

Study Policy

Mercy Secondary School, Mounthawk, Tralee

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Ratification by BOM June 2008

1.1 Rationale

- This Study Policy gives practical expression to the school's mission of promoting "the highest standards of teaching, learning and performance".
- The process of creating a Study Policy, provides the opportunity to reflect upon and implement best practice in relation to study.
- Study is an integral and important aspect of a student's education and as such requires a clear set of expectations and procedures.
- It is desirable to inform the whole school community of the school's position regarding study.

1.2 Aims of Policy

- To improve the experience of learning for the learner
- To inform the school community of the school's expectations regarding study
- To promote good practice, uniformity and consistency in the approach to setting and reviewing homework
- To advance the students' understanding of the need for study, in all its aspects, so that they will achieve their full academic potential and develop effective study habits, growing in a love of learning and a commitment to lifelong learning
- To explore the role of parents in the matter of study
- To explore the role of the teacher in encouraging study

2.1 Definition of Study

Study is an umbrella term that comprises a number of components: Homework, Self-directed learning, Revision and Exam Preparation.

Homework is subject based work assigned by a teacher, for completion by a student, alone or with others, outside of school. It may be oral, aural, written, reading, drawing, thinking, memorising, research, project centred or revision in nature.

In addition, study can and should include self-directed learning by the student which complements his/her understanding of the syllabus. Allied to this is Revision and Exam preparation.

There is always study to be done!

2.2 The Purposes of Homework

In setting and reviewing homework for students we understand the purpose of homework to be

A In relation to classwork

- To reinforce the work done in class that day so as to improve understanding
- To provide the student with practice in aspects of class work
- To revise so as to reinforce the work learned last week/month

B In relation to developing study skills

- To encourage the skills needed for students to study effectively on their own and to develop skills such as research and time management
- To assist the student with examination skills
- To aid the student in developing language skills and writing skills

C In relation to monitoring progress

- To help teachers to monitor the individual student's progress
- To give parents the opportunity to see the progress of their child
- To provide regular feedback to the student on his/her progress in learning

D In relation to promoting student self-directed learning

- To encourage associative learning
- To establish the habits of study, concentration and self discipline
- To provide challenges and stimulus to gifted and talented children
- To promote self responsibility for learning
- To allow students to work at their own pace

3 Roles and Responsibilities

Students, teachers and parents play a significant role in implementing the policy.

3.1 The Responsibility of the Student

with regard to study

It is important for students to realise that study is not limited to homework, but should also include revision, exam preparation and self-directed learning.

with regard to home work

- Full participation in the school's academic programme requires the satisfactory completion of all homework assignments set at the discretion of the subject teachers. All students must undertake to complete all homework to the best of their abilities
- The student is responsible for recording homework in the Student Journal (cf Appendix 1 for information on the Student Journal)
- The student is responsible for finding out what homework (s)he has if (s)he misses class for any reason.
- Students should study for the recommended period for their year group
- Students should provide a note if homework is not done or is incomplete

3.2 The Responsibility of the teacher

regarding home work

Good practice in relation to giving homework would include the following

- Homework should be assigned to students based upon reasonable expectations
- Teachers should give regular homework, cognisant of the particular subject department policy on homework. A rough time guide is suggested for each year group. Each subject Department will develop guidelines on homework within that department.
- Teachers should give clear instructions re homework and time to record homework
- Teachers are mindful in setting homework of spacing large scale assignments such as essays and projects.
- Homework should be appropriate to the student's ability
- Homework should be purposeful and meaningful to the work of the class.
- The school will provide support and guidance in developing study skills through the Guidance programme, SPHE classes and direction from subject teachers.

Good practice in relation to correcting homework would include the following

- Teachers should check/correct homework as soon as practicable
- It is recommended, when making written corrections of a student's written work, that the corrected work be initialled and dated
- Teachers should acknowledge in some way consistent completion of homework. It is important to give feedback to direct and encourage improvement and learning.
- Students can be involved in correcting their own homework under direction from the teacher, as this can be a good learning experience.

Feedback to parents

- Teachers should record in student's journal if homework is not done
- Teachers should check journal for parents' signatures

With regard to Study

While teachers cannot have responsibility for monitoring independent study, revision or exam preparation, teachers encourage students to engage in study beyond the limits of homework alone. With regard to revision, teachers can remind students of the importance of scheduling revision and from time to time may assist classes in structuring such revision and exam preparation.

Teachers encourage students to discover the joy of self-directed learning. Teachers can use homework assignments to promote self-directed learning and to foster the skills of independent study such as research, investigation etc.

3.3 The responsibility of the Parent

As partners in their children's education with the school, parents are expected to take an active interest in their study.

With regard to study and home work

Supervision of homework:

- Support their child in setting aside time each day for study
- Provide adequate supervision as appropriate to the needs of the student
- Ensure that the homework component is complete to the best of the student's ability
- Ensure that their children find out their homework if they missed class for any reason
- Check that their children review class work and engage in frequent revision
- Ensure that the student plans sports and social activity around study time

Provision of space and facilities:

- Provide adequate facilities to enable their children to undertake study, i.e. space, light, heat, ventilation, freedom from noise and other interference such as television, radio, music etc.
- Provide work materials and ongoing support as needed

Communication with teacher:

- Assist teachers to monitor homework by checking journals regularly and signing weekly

- Furnish an explanatory note in the event that homework is incomplete or not done. It is the parents' responsibility to inform the school or class teacher of any reasons why a student was unable to complete a homework assignment.
- Communicate with teachers any concerns about the nature of homework or your child's approach to homework

4. Related matters

4.1 Copies / Materials

Each student should have the required copy books for each subject and should enter written homework into the correct copy. It should be dated e.g. homework for day/month/year. The work should be written clearly. This assists with revision.

4.2 Duration of Study

While the amount of time required to complete the same assignment may vary from student to student, below are guidelines for minimal homework times. Should a student satisfactorily finish the homework in less time, then the remaining time should be used for revision and self-directed learning.

Junior Cycle

- First year 1½ hours *effective* work
- Second year 2 to 2½ hours *effective* work
- Third year 2½ to 3 hours *effective* work

Senior Cycle

- Fifth year 3 hours with 3+ hours at the weekend *effective* work
- Sixth year 3 to 4 hours with 6 hours at the weekend *effective* work
- Remember: Many students manage more than this. The top grades demand this time commitment (at least). *Effective work* means you are alive, alert and efficient. The Leaving Certificate is a 2 year course and requires substantial effort and dedication over the 2 years. Working during the holiday time will be necessary. **All students will have home work every week night.**

The school recommends strongly that students should not have jobs as the level of concentration required for both class and study is a sufficient demand on the energy levels of growing students.

4.3 Supervised Study

An after-school study programme is on offer within the school. Students are invited to apply for a place at the beginning of the school year. The school provides a 2 and a 3 hour session for students. The 3 hour session is aimed at exam classes. (cf Appendix 2 for rules and regulations regarding Supervised Study).

4.4 Sanctions.

As homework is an essential part of school life, it is reasonable to expect that all students will make an honest effort to complete it satisfactorily.

Situations may arise from time to time which prevent students having their homework done. Naturally, in these cases, no sanctions will apply provided an explanatory note from parents is furnished.

With regard to failure to produce homework or lack of effort in completing homework, teachers will follow the procedures outlined in the school behaviour code. (section 6.5.b., cf. Appendix 3)

4.5 Developing Study Skills and promoting Study

'You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives'. Clay P. Bedford

It is our aim in Mercy Mounthawk to develop the study skills of our students. We do so for a number of reasons. In the short term we are committed to encouraging all our students to achieve their potential in examinations and to gain the skills in study that will benefit them in their further 3rd level education. In the long term, we hope that our students will leave Mercy Mounthawk with a love of study and a hunger to continue their learning into adulthood and with the essential study skills to engage with enjoyment and success in learning.

There is a whole school approach to and responsibility for the development of study skills.

School management focuses on the importance of study at information talks with parents and at student assemblies and seeks to promote a partnership between home and school in developing and sustaining good study practices.

Each subject teacher is mindful of the need to help students develop good study techniques specific to their particular discipline.

The Guidance Department in the school has developed a programme to develop study skills spread over the life of the student in the school, outlined in the Guidance policy.

A section of the S.P.H.E. syllabus focuses specifically on study skills appropriate to the development age of the student.

A number of initiatives have been undertaken by Year Heads to help support good study practices among students in their year groups.

4.6 Special Educational Needs

In setting homework for students with special needs teachers are encouraged to balance the right of students to share fully in the work of the class, including homework, with their individual learning needs. Subject teachers will collaborate where possible with the Learning Support teacher to ensure tasks are appropriate to the ability of each student. For all students, the continuing involvement of parents is very valuable.

5. Arrangements for Monitoring and Evaluating the Study Policy

5.1 Implementation Phase: September 2008 to May 2010

Each Subject Department will develop guidelines on the amount of homework to be given per subject in each year.

Teachers will receive in-service on AFL (Assessment for Learning) to be organised by the school as per the school plan.

5.2 Monitoring Procedures

Year Heads and Guidance counsellors will conduct ongoing monitoring through informal discussion with students, subject teachers and parents and will note feedback from same.

Subject Departments will review the implementation of Department guidelines at year end.

The Principal /Deputy Principal will meet with Subject Department Heads to collate feedback.

The Principal will report to the B.O.M. by may 2010.

5.3 Review Procedures

The policy will be reviewed every 2 year. Starting in 2010.

Views of teachers, students and parents will be sought as part of the review.

6. Timeline for the Study Policy

Survey of staff - End August 2007 Results of Survey presented to Teachers' Council by Planning Co-Ordinator September 2007

Draft of Homework Policy submitted to Teachers' Council by Planning Co-Ordinator - October 4 2007

Questionnaire put to parents of first years - week of October 10 2007

Second Draft submitted to Teachers' Council - End January 2008

Consultation with Staff - staff meeting February 27th

Consultation with Parents and students – March 2008

Final consultation with Staff - May 16th

Ratification of policy by BOM - June 2008

Implementation phase - September 2008 to May 2010.

APPENDIX 1. Purpose and Use of the Student Journal

The Journal is an essential item in every student's equipment as a means of communication between teachers and parents and vice versa.

Students are required to have their journals in their possession while in school. They are also required to record homework for each subject each day. They are required to record homework for each subject each day

Parents are strongly encouraged to examine the journal on a daily basis and to sign it every weekend.

Teachers should check that parents are signing the journal on a weekly basis. They should allow adequate time in class for the recording of homework.

To facilitate this communication, the journal provides:

- Pages on which to record homework given in each subject every day. If the homework is not due for the next day the student should put a reminder in the space for the day before it is due.
- Space at the bottom of each page, which teachers may use to communicate with parents.
- A space where parents sign weekly to indicate that they have examined the journal for that week.

APPENDIX 2 SUPERVISED STUDY

Supervised study is provided in two session lengths, a 2 hour sessions for non-exam classes and a 3 hour session for examination students. The two hour session runs from 4.00 to 6.00 and the 3 hour session continues to 7.00.

In order to facilitate students gaining the maximum benefit from supervised study the following will apply:

- A record of attendance and any other information (e.g. students' punctuality, behaviour, etc.) will be sent home on a term basis.
- Students are expected to be punctual for all study periods. Arriving late disrupts other students' concentration. If, due to unforeseen circumstances, a student is late a note from parents/guardians will be required by the supervisor on duty.
- No electronic equipment e.g. phones, ipods, walkmans is allowed in the study rooms.
- Trips to lockers are not allowed during study time.
- Each student is expected to cooperate fully with the supervisor and normal school rules apply e.g. full school uniform must be worn, no eating, drinking or chewing gum during study etc.
- Students are required to go to the toilet before study so that no interruptions are required.
- Students who arrive late for any study period must present themselves at the designated study area. School authorities will not tolerate students loitering in any other part of the school during the study periods.
- Persistent poor time-keeping or refusal by a student to co-operate with his/her supervisor may lead to suspension or, in more serious cases, expulsion from supervised study. In this situation fees will be forfeited.

The fees required for supervised study are set per term in order to cover costs.

Fees must be pre-paid before attendance at study. Payment must be by cheque or bank draft payable to Mercy Mounthawk. Cash is not acceptable for security and accountability reasons. Places will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

APPENDIX 3 Section of the Behaviour Code in relation to Homework

- 6.5.b No Homework done:
- *On the first occasion:*
 - - Note in the journal to be signed by parents or a standard letter home
 - - The student is required to do the work as well as the new work for that night
- *On subsequent occasions:*
 - - Penalty sheet issued as well as requiring the work to be done
 - - A Reflection Sheet may be issued
 - - On recurrence of the problem, the teacher may consult with the Year Head regarding addressing the problem with the student.
- *Persistent offences:*
 - - In the case of students who consistently refuse to do homework, the student can be referred to the Deputy Principal with responsibility for curriculum using an Academic Referral Form
 - - A meeting may be requested with parents to address the situation.