside of their lessons and homework tasks.
- Within the PSHE curriculum, future options are explored in school and independently to assist with progression after year 11.
- SWA Alumni webinars to be used in registrations and as homework in all years to assist students in aspiring ahead to future options.
- Half termly guidance for parents/carers will be provided to ensure a focus remains on assisting students outside of school with the completion of academic independent work. Communications to students and parents/carers as to the characteristics of independent learning and different levels that lead up to a full and confident independent learner.

4. Key Principles

This policy is based upon a 'quality not quantity' approach.

- Homework and independent learning opportunities are set through Bromcom and Google classroom.
- Homework will usually be set at the 'Apply to Demonstrate' or 'Review' phase of the learning cycle. This will allow teachers to assess students' understanding of new skills and knowledge learned during lesson time.
- Guidelines on how to successfully complete homework and independent learning tasks are available on Bromcom and Google Classroom.
- Homework can be assessed/marked formatively, depending on the department homework policy.
- Where homework is assessed/marked, students will be given an opportunity to act upon this feedback and to have a chance to improve their work through 'My response is' (MRI)
- The homework and independent learning tasks are planned and integrated into the Schemes of Learning.
- Feedback on literacy and numeracy skills demonstrated through homework tasks will also be given, where appropriate, using the relevant policies.
- Use of the google drive GCSE and Sixth Form learning platforms for courses to make available to students all lesson resources.
- Targeted differentiation will take place for High Attaining students in all year groups on Bromcom to academically stretch and challenge.

- Homework should be rewarded in Bromcom with a praise point for 'Good homework', where staff can see that the student has completed the homework to a good or above expected standard.
- Homework that is not completed by the appropriate time will be issued a B1 for 'Incomplete homework', which will be followed by an automatic email to families highlighting the importance of home learning, and details of the missing work.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Senior Leadership Team member responsible for homework and independent learning will monitor and evaluate the overall effectiveness of the policy. Delivery of the policy will primarily be the responsibility of Key Stage Leaders, Heads of Year, Heads of Departments, and Heads of Subject. They will be responsible for monitoring that homework has been set, that records are kept of the standard and amount of homework set and that useful formative feedback has been given and acted upon.

6. Implementation and Review

This policy will be made known to all staff, parents/carers, and governors, and it will be published on the academy website. Copies will also be available upon request from SWA. This policy will be reviewed two yearly, or as required, in response to changes to Government Policy, etc.

7. Author and Date

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Updated by David Hall – July 2016

Updated by David Hall – July 2018

Updated by David Hall – December 2020

Updated by Lee Huckle – January 2022

Updated by Lee Huckle – February 2024

Updated by Karl Brooks – February 2026

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Next review date – February 2028

Appendices 1 - PEEP:

Preparation: Some independent learning is designed to prepare the student for the next lesson. This type of independent learning is crucial to the practice of students playing a proactive role in and having responsibility for the effectiveness of the learning activities of lessons.

Elaboration: on what has been learnt in class. This type of independent learning is designed to apply and reinforce knowledge gained & concepts learnt in class to ensure that the student processes the information in order to deepen their understanding. It enables the teacher to gauge the level of the student's confidence with new information and depth of understanding.

Exploration: This provides an opportunity for students to explore topics of their own interest and delve into an area of study in more detail than time allows for in the curriculum, so broadening their knowledge. It affords students the opportunity and space to become expert researchers and to report back to their peers is important. It is excellent preparation for students to take the lead as 'teacher' in lessons e.g. conducting an experiment or giving a demonstration. Exploration tasks allow teachers to stretch students and encourage them to engage in further reading and teacher challenges. They are an excellent way to extend students towards the top grades at KS4 and KS5.

Practice and apply: Some independent learning tasks provide students with an opportunity to practice and apply a skill/knowledge. These tasks are designed to provide the opportunity for increasing speed and improving accuracy and fluency. When independent learning is assigned for the purposes of practice, it will be structured around content with which the students have a high degree of familiarity. Skills and knowledge should be learnt to the level that students can perform them quickly and accurately. To facilitate skill development, students will be encouraged to keep track of their speed and accuracy. Research tells us that it is not until students have practiced upwards of about 24 times that they reach 80% competency. Practice needs to be deliberate, focused practice to ensure mastery.