

“Homework is not an optional extra, but an essential part of a good education.”
The White Paper, Excellence in Schools

Rationale

At Newark Academy we use the term ‘Independent Learning’ rather than ‘homework’ to describe the independent ‘My Time’ tasks students are set to complete outside of lessons. The Education Endowment Fund research outlines how the regular setting of meaningful independent learning tasks can result in additional progress for secondary students (+5 months). Our staff also recognise and value the integral role that independent learning plays in the education of our students; reinforcing the educational process and supporting good habits that are essential for both examination success and lifelong learning. Our independent learning strategy therefore aims to enrich each student’s learning experience, links clearly to the ambitious curriculum and supports the knowledge retrieval process. We also understand and appreciate that the learning students undertake outside of their usual classroom environment must be seen to have relevance and value, and that the quality of a set independent learning task is more important than the quantity of work produced. We believe it is every student’s entitlement to be given meaningful opportunities to develop their curiosity, interests and passions; ‘independent learning’ is one of the strands by which we achieve this.

Principles

All independent learning opportunities will:

- Promote students’ self-discipline and personal responsibility for learning and organisation.
- Provide opportunities to practise and develop skills, embed knowledge and further enrich knowledge taught in lessons.
- Allow parents/carers to be actively involved in their child’s learning.
- Support students’ progress and achievement.
- Reinforce learning that began in class, extending knowledge and understanding.
- Be logged on Satchelone/Show My Homework so students and parents/carers are able to access the tasks set each week through the app.
- Have realistic deadlines and therefore are manageable for students to complete in the time allocated.
- Receive acknowledgement through teacher feedback and referenced in subsequent teaching, thus ensuring students understand the value in tasks. Forms of possible feedback include: Read the Books, live whole-class feedback, individual written or verbal feedback, low stakes quizzes and medium or high stakes assessment.
- Link to rewards, issued on completion, ensuring student engagement is consistently high as their effort feels valued. We want children to be intrinsically motivated (a great scholarly trait for future success) rather than be driven by consequences of non-completion. However, staff will challenge persistent non-engagement and follow-up with contact home where appropriate.

The list below outlines the types of independent learning students could be set. If independent learning is to be valued and meaningful it must meet at least one of these criteria. There is also an expectation that over time students receive a variety of tasks and therefore become more skilled in each aspect.

G: Guided research Tasks to expand core knowledge and understanding of a current topic, and/or prepare students for future learning. To support this, they may be directed to resources such as key websites, articles, podcasts, interviews, films, news reports and visits to places of interest and/or significance.

R: Reading Improving students’ reading fluency and developing a love of reading is a whole Academy priority. Students will be set a range of age appropriate texts and genres and encouraged to evaluate these through the scaffolded ‘before-during-after’ strategy we use across subjects. Texts will link to a specific scheme of learning and therefore help to develop students’ understanding and use of tier 2 and 3 vocabulary.

E: Enriched knowledge Activities that take the learning experience beyond the classroom, making clear links between the curriculum, and current local and global contexts. Students will be directed towards learning that references historical contexts, develops their cultural capital and celebrates diversity.

A: Application Encouraging students to retrieve powerful knowledge and apply it to tasks to strengthen and build their long-term memory. Tasks could include: exam style questions and tasks, extended writing opportunities that enforce organisational skills, knowledge retrieval and skill application.

T: Transformational Empowering students with lifelong skills so they can seize opportunities, shape their own futures and be valuable members of society. Students will be encouraged to challenge and question a wide range of information to form their own opinions, developing their critical thinking and analytical skills, giving them the confidence to challenge social injustice and drive change.

Expectations and Implementation

All subjects will plan a sequence of independent learning opportunities within each scheme of learning. These will be adapted by individual teachers to best support the class and students they teach. The number and length of these tasks will differ from subject to subject and relate to the number of lessons a subject has on a student's weekly timetable. Furthermore, it is also dependent on a student's age, their key stage and the point they are at in their current scheme of learning. We therefore expect our oldest students to have more independent learning tasks to complete than our youngest.

Moving forward we are developing the Independent Learning pages on our academy website, to provide links to resources and subject specific tasks.

KS3

As a minimum, in Year 7, 8 and 9 students will be set at least one piece of independent learning each week for each of their core subjects: English, Maths and Science. All other subjects will set at least two strategic independent learning opportunities within each scheme of learning, so students can go beyond the classroom experience. Typically, these tasks would take 30-45 minutes to complete.

KS4

As a minimum, Year 10 and 11 students will be set at least one Independent Learning task each week across **all** of their subjects, as appropriate to the scheme of learning and content being covered within lessons. Typically, these tasks would take 30-45 minutes to complete.

KS5

Students are provided with frequent opportunities to lead their own learning and take the study of the curriculum further. For each taught hour students should spend an additional hour undertaking independent learning. Through the NA6 Dare to Excel reading programme and NA6 Study Challenges, students will grow in independence and resilience, acquiring proficiency in their chosen subjects. This will be supported through a vast range of strategies including; extended reading and writing, attending lectures, giving presentations, compiling knowledge organisers and completing research tasks.

Accessible for all

In order to ensure all of our students have the same opportunities to achieve their goals and realise their potential, we understand the importance of removing all barriers to learning and provide support wherever needed. The range of online resources is vast for every subject and Maths and Science will specifically set independent learning opportunities through online platforms each week. To ensure every student has access to these valuable resources, different clubs will be running both during the school day and after school to provide students with access to IT facilities, library resources and subject specific materials.