How can I best support my child at home?

Children respond to homework very differently. Some love the opportunity to further develop their learning whilst others dislike having to study outside of school hours. As a parent, it can be very difficult to know how best to support your child at home.

The following list can help you give your child the best environment in which to study and support their needs.

1. Create a quiet space. This can be at the kitchen table or in your child's bedroom.
2. Set a routine for checking the assignments and revision material on Google Classroom and add them to a homework timetable with deadlines.
3. Reduce distractions by switching off the TV and placing mobile phones out of the way.
4. Ensure your child has essential equipment at hand: pen, pencil, ruler, calculator.
5. Encourage your child to show you what they have completed and celebrate the strengths of the piece.

Year 10 & 11

By the time students move into KS4, they will need to have established homework routines and be able to work without your guidance and support. At this age students tend to fall in one of two camps: those who look like they are working yet are often not really actively engaged and those who spend far too long studying, working late into the night and often responding with panic when they are told to stop as sleep and rest are essential.

Depending on which types of behaviour your child displays will depend on how you support them. However, asking them to explain what they have been set; what the teacher requires them to complete and what the work should look like when it is finished, will help them be more realistic about their achievements.

Below are some frequently asked questions that many parents share with us and our advice in response.

As home learning develops independence and self-reliance, how much should I intervene?

Support can be provided in many ways. Setting routines are essential to help children adopt these strategies for themselves and so does not stop the development of independence but instead helps it. Intervention at all levels can be helpful in the beginning:

- Creating a homework schedule to be displayed somewhere obvious (e.g. on the fridge) and added to as tasks are set.
- Sitting together and discussing the tasks that have been set and how they will complete them.
- Encouraging them to post questions if they are finding the work challenging.
- Reminding them of deadlines.

My child works really hard at home so why are they not making expected progress?

Children can often appear to be working hard because they are spending a long time completing homework. However, work does not always result in progress particularly as progress is not linear. The type of work or activity being completed will make a difference. Children tend to complete work for their favourite subjects first and spend more time working on tasks that they can do well already. Teachers work hard to ensure that the work set is of a suitable level, however, if you think your child is working through these tasks with ease, it is important to let us know. The level of challenge needs to be just right in order for progress to be maximised.

- Ensure your child is focused on the objectives of the task and has not missed the point of the task.
- Check how easily your child is finding the work and contact their teacher if you are concerned.
- Challenge your child to spend more time on the subjects they find difficult.
- Encourage your child to post questions to their teachers to ensure they fully understand a topic.
- Check that your child is not spending time on unnecessary activities that do not really add to their understanding.

How can I help my child when I don't really understand the concepts myself?

Many parents contact us because they worry that they cannot help their child with certain subjects because they found them challenging at school. We cannot emphasise enough how important it is to share that with your child but at the same time be willing to show that you can learn as they do. Please do not suggest that the subject is too difficult or that you are not surprised that they find it hard because you did. Instead, explain that all ideas are difficult when we do not understand them and suggest that you can learn it together. Try the following steps:

1. Look at the objectives of the task – what does the teacher want your child to learn?
2. What does your child already understand? Ask them to explain this to you.
3. What does your child not understand? What questions do they have? Can these questions be answered by checking their knowledge organiser or looking on the internet?

My own workload is so overwhelming, how can I still find time to help my child?

We are very aware that parents worry that they do not have enough time to support their child with their studies at home.
Our advice is always that a little means a lot.

It is never too late to establish routines and simply talking every day to your child about what they have learnt and what they found difficult will be a useful starting point. For example, ask them to recall the key words in each subject that day, or the questions in their "Do Now" tasks which happen in every lesson.

Try to create set times to check assignments and resources that are uploaded onto Google Classroom and encourage your child to spend time working each evening. For example, every Friday evening or Saturday morning spend 15 minutes checking their independent learning planner. If they claim that they have finished the work set, ask them to revise by using their revision guides that they have had given to them.

Encourage your child to read for 30 minutes every day.

Homework just adds to my child's stress levels, how can I help reduce their anxiety?

Children become anxious when they worry that their work will not be good enough. They stress because they feel that their teacher will be cross if they have not completed the task to a high standard. Students also find acknowledging their skill gaps disheartening and therefore avoid completing certain tasks. This avoidance only adds further to their anxieties. It is important to have a strategy to manage this and encouraging your child to communicate their worries and concerns is the first step.

- Encourage your child to explain to you why they are anxious.
- Communicate these worries with your child's form tutor as soon as possible.
- Help them realise that timetabling their homework will reduce their worries.
- Encourage them to start tasks early so that they can ask for help well before the deadline.
- Encourage them to work on the subjects they find difficult first as leaving them until last will mean that they have less energy to cope with challenge.
- Assure them that everyone learns at a different pace and that they may need to ask for more time on a certain topic.

Practical steps

1. Ask your child to explain to you what they need to do. If they cannot, read the task with them and offer support if you can.
2. If your child still does not understand, contact the teacher and assure your child that they will be given further support at school. Show them this post if they are still worried.
3. If your child does understand but feels that they won't be able to do it well in the time given, reassure them that the teacher understands the time they have and only needs to see what they are able to do. This helps the teacher plan the next few lessons.
4. Help your child to recognise that if they could do all of the work with ease there would be no point being at school. Learning only happens when we start to do something we could not do before.

My child tells me they have completed all the work set, how can I be certain of this?

As a parent it can be very difficult to know whether your child is completing work to the best of their ability. When they claim that they have finished all of their homework and yet you have not seen them do anything at home, we assure you that they have not.

If your child can show you completed homework tasks and yet you know that they have not spent the allocated time, it is important that you contact their teacher. However, you can also explain to your child that they should be spending time working at home because it is this process that interrupts the forgetting curve. Encourage them to:

- review what they have done and ensure that it meets the success criteria
- Identify elements of the topic that they do not understand and research possible answers - you can use their revision guides to support with this
- RAG* their understanding of each of the topics for that term and research those sections that are Red.

*RAG stands for:
Red = I don't understand
Amber = I have some understanding
Green = I have a thorough understanding