



Thomas Tallis School Independent Learning policy 2018-19

Education to understand the world and change it for the better

This is the school plan which informs this policy:

Our plan for education to understand the world and change it for the better

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CURRICULUM What we do	Thomas Tallis is a creative comprehensive school committed to a broad and balanced entitlement curriculum. Evidence informed, we aim to use consistently excellent teaching, data, and CPD to build quality, fairness and success for our young people for the long term. Literacy and numeracy across the curriculum enhance progress for everyone. Research focuses our thinking and improves our teaching and learning. We scrutinise our achievements and seek to improve them for all of our children. Our Habits of persistence, discipline, imagination, inquisitiveness and collaboration permeate everything we do. All our achievement and curriculum plans are based on this.	<p style="text-align: center; color: #C00000;">Priorities 2018-19</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Achieve positive P8, with a focus on maths and English and aim for ALPs 2. (Curriculum Plan) 2. Respond to consultation on curriculum change at KS4 (Curriculum Plan) 3. Plan and achieve consistency in all aspects of teaching including home learning (Curriculum Plan) 4. Increase attendance to 96%, keep PA below 12% and exclusions below the national average. (Inclusion Plan) 5. Build links with parents, our local community and school partners so that no family is unknown to us. (Community Plan) 6. To implement, monitor and evaluate the Tallis Fair Workload Charter (Curriculum Plan) 7. Assure financial sustainability so that balanced budgets may be set from 2018-19. (Budget)
INCLUSION Who we are	Inclusive Tallis enables our young people to understand themselves in a happy community characterised by positive peer pressure. Decision-making humanely balances the needs of individuals in community: we look for creative solutions to problems. Adults try to be good roles models at all times. We use feedback in all aspects of our life to develop young people's independence and improve our service. Despite external pressures, children are the heart of our school and each one is seen, valued and known. Our character values, which help develop character for learning as well as personal development are fairness, honesty, kindness, respect and optimism. They permeate everything we do. All our inclusion plans are based on this.	
COMMUNITY How we work	Community Tallis aims to commission, sustain and model the best possible context for our students. We seek enrichment for our students, improvement of their life outcomes and the development of innovative practice. We know, understand and work with parents, our community inside and outside school and in a national context to help students and staff flourish. We are committed to sharing and collaborating with other schools for the common good. Governors support our strengths and challenge strategically. Our community framework of connecting, communicating and collaborating permeates everything we do. All of our community and resourcing plans are based on this.	
<p>Above all, we mean what we say</p> <p><i>'It shines out of you that you really care about each and every student, that each student is given a fair chance, a decent education and treated as an individual.'</i> (Parent 2017)</p>		

Jon Curtis-Brignell

Policy adopted from: September 2015

Policy reviewed and updated: October 2016, September 2017, September 2018

To be reviewed: September 2019

At Tallis we believe that independent learning forms a vital part of students' learning experiences, 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.

Research in the last decade has begun to focus on the relationship between homework (independent learning) and student achievement and has shown a clear resulting improvement, particularly for students at secondary school. According to The Education Endowment Foundation, the impact of homework / independent learning on secondary learning is consistently positive (leading to on average five months' additional progress),

whilst Hattie's Visible Learning assigns it an effect size of 0.64. However, beneath these averages there is a wide variation in potential impact, suggesting that how homework is set is likely to be very important.

The DfE recently released the findings of a study (published in the Guardian¹) by the Institute of Education at the University of London. This suggested that homework / independent learning provided a clear resulting improvement, particularly for students doing up to two hours a night.

Main findings of the research:

1. It is hard to isolate homework / independent learning from other social factors causing impacts
2. Decades of research suggest some kind of positive impact of doing appropriate homework / independent learning
3. Homework / independent learning can exacerbate social inequalities because disadvantaged parents struggle to help their child or do not value it - but doing it seems to exaggerate performance
4. It is best to assign homework beneficial to student learning rather than as policy - purposeful homework could be introducing new content, practising a skill that students can do independently, elaborating on information to deepen knowledge, encouraging exploration of interests
5. Assignments should be challenging but achievable; inappropriate homework can even detract from learning
6. Independent learning extends the school day which is the main reason for positive impact
7. Longer time should be spent on homework as students get older
8. The role of parents / carers is important if given clear guidelines and do not act as experts
9. There is some disagreement on whether feedback matters for all homework - but generally considered it does (although can be peer feedback or discussion)
10. A clear school wide policy with clear expectations for staff, students and parents is important

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.

While it is important that we continue to have a dialogue about the nature of independent learning, underpinning this is the systematic habit of planning, setting, doing, checking and feeding back on independent learning as a planned part of the curriculum.

Independent learning should:

- Be a planned part of the curriculum, beneficial to student learning, not an afterthought.
- Be clear, well scaffolded, and be able to be done independently, with minimal support.

¹ <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2012/mar/29/homework-linked-better-school-results>

- Have just the right amount of challenge. Not so challenging that students give up, but not so simple that they are not stretched.
- Have considered the resources that students will need, and any further support, to complete the work to a high standard – including any use of ICT.
- Be monitored for completion and act as an integral part of the ongoing learning cycle.
- Have elements that encourage curiosity and enquiry to flourish. Such independent learning can be completed in the time slot allocated, but that wouldn't stop a student going on a flight of excellence that sees him or her lost in learning that is wholly worthwhile.

Effective independent learning strategies include:

- Flipped learning - preparing for the next lesson
- Online learning, eg SAM learning
- Research or presentation-based tasks
- Extended enquiries / booklets - there is some evidence that homework is most effective when used as a short and focused intervention (e.g. in the form of a project or specific target connected with a particular element of learning) with some exceptional studies showing up to eight months' positive impact on attainment.
- Revision for high frequency low stakes tests
- Preparing for formal assessments
- Reading (with something checking it has been completed)
- Tasks which can be peer- or self-assessed

We will use the following principles for independent learning in 2018-19:

- We will refer to 'homework' as 'independent learning', in order to emphasise the responsibility that students should take for their own learning
- We have a clear policy on using the above as a list of effective independent learning tasks shared with students and parents
- We publish an official independent learning timetable published and shared with parents
- Where possible, independent learning tasks are built clearly into schemes of learning – an area that needs to be developed through the school
- We use some curriculum development time this year to create independent learning booklets at KS3
- Departments need to create an independent learning catch up slot with escalation to an SLT detention for failure to complete – see flow diagram

Frequency and amount

Studies suggest that there is an optimum amount of independent learning of between 1 and 2 hours per school day (slightly longer for older students), with effects diminishing as the time that students spend on independent learning increases. Therefore, the school will aim for the following amount of Independent Learning to be set per night:

Key Stage	Year Group	Amount of Independent Work
KS3	Year 7	Up to 60 minutes
	Year 8	
KS4	Year 9	At least 60 minutes
	Year 10	90 minutes
	Year 11	2 hours
KS5	Year 12	5 hours per subject per week

Key Stage 3 Expectations

There are published timetables which have been drawn up to allocate independent learning across all subjects, based on a careful timing for each subject. There is a suggested duration of around 30 minutes per allocated slot in Year 7 and Year 8. Due to the complexities of the timetable, staff will have to pay close attention to when they teach particular subjects on the days marked for independent learning in that area. It is also crucial that we follow this schedule so that the weight of independent learning is evenly spread and so that parents/carers are aware when they can expect independent work to be set. Teachers are encouraged to spread independent learning throughout the half term due so that students are not over loaded at the beginning or end of the term.

In Year 7 and 8 in 2018-19 the school will be introducing independent learning booklets to share with parents as well as the students to help monitor the amount of independent work, the quality and range of tasks, as well as assisting in the careful structure and support that students require. This is also to address the consistency and expectation discrepancies between staff, students and parents.

Key Stage 4 Expectations

In years 9, 10 and 11, it is expected that students should have between 60 and 90 minutes of independent learning per subject per week. We expect that by Year 11 students should be completing two hours independent learning per day, building up from approximately 60 minutes per day in year 9 and 90 minutes per day in year 10.

Key Stage 5 Expectations

It is expected that for every hour of lesson time students in the Sixth Form will do one hour of independent study as 'independent learning'. Staff should set independent work that amounts to this quantity and get students to note down clearly what is expected in their planners.

It is expected that all Independent Learning will be set and monitored for completion using PARS. Students in all year groups will access independent learning through the Insight platform. Students in Years 7 to 11 should continue to note work set in their planner.

Independent learning and teacher workload

Given wider concerns surrounding teacher workload, we encourage teachers to find methods of setting and monitoring independent learning that do not add unnecessarily to their workload. Many of the effective strategies listed above should require minimal supervision, monitoring and / or marking and our advice where possible is to restrict the setting, monitoring and feedback of home learning to within lesson time. Over time, Independent Learning booklets designed as part of a scheme of learning will reduce workload.

JCB, May 2019

Appendix 1: Failure to complete Independent Learning Protocol

