

DENBIGHSHIRE EDUCATION SERVICES

MORE ABLE AND TALENTED POLICY

INTRODUCTION

This policy has been developed to inform schools, their governors and parents how Denbighshire Education Services will support them in making effective provision for more able and talented pupils. Where a school holds a clear policy for able and talented pupils, not only are their needs more likely to be appropriately met, but also the expectation of extension and enrichment of the curriculum gives an added benefit to all the pupils in that school.

The Welsh Assembly Government defines this group of pupils as those who:
“Require extended opportunities across the curriculum in order to develop their abilities in one or more areas. Approximately 20% of the school population may be ‘more able’ while the top 2% could be considered ‘exceptional’.”

Each school should make a decision as to who, in its own community, shows high ability or is talented in particular areas, acknowledging that ability and talent can manifest itself in many different ways.

THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITY

The local authority’s responsibility to promote high standards includes ensuring that the needs of very able and gifted children are met. To fulfill this responsibility the local authority will follow the guidance provided in “A curriculum of opportunity: developing potential into performance” (ACCAC 2003) and “LEA Guidance for pupils who are more able and talented” (WAG 2003) and will:

- establish a policy on the education of very able and gifted children
- monitor its implementation and the impact of the policy on practice and standards
- review the policy at regular intervals
- ensure that the policy is made available to all relevant partners in the education of very able and gifted children.
- have a “named person” with responsibility for coordinating the work of the local authority in relation to able and talented pupils
- provide support through “Dolen Gymorth Dinbych” to promote, monitor and evaluate this work

In addition, the local education authority will:

- identify and monitor the provision available within Denbighshire schools
- provide advice to parents in gaining access to this provision
- use the Education Services’ website to share good practice, current thinking and guidance, and research on able and talented pupils

To support schools in meeting the needs of very able and gifted children, the local education authority in conjunction with Dolen Gymorth Dinbych, will:

- provide relevant information to schools (including data provided by the Data Team) to encourage them to offer appropriate challenges to very able and gifted children
- raise teachers awareness and ability to identify and respond to pupils who are more able and talented
- provide information on the teaching and learning of able and talented pupils
- provide information and advice on school management, curriculum, and transition in relation to very able and gifted children, and disseminate best practice

To secure high standards in schools, the local education authority will:

- encourage each school to develop a policy to support its able and talented pupils
- ensure that able and talented pupils are identified in each school, and
- encourage each school to have a list or register of able and talented pupils
- enhance the provision for very able and gifted children, through joint work with schools and partnerships with other groups and providers

To ensure that the needs of very able and gifted children from minority groups are met, the local education authority will:

- promote arrangements for the identification and assessment of needs, and subsequent provision, that are equally accessible to children who are:
 - . educated in mainstream schools
 - . educated otherwise than at school
 - . from minority ethnic groups
 - . travellers
 - . in public care
and/or
 - . have special educational needs.

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL

Within Estyn's framework for Inspection, schools are expected to ensure that the needs of more able and talented pupils are being met. To ensure that these needs are met, schools should be encouraged to:

- have a policy on teaching and learning that support high expectations of all pupils
- have a designated person as an Able and Talented Coordinator with responsibility for coordinating issues related to this group
- Ensure that planning support for learning includes opportunities within the Curriculum and within the out of school hours learning programme of the school.
- establish procedures for identifying very able and talented children which are transparent, non-discriminatory, flexible and effective
- analyse attainment data, including performance criteria in sport, PE and the creative arts, in order to identify its very able and talented children and those children who have the potential to reach high levels of performance
- check that particular groups of children are not under-represented in the cohort of very able and gifted children
- ensure its curriculum and other opportunities meet the needs of very able and gifted children
- support and encourage a change in attitudes and behaviour to overcome negative stereotyped generalisations about very able and gifted children
- monitor the outcomes and track the progress of very able and gifted children, paying particular attention to groups of children who may be underachieving, such as highly mobile children, minority ethnic groups including refugees, children in care or disaffected children
- take appropriate and effective action to promote the interests of these children, including providing training for staff as well as support for children and their parents to plan their learning and develop further their talents and experiences
- improve transition between school by ensuring that the receiving school recognizes and builds on the pupils' prior attainment and progress

THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL'S GOVERNING BODY

School governors have a large part to play in the introduction of a school policy for very able and gifted children. Working with the Headteacher and the staff, they can help to ensure that the policy fits the particular ethos of their school. They should decide whether to appoint a governor with special responsibility for this area.

Governors can help to ensure that parents are well informed about the strategy, and engage their support. They may be a useful resource in establishing links throughout the community.

Governors should decide:

- what type and level of monitoring of the policy is appropriate in their school
- ensure that the monitoring is implemented appropriately
and also
- evaluate the impact of the policy.

They should be aware of the possible implications for extra funding for staffing, new resources, non-contact time and staff training. The governing body should try to increase its knowledge in this area, by arranging for one or more governors to attend relevant governor training when available.

The local authority will support governing bodies by:

- providing training opportunities and support for school governors to develop their understanding about identification and provision for pupils who are more able and talented;
and
- assisting them to develop and implement a school policy.

PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

Parents and schools working together can significantly enhance a child's experience of education, through:

- effective identification and assessment of strengths and needs, especially when starting a new school
- sharing high but realistic expectations of further success
- agreeing on the need for a broad and balanced curriculum, which provides challenge in relevant areas but avoids the undue pressure that comes from an expectation of high ability in everything all the time
- recognising together that learning to learn and the enjoyment of learning are as important as passing tests and examinations
- building on the experiences provided by the other
and
- sharing successes and concerns.

Effective partnership will be based on the development of trust, and on each partner valuing the other.

Schools should ensure that parents are aware of the school's policy on very able and gifted children, and that they know whom to contact to discuss their child's needs, or their own needs as parents. Parents should know how to make a complaint, and to whom, should they need to do so.

Schools may find it useful to discuss with parents ways in which they can support their child within and outside the school curriculum.

To support effective partnerships, the local education authority will:

- give advice and support to teachers and parents about making provision for very able and gifted children
- where necessary, help to improve the partnership between the school and parents if this is preventing the child from receiving appropriate provision.

IDENTIFYING ABLE AND TALENTED PUPILS AND THEIR NEEDS

It is the responsibility of each school to meet the needs of all of its pupils. To achieve this, schools should identify the abilities and needs of all its pupils, including the very able and gifted children. It is important for schools to use a variety of identification strategies, formal or informal, for their able pupils, as long as these are practical and pragmatic. The risk of excluding any pupils who may not respond well to a particular method should be minimal. Recognizing that ability comes in many forms, a cyclical review will help to identify more pupils who develop ability at a later stage of their education, and those who reach a plateau in their learning.

Identification processes should take into account:

- the full range of abilities and “intelligences” possessed by children
- the extent to which abilities can be measured through attainment and through performance
- the views of a wide range of adults, including teaching and non-teaching staff, parents and other adults in the community e.g. youth group leaders, team coaches, and
- relevant information available from previous educational providers.

Particular care should be taken to ensure that identification processes are broadly based in order to identify underachieving children, and those with the potential to achieve at higher levels.

The approaches selected could include taking account of any of the following:

- teacher observation and assessment, using agreed criteria such as generic and subject checklists
- National Curriculum attainment
- attainment in externally accredited courses, e.g. GCSE results
- standardized test scores, e.g. CATs
- involvement and achievement in competitions, e.g. school or county competitions
- achievements in extra-curricular activities, e.g. participation in exhibitions, public events or specialist clubs
- nomination by the child’s parent(s)
- peer group nomination, and/or
- external agency nomination e.g. health visitor.

Schools should recognise that if all abilities are to be identified, then a range of appropriate curricular opportunities also need to be provided for children to demonstrate their abilities.

The local education authority will support schools in the identification of very able and gifted children by:

- providing relevant guidance and training for teachers and school managers
- providing specific guidance and support in the assessment of children from minority groups and groups at risk of underachievement, and providing relevant feedback to schools to develop their practices.

MONITORING THE POLICY

The local authority will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of this policy annually, through:

- evaluation of the extent to which objectives in the authority's strategy are met
- analysis of the progress of high attaining children in National Curriculum tests, teacher assessments and accredited examinations
- annual joint review of standards and school provision by Link Officers with Headteachers
- review of school Estyn inspection reports
- analysis of any parental concerns or complaints about provision
- review of participation by teachers in accredited professional development
- review of additions to the range of provision made within the authority.

The policy will be reviewed fully every two years.

THE ROLE OF THE ABLE AND TALENTED COORDINATOR

It is the role of the Able and Talented Coordinator to organise the identification, provision, and practice for this group of pupils.

The ATCO should:

- develop, monitor, evaluate and refine, in liaison with the Headteacher, Senior Management and the governing body, a whole-school policy for the able and talented pupils
- increase the awareness of colleagues of the needs of more able and talented pupils
- establish, with colleagues, a register of pupils considered to be able and talented, and ensure its availability
- liaise with subject leaders, to ensure all teachers are able to share in providing the level of subject support needed
- ensure that appropriate training and development opportunities for colleagues are provided
- when appropriate, ensure NQTs are supported
- work with others involved in supporting pupils in their learning, such as pastoral team leaders
- consult with staff at all levels and ensure there is an efficient exchange of information, including between schools
- foster good home -school relationships

Schools may find it practical to have a small working group, supporting the ATCO, which meets regularly to review the register of able and talented pupils and progress of school policy.