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Dear Parents and Carers

Independent learning guidelines 2018-19

I am writing to you to offer some guidance and clarify our expectations with regards to independent learning (homework) at Thomas Tallis. We refer to homework as independent learning at Tallis to help students to understand its purpose.

Research in the last decade has begun to focus on the relationship between independent learning and student achievement and has shown a clear resulting improvement, particularly for students at secondary school. At Tallis we believe that independent learning forms a vital part of students' learning, helping to embed knowledge and skills acquired in class and providing young people with an opportunity to develop a range of crucial learning habits including independent thinking, creativity, resilience and initiative.

Why is independent learning important?

- It can develop *inquisitiveness*, by providing opportunities for long term research and other work.
- It can develop *collaboration*, by involving parents and others in the learning process and so providing an important motivational function.
- It can develop *persistence*, by allowing students to develop their ability to work independently.
- It can develop *discipline*, by allowing valuable practice and extension of skills, knowledge and understanding learned in the classroom.
- It can develop *imagination*, by allowing students to use materials and other sources of information that are not always available in the classroom.

How can you help?

Your child will need to work more independently at secondary school than at primary school, but your interest and input will still be important and will help your child to do well.

1. Provide a quiet environment and necessary equipment
2. Have a regular independent learning routine
3. Praise effort, rather than achievement
4. Show an interest
5. Set a good example
6. Monitor: check your child's planner and Insight

Expectations

At Key Stage 3 students receive independent learning from all their subject teachers according to the published timetable. This ensures that students are neither without some work to do nor overloaded with tasks. We think that KS3 students should be working independently for around 30 to 60 minutes per day. At Key Stage 4 we operate a similar timetable. However, the independent learning activities set by teachers tend to be more complex, requiring a greater commitment of time and effort. We think that KS4 students should be working for at least 1 hour per day – increasing to an optimal amount of 2 hours per day in Year 11. At Post 16 (KS5), students should be completing on average 5 hours of independent study per subject each week.

Insight

All home learning will be set using the Insight platform (<http://insight.thomastallis.org.uk>), for which every child has a login; please contact your child's tutor if they do not have this. If you login as a parent or carer, you will be able to see your child's own calendar.

Other ways you can help with reading and mathematics

Your child's literacy and numeracy skills are critical to their long-term development; the importance of daily, personalised practice of reading and mathematics cannot be overstated. Recent studies indicate that when students spend 25 minutes a day reading suitably challenging books, they will achieve optimal reading age growth. You may not be reading with your child as you did at primary school but you can still support good reading habits. Talk to your child about the books you're both reading. Ask what books your child would like for birthday and Christmas presents. Go to the library together - if your child is stuck for a new author, ask the librarian for guidance or look online at book reviews. You could also take a look at our reading recommendations. (<https://www.thomastallischool.com/reading.html>)

inquisitive • collaborative • persistent • disciplined • imaginative

Similarly, students make most progress in maths when they practise little and often. In addition to the work they will be set by their class teacher, all children in years 7 to 11 will receive a login to an online textbook, packed full of practice questions, that will complement their learning in class. Login details for this will be published soon.

Support, rewards and sanctions

Given the importance of independent learning to your child's education, it is necessary for it to be monitored, supported, rewarded and enforced when necessary. Students receive reward points and other rewards when they complete tasks. If your child fails to complete independent work they have been set then they will be sanctioned according to our procedures and you will be contacted. Persistent failure to engage with independent learning will lead to a detention with members of the Senior Leadership Team on Friday afternoons. We provide two Independent Study Rooms (1-316; 1-333) open every day from 3.15-4pm for students to work in if they would like a quiet space to work or some help.

Many thanks in advance for supporting your child with their independent learning. For further information, please visit: <http://www.thomastallisschool.com/independent-learning.html>. Should you have any questions or comments about independent learning, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'J. Curtis-Brignell', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Jon Curtis-Brignell
Acting Deputy Head: Curriculum