

# Liberty Academy Trust

## Homework Strategy

Date	September 2024
Written by	Director of Education
Approval Date	24 <sup>th</sup> July 2023
Review date	September 2025

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## Definition

Liberty Academy trust has adopted the Education Endowment Foundation (EEF) description of homework:

- “Homework refers to tasks given to pupils by their teachers to be completed outside of usual lessons.
- Homework activities vary significantly, particularly between younger and older pupils, including but not limited to home reading activities, longer projects or essays and more directed and focused work such as revision for tests.
- Our definition also includes activities such as ‘homework clubs’ where pupils have the opportunity to complete homework in school but outside normal hours and ‘flipped learning’ model, where pupils prepare at home for classroom discussion and application tasks”.

## About this Policy

This policy was written with contribution from the Liberty Academy Trust Curriculum Leads network.

It is a common misconception that schools are required to set homework. Historically the Department for Education provided guidelines on the amount of time pupils should spend on home learning. This was withdrawn in 2012 and autonomy was handed to school leaders to determine what and how much homework is set. Therefore, schools are not required by Ofsted or the DfE to have a homework policy in place. However, Liberty Academy Trust has determined that it is important to set out expectations for parents and for staff.

## Aims of the Liberty Homework Strategy

- Give pupils the opportunity to extend their learning in areas of personal interest.
- Give information about benefits of homework, whilst raising awareness of its potential impact on anxiety.
- Ensure a consistent approach throughout Liberty Academy trust schools.
- To encourage children to develop the confidence, independence, planning and motivation needed to study on their own and prepare them for the next phase of education.
- To make set homework relevant and meaningful for the child linked to work done at school.
- Make expectations about homework clear to children, parents and carers.
- Provide opportunities for parents and children to work together, thereby fostering an effective partnership between home and school.

## Research

EEF states:

“Homework has a positive impact on average (+5 months), particularly with pupils in secondary”.

Pope et al (2013) study found that too much homework has negative effects on pupil well-being and behavioral engagement. The research which analysed 4,317 perceptions of homework found that homework contributed to greater stress, reduction in health and less time for friends, family and extracurricular pursuits with 56% of pupils considering homework a primary source of stress.

Hampshire (2015) found that homework challenges are particularly relevant for autistic pupils who may demonstrate difficulty in maintaining attention and motivation. She found they also may struggle to develop effective independent study skills.

Endedijk et al (2011) found that executive function skills including cognitive flexibility, monitoring and planning are vital prerequisites for the completion of homework. Their study describes how executive function is a known area of difficulty for autistic people and their research indicates that the level of difficulty with homework is related to the level of difficulties with executive functioning.

## Pupil voice

Representatives from Thames Valley School council were consulted upon in the production of this strategy. Their views included:

- The homework was good because it helped pupils have a chance to practice their work.
- It could be too much if given at the same time as doing revising and exams and could cause mental health problems.
- It should be staggered so older pupils have more.
- Pupils should have some choice and input into what homework and when.
- All members of the school council thought there should be homework.

## General considerations

- In line with our Quality-of-Life Framework model, which includes co-production with parents and pupils, the approach to homework should take into account individual parent and pupil views.
- Homework that is linked to classroom work tends to be more effective (EEF)
- Homework has more impact in secondary school than in primary school.
- Feedback should always be given on homework in order to communicate value but also because research suggests that homework that includes clear feedback has higher impacts on learning.
- Pupils eligible for free school meals typically do receive benefits from homework. (EEF) However, research also suggests that pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds may not have a quiet working space or the resources they need such as laptop and stable internet connectivity. Homework may contribute to widening gaps in attainment if not considered carefully.

## Specific considerations for specialist settings

- Autistic pupils may find it difficult to take schoolwork home. Experience shows that this is the case and autistic pupils have a clear separation between what they do at home and what they do at school and blurring the two can be confusing.
- Whilst it may be difficult for some autistic pupils to do homework, establishing routines early in school life can do homework completion easier.
- Whilst it may be considered not appropriate to expect some pupils to do homework this should not be a rule applied to all. And where homework is not set it should be understood that this can disadvantage the pupil, particularly if able to undertake qualifications in later secondary school.
- Where homework is successfully implemented it usually involves the pupil and parent contributing to how it will work well.
- Pupils are often brought to school via shared taxis, and this can have implications for running after-school homework clubs.
- Lunchtime homework clubs may not work well because of the need for separating sessions within the timetable and literal understanding of the purposes of specific timetable sessions.
- Studies have shown a correlation between pupil anxiety and demanding amounts of homework. An [NAS study](#) indicates that 47% of autistic people fall into the severe anxiety category. Given this, it is likely commensurate that anxiety around homework in the pupil population will be more prevalent.
- Expectations within homework must be set clearly and guidance structured otherwise they will lead to increased anxiety around starting / completing homework. Therefore, homework has to be well considered and well planned. This may involve additional stages beyond sending a piece of work home.
- Guidance should be given on how long it should be spent on a task. Some autistic pupils may find it difficult to know when to stop a task, particularly if they typically pursue perfection in their work.
- For some autistic pupils having time at home to complete tasks where there may be less distractions may have a positive effect on reducing anxiety. It may also result in improvements in the quality of work.
- Some autistic pupils in our schools report they like having homework to do as it helps them practice their work and feel more confident.
- Some pupils may be tired after a long day at school. In our experience and from listening to autistic children and adults' some of our pupils may mask how difficult they find it to cope with the school day which can result in exhaustion at the end of the day. The time after school is needed to recover and be able to learn the next day.
- Cognitive load should be considered, and consideration given to how autistic pupils may experience reduction in working memory due to difficulties in filtering extraneous stimuli.

No assumptions should be made regarding the above considerations. Engagement with the pupil and with parents is crucial to understanding what factors are important to each individual.

## Approach to homework

- The approach to setting homework should be individualised. For some pupils it may not be appropriate due to anxiety to set homework.
- The nature, type and amount of homework will vary according to the age and ability of the pupil.
- Where homework is given sufficient time should be allowed for the completion of homework to allow for a healthy home/schoolwork balance
- Where it is appropriate for pupils to be given homework steps should be taken to understand whether it is causing anxiety for pupils and adaptations made as appropriate.
- Schools should consult with parents and pupils on quantity and arrangements for homework.
- Parents can be signposted to guidance such as: the [NAS Homework guide for parents](#).
- Where homework is provided this should be of a high quality rather than high quantity.
- Tasks should be well designed and link to classroom learning.
- The aim of each task / piece of homework should be set out for pupils.
- The general reasons for providing homework should be set out for pupils so they understand how it can help them.
- Homework may include:
  - Reading: independent, shared or paired reading, with possible activities to reinforce comprehension and understanding of texts as children progress through school.
  - Retrieval practice such as spelling and vocabulary extension: learning sounds and spellings; activities to apply spelling rules and patterns to extended tasks.
  - Research into an aspect of the curriculum as preparation for, extension to, consolidation of or follow up to work carried out in class.
  - Learning number facts and practice of calculation, including problem solving (multiplication tables, number bonds, etc..).
  - Written assignments in English and Maths.
  - Handwriting
  - Other tasks to extend work done in class, including topic-based work.
  - Revision for examinations.
- However, it may be more appropriate for pupils to have a different approach to homework such as a project for the half term or a pack of resources to work through at home. These should be given to the parent either with clear guidance or with the opportunity to discuss.
- An approach that has proven effective and is supported by some parents is receiving an overview and ideas. An example of this is:

Class		What is the topic?	Why are we studying it?	How can parents help?
Year 7	English	Modern Novel Reading <b>A Kind of Spark</b> (Elle McNicoll).	Exploration of identity Explore how experiences shape people. Diary Writing	Pupils would benefit from reading an autobiography of their choice or keeping a diary of their own.
	Maths	Geometry- measures and perimeter	Pupils are able to estimate and measure different lengths.	Encourage conversations about distance – when walking / driving.

			Pupils are able to solve mathematical problems	Use tape measures to measure areas in the home and calculate which rooms are smaller / bigger. Further measure activities are available from your child's maths teacher.
Science	Energy in food including a food burning practical. Method writing (working scientifically skills) How coal and natural gas have formed. Renewable and non-renewable sources of energy	This links to the wider KS4 curriculum in physics and chemistry on impacts of pollution. Wider knowledge is linked to climate change and the evolving world around us with long term use of different types of energy.		BBC Bitesize short questions.
Art	Pop Art - Logo design and Andy Warhol	Pupils will explore a variety of Pop artists, including Warhol and Lichtenstein.		Visit BBC Bitesize to watch clips on Pop Art. Families could also visit the Tate Modern.
Creative Arts	Script Writing	Pupils will develop confidence, teamwork and verbal reasoning as well as extended writing.		Explore what is available on BBC I Player, at your local theatre or <a href="#">National Theatre Online</a>
Food Technology	Winter recipes	Pupils will be able to plan and cook different meals across the term: including Leak and Potato soup Spaghetti bolognaise. 1 pupil vote		Encourage your child to participate in shopping and cooking food. Plan a special meal and cook for a member of the family together.
Geography	Poverty – how money is distributed across the world.	Pupil will explore the different economic factors and how they affect countries, such as Nepal.		Watch the news and discuss the Earthquake in Turkey and possible ways to help.
History	Medieval Kings	Develop understanding of Magna Carter & King John. What makes a good King and what was the need for the Magna Carter?		Explore Basic Human Rights on BBC Bitesize.
French	Descriptions of self (physical qualities and emotions)	Pupils will learn to describe themselves in French, using adjectives in correct word order and gender.		Your child's teacher will send a vocabulary list home for independent learning. Pupils can work from this.
PDLS	Healthy Relationships	It is important for our pupils to keep themselves safe and be able to recognise healthy and non-healthy relationships. Visual resources used to help stimulate		Please contact the school if you would like support in talking about this topic with your child.

			discussion on healthy relationships. (Parents are welcome to visit schools and view the resources we use)	
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- Teacher feedback should always be provided.
- Where homework is not returned teachers should use this as an opportunity to learn about the child and home situation and understand any barriers to completing homework.
- High expectations for neat presentation should be set and clearly communicated so that pupils maintain a similar high standard of work at home as in school.
- Pupils should be taught explicitly in school how to learn independently.
- Pupils should be taught explicitly how to monitor their progress and how to manage their time.
- Pupils should be taught explicitly how to organise their work and given visual prompts / reminders on how to do this. An example of this is included below:



**My homework planner**

**Why homework is important**

Homework:

1. Gives me chance to practice school work at home where there are no other distractions from my friends.
2. Makes me feel more confident.
3. Helps my memory.
4. Helps me learn quicker and this will help me with my chosen career.

**If I can't do my homework I can choose to:**

- Take a break and then try again or...
- Ask an adult in house or...
- Ask my older brother or...
- Wait until tomorrow and ask a teacher.

All of these are ok.

My teacher and parents do not want me to worry about my homework!

**My homework routine**

1. Have a break when I get home from school.
2. Decide a time to start my homework.
3. Start my homework at the right time.
4. Read the instructions.
5. If I don't understand take a deep breath and read again.
6. If I still don't understand ask an adult.
7. Check which resources I need, and put them all on my table.
8. Make sure I have a drink.
9. Think about what I will do when my homework is finished. (Maximum 2 minutes allowed for thinking about this)
10. Work out how much time I have to do my homework.
11. Set a timer for half of that time. So I can stop and monitor how much more work I have to do.
12. Check my work.
13. Put all my school things away in my school bag.
14. check I have everything I need for school for the next day.
15. Have my dinner
16. Do something relaxing or fun.

**Strategies that help me**

- Clear instructions
- Clear expectations - knowing number of pages or time to spend on an activity.
- Knowing what finished looks like
- Key Word map / vocab prompt
- Checklists that I can tick so I know when I have done everything I should
- Seeing what I'm meant to do - a practical demonstration or showing me a WAGOLL (what a good one looks like)
- Visual aids / prompts of what to remember or how to plan my work.
- Countdown timers
- Mnemonics for memory activities
- Uncluttered worksheets
- Don't talk to me when working as restarting tasks can take me a long time
- Give me clear feedback. Don't just say well done. Tell me what I have done well.

Adults please tick to say you understand

All visual resources and planners should be individualised. This example has a lot of detail – which would be too much information and overwhelming for some.

Form time is a great opportunity to co-produce these with pupils.



## How parents can help with Homework

Below is a list of ways that parents can show their child that you value their homework and the time and effort spent completing it.

You can show you value your child's homework by:

- providing a suitable place in which your child can do their homework, preferably with an adult to discuss, encourage and support.
- Making it clear to your child that you value homework and supporting the school in explaining how it can help learning.
- encouraging your child and praising them when they have completed work set.
- signing and dating your child's completed homework to show that it is a true reflection of their best efforts.
- ensure work is complete and returned to school on time.
- checking your child spends a suitable amount of time on homework.

Additionally, you can support your child's development by:

- visits to libraries, museums etc.
- cooking with them
- taking your child swimming
- playing games, e.g., board games, cards, ball games
- watching informative TV programmes together
- providing opportunities for craft activities, e.g., cutting, sticking, sewing, painting etc.
- gardening and growing plants
- using the internet to research something with your child (following guidelines for safe internet use)
- talking to your child about schoolwork, their day, what they have been learning about and how they have been learning.

Remember: Homework if it is appropriate for your child is about reinforcing, practicing and confidence building... Enthusing your child about undertaking homework and modelling the high value of homework to them is of key importance. Make it fun!

Questions parents can ask their child about their homework:

- What are you learning about in English / Maths etc. at the moment?
- Is this new or have you learnt about it before?
- How is it different to what you did last year?
- Would you be able to teach me something about it?
- Is this work difficult, easy or just the right amount of challenge to help you learn?

Questions parents can ask the school about homework:

- How much is the right amount of homework for my child?
- How much help should I give?

- How should I motivate my child to complete homework when they say schoolwork is for school not home?
- What do I do if they refuse?
- What if my child and I decide there is too much?
- What if my child and I decide is too little?
- Can we opt out of homework?
- What resources do I need to provide?

## References

[Education Endowment Foundation \(2023\) Teaching and Learning Toolkit](#)

[Galloway, Conner and Pope \(July 2013\) Non-academic effects of homework The Journal of Experimental Education.](#)

[Hampshire et al \(2016\) Self-Management and Parents as Interventionists to Improve Homework Independence in Pupils with Autism Spectrum Disorders Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth Volume 60, issue 1](#)

[Endedijk et al \(2011\) Relationships between executive functioning and homework difficulties in pupils with and without autism spectrum disorder: An analysis of pupil- and parent-reports Learning and Individual Differences Volume 21, Issue 6](#)