



## ST. VINCENT'S CASTLEKNOCK COLLEGE

# Homework Policy

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### 1. Introductory Statement

The Homework Policy of St Vincent's Castleknock College is a structured document that describes the school's approach to homework. This policy is an integral part of the College's overall school development plan.

### 2. Scope of this Policy

To what will the policy apply?

The policy will apply to all aspects of teaching and learning related to "work" which is done outside the classroom, ie: at home. Such activity may constitute revision of material already covered, preparation of material to be referred to in class, ongoing project research, wider reading, and so on.

To whom will the policy apply?

The policy will apply to school staff and students.

### 3. Rationale for this Policy

Homework helps students to construct knowledge, develop deeper understandings and connections amongst the concepts to which they have been introduced, and provides an opportunity for them to apply the skills they have acquired.

The purpose of this policy is to help students develop and sustain good study habits. It fosters positive values such as self-discipline, responsibility, and an interest in learning, which will benefit them throughout their lives.

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### 4. Relationship of this Policy to the Characteristic Spirit of the School

The Mission Statement of St Vincent's Castleknock College is set out as follows:

*To have a College which is concerned with the development of the whole person in a Christian atmosphere which encourages involvement in a balance of religious, intellectual, cultural and sporting activities and which promotes the growth of self-worth and respect for others in the spirit of St Vincent de Paul.*

The College's Mission Statement guides the College's Homework Policy. The College acknowledges the role of parents in the education of their sons and the importance of good communication between the home and the subject teacher. Homework exercises can form a useful means of communicating progress.

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## 5. Key points

- (a) Homework should be meaningful for the teacher and the student.
- (b) Homework may serve to re-enforce work done in class and it can act as a bridge between the work of one day and the next.
- (c) Homework should be organically and systematically linked with and integrated into a programme of teaching and learning thereby forming part of the process of assessment for learning.
- (d) Homework should be designed in such a way as to offer the students opportunities for self-assessment.
- (e) Homework offers an opportunity for a more meaningful dialogue between school and home.
- (f) Assigning homework, both written and oral, on a regular basis is central to the learning process and an expectation of the majority of parents.
- (g) Homework can take many forms: preparation, practice, extension, enrichment.
- (h) Homework should generally be assigned in the second half of classes and students may be allowed to begin it in class.
- (i) Homework assignments in junior classes should be written on the board and teachers should ensure that all homework is entered and dated in the Journal.
- (j) Homework assignments for all years should also be entered on MS Teams. This allows for the teacher to see that work is 'viewed', 'handed in' or 'late'.
- (k) Using MS Teams for homework also allows those students who are absent from school to engage with the work set.

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## 6. Types of homework assignments

### (a) Preparation

This type of assignment is intended to help students get ready for the next day's classroom lesson. For instance, a reading assignment may be given prior to a lesson. Students might be asked to write their own discussion questions based on the reading assignment. Or, the student may be asked to complete answers to reading review questions from the text.

### (b) Practice

By successfully completing practice assignments, students have the opportunity to review and reinforce skills, knowledge, and information presented in a previous lesson. A simple example might be that after a grammar lesson, students are asked to write their own sentences and label the specific grammatical elements presented in the most recent classroom lesson.

(c) Extension

Extension assignments ask students to expand on skills and/or concepts taught during a previous class. For example, after studying a period in history students might be asked to read an article or book pertaining to that period and report their findings to the class.

(d) Creative/Enrichment

This assignment includes analysing, synthesising and evaluating concepts or skills already taught. Students have an opportunity to develop and apply their own ideas about a topic and prepare a presentation for the teachers or class. One example would be to assign students the task of creating an invention that would solve a problem. Another might be to write a play or short story.

What is stressed here is that not all homework is alike in nature and purpose. In considering different types of homework to set, teachers might usefully refer to the different kinds of questioning employed in class.

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## 7. Assessing homework and offering feedback

- (a) Students and parents expect feedback on their written assignments. Colleagues are reminded of the research which indicates that comment-only marking is often more productive than a simple grade.
- (b) A whole school reflection template has been designed (FIT: Feedback, Improvement, Time) which can be adapted by subject departments and used by students to enable their reflection on progress.
- (c) A student who has no homework done must present his subject teacher(s) with a note from home. Should a student not have his work done, or not have a note from home excusing the work, the teacher should write a note in his journal with a request to have it signed.
- (d) Late presentation of homework is not acceptable and all teachers should insist that the students hand in their assignments on schedule. Students who persist in not doing their home-work or are regularly late in handing it in, should have an 'event' entered online.
- (e) Assessment of a piece of homework should be based upon the criteria for success in the particular task set. For example, there is little to be gained by drawing attention to lapses in the surface presentation (spelling, punctuation, etc.) of a piece of student work, if this had not been specifically articulated as one of the criteria against which success was to be measured. Neither is it helpful to set out too many criteria against which the work will be judged.
- (f) Teachers might usefully consider whether always giving marks or grades helps students to learn more effectively. In particular, the giving of marks can be counter-productive even when they are accompanied by the teacher's comments as to how students might improve. Students all too often ignore the helpful comments and pay attention solely to the marks. Those who have received low marks, then, merely see themselves failing to achieve while those whose marks are high can neglect to look for the specific direction as to the strengths in their work and the areas where they might need to improve.

### Note on Comment-only Marking

It is important to bear in mind that giving a mark in itself does not help students to understand how they might improve their work. The assessment is not formative in intention and it will do little or nothing for learning. In fact, giving marks or grades cancels out the impact of formative comments. In adopting the approach of comment-only marking the teacher gives feedback in three key areas in the student's learning cycle:

- what the student has done right
- what weaknesses there are in the student's work

- what the next step/s should be to improve performance or understanding

This kind of feedback will be most helpful when the learning intentions and criteria for success are clearly understood by the students. The teacher's comments should relate to the task in hand, the learning intention and the criteria for success.

Where a school (or a subject department within a school) adopts a policy of comment-only marking, this should be explained to parents so that they understand what is happening and can be supportive to students in responding to feedback. In this way comment-only marking can become an important part of the school's practice of reporting to parents.

Comment-only marking does not preclude the giving of marks or grades to an assignment. The teacher can record the marks he/she awards to each assignment and use them to build up a picture of summative achievement for the student.

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## 8. Guidelines for time of homework allocated (approx.)

1st year: 10-15 minutes per subject 2 or 3 times a week  
 2nd year: 10 – 20 minutes per subject 2 or 3 times a week  
 3rd year: 20 – 25 minutes per subject 2 or 3 times a week  
 TY: 20-25 minutes per subject twice a week.  
 5th / 6th year: 30-40 minutes per subject 3 or 4 times a week

## Links to School Policies

Paragraph 6.6 of the Code of Behaviour states:

The College regards Homework as a critical component of learning. Hence, each student must enter his homework in his Homework Journal and present this Journal for inspection when requested. If a student fails to produce homework, the teacher will:

- Seek to resolve the issue initially using his/her own classroom management skills. This can involve setting a new date for submission, extra work, notifying parents through the school journal along with other methods. The teacher may also record an event here online as a record of steps taken to assist the student.
- If the issue persists then the teacher must enter an event online while still trying to resolve it internally. More than one event may be entered if there is no resolution.
- The Year Head will assist the classroom teacher in dealing with persistent failure to hand in work.

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Signed: 

Chairperson of Board of Management

Date: 24 March 2021

Signed: 

Principal/Secretary to the Board of Management

Date: 24 March 2021