

Homework 5th & 6th

October 5, 2020

Dear parents/guardians,

The children have made an excellent start to the school year and we have established a good base on which to build. We have not been able to arrange our annual Homework Meeting due to the ongoing situation, so I am posting the main pointers on this document in order to outline what is involved in the senior room.

Reading

This is a very important part of homework and should be practised every night. The children are usually given one or sometimes two pages of reading to practise and this can be done orally and silently, as they should be at a level to cope with silent reading. Library books are also given to the children weekly and we will be focusing at present on the Ladybird Classics. Later, book reviews will be written on what they have read but I want them to focus on the pure enjoyment of reading a classic novel for the time being.

When reading, the children should be encouraged to read with a good voice expression, obey punctuation marks and read for meaning. In other words, the reading should flow and the reader should be comfortable with expression and with the subject matter they are reading.

Spellings

The children have a weekly spelling test every Wednesday. The spellings are based on the lists in the Nelson Alphabetical List. They have 18 English spellings and 9/12 Irish spellings weekly. The children are tested on a third of these spellings on Thursdays, Fridays and Mondays.

In learning the spellings, the children are encouraged to use the method of **Look, Say, Cover, Write & Check**. They are also encouraged to look for visual clues and patterns in the words they are learning. I advise them to learn the spellings before they do any written homework, and then at the end of the written homework, to go to someone and have the spellings asked without looking at them again in the meantime. These should be written by the pupil when being tested, as spelling is a written exercise. In this way, they have shown that the spellings have stayed in the memory for a period of time. As an incentive and to ensure that the children are working on spellings that challenge them, they can move up targets, depending on how many sets they get right in the current target.

Maths

Work from the new Ready, Steady, Go! Maths books will be included most nights, except when some new work has to be practised from the Planet Maths textbook with the aim of reinforcing work done in class. Work should be presented neatly and the children should keep the rule of 'a digit in every square'. The new book teaches the skills required to mentally calculate the answers to problems, rather than just test the pupils on their knowledge. Any topic being revised that the child is not familiar with should be skipped without stress and the teacher will go over it the next day.

Tables or other lists of number facts will also have to be learned to aid with mental computation. They will be tested weekly in first term, with 50 multiplication number facts in five-minute tests. Games are played in class to reinforce their knowledge and add a fun element. The 'Hit the Button' game on the web is ideal for practising these at home. They will also learn the 11s and 12s.

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I would also encourage children to use IXL.com or similar websites to aid with improving their Maths skillset. IXL is free, provided no more than 10 questions per day per computer are practised. It covers the Irish Maths curriculum from infants up to Leaving Cert. Other useful free websites are multiplication.com, sumdog.com, www.topmarks.co.uk and mangahigh.com. These present maths work to children in child-friendly visual ways and can be rewarding if used regularly.

Writing

Writing homework may also be included which could come from any subject. Literacy skills are practised over all subject areas, so we always expect good penmanship, neatly presented work and accurate spelling. Joined writing is encouraged once proficiency is achieved; it is not essential if it proves too problematic or slows the pupil down.

Irish Reading

The new Irish curriculum (2016) does focus more on oral language, but Irish reading in *Am Don Léamh* should still be practised every night. The audio of each story is uploaded at weekends to the school website under "Classes" (www.stconals.ie) The children will usually be given a page to practise which will have been worked on in class. Revision of past reading is also advisable, especially earlier in a given theme. Again, the observance of punctuation, good voice modulation, a brisk pace and reading for meaning are essential. A positive approach to Irish reading is important to model for the children and the children should be able to practise with relative confidence, even if a parent hasn't a good command of Irish.

The *Gaeilge Úsáideach* pages should also be practised at home as constant revision facilitates fluency in speech. Each page contains 21 common phrases and are used in class to stimulate conversation and to construct dialogue, which can then be altered by the children themselves as sheet follows sheet. They will also be given verb and adjective sheets that should be maintained in a good condition in the Irish section of their folder.

General Points

- We would request that the homework diary be signed by a parent and the relevant homework ticked as having been done to the satisfaction of the parent.
- Homework is essential in revising topics, practising necessary skills and it also gives parents an opportunity to feel involved in their child's learning. If children are struggling in any particular area or are taking too long to complete their work, it is important that the teacher be notified so that unnecessary stress can be avoided.
- Free Websites which can be both educational and fun for children include www.seomraranga.com, www.topmarks.co.uk, www.multiplication.com, www.timestables.me.uk and www.scoilnet.ie.
- A useful website for Irish pronunciation is www.focloir.ie

If you have any queries at any time, please feel free to ring me at the school during breaks.

Best wishes,

Tom Plunkett