

HOMEWORK SURVEY SUMMARY 2010

During September 2010, HVS parents were invited to fill out a survey about homework. Around 110 out of 150 families chose to respond.

When thinking about homework this year, how satisfied are you about the following..

The amount of homework				
	Not satisfied			Very satisfied
	1	2	3	4
Junior	4.2%	14.6%	39.6%	41.7%
Senior	3.2%	11.3%	33.9%	51.6%
Whole school	3.6%	12.7%	36.4%	47.3%

The homework tasks				
	Not satisfied			Very satisfied
	1	2	3	4
Junior responses	2.1%	12.8%	44.7%	40.4%
Senior responses	4.8%	16.1%	30.6%	48.4%
Whole School	3.7%	14.7%	36.7%	45.0%

THEMES and SUGGESTIONS

- Over 80% satisfied or very satisfied by the amount of homework and the homework tasks.
- Expectations need to be clear but flexible—especially for families who lead very busy lives.
- Parents can ‘make an arrangement’ with teachers to do no homework or only part of it, and this is appreciated.
- Children need plenty of time to do the homework.
- Parents should not have to do homework for their children.
- Many children enjoy practical activities so it’s good to include them.
- Homework should be linked to what children are doing at school.
- While most comments indicated the amount of homework was ‘about right’, some said their should be no homework and others said there should be less.

Please rate the following homework tasks, according to how often they should be part of a balanced homework programme

JUNIOR SCHOOL	never	sometimes	often
Reading practice	0.0%	17.0%	83.0%
Writing - all types	4.5%	56.8%	38.6%
Handwriting practice	6.7%	60.0%	33.3%
Basic research	4.5%	75.0%	20.5%
Making/constructing	11.6%	67.4%	20.9%
Spelling skills	4.5%	36.4%	59.1%
Presentation skills	9.1%	65.9%	25.0%
Maths practice	0.0%	18.2%	81.8%
Oral language	2.3%	69.8%	27.9%
Visual art	13.6%	68.2%	18.2%

Copies of the surveys that parents and children completed will be given to teachers so they can read all comments and reflect on the feedback

SENIOR SCHOOL	never	sometimes	often
Reading practice	1.7%	18.3%	80.0%
Writing - all types	3.2%	56.5%	40.3%
Handwriting practice	19.3%	63.2%	17.5%
Basic research	1.7%	56.7%	41.7%
Making/constructing	25.0%	55.0%	20.0%
Spelling skills	5.0%	35.0%	60.0%
Presentation skills	10.2%	62.7%	27.1%
Maths practice	1.7%	10.3%	87.9%
Oral language	11.1%	61.1%	27.8%
Visual art	16.9%	57.6%	25.4%

THEMES and SUGGESTIONS

- * Keep the homework tasks varied—not too repetitive
- * More ‘projects’ please
- * Spelling activities would be good
- * Examples of maths strategies would help

- * Give a mix of activities to keep children engaged
- * A ‘little bit of everything’
- * Don’t want homework just for the sake of it
- * Frequency of homework must be consistent

- * Written feedback is appreciated
- * More maths please
- * Creative tasks are worthwhile

Currently teachers use the following as a guide for 'how much time should be spent on homework'. Please let us know whether

	Not enough	About right	Too much	THEMES and SUGGESTIONS
Year 1	7.0%	90.1%	3%	
Years 2-3, 15-20 mins per night plus reading	0.0%	70.7%	29%	
Years 4-6, 20-30 mins per night plus reading	0.0%	64.3%	36%	

- Around a third considered there is too much homework.
- Many parents stated that children should not have to do homework every night—especially if children are busy with after school activities.
- Reading practice important.
- Need to be able to do less if family circumstances mean there isn't time to do all of the homework.
- The weekend is the best time to do homework for some families.

We are considering asking parents and children to sign a homework contract at the beginning of each year, with an 'opt out' clause for those families who do not want homework provided. Please indicate whether you think this approach would be useful.

	I don't agree	I agree	This generated the most responses—filling up 6 of the 18 pages of feedback. Generally responses fell into 3 groups: 1) <i>It's a great idea</i> — it would relieve the pressure for some families; it would give parents choice; there's no research to show that homework has benefits. 2) <i>It's a good idea but my family would not opt out</i> - it would be a good way to manage expectations; we like homework but understand that there are those who don't . 3) <i>It's a bad idea</i> —homework is important and useful; there should be one rule for all; it wouldn't be fair . Two thirds of those who wrote a comment were very much against an 'opt out' clause.
Junior responses	44.2%	55.8%	
Senior responses	41.0%	59.0%	
Whole school	42.3%	57.7%	

CONCLUSIONS

- Teachers should bear in mind the fact that families are busy, and they should set a reasonable amount of homework and give a fair amount of time to complete it.
- While maths, reading, writing and spelling are important, parents and children like variety—with creative, project based and practical tasks sometimes included.
- We will not be trialling the 'opt-out' contract—while 58% of those who responded said they supported the idea (to varying degrees), we would be reluctant to bring in something that 42% are definitely against. The status quo will remain i.e. parents taking the initiative and letting teachers know that, if for any reason, their child is unable to do any (or all) homework. Teachers are more than willing to accommodate such requests.
- The following will be added to the HVS website before the end of 2010
 - a summary of the HVS teachers' reflection about homework
 - an updated version of the HVS homework guidelines
 - some thoughts from researchers John Hattie and Robert Marzano
 - advice re homework from the Ministry of Education