

Grove Road Primary School



Home Learning Update

Dear Parents,

We thought you might find it useful to know that feedback on Home Learning from the Parent Forum on 14th February 2013 was very positive. Some really useful improvements were suggested, and we have made some small changes in light of this feedback. We thought you might like to see a summary of what we are trying to achieve and how you can help.

Aims

Since September 2012 we have been working to ensure that Home Learning is both purposeful and appropriate. Our aim is to foster an enthusiasm for learning in the children and an intrinsic motivation to take ownership of their endeavours. For parents, Home Learning can be a regular window on the way a child is working and a glimpse into how well the teacher feels they are progressing through the marking and feedback. It is important to stress that Home Learning activities are a small fraction of the learning the children complete on a weekly basis. It is really important that this is kept in perspective and that parents avoid falling into the trap of thinking this is the only maths or literacy the children are being asked to undertake. Instead, the teachers are keen to engage the children in a range of purposeful enquiry out of school, in order to foster positive attitudes to learning; and not simply to trudge through pages of sums+or spellings.

It was clear from the forum that some parents rely on home work as an opportunity to gauge progress and get a view on the work being done in the class. Whilst Home Learning tasks may give a glimpse of these things, it is not the primary aim and certainly not the best indicator. Instead, it is best to view the grids in conjunction with the class newsletters and remember you can ask to come into school to sit and look at work in books with your child. The Home Learning Grids are not intended to be a mirror on the weekly curriculum. The grids are simply an opportunity to develop and extend some of the generic and transferrable skills linked to learning.

Independence vs. Support & Collaboration

To ensure the pitch and expectation is appropriate, the teachers have been asked to set a range of open-ended tasks. Some families are choosing to support their children, while others are keen for them to work independently. Both options are fine, and the teachers value the benefits of both. Some parents have felt pressured to support the tasks, but of course the teachers are familiar with what the children can do independently in class and are quite happy to receive work that the children have done on their own. Similarly, we appreciate the huge benefits the children get from working with adult support and collaborative partnerships. The children have also said that they really enjoy the opportunity to work with their parents on projects and tasks. Teachers evaluate the learning+not simply the outcome, just as they do in

class. Work that has been assisted will look very different to work that has been done independently. There is a place for both and we recommend a mixture.

Variety in order to meet the needs of all

Whilst some parents have asked for more maths and more spellings, others are very happy with the variety. You are encouraged to help your children rehearse and consolidate number facts such as times tables and number bonds, just as we rely on you to hear your children read regularly. The Home Learning Grids are designed to promote additional learning experiences. Previously, homework tasks at Grove were sheet based and failed to offer the appropriate differentiation and quality we are able to achieve on the Grids. As such, we are resisting the requests for maths sheets and would encourage parents to view the Grids as a vehicle to foster enjoyment and engagement with learning, to be supplemented with games and activities that boost maths and spelling skills.

We are happy to demonstrate ideas and resources that parents can use at home to reinforce maths and literacy learning. All year groups now supply a set of key words and maths activities that can be used as an on-going resource for parents.

“Family Week” Option

On the Grids we have also included a new Family Learning option. This is a flexible option in response to requests at the forum for some additional flexibility. The aim is to provide families, especially those with multiple siblings, with activities to take part in together; or simply build in a bit more flexibility for those with busy family diaries. You can use this as a free pass, so that you could, if needed, take one week off from the Home Learning Grid. You might, instead, choose to use it for a family activity that each sibling could do at the same time, such as a walk in the woods, a family chore such as tidying bedrooms, or perhaps a family game of Scrabble or Snakes and Ladders. You can then simply log a note in the Home Learning book or just sign and date that element of the Grid so that the class teacher knows that has been the chosen option for that week.

House Points and Home Learning

We are also working to ensure consistency in the awarding of House Points for Home Learning. Feedback is clear that the children respond really well to the incentive of House Points and teachers award these consistently across their class. However, there has clearly been variation between classes. For children with siblings this has created some issues, so we are working to establish and agree a consistent mark scheme across the school for Home Learning in order to minimise what some children with brothers and sisters in different year groups, perceive to be unfair. The scheme we intend to use awards:

- 1 House Point for completing a Grid activity as requested
- 2 House Points for making a good effort beyond the minimum expectation
- 3 House Points for an exceptional effort or outcome, where a child has extended their own learning

Parent Comments

We also want to clarify that you are most welcome to add any comments you feel your child or the teacher might find useful, under the piece of work that has been completed. In this way, if you feel your child has struggled to record their ideas but spent a long time on the practical element, and they were able to explain their thinking, you can let us know. Whilst any comments in the books are primarily for the children, teachers will find it useful to know the context for how the work was

completed and the time taken. Whilst we value high quality presentation, it is the learning process rather than the product that is the most valuable.

In Conclusion...

If the children are making choices and showing enthusiasm for the tasks, then the grids are doing their job. The teachers set tasks that include a range of skills and a variety of options so that both eager writers as well as reluctant writers can select something to participate in. In Reception and Key Stage One the emphasis is on participation and enquiry, with teachers keen not to go too formal too soon. Progression into Key Stage Two sees expectations become more exacting and teachers are starting to prepare children for independent learning and managing their own time as effectively as possible. By Year 6, transition to secondary school is a key consideration.

If your child is persistently resistant to Home Learning activities, we would encourage you to come in and talk to the teacher or make a note in the Home Learning Book. Forcing Home Learning, particularly early on, can create problems that are difficult to undo. The teachers have many strategies for encouraging children to re-engage. Please don't allow Home Learning to become a weekly battle ground. It is not uncommon for children to go through a phase of being reluctant to read or participate in activities out of school, so you should not worry unduly about this. It is, in most cases, a phase that will pass quite quickly. So please do speak to the class teacher if you are encountering any problems or have any concerns.



Sharon Sanderson

Headteacher