



# Helping your child at home: Talking, reading, creating, and doing homework

*A guide for teachers, parents and carers*

*Parents are their children's first and most important teachers. They teach their children how to talk, play and care for themselves. When children come to school, these three aspects of learning continue to be a priority. Communicating, building positive relationships and getting organised are three critical skills in life, and they are also critical at school.*

## Parents as partners in education

The time that parents spend with their children at home is best directed at strengthening these three areas.



### *Building language skills*

Speaking and listening skills are the bedrock of successful relationships and successful learning. The amount of time that children spend in conversation with adults has a really important impact on their learning and comprehension, and the *complexity* of the ideas that adults use in those discussions that makes a real difference. So, while you are spending time together walking or playing or weeding the garden, talk about the big issues: the life cycle of ladybirds, how robots will change our lives, the workings of a motor, future careers, the world wars, the plot of a movie....

These rather 'grown up' conversations are very rewarding for both you and your child, and have an enormous impact on their critical reasoning skills and their vocabulary. Of course, it's very difficult to have really meaningful conversations

***At Beverley DHS we believe that regular homework has value for children during their school years. Homework will be prepared and assigned by our teachers for all students, with the expectation that parents will help and encourage them to complete it. This guide provides a 'why and how' guide for staff and for parents and guardians.***

while you are looking at your mobile phone, so having device free time together is a really good habit to get into.



Books provide another important source of the complex language that your child will need for academic learning. Whether they are e-books or audiobooks or traditional paper versions, books contain sophisticated words and sentence structures that children need at school. Most families with young children read to them every night, and enjoy this experience. It's fantastic to continue this habit once your children get to school.

You can keep reading to your children until they would rather do the reading themselves, and then you can ask them to read to you! The more books you share together, the more powerful your child's language skills will be. In addition, books are a great bonding experience, and a great springboard for discussions about the deep and meaningful themes in our lives. For older children, reading them newspaper articles that interest or enrage you is a great place to start – even if you got them off your mobile phone!

### *Building relationship skills*

Playing **with** your child is a great stress reliever, a powerful relationship builder, and a wonderful way to develop creativity, communication, and social problem-solving. Play that is active and creative (building a cubby house together, playing with playdo together, building a minecraft world together) is especially valuable. Negotiating, valuing each other's ideas, being spontaneous and silly, and celebrating together are powerful ways to show that you value your child. These experiences develop your child's resilience and self-respect.

As children get older, 'playing' together might not seem so natural, but cooking or gardening or working on chores or projects together can have the same benefits. Listening to your child tell you about their day is well worth your while, as it is a great springboard for discussions about how to manage those tricky social relationships that all children must learn to manage as they move towards adolescence and then adulthood. It is always hard to listen without jumping in too quickly to give advice, but sometimes children just need a chance to be heard without judgement.



### *Building self-regulation*

Managing your attention, your time, your gear and your emotions are all important aspects of the overarching capacity that is sometimes called self-regulation. Children don't develop these skills without guidance, and some need more guidance than others. Helping children to develop routines is a great grounding in self-regulation. Children need to develop increasing independence so they can get organised for the day, pack a lunchbox and reading folder, and arrive at school before the first bell. When parents help set routines and give gentle reminders without doing these things for their children, they help them to develop their own sense of competence.

Children also need to deal with disappointments like losing a game, being rejected by a friend, or doing poorly on an assessment. Spending time planning for these things in advance – and developing 'scripts' together for if something goes wrong – can really help. You might help your child to talk through what they might do if their best friend was away sick, or their teacher blamed them for something that was not their fault.



Helping your child to develop home study routines for their secondary and tertiary studies is best begun early, just like their other routines. Starting off with short but regular practice sessions which feel like games or story sharing is a terrific way to approach 'homework'. Practising skills can be an enjoyable part of each school day for you and your child if it is something you do together. Combining it with an enjoyable snack or following it with a favourite activity can also really help.

## A Homework Snapshot

### *Why practise skills at home?*

While communication, relationships and self-regulation are the big three areas in which parents can support their children, there is also value in practising some of the basic skills that children are learning at school. These include, for example

- Literacy skills such as fluent reading, accurate spelling and fast keyboarding
- Numeracy skills such as counting, addition, and multiplication facts
- Physical fitness and hand-eye co-ordination skills such as kicking or catching balls
- New vocabulary for English or Italian (LOTE)

As adults, we can read fluently and understand what we read because we recognise most words automatically, so we can concentrate on the meaning. We can budget effectively for a shopping trip because we can do quick mental calculations effortlessly. We can play a tune on a piano or make a good fist of a game of tennis because those movements have been practised many, many times.

Children need fluent and accurate basic skills to be able to

- understand what they read,
- organise and compose longer pieces of writing, or
- attempt complex problem solving,

Knowing basic facts off by heart **only** comes with practice, and the best kind of practice is short, focused and frequent. If you make the decision to help them to develop their basic skills, their learning and results **will** benefit.

### *Will my child receive regular homework from school?*

Yes. In the early years and primary school, your child's teacher will provide activities which will help develop basic skills in literacy and numeracy. The activities might include

- story books to read together
- activities for hearing or blending the sounds in words
- letter writing or recognition games
- word cards or word list to practise decoding individual words

- 'home readers' or books to read together
- Counting games
- Games or worksheets for practising addition, subtraction, multiplication or division facts
- Telling the time activities
- Practice worksheets or activities for skills like recognising fractions or measuring angles

### *Homework in High School*

As children approach and enter high school, some homework will be for higher level tasks, such as maths problems or writing a paragraph. However, the focus will still be on developing accuracy and automaticity in the essential skills that can support the rigorous learning and projects which are undertaken in class. Major assessment tasks will be set and undertaken during class, but students may be expected to continue or complete assignments in their own time.

### *How often? How long? How much help?*

#### **The following tips will help you help your child**

- Try to set up the same practice routine every school day (e.g. Monday to Friday)
- Often, a snack and a chat about the day helps children to recharge and debrief before they get to work.
- Keep your practice sessions short: Ten minutes a day on addition facts and 10 minutes a day on reading simple texts is much more effective than one big session once a week.
- Make sure the challenge level is just right – the practice drill should be *just a little bit* hard
- Make it a game if possible – you can nearly always use a game to practise a skill, and it's much more motivating!
- Give children as much help as they need! If the task is too hard, do it together, then gradually reduce the amount of help your child requires over time.
- Reducing distractions in the background (like the TV or other children playing) helps children to focus on you, the task and your encouragement.

## Completing projects or preparing for a special event

Some children relish the opportunity for undertaking individual projects and extension tasks in their own time with minimal guidance from their teachers. Your child's teacher may set such tasks as optional activities, and encourage your child to have a go at them if they are within their capacity. They may expect students to do extra work on a task begun in class before it is submitted for assessment. If these types of tasks are set, you are welcome to work with your child to provide guidance and assistance. Remember, though, that the aim is to develop the child's planning and problem solving, so the more you are able to take a back seat, the more ownership and pride your child will feel in the result.

We also encourage students to take on challenges that result in them presenting their work or talents to an audience, such as performing at an assembly or in a show, delivering a speech, displaying work in an exhibition, or entering a competition. These types of activities will often require students to undertake practice or preparation beforehand. If students put their hands up for these types of

tasks, it is expected that they will be prepared to work on them at home.

## Talking to your child's teacher about homework

If your child enjoys challenges, you might like to speak to his or her classroom teacher about some extension activities. These won't replace skills practice; they will be in addition to it. Your child's teacher may recommend a particular online site links to a learning project. Such tasks will not be submitted for assessment, although your child's teacher may be keen to see how well your child is progressing and may wish to check that they have completed assigned tasks before suggesting others. Your child's Connect class will contain links to useful educational activities and resources.

If set tasks are proving stressful for you and your child, the first port of call is your child's class teacher. Students can ask for help with homework from their teachers, and parents can talk through expectations and discuss whether a modified set of tasks or expectations is more appropriate. If ever you are unsure, teachers will appreciate you contacting them to ask.



## Beverly District High School

The heart of our community

*Working in unity to make a difference for every child*

*Our vision:*

*The Beverly community is committed to ensuring that its school is...*

Successful

Supportive

Sustainable