



Dear Parents/ Carers,

As part of our commitment to effective teaching and learning, we are writing to explain our approach to homework and independent study in the Sixth Form. We hope this information helps you understand our expectations and supports your child in developing effective study habits, taking ownership of their learning, and using both homework and independent study time productively.

According to John Hattie, a renowned education researcher from New Zealand, homework at secondary level has an effect size of $d = 0.64$. An effect size of 0.2 is small, 0.4 is medium and 0.6 is large. Hattie argues that for any educational approach to be effective, it requires an effect size of above 0.4. On this basis, homework for secondary students has an 'excellent' effect.

Independent study is broader than homework. Homework refers to specific tasks set by teachers to extend or consolidate classwork. Independent study also includes wider activities such as reviewing lesson notes, revisiting challenging material, practising exam questions, wider reading, or preparing for upcoming topics. Both are essential in helping students develop fluency, confidence, and deeper recall of key concepts. They also build independence by encouraging students to take ownership of their learning, prepare for lessons in advance, and engage more meaningfully with teacher input.

Independent study does not only mean work done at home. Sixth Form timetables include non-contact periods in school, which should also be used productively. These sessions are designed for consolidation, reflection, and extending knowledge, as well as for completing set homework. Occasionally, some students claim they have 'nothing to do'. This is categorically not the case. Even if a teacher has not set a specific task, there is always valuable work to be getting on with, such as revising or consolidating previously covered material. Students are expected to take responsibility for using their time productively, drawing on proven study strategies. Examples of effective approaches can be found in their Year Group Team or in the WalkThru books available in school.

A key principle we share with students is that **consistency matters more than intensity**. It is far more effective to study regularly, using cognitively active strategies such as retrieval practice, summarising in their own words, and self-testing, rather than relying on last-minute, passive revision techniques like re-reading notes. Consistently doing the right things builds strong, long-term learning habits.

In the Sixth Form, students are expected to complete **90 minutes of homework per subject each week** as a minimum. Alongside this, a good rule of thumb is to spend **around one hour of independent study for every hour of teaching in each subject**. In our experience, students working towards the highest grades usually complete **15–20 hours of additional independent study per week** across all their subjects.

As education evolves, we also recognise the role of artificial intelligence (AI). Used responsibly, AI can be a valuable tool for learning, but it must not replace the thinking and effort that lead to genuine understanding. Our homework policy encourages students to use AI ethically while ensuring that their work reflects their own knowledge and skills. This protects academic integrity and prepares them for the growing role of AI in education and the workplace.

You can find our full Homework Policy on the school website, under **About Us > Policies**.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs. H Waldron
Head of Sixth Form