

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

ACTION	WHEN
Mr Good will work with a team of pupils on designing a Progress Diary that will meet their needs and that is fit for purpose	Summer Term, for distribution in September
All staff have been informed that IL tasks must be linked to classroom learning, and those links are to be made explicit to pupils	From the start of the Summer Term
Adapted IL booklets have been produced for use by our less able pupils and can be found under the heading 'Quick Start'. These only contain those tasks that are applicable to them – however, there is nothing to stop any pupil accessing the full booklet, with all the tasks, if they prefer. Subject staff will provide guidance to pupils as to which booklet is the best choice for them.	From the start of the Summer Term
All subject teams will develop appropriate assessment sheets, and each booklet will contain information about how pupils' work will be responded to	From the start of the Summer Term
All subject teams will check the time requirements of tasks and amend if necessary	From the start of the Summer Term
Deadlines will be spaced out and those deadlines will be shared with pupils and parents	See below
Subject teams will develop activities that give a greater breadth of choice for G+T pupils, rather than just give them more to do	IL booklet in second half of Summer Term
Because of the low pupil/teacher contact at Key Stage 3, ICT will be dropped from IL, in line with other subjects with similar contact e.g. Music, Drama, PE etc.	Second half of Summer Term

10 TOP TIPS FOR ORGANISING MY IL (with thanks to all those pupils who contributed their ideas)

1. Before each half term begins, print off all the IL booklets and start thinking about which tasks you are going to complete.
2. Write out all the interim deadlines and final deadlines into your diary. Stick to the interim deadlines, otherwise it builds up quickly!
3. Plan what you are going to work on each night and stick to your programme. Don't wait till the last minute!
4. Be organised and plan all the equipment you will need. Will you need your dictionary, card, materials? (e.g when you have to build a castle, or build something for DT).
5. Keep an 'IL folder' with different sections for each subject so you have everything together.
6. As soon as you have completed a task, record it into the front sheet of the booklet so you don't have to do it all at the end.
7. Get a mini-whiteboard for your bedroom, and keep all your deadlines on it. You can then wipe off thing when you do it – seeing the board empty is a GREAT feeling!
8. Ask your teacher if you are not sure what to do. Your classmates will also be able to help you out.
9. Ask your parents to help you out getting organised / planning for your tasks if you are not sure how to prioritise.
10. Attend Independent Learning club if you feel you need more support from staff.

THE FOREST SCHOOL



Independent Learning Newsletter for Pupils & Parents

May 2009

In my letter to parents in October I indicated that an interim review of Independent Learning would take place. This has now been completed and the outcomes of the review are detailed below. We will do a full review at the end of the Summer Term, in which we will involve parents, staff and pupils, before making any changes in time for the start of the new academic year.

For the review, each member of the Senior Leadership Team interviewed a cross-section of pupils from Years 7 – 9 and took careful note of the views expressed. An analysis of this sampling exercise was shared with the Directors of Learning and points for action were then agreed, a summary of which is given below.

An unexpected outcome of the pupil interviews was the range of really good ideas both pupils and parents have for managing their Independent Learning. We thought it would be useful to share these with everyone – please see the “10 Top Tips” section of this article.

The final section of this Newsletter gives you all the Independent Learning deadlines for this term. You will see that, in response to concerns raised by our pupil survey, we have made every effort to space out these deadlines, to avoid “log-jams” at particular points in the term.

I hope you find this Newsletter helpful.

Ms S C V Denning
Headteacher

The vast majority of pupils showed a clear understanding and appreciation of the theory behind the introduction of Independent Learning. Whilst Year 8 and 9 pupils all agreed that they now do more work at home than in the past, the majority also acknowledged that this was probably a good thing!

What pupils said they liked about Independent Learning

- We like the fact that Independent Learning prepares us for GCSEs, A Levels and the potential it has for developing our life skills
- Independent Learning helps us to develop the research skills we need for KS4
- We like the fact that we can improve the quality of our work
- We enjoy the range and choice of tasks
- We like the fact that there are different tasks so that different types of learners (e.g. practical learners) can access them
- We enjoy the project-based activities and the practical tasks
- We like the fact that our tutors help us with our Independent Learning organisation and we feel that our subject teachers will also help us, if we ask
- We enjoy the opportunity to use and develop our ICT skills
- We like the summary assessment sheets used in Humanities and Science last term
- We enjoy going to Independent Learning Club after school. We can work on the computers there and there are staff available for help, should we need it (Year 7 use this facility a lot; Year 8 and Year 9 numbers are growing.)
- We like the fact that Independent Learning allows us to stretch and challenge ourselves (Very few boys seem to choose the “easy option” with their IL.)

In summary: Most pupils thought that the quality of their work had improved considerably and that they were working to a higher standard. IL also encourages them to discuss their work to a greater extent with their parents. Pupils are generally very positive about IL. They like the choice and all could see how it had benefited their learning, especially being organised, self-disciplined and better researchers.

What pupils said they didn't like about Independent Learning

- When the learning needed for the IL task has not been covered in the lesson(s) beforehand
- When “extra” homework is set that’s not in the IL booklet
- When there’s only 1 task, and it isn’t differentiated for different abilities or different learning styles
- When there’s not enough guidance, clarity or explanation from their teachers
- When the points don’t seem to equate with their perception of the difficulty of the task, or the length of time needed to complete it
- When there are too many deadlines too close together
- Pupils would like a quicker response to their IL from some of their subject teachers
- Pupils enjoy having a Progress Diary, but find the layout unhelpful and frustrating
- Pupils feel there’s too much IL overall, and the subjects where it is very time-consuming are often those with the least pupil-teacher contact
- Our less able pupils find the density of the individual IL booklets off-putting and confusing
- Our Gifted and Talented pupils feel that because of the nature of the tasks aimed at them, they are penalised for being more able – they feel they have to do more work and spend more time on their IL than their fellow-pupils.