



each assignment as an affront to her human rights, so I spent her school days threatening and cajoling her into completing them. Our youngest is 12 and about to enter year eight. She finds homework easy once she gets started, but I must badger her into it or she'd miss deadlines.

"Having a homework routine—being very clear that this is when and where they must sit down to it—helps," Jaderberg explains. "If you have a set time each day when the house is kept quiet and homework is the only thing your child must think about, you're providing an environment that places great credence on this task." This sends a clear message—I take your homework seriously, and so I expect you to do the same—to your child.

Age-appropriate input

Your child's age will also influence the extent of your role. Primary school homework is less challenging, meant to simply get them into the routine of independent learning and ready for secondary school. Parents should find time at the weekends to engage with this process, again reinforcing a message that you're a family that takes homework seriously.

Secondary-school-age youngsters need to become more enterprising, but you still have a role to play. Jaderberg says that means saying yes to helping children use a dictionary or undertake research, but not actually doing it for them. Signposting where they can find appropriate help online is another healthy form of support, along with reading and editing their work on completion.

Kristy Turner, who teaches Chemistry at Bolton School in Lancashire, points out that understanding what stops children from getting their work finished is key. "In older children, that's almost always going to be technology—their phones and social media accounts," she says. She suggests taking away devices during homework sessions, returning them when the work's been completed and to a good standard. Over time children learn enough discipline to remove those distractions on their own accord.

Reaping the rewards

Parents should be consistent with the message that homework is a non-negotiable priority. Helping children establish a strong academic work ethic requires different strategies, depending on their personality. It is, however, one of the most valuable attributes you can help them learn, for school and in all areas of life. **C**

Rachel Halliwell is a Cheshire-based freelance journalist.

How much help is too much?

How to find a healthy role with your child's homework

BY RACHEL HALLIWELL

AS ANY parent of a school-age child will testify, finding your role in how your child's homework gets done is a challenge. Some children turn homework into a battleground for all concerned. Others might be keener, but demand so much help you wonder who's being tested: you or them?

Should you stand over your child until the job's done or just leave them to it, letting shirkers learn the hard way when they get in trouble with their teacher? How do you find the happy middle ground where your child feels supported but is self-motivated too?

Give your child what's needed

Education consultant Lorrae Jaderberg, a former head teacher and co-founder of London-based tutoring assessment company JK Educate (jkeducate.co.uk), says there's no one-size-fits-all answer. Parents should tailor their approach to fit their child's personality.

That's been my approach as a mother of three daughters. Our eldest, now 23, was a studious self-starter who preferred to be left to it; my role was to enforce breaks, provide snacks and check her work when asked. But our middle girl, now 20, regarded