

Foreword

by the Secretary of State

Learning at home is an essential part of the good education to which all our children are entitled. It is not just about reinforcing learning in the classroom, although that is important. A good, well organised homework programme helps children and young people to develop the skills and attitudes they will need for successful, independent lifelong learning. Homework supports the development of independent learning skills, so enquiry and investigation are seen as part of the learning process. Given the increasing importance to everyone of flexibility and the ability to learn independently, developing these skills and attitudes must be a central aim for all schools.



Many schools have long experience of planning and managing an effective homework programme, working in close partnership with parents. These guidelines draw on their experience and good practice, and aim to help all schools develop their own programmes. Homework partnerships with parents, carers and pupils are vital to extending high quality learning beyond the limits of the school day. Our National Framework for Study Support will also help by providing study centres in schools. By working together, we can ensure that young people are equipped with the disciplines and understanding they need to continue learning throughout their adult lives.

David Blunkett

Rt Hon David Blunkett MP

Introduction

- 1 Research over a number of years in this and other countries has shown that homework can make an important contribution to pupils' progress at school. An OFSTED Report published in 1995 (*Homework in Primary and Secondary Schools*, HMSO, London) confirmed that, many pupils and their parents saw work done at home as a valuable and essential part of school work... . Also the 1996/97 OFSTED Annual Report noted that homework is important at all stages in a child's education and that when used properly, it extends the challenge open to the pupil and ensures that teaching time is used to maximum effect. In this country there is evidence that pupils in the highest achieving schools spend more time on learning activities at home than pupils in other schools. Among primary schools, NFER research in 1995 showed that almost half of all pupils in Year 6 were not given regular homework.
- 2 The Government believes that there is enormous advantage in children spending regular periods of time, initially quite short, on different learning activities devised by schools as part of a homework programme which supports the work they do in class. These need not be very formal or done without help: for infants homework should consist largely of reading and sharing books with parents and carers. Homework need not, and should not, get in the way of other activities which they may do after school such as sport, music and clubs of all kinds. These activities can be very beneficial and one of the aims of the Government's proposals for the development of study support (see *Extending Opportunity: A national Framework for Study Support* * published earlier this year) is that a wide range of after school activities should be available to children who have not had access to them in the past.
- 3 The Government's White Paper, *Excellence in Schools* proposed that national guidelines on homework should be published. The following guidelines set out the Government's view on the purposes of homework in primary and secondary schools respectively, on how much and of what sort should be set for pupils of different ages, and on what should be expected of both schools and parents in supporting pupils. They take account of comments on earlier versions of the guidelines for primary and secondary schools, published separately for consultation in April.
- 4 There are no guidelines specifically for special schools as they vary so much both in age range and in the appropriate homework expectations. However, special schools should review their policies carefully taking account of the aspects of the primary and secondary guidelines which are most relevant to them.

* Copies of the National Framework ISBN 0855 22 755 9 are available from DFEE Publications Centre, PO Box 5050, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 6ZQ; tel 0845 602 2260; fax 0845 603 3360.



The evidence on which the guidelines are based

- 5 The guidelines draw on extensive research and analysis into current good practice in schools. They are informed, in particular, by a study conducted by OFSTED in 1997 which involved a systematic review of research literature, analysis of the OFSTED database, a structured telephone questionnaire survey of 368 schools identified from the database for the quality of their homework arrangements, visits to a further 29 schools and a questionnaire survey of about 1,000 Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 pupils across the visited schools. A summary of the findings of this study is included as an annex to these guidelines (see page 25). The primary guidelines also take account of ideas and experience generated through the National Literacy and Numeracy Projects.
- 6 The OFSTED study shows that homework is well established in a number of primary schools. Many have been very successful in ensuring that homework is well integrated within their everyday work and planning, and in winning the support of parents. In the secondary sector, while almost all schools have homework systems and policies in place, there is inconsistency across the country and room for improvement in many schools in the way it is planned, managed and evaluated. The evidence suggests that homework makes the greatest contribution to learning when:
 - homework policy is led by the senior management of the school as part of the school's overall learning and assessment strategy;
 - tasks are carefully planned and structured to support progression in learning, as part of schools' schemes of work;

- there is consistent practice across the school in setting, managing and marking homework (as appropriate);
- there is a regular programme so that everyone – teachers, children and parents or carers – knows what to expect each week;
- pupils and parents or carers are very clear about what they need to do;
- parents and carers are treated as partners in their children's learning;
- there are high expectations of pupils in completing homework;
- pupils receive prompt, clear feedback on their work;
- homework policies are regularly monitored and evaluated to check that they support pupils' learning in the best possible way.

Implementing the guidelines

- 7 These guidelines are intended to help schools draw up and implement effective homework policies. They are not statutory; schools are not required by law to follow them. As now, OFSTED inspectors in considering schools' homework policies and their operation will be guided by the relevant section of the OFSTED framework for inspection.
- 8 Many schools already have detailed arrangements for homework and will need to make little, if any, change to their arrangements in the light of the guidelines. For others, implementing the guidelines will require some more radical changes. New policies for homework need to be drawn up with care and sensitivity, in full consultation with parents. The Government is aware that this may take time.

What is homework?

- 9 Schools do not always define homework in exactly the same way. For these guidelines homework refers to any work or activities which pupils are asked to do outside lesson time, either on their own or with parents or carers.

A partnership with parents; homework and home-school agreements

- 10 To be effective homework needs to be part of a wider partnership between parents and schools. Schools need to be able to count on parents' support for their aims and parents need to be consulted and informed about school policies. In some schools homework is already an important part of home-school agreements between parents and schools. This can help to create and maintain parents' commitment to homework, which is essential if it is to be

effective. The School Standards and Framework Act 1998 contains provisions requiring all schools to draw up home school agreements in consultation with parents. Guidance from the DFEE on the requirements of the legislation, Home-School Agreements Guidance For Schools*, makes it clear that all home school agreements will need to set out the school's expectations about homework and the means by which parents will be consulted about changes.

A whole school policy for homework

- 11 In any school, both teachers and parents need to be completely clear about what is expected of pupils in the way of homework and how it should be organised and managed. They should also be consulted regularly about school policies. The Government believes that the best way to ensure that everyone knows what is expected is for schools to have a written policy on homework, publicly available on request. All schools are encouraged to draw up a written policy or, if they have one already, to review it, consulting parents and teachers carefully. All parents should then be sent a copy of the policy and encouraged to discuss it with their child's teacher.
- 12 Policy documents should aim to be an important source of guidance and information for both teachers and parents (or, in the case of secondary schools, a common consistent framework for more detailed guidance drawn up, for example, by subject faculties and departments) and should cover all the issues set out in these guidelines. A good whole school policy,



* Copies of the Home-School Agreement Guidance For Schools are available from DFEE publications centre, PO Box 5050, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6ZQ; tel 0845 602 2260; fax 0845 603 3360.

consistently applied, can ensure that homework arrangements are manageable for everyone, not least teachers, as well as educationally beneficial.

Leaflet for parents

- 13 The DFEE has published a leaflet for parents about home-school agreements which covers homework, setting out the key messages in these guidelines. Schools should ensure that parents see copies of the leaflet, *Home-School Agreement Leaflet For Parents**, as part of schools' consultation over their own policies.

Case study (1)

Greenwood Junior School, Nottingham

In 1993 head teacher John Botham introduced Home Study at Greenwood Junior School in inner city Nottingham, through home school contracts. Parents agree to work with pupils at home, using an imaginative home study book which the school gives to pupils along with a special home study bag and other resources. Homework assignments follow a set pattern every week of four activities – Spelling, English, Maths and Science – each with a recommended time allocation – usually 15 minutes for year 3 pupils ranging to around 30 minutes for year 6 pupils. In return for parents' commitment the school undertakes to provide regular feedback and opportunities for discussion with parents, including home visits.

What should be in school homework policies?

- 14 Homework policies need to have enough detail to give clear guidance to parents and teachers about what is expected of them and of pupils on a weekly basis. The following paragraphs set out the issues which the policies of primary and secondary schools respectively should address. Individual schools may, of course, wish to add other issues to reflect their particular circumstances.

* Copies of the *Home-School Agreement Leaflet For Parents* are available from DfEE publications centre, PO Box 5050, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 6ZQ; tel 0845 602 2260; fax 0845 603 3360.

Primary Schools

The purpose of homework

15 Policies should set out clearly the purposes of homework. In general terms these should include:

- developing an effective partnership between the school and parents and other carers in pursuing the aims of the school. This is also, of course, the purpose of home school agreements;
- consolidating and reinforcing skills and understanding, particularly in literacy and numeracy;
- exploiting resources for learning, of all kinds, at home;
- extending school learning, for example through additional reading; and
- encouraging pupils as they get older to develop the confidence and self discipline needed to study on their own, and preparing them for the requirements of secondary school.

Case study (2)

Agreeing on purpose: Berkeley Primary School, Gloucestershire

When the new head arrived in 1995, the staff supported the decision to formalise the homework structure. The findings from a parents consultation questionnaire were discussed by the staff, and the deputy head prepared a draft. The policy was tested informally in 1996/97, amended and formally adopted in September 1997. It will be evaluated each year using feedback from parents and staff. The list of purposes reflects the care taken:

Through this policy we aim to:

- ensure consistency of approach throughout the school;
- ensure progression towards independence and individual responsibility;
- ensure the needs of the individual pupil are taken into account;
- ensure parents/guardians have a clear understanding about expectations from themselves and the pupil;
- improve the quality of learning experience offered to pupils;
- extend and support the learning experience via reinforcement and revision;
- provide opportunities for parents, pupils and school to work in partnership;
- provide opportunities for parents and pupils to work together to enjoy learning experiences;
- encourage children to develop long term strategies for future needs;
- at Year 6, to prepare children for secondary transfer.

- 16 Policies need to reflect the fact that in primary schools the purposes of homework change as children get older. For children in Key Stage 1, developing a partnership with parents or carers and involving them actively in children's learning is the key purpose and the activities children do at home may not be described by schools as homework.
- 17 Short activities of different kinds – simple games, learning spellings and number facts and, of course, reading together – provide a very important opportunity for young children to talk about what they are learning to an interested adult, and to practise key skills in a supportive environment.
- 18 As children get older homework provides an opportunity for children to develop the skills of independent learning, and this should increasingly become its main purpose. It is important that children should gradually get into the habit of regularly devoting periods of time, which may not be long, to study on their own. By the time children reach Year 6 their homework programme should cover a wide range of tasks and curriculum content, with a regular weekly schedule. This approach will benefit their learning and also ensure that, in relation to homework as much as to other aspects, their transition to Year 7/secondary school is as smooth as possible. Primary and secondary schools which form part of local pyramids or clusters should co-ordinate their homework policies so that this aim can be achieved.

The type and amount of homework which is appropriate for pupils of different ages

- 19 Policies should give clear guidance about the sort of homework, and how much of it, pupils should do at different ages. In the Government's view the main focus of homework for children at primary schools should be on literacy and numeracy. Science and other subjects should be added to the programme as children move up the school, without losing this focus on literacy and numeracy. Again, homework does not just mean formal exercises carried out by children without help from adults. Particularly in the case of younger children, it is the involvement of parents and carers in joint activities, which can be very brief, which is most valuable in promoting children's learning.
- 20 Regular reading is vital. For children in Key Stage 1 homework should very largely consist of regular reading with parents and carers, looking at books together. Reading practice and listening to others read then continues to be essential right through primary school. One of the key messages for parents and carers of the Government's campaign in the National Year of Reading is that all primary school age children should either read to their parents or carers, listen to them reading or, if they are fluent readers, read on their own for at least 10 to 20 minutes a day. This may be done in the context of homework, for example a six year old reading her school reading book to a parent or a ten year old reading a reference book for a history project. Or it may be done separately – parents reading stories to children or children reading out signs or notices on the way to school.
- 21 Other literacy related homework will include, of course, learning spellings and practising correct punctuation. In numeracy, the report of the Numeracy Task Force recommends that schools set number games and tasks, and more formal exercises for older children, that they can do at home, involving parents or carers. These should be set about twice a week for all children, with additional, more substantial or more challenging activities set at the weekend for children in Key Stage 2. The Task Force also recommends that guidance should be produced for schools as part of the National Numeracy Strategy on appropriate homework activities and how best to support parents and carers in carrying out their role. All these and other homework activities should be carefully designed to meet children's individual needs, including any special educational needs (see paragraphs 28 and 29).
- 22 In addition to these regular activities, older children should be given some homework, gradually increasing in its demands, of other kinds. Again, this should be differentiated where appropriate to take account of individual pupils' needs and might include:
- finding out information;
 - reading in preparation for lessons;
 - preparing oral presentations;
 - more traditional written assignments.

- 23 Schools should be careful to ensure that too much homework time is not spent finishing off written work carried out in class. This can often place too heavy a burden on some pupils and too light a demand on others.
- 24 The precise amount of time spent on homework is much less important than the quality of tasks set and the way they are planned to support learning. Schools need to have a clear idea of the tasks which they want pupils to do as homework and to plan these tasks as part of their schemes of work for different areas of the curriculum, particularly literacy and numeracy. Some schools, for example Greenwood Junior School in Nottingham (see case study 1), prepare sets of assignments covering the whole year which are given to parents at the beginning of the year (Greenwood School's home study book). Teachers may want to draw on national or local support services in planning tasks, for example the BBC's Learning Station on the internet.
- 25 A regular pattern is also important, particularly for literacy and numeracy. A familiar routine, for example setting tables to learn on Tuesdays and spellings on Wednesdays, is very helpful for children, parents and teachers.

Case study (3)

Planning for progression and manageability: Garway Primary School, Hereford and Worcester

At this small rural primary, the staff have made book reviews the backbone of their KS2 language homework programme. Using a variety of published and home-produced guidelines, pupils gradually learn how to develop a critique. With guidance, pupils in Years 3 and 4 chose one book to review per month (two books for Years 5 and 6). The head has gone to considerable trouble to select appropriate materials and to bring in new books, including a particular genre for reluctant readers. Starting with a very structured approach, pupils can and do progress to quite sophisticated reviews by Year 6. In addition, pupils are expected to prepare a talk on the book, to give the class.

- 26 Broad expectations, however, about the amount of time pupils might reasonably be expected to spend on homework provide a useful framework and discipline for schools and are helpful for parents. Schools' policies should therefore set out in broad terms both the kind of tasks pupils will be asked to do and the school's expectations about the amount of time children in different year groups can expect to spend on them.
- 27 The Government believes that a sensible programme of homework activities for children in Key Stage 1 should be designed to take, on average, about 1 hour a week. At Key Stage 2 the demands should gradually increase so that by Years 5 and 6 children are spending about 30 minutes a day (two and a half hours a week) on homework.

Recommended time allocation for homework

Years 1 and 2	1 hour/week	(reading, spellings, other literacy work and number work)
Years 3 and 4	1.5 hours/week	(literacy and numeracy as for Years 1 and 2
		with occasional assignments in other subjects)
Years 5 and 6	30 minutes/day	(regular weekly schedule with continued emphasis on literacy and numeracy but also ranging widely over the curriculum)

As noted in paragraph 20, the daily reading which the Government recommends for all children can, of course, be done as part of homework. On days when the homework activity is something other than reading children should be encouraged, in addition, to read on their own or with others for at least 20 minutes (less for infants).

Case study (4)

Clear, consistent and purposeful scheduling: Harston and Newton County Primary School, Cambridge

Within the last two years, the head of this village school (123 on roll) has introduced a systematic homework programme. The policy gives an outline of the homework tasks for each class and this is supplemented by separate and appropriate guidelines for staff and parents, agreed by the staff team. There are planning documents (a) spelling, handwriting and reading (for all classes) and (b) mathematics (for KS2 classes). For each class, some of which contain more than one year group, a letter is sent to parents covering a number of topics, including homework. And thus Class Two (years 1 and 2) parents are told in the autumn term about all the homework tasks: reading (daily, including guided choice of stories and free choice of library books), spellings (tested on Friday after a week to learn them), handwriting tasks (one week to complete a page, at five minutes per day), mathematics (for year 2 mainly tested on Thursday). Classes 3, 4 and 5 continue this pattern but also have a fortnightly topic related task. These tasks (four or five per term, depending on age) were set out in appropriate language on a separate sheet, so that parents and pupils knew, for the term, what was expected, when it would be set and when it should be completed. The five tasks for the top class were in science, history (three tasks on the term's topic, the Victorians) and RE.

Special educational needs

28 Setting the right type and amount of homework for children with special educational needs is not always easy. Some children in mainstream schools may benefit from special tasks separate from the homework set for other children in the class. On the other hand, it is important that they should do as much in common with other children as possible. Setting appropriate homework, which does not demand too much or too little of children and their parents, needs close co-ordination between class teachers, special needs co-ordinators and parents. Tasks should:

- have a very clear focus and time-guideline;
- give plenty of opportunities for pupils to succeed;
- help develop social as well as other skills where necessary;
- be varied and not purely written assignments;
- be manageable for teachers.

- 29 The purposes of homework outlined in paragraph 15 should apply equally to pupils with SEN. Homework should not be seen as the way of attempting to get these pupils to catch up with the rest of the class.

Case study (5)

Effective learning for pupils with SEN: Olney County First School, Bucks

In this school, where the headteacher (as SENCO) leads a support team, homework is planned according to the stage (of the SEN code) at which pupils are. Pupils at stage 1, whose progress is being monitored by the class teacher, are given key word games to take home and play to develop their retention of these words. Pupils at stage 2 add tasks which are specifically linked to their IEP targets.

There is a space on the IEP sheet for home contributions. There is a strong belief in over-learning for pupils with SEN. This is considered to be effective in helping them to make progress and depends on regular parental support which is carefully fostered.

How homework will be planned and co-ordinated so that the demands on pupils are balanced and manageable

- 30 Policies should set out:
- who is responsible for ensuring that the demands of homework are manageable for pupils and parents/carers on a day to day basis normally the class teacher;
 - regular patterns to homework, particularly for literacy and numeracy.
- 31 Teachers will want to allow more than one evening for some homework to be completed, for example to allow sufficient time for information to be collected or to take account of any after school activities the children may be doing. However homework is set, it is very important to monitor the demands on pupils so that they are as even and balanced as possible.

The role of parents and carers in supporting pupils

- 32 Policies should contain clear guidance on the role of parents and carers in supporting pupils homework and how the school expects this role to change as children get older. This guidance must be drawn up in consultation with parents and carers.
- 33 In general terms parents and carers should, in the Government's view, be encouraged to:
- provide a reasonably peaceful, suitable place in which pupil can do their homework alone or, more often for younger children, together with an adult or help pupils attend

other places where homework can be done, such as homework clubs or study support centres;

- make it clear to pupils that they value homework, and support the school in explaining how it can help their learning;
- encourage pupils and praise them when they have completed homework.

34 Beyond this parents and carers of younger children, in particular, should be encouraged, as far as possible, to become actively involved in joint homework activities with children. To help them in this they may need careful guidance from class teachers. The Government recognises that some parents may find supporting their children with homework or home activities difficult and schools may find it a challenge to enlist their help. Information on strategies used by successful schools, including schools featured in these guidelines, is available from the Standards and Effectiveness Unit at the DFEE or through the SEU's good practice database.

Case study (6)

Progress in mathematics against the odds: Servite Roman Catholic Primary School, London

At Servite RC Primary School (Kensington & Chelsea LEA), which has commonly had NCA results above the national average despite the wide ability range and a considerable proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals, regular homework is set in maths for most year groups. In order to motivate pupils, the school set up a Tables Club. Children who had learnt one set (2x, etc) were tested on all permutations of it and then became a member of the 2x Club, receiving a badge. This has now been superseded by a tables assessment card with bronze, silver and gold awards. Such schemes have worked well in a school where it is sometimes hard to involve parents, some of whom do not speak English and are not all literate in their own language. Moreover, many live in very cramped conditions. Some parents have difficulty with maths homework and have asked for a maths workshop, to which the school has agreed.

Homework and study support facilities

35 Policies should describe any opportunities which exist for older pupils to do homework, under supervision, at places other than home. These may include opportunities at school, for example during lunch time or before or after school, as well as opportunities away from school premises, at libraries or community centres.

36 We are aware of the excellent work already being done by many LEAs, schools, public libraries and other organisations to provide space and support for pupils to carry out homework. The framework set out by the Department in *Extending Opportunity: a national*

framework for study support , describes the contribution which homework clubs can make to schools wider programme of out of school hours learning activities.

- 37 The Government is providing £200 million lottery money through the New Opportunities Fund to support out of school hours learning in at least half of all secondary and special schools, and a quarter of all primary schools, by 2001. We expect homework clubs to be included in many of the projects supported by lottery funding. The Government is also making resources available to all LEAs with Premier or Division One Football Clubs in their area, to establish study support centres at the Clubs. The centres will offer a range of study support opportunities around literacy, numeracy and IT, and will include opportunities for homework.

Case study (7)

Pilot for lottery funding

Three primary schools in Richmond, Surrey, have formed a consortium with Rectory Comprehensive School to provide homework facilities as one of 50 pilot projects for the Government's plans to use lottery funds for out of school hours learning. Children will be prepared for entry into secondary school through the facilities, which will include access to ICT and a library to develop literacy skills.



Feedback for pupils, parents or carers and teachers

- 38 Where homework is done together with adults, children will often receive immediate feedback on what they are doing. In the case of work they do on their own it is very important that they build on it, and/or receive appropriate feedback as quickly as possible. This may be through class work (for example class discussion or feedback on work of which the homework assignment is a part) or through tests (for example tables and spellings), or through individual comments from their teacher (for example on written assignments). Providing individual written feedback is, of course, demanding on teachers' time. The range of tasks set for homework should take this into account, with the aim of keeping the workload of teachers manageable. Other strategies to achieve this objective should also be employed, such as asking pupils to review their own work in small groups. At a more general level, recognition of children's efforts, for example by mentioning them in assemblies or publicising the achievements of particular classes, is very important in maintaining pupils' motivation.
- 39 Where parents and carers have carried out activities with children, teachers will be interested in feedback from them, both on how well the children did the activities and on whether the activities were interesting/too easy/too hard etc. Some schools find it helpful to maintain a regular dialogue with parents through homework diaries, in which both teachers and parents record comments. Reading diaries are quite common in schools; schools should consider extending these to include comments on number activities done at home.

- 40 Policies should set out the arrangements for feedback from both teachers and parents/carers on homework so that everyone is clear what is expected of them.

Case study (8)

Developing a dialogue: St Oswald's RC Primary School,
Newcastle upon Tyne

The staff base their homework programme on a dialogue with parents which starts in the reception class. A reading workshop is held during the autumn term each year to introduce new parents to the methods used by the school so that they can support reading at home. Similarly, there is an annual maths workshop in September for the parents of Year 3 pupils. The communication from school to parents is maintained by regular newsletters. Further collaboration is planned through the Share project, to support parents working at home with their children.

Two-way dialogue is encouraged from the start through the reading diary, building on the ideas given to parents in the reading workshop. In these notebooks, which go home daily with the reading books, teachers and parents make comments on how, as well as what, the child has read. The examples provided show the range of parental response, from very detailed and supportive to more laconic. As pupils get older, the teacher's comments are angled at pupils as well as parents, and are always constructive in tone. By KS2, the dialogue is maintained through a homework notebook in which tasks are reported and completed and comments encouraged.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating policies

- 41 The efficiency and effectiveness of homework policies needs to be monitored and evaluated. For example, in some schools a teacher is responsible for checking a sample of homework diaries and assignments from time to time and discussing with teachers how far school policies are being successfully implemented.
- 42 In addition to arrangements for day to day monitoring and evaluation, policies should also set out when the school expects to review the policy, how parents will be involved in the review, and what criteria will be used to assess its effectiveness. The key criterion should be the extent to which the policy is contributing to the progress pupils make at school and their attitude to learning.

Case study (9)

Clarity, consistency and rigour: Coppemill Primary School Walthamstow

In this urban school, where 38% of those entering the nursery are bilingual, homework is set in a whole school programme from the nursery onwards, starting with reading activities and adding in spelling (Year 1), and number and multiplication facts (Year 2). By Year 5, there is a fortnightly task linked to other subject areas; in Year 6 this becomes weekly. Homework in spelling, reading and maths is differentiated according to ability; for example in Year 3 there are four spelling groups and number facts are set on an individual basis. The policy is co-ordinated by the Deputy Head. A rigorous monitoring system helps staff to assess whether or not their approach is meeting pupils' needs. A sample of home-school books is collected from each class every term to check for compliance with the policy. Written feedback is provided by the Deputy on the quality of the homework set. There is strong support from parents.

Secondary Schools

The purpose of homework

- 43 Homework policies should set out clearly the purposes of homework. These should include:
- encouraging pupils to develop the skills, confidence and motivation needed to study effectively on their own. This is vital given the importance for pupils in the future of life long learning and adaptability;
 - consolidating and reinforcing skills and understanding developed at school;
 - extending school learning, for example through additional reading;
 - sustaining the involvement of parents and carers in the management of pupils learning and keeping them informed about the work pupils are doing;
 - managing particular demands, such as GCSE course work.

Case study (1)

The purpose of homework : Ninestiles Technology College, Birmingham

The generally very positive 1996 inspection report had highlighted inconsistent practice in setting homework in KS3 as a key issue for action. Since then the school has tackled this issue with vigour. A sub-group of the Curriculum Committee first clarified what homework was and the purposes it should serve. Their conclusions were presented in the form of clear and simple checklists, useful for pupils, parents and teachers. Each department was required to produce its own more detailed policy to comply with these criteria.

Homework: What is it for?

- independent learning
- consolidation
- practice learning by doing
- completion of course work assignments
- self-discipline
- research
- pupil/parent/teacher partnership
- work not suited to classroom situation

The amount of homework appropriate for pupils of different ages

- 44 The intrinsic value of homework activities is far more important than the precise amount of time devoted to them. Broad expectations about how much time it is reasonable for pupils to spend are useful, however, both as a framework and discipline for schools and as a guide for parents and pupils. Policies should therefore contain clear and flexible guidance as to the broad amount of homework which should be expected of pupils of different ages.
- 45 Good practice suggests that the amount of time which should be spent by pupils at secondary schools, on average, on homework or GCSE course work, should fall within the following ranges:

Years 7 8	45 90 minutes per day
Year 9	1 2 hours a day
Years 10 11	1.5 2.5 hours a day

- 46 In Years 12 and 13 the amount of work done by pupils outside lessons will, of course, depend on their individual programmes, but guidance on this should be included in schools policies.

How homework will be planned and co-ordinated so that the demand on pupils time is consistent and manageable on a daily basis

- 47 Policies should set out the arrangements made by schools to ensure that the total amount of homework set for pupils either daily or weekly is consistent and manageable for them on a daily basis. They should not be required to work in a way which gives them too much to do on some days and too little on others. Homework timetables co-ordinated across subjects and setting out subject allocations for each day are helpful, but it is important that subject teachers appreciate the need to work within this timetable, both in giving homework and in setting deadlines for its completion. Homework diaries can be helpful to pupils and teachers in implementing and monitoring an effective homework timetable.
- 48 Meeting homework deadlines is not always easy for some pupils, particularly if they are expected to help at home, for example looking after younger siblings, or have weekend jobs. They should not be excused homework, but may need extra help with strategies to manage it.
- 49 It is very important that homework arrangements, including sanctions for not completing it, should be consistently applied across the school so that all pupils see the arrangements as fair.

The role of parents and carers in supporting pupils

50 Policy statements should set out clearly:

- what the school expects parents and carers to do to support pupils in relation to homework;
- pupils own responsibilities;
- how parental/pupil roles are expected to change as pupils move up the school.

51 In the Government's view parents and carers should be encouraged, as far as possible, to:

- provide a reasonably peaceful, suitable place in which pupils can do their homework or help pupils attend other places where homework can be done, such as homework clubs or study support centres;
- make it clear to pupils that they value homework, and support the school in explaining how it can help them make progress at school;
- encourage pupils and praise them when they have completed homework;
- expect deadlines to be met and check that they are.

52 It is very important that pupils should have frequent and increasing opportunities to develop and consolidate their competence as independent learners. These might be achieved through homework diaries and planners, tutorials on study skills, target setting and mentoring schemes.

Case study (2)

Promoting Independent Learners: Huntington School, York

In this 11 18 comprehensive school, a combination of strategies is used to encourage pupils from Year 7 onwards to develop responsibility for managing their homework, as part of a broader programme for promoting independent learning, with the support of parents (who sign a home-school contract), subject teachers and tutors. Each pupil has a student planner in which to record their homework, and these are checked systematically by tutors each week. In this way tutors can check that all the systems are working: that is that parents have signed for the week's work and that tasks have been set in line with the homework timetable. By following this structured approach, all pupils are helped to get the habit of using the planners systematically. The tutors run a tutorial programme on developing independent learning, and discussion of homework is built into this. (Pupils themselves confirmed that this had happened). One of the Year 8 tutors saw the main purpose of homework as teaching self-discipline and independence. Pupils are given relevant information to help them; for example, the marking system is stuck into the front of their notebooks. Pupils displayed confidence in discussing assessments with teachers. The heads of English and Maths felt the homework system improved the pupil's ability to organise themselves.

Homework and study support facilities

- 53 Policies should describe any opportunities for pupils to do homework, under supervision, at places other than home. These may include opportunities at school, for example during the lunch time or before or after school, as well as opportunities away from school premises, at libraries or community centres.
- 54 We are aware of the excellent work already being done by many LEAs, schools, public libraries and other organisations to provide space and support for pupils to carry out homework. The framework set out by the Department in *Extending Opportunity: a national framework for study support*, describes the contribution which homework clubs can make to schools' wider programmes of out of school hours learning activities.
- 55 The Government plans to provide £200 million lottery money through the New Opportunities Fund to support out of school hours learning in at least half of all secondary and special schools, and a quarter of all primary schools, by 2001. We expect homework clubs to be included in many of the projects supported by lottery funding. The Government is also making resources available to all LEAs with Premier or Division One Football Clubs in their area, to establish study support centres at the Clubs. The centres will offer a range of study support opportunities around literacy, numeracy, IT, and will include opportunities for homework.

Case study (3)

Pilot for lottery funding

As one of the 50 pilot projects for the Government's plans to use lottery funding for study support Grangefield School, Stockton on Tees, will provide a coordinated programme of after school activities – academic, social and cultural. Pupils will have access to more IT facilities and CD Roms, especially for homework. Staff will offer a wider choice of experiences such as new sports, outdoor activities and cultural visits.

Appropriate tasks for homework

- 56 School policies and, where relevant, guidance related to specific subjects, should indicate the range of tasks which are appropriate for pupils of various ages. Tasks should have a clear objective, linked to study programmes. Schools should be careful to ensure that homework time is not regularly used simply for finishing off work carried out in class. This can often place too heavy a burden on some children and too light a demand on others. Policies could usefully set out criteria for checking that the overall homework programme is balanced in the type and scale of tasks and manageable for both pupils and teachers.

Case study (4)

Varying the diet: Richard Hale School, Hertford

At this 11 18 comprehensive school for 800 boys, the homework policy urged subject teachers to see that homework formed a coherent part of the work being done, and gave a list of possible tasks:

Investigations	Interviews	Simple experiments	Essay writing
Research	Public library visit	Drafting	Report writing
Reading	Designing	Revision	Making a model
Drawing	Word processing	Desktop publishing	Projects

There was evidence from pupils and their homework diaries to suggest that pupils were indeed set a more varied diet of tasks than average, with quite a few research activities across a number of subjects (geography, sciences, history, design and technology).

- 57 In order to promote consistency and progression schools may wish to consider planning homework systematically. For example, assignments designed as part of the planning of a subject scheme of work can help to make homework both relevant and manageable. Developing a bank of assignments which teachers can use as appropriate has proved a flexible approach to planning for some schools. Teachers may want to draw on national and local support services where appropriate, for example the BBC's Learning Station on the internet.



John Wainwright

Case study (5)

Planning homework in to the curriculum :
Cardinal Langley RC High School, Manchester

This 11-18 comprehensive school could report examples of careful departmental planning of homework in several subjects, including science and art. In science, there was one homework per week for all KS3 pupils. A booklet of 5-6 self-contained assignments, which the teacher could select as appropriate, was prepared for each topic. Most booklets had been produced in two versions, one in collaboration with the Learning Support department. A marking scheme had been devised, and marks (out of 10) and comments were recorded on the front of the booklet. The art department had set the pace for the design faculty in the standard of their project booklets for KS3 pupils, which incorporated homework tasks, as well as in the guidance to pupils on assessment of their work. For example, the booklet for the Year 7 Portrait Project listed six homework tasks, supplied the illustrations and guidelines and listed the assessment criteria.

Special educational needs

- 58 Policies should provide guidelines on the management of homework for pupils with special educational needs. In setting homework for these pupils it is important to balance the right of pupils to share fully in the work of the class, including homework tasks, with their individual learning needs. These needs may include consolidation and reinforcement of specific skills. For some pupils, the continuing involvement of parents is very valuable. Policies should make clear how SEN co-ordinators will collaborate with subject teachers and tutors to ensure class tasks are manageable, and individual skill practice can be incorporated without overloading the pupil.

Feedback for pupils

- 59 If homework is to benefit pupils learning they must be given prompt and appropriate feedback on what they have done. Parents/carers have a role in encouraging and praising children for the effort which they have devoted to homework but pupils look mainly to teachers for a response on the quality of their work. Policies should make clear the timing and character of feedback which should be provided. Effective marking and feedback have always placed demands on teachers, but both are fundamental to helping pupils make progress. Managers in schools need to bear this in mind when arranging meetings or making other demands on teachers time. Equally, however, it is possible to design many homework assignments which do not make heavy demands on teachers, and schools should make sensible use of these.

Arrangements for monitoring and evaluating policies

- 60 The efficiency and effectiveness of homework policies needs to be monitored and evaluated. Schools need to have systems in place to check that procedures are operating properly. They also need to evaluate the quality of homework, and the contribution it is making to learning. For example, in some schools a teacher is responsible for checking a sample of homework diaries and assignments from time to time and discussing with subject teachers how far school policies are being successfully implemented. The system can also be evaluated through staff appraisal and surveys of pupils or parents needs, experience and attitudes. Senior managers have an important role in this monitoring and evaluation.
- 61 In addition to monitoring arrangements policies should set out when the school expects to review the policy, how parents will be involved in the review, and what criteria will be used to assess its effectiveness. The key criterion should be the extent to which the policy is contributing to the progress pupils make at school and their attitude to learning.

Case study (6)

Evaluating the homework programme: Woodlands School, Basildon

The homework policy statement for this school states that: Each term the Senior Management Team (SMT) will undertake two homework reviews. One of these will focus on a particular department. The second will focus on a particular year group. The purposes of the review are to enable the SMT to get an overview of a range and quality of homework set, to help the department with evaluation, to monitor and report on homework set for a year group, and to investigate and report on how pupils are coping. The statement presents questions for the review, including; purpose, quality and amount of homework, and responding to pupils work, and ends with the procedure for the review. This includes examination of homework done by three pupils from each teaching group involved and discussions with pupils and teachers. The process results in a written summary and an action plan.

Questions

- 62 If you have any questions about these guidelines please contact Victoria White at the Standards and Effectiveness Unit on 0171 925 5345 or in writing at the Department for Education and Employment, Sanctuary Buildings, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3BT or e-mail victorial.white@dfee.gov.uk.

Homework: Learning from Practice

Summary of findings from the OFSTED research study

Background

- 1 The research summarised here has been carried out by, and on behalf of, OFSTED, for the Department for Education and Employment (DFEE). The findings reflect and take account of best current practice. Evidence was collected in Autumn 1997 through case studies in 19 primary and 10 secondary schools and a telephone survey of 227 primary and 141 secondary schools. Further evidence was drawn from a review of previous research on homework and of current professional judgements, as expressed through responses to the consultation on the 1997 White Paper. Copies of the full research report can be obtained from The Stationery Office.*

Key Findings

Homework and learning

- 2 Homework is widely accepted as an essential and valuable element of learning. However, earlier research and our own study show that homework can have many meanings and be used to serve a variety of purposes. Schools therefore need to take an active role in evaluating and developing their own homework strategy to meet the needs of the future.
- 3 Increasingly, good practice in homework builds upon and reflects broader changes in educational thinking, relating to learning as a lifelong process. As well as its traditional function of practice and reinforcement of classroom learning, homework was seen by schools in the study to offer opportunities to develop key skills for independent learning, such as information retrieval, planning, analysis and time management.
- 4 Key elements of good practice could be summarised as follows:

Homework strategy

- Homework strategy was firmly steered and supported by senior staff as an integral part of the school's plan for learning.

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- The strategy was designed to meet the goals and fit the circumstances of the particular institution, in its current stage of development, but also to be capable of development both to meet existing goals more effectively and to address new priorities.

Collaboration and communication

- Most schools in the study had a written policy and other documentation to clarify homework practice. More effective schools involved teachers, parents and pupils in the process, and their roles and responsibilities were clearly defined.
- A variety of channels and media were used to keep parents and pupils informed and encourage them to share responsibility. These might include guidelines for each year group, regular class/subject newsletters, subject workshops and homework books or diaries.
- The definition and purposes of homework were clear and agreed by all staff, and the range of tasks was specified.

Planning and preparation

- Schools recognised that the quality and effectiveness of homework depended crucially on how creatively it had been planned.
- Teachers took homework planning as seriously as lesson planning. They took account of the range of pupil capabilities, and drew on appropriate expertise (e.g. subject and special needs experts). Wherever possible, homework was differentiated on the basis of prior assessment, to provide an equal and appropriate challenge for individuals.
- Homework was planned to complement (not just to complete) classroom learning.
- Teaching teams collaborated in planning and preparing tasks and/or materials.
- The time invested in planning and preparing resources was balanced by more effective use of teaching time in class.

A learning partnership with parents

Schools which appreciated the benefits of effective homework wanted to ensure that all pupils had access to it. At the same time, they recognised that this required the support of parents either in working directly with pupils or in ensuring that their children could, and did, complete their homework. In support of this aim:

- staff were well informed about family circumstances;
- the school had devised strategies to involve parents in their children's learning, in keeping with their circumstances and the age of the children;

- particular care was taken to collaborate with parents of children with special educational needs, to ensure tasks were appropriate and feasible;
- alternative study support opportunities were provided where appropriate (including individual help, the use of IT, homework clubs).

Assessment, feedback and progression

Effective schools had clear and consistent principles and strategies for assessing performance, setting individual learning targets and enhancing progression through feedback on performance. These applied equally to classroom learning and to homework.

- Pupils were told the criteria on which work would be assessed and high standards were expected for homework assignments.
- Feedback was planned to show the pupil what and how to improve.
- Progression was planned not just in the time allocated but also in type and level of study skills required.

Resourcing

In more effective schools an appropriate investment is made in homework.

- Allowances were made for staff to spend time on planning homework, as well as on marking.
- The school ensured that teachers had access to appropriate resources e.g. pupils had copies of published materials to take home or use in school.
- Facilities were provided and staff were given time to prepare banks of homework resources or tasks.

Scheduling and compliance

Schools ensured that the homework programme was clearly and consistently implemented.

- There were clear guidelines about the schedule or timetable of subjects and tasks which were expected, how often and when these would be set and when work was to be handed in or tested.
- A monitoring system ensured that staff as well as pupils complied.
- Rewards and sanctions linked to the schedule were clearly defined and consistently applied.

Review and evaluation

- The operation of homework programmes was regularly monitored and their effectiveness in achieving their aims reviewed periodically, involving parents.

Homework Practice in Primary Schools

- 5 Over three quarters of the primary schools in the study had a written homework policy and most of these had been devised in the last few years. These schools valued homework highly.

Homework strategy

- 6 In most schools, homework policy was led by the head or deputy. In a number of case study schools, there had been a policy decision to develop a more structured homework programme as part of the overall strategy to raise attainment. There were some common features of these structured programmes:

- all pupils, in all year groups, were expected to do homework, the amount increasing with age;
- partnership with parents was seen as fundamental;
- the strategy was designed to fit the school context;
- the core of the homework programme in both key stages was the development of literacy and numeracy skills;
- progression for all pupils was usually catered for by designing or adopting comprehensive skill development schemes or frameworks to cover all age groups;
- homework was planned to complement the classroom programme.

Because programmes were tailored to school priorities and needs, there was considerable diversity, even among effective schools, in the range of tasks, in the approach to parental involvement and to assessment, and in monitoring systems.

Average amount of homework set

- 7 One of the questions asked of head teachers in the telephone survey was how much homework was set for different year groups, in terms of the amount of time required broadly each week. The distribution, and the average amount, of homework set by the survey schools is set out below.

Amount of homework set per week, in minutes, by Year Group: Primary Schools								
	(Base)	0-30	30-59	60-89	90-119	120+	Don't know	Average H/Mins
Reception	(189)	13	28	33	10	4	10	0h57m
Year 1	(192)	8	22	34	19	7	8	1h07m
Year 2	(192)	4	15	30	27	15	8	1h19m
Year 3	(226)	1	10	24	24	31	8	1h36m
Year 4	(221)	2	10	21	20	40	6	1h43m
Year 5	(201)	1	4	15	18	54	7	2h07m
Year 6	(199)	1	4	10	17	61	7	2h26m

Collaboration and communication

- 8 The study showed that some primary schools had taken care to involve parents as well as the whole staff in the process of homework policy development or review. Many of the primary schools issued regular bulletins to parents, usually in the form of class newsletters, which included information on forthcoming homework tasks. They also used the letters to reinforce guidelines on the homework rules and regulations, so that parents were clear about what was expected of them and their children.

A learning partnership with parents

- 9 All the schools stressed that partnership was essential to their homework programme. It took time and effort to build the partnership, but it was seen as a very worthwhile investment, because of the perceived impact on pupils' learning. Parents had to be brought on board from the outset. Popular strategies in support of partnership included:

- workshops (e.g. on practical maths and literacy activities, in KS1 and KS2);
- reading records, link books and diaries, used to encourage two-way (parent-teacher) and, later, three-way (parent-teacher-child) communication;
- shared materials (e.g. games, information and instructions on skills and topics);
- shared activities (early years games, reading, family surveys, testing).

Staff saw two-fold benefits in a collaborative approach: children improved their skills and parents had a better understanding of the learning programme. They found that, with careful planning, most parents were pleased to support their children in this way.

Planning and preparation

10 In most of the case study schools there was a strong emphasis on planning homework:

- by senior managers and the whole staff, to define the overall structure;
- by teaching teams, who planned homework into their schemes of work.

The overall structure often included whole-school schemes for literacy and numeracy. These established common criteria (and often materials) and consistent rules for all staff and pupils, while enabling class teachers to match detailed tasks to the assessed ability of individual pupils, using a common resource bank. The approach worked best when Special Educational Needs Co-ordinators helped to develop and implement the scheme. Another feature of the overall homework plan, in many schools, was the structured development of project work covering other areas of the curriculum, usually through KS2.

11 In planning their schemes of work, class teachers made sure their class plans for homework fitted into the overall framework and complemented their classroom programme.

Assessment, feedback and progression

12 Schools differed on whether to use comments, grades or both; those who used grades argued that this demonstrated that homework was treated as seriously as classwork; other schools felt that comments, corrections and targets were more important, particularly for younger pupils. In either case, the more effective schools had a consistent approach, defined in the school's assessment policy. Learning tasks were usually tested after an interval of several days. Where possible, parents were included in the feedback process.

13 In many schools, progression in learning skills was built gradually:

- by extending the range of homework tasks;
 - from numeracy/literacy to other subject areas;
 - from practice and learning to research, problem-solving and written tasks;
 - from closely structured to more open-ended assignments;
- by lengthening the time span for completing task.

A few schools had programmes which developed study skills systematically, through projects or book reviews, across KS2. At each stage the school offered guidance to pupils and parents on how tasks should be tackled. In this way, parents were helped to grow with their children, from a teaching role to an enabling role, listening and offering comment and suggestions when asked, as children learned to work independently.

Resourcing

14 The material resources provided for homework in most schools included:

- basic equipment (e.g. a homework bag or folder);
- reading books, photocopied worksheets;
- diaries/link books.

As the homework programme grew, some schools were finding the preparation and copying of materials a considerable challenge, but it was seen as worthwhile, as was the investment of stafftime.

Scheduling and compliance

15 Most primary schools provided a homework schedule, setting out weekly tasks for each age group and indicating other tasks that would be set, perhaps fortnightly, monthly or occasionally. While time indications might be given, schools found it more important to stress the regularity of the tasks, and the deadlines for their completion (e.g. daily reading; weekly spelling and number facts; fortnightly topic assignments; monthly book reviews).

16 Most schools employed some form of rewards and sanctions for their pupils although teachers usually achieved compliance through clear and regular instruction and flexibility. The survey of pupils in the case study schools found that most pupils accepted and even enjoyed homework.

Review and evaluation

17 Most schools checked that homework was being set and completed and a few had systems for regular evaluation of the programme, for example as part of professional reviews which the head teacher had with each teacher. A few schools had gone as far as to associate improved test scores with the development of regular homework, while recognising that there could be other factors in play to explain the improvement.

Homework Practice in Secondary Schools

18 Homework is an established part of secondary school practice. Less than half the schools surveyed had made any changes to their homework policy and practice in the last three years. The challenge for secondary schools was to ensure that homework was integrated with learning policy and practice at every level (whole school, department and classroom) and took account of developments in overall learning strategy.

Homework strategy

19 In some of the case study schools, common criteria and approaches were:

- clearly defined in the whole-school homework policy;
- linked to other aspects of the learning strategy;
- implemented in departmental policies.

However, it was relatively unusual to find even this degree of coherence, since homework content and methods were often largely devolved to subject departments. It was much less common to see homework used as part of a strategy for developing independent learning. Study skills programmes, mentoring and other strategies for study support were established in only a few schools. During KS3, progression in the range of homework tasks, organisational skills and study methods seemed incidental rather than planned.

20 One way used by some schools to ensure that the homework programme was managed in a way which enhanced learning was to include it within the brief of the senior manager with responsibility for the learning strategy, and to include the SEN Co-ordinator and some subject leaders in the planning group.

Amount of homework set

21 One of the questions asked of head teachers in the telephone survey was how much homework was set for different year groups, in terms of the amount of time required broadly each week. The distribution, and the average amount, of homework set by the survey schools is set out below.

Amount of homework set each week, in minutes, by Year group: Secondary Schools

(Base)	0-300	300-359	360-419	420-539	540+	Don't know	Average H/Mins
Year 7	13	40	15	20	2	9	5h39m
Year 8	11	22	17	36	6	7	6h27m
Year 9	6	9	9	50	36	1	7h42m
Year 10	1	5	2	21	68	2	10h12m
Year 11	1	5	1	18	72	3	10h32m

Collaboration and communication

- 22 In most schools all staff were involved in the homework programme, both as class teachers and as form tutors. However, only in a minority of schools and departments, it appeared, was the content and management of the programme under active discussion. The system ran more smoothly when responsibilities of middle managers, subject teachers and form tutors were clearly defined (for example in the policy or staff guidelines) and rigorously monitored.
- 23 Guidance for parents was generally in written form, either in the policy, or in booklets written for parents or for each age group. A number of schools introduced homework to pupils through tutor group sessions in Year 7, often using guidance in the school's homework diary (issued to each pupil) as the basis.

Planning and preparation

- 24 There were some instances of rigorous and imaginative homework planning at departmental level, to provide a range of tasks which effectively complemented the scheme of work. This included homework booklets to accompany specific course units and a bank of homework tasks and resources which teachers could draw on. However, within departments, homework planning was often delegated to the class teacher, even though the scheme of work had been planned as a team. While this meant the teacher could be flexible, in devising tasks which met a class's needs, there was a risk of a disjointed, ad hoc approach. It appeared that finishing off was used more often in some schools or departments than the written policy recommended. This could place a heavy burden on pupils with special educational needs. Careful planning was particularly important for these pupils, and some schools had involved the SENCO closely in planning a homework programme for all abilities collaboratively with subject staff.

A learning partnership with parents

- 25 Almost all schools expected pupils (and subject teachers) to take the main responsibility for seeing homework was completed, with parents generally seen as having a back-up role, symbolised by signing off work in the diary. Nevertheless parental commitment to homework was seen as critical, particularly in KS3 and for pupils with SEN. Only a minority of schools used contracts to formalise this commitment.

Assessment, feedback, differentiation and progression

- 26 Some schools recommended more selective but specific marking, to enhance the quality of feedback while keeping the marking load manageable for teachers. Pupils valued comments and suggestions for improving their work, which were relatively uncommon. Pupils were very aware that effective feedback often depended on clear leadership by heads of department.

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- 27 Homework could be used to promote progression in study skills, although this was not common. Some subject departments helped by clarifying objectives and assessment criteria for pupils (and parents). Others challenged pupils by setting demanding but well-structured, often differentiated, assignments, requiring the use of a range of skills. Some schools were encouraging tutors, through structured personal and social education programmes, to work more systematically on the development of study skills, including time management and the organisation of homework, and making the links between mentoring, target-setting and the development of independent study. Homework was more effective for pupils with special needs when SENCOs were able to collaborate with subject specialists in developing homework resources and planning assignments for individuals.

Resourcing

- 28 Most schools and pupils in this study seemed broadly satisfied with the material resources available for homework (in particular, provision of books or worksheets). However, other studies have suggested that many KS3 pupils cannot regularly take school books home. The underlying issue was whether homework learning goals could be met within resource limits. Schools or departments with the greatest investment in homework were planning to expand the range of resource available and teaching pupils to use them effectively.
- 29 Development of various forms of study support provides an effective complement to investment of time spent planning and assessing homework. One example is the homework club. Schools were exploring the most effective way of supporting pupils whose parents were unable or unwilling to provide them with appropriate homework facilities or support.

Scheduling and compliance

- 30 Almost all schools had homework timetables which allocated time to be spent on each subject per week. Timetables could be important management tools, to ensure staff were realistic in their demands. In practice they often seemed to be applied by both staff and pupils rather flexibly. One secondary school allocated most subjects a major and a minor homework per week. Parents and pupils appreciated clear guidelines on when tasks were to be set and completed.
- 31 Again, it was commonplace to have rules and sanctions to ensure pupils complied; in effective systems, the sanctions rarely had to be invoked. The key to success seemed to be clear and manageable requirements, backed up by vigilant monitoring at all levels, to ensure homework was set, completed, assessed and returned as intended. However, there were some indications that a proportion of pupils perhaps as many as half sometimes spent much longer on their homework than the school indicated in order to meet these requirements.

Review and evaluation

- 32 In some schools, senior managers and heads of department regularly monitored and evaluated the quality of homework tasks and their relevance to the learning programme, or included homework in staff reviews. It is early days yet to see more formal evaluation of the homework programme, through linking homework to target-setting.