

Merchant Taylors' School



HOMEWORK POLICY

Policy Custodian: Senior Deputy Head (Academic)

Approving Body: MTS Senior Leadership Team

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(This policy does not apply to Merchant Taylors' Prep.)

Principles

Homework is a key facet of all Merchant Taylors' pupils' learning. It is important that pupils develop good independent working patterns and that they organise themselves effectively. Academic studies show that homework can be a vital tool in developing understanding, especially when focused on consolidating classwork, recalling earlier learning and self-testing. Homework can also be used to prepare for future lessons, giving teachers more time to focus on higher order thinking skills like analysis and evaluation.

Merchant Taylors' school will only set carefully considered tasks which will benefit pupil progress. Tasks will always look to develop a pupil's understanding of their subjects and will vary according to the stage of a pupil's education and the needs of the subject. Rather than a rigid weekly timetable, we have flexibility so that the teachers can set the most helpful homework for that period of learning. Homework will not always be written. It is not always the 'visible' tasks that produce the best learning. Lengthy written tasks, for example, are often not the most effective way to determine how well a pupil has grasped a concept. Further, completing repetitive patterns of the same task can lead to shallow, formulaic practice rather than durable learning. Worksheets or lists of questions, where answers can be readily exchanged between pupils can be particularly unhelpful. However, reading an article or source, or watching a video, followed by questions in class, may help to develop understanding far more, even if there is not immediately a visible 'outcome' to hand in.

The 48-hour rule is the convention at Merchant Taylors', staff do not expect work to be completed for the following day. Instead, boys should normally have two evenings in which to complete a task. This allows for boys to balance their homework with their other commitments and ensures they will not be overloaded on one given night. Staff coordinate across subjects in order to try to minimise 'congestion' at key moments in the academic year. The quantity of homework differs between Lower, Middle and Upper School, but in all cases it will be set using the 'Assignments' function of Microsoft Teams.

The Upper School

Boys in the Upper Sixth should expect to be doing between seven and eight hours of work for each subject, to be completed outside of lessons each week. They can use their Private Study periods to complete some of this and the rest should be completed at home. Boys in the Lower Sixth should expect to be doing around five hours of work for each subject to be completed outside of lessons each week. It is expected that the majority of this work will be completed at home, although Lower Sixth formers do have some Private Study periods too.

Different subjects set work in different ways. Some essay-based subjects may work to a deadline set weeks in advance for a piece of work. The expectation in these subjects is that boys will organise their time towards that in the intervening period. Other subjects may set smaller, discrete, tasks that are

assessed 'little and often'. The guidelines above are a starting point. There may be some weeks in which boys do not get as much 'set' work. However, there is always work to be done; consolidation, planning and organisation can always be used to fill the time available to them, as well as extension work. Equally, revision should not be seen as something to just do at the end of the course, but rather as an on-going process, supporting incremental learning throughout the year.

The Middle School

Boys in the Middle School typically study 9 or 10 subjects and should expect homework of some kind in each subject, each week. Typically, they can expect to spend 60-90 minutes per GCSE subject each week.

As with the Upper School, if boys are not 'set' as much work in any given week, they should use that newly available time to consolidate past learning and to test themselves, as well as to read ahead.

The Lower School

In the Upper Third Form and The Fourth Form, pupils study a greater breadth of subjects (perhaps 14 or 15 in a fortnight) and consequently, their individual subject allocations are reduced. A boy in the Upper Third Form or the Fourth Form should expect to complete between 30 and 60 minutes of homework per subject per week, with more being completed in the subjects which they have more often. In place of weekly tasks, some subjects will set one longer, more substantial piece of homework each half-term. On average, boys will have between five and seven hours of homework each week.

For many boys in the Third Form, the transition to Senior School leads to a sea change in the style and quantity of homework they will be given. Whilst similar to the year groups above, to try and help boys manage that change the homework expectations may vary slightly when compared to the Upper Thirds and Fourths. Whilst the broad parameters for timings remain true, there may be times in the year when they are given a homework-free period, in order to focus on revision, on reading for pleasure, or on their broader well-being.

Summary

Homework is set at Merchant Taylors' with a view to supporting the educational development of our pupils; it is not set to tick a box. A flexible approach allows departments to set the most educationally appropriate tasks, but this flexibility is monitored to ensure pupils do not become overwhelmed. Alongside the setting of task-based homework, pupils are encouraged to engage in wider reading both on academic disciplines and for pleasure, with a view to placing their studies in a broader context and to support their well-being.

Senior Deputy Head (Academic)
June 2023