

A parents' guide to prep



Prep is an important part of the educational experience of Spratton Hall. It has many purposes:

- ❑ To reinforce classroom learning
- ❑ To help pupils develop independent learning skills, including research skills
- ❑ To allow pupils to practice and apply the skills they have learnt at school
- ❑ To develop planning and organisational skills
- ❑ To measure pupil understanding of ideas and concepts taught in class.

However, prep is an issue that can lead to confusion and can cause conflict between parents and children. It is also an area where misunderstanding can arise between home and school. The guidelines in this document are designed to help you help your child complete prep in a positive and supportive way and hopefully avoid many of the misunderstandings that arise.

Prep time

In Years 3 to 4 each subjects' prep should be a maximum of 20 minutes duration. In Year 5 and 6 it should be between 20 - 30 minutes. In Years 7 and 8 each prep should take no longer than 30 minutes. The time will obviously vary slightly depending on how fast the pupil works and the type of task that is set. Year 8 pupils preparing for academic scholarships will have a heavier schedule in the few weeks before their particular exam. However, prep is set assuming full and uninterrupted concentration for that period of time. Trips to the loo, day dreaming or repeated pencil sharpening will mean the prep takes much longer to complete!



As a parent you may need to monitor how long prep is taking. If you feel that your child has concentrated fully and is still working after 45 minutes, stop them and put a note in the diary. If the prep only takes a few minutes it is helpful if this is also recorded. Remember some preps involve watching videos online, or reading and learning information, as well as actually writing things, which is all part of the time allowance.

Prep timetable

Every pupil has a copy of their prep timetable in their pupil planner. The number of preps on each night varies, particularly in the upper year groups, depending on which subjects are taught on which day. Generally speaking Wednesdays are avoided whenever possible and no more than three preps are set on one night.



Most teachers try to avoid asking for prep to be completed for the following day, although sometimes this is unavoidable. This means that your child needs to record which day the prep is due and not allow the number of preps to build up. It also means that prep can be planned around days where a child has substantial commitments after school.

Organisation

Organisation is the key to successfully completed prep and helps to relieve some of the tension and stress that can be caused at home over prep. Independent learning is a key component of prep at Spratton and it is important that this is reinforced both at home and at school. However, some pupils need quite a lot of guidance and help to become independent.



Edmodo

We use an online learning platform called Edmodo to pass on prep instructions in Year 4-8, and indeed actual tasks themselves sometimes. Please try and allow your children access to this website from home so they can access instructions and tasks at home wherever possible. It will also allow you to check what a pupil is meant to be doing as instructions for particular preps are posted on this website. This is an exciting and interactive way of pupil and teacher passing back and forth information and feedback. Your assistance in facilitating this for all pupils is most appreciated.

Below are a few further tips and ideas to help organise the prep environment at home to encourage independent learning:

- ❑ Have a designated prep area at home. Make sure that there is a large flat work area, plenty of light and few distractions. It can be difficult for a child to concentrate if there is a lot of noise and activity in other parts of the house.



- ❑ Try to have a daily routine. A snack and drink before prep starts is a good idea and checking the diary to see what needs to be done can reduce confusion. Even if no prep has been set or it has been completed at school, it is a good idea to check the diary at the time prep would have been done at home

- ❑ Help your child to work independently. Encourage them to look up information rather than answering questions yourself. Constant 'phoning or e-mailing of friends for help is unnecessary and wastes time. Most prep is set for the individual child to complete. It makes it difficult for the teacher to assess how much has been understood if the prep has been completed by committee! Also, check they are actually working on prep in their room, and not distracting themselves. A 20 minute prep will take 40 mins if they are texting their friends every 2 minutes!

- ❑ Take an interest in the work your child is doing and report any concerns in the diary. Children need to know that their parents and adults close to them think homework is important. If a child finds it very difficult to settle it may be that you need to do some quiet work or reading in the room with them to reinforce the idea of the importance of study.



If you have any concerns about prep or any other aspect of your child's work in school, please do not hesitate to contact me: srb@sprattonhall.com

Mr Steve Bradnam
Director of Studies