THE CONTEXT FOR HOMEWORK

At Woodend, families value the long established pattern of class teachers setting homework regularly. They appreciate the extended timelines that teachers set, which help to allow for the busy schedules that many families require, because of work and other commitments. Families to recognise the importance of leaving room for children to have time outside school hours to have fun, to explore, to wonder, to socialise, to relax, to be quiet and to be alone. Balance is valued. We recognise the importance of a healthy mix of physical and sedentary activity, and individual pursuits balanced with activities involving others. We also wish to recognise the importance of children learning with adults: having learning experiences that incorporate regular interactions and modelling of learning behaviours and dispositions by adults.

Children engage in authentic learning opportunities outside school hours. These experiences are usually organised by parents and may help develop the life skills, including social skills and teamwork that are important to their personal development and wellbeing. There are also learning activities set by teachers, which are directly related to classroom learning programs. Work set by teachers has traditionally been defined as homework. Through this policy we wish to broaden the definition of homework and acknowledge all learning opportunities as important in framing each learner’s dispositions and skills, as active participants in society.

Two aspects of Homework
This policy outlines two distinct aspects of homework: one organised, set and followed up by teachers and the other organised and monitored by families. In order to maximise ownership and commitment by the learner, we recommend a democratic decision making process be implemented.

Homework generated from school
At Woodend PS, all students, from Reception to Year 7 are set homework by teachers; although the type and amount differs according to the age and abilities of the student. Homework is set because we believe it helps students to develop the study habits and organisation skills, which will be necessary to further education and work success. Homework also provides an opportunity for students to practise basic skills introduced in the classroom. On another level, homework may provide an avenue for parents to talk with children about learning.

As a rough guide, students are asked to do homework for, on average, at least 20 minutes per week for Year 1 students to at least 2 and a ½ hours per week for Year 7 students.

In the R-2 levels of schooling homework generally consists of reading, playing word recognition or spelling games, and collecting materials for class study topics. In the middle primary years written homework is introduced.

At Woodend PS teachers have agreed that the homework set will:
- be purposeful and include only work already introduced in class
- not consist of work that students have not finished in class. If students do not finish work because of inattention they will be asked to complete it during playtime. If students have other reasons for not completing work during class, then the work or the timeline will be adjusted.
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- be set with a “hand-up” time of several days, thus allowing students to complete it while being involved in other recreational activities.
- be acknowledged in student reports. Teachers will make an assessment based on achievement and commitment to homework generated from school.

Responsibilities for school generated homework
If homework is to be a useful part of the student’s regular learning routine, we all have a part to play.

Teachers have a responsibility to set homework suitable to the age and ability of the students. They need to communicate their expectations clearly to both students and parents, and set up procedures to check and provide feedback to students on their work at home.

Students are responsible for completing and handing in homework on time. They need to collect materials needed (such as homework sheets!) and remember to take them home. Students should also speak to the teacher if they have any difficulties with the work set, or want further explanation.

Parents and Caregivers need to support their child in completing homework, while still encouraging independence. This can mean asking your child to have a go before seeking help, or giving hints on how to solve the problem rather than telling the answer. A very important part of the parent role is communicating with the teacher - letting the teacher know if the child is spending too long on homework or finding the level of work inappropriate.

Standards - How do you know it’s good enough?
One of the biggest difficulties that many parents / caregivers face over homework is judging whether the effort and the outcome are meeting the standard expected by the teacher. When students engage in work at school, teachers work with them to clearly identify the criteria that need to be met for work to be completed at an appropriate standard. This also should apply to homework generated from school. Students have a responsibility to be aware of the standards required and be able to articulate them. Parents / caregivers should be aware of the standards required and take up the opportunities available to clarify their understandings: teacher expectations outlined at Acquaintance Night and through class newsletters, check with the student, check with the teacher, check for any criteria which may accompany the work set.

Consequences for not completing school generated homework
Homework will be marked and checked by teachers. If it is incomplete this will be communicated to parents and it will be the responsibility of the family to follow this up. The student report will reflect the homework effort.

Special Circumstances
For some students extra or alternative homework may be set. This may be to provide extra challenge or to give extra practice in areas of difficulty. In such cases, this work will be negotiated with the parent. For extended holidays it is recommended that students keep a travel diary.
Some parents are opposed to homework. Any parent wishing to exempt their child from homework should make an appointment to see the class teacher and outline this request.

**Homework generated from home**

**Guidelines for Parents and Caregivers**

Our school community believes it is wise for families to engage their children in purposeful activities to develop lifelong skills, responsibilities and attitudes. We also believe that children need regular and predictable time learning with an adult, preferably one of their parents. It is therefore recommended that families work together to develop a planned and organised grid of learning opportunities that suits their needs, reflects what is already being done or what will be done. This grid should allow time for students to complete school generated homework as well a fitting in family generated activities.

To assist with this process, teachers will work with students and families to develop a list of possible learning opportunities in which their families might engage. This list of learning opportunities will be published for students and their families and modified/reviewed as the need arises.

**Recommended Responsibilities:**

**Parents /Caregivers:**
Contribute to the development of the learning opportunities class list at the beginning of the year and at other review times. This list could be used as a guide to assist families to complete their own part of the grid.

Discuss the class list of learning opportunities with your child and negotiate and facilitate learning activities that you put on your child’s homework grid. For example, read a book with a parent, or walk the dog with an adult, guitar lesson, soccer practice, and gardening, cooking with an adult.

Sign your child’s diary each week

**Students:**
Contribute to the development of the class list and their own homework grid. Commit to working on all items on the grid to an appropriate standard. Record what they do in their diary.

**Teachers:**
Show an interest in home generated learning activities

* Based on the feedback for 180 responses to the WPS homework survey, which was given to all families to work on in term 2 2007. The survey's represented the work of students and their families. The review group comprised the Parent Education Committee and three additional staff reps. Plus SRC reps.