

Reviewed: June 2022

Homework Policy – A Personal Approach

We uphold the ideal of inclusion in its broadest sense and seek to involve all stakeholders in achieving this.

As a team we aim to stimulate re-engagement, participation, interest and achievement by providing bespoke educational intervention programmes, pupil centred planning and solution focused support – ultimately leading to successful educational integration.

We endeavour to provide a safe, nurturing, community based environment that facilitates a personalised holistic approach to learning enabling pupils to reach their potential.

INTRODUCTION

The disparate needs, disabilities, conditions, profiles, backgrounds and circumstances of our pupils mean that a 'one size fits all' approach is unlikely to be successful. A personalised approach/response/plan will be considered, devised, developed and reviewed.

At Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit, we believe that all pupils of this school should access the curriculum. We aim to make the curriculum appropriate for each individual's age and ability in an interesting, meaningful and enjoyable way.

Northumberland Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) exists to enable children whose behaviour causes them to experience problems in mainstream schools to achieve the very best outcomes possible. There are clearly many factors that prevent some children from coping with the expectations and challenges of school. Some pupils enter the PRU with exceptionally complex needs, and are unlikely to be able to return to a school without additional support. Homework can be a persistent and challenging barrier to tackle whilst attempting to meet our aims for learners.

Aims for PRU pupils:

- To improve pupil attitude to learning.
- To formulate a curriculum and learning plan relevant and appropriate to the individual pupil's needs.
- To identify academic strengths and weaknesses and develop an individual education plan to accelerate attainment where appropriate (particularly literacy).
- To provide comprehensive diagnostic, behaviour, attainment and achievement profiles, reports and strategy/intervention prompts and advice at the end of each placement.

We therefore:

- Value every individual and celebrate their achievements
- Identify and respond to individual needs
- Identify and overcome potential barriers to learning
- Set multiple learning challenges for every pupil.

Research

In *Reforming Homework*, published in 2012 by Associate Professor Richard Walker and Professor Michael Horsley, the academics comment on the differing conclusions reached by the studies into the impact and effectiveness of homework. 'Researchers have variously concluded that homework is beneficial (Cooper et al.) or harmful (various), that homework has no effects (Kohn), that it has complex effects or that the research is too sparse or too problematic to be able to justify the drawing of strong conclusions.'

In support of homework, some may argue it not only has academic benefits, but also helps young people to develop important study skills such as time management, and gives parents a chance to engage in

their child's learning. In opposition, many others feel that it creates unnecessary pressure on pupils for limited/disputed academic gains, and prevents children from having time to further develop other life skills, through recreational and artistic activities and social interaction, and places pressure on family life.

With this in mind, and the often complex nature of the children who attend Shortstay-Northumberland PRU, we view homework as a positive experience for **some** pupils. It can help children improve important skills and be an opportunity for children to share with their parents/ carers things they have been doing at school.

Rationale

Homework is encouraged and widely accessible, taking into account the diverse and disparate needs of our population, but no student will receive punitive or sanction based responses for not completing homework. Here, at Shortstay Northumberland PRU, we aim to encourage and support children to identify the importance of taking ownership and responsibility over their own learning. Therefore setting of homework is flexible and time scales take into account family interests and commitments.

Many of the pupils who attend the PRU have found this aspect of school difficult; therefore, they have a predetermined negative attitude towards its implementation. We hope to foster good working habits and, after an initial period, we encourage all our pupils to take a more positive and responsible attitude towards their own learning.

Aims of Homework

"The use of homework, given the previous educational history of many pupils, is not likely to be prevalent. For some part-time pupils, however, who are aiming to return to mainstream secondary schools, its provision may be both appropriate and necessary." (OFSTED Guidance on the inspection of pupil referral units).

Homework is set:

- to allow students time to consolidate and extend knowledge fostered in the classroom and find opportunities to follow their own interests whilst doing so.
- to give pupils ownership of their learning
- to foster skills of independent working
- to forge links between home and school learning and demonstrate the importance of a multi-faceted approach
- to support and prepare students for their possible return to mainstream school where homework is an important aspect of learning and independence skill building.
- Promote, where possible, positive parent and child experiences/time
- Practice skills in varied and possible new contents
- Share enthusiasm of pupil-led interests
- Give pupils a vehicle from which to demonstrate their achievements and take pride in their work

Role of the Parent/carers

At Shortstay Northumberland PRU we understand that some parents / carers feel unable or unskilled to support the completion of homework in their home, however, we believe there are many ways parents and carers can support our learners:

- Be open and honest; establish that you are there to support.
- Set clear boundaries; to avoid the stereotypical scenario where children feel 'nagged' explain you will check that your child is on task and be productive, offering support.
- It is important that you set boundaries for the use of social media and for the playing of computer games as they can obviously be a distraction from homework.
- All students may fall behind; feel unmotivated or overwhelmed, with the balance of social and school demands at times. Talk to your child about their need for balance and remember you can contact your child's teacher at any time if you feel homework is skewing the balance.

Role of the Pupils

- Complete their homework and return to school (*per prior arrangement/agreement with class teacher*)
- Listen carefully to discussions around homework; asking relevant questions to ensure understanding of tasks set

- Contribute to pupil interviews and pupil questionnaires on homework for the school to monitor and evaluate
- Make sure they get feedback for their homework – request it if not given as per staff agreement
- Complete homework using appropriate materials (*Pupils will be provided with resources needed but can ask for additional materials where needed*)

Shortstay Northumberland PRU recognises that for some children completing homework may not be manageable at home.

Although this can be for a number of reasons, we recognise we have a high number of children with disparate and diverse needs;

- children who are Looked After (**LAC**) (foster care/SGO) and **Adopted**, may need to prioritise building relationships of trust at home over the conflict and anxiety homework could cause
- children who have been diagnosed or whom are going through diagnostic procedures for Autism Spectrum Disorder (**ASD**), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (**ADHD**) or other Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (**PMLD**) and or Social Emotional Mental Health Difficulties (**SEMH**) homework can present a number of additional difficulties and in turn, can cause additional stress / conflict within the home.

The National Autistic Society (NAS) outlines these difficulties here;

“Your child might be having difficulty because:

- the homework does not meet their level of ability and need so they find it too difficult, become frustrated and then don't want to work at home
- they may not understand why they have to do work for school when they're at home
- it might not be clear to them what work needs to be done if they have difficulty with processing instructions or writing, and are not supervised when recording homework
- they may be tired after a long day at school or there may be too many distractions at home for them to concentrate
- they may have difficulty with organising, sequencing and prioritising tasks and may misjudge how long to spend doing homework
- they may feel that the work has to be perfect, and struggle to begin a task because of anxiety.

If your child has a demand avoidant profile their need to be in control may drive them to avoid the demands of homework. The PDA Society have further information, including strategies to try at home.”

Considering the holistic needs of our pupil population in this way, leads us to conclude that pupils will not be ‘sanctioned’ for not completing homework. Instead teachers will use incentives and motivational devices; including our Token Economy (*see Behaviour Policy*) to reward and encourage children to complete homework that supports their independence and learning.

Equal Opportunities and Additional Needs

Homework activities will be differentiated, where appropriate, to ensure the needs of pupils can be met successfully. Work produced by children is valued and will be celebrated through display, discussion and rewards (as discussed previously).

Although pupils will be provided with necessary resources to complete homework, we aim to limit the number of resources required, as we are aware that not every home has access to a wide resource library and educational equipment. Pupils can arrange access to ICT during the school day with their class teacher, if they wish to do so in order to complete homework. Pupils may also request and work towards after school attention sessions where support can be provided to complete such tasks.

Policy will be reviewed annually.

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