

# HOMEWORK PARENT SURVEY

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



Spring 2017

Governors and teachers are reviewing the school's Homework Policy and thank all the parents who returned completed questionnaires giving views on homework at Woodstock Primary School. We are extremely impressed with the quality and thoughtfulness of responses, and hugely appreciate the time and effort that was clearly put into completing the questionnaires. Responses have been summarised and will be used to inform the development of a new Homework Policy that means something to each of us with an interest in the children here at Woodstock CE Primary School.

Whilst the current government has removed the specifications around how much homework should be given in primary schools, Ofsted will still look to see how homework links effectively with the learning taking place in school and grade the setting according to how well this is achieved.

Fifty-six questionnaires were returned which relate to children in the following years (a number of questionnaires were completed for more than one child):

Foundation Stage: Reception	11
Key Stage One: Years 1 & 2	24
Key Stage Two: Years 3 & 4	19
Key Stage Two: Years 5 & 6	12

### KEY POINTS FROM WHAT PARENTS THINK:

- Homework, if it is meaningful and engaging, can have a positive impact on their child's learning.
- Homework helps to promote independent learning and introduce self-discipline.
- Those parents who responded positively said homework helped them feel part of their children's learning and that it also reinforces the view that learning isn't confined to the classroom.
- Homework consolidates what children have learnt in the classroom and helps to practice and embed key skills.
- Homework should be clearly explained.
- The volume of homework needs to be manageable. Some parents feel that the time taken to complete tasks is often underestimated. One common suggestion was to gradually build-up the amount of homework set in the early years.
- Homework should be limited to reading, spelling and learning times tables particularly for younger children.
- Children have a busy day at school and when they get home they can feel tired and need some downtime.
- A view held by a number of parents is that homework causes stress for the whole family and so impacts negatively on home life.
- There was some frustration expressed about homework not always being marked. Parents said this can be demoralising.
- Some parents are also unsure about how much help they should be giving their children.

***Homework can make an important contribution to a child's progress at school. As well as reinforcing learning in the classroom, homework helps children to develop the skills and attitudes they will need for successful independent lifelong learning.***

1. Do you agree?                      Yes    83%                      No        11%                      Unsure    6%

#### Representative comments:

- *Parent involvement with school and learning can have a positive impact. Homework may be useful for some children, but possibly not all. (Y3/4 parent)*
- *Homework shouldn't be too onerous. It needs to be a good balance particularly for working parents.*
- *Parents need to support their children's learning at home to ensure they do their best their education.*
- *Homework should be well thought through and relevant. It also requires adequate feedback as otherwise a child will lose interest in putting in the effort to do well. (Y5/6 parent)*
- *Homework provides essential practice time. (Y1/2 parent)*
- *Getting used to the demands of homework is beneficial as long as it is balanced with other learning activities. (Y5/6 parent)*
- *Children are learning skills already at school. In primary school children don't understand why they have to do homework and can add stress and anxiety to the children and whole family.*

**Reading, spellings and times tables, and developing children's confidence with them are key homework ingredients.**

## 2: What are your thoughts on this?

The vast majority of parents agree that these areas all need reinforcement and practice and should be the priority for homework activities across the primary age range.

Representative comments:

- *These activities lead to improvement.* (Y1/2 parent)
- *Reading must be fun.* (Y5/6 parent)
- *Additional tasks beyond this are not necessary.* (Y3/4 parent)
- *Guidance and suggestions to develop children's comprehension would be appreciated.* (Y3/4)
- *All other activities become easier if these basics are continually practiced.* (Y3/4 parent)
- *Reading should be for pleasure. If children are not used to reading at home because parents don't do it from an early age, then it will not be fun for the child.* (Y1/2 parent)
- *Agree these areas are of huge importance; however, they can be swallowed-up because of other homework.*

**The school has invested in purchases Spelladrome and Mathletics online licences for all children to practice core skills at home.**

## 3: Is your child motivated by these resources?

Yes 66% No 16% No response 4%

8 Reception parents (14%) said their child has no access to these programmes and so couldn't comment

The overall feeling is that children are enthusiastic about these programs. Inter-class competition with certificates is very motivational but interest can wane if the level of challenge is too low or appropriate tasks are not set.

## What are your thoughts on this approach to learning at home?

Representative comments:

- *Homework can be a battle but these resources are great at engaging my daughter; they make learning fun.* (Y1/2)
- *At age 6, I want my child to be away from the screen as much as possible.* (Y1/2)
- *My child struggles with maths, and Mathletics can be demotivating.* (Y5/6)
- *It is a useful tool and both our children will happily use these when they otherwise would not be 'up for doing' homework. I think they are a valuable resource.* (Y1/2; Y5/6)
- *Resources are quite useful but the format does get a bit tedious after a while.* (Y5/6)
- *They love it! Great way of giving them computer time that is constructive.* (Y1/2; 3/4)
- *The resources are great and can be self-managed with minimal parental input.* (Y3/4)

## 4: What homework tasks do you think best help your child embed their learning?

Representative comments:

- *Fun and engaging tasks.*
- *Tasks need to be clearly explained.*
- *Learning through games.*
- *Things children can do themselves.*
- *Small/short tasks that reinforce work done in class or practise a skill children have been working on.*
- *A variety of tasks were suggested by parents, however the overwhelming consensus was:*
  - *Reading/comprehension/spelling/times tables/maths activities*

**5: How do you feel about the jigsaw type homework set? Do you enjoy getting involved in these activities?**

Yes 9 parents No 30 parents (mainly a time issue) Not sure 6 parents

8 Reception parents couldn't comment as their children do not have jigsaw homework activities. (Not all parents gave a response)

Representative comments:

- *Too much on top of everything else. (Y5/6)*
- *They are fun activities but I would prefer them to have more firm deadlines. (Y5/6)*
- *Very good, lots of fun and a great way of getting homework done. (Y1/2)*
- *Activities are things the pupil can't do without parental involvement and are time consuming. (Y3/4)*
- *Tasks are well thought out and I can see the effort that goes into them, however, there is rarely time to do one. (Y3/4)*
- *Scope for creativity. (Y5/6)*
- *We like the idea of the jigsaw but it should be either this or a set task. (Y3/4)*

**6: Do you feel the level of challenge of homework activities is about right for your child?**

Yes 32 parents No 15 parents Yes/No 8 parents

(Not all parents gave a response)

Representative comments:

- *It is totally variable. Sometimes way too hard, sometimes too easy. (Rec; Y1/2)*
- *Level of challenge of homework is good. (Y3/4; Y5/6)*
- *Sometimes tasks are too hard for children to do themselves. (Y3/4)*
- *Homework activities are well thought out and allow for differences in abilities so can be as challenging as parents want to make it. (Rec)*
- *We'd rather have more challenging short tasks. Our child finishes homework fairly quickly. (Y5/6)*
- *Homework can be wordy and not made simple for children to read and understand. (Y1/2 parent)*

**7: Do you think the time your child currently spends on homework is about right?**

Yes 33 parents No 18 parents

(Not all parents gave a response)

Representative comments:

- *For her age, yes. (Y1/2 parent)*
- *Whilst 2.5 hours should be about right for Y5, we usually spend a lot longer on open-ended questions. (Y5/6)*
- *Hard to balance demands of homework when we want our children to also have a full and active life outside school. (Y1/2; Y5/6)*
- *Yes, now that we don't attempt the jigsaw tasks any more. (Y1/2)*
- *Overall, but it can vary from week to week. (Y5/6 parent)*
- *It is useful to have until Wednesday to complete homework if the weekend has been busy. (Y3/4; Y5/6)*

**Homework tasks in Reception currently focus on supporting early development of reading, writing and number, and promoting shared experiences between children and parents.**

**8. (Parents of children in Reception) Do you agree with this approach? Yes 9 parents No 2 parents**

Representative comments:

- *We've built homework into our weekday and weekend activities and it helps us engage and educate our daughter.*
- *Don't feel homework is needed at this age.*
- *Structured approach works well and allows for consistent practice of new skills learnt in the classroom.*
- *More focus on individual abilities should be made rather than so generalised.*
- *For working parents, homework tasks in the evening can be difficult to fit in.*

**Previous feedback has been that giving older children an increased homework schedule prepares them for secondary school.**

**9. (Parents of children in Y5/6) Do you agree?** Yes 8 parents No 2 parents  
(Not all parents gave a response)

Representative comments:

- *It is not the amount of homework that counts – just enough to be useful and get children into a routine.*
- *Jigsaws are too much on top of everything else.*
- *Having Friday evening to Tuesday evening to complete homework is very challenging when children have many other activities.*
- *Yes, although our school seems to have more homework than others, but perhaps our children settle into secondary school better.*

**We encourage parents to take an interest in, and help and support their child with homework tasks.**

**10: How is this working for you? What further support could we offer?**

Representative comments:

- *It would be helpful to have a structured regular approach to practising timetables at home. (Y1/2)*
- *We get lots of support with Maths and Literacy Workshops and I know we can always ask. (Y1/2; Y5/6)*
- *Maths is taught differently so it is hard to help. (Y5/6)*
- *It is a significant time commitment to be involved in homework. (Y5/6)*
- *I've enjoyed the homework tasks and how, if I need support or advice, it will be on-hand from the teachers. (Rec)*
- *I feel the stress homework adds to family life is not taken into consideration. (Y1/2)*
- *I feel the school makes very good provision for parents to be interested and support their children if they are inclined to do so. I have found it most effective when the teacher speaks to me or pops a note in the book about something from the day that my child might need to work on – much more effective for learning than the homework tasks I've felt. (Y3/4)*
- *Sometimes a bit more explanation would be useful if it is something they have covered in class and very specific. (Y1/2; Y3/4) ..... An example would be helpful where children need to show their working out. (Y1/2)*

**Parents were asked if they wanted to pass on any further observations/comments....**

Many parents wrote further comments for which we thank you. In the main these were very positive in respect of homework and the wider work of the school, though as with all the questions in the survey, a range of opinions is evident. As one Y3/4 parent stated, *'I realise it is impossible to please all of the people, all of the time, but would argue that for those parents who require more to do, the school makes excellent provision and information to follow that up!'*

Representative comments:

- *We don't like homework during school holidays. We feel our children work very hard during the term and therefore deserve holidays to relax. (Y1/2; Y5/6 parent)*
- *Proper feedback from the teachers is essential, as without it a child will get demoralised and do the minimum.*
- *With the excellent provision of Mathletics, Spellodrome, spellings to practise, reading ideas, comprehension and times-tables, we have more than enough for 2 hours homework per week. (Y3/4 parent)*
- *Our children are getting a wonderful education from the fantastic teaching staff. They enjoy going to school and always have something good to say about their day. They are however only in KS1 and we are not convinced there needs to be so much focus on homework and that they should be allowed time outside school to relax and enjoy themselves, to learn other life skills, much as we do as parents after our working day. (KS1 parent)*
- *Please can guided reading, spelling practice and other activities that come home be included as homework? (KS1 parent)*
- *For maths activities can we get a simple crib sheet to explain to parents how it is done so to keep phrases, instructions and methods consistent between home and school, and not confuse the kid! (KS1 parent)*

We recognise that parents make an enormous contribution in supporting the education of our children. Parental encouragement is a key factor in raising attainment and fostering a love of learning. We believe learning is a lifelong journey, which begins at home and is nurtured in a range of contexts and settings, including school.

Homework has a role to play in supporting learning, since it gives children the opportunity to practice at home the work done in class, and helps them work toward improving important skills. It also supports children in becoming more confident and independent in their learning, which will help them over their years in school and into the future.

We thank parents most sincerely for taking the time to give us your frank and considered thoughts and opinions - teachers and governors will take these into account to develop a set of principles on which our new Homework Policy will be based.

Lisa Rowe  
March 2017