



West Leigh Junior School

Part of the Portico Academy Trust

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opening doors, unlocking potential

CEO - Mrs C. Woolf

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Dear Parents/Carers,

As we start a new year, we felt that it would be helpful to clarify certain points and provide guidance on how you can support your child's learning at home.

Although formal, written homework will not be set in all year groups, a great deal of homework will involve practice of key skills such as spellings, mental arithmetic and reading. Please try to assist with this on a regular, if possible daily, basis rather than shortly before a test – this way the children are more likely to remember in the long term.

Spellings

At West Leigh, we use “look, say, cover, write, check” when learning spellings. Rather than leave your child with the list, encourage them to look at and study the words. Help them to find and study the difficult bits and make comparisons with other words as making links is always helpful. Silly or funny ways of remembering is even better (as the children will have seen on the Sir Linkalot spelling app). When your child believes the word is learned, ask them to write it out and then compare to the correct version. If it is wrong, repeat the process but don't allow them to correct the word – they must get used to writing the whole word correctly. Please also make sure that your child understands the definition of each spelling. Why not challenge them to use each word correctly within a sentence?

Don't test until you think your child is likely to get them right and it is better that your child writes the words rather than spelling them aloud. This gives them a chance to look at the words to see if they look right.

Mental Arithmetic

Try to think of times tables as number facts: 4 multiplied by 7 is 28 just as Paris is the capital of France. We know facts so we don't need to work them out! One of the most effective tools in enabling these to be recalled rapidly is through the daily use of the TT Rockstars app. (It is suggested that the optimum usage is 3 – 5 minutes per day.) The children can chant them, sing them, make number patterns etc. but ultimately they must know them in isolation. Remember too, that to know the tables means they can be answered in all situations e.g. $28 \div 4$ and $\frac{1}{4}$ of 28. It is often useful to make some cards of the tables you are practising with the question on one side and answer on the other – all sorts of games can come from these facts and they can also be used to beat the clock. Some children find it useful to have cards with a question and answer displayed around the house e.g. $8 \times 9 = 72$ on their bedroom door will ensure it is looked at and thought about several times a day! However, limit this to no more than 5 or 6 cards otherwise your child will ignore them!

Mental arithmetic involves much more, of course, than multiplication tables and the expectation of the National Curriculum is that children know and can apply their tables up to 12×12 by the end of Year 4. To help parents practise mental maths, staff will share links (via Showbie) to mental maths games with a

focus on an important mental maths skill each week. It will often be expected that screenshots will need to be uploaded to Showbie as evidence of their effort.

Reading

It is probably reading that makes the greatest difference to a child's education and lifelong learning. We encourage children to select books that will provide both interest and challenge and although we welcome them to supplement their reading diet with books from home, we ask that these are reviewed by the class teacher. It is an expectation that all children read at home every day to develop fluency, vocabulary and stamina so we ask that their reading record (inside their communication book) is signed each day.

We understand that as a child becomes more proficient they will want to read more of the book silently to themselves – this is to be encouraged, but bear in mind that a certain amount of reading aloud and discussion of the text is necessary to develop wider vocabulary and inferential comprehension.

From time to time, in addition to spellings, reading and mental arithmetic, your child might be set further homework tasks. This is good practice in developing important independent learning skills as well as encouraging a responsible attitude towards learning.

In Year 6 (and during summer term in Year 5), the children will be set weekly homework tasks in addition to spellings, reading and mental arithmetic as we recognise how important it is to develop independent learning behaviours in preparation for the demands of Year 7.

We will not generally set homework during school holidays but we would hope that reading will continue as this is such an important life skill.

When the homework has been completed, please satisfy yourself that a good effort has been made and that the work is well organised and neatly presented and we ask that you sign the communication book once you have done this.

We hope this clarifies some parents' questions about homework. We try to be as specific as possible when we communicate through the communication books and via Showbie but should you require further information, remember that your child's teacher is always happy to speak to you.

Yours sincerely,

Mrs Carr
Assistant Headteacher