



Great Easton C of E VA Primary School

## SMART Thinking Policy



### Our School Vision:

*We are God's children and global citizens. We will be bold enough to use our voices, brave enough to evoke change in the world and strong enough to stand up for what is right. We are valued and are part of a Christian family that grows together in faith, love and kindness.*

*'Let all that you do be done in love'. (1 Corinthians 16:14)*

*Love of learning, life and living.*

*Associated values: Courage, Compassion, Forgiveness and Joy.*

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.

This Policy was reviewed and amended and parents and staff were consulted on this document in:	September 2023
The policy was ratified by the Governing Body in:	18th October 2023

To be reviewed September 2024

## The story behind SMART learning (as opposed to more traditional 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 due to a lack of time. 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. We aim 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.

Being SMART means:

- ★ - Spellings
- ★ - Maths
- ★ - Apps
- ★ - 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 practise them out loud on car journeys.
- ✓ **Doodlespell** is another fun way to help your child practise their spellings, children can access through their Doodle log in.
- ✓ **DoodleEnglish** provides excellent reinforcement of grammar, punctuation and spelling too!

**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' and 'Doodle Tables' which are 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 (and from Y1 or 2 Doodle Tables) daily to help develop their maths skills. Every Friday each class will celebrate children who are

in the green zone and have been busy doodlers that week.

- ✓ Magical Maths challenges in YR and KS1 are additional ways in which children are encouraged to work on areas of maths that will improve their learning.
- ✓ The White Rose 1 minute maths app is free and helps children build greater number confidence and fluency. It's all about targeted practice in engaging, one-minute chunks!
- ✓ Times Tables Rockstars in KS2 is another great way your child can develop their times tables fluency and recall.

### Reading:

Reading has a central part in a child's education and in preparing them for life after school. It helps children develop emotionally, socially, intellectually and culturally. It also underpins successful access to education throughout their school careers and to employment beyond.

**"One in five children in England cannot read well by the age of 11. As a result, 30% of children aged 11 to 17 years old aren't reading for pleasure."**

**"UK is the only OECD country where children and young adults are less literate than previous generations."**

**"Unemployed adults are twice as likely to have weak literacy skills as those in full-time employment."**

*Sources: Department of Education and OECD*

- ✓ This can be anything- newspaper, magazines, joke 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.
- ✓ Your child will have a reading book and reading diary. Please encourage them to read to you when they are younger and record a few notes in their reading diary. This helps us to see the support children are getting at home. As they get older children can record their independent reading themselves.
- ✓ 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. This will follow your child through primary school. Please let your class teacher know if you don't feel the level is quite right.
- ✓ Oxford Owl has a free online reading library which you may enjoy with your child <https://www.oxfordowl.co.uk/for-home/find-a-book/library-page/>

## **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.

Developing children's awareness of current issues and topics is so important. We share our weekly Picture News assembly in the Grapevine each week. Please have a chat with them and find out what they have learned from the Friday assembly.

**Class Dojo** allows parents to be updated with classroom activities. Every parent is given a login and shown how to view their child's learning story. We love to see any learning you have been doing at home so please feel free to share this.

✓ **SMART** thinking will also encourage children who have been inspired by their project 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 project overview 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. We love to see the children's SMART work and celebrate their effort and enthusiasm.

✓ **P4C (Philosophy for Children)** is an exciting concept which allows children to play with learning and to ask questions about the world around them. Your child's Courageous Curriculum project will have a big question, for example 'Who owns the sky?' so please ask them what they think about the question and their learning so far.

**Sticky Questions** - we are keen to have big thinking children! They will come home with a 'sticky question' each week to develop their philosophical thinking and discussion skills. Please take the time to chat to them about these and explore their thinking and reasoning.

**Oddizzi** is a fantastic web-based geography programme that lets the children explore geography topics and the world around them. This can also support their reading too!

**Whizz Pop Bang!** Fun science experiments are shared on the school newsletter to encourage practical investigation skills at home.

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

### **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 we will regularly send their exercise books home. This provides parents with the opportunity to discuss their child's learning with them, look at progress and celebrate successes. Teachers may 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. Therefore we send reminders each term as part of our curriculum share letters.

Children are also reminded about SMART learning - see an example letter shared at the start of the school year in Appendix 2.

### **Expectations for Parents and Carers**

The principles behind developing SMART thinking and learning was partly to ease pressures on parents at home, but fundamentally to ensure children are supported in the basics such as reading and key maths skills. Whilst we provide many opportunities for learning at home we expect parents and carers to read regularly (at least 4 times per week) and record this in reading diaries. The difference that regular reading makes is incredible and to foster a love for reading with a child is undoubtedly the single most powerful skill we can give them. A love for books will have an enormous impact on a child's learning. The most able children are always the ones that love reading! Teachers and LSAs monitor reading diaries and will ask parents to read more regularly to support the work we are doing at school. If parents and carers don't make the expected contribution to supporting their child's

reading then they will receive a more formal letter and be asked to meet with the teacher and headteacher to discuss ways in which the school can support.

We encourage parents and carers to talk with us if they are experiencing any difficulties as we recognise that children may not always make it easy to read at home or learn spellings. We are happy to help and can provide incentives for your child and encourage them to be SMART!

Teachers are happy to facilitate SMART learning in school as well. For example if a child is unable to access Doodle Maths at home, they will be given opportunities in the school day to make sure they earn plenty of stars and have the chance to build in some extra learning.

If we feel parents aren't supporting children at home we will offer support and encouragement but if there is little progress a more formal letter may be sent. See an example in Appendix 3.

## **Appendix 1 *Letter to be sent to all parents September 2023***

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 as they work 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 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 practice on this area at home as a way of encouraging your child to take initiative for their learning and practicing 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 practice 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 (purple polishing) of spelling the 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.

By sending books home we hope that you will feel really involved and get a much clearer picture of the day 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, it means the world to the children.** As always, if you have any concerns please come and talk to the teachers or me.

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 regularly on a Tuesday and will alternate between Maths, English, RE and Project.

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 Letter to be shared with children September 2023



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

Thank you ALL for your hard work at the start of term, I have been very impressed with the effort you are making! I have seen some great resilience and determination with your learning already and the teachers have all talked about how enthusiastic you have been and so full of energy for your learning!

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.

The teachers have sent out curriculum share letters with lots of information on so that you have some ideas for ways you can become even better learners by practising at home too. Year 6 I know you gave Miss Govey lots of ideas about ways you could be SMART learners - well done!

SMART stands for:

**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! DoodleEnglish is also a great way to explore spellings and get better at English.

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



Times Tables Rockstars is my personal fave!



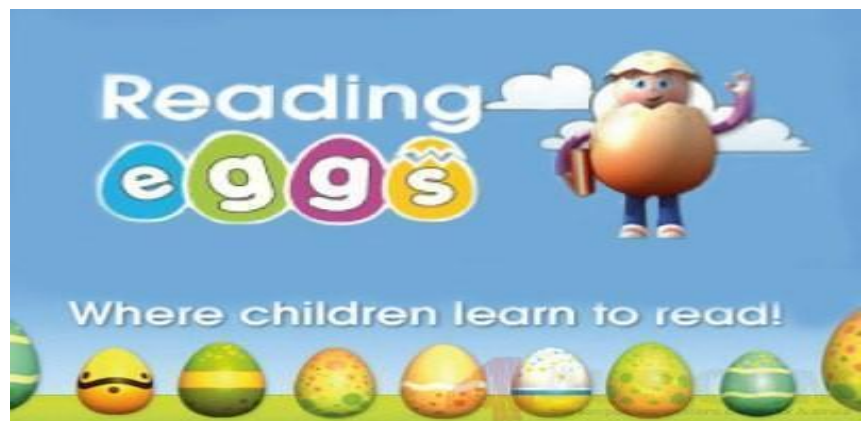


Remember what you have been practising in your maths lessons - you could do some counting at home, everytime you run up or down the stairs challenge yourself to do it in 7s or 8s! Work on whichever tables or counting steps you are learning. When you walk the dog or in the car - just have a quick go and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

A: apps - think about going on one of your school apps every day to help you learn and practise! Doodle maths, Doodle English, Oddizzi, Reading Eggs, Oddizzi and Times Table Rockstars will all really help you!

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 the children section 'Online 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:



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. Your teacher also sends out SMART ideas at the start of the term in their Curriculum Share letter so there will be lots of fun ideas linked to your project.

Just remember to ask before you use the internet and to keep safe online too.

Your teachers have told you about your projects this term - Reception and KS1 your project is all about animals and KS2 your project is all about mountains!

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

Make sure you are loving learning and loving life!

from  
Miss Jackman ☺

### **Appendix 3 Letter to be sent to parents who are not supporting SMART learning at home**

Dear Parents,

Every term we have Pupil Progress meetings whereby class teacher meets with the headteacher, SenCos Maths and English Lead to discuss your child's attainment, progress and emotional well-being.

Following this term's meeting we are writing to ask for your full support and engagement to help your child reach their full potential. It is a fact that parents are the most important educators in a child's life - even more important than their teachers.

Currently your child is behind where we would expect them to be. We have looked at the additional support teachers and LSAs are giving your child routinely in class and we feel we are doing everything we possibly can to try and close the gap with their peers.

In order for your child to not fall even further behind we are asking that over the summer holiday you allocate some time each day to support your child's basic learning. Little and often using SMART apps and reading their reading books is enough to help your child catch up and prevent them falling further behind over the holidays.

We understand how busy life is and so try to prioritise reading, as we believe this is the key to unlock all learning.

Evidence is clear that children who read independently by the age of 9 achieve significantly higher than those who only read twice a week.

Here are some ways in which you can make a HUGE difference to your child over the holidays:

#### **Reading:**

- The Reading summer challenge through the Essex Library Service (see the bookmark your child brought home - check their book bag!)
- Reading at least 5 times a week - to a parent or sibling. 10 minutes a day makes all the difference try and build it into a routine.
- Bedtime stories - parents reading to children or listening to audio books (two apps linked to the library reading challenge)
- All reading is valuable - menus, non-fiction books, recipes, adults modelling reading is really helpful too.
- Reading Eggs has lots of useful games and texts to support your child's learning. Reading

#### **Maths:**

- Doodlemaths and Doodletables - these take minutes and make a massive difference! You can sign up to the Summer Challenge and they will get a badge too.

- Times Table Rockstars for KS2 children
- White Rose 1 minute maths app
- Using money and telling the time
- By the end of year 4 all children need to know and recall their times tables to 12x12. This is an easy thing to do with children on walks, in the car - just find a little bit of time to work with them on these.

**Writing/handwriting:**

- Encouraging your child to write cards, letters or a daily journal is a fantastic way to keep their stamina and sentence structure going over the holidays.
- We are happy to provide handwriting books if you would like one of these.
- DoodleEnglish and DoodlesSpell are accessible using your child's single login.

We know from experience the enormous difference it will make if you could support your child's learning at home and reinforce the important message that your child's education and learning matters.

Although this makes difficult reading, we feel that we need to make you aware of the impact a lack of engagement from home is having on your child's education.