



Homework and Independent Study Policy

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1. AIM/RATIONALE

Independent study provides students with the tools they need to take their learning beyond the classroom and develop the key life skills of independence, responsibility, resilience and active curiosity. To achieve this, teachers must base tasks on sound pedagogical principles that 'make things stick' for students. They must also seek to remove barriers to independent learning, through a constructive dialogue between school, student and parents.

Homework is instrumental in:

- Consolidating work covered in class and embedding it in learning;
- Extending work covered in class to develop confidence;
- Bolstering learner independence, resilience and ownership;
- Developing a healthy curiosity in the larger world;
- Modelling and embedding effective reading and research skills;
- Preparing students for future learning;
- Creating positive learning experiences inside and outside of school;
- Involving parents and carers in their child's learning.

This policy should be read in conjunction with our Fair Workload Charter and the Assessment & Feedback policy.

2. THE NORWOOD SCHOOL INDEPENDENT STUDY MODEL

At the Norwood School, all types of out-of-school learning are referred to as **Independent Study**.

Independent Study involves the following, dependent on the year group:

- Completion of Independent Learning Booklets (**ILBs**) for each subject (Years 7 and 8);
- Completion of Cross-Curricular Projects (Optional in years 7 and 8);
- Weekly Homework Tasks (Years 9 and above);
- Revision and consolidation via quality-assured online learning platforms (e.g. Quizlet, SENECA, Hegarty Maths);
- Completion of the VESPA programme;
- Reading for Pleasure and for information;
- Conducting research and pursuing areas of interest outside of school.

2.1. YEARS 7 AND 8

Independent Study in Years 7 and 8 reflects the following priorities:

- Secure effective transition from Key Stage Two and build on the knowledge, skills and understanding students have acquired;
- Develop good learning habits from the outset;
- Showcase students' work and raise the profile of secondary early years students;
- Foster and maintain enjoyment, enthusiasm, curiosity and engagement in the curriculum.

In Years 7 and 8, Independent study involves:

- Weekly completion of termly Independent Learning Booklets (ILBs) for each subject (with the exception of less frequently taught subjects)
- Completion of core numeracy and literacy ILBs at the start of the year;
- Cross-Curricular Projects (optional) that students elect to complete to earn House Points;
- The expectation that students are always in the process of reading a book for pleasure.

2.2 YEAR 9

Independent Study in Years 7 and 8 reflects the following priorities:

- *Build a solid base of core knowledge, skills and understanding to enable successful transition to Key Stage Four;*
- *Help students see the relevance of subjects in terms of the larger world of education and employment;*
- *Ensure students can think in an informed way about their future career;*
- *Develop a range of revision strategies.*

In year 9, Independent Study is set weekly, with emphasis on securing the fundamental knowledge, skills and understanding for successful transition into Year 10. Tasks set should fall under the following categories:

Preparation: Learning future content through independent research or directed reading.

Extension: Continuation/ elaboration of learning to a more sophisticated level of detail or difficulty, or doing something **new** with what they have learnt.

Consolidation: Embedding skills/knowledge acquired in lessons through practice/ repetition/ testing.

Review: Developing a range of revision strategies in a specific area of study.

In Year 9, Independent study involves:

- Weekly homework tasks;
- Ongoing revision and consolidation via specified online learning platforms;
- Completion of the VESPA programme.

2.3 KEY STAGE FOUR

Year 9 into 10 is a key transition point in students' academic journey, and can accompany a dip in attainment if students do not develop effective revision and independent learning strategies. Students need to cope with higher demands on their time and commit larger quantities of academic material to their long-term memory to be recalled under exam conditions.

As with Year 9, Independent Learning tasks in Years 10 and 11 are set under the categories of **preparation, consolidation, extension and review**.

Independent study at Key Stage Four involves:

- Weekly homework tasks;
- Ongoing revision and consolidation via specified online learning platforms;
- Regular completion of past papers and self-marking using exam mark schemes and success criteria;
- Use of Personalised Learning Checklists (**PLCs**) to identify gaps in knowledge;

2.4 KEY STAGE FIVE

Students face considerable challenges when coming from the intervention-rich experience of Year 11 to Key Stage 5, due in part to the largely linear nature of Key Stage 5 exams. Teachers should set tasks that also fulfil the functions of **preparation, extension, consolidation** and **review**. In addition, tasks set should involve the following:

- Extensive reading and effective note-taking;
- A range of advanced research strategies;
- Developing awareness of the wider world, culture and workplace that pertain to the subject;
- The development of critical thinking skills.

Due to the sheer quantity of content to be covered, students in Key Stage 5 must be able to independently learn key course content and read extensively outside of the classroom. This entails a more learner-centred model at Key Stage 5 which could involve a ‘flipped classroom’ approach, where students undertake the learning themselves for the follow-up work to be completed in the lesson.

3. EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Independent Learning tasks should be engaging, varied, meaningfully integrated into curricula and relevant to lessons. Staff will regularly monitor completion of tasks via Class Charts and ensure feedback is given through non-written means (e.g. whole class feedback, comparative analysis)

All students should be encouraged to attend extra-curricular provision that widens their interests along the larger curricular dimensions of sports/fitness, the Arts, cultural awareness, communication and research skills.

Teachers should aim to promote wider reading through the Independent Learning tasks they set and within their curriculum.

3.1 SETTING OF HOMEWORK

All weekly tasks are to be set and monitored on Class Charts, including sections of ILBS that need to be completed in years 7 and 8. Tasks will be clearly explained by teachers in lessons, and physical copies of any necessary resources provided.

If parents or students have a query about homework, the student should seek the teacher out in the first instance or the parent should contact the relevant class teacher or, failing that, the form tutor.

Teachers setting homework should not assume that students have access to ICT at home and ensure tasks are accessible to all.

3.2. TIME SPENT ON HOMEWORK

Please find below the guidance on how long students should be spending on homework tasks:

- **Students in Years 7 and 8** are expected to spend a minimum of 30 minutes per subject per week using the ILBs;
- **Students in Year 9** are expected to spend a minimum of 45 minutes per subject per week on weekly tasks set by their teachers;
- **Students in Years 10 and 11** are expected to spend at least 60 minutes per week per foundation subject, or 90 minutes per core subject on independent study.
- **Students in Years 12 and 13** should commit to 5 hours of independent study. This includes use of study periods.

3.3. MONITORING AND FEEDBACK

Teachers will set all weekly tasks on Class Charts for all years. Homework will be checked and corrected during lessons, and informal feedback given. It is not an expectation that staff provide written feedback for homework tasks, but that students are given timely and effective feedback through other means, e.g. whole-class feedback, guided self/ peer assessment, live marking or comparative analysis of two or more pieces of work.

Teachers will systematically check the impact of homework tasks by regular informal assessments; quizzes, low-stakes tests, exit tickets or targeted questioning.

If students opt to complete a Cross Curricular Project in Years 7 and 8, relevant teachers will provide written feedback via google (Project feedback proforma). Outstanding projects will be showcased to the year group and rewards given to the projects that best meet the success criteria.

3.4. REWARDS AND SANCTIONS

Positive reinforcement should be the cornerstone of teacher feedback on Independent Learning tasks. Completion of work to a good or improved standard can be addressed in the following ways:

- A positive phone call home;
- Giving House Points;
- Faculty rewards systems (reward trips, positive postcards home);
- Recognition in Year assemblies/ tutor time;
- Featuring students' work in classroom display;
- Referring explicitly to good pieces of work in the lesson;
- Introducing a competitive element (e.g. through league tables for usage of Hegarty Maths)

Non-completion of Independent Learning tasks can be addressed by teachers, departments and faculties in the following ways:

- Logging via the 'Homework Issue tab on Class Charts, and arranging a class detention for the student to complete the outstanding homework task;
- Phoning a parent to discuss barriers to homework completion
- Faculty-led homework clubs to support;
- For repeated non-completion, a faculty-led longer homework detention;
- Issuing a faculty homework report;
- If homework is not being completed across a range of subjects, tutors to issue a homework report.

Sanctions in Key Stage 5:

Students in Years 12 and 13 are expected to have completed preparatory work prior to lessons; failure to do so may result in their forfeiting the right to attend a lesson until all outstanding work is completed in their own time.

Teachers will record and sanction non-completion of homework in KS5 as with any other Key Stage.

When a faculty has used sanctions/ home contact to no effect, a referral can be made to the SSSP (Student Services Support Programme). Students will then be registered and required to study independently from more structured work provided by subject specialists until students have made the necessary progress.

All faculties will provide an independent study booklet for the SSSP, and **will ensure PLCs are in place for each student**. Student-friendly versions of PLCs will be used by students, to structure and plan their Independent Study.

3.5 FACILITATING INDEPENDENT STUDY

Recommended approaches for staff when planning Independent Learning tasks are:

- Planning tasks that involve students actively retrieving information from memory, as opposed to merely practicing where no recall is required;
- Spacing out practice and interleaving practice of different topics or subjects;
- Including tasks that involve students trying to solve a problem with the foundation of knowledge they have;
- Ensuring students can elaborate on prior knowledge by doing something new with material they already know;
- Encouraging students to widen their repertoire of learning styles, as opposed to just catering for preferred learning styles.

Practical considerations to bear in mind:

If students are required to print, arrangements must be made to facilitate student access to printers/ resources.

It should not be assumed that all students have access to ICT to complete homework, or benefit from having a quiet place to work at home. The library plays an important role in providing access to ICT and space to work, before school (from 8:00- 8:30), during break and lunchtime and after

school (until 4pm). Regular Independent Study clubs in KS3 and KS4 are also in place as a supportive measure for students, and are planned and organised by faculties in the first instance. Coordination of provision should then take place via heads of year. Support staff can be allocated to clubs via the SEN department.

It is also expected that faculties promote and exploit the library as a resource, through inclusion of reading lists, well-planned library lessons and research tasks.

It is also expected that:

- Agreed systems of monitoring used consistently so that students are supported but also held accountable for completing work to deadlines;
- Students have access to support after school via faculty led clubs (including SEND homework clubs)
- Programmes of support/ intervention are in place early order to address underachievement;
- Students in their subjects have the materials and guidance they need to complete independent tasks and revise effectively in their subject;
- PLCs (Personalised Learning Checklists) are in place for students to navigate through what they can and cannot yet do confidently;
- Communication with parents is regular and timely in order to avoid the widening of gaps in knowledge and decline student engagement;
- Independent Learning tasks should space out practice and interleave old with new content and ensure that students are made to retrieve information from memory, solve problems, elaborate/ extend the knowledge and widen their repertoire of learning styles.
- Students are given clear guidance on how to effectively manage their time (see guidance sheet in Appendix 1. downloadable from the school website);
- Students complete an exam preparation and revision timetable and stick to it (see Appendix 2);
- Students' well-being is monitored in terms of stress, anxiety and potential depression associated with the build up to exams, with appropriate safeguarding measures taken;
- Parents know how to support their child in the lead up to exams;
- Students and parents are aware of what it means to be 'exam ready' (see 'Exam Ready' guidance booklet on the school website).

Use of Google Classroom:

All students will have access to a Google Classroom for each of their subjects. This will serve as a resource base and study hub for students and will include:

- Digital copies of ILBs (7 and 8);
- Resources to support learning (e.g. word lists, revision techniques);
- The Web-based Independent Study Hub (WISH) for KS4 and 5;
- Key information and notices.

3.6. PROMOTING READING

Extensive reading for pleasure has proven benefits for cognitive development and academic performance, as well as well-being and happiness. It is the responsibility of all teaching staff to communicate to students the joys and benefits associated with reading for pleasure.

It is an expectation that students are always in the process of reading something for pleasure, fiction or non-fiction (e.g. periodicals, newspapers, journals, magazines, blogs, and articles).

Tutors will facilitate sharing and discussion of what students are reading. Form time activities will include silent reading in Years 7 and 8.

In year 7, a key focus for tutors from the outset is to get every student reading.

Faculties will provide reading lists that include a range of text types and develop interest and curiosity in the subject. Reading opportunities will feature prominently in schemes of learning and will develop the skill of reading a range of texts independently and strategies to deal with unfamiliar language.

Please also refer to the SEND Policy and Information Report for information regarding provisions and interventions to further support reading.

3.7. PROMOTING NUMERACY

The Norwood School is committed to removing poor numeracy as a barrier to academic performance and access to future opportunities.

Faculties will further develop students' functional Maths skills through including relevant aspects of numeracy in their own curricula, and having an awareness of what mathematical skills/ students acquire in Key Stage 2.

Students in Year 7 will complete a core numeracy ILB in the Autumn term to ensure independent mastery of key Maths skills as relevant to the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

Weekly Maths homework in Year 9 will consolidate a solid grounding in the key Mathematical skills and concepts required for Key Stage 4 study.

In Years 10 and 11, data-driven targeted intervention will take place in the form of tutorials and extra-curricular sessions designed to bridge the emergent gaps in learning.

The ILBs in Years 7 and 8 will also contain key functional Maths content (e.g. times tables, how to divide) in line with the school approach to teaching these (e.g. the agreed method for long division).

Numeracy also forms part of the tutor time programmes across all year groups and tutors should work consistently within the agreed programme for the year group.

3.8. SEND

Students with SEND can struggle considerably with memory and organisational skills. This means that homework runs a greater risk of not being completed, thereby compounding an experience of failure and disengagement from independent study.

Staff setting homework tasks for students with SEND must ensure:

- Tasks are suitably challenging but also sufficiently scaffolded and differentiated so as to be achievable;
- The language requirements of homework have been considered and students have access to the key language they need to access the tasks;
- Students' learning needs have been considered when setting homework tasks;
- Tasks are set clearly and unambiguously, orally and in written form;
- Support staff are used effectively to ensure that students understand the requirements of tasks and that students are supported in organising themselves (e.g. through a personalised planner).

4. INDEPENDENT LEARNING BOOKLETS (ILBs)

The ILBs provide a clear structure for students in Years 7 and 8 for independent study. They should include (for each subject):

- Key content for the course, arranged into units, modules or learning cycles;
- Clear guidance on how to memorise, revise and practice effectively;
- Links to online resources with relevant passwords/ instructions (Educake, Linguascope, Hegarty).
- Practice exercises/ tasks/ questions with answers/ models at the back so students can self-correct;
- Personalised Learning Checklists (PLCs) that allow students to identify where knowledge is, sand where it is not yet, secure.

Students in Years 7 and 8 are expected to spend 30 minutes per subject per week using the ILBs.

The ILB will be one single booklet for all subjects for students **to take home and bring to every lesson**.

ILBs will be checked in class and feedback given. Teachers will measure their impact through regular informal assessment (e.g. progress tests, quizzes) and will refer to the ILBs to guide them in their revision. It is an expectation that ILBs be referred to in every lesson. Teachers are not expected to provide written feedback in ILBs.

ILBs will be periodically checked by faculties and the Year 7/ 8 pastoral team to monitor uptake and impact.

Teachers will tell students which tasks to complete in the ILBS and set this on Class Charts.

ILBs will also be available in digital form on Google Classroom, which may also include hyperlinks to online learning platforms (e.g Quizlet).

5. CROSS CURRICULAR PROJECTS

i) Year 6-7 transition projects:

Students receive their summer project during their induction interviews in Year 6. These are taken in and by Year 7 tutors. Projects are acknowledged, displayed, and shared with prizes awarded for exceptional work and effort.

ii) Termly Cross-Curricular Projects (Optional)

Students in Years 7 and 8 will be given the opportunity to complete a Cross-Curricular Project each term. These are not obligatory, but students are encouraged to complete in order to extend their knowledge and apply it to a creative outcome. Students who complete the project successfully will earn house points, and outstanding projects will be awarded prizes, as well as celebrated publicly.

Marking and feedback are shared across faculties responsible for a project. Feedback for the projects will provide detail on where students have been successful, how they could have been more successful, and teachers will comment on effort, commitment and time-management.

6. THE VESPA PROGRAMME

The principal aims of VESPA are to help students understand what makes high performing students so successful, and equally to provide a range of opportunities to encourage our students to emulate those successful behaviours and characteristics.

VESPA identifies 5 strands of behaviours and characteristics that all students need to be successful:

Vision = They know what they want to achieve.

Effort = They put in many hours of proactive independent study.

Systems = They organise their learning resources and their time.

Practice = They use effective techniques to practise and develop their skills.

Attitude = They respond constructively to feedback and setbacks.

Students who consistently exhibit these qualities are far more likely to succeed than those who score highly in terms of cognition. Regardless of academic success at 11, 16 & 18, all learners hit ceilings; students who demonstrate VESPA qualities can, and do, make significant breakthroughs in their learning.

VESPA forms part of all students' Independent Study and includes:

- A programme of study skills sessions delivered during form time from Years 7-13;
- VESPA coaching for targeted students;
- Modelling of VESPA Study Strategies in all subjects;
- The Web-based Independent Study Hub (W.I.S.H.), accessed via Google Classroom, where KS4 students can easily access independent study resources for each of their subjects.

The current VESPA form time programme can be seen below and aims to incrementally build awareness and study skills so as to ensure mastery:

VESPA form-time programme

	Term	Study Skills focus	VESPA focus
Year 7	1	How to use ILBs	Time capsules / 20 Qs
	2	flashcards	The Motivation Diamond
	3	RR timetables	Setting a Personal Best
Year 8	1	spaced practice	Introduction to VESPA
	2	dual coding	The Pomodoro Technique
	3	retrieval mapping	The Effort Thermometer
Year 9	1	free recall	The Bottom Left
	2	interleaved practice	The Energy Line
	3	practice testing	Three Types of Attention
Year 10	1	WISH	Will vs Skill
	2	WISH	The Practice Questionnaire
	3	SS Recap + concrete examples	Building Independent Learning
Year 11	1	SS Recap + elaboration	Growth Mindset
	2	Revision Wednesday (guided)	Network Audits
	3	Revision Wednesday (free)	The Battery