

Name _____ Date _____

Teachers call for ban on homework

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/education/7287962.stm>

Adapted from BBC News 10.03.2008 © BBC MMIIIX



Teachers want homework to be abolished for primary school age children

A motion for the Association of Teachers and Lecturers conference will also seek a Royal Commission to **examine** why children are unhappy at school.

Union leader Mary Bousted said the difficulty of completing homework could set up a cycle of **resistance** to school in children from poorer homes.

The government says that homework is not **compulsory** but it is encouraged as a key part of the learning process.

Its guidelines for schools in England say children should be doing homework from the day they start school, rising from one hour a week at five, to 90 to 150 minutes a day at 16.

They say 10 and 11-year-olds should be doing half an hour of homework every day.

But research has cast doubt on its effectiveness, and has even **suggested** that too much is counter-productive. Some independent schools have **abolished** the practice.

'Waste'

Dr Bousted told journalists that in state schools everyone just **accepted** that homework had to be done.

"I think a lot of homework is a waste of time. The teacher has got to set it, so what gets set is 'busy' homework," she said.

But children from disadvantaged homes, who did not have the resources and support middle class parents **provided**, could get into trouble for not completing it.

"I think it sets up a cycle of resistance to school because they don't have access to the cultural and emotional and learning support which middle-class children can get."

The motion also says many children appear "unhappy and **anxious**".

"Children should be able to explore, experiment and enjoy their learning without feeling pressurised," it adds.

"Homework has become an increasing pressure placed on children in primary and secondary schools."

The motion wants ministers to "**scrap** compulsory homework for primary-aged children and to limit the amount of time allocated to compulsory homework at secondary level".

'Most are happy'

A spokesman for the Department for Children, Schools and Families said homework was not compulsory but it encouraged teachers to set children work to do at outside the classroom.

"We have clear guidance for teachers on their legal entitlement to set homework.

"A good, well-organised homework programme helps children and young people to develop the skills and **attitudes** they will need for successful, independent, lifelong learning.

"Research shows that for most children, 2008 is a great time to be a child. Most children are happy, most are achieving to a higher level than ever before, enjoying better health, more opportunities to travel, to engage in sport or cultural activities than was the case for any previous generation."

The government has a new Children's Plan for England - underpinned by a study of parents which said they felt there was something **fundamentally** wrong with modern childhood.

Name _____ Date _____

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A. Read the article and decide whether the following statements are true or false or don't know.

1. The government says homework is compulsory.

True/False/Don't know

2. 10 and 11 year olds should do one and a half hours homework a day.

True/False/Don't know

3. Teachers want homework abolished.

True/False/Don't know

4. Teachers currently have a legal right to set homework.

True/False/Don't know

5. Research confirms that most children are happier now than in previous generations

True/False/Don't know

6. Many parents feel that there is something basically amiss with modern childhood.

True/False/Don't know

7. Homework can provide skills needed in later life, according to the Department for Children, Schools and families.

True/False/Don't know

8. Dr Boustead is a union leader.

True/False/Don't know

B. What are your views? Use the space below to write a short essay giving your views on the points made in the article.

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C. Read the article and then answer these questions

1. Where has homework already been abolished?
2. Why and how could children from disadvantaged homes get into trouble for not doing homework?
3. How many hours of homework a day would a child expect in his/her first year at school?
4. What has led to the Children's Plan for England?
5. Who has asked for a Royal Commission to be set up?
6. Who believes homework is a waste of time?
7. Who believes homework should be encouraged?

D. Look at the words in the text that are in bold. They are listed on the left below. Can you match them with a word on the right that can replace them in the text?

For example **compulsory** can be replaced by **mandatory**

compulsory	→	mandatory
examine		gave
resistance		ditch
suggested		basically
provided		check
accepted		opposition
scrap		worried
attitudes		recommended
fundamentally		approaches
anxious		acknowledged

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ANSWERS

A

1. false
2. false (half an hour)
3. false (only in primary schools)
4. true
5. true
6. true
7. true
8. true

C

1. Some independent schools.
2. Their parents are unable to provide resources and support
3. One hour a week
4. A study of parents who believe there is something fundamentally wrong with modern childhood.
5. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers conference.
6. Dr. Bousted.
7. The government

D.

compulsory



mandatory

examine

check

resistance

opposition

suggested

recommended

provided

gave

accepted

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scrap

ditch

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