



Peterchurch, Herefordshire HR2 0SG | 01981 550 231 | [admin@fairfield.hereford.sch.uk](mailto:admin@fairfield.hereford.sch.uk) | Head Teacher: Mrs S L Gaston

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Dear Parents and Carers,

### Spellzone, Homework and Reading Expectations in English at KS3

For the last half term, the English Department have trialled a slightly different approach to KS3 students' English lessons in order to support their literacy more effectively. I wanted to take this opportunity to share with you our approach and ensure you were made aware of our expectations around homework and reading, so you feel more able to support your child.

#### Literacy Lessons in English

Every fortnight, all KS3 students have one Spellzone lesson. Spellzone is a website that sets bespoke tasks and individual course pathways for each student to help them improve their spelling. Students also receive one Library lesson every fortnight, where they have the opportunity to share what they're reading, use the library and read independently.

Year 7 and Year 8 also have one lesson a fortnight to focus on an area of punctuation or grammar, and complete a piece of creative writing based on a stimulus to develop their technical accuracy and imagination. Students have particularly enjoyed these lessons and their stories have been fantastic!

#### Homework Expectations in English

To ensure homework is more manageable (and memorable) for students, and to help students improve their spelling and reading, we have made the decision to only set Spellzone homework and reading homework:

- KS3 students should complete 30 minutes on their individual course pathway on Spellzone, each week. Spellzone can be accessed on any device that has an internet browser – many students have done it on their phone, a tablet or a computer.
- KS3 students should read for 1 hour a week (essentially, 10 minutes a day) and get their reading log signed by their parent or carer to show they have completed it. Students who read more than this get handsomely rewarded with house points.

#### Reading Book Expectations

Research has found that students who read widely excel in **all** subjects, not just English. While there is a wealth of books out there, we impress on students that they should have a fiction (story) book as their main book for Smart Start every day.

Students, of course, may also read non-fiction alongside this, but reading fiction is important as it develops students' empathy, imagination and vocabulary, and has also been found to reduce stress and anxiety in students. Students read a lot of non-fiction in their day-to-day lessons, so we feel it is paramount that they are reading fiction alongside their studies to ensure more of a 'mixed diet' of material.

We are incredibly lucky at Fairfield to have students who are so keen on reading and so engaged in their English lessons, which is a testament to you as their parents and carers. As their teachers, we want to ensure that they get the most out of their time at Fairfield and we appreciate your continued support with your child's learning.

Yours faithfully

Emma Worsfold

Assistant Headteacher  
Head of Faculty for English, MFL and Drama