

Prep Guide for Parents

At Belmont, we refer to homework as 'prep'. This is the term that will be used throughout this document. The Prep Guide for Parents aims to answer frequently asked questions about prep. I hope you find it both informative and useful.

During the academic year of 2015 – 16 we have conducted a full review of prep. The review involved canvassing the views of teachers, parents and pupils as well as investigating what other schools are doing and looking at current studies into the value of prep. From the outset we were clear that any changes made to the current structure of prep must reflect our professional view of what is right for the majority of our pupils.

Studies and research into the value of homework do not provide unequivocal statements about its effectiveness and the results of one study can contradict the results of another. This is summarised by the following, from an article in 'Teacher', an Australian magazine.

'Supporters of homework argue it not only has academic benefits, but also helps youngsters develop important study and time management skills, and gives parents a chance to engage in their child's learning.

On the other side of the debate: For those opposed to homework, many feel that it creates unnecessary pressure on students for limited or disputed academic benefit, robs children of time to develop other life skills, through recreational and artistic activities and social interaction, and places pressure on family' www.teachermagazine.com.au 11th September 2014.

Interestingly, in our surveys parents, pupils and teachers all see the value in prep but the overall feeling is that it should be more flexible so that it is not too much of a burden on children or families.

As a result of the prep review, the key word, moving forward, is 'flexibility'. Teachers want to set prep that is valuable but is not too onerous on the pupils so the following will be effective from September 2016.

- Prep will be **approximately** 30 minutes in Lower School and 45 minutes in Upper School. Teachers will use their professional judgement, depending on the task, so the expected length may vary from task to task but timings will broadly be as above
- On fixture nights, deadlines will be set for the following Monday so pupils could complete the prep over the weekend if they choose to. This allows families and pupils flexibility to have a clear weekend if they wish to or use the weekend for completing the prep
- In general, if holiday prep is set, it will only be set in those holidays prior to exams or tests for revision purposes i.e. October Half-Term, Easter and Summer Half-Term (Y8 only). Some light revision may be given to Upper School pupils during the Summer Holiday
- Holiday project work may be set but it will be optional. Project work will be acknowledged on return e.g. being shown in class, put up on display, commends given with feedback etc.
- The majority of prep will be consolidation of the learning taking place in lessons and it may also include project work, an on-line activity, a practical activity or a 'fun' game or activity
- All children in Bus Room, Pre-Club Supervision, Sibling Supervision and Late Room must begin their prep during the supervision session
- Deadlines will be clearly stated by the teacher and be noted in the Prep Diary by the pupils

The following timetable is for illustrative purposes only. This is what a prep timetable for each year group **might** look like. The writing in red and blue will be relevant for all prep timetables from September 2016.

	Mon	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Y3 + 4	English	Maths	Spellings and Times Tables	Science/History/ Geography (could include research / project work) Deadline for Monday to allow flexibility on fixture night	
Y5 Spellings, Times Tables and reading should be happening through the week. French vocabulary learning may also be given.	English	Maths Deadline for Monday to allow flexibility on fixture night	Science	History/ Geography (This could include research/ project work)	
Y6 Geography may be set as on-going project work for Y6	Latin	English Deadline for Monday to allow flexibility on fixture night	Maths	Science	French
Y7 + 8 RE and Geography will be set as on-going project work for Y7 + 8	Maths	History	English Deadline for Monday to allow flexibility on fixture night	Science	French and Latin

Frequently Asked Questions

How will I know what has been set for prep?

Every child is issued with a prep diary. This is a very important book and pupils must have their diaries with them for all lessons. Pupils write down the task they have been set. The tutor checks, on a daily basis, that prep is being entered, and, if none is set, the reason is stated e.g.: None set – outing. Parents are expected to sign the prep diaries to indicate that they have looked at them and know what their child has been asked to do. It is also a useful tool for communication; if your child could not complete the prep or found it too difficult or too easy, please put a note to the teacher in the prep diary. Teachers find this communication invaluable.

Where should children study?

In general, it is better to establish one place that the child can work. With younger children, this is often in the kitchen or dining room close to the rest of the family. As children get older and more independent, their own bedroom may be more appropriate. The following conditions are thought best:

- The place of work should be of a comfortable temperature and well-lit
- The work surface should be flat and uncluttered, preferably a table or desk
- Children should sit on a chair not a stool which can cause back-ache
- The place should be quiet and away from distractions, such as TV or the noise of other members of the household

Many young people (unlike most adults) prefer to work with music playing. If the homework is completed appropriately, then the music may be helping. However, if it is causing a distraction, then it is not suitable.

How much help should I give my child?

It is helpful for parents to ask their child what they have for prep and check what is written in the prep diary. Younger children may need their parents to check they have understood the task but the task should be undertaken independently. It is not recommended that parents sit with their children while they undertake prep. If a child asks for help, parents can of course guide them but if the child has clearly misunderstood a concept or forgotten how to tackle a task, parents should note this in the prep diary or email the teacher. Prep is a useful form of assessment for teachers so knowing that a child has struggled will help them to plan how to further support the child.

