



# METNS Homework Policy

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## Introduction

A full review of this policy has been undertaken during the academic year 2019. This constituted a working group made up from key members of the METNS community; teachers, support staff and parents/guardians. It was informed by a community wide survey to capture the wide range of views and insights. More than 450 teachers, parents/guardians and pupils responded to the survey.

In addition, research was undertaken to explore and appraise other schools' policies along with guidance from the National Parents Council (NPC)<sup>1</sup>, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)<sup>2</sup> and research papers on the theme of homework.

A 2006 study undertaken at Duke University noted that homework supports the development of simple tasks such as spelling, maths and vocabulary. There is however a balance to be attained to its effectiveness, and the key is in the amount given<sup>3</sup>. It is also recognised that it may not be as effective for younger children<sup>4</sup>. Some studies question not only the amount of homework given, but also the quality of it<sup>5</sup>. One particular piece, suggests that for homework to be valid it must be seen as beneficial to the learner and invoke activities that are appropriate in the home, such

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.npc.ie/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.ncca.ie/en>

<sup>3</sup> <https://today.duke.edu/2006/03/homework.html>

<sup>4</sup> Cooper, H., Robinson, J. C., & Patall, E. A. (2006). Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research, 1987–2003. *Review of Educational Research*, 76(1), 1–62

<sup>5</sup> Bennett, S., & Kalish, N. (2006). *The case against homework: How homework is hurting our children and what we can do about it*. New York: Crown.



as experimenting in the kitchen, reading, cooking, or doing puzzles with the family<sup>6</sup>.

This is echoed in the notion that positive effects from homework may not be related to the time spent, but rather on whether homework is completed<sup>7</sup>, i.e. acting as a support to children in achieving meaningful learning.

From the Growing Up in Ireland Survey (ESRI)<sup>8</sup> we know that 97% of children receive homework four evenings a week; through the NPC research has found that 62% of parents believe homework to be stressful. The on-going debate about the effectiveness and delivery of homework may be viewed as a complex and evolving process, this policy is intended to take a fresh look at homework in METNS and to provide a transparent and responsive framework that best serves the METNS community/children.

The NCCA offers practical guidance on how best to integrate homework, taking account of other needs such as recreation and family life in general. It also stresses where possible, the important role that parental involvement plays – to encourage and support children in finding their own way and building trust in their own skills. We strive to make this policy reflective of our wide range of needs and expectations, but acknowledge that it may be adapted for future use, and as with all METNS policies it shall be reviewed on an on-going basis.

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<sup>6</sup> Kohn, A. (2006a). *The homework myth: Why our kids get too much of a bad thing*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press.

<sup>7</sup> Marzano, R. J., & Pickering, D. J. (2007). Special topic: The case for and against homework. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 74-79.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.esri.ie/growing-up-in-ireland>



The policy sets out a specific schedule of when homework is expected throughout the academic year. In so doing there is an emphasis on enabling teachers and children flexibility in the way in which they engage with the curriculum, to best support the individuals' learning needs.

When homework is given, it is under the guidelines set down by this policy. The expected duration has been reviewed and where possible - reduced (as per NPC guidelines and in response to our own survey).

### **Acknowledgements**

The Board of Management would like to thank the members of the working group for their time and commitment and the entire METNS community for all their support and valuable contributions.



## Policy Overview

At the core of METNS is a child-centred philosophy that seeks to enable each child to develop his or her potential through ways and means that support their individual needs.

Teachers use homework assignments to provide feedback for children and respond diverse needs by differentiating assignments to best support the child's learning journey.

Homework provides an opportunity to develop a partnership with the parent/guardian and their child's teacher in supporting children to achieve their potential.

The parent/guardian is often best placed to know what their child may need, and they can work with the teacher to design homework provides focused support.

The ideal role of a parent/guardian is to engage actively with the homework process and to offer support and guidance that is fundamental to the child's overall development.

This policy sets out *principles and perspectives, an annual schedule and time guidelines* to enable everyone to become better informed and fully engaged with homework.



## Homework Perspectives

This section provides an overview of the homework practice in METNS from the children's, parent/guardians and the teacher's perspective<sup>9</sup>.

### The student council believes that children should be able to ...

Have varied kinds of homework, and the opportunity for flexible arrangements

*"It would be good if the amount of homework was more variable /relaxed – especially when it is a sunny day."*

### The Parents Association believes that ...

Homework is an opportunity to engage in their children's learning.

*"(Homework) ... should be meaningful and engaging"*

### METNS Teachers believe that homework can ...

Connect with home and school on a daily basis in order to support and deepen learning.

*"It's a forum/means of communication and collaboration with the home"*

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<sup>9</sup> This mirrors some of the commentary received in the Community wide survey that was undertaken in advance of the policy review.

A summary document may be found on the METNS website.



## METNS Homework Principles

These principles capture what we, as a community, recognise as essential to the understanding and practice of homework.

1. Homework provides a link between the home and school
  2. Homework offers parents an opportunity to work with their child to reinforce and support their learning
  3. Homework helps children to develop organisational skills and encourages them to take responsibility for their own work
  4. Homework helps to develop a child's concentration and contributes to the development of literacy and numeracy skills
  5. Flexible and creative homework at METNS aims to nurture a love for learning.
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## **The Homework Schedule**

This schedule offers an outline of the periods of homework throughout the year. It captures the ebb and flow of homework, paying heed to the curriculum and reflecting how other events and activities may change the focus of homework.



Monthly Outline	Infants		1 <sup>st</sup> 2nd	3 <sup>rd</sup> -4th	5 <sup>th</sup> -6th
September	Junior Infants	Senior Infants	Gradual easing in and working towards full homework by the end of the first month  Working within recommended time guidelines for each class as set out in the homework policy.		
	No homework	No homework For first 2 weeks			
	Phonics letter sounds  Numbers in the environment  Letter formation starts in November	Letter formation  Planet Maths  Reading			
Week before Christmas holidays	<b>No Home Work</b>				
January – May	Working within recommended time guidelines for each class as set out in the homework policy.				
Early June	Emphasis on active homework This may include: nature walks, fieldtrips, exercise and sports, team events, home adventures etc. Continued reading				
Last two weeks of June	<b>No Homework</b>				
Creative Homework	Whole school ‘creative days’ - <i>Approximately 6 times a year</i> These may be based around current school events: Grand-parents/Special relatives day, Seasonal Songs, Music Generation, Easter Bonnet Parade, Sports day etc.				



## Guidelines for Time Spent on Homework

- **Junior/Senior infants:**
  - 5-10 mins
  - Letter formation, drawing, environmental numeracy, preliminary reading, listening to stories read by parents etc.
- **First/Second class:**
  - Maximum of 20 minutes
  - A focus on maths in the environment, reading and writing
- **Third/Fourth class:**
  - Ideal 30 minutes, maximum 40 minutes
  - Increasing emphasis on written work
- **Fifth class:**
  - Ideal 40 minutes, maximum 50 minutes
- **Sixth class**
  - Broad spectrum of the curriculum, including a transition from time-based-work to task-based work as per secondary level

**Teachers** monitor homework on a regular basis and acknowledge the varying pace at which children may work. **Parents** are requested to note in the homework journal the length of time it takes to complete the tasks. Teachers will give homework that should on average, fit comfortably into the allocated time-periods.

**Note for Parents** *If, for any reason, homework is not completed, or any issues arise, please use the Homework Journal to communicate with the teacher.*