



NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL

G D S T
GIRLS' DAY SCHOOL TRUST

NORTHAMPTON HIGH SCHOOL

Prep (practise, reflect, explore, prepare) Policy

At Northampton High School, prep is seen as an integral part of the educational process, which should not cause students undue stress, nor be put in place excessively or needlessly. There should be a balance between different types of prep and sufficient time allowed for completion. Students are encouraged to manage their time effectively in order to produce work they are proud of and to meet deadlines, whilst leaving time for other interests both in and out of school.

The time allocation for prep should be gradually increased over the years so that students build up the stamina and skills required to cope with the specifications for GCSE and A Level. In the younger years, however, up to Year 8, prep should be 'light touch' and ideally used to help *prepare* students for work to be completed in lessons, in line with prep policy in junior school, and also feeding into the other strands of *practise, reflect and explore*, which allow pupils opportunities to consolidate and revisit their learning in class, whilst also satisfying their curiosity and imagination.

Prep enables pupils to:

- practise skills learnt in lessons
- work independently and at an appropriate level
- extend their interests
- take responsibility for the organisation of their work
- consolidate and reinforce knowledge and understanding
- reflect on what they have learnt over a period of time
- reflect on **how** they learn to enable them to become more effective as learners

Prep enables teachers to:

- provide an opportunity for research into a topic which may then be shared in the classroom
- give an additional opportunity for assessment
- add another dimension to the knowledge about an individual pupil
- provide timely, appropriate and individualised feedback (often verbally via Mote and Google Classroom)
- plan appropriately for the next steps

Prep enables parents to:

- see the standard and content of the work expected of their child(ren)
- support their child(ren)'s learning experiences

Marking of Prep

This policy provides a framework for Junior School and Senior School subject area marking policies. In year groups where pupils have 1 to 1 devices, prep is set through Google Classroom so students can access instructions and materials and submit work electronically.

Feedback

All work produced should receive teacher feedback, however, this does not necessarily mean that it has been formally marked on every occasion, e.g. work may be used for class discussion or feedback may be given orally. Mote is an extremely effective way of providing verbal feedback in Google Classroom and Kami can be used to annotate any PDF and link it to Google Classroom. Support is available to teachers who would like to know more about the logistics and benefits of this method of providing feedback.

When responding to student work, teachers will provide formative feedback which encourages continual improvement and which generally includes a 'challenge question' to develop further enquiry. Where feedback is given verbally, a note to this effect on the work in question is helpful. The WWW, EBI, NS (what went well, even better if, next steps) process is helpful for both written and verbal feedback in order to support students in their progress.

Junior School - additional notes

Prep begins on a regular formal basis in Year 3. However, this is also at the discretion of the class teacher, as we only set prep that we feel has value and a purpose and that will enhance the pupils' learning experience. It is expected that each pupil will record prep in the planner.

We try to make prep as varied as possible and encourage the use of digital devices where possible. prep tasks will often be differentiated or there may be optional extension work. We try to make the purpose of any prep, an idea of the amount expected, and the time to be taken, very clear to the pupil and to adequately explain it before the end of the lesson.

Pupils receive an adequate and realistic time to complete prep. This means that at least two school nights are allowed, longer if over a weekend and it is expected that it will be completed and given in on time. No additional compulsory prep should be set over a holiday period, although we recommend reading for pleasure throughout the year.

Teachers aim to respond sensitively to the difficulty that some pupils may have in recording prep accurately and to give their instructions carefully.

Younger pupils, in Year 1 & 2, will be given home readers, one task a week to complete with parents and may be asked to find out information about their current topic.

Guidelines for time allocated to prep in Junior School

Subject	Key Stage 2 prep time per week			
	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
English	Written 30 mins Reading 10 mins per day	Written 30 mins Reading 10 mins per day	Written 30 mins Reading 10 mins per day	Written 40 mins Reading 10 mins per day
Mathematics	Written 30 mins Learning 5 mins per day	Written 30 mins Learning 5 mins per day	Written 30 mins	Written 40 mins Learning 5 mins per day
Science		When appropriate (30 mins)	30 mins or Humanities	40 mins
Humanities		When appropriate (instead of English)	30 mins or Science	40 mins
French			30 mins	20 mins

Tutor (e.g. Art, research, assembly lines, Maths learning etc.)			30 mins	
---	--	--	---------	--

Prep should be marked as per the Junior School marking policy but time should also be given for individual / class feedback and an opportunity for girls' to respond to the marking. This may occur in the subject lesson or a form period.

Senior School - additional notes

Key Stage 3 (Year 7-9)

Prep is set according to the guidelines below and all staff are aware of these. The types of task will vary according to the demands of the subject and could include:

- practice and extension of what is covered in lessons
- preparation for future lessons (flipping the classroom)
- learning
- reading
- research and projects
- presentations
- collaborative tasks on cloud-based platforms (google docs, jamboard, padlet)
- controlled or non-examined assessment (NEA) preparation
- essay and extended writing
- practical tasks
- redrafting
- reflecting and creative thinking, blogs, creative writing.

Prep should be as varied as possible, making use of digital resources where appropriate (this is particularly helpful for collaborative tasks). The purpose of the activity, an idea of the amount expected and the time to be taken will be made very clear to the students during the lesson, with sufficient time for questions and clarifications.

Students are given an adequate and realistic time to complete prep. This means that **at least two** school nights are allowed. No additional compulsory prep should be set over a holiday period, or in the run up to exams when students are revising. However, it may be appropriate to suggest some recap work over the summer for a subject that has not been studied for some time, for example in the Creative Arts circus or German/Spanish in KS3.

The value of wider reading is acknowledged. As such, the week before each holiday is allocated as a **reading week**. Before half-term breaks, this is a 'subject' reading week, where teachers will suggest interesting wider reading activities in their subject areas. Before the main term breaks at Christmas, Easter and the summer, they are 'general' reading weeks, when the English faculty will suggest suitable books via their reading lists. There are additional lists held in the Library pages in Firefly.

Although all prep tasks are now set in Google Classroom, teachers should ensure that students are familiar with the routines for using this platform and check that they have understood the instructions.

For **time allocated** to subjects see table below. The timings are reviewed and agreed by the Faculty Board periodically. The following section gives guidelines for **maximum** time to be spent on homework per week in KS3.

Subject	Maximum prep time per week		
	Y7	Y8	Y9
Theology And Philosophy	20 mins occasional	30 mins	30 mins

English	40 mins (2 x 20 mins)	60 mins (2 x 30 mins)	60 mins (2 x 30 mins)
Geography	20 mins	30 mins	30 mins
History	20 mins	30 mins	40 mins
French	20 mins	30 mins	40 mins
German/Spanish	20 mins	30 mins	40 mins
Latin	20 mins	30 mins	40 mins
Mathematics	40 mins	60 mins (2 x 30 mins)	60 mins (2 x 30 mins)
Science	30 mins	60 mins	90 mins (3 x 30 mins)
Music/Drama Prep is only set for specific projects very occasionally.	See notes		
Technology circus Textiles, Food and Computing will set prep once a fortnight between 40-80 minutes in total. For textiles the prep will be project related and usually something that will be used during the next lesson. For food, prep will involve the preparation of ingredients for practical lessons as well as written tasks.	See notes		
Art Art sets KS3 prep once a fortnight and pupils will sometimes be able to choose what they can do from a booklet. Pupils will work to a fortnightly programme (40-80 mins) instead of a rushed piece once a week.	See notes		
Total (Approximate)	300 mins	460 mins	580 mins

These guidelines should be adhered to in order to avoid students becoming overloaded with work. Teachers should remind pupils of this and ask them to stop working if they reach the time limit. Pupils are encouraged to let teachers know if they are struggling to complete work in the given time.

Note that for the **first half term of Year 7** teachers are asked to give approximately half the allocated time for prep to help pupils settle in and reduce anxiety.

Key Stage 4 (Years 10-11)

The nature of prep may vary more widely in Key Stage 4 owing to the different demands of GCSEs/IGCSEs. Coursework (or Non-Examined Assessment – NEA) becomes a prominent feature in some subjects and much of this can be completed within prep time. In practical subjects, it may be necessary for pupils to work on the premises at lunchtime and immediately after school as on-site facilities are needed. At this level, the workload means that students may do additional schoolwork over holiday periods but this should only be set formally on exceptional occasions and may be more likely to be revision based. In all other respects, the practices prevalent at Key Stage 3 continue into Key Stage 4.

While there is no set time limit because of the variability of the different courses, **around 1.5 hours per week per subject is a suitable benchmark**. It is perfectly acceptable to set prep in each lesson and share this overall time out across the week, but teachers will be mindful of student workload and allow at least two school days for each task, more if it is a longer task set once in the week.

Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form)

At Key Stage 5, prep promotes and fosters a deeper knowledge and understanding of work covered in school. It lays the foundations for life-long learning.

Prep time limits as such are not appropriate at Key Stage 5, however, students should generally **spend at least as much time working independently on their subjects as they do in school** and they may have to do considerably more at certain times of the year. It is worth noting that the standard time given in lesson time for an A Level subject is 8 periods (300 minutes or 5 hours) but when a group is particularly small, teaching time may be reduced. Students are still expected to study in school, under teacher direction, for the full 5 hours. When setting prep for Sixth Form students, teachers should take into account students' other subjects and commitments, and inform colleagues of particular 'pinch points' in the year so these can be considered when organising the overall programme of study.

Prep should encourage Sixth Formers to:

- demonstrate self-discipline
- acquire organisational skills
- meet all the requirements of coursework
- develop a spirit of enquiry
- achieve a greater maturity
- fulfil their potential

Types of Prep include:

- Reading
- Research and projects
- Coursework
- Essay/extended writing
- Practical tasks
- Redrafting
- Reviewing and learning
- preparation for examinations
- Collection of data

Appendix

The following extract by Kieran Larkin echoes many of the comments that came out of the three surveys conducted by the working party and illustrates clearly our attitude to prep at Northampton High School:

Homework must be given with purpose and teachers need to make clear to the students what that purpose is. [...]

So what can homework achieve that can't be achieved in the classroom? First, it's important to create an independent work ethic. Success at and beyond school requires students to get used to problem solving and persevering with extended pieces of work without support from their teachers. There is a huge difference between solving an equation, doing a translation or writing or deconstructing a piece of prose in a lesson after you have just discussed it, and doing it alone in the library or your room a day or a week later using your own knowledge and skills.

Homework is a way to learn practical research skills: using the library, devising questionnaires or interviews and conducting online searches. (Not just accepting the first Google hit as a universal truth.) Whether students intend to study beyond school or not these are essential – and enriching – skills for later life.

Third, homework provides challenge; having to solve a problem to bring to the next lesson enables students to demonstrate understanding and teachers to assess its depth or identify any gaps. It also provides time to practise. Homework provides time to embed the things that are useful to learn by rote, such as times tables, vocabulary, spelling, irregular verbs and handwriting.

Lastly, well thought-through homework provides uninterrupted time for students to make sense of their own understanding at their own pace.

So what should schools and students do to make homework worthwhile? It's not about the length of time spent on it. It's about using the time spent on it for a reason.

Ensure variety. If you want to maintain interest in your subject it needs to be engaging in the first place. Avoid homework that is "finishing off class work" – that rather implies it should have been better managed in the class by the teacher. The teacher should indicate the length, content and presentational style required – so that students know how it will be assessed. Collect homework in on time and use it as part of the lesson or as soon as possible, so that you value its completion and demonstrate its importance. [...]

When setting homework, the teacher should create time in the lesson to record it and clarify what needs to be done. A hurriedly set assignment at the end of the lesson is more likely to be undone or done badly.

Lastly – always show that you value the work you are asking students to do. Collect it at the agreed time, mark it quickly and thoroughly. Use the work to provide feedback to the student and the class what has been done well. Shape the next lesson to plug gaps, address any misconceptions or extend the standard/ challenge of the work for students.

Quoted in *The Independent*, 24 April 2013

Reviewed by:	Henry Rickman, Deputy Head, Academic
Signed off:	August 2023
Next review due:	August 2024