



Great Easton Voluntary Aided C of E  
Primary School's  
**SMART Thinking** Policy



This policy has been equality impact assessed and we believe that it is in line with the Equality Act 2010 as it is fair, it does not prioritise or disadvantage any pupil and it helps to promote equality at this school.

All staff consulted: June 2016  
Agreed by Governors: June 15<sup>th</sup> 2016  
To be reviewed by: June 2018

## **The story behind SMART (as opposed to homework)**

Following considerable feedback and research involving a parental survey, forums, teacher and LSA meetings and from surveying and talking to children is the focus for our school needs to be upon nurturing our children's innate curiosity and **love of learning** with independent study skills and thought processes, rather than the more traditional approach to 'setting homework'. These life skills are vital for any child to progress and develop and we believe this can be best done by taking the pressure off home time and instead enabling parents and carers to spend more time with their child sharing a book or chatting about number. We found that families were completing homework tasks but that the most important skills such as reading were not being completed. Therefore, we were keen to bring back time for families to prioritise reading and essential maths facts in order for children to have the best possible foundations for their learning.

Teachers are able to give ongoing guidance on how best help children in much more fun and beneficial ways. This will therefore follow a **SMART** way of learning focusing on building study skills that will provide life-long benefits. So if a child refers to 'homework' as the 'h' word - or they tell you off for saying it, that's because we are looking to inspire children to want to learn and find out about the world around them. The children understand the importance of a 'growth mindset' and are instead encouraged to think about areas of learning they perhaps find tricky and are encouraged to work hard to improve. This will help them develop a sense of responsibility and become increasingly independent learners.

We have re-vamped the traditional approach to the 'h' word and replaced it with being SMART:

- ✓ - **Spellings**
- ✓ - **Maths**
- ✓ - **And**
- ✓ - **Reading**
- ✓ - **Together!**

## Spelling:

- ✓ **Practising weekly spellings little and often** makes a huge difference and really helps children to feel more confident. Pinning them up on the bathroom mirror or on their bedroom door will also mean the child can see them every day and become familiar with them and practising them out loud on car journeys.

## Maths:

- ✓ If children can **recall key number facts** (i.e. which numbers add together to make 10) and **times tables**- they will find maths lessons in school easier and more fun. We have an exciting programme called 'Doodle Maths' which is intuitive and available for use at home as well as school and is a free downloadable app for apple and android devices. Each child has a log in and they are encouraged to use Doodle Maths daily to help develop their maths skills. As part of each Friday celebration assembly we have 'Doodler of the week!' and celebrate the child who has earned the most stars and been super busy practicing their maths.
- ✓ Times Tables Rockstars in KS2 and Magic Maths in YR and KS1 are additional ways in which children are encouraged to work on areas of maths that will improve their learning.

## Reading:

- ✓ This can be anything- newspaper, magazines, fact books, a recipe, or the works of Shakespeare! Children choosing to **read for pleasure** (active readers) find thinking of ideas for their writing and other school work much easier.  
Reading a nightly story is a big indicator of a child being more likely to read for pleasure.
- ✓ Our Reading Champions- Major Read and Paige Turner- are reading superheroes from the Planet Thesaurus who reward children, in exciting assemblies, for being enthusiastic readers!
- ✓ We also subscribe to the brilliant 'Fiction Express' which is for children aged 6-12+. It enables readers to engage with their favourite authors in a unique and original way by allowing them to contribute to the plot. Fiction Express for Schools e-books are published in weekly chapters at 3 pm (UK time) each Friday. At the end of every cliffhanging chapter there are voting options to decide where the plot should go next. The readers have the following Monday and Tuesday to read each chapter and vote by 3pm on Tuesday afternoon. The

author then writes the next chapter, in 'real time', according to what the readers chose. Again more information will follow which will enable you to login at home and discuss what you think should happen next in the story!

✓ Reading Eggs is another programme we subscribe to and each child has access to their own online library of books. This appeals to children who may prefer reading on an electronic device as we are keen to foster a love for reading in whatever form that may take. Reading Eggs is intuitive and selects appropriately challenging books for each child and also asks them comprehension questions as they read to check their understanding.

### **Together:**

✓ We recognise how busy everyone is and how many after-school clubs our children are lucky enough to attend and that family time is very precious. Therefore, being '**SMART**' encourages 'togetherness' as a crucial time for developing each child. A discussion at breakfast time, in the bath or in the car is more valuable than battling to complete a worksheet. **Money, and telling the time** are two really difficult topics to teach to a whole class, whereas a chat in the supermarket about how much change you're due, or how long left until bedtime would quickly help children become more confident. This means they will get maximum benefit from any work done in class. Similarly, reading a book to your child develops their language skills and vocabulary.

We also subscribe to Cybercoach - a dance and brain gym programme. Every school family has a login to enable them to enjoy a workout at home as well.

Tapestry is an online learning journal for the EYFS and every parent is given a login and shown how to view their child's learning story and add their own pictures and comments.

In addition, every child has a DB Primary login - this is our VLE (Virtual Learning Environment) and is a safe place for children to message children in school, staff and take part in learning activities and games. During the Isle of Wight residential it is an excellent way for parents and children to keep in touch and for parents to find out what the children have been up to each day!

✓ **SMART** thinking will also encourage children who have been inspired by their topic to undertake optional more creative learning. Ideas are given by the teachers to inspire children to want to learn, bake or make with you at home.

Every term a 'Curriculum Share' letter and Topic map are sent home - these

include SMART links to inspire the children to learn and think about ways in which they could develop their skills and understanding in different areas.

Oddizzi is a fantastic web-based geography programme that lets the children explore geography topics. Each class has a log-in and again we celebrate children who have been busily exploring the world in our Friday celebration assembly.

✓ **P4C (Philosophy for Children)** is an exciting concept which allows children to play with learning and to ask questions about the world around them. We send home a brain teaser in the Grapevine each week. (THINK BIG! If a tree falls in an empty forest- does it still make a sound?) The aim is to spark a family discussion or debate. If the child would like to share their ideas they can message their teacher or Miss Jackman on DB Primary and become the Big Thinker of the week!

### **How will parents and carers keep track of their child's progress?□**

To strengthen the bridge between school and home teachers have kindly offered an **open classroom every night** after school where parents are welcome to pop in and look at their child's books and celebrate their work. This is an informal opportunity for children to show off what they've done that day. Teachers may or may not be available, but parents and carers are welcome anyway!

### **Sending books home**

As part of our belief that children should feel excited by learning we are keen that the children are really excited to share the fruits of their labour with parents and carers. So every Tuesday children take their SMART folder home and share an exercise book at home. A different book is sent each week - maths one week, English the next, RE, Science and Topic books are all regularly shared. This provides parents with the opportunity to discuss their child's learning with them, look at progress and celebrate successes. Teachers will use a SMART stamp to indicate area that it would be useful to consolidate at home.

Parents and carers are actively encouraged (this is an opportunity for children to earn considerable house points!) to leave their own comments in books. The children are always proud of these and it helps to ensure strong communication between parent and teacher. As always, parents and carers are welcome to make an appointment to chat to their child's teacher further at any time. Appendix One shows a letter sent to parents and carers.

### **Ensuring Children are keen to be SMART**

Miss Jackman meets regularly with a group of children who have volunteered to

be 'School Improvement Ambassadors'. The SIAs work on the School Improvement Plan and are the first port of call for teachers to find out what is working well and what can be improved. These children's sole job is to help improve the learning and teaching throughout our school. We regularly look at SMART learning, what is working well and what could be better. It was the SIAs who looked into Reading Eggs as early on they felt we had great online learning programmes for maths, but nothing for reading.

It was also decided that reminder letters and workshops for parents would be useful. Some children felt frustrated that their parents didn't understand what was available. Appendix two shows a letter sent out to all children Easter 2016. Parent workshops have been arranged for the Summer term 2016 and will continue to be a regular opportunity in the calendar.

Teachers and LSAs also monitor SMART learning and provide support to children not reading at home regularly for example.

## Appendix 1

Dear Parents,

We are very excited to be sending your child's exercise book home! As part of our SMART learning and following the Parents' Open Meeting, it was decided that we would send the books home every fortnight so you can have a really good look through!

As I am sure you will appreciate A LOT of work, care, time and love go into these books and they represent your child's progress throughout the year. The children are very proud of their work and these books show their learning journey. By sending their work home I hope you will gain a much clearer understanding of areas you can support and practise at home. The teachers all have new SMART stamps that look like this - so if you see this stamp, it would be great if you could do a bit of practise on this area at home as a way of encouraging your child to take initiative for their learning and practising areas they find tricky. At school we call this the 'Growth Mindset' which teaches children the importance of working a bit harder when we find things difficult because with practise we can all improve.

### **What should you see in the books:**

***Marking codes:*** I have enclosed a copy of the school's marking codes to help you decipher the symbols used by teachers and children! The Reception and Key Stage One children also have a pictorial code which is a useful visual reminder for them.

***Children's comments and messages!*** The children are encouraged to write comments (WINKS) to evaluate their learning as well as give feedback to their peers on occasions. They will be able to explain this to you but it is a vital part of the feedback process and gives an insight into how they feel about their learning which is invaluable when marking and planning the next lessons.

***Teacher's comments*** These will be focused upon the learning intention for that lesson, or sequence of lessons. There should be a balance of praise and 'next steps' which lets your child know what they have been successful at and what could be improved next time. There won't always be a focus on spellings - so please don't expect to see every spelling corrected. This can really de-motivate children and stop them from making exciting word choices in their writing - we would much rather they were adventurous and used 'wow' words even if the

spelling isn't quite right. What you will see is corrections of spelling sthe children *should* know. The children do a 'book look' and are given time to re-do corrections in all of their subjects. So in maths this may be re-doing a calculation and in English this may involve re-writing a sentence, correcting a spelling or adding in missing punctuation. This allows your child time to embed their learning and go back to improve and make it even better!

***Neat handwriting*** we have worked hard to ensure children are writing their letters correctly and that they are the right size and sit correctly on the line (ascenders are tall letters that go up - such as l, k, t and descenders are long letters that sit below the line such as g and y. In maths we expect children to write neatly and use the squares in their books. If drawing shapes they are expected to use a ruler. I hope you will be impressed. If your child finds presenting their work neatly a bit of a challenge, please support us by praising their neat efforts.

As I said at the start, this is really exciting and not something that I have heard any other schools doing. By sending books home we hope that you will feel really involved and get a much clearer picture of the daya to day learning that takes place. If you would like to write a positive comment in their books, either next to a particular piece of work or at the end of the latest piece then please do. If you have any concerns please come and talk to the teachers or myself.

We have purposefully sent the books home this week to enable you to share any questions at Parents' consultations next week.

Can I also remind you that the teachers are happy to have an 'open classroom' each afternoon after school, so if you would like to pop in and look through their work, see a piece of art work or have a look around the classroom then please do! You are always welcome.

As you will appreciate the exercise books are needed every day so please make sure that they come back in the following day. We will be sending books home every other Tuesday and will alternate between Maths and English.

Phew...there is a lot of information here so please pop in and ask questions if I have missed anything! Please enjoy having a look through their books!

## Appendix 2



24<sup>th</sup> March 2016



Dear Children (please let your parents have a look at this letter too!)

Thank you ALL for your hard work this term, I have been very impressed with the effort you are making in your talk for writing sessions. I have seen some INCREDIBLE short-burst writing and I hope that you are very proud of the improvements you have made with your handwriting. When I take examples of your work to meetings and see other schools I am always very proud of your work, so well done. ☺

As you know we are SMART learners at GEPS- which means we don't have 'homework' to do! Instead you take charge and challenge yourselves to be better learners! Think about Austin's Butterfly and how he had 5 attempts at improving his drawing (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqh1MRWZjms>) maybe mum or dad would be interested to see the clip too.

Of course we want you to have a jolly good rest and recharge your batteries. Hopefully the sun will shine so that you can do lots of lovely things outside, you may even be lucky enough to be going on holiday somewhere. However, you may also want to do a bit of SMART learning, so I thought I'd remind you about some of the exciting ways you can do that if you want to!

S: Spellings - Keep looking at your spellings and write them everywhere you go - on mum's shopping list, on post-it notes around the house, make a muddy puddle and then get a stick and write them in the mud....be creative and have some fun!



In the Learning Library

there are some great spelling games too!

M: If you want to practise your maths you can use:



Times Tables Rockstars is my personal fave!



Remember what you have been practising in your maths lessons - you could do some counting at home, everytime you run up or down the stairs challenge yourself to do it in 7s or 8s! Work on whichever tables or counting steps you are learning. When you walk the dog or in the car - just have a quick go and soon you will become an expert!

Telling the time, weighing ingredients, measuring water in jugs - all important

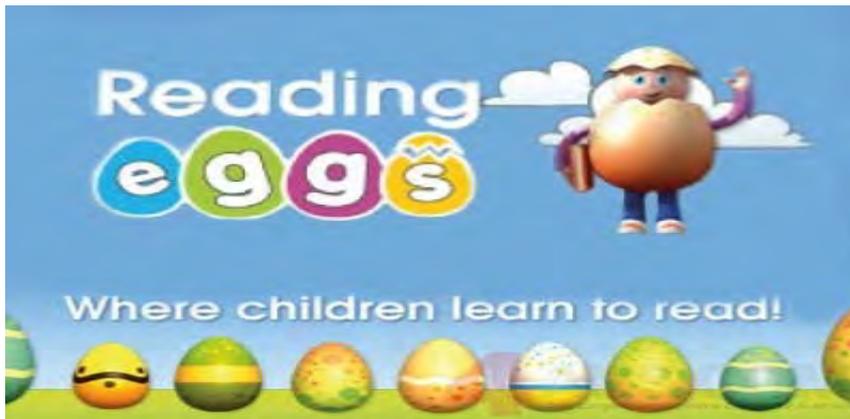


skills which are easy to have a go at. DB Primary Learning Library has some great games for Reception to Year 6 - counting to algebra!

A: and...

R: One of the best ways to be SMART is to read! So bury your nose in a good book and enjoy an adventure! Remember to 'magpie' the best bits (you don't need a magpie book - your reading diary or a piece of paper would work just as well!) Please help yourself to a few books from the library - you are welcome to borrow as many as you like! On the school website under 'Learning links' there is a link to the Oxford Owl website which has lots of lovely things to explore and some more free books to read online!

Then of course there is...



Very popular with lots of children. The great thing about Reading Eggs is that it will choose books at the right level for you AND ask you questions to help you improve your comprehension.

Remember having stories read to you is also HUGELY important so you can sit back and enjoy some Jacanory time too (ask mums and dads what that means!)

T: together means with your families, friends and pets! There are lots of things you can do together...you could explore the world and have a look on:



DB Primary's Learning Library has gazillions of topics to find out about and some GREAT programming games too! You can learn more about keeping safe online as well.



Some of the Y5 'Big Thinkers' choose children who have thought about the weekly 'Big Question' which is sent out in The Grapevine for families to discuss. The philosophy style question helps improve skills in discussion, debate and empathy. The winner receives a prestigious badge!

*The current SMART - 'Think Big Question' is - If you say sorry without meaning it, but the person you've said it to believes you, does it still count?*

*Here are some more questions to think about and discuss with your family and friends:*

- Is it better to give up your space in a lifeboat to save a mother and infant twins, or to stay put and push out an old man instead?
- Would it be better to be rich and ugly, or poor but beautiful?
- Is this a proper question?
- Is the hole in a polo part of the polo?

The Woodlands Primary link (from Learning Links) has a great 'Facts of the Day' calendar which you could check out.



Remember there are lots of workouts, dances and brain training exercises to keep you busy on here. The username is [admin@greateaston.essex.sch.uk](mailto:admin@greateaston.essex.sch.uk) and the password is cm62dr

Children we just want you to be inspired to learn about everything! Have a look on the school website under 'Learning Links' for more ideas - there is an art-cyclopedia, great grub club and lots more. Just remember to ask before you use the internet.

Your teachers may have told you about your topics after half term - Reception and KS1 you will be learning about hot and cold areas of the world in relation to the equator and North and South Poles. KS2 your topic is...Natural Disasters.

Our first day back will be a colourful house team day - so come dressed in bright colours - see how many you can wear! We are going to look at friendships and anti-bullying. It will be a fun day!

If we do some impressive learning at home come and see me when we get back and earn a SMART badge to wear with pride!

Have an AMAZING Easter holiday, eat lots of chocolate and enjoy two weeks of rest and fun and keep safe!

I can't wait to hear all about your adventures...

Miss Jackman 😊

*P.S Children please remind your parents that they can write comments in your exercise books when they come home. If they do your teacher will give you house points. I think the going rate is 20 house points! Just a message about your learning, progress or effort that you have made, what they like about your work and what perhaps you could try a bit harder with.*