



Academic Challenge Policy

"For I can do everything through Christ, who gives me strength."

Philippians 4:13

Rationale

Saint Cecilia's Church of England School is fully committed to the equality of opportunity for all pupils. Every pupil, of whatever ability, has the right to be challenged and encouraged to develop to their full potential. It is therefore important that the needs of the more able learners are met to ensure they continue to be challenged and are able to make exceptional progress. This policy therefore fits alongside the Teaching and Learning Policy, to ensure effective teaching leads to great learning.

Through raising expectations, challenge and attainment of the more able pupils, we will raise the achievement of all pupils.

Definitions

Gifted

Gifted is the term used to identify pupils on a subject level. These pupils demonstrate a strong ability or interest within the subject area, and will be identified by department staff, using department specific criteria. These groups can be changeable. Department registers will be saved on SIMS and accessible to all members of the department.

More Able

More Able is the term used to define learners who are identified at school level as pupils who more able relative to their peers in their own year group. These pupils will have been identified by a number of subject areas and will have higher KS2 scores. These pupils have the potential or capacity for high attainment. Roughly 10% of the year group will be identified as More Able. These pupils are identified in Year 7 and in Year 12. These pupils will be identified on SIMS using the More Able label.

Exceptionally Able

Pupils whose abilities exceed the More Able are known as Exceptionally Able, as compared to their peers nationally. This can include pupils who have as yet unrealised potential for exceptional ability. These pupils require additional support and challenge beyond the enrichment and extension within the normal curriculum. Exceptionally Able pupils are identified where they have an average of 117 across their Key Stage 2 scores.

Identification

Gifted

Gifted pupils/students can be identified throughout their time at Saint Cecilia's Church of England School and identification is a continuous process, where pupils are added or removed from the department lists as their gifts or talents grow or wane. Department lists are regularly reviewed and updated by members of teaching staff. Pupils/students will be identified in subject areas using

department checklists, created by department teachers. The department checklists place more emphasis on enthusiasm, skills and knowledge, rather than attainment.

A pupil's inclusion on department registers will not necessarily be shared with the pupil or parent/carer, but will instead be used by the teacher to ensure that appropriate challenging activities and tasks are provided to the pupil.

More Able

More Able pupils will be identified by the Assistant Headteacher in charge of Academic Challenge. A range of information will be reviewed in identifying these pupils, including department identification, teacher observation, KS2 scores, prior identification by primary school, parent information and attainment grades.

Particular focus will be paid to groups who are under-represented, such as Disadvantaged Pupils, pupils with SEND, and underachieving more able pupils, to ensure their inclusion in the school list. This may include positive discrimination.

Provision

Curriculum, Teaching and Learning

The school ethos is to challenge all pupils, ensuring that our curriculum is challenging, offering pupils the chance to develop their knowledge and skills. This is supported by a culture of high expectations for all, and a desire to provide deeper learning that encourages enquiry, analysis and synthesis.

The curriculum has been designed to ensure progression and challenge from Year 7 to Year 13. Each Scheme of Work identifies how challenge is incorporated into lessons, providing guidance to staff on activities, questioning, materials that can be used to provide additional challenge.

Quality first teaching is a fundamental concept at Saint Cecilia's, and most of the provision occurs in the classroom through carefully planned teaching. Teachers provide challenging, stretching and engaging learning opportunities for all learners, and differentiate 'downwards', through effective scaffolding of the task. Pupils complete a 'Pupil Passport' on identification as More Able, and this is shared with all staff so that they are aware of each pupil's individual needs. This enables all pupils to be sufficiently challenged but given the necessary support to access the task where necessary. All pupils are given a variety of activities that engage and develop their thinking skills. Teachers use in depth, quality discussion, coupled with carefully planned and timed questioning, to challenge pupils' perceptions and further their understanding. Questioning focuses on using higher order thinking skills as described in Bloom's taxonomy. Specifically for More Able pupils, teachers use a range of techniques to provide pupils with additional challenge, including targeted provision, independent tasks, grouping of pupils, roles within groups and acceleration to harder topics as appropriate to the topic and the pupil's individual needs. More Able pupils are allowed to move on quickly to more challenging activities, to help develop higher order thinking and problem solving skills.

Teachers take into account a pupil's prior understanding and knowledge, to effectively provide for the More Able learners, with the aim to broaden, deepen and link learning.

Enrichment

An enrichment programme is in place for each key stage, which focuses on competitions, university visits, well-being workshops, study skills sessions and teacher-led discovery sessions. These programmes are:

KS3: Junior Enrichment Programme
KS4: Intermediate Enrichment Programme
KS5: Senior Enrichment Programme

The programmes are designed to offer progression and cater for the specific needs of the cohort. The programmes are aimed at the More Able pupils but specific sessions may be opened out to all pupils where there is capacity and interest.

A wide range of enrichment activities are offered by staff at the school, including clubs, internal and external competitions and trips, speakers, workshops, mentoring opportunities and leadership opportunities which are appropriate for More Able pupils. When appropriate, departments offer extension clubs in preparation for public examinations. These enrichment activities provide pupils with opportunities to learn new topics, not covered within the curriculum, and to develop their higher order skills, such as problem solving, analysis, creating thinking and evaluation skills. Pupils are encouraged to take these opportunities, and may be invited individually by staff.

Departments will provide enrichment opportunities for pupils identified as Gifted in their subject area.

Where additional opportunities are available, the Academic Challenge Lead will invite individual pupils. This may include activity days, national competitions, masterclasses, day and residential visits, visiting specialists, weekend activities, and summer schools. These may be planned and supervised by members of staff, or families encouraged to sign up for the opportunities individually.

Personal, Social and Emotional Support

More Able pupils may require additional support to ensure they continue to make good progress. This may take many forms, including mentoring, having a trusted adult, or external agency support. Support is also provided for careers and well-being through the structures in place. The Academic Challenge Co-ordinator will liaise with the pupil's mentor and Year Leader to look at what support can be put in place.

Additional support is delivered through the workshops in the Enrichment Programmes, specific to the year/key stage, for example a workshop on exam stress.

Academic monitoring

The Academic Challenge Co-ordinator will be involved in tracking and monitoring the progress of pupils identified as More Able, liaising with mentors, Year Leaders and subject teachers as appropriate.

Where More Able pupils are identified as underperforming, they will be spoken to by their mentor in the first instance, as part of the termly academic review meeting. Should concerns remain, the Academic Challenge Co-ordinator will meet with the pupil, and discuss strengths, weaknesses and concerns. An IEP may be completed if necessary, and shared with teaching staff, so that additional support can be put in place in lessons.

Where a Gifted pupil is underperforming in a subject they have been identified in, their subject teacher will look at ways they can support the individual in class. Where it is felt the pupil no longer

exhibits traits to be identified as Gifted in that subject, the teacher may decide to remove them from the list on SIMS.

Professional Development

Regular focus on More Able pupils, and teaching methods to challenge and support these learners, will be incorporated in the CPD programme.

The Academic Challenge Co-ordinator runs training for PGCE, NQT and new staff on how to provide for the More Able pupils, and the systems in place for identification.

All staff are offered CPD on innovative teaching ideas to support and challenge learners through the Teaching Innovation Group. The teaching techniques and methods discussed will sometimes feature an aspect of challenge, such as questioning.

Additional CPD sessions on aspects of challenge are delivered through the after-school school CPD sessions.

Policy Review and Development

Challenge is a fundamental part of the school ethos and aims, and is therefore included on the school's Development Plan, to ensure there is continual development in this area. The Academic Challenge Co-ordinator meets on a regular basis with a named member of the Governing Body, who is linked with challenge.

Regular monitoring of More Able pupils takes place through department learning walks, observations and book trawls.

The Academic Challenge Co-ordinator tracks and monitors the provision through lesson observations, learning walks, book trawls and pupil interviews. Particular attention will be paid to differentiation, thinking activities and promoting independent learners. Feedback will be provided to classroom teachers and the Leadership Team, with follow up sessions for teachers or departments to discuss activities, resources and teaching ideas to develop provision further.

Action	Committee	Date
Updated and Approved	Headteacher	20 th June 2023
Next Review	Headteacher	2026

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