

# Research into attitudes towards and experiences of homework – the headlines.

“I can't believe I'm saying all these pro things about homework--- ” (parent)

“I think we should have homework, but --- ” (Year 8/9)

Elizabeth Dawson  
for KASS  
11.10.14

## 1) Questionnaires for:

- Parents: response rate about 33% (251/766)
- Teachers: response rate 44.6% (46/103)
- Students Years 10 -13: response rate 60% (115/191)
- Students in Years 6 – 9: response rate 77% (150/194)

## 2) Group interviews (number in each group: 5 - 6)

- Parents
- Teachers
- 4 student groups (Years 12 -13, Years 10 -11, Years 8 -9, Years 6-7)

- 1) Assumptions and expectations
- 2) Reasons for doing/setting homework
- 3) Useful types of homework.
- 4) Appropriate amounts of homework
- 5) Family experience of homework

# Assumptions and Expectations

Just over a quarter of respondents agreed with the statement: “Good teachers set homework” (parents most positive).

Over a third of respondents agreed with the statement: “Good schools set homework” (teachers least positive).

Percentage of teachers agreeing that they set homework to meet the expectations of

- students (27%)
- the school (40%)
- parents (52%)

## Views which are consistent with research literature

- Homework can be a source of family tension and misunderstanding (Hallam,2006; Davis 2013)

*Parents and children have differing perceptions about how helpful parents are (e.g. only 4% of parents think they don't understand their children's homework, but 33% of Y10-13 think they don't).*

*Children worry more than their parents think they do: 49% of Y10-13 and 33% of Y6 -9 (parents 19%).*

*Half of parents think that homework does not usually support their relationships with their children.*

*59% of Y6-9 and 76% of Y10-11 agreed that they argue about homework.*

## Views which are consistent with research literature

- Homework overload can impact negatively on home life.  
(Hallam, 2006; Davis, 2013; Vatterrott, 2009)

*Over a third of students (though only 16% of parents) agreed that homework doesn't leave them enough time for other things.*

*From the group interviews:*

*“I have a little sister which I like to spend time with, so if I do my homework, I don't see her for the whole day.” (12/13)*

*“I know lots of friends who've had to give up passions of theirs to fit in homework.” (8/9)*

*“I found the lower school project awful – kill it, it ruined the holidays.” (parent)*

## **But --**

A quarter to a third of students and parents responded +vely to:  
“(I) My child enjoy(s) homework.”

Over half of students think they can organise their homework  
(parents less sure – 38%).

Two-thirds of parents think that homework fits into family life  
easily (though only 39% of Y6-9 and 17% of Y10-13 agree).

*In group interviews, parents said that homework helped them to know  
what their children were doing in school, and sharing knowledge was  
valuable. (“That exchange for me is a real positive.”)*

# Views which are consistent with research literature: Uses

- Practice (especially for Maths) is a useful type of homework, if well monitored (Hattie, 2009)

*Parents, teachers and older students all rated practice as the most useful type of homework (out of 6 types). Y6-9 ranked it 3/6.*

*(All groups of respondents ranked “making something” 6/6 or 5/6).*

# More about uses and purposes from the group interviews

- Pointless homework

*Not just “for the sake of giving homework.” (10/11)*

*Covering books – (12/13, 10/11).*

*“Just write a paragraph,” (8/9)*

*Perceived parental expectations (parents)*

- Homework frees up lesson time for shared activity and discussion, etc. (Hattie, 2009)

*“One of the things about our students is that they love to talk. And we have increasingly so many different resources to use in lessons that I sometimes feel it's a bit of a waste of lesson time to have the children writing ---” (teacher)*

# More about uses and purposes from the group interviews

- Homework as a necessary vehicle for learning independence and preparation for later life (Davis, 2013)

*Sometimes positive: “You have to kind of plan it out, and that's kind of helpful for when you're older.” (8/9)*

*Sometimes negative: “I think the lower years should get more, because you just get thrown in to all this.” (10/11)*

## Views which are consistent with research literature: amounts

- Large amounts of homework are counter-productive even in the upper school (Cooper and Valentine, 2001; Lam in Cooper, Robinson and Patel, 2006; Galloway and Pope, 2007)

*Only 9% of parents, 1% of teachers and 2% of students think that GCSE/A-level students should have more than 15 hours a week.*

## **More on amounts of homework**

57% of students in Years 6 – 9 think they should have 5 hours a week or less.

49% of Y10-13 students think they should have 15 hours a week or less.

43% of students responding to the survey think homework should be assigned “as needed”.

*Varying views on the current flexibility at KAS. One person said that the amount of homework he got was “perfect”, and another that it was “about right”.*

# Primary-aged children and homework

(Cooper and Valentine, 2001; Hallam, 2006; Hattie, 2012)

*47% of responding parents (52% of teachers) think that Y3 children should have some homework; but 41% (parents) and 50% (teachers) think not more than an hour a week. 18% of parents and 14% teachers think they should have none.*

*In Year 6, 77% of parents (69 % of teachers) think children should have homework, though 33% of parents and 50% of teachers think they should not have more than an hour a week. 2% of parents and no teachers think they should have none.*

## Views which are inconsistent with the research literature

Homework promotes independent learning and the development of study skills (Hallam, 2006; Cooper, Robinson and Patel, 2006)

*Around 80% of all those responding think this is the case.*

*But the interviewed teachers are less sure: “Setting homework --- doesn't actually create a magical environment where they're going to get better at doing it, and the students who struggle in Y10 have struggled with it in Y9 and 8 and 7 --”.*

## Further themes from group interviews

- Organisation and good communication were discussed more than amount of homework.

*“I don't think they know how much we've got already.” (8/9).*

*The teachers wondered if technology helps or hinders. “I think it's great that there's a place where parents can check homework, but somehow it then takes the onus off the child --”*

*Current flexibility is both valued and questioned.*

- Possibility of an extended day/homework clubs.

*Raised by all interview groups. “I think it would be a lot more beneficial than having to go home and do it by yourself” (12/13).*

*Teachers recalled logistical issues from past experiences.*

Words which come to mind when you think of  
“homework” - parents

A word cloud of terms related to homework, including 'learning', 'school', 'time', 'child', 'practice', 'work', 'homework', and 'children'. The words are arranged in a circular pattern, with 'learning' at the top, 'school' to the right, 'time' to the left, 'child' at the bottom, 'practice' to the right, 'work' to the left, 'homework' at the bottom, and 'children' to the left. The words are in various colors and orientations, with 'learning' and 'school' being the largest and most prominent.

learning  
time school  
child  
practice  
work homework  
children

Words which come to mind when you think of homework - teachers

**children** **parents** **learning**  
**independence**  
**Time** **Practice**  
**Independent**

Words which come to mind when you think of  
homework - Years 10-13

time  
stressful  
learning  
pointless  
boring  
sometimes  
work  
useful  
annoying  
necessary

Words which come to mind when you think of  
homework – Years 6 -9

school boring homework  
annoying maths time hard  
fun work  
pointless

## **Final words on doing homework mindfully.**

“ It's how you do it, I think, that really makes it affect you – if you just do it like, 'Oh, I hate this', just writing it down's not going to help you, it's not going to do anything. But if you do it knowing that it can help you, it probably will help you.” (6/7)

Cooper, H. and Valentine, J.(2001). 'Using Research to Answer Practical Questions about Homework' *Educational Psychologist* 36 (3), pp 143-153

Cooper, H., Robinson, J and Patall, E. (2006) 'Does Homework Improve Academic Achievement? A Synthesis of Research 1987-2003' *Review of Educational Research* 76 (1) pp. 1-62

Davis, A. (2013). 'Homework and Getting a Life' *Annual Conference: Philosophy of Education Society of Great Britain* Oxford: 22-24 March. PESGB. Available at: <https://www.philosophy-of-education.org/uploads/.../Papers/Davis.pdf> (Accessed 11 May 2014)

Galloway, M. and Pope, D. (2007). 'Hazardous Homework? The Relationship between Homework, Goal Orientation and Well Being in Adolescence' *Encounter: Education for Meaning and Social Justice* 20(4) pp.25-31

Galloway, M.; Conner, J.; Pope, D. (2013). 'Nonacademic Effects of Homework in Privileged, High Performing High Schools' *Journal of Experimental Education*. 2013, 81 (4) p 490-510. (abstract)

Hallam, S (2006). 'Homework: its uses and abuses' Available at:<https://content.ncetm.org.uk/itt/sec/KeelePGCEMaths2006/Research/Homework%20Research/ReportSusanHallam.pdf>(Accessed 7 May 2014)

Hattie, J. (2009) *Visible Learning: A Synthesis of over 800 Meta-analyses Relating to Achievement* London: Routledge

Hattie, J. (2012) *Visible Learning for Teachers: Maximising Impact on Learning* Abingdon: Routledge

Vatterrott, K. (2009) *Rethinking Homework: Best Practices That Support Diverse Needs* Alexandria, VA: ASCD