At O’Sullivan Beach School we recognise and acknowledge that the time children spend with their families and their involvement in out of hours activities are important components of the development of the whole child. Activities such as art lessons, sports practices, cultural activities, out of school hours care, the learning of a language, tutoring, church and youth clubs etc are all considered to be valuable learning activities that place additional demands on family time.

What is Homework?

Homework is any work or task set by a class teacher that is to be completed by the student outside of normal school hours. We believe that homework can be a positive, learning experience. However, it needs to be relevant to the students' current learning if it is to be of benefit. Students need to understand what is expected of them and the reasons why the homework tasks are set. This is the role of the class teacher.

Homework can assist in:
- the development of time management and organisational skills
- in consolidating new concepts learnt
- keeping parents in touch with the kinds of work their children are doing at school
- providing a link between families, students and teachers.

While homework is not compulsory, the Department of Education and Children's Services (DECS) has set guidelines about the time that students should spend on homework tasks. In order that out-of-school activities can be fostered within families, our teachers support homework that can be completed over a period of time.

Homework may consist of:
- reading
- completing tasks that were not completed in class time
- ‘practise’ tasks which will give students a chance to consolidate newly learned concepts
- set tasks or 'longer-term' contracts which will have negotiated time frames
- a home or community based activity.

Homework can support student learning. It should never be too onerous or stressful. It can provide an opportunity for students to take responsibility for their own learning and can help to establish routines and sound study habits. Students are only ever expected to do what families consider is a reasonable effort within a designated time frame. This is fine as long as the family deems an appropriate effort has been made. Likewise some students greatly enjoy homework. They choose to spend far more time and effort than is asked of them. Such enthusiasm is acknowledged, but not encouraged. Children need time to be children.

How families can help?

The help and support of families is important to a student's enjoyment and completion of homework. Families can help by:
- encouraging students to take homework seriously
- setting the scene at home and acknowledging that a set time is dedicated to homework
- providing a 'study' place that is quiet, pleasant and comfortable, with good lighting and ventilation
- helping your child to acquire any resources they may need for any independent research, by taking them to visit local libraries, etc
- knowing your child's deadlines so you can encourage them to meet these
- providing your child's teacher with prompt feedback if your child is experiencing any difficulties.

How much homework and how often?

The following are guidelines as to how much and how often homework could be set.

Reception to Year 2
- Junior Primary students are not set formal homework. Students may, however, be asked to carry out tasks like reading to a family member or finding things at home.

Year 3
- Students should read every night. Up to 20 minutes on one night a week may be set aside for formal tasks.

Year 4
- Students should read every night. Up to 20 minutes on two nights per week may be set aside for formal tasks.

Year 5
- Students should read every night. Up to 20 minutes on three nights per week may be set aside for formal tasks.

Year 6
- Students should read every night. Up to 30 minutes on three nights per week may be set aside for formal tasks.

Year 7
- Students should read every night. Up to 30 minutes on four nights per week may be set aside for formal tasks.
Diaries or Communication Books

Diaries or Communication Books are an important part of the homework process. All students will be issued with a diary or communication book at the beginning of the year. They will be used to inform both students and families of homework set as well as indicating if homework has not been set. Diaries and Communication Books must be regularly signed by both families and teachers.

Roles

Students will:
- ensure they know what homework is required of them each evening and complete their tasks
- let their teacher know if they don't understand the set task
- record their homework task in their diary or communication book
- meet the timeline for the task
- negotiate with their teacher any adjustments to set deadlines.

Teachers will:
- set appropriate homework for students
- communicate the expectations of the task so students have a clear understanding
- monitor that homework is completed appropriately and on time
- provide feedback to the student
- report on homework where appropriate
- contact families as soon as possible when homework is not being completed.

Families will:
- provide a suitable workspace, appropriate resources, encouragement and guidance
- communicate any homework issues to the teacher
- sign the diary or communication book when required.

Conclusion

Homework should not cause worry or stress, or be too onerous for the student. If homework proves to be a problem, families need to communicate those problems with the teacher via the diary, communication book or by personal contact.

Students will not be punished for not completing work scheduled to be done at home. Teachers will contact families to discuss the matter as soon as possible to determine what the main reasons for not completing homework are and how individuals can be supported to complete the tasks set.

At the end of the day, homework set is at the discretion of the teacher. Our teachers understand family demands, circumstances, individual backgrounds and family complexities. At the very least, to best support your child at home with his/her learning, spending time listening to him/her read or reading to him/her will be of great benefit to the learning across all aspects of schooling.