



# ALTRINCHAM GRAMMAR SCHOOL FOR BOYS

## WHOLE SCHOOL INDEPENDENT LEARNING POLICY

**Nominated Lead Member of Staff:**

**HM**

**Next Review Date:**

**September 2021**

The value of independent learning tasks is to set meaningful work as and when it is appropriate to set them, rather than when the timetable says work should be set. The 'one size fits all' model of homework is no longer applicable for what we want to do for our boys i.e. to encourage students to be more independent and to love learning for itself. Setting homework for its own sake or to conform to a timetable helps our boys achieve neither of these.

Each department has designed its own independent learning policy. These reflect the peculiar demands of the subject and rely on the professional judgement of those teachers within the department to achieve the end goals of greater pupil autonomy as well as, allowing for diversity and creativity in the design of the tasks to be set.

Each policy outline includes:

- The purpose of independent learning within the subject
- The nature / style of the independent learning
- How the independent learning will be assessed.

All homework tasks are set through the **Show My Homework** platform. Both students and parents have access to the platform online or via a smartphone app. For more information on this please see the school website.

Tasks can/will range from 10/15 minute ones like vocab learning to longer projects that might span 2-3 weeks. Tasks might take the form of written work, learning tasks, research, presentations, essays, models, and/or art etc.

Such tasks might be marked by self/peer assessment and/or formally marked by the teacher with key assessment tasks being graded and qualitative feedback given on what has been done well and how to

improve.

Tasks will be set to challenge pupils so that they engage in higher order thinking activities and the work will be differentiated if necessary. This might mean extension work for the higher ability pupils and the lower ability will receive extra guidance/scaffolding.

You should see your son doing some work each night as part of his learning how to plan and organise his time, and manage the independent learning tasks he is required by his teachers to complete. In quiet times there are also opportunities for him:

- to engage in additional independent research of his own
- to proof read through assignments
- go back over and improve earlier work
- to begin creating revision materials (revision cards, mind maps etc)

which we would encourage as traits that mark out the more successful learners.

### AGSB Art Independent Learning Policy

Independent study tasks in Art & Design are always inextricably linked with the ongoing work in class. Tasks will normally fit into one of the following types:

- **Research** – this may involve gathering source material from which to draw or take ideas; it may involve taking photographs upon which work will be based, or it may involve researching the work of artists on the internet.
- **Gathering materials** – this might involve the collecting of actual resource material from which art will be made, usually from recyclable sources, such as newspapers, magazines, junk mail, packaging, discarded objects etc.
- **Reviewing work** – at the ends of projects in Key Stage 3 we may ask pupils to review what they have done.
- **Continuation of project work.** This is where pupils will be required to take home the practical work that they have been doing in class, to continue it at home, and then bring it back to school to continue in the subsequent lesson. This type of task is more common from Year 10 onwards when pupils are engaged on longer pieces of coursework. When more specialised materials are being used, we operate a 'loan' system to avoid students having to provide large quantities of expensive materials which may be used infrequently.

The frequency of these Study Tasks will be different at different stages in the School:

In Years 7 – 9, tasks will be set when the project requires them. Research tasks and gathering of materials are more common tasks at this level, so tasks *might* be more frequent in the earlier stages of projects.

In Years 10 – 13, all students are expected to work independently, at home, every week, and the tasks could be any of the above types. As each student's work and progress will be slightly different, general guidance will be given to groups, and students will need to interpret this guidance to their own circumstances, asking for help if necessary.

It will be seen from all of this that, at all stages, progress in class depends upon independent study tasks being completed fully at the proper times, as the study tasks are never separate 'one-offs' but are always integral with the ongoing project.

**AGSB Biology**  
**Independent Learning Policy**

The purpose of an independent study task is to allow pupils to:

- consolidate their understanding of the material taught in lessons
- embed the required facts and skills into their memory
- practise the application of their knowledge and skills in the format required by the examination boards
- extend their viewpoint of the extent and impact of science in everyday life.

In order to achieve this each pupil is expected to do one hour of independent study per week in addition to any tasks set by the class teacher.

The timing of the tasks set by the teacher will vary depending upon the topic taught, the progression of the class and the assessment schedule.

The type of task set may include:

- Questions requiring written responses
- A piece of research relating to the current or a future topic
- Revision of a specific topic for a forthcoming assessment
- The making of suitable notes
- Learning the meaning and spelling of specific terminology
- Preparing a presentation on a specified topic
- Completing the analysis of data generated in the lesson
- Practising specific skills relating to the centre assessed unit or practical endorsement e.g. the construction of suitable tables, graphs or charts
- The redrafting of work in response to the comments given in the marking.

The assessment of the independent study tasks set will vary. Some will be peer assessed in the classroom under the guidance of the teacher. Some will be marked by the teacher and given a grade, others will be marked using only comments.

In each year group there is a regular series of tests that are marked by the teacher and graded according to the exam criteria for that year group. These marks are used to inform the grades given in snapshots and reports.

Any student who feels they are struggling with a particular topic should see their teacher or any other member of the Biology Department to ask for guidance. There is also a Biology mentoring program running each day in N13 staffed by the Year 13 Biology prefects.

**AGSB Business Studies and Economics**  
**Independent Learning Policy**

Students will receive one fully assessed piece of work per fortnight. This could be an essay, set of questions or a test. They will receive an academic grade, an effort grade and, where appropriate, targets for improvement.

Students will also receive a reading, research or key terms homework once per fortnight in addition to the formally assessed piece. This may be peer or self-assessed. During assessment periods the policy will be relaxed to allow for revision.

**AGSB Chemistry**  
**Independent Learning Policy**

The purpose of independent study in Chemistry is to support the teaching and learning carried out in the classroom. They are used to consolidate and expand knowledge, encourage higher order skills and prepare them to interpret and answer exam questions.

The nature of the tasks will vary from class to class depending on the teacher and the topic being taught.

The sort of tasks set may include:

- Research tasks e.g. periodic table, metal extraction, coursework preparation
- Exam style questions throughout to develop understanding of the standard of response needed at each level.
- Completion of classwork, usually in the form of writing a conclusion to a class practical.

Pupils who struggle with the task set are encouraged to initially seek assistance from their class teacher or by attending sessions held in N9 with our Sixth Form Chemistry mentors.

Assessment will consist of a mixture of teacher and peer assessment. Where appropriate, students will normally be given a mark or grade for each piece of work assessed. There should also be comments on a selection of work identifying areas where improvement can be made alongside a comment of how this might be done.

**AGSB Computing and ICT**  
**Independent Learning Policy**

In CICT, independent study tasks (IST) will be set to enhance classroom learning and to develop skills (academic, research and practical). The frequency of setting of tasks depends on the module/topic being studied.

Some tasks will extend/reinforce classroom learning, whilst others will give practice to recently learned skills. Research tasks may also extend learning, but may also provide the basis for upcoming lessons.

Assessment methods will vary. Some tasks will be teacher assessed, some via online/automatic marking, and others via peer-assessment. However, in each case the teacher will be aware of the awarded marks and will feedback praise, comments and learning/improvement points to pupils.

**AGSB Design and Technology**  
**Independent Learning Policy**

Technology work that is completed outside of the classroom and independently of the teacher has a vital role to play, not only in the academic development of our students, but also in the development of their self-reliance, self-motivation and personal responsibility. We aim to 'train' students through a variety of home learning opportunities to plan their own time and learning at Key Stages 3, 4 and 5. We aim for students to become increasingly independent learners and believe that work completed outside the classroom environment contributes to this.

**In Design and Technology, work completed outside of the classroom will:**

- encourage students to develop the practice of independent study;
- develop perseverance and self-discipline;
- allow practice, when it is needed, of skills learned in the classroom;
- permit more ground to be covered and more rapid progress to be made;
- enable class work to concentrate on those activities requiring the teacher's presence;

### **How will teachers, students and parents keep track of the work and deadlines?**

All students are expected to record independent learning tasks, together with other important deadlines and reminders in their planner.

Completed tasks will always be acknowledged by teachers – either by written or verbal marking, checking to see it has been completed, testing or by using some other appropriate form of recognition.

Learning tasks that are part of a longer project and therefore span several weeks are written down each week by the student. Weekly checks must be made to monitor progress.

### **How do we support our students in completing the tasks and becoming more independent learners?**

The Department offers support for students in their independent learning through:

- an open workshop policy where teachers are available at lunchtime to discuss the work.
- individual or group support sessions run by subject teachers after school.
- an accessible virtual learning environment with a variety of resources and exemplar material.
- email support outside of school hours.

## **AGSB English** **Independent Learning Policy**

### **Purpose of independent study in English**

The purpose of independent study in English is to:

- give students opportunities for independent learning and discovery
- reinforce the knowledge and skills developed in the lessons
- offer opportunities for different styles of learning
- encourage wider, enriching experiences of reading, writing, speaking and listening.

### **How much time should be spent on independent study?**

Students in all year groups can expect to be given *at least* one independent study task per week. In some cases, there may be two tasks set in a week.

- In Years 7-8, students can expect to spend 45-60 minutes on independent study per week.
- In Years 9-11, students can expect to spend 60-90 minutes on independent study per week.
- In Years 12-13, students can expect to spend 3 hours on independent study. Students in these years are expected to keep independent notes both within and outside lessons.
- Teachers will indicate to students the recommended time to spend on a task.

### **The nature and content of independent study**

- Independent study will target specific skills within English Language or English Literature.
- Tasks will be differentiated according to the age, ability and profile of students.
- Extension tasks will be provided for students in the higher ability range.
- Support materials will be provided for students who need more guidance and structure.
- All students will be appropriately stretched and challenged to become increasingly independent in their learning.

Some tasks will take a relatively **short** time to complete. For example:

- learning spellings
- researching a topic
- planning a piece of work
- reading a section of a book

Some tasks will take a **longer** time to complete. For example:

- writing an essay

- constructing a narrative or poem
- producing a piece of journalism
- planning and rehearsing a presentation or speech

### **How independent study will be assessed**

Shorter independent study tasks will be assessed in a variety of ways, including:

- teacher-assessment
- peer-assessment
- self-assessment

Longer independent study tasks will be assessed more formally by the teacher using the agreed criteria for either English Language or English Literature.

Assessment criteria will be shared with the pupil before they begin the task to ensure the success criteria is fully understood.

In conclusion, independent study in English will introduce our students to the habits of successful learners and the liberating benefits of lifelong learning.

## **AGSB Food and Nutrition** **Independent Learning Policy**

### **Purpose**

To extend pupils' skills and knowledge within the subject.

### **Time Spent**

For Year 7 -9 tasks should take no more than 25 minutes to complete.

In Year 8 and 9 there will also be an extended research and planning task which pupils will be required to spend more time on as this will count towards their final assessment.

All pupils will also be expected to purchase and prepare all their own ingredients for focussed practical lessons on a weekly basis.

GCSE pupils are expected to source, adapt and practise recipes at home as part of their independent learning allocation. They will also be required to complete set tasks to extend their classroom learning.

### **Nature of Independent Learning**

It has been designed to develop pupils' skills and knowledge of the subject. The work may consolidate learning in the lesson or provide pupils with the opportunity to conduct independent research and wider reading in preparation for future lessons.

Pupils will also be expected to complete focussed planning sheets in preparation for practical lessons and a short but valuable practical record after making their dishes.

In Year 8 and 9 pupils will be expected to show modification in their practical work, especially those of higher ability. This will include research and preparation of ingredients prior to their practical lesson. This will allow them to demonstrate their development and understanding of recipes and level of skill.

### **Assessment**

Each piece of completed work will be assessed and marked using the subject specific grading system.

Pupils can track their progress using the skills and knowledge sheet provided at the beginning of the course and through completion of their practical record to evaluate recipes.

Constructive feedback will be given for each piece of work to encourage pupils to make improvements.

At the end of a module pupils will receive an average grade taken from practical work, theory work and end of unit assessment.

### **AGSB Geography** **Independent Learning Policy**

#### **Purpose of Independent study in Geography**

The purpose of independent study in Geography is to reinforce the knowledge and skills developed in the lessons. Independent study will engage pupils further in the study of the subject and allow them to delve more deeply into the subject content. The tasks set will encourage the pupils to think and work independently.

#### **How much time should be spent on independent study?**

Pupils should expect to spend between 60-90 minutes on independent study per fortnight in KS3. Sometimes homework tasks might be short and set across all three lessons in the fortnight or they might be longer extended tasks and set only once over the fortnight. Where a pupil is given an extended task, they will be given a longer period of time to complete the work. At KS4 homework will usually be set in three out of five of the lessons. However, all KS4 pupils are expected to have a Geography folder where they will write their revision notes. Pupils are expected to keep their notes up to date throughout the course, they should complete revision notes at the end of every unit in preparation for the end of unit exam. Pupils should work on these notes when they have time and without being prompted by the teacher.

#### **The nature of independent study**

Independent study will always be designed to develop a specific skill/ range of skills. The work will seek to consolidate the learning that has taken place in the classroom and a wide range of different activities will be set e.g. written work, presentations, models, essays, research or art. The work will seek to challenge pupils so that they engage in higher order thinking activities and the work will be differentiated if necessary. This means extension tasks will be provided for the highest ability pupils and lower ability pupils will receive extra guidance/ framing. Although the nature of the tasks might vary between classes the schemes of work the students study will be similar and the nature of the activities will also be similar. Additional materials to support the pupils in their homework will be put on the Engine.

#### **How homework will be assessed**

Shorter homework tasks will be checked by the teacher and longer tasks will be formally marked using agreed criteria that will be shared with the pupil before they begin the task. The pupil will always be given the opportunity to improve his work and this updated result will be added to the teacher's mark book, alongside the first mark.

### **AGSB Geology** **Independent Learning Policy**

In Geology, independent study tasks (IST) will be set primarily in order to reinforce, extend and assess what has been previously learned in the lesson. It is most likely that an IST will be set once every fortnight.

Two principal types of IST will be set. The first type will consist of on-line data response questions which are specifically designed to evaluate understanding and enable students to become more familiar with the format of the final GCSE on-line examination. These will be marked by the teacher and constructive feedback on how to improve will be provided by the teacher. The second type of IST will be research-

orientated using the internet and/or other sources to enable the student to explore curriculum topics in more detail/depth. These will usually be peer or self-assessed following class discussion.

**AGSB History**  
**Independent Learning Policy**

Independent Learning Tasks (ILTs) will be set according to the needs of the students in each class.

There will be a range of ILTs which cover a variety of historical skills. These include:

- Written tasks in which students respond to a question or questions;
- Creative writing tasks;
- The production of revision resources to reinforce work already covered
- Learning the definitions of subject specific concepts.

This list is not exhaustive. When students have formal assessments or exams, the ILTs will vary.

**AGSB Latin**  
**Independent Learning Policy**

At least one homework per fortnight will be a learning homework and this will be tested in class and pupils will re-sit the test if the marks are not good enough.

The other homework(s) will be set according to the needs of the class and pupils.

**Learning tasks:**

- Learning vocabulary and/ or grammar
- Vocabulary could be learnt from a prescribed list (from their exercise/text books or an internet site).

**Other tasks:**

These could be

- a project on a cultural aspect of the Classical world.
- a task where students design a revision resource to use at a later stage.
- translating sample sentences from English into Latin.
- translation of a story or poem from Latin into English.
- any other task which reinforces the work that has been learnt in class.

**AGSB Mathematics**  
**Independent Learning Policy**

**Away from lessons Mathematics pupils may be expected to:**

- extend and consolidate classwork with exercises that they will be directed to
- consolidate learning of previously taught topics
- research and prepare for upcoming topics
- revise for tests and examinations
- correct previous work
- summarise feedback
- summarise learning
- evaluate examination/tests
- consider what their personal targets need to be and to act upon them



### **Expectation of pupils**

Pupils will complete set tasks in a timely fashion and will normally be given more than one day to complete the task to allow them to actively seek help from:

- their peers
- home support
- maths prefects at lunch in M2
- their own maths teacher
- any other Maths teacher.

We aim to help our pupils develop their ability to learn independently and take responsibility for their progress. When given appropriate time to seek help we expect pupils to complete the task for the date that has been set. Failure to do so will result in a sanction would usually take the form of a yellow card, a lunch detention or an after-school detention.

### **AGSB MFL** **Independent Learning Policy**

At least one homework per fortnight will be a learning homework and this will be tested in class and pupils will re-sit the test if the marks are not good enough.

The other homework(s) will be set according to the needs of the class and pupils.

#### **Learning tasks**

- Learning vocabulary and/ or grammar
- Vocabulary could be learnt from a prescribed list (from their exercise/text books or an internet site).

#### **Other tasks**

These could be

- a gap filling exercise
- a reading comprehension activity which uses previously learnt/new vocabulary
- a written task, in which students respond to a question or questions
- a creative writing task
- a task where students design a revision resource to use at a later stage.
- preparing/practising a presentation/role play/conversation
- a listening comprehension exercise
- transcription or translation
- any other task which reinforces the work that has been learnt in class.

### **AGSB Music** **Independent Learning Policy**

#### **Year 7**

Year 7 pupils will be set one piece of theory homework per fortnight. This will be assessed by the teacher. Pupils are expected to spend a minimum of 40 minutes per week practising their instruments.

#### **Year 8 and 9**

Pupils will be set theory, composition and listening tasks in lessons and these will be assessed by the teacher. Extension activities will also be set. On some occasions these tasks will need to be finished out of class time. The pupils can access the keyboards on Monday lunchtimes. The computing room is also available for them to use at lunchtimes.

It is expected that pupils visit the computing and or keyboard club for a minimum of 20 minutes per week

to practise their skills for the assessments in lesson time.

KS4/5

Pupils will be set theory, listening or composition tasks every fortnight and this will take them between one (GCSE) to two (A2) hours per fortnight. The computer room is available for them to use after school to work on composition skills.

It is expected that all GCSE and A Level pupils attend at least one ensemble.

### **AGSB Physical Education** **Independent Learning Policy**

Independent Study Tasks (IST) in PE can be separated into various key areas;

- KS3 (Yr 7-9) practical
- GCSE PE – Practical and Theory
- A Level PE – Practical.

#### **KS3 – Year 7-9**

Pupils in years 7-9 will participate in a broad, diverse and inclusive curriculum. They will also participate in various quantifiable fitness tests throughout the academic year. We would actively encourage pupils to view IST as an opportunity for additional sporting participation to enhance their physical, social and mental health. We encourage all pupils to participate in at least one extra-curricular sports/physical recreation club, either inside or outside of school.

A more personalised IST for PE would be to target a sport-specific or fitness weakness and make a concerted effort to develop this weakness. This lends itself particularly well during the half term leading up to the fitness tests.

#### **GCSE PE**

In GCSE PE, IST will be set primarily in order to reinforce, extend and assess what has been previously learned in the lesson. It is most likely that an IST will be set after each of the theory lessons.

Three principal types of Theory IST will be set;

1. Information learning. After each lesson pupils will be expected to spend an appropriate amount of time learning key information covered in the lesson. This will be assessed through short, informal assessment at the start of the next lesson.
2. Exams style questions that check application and understanding. These could be revision notes or synoptic extended responses. These will be collaboratively marked or teacher marked and individualised feedback and personalised targets provided.
3. GCSE PE pupils will be expected to complete a large piece of coursework. It is linked to a training programme and so pupils will be expected to structure and complete personalised and detailed session plans and a training diary. They will also be expected to learn and apply the theoretical content of the GCSE PE course in this practical environment.

Practical IST in GCSE PE is all geared around finding and improving 4 sporting disciplines ready for assessment on their externally moderated practical examination. Joining extra-curricular clubs and improving components of fitness will all enhance their ability to access the best possible grades.

#### **A-Level PE**

In A-Level PE, IST will be set primarily in order to reinforce, extend and assess what has been previously learned in the lesson. It is most likely that an IST will be set at least once every fortnight for each of the three units.

Two principal types of Theory IST will be set:

1. Exams questions that correlate to the mark allowance at AS and A2; [1 Mark] Knowledge questions, [2-6 Mark] Knowledge application and understanding questions and [10 Mark] Synoptic extended responses. These will be collaboratively marked or teacher marked and individualised feedback and personalised target provided.
2. Independent research and wider reading on sport specific information and contemporary topics which will help understanding in more detail/depth. These will usually be peer or self-assessed following class discussion.

Practical IST is a large part of A-Level PE. Pupils will significantly enhance their ability to access top practical marks by committing to a sustained and details process of video evidence collection and editing. They will also need to spend a large amount of time refining their ability to effectively perform an 'Evaluative Coursework Interview'. They will need to recall and apply theory content from the course. The nature of the EPIP/E&A coursework is very unique, therefore personalised and specific IST is an integral component of making sure the outcome is meaningful.

### **AGSB Lower School Science** **Independent Learning Policy**

Topics covered in Year 7 & 8 Science vary widely. As such the nature of independent study tasks take a variety of forms. Each topic is likely to include some elements of:

- short answer questions with both written and numerical responses
- practical investigation write ups
- research based tasks
- revision for class assessments.

The frequency of tasks set will vary with each topic, depending on the content and the nature of the work undertaken in class.

Students are continually expected to read and research around the topic and encouraged to make notes on a weekly basis in the back of their books. Useful resources for this include: Fusion online textbook (a login for each student is provided), news websites (such as BBC or the Guardian), BBC Bitesize pages (which include notes, quizzes, activities and tests) and general reference books from the School or local libraries.

### **AGSB Sixth Form** **Independent Learning Policy**

#### **Some quotes from our students to consider**

*"Too many teachers get you to copy out during lessons what you could have done independently"*

*"We have been encouraged to study independently but not research independently"*

*"The best approach is that which balances intense learning in class with a strong focus on independent learning opportunities"*

#### **Independent Learning**

CPD objectives:

- Develop understanding of independent learning
- Examine obstacles to increasing independent learning in our students
- Identify ways in which departments can encourage and develop independent learning opportunities
- Reflect on own Sixth Form Teaching and Learning

### **Independent learning - the context**

- Move towards linear assessment
- Increased rigour in assessment requires more adaptable learners
- Reduced teaching time in the Sixth Form
- 16 hours per week independent study

*"Students show excellent attitudes to their learning. They make best use of independent study time so that they are very well prepared for lessons and other activities."*

Ofsted School Inspection Handbook 2015

### **Independent learning - a shared concept?**

- *"Independent learning is a process, a method and a philosophy of education whereby a learner acquires knowledge by his or her own efforts and develops the ability for enquiry and critical evaluation"*
- *"Independent learning is a process and a method by which learners take more control and play a more active part in their own learning- it is an essential partner to outstanding teaching"*
- Essentially in promoting independent learning we are encouraging and enabling our students to become self-directed in their learning experiences and to have more autonomy and control over their learning.

### **What activities do you associate with independent learning**

- In groups list activities that you associate with independent learning

### **What are the obstacles to independent learning**

- Identify barriers to independent learning under each of the following categories: organisational, subject specific, student, other
- Once you have agreed a list of barriers can you then identify ways in which these barriers can be overcome

### **Promoting independent learning**

- Provide students with the tools to learn (tell them what you will be covering over the next few weeks or share SOW)
- Give them research topics each week (remember they have 4 hours additional study per week to complete)
- Check their note taking and work outside of class (no need for assessment but show interest in their folders)
- Share class resources and power points on the Engine
- Encourage self and peer editing before work is handed in
- Give pupils choices so they can reflect on their own interests and preferences
- Encourage group work so that learners can learn from each other
- Collaborate with pupils to set shared learning goals
- Encourage pupils to reflect and plan in learner diaries

### **Reflecting on our own Sixth Form teaching**

- Sixth Form teaching has the most freedom and least guidance when we compare to KS3 proscripton but this doesn't mean rigour, behaviour, support and control should be largely different in their intention

### **Reflecting on your Sixth Form teaching**

- Punctuality to lessons (both teacher and students)
- Established class routines
- Regular testing
- Promotes confidence in students by modelling, discussion and explanation
- Prompt feedback
- Sharing of resources on the Engine
- Whole class teaching that engages and sustains interest
- Range of activities that are well structured
  - Opportunities for students to explore subject and develop independence