
Most Able Pupils Policy

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1 Policy Statement

At Birkdale we aim to give all pupils a strong academic and all round education, while developing them as whole individuals prepared for their wider role as responsible citizens willing to serve the community.

The policy for providing for the most able pupils is therefore an integral part of the school's commitment to creating an environment in which all pupils are enabled to realise their potential in academic, sporting and cultural contexts by the provision of a sufficiently challenging curriculum for all, including those who are more able.

2 Aims

This policy is intended to support the following aims:

- The raising of aspiration for all pupils
- High expectations of achievement for all pupils
- Lessons that stimulate, engage, challenge, inform, excite and encourage
- An entitlement beyond subject teaching, including preparation for adult life.

3 Identification

3.1 Prep School

In the Prep School the most able pupils are identified by making a judgement based on an analysis of various sources of information including:

- Assessment scores of typically 130+ Standardised.
- Teacher nomination and professional judgement based on classroom observation and assessment of classwork.
- Subject specific criteria where pupil performance is assessed by subject specialist teacher.
- Science continuous assessment programme in Prep 3 and 4.

3.2 Senior School

We recognise that the most able pupils are a diverse group of pupils and may excel in one or multiple areas of school. This can include academic subjects and also those of a more practical nature including music, drama, sport and art.

The most able pupils are identified by making a judgement based on an analysis of various sources of information including:

- Test scores (MidYis, Yellis, GCSE results and ALIS information, internal tests and annual school examinations).
- Teacher nomination (based on classroom observation, work scrutiny)
- Performance in scholarship assessments upon entry to S1 and also to the 6th form.

- Performance in extracurricular activities including musical groups, sports teams and drama clubs and productions.

As a result of the above an initial identification of the academically most able pupils in each year is formed. 5-10% of each year group will be selected; typically pupils who score over 140 for their overall Midyis or Yellis test result will be identified as academically more able. This list is then added to by classroom teachers who can nominate able pupils in their specific subject area.

4 Provision

Birkdale is committed to providing a range of strategies to stretch and challenge the most able pupils including curriculum structure, teaching and learning and enrichment activities.

4.1 Curriculum Structure/Organisational

In the Prep School:

- Pupils are taught in ability sets for Maths.
- Most subjects are taught by a Subject specialist in the Prep Department.
- Modern Languages, Drama, Music and RE are taught from Reception.
- Games is taught in ability groups.
- Prep 4 English and Maths teachers occasionally extend and challenge using KS3 curriculum and skills.
- Some ability grouping in all classes in Pre-Prep Department
- Termly Progress Meetings used to identify most able pupils.

In the Senior School:

- Pupils are taught in ability sets in Mathematics, Science, and Modern Foreign Languages.
- Class sizes are limited to a maximum of 25 at KS3 and KS4 and 15 at KS5 to enable greater personalisation of teaching and learning for all pupils including the most able. Most classes are significantly smaller than this.
- A wide range of subjects is offered at KS4 and KS5 to provide every opportunity for pupils to develop an area of interest.
- Consistency and awareness of provision for the most able activities across the whole school will be achieved through discussion at Head of Department meetings.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities and trips provide support and challenge for our most able pupils, and the opportunity for them to continue to develop knowledge and skills.

4.2 Teaching and Learning

Birkdale is committed to quality first teaching to ensure all pupils make good progress including the most able.

A wide variety of strategies will be employed in lessons including:

- Questioning – using different types of questions e.g. open/closed, thinking time etc. as well as phrasing questions using Bloom’s taxonomy to encourage more able pupils to use higher level thinking skills.
- Grouping pupils – to utilise both mixed ability opportunities when more able pupils can mentor/teach weaker pupils and ability groups when more able pupils can work together.
- Outcome/expectations.
- Extension tasks.
- Differentiated resources and tasks.
- Task – setting open ended, investigative research tasks that are not fixed or limited.

4.3 Enrichment Opportunities for All

In the Prep School enrichment provision includes:

- Intellectual curiosity Lunchtime Club.
- Mandarin Club.
- Quiz Teams take part in National and Sheffield area Competitions in General Knowledge, Science and Maths.
- Pupils entered in National and Sheffield Art competitions.
- Pupils encouraged and supported to take roles in External Drama productions including London West End Shows.
- Close links with Sheffield Cathedral Choir to provide opportunity for high level singing.
- Pupils provided with many peripatetic music and drama opportunities including entry for many ABRSM Music and LAMDA exams at a high level.
- High performing musicians included in Brass Band, Jazz Band and Orchestra Days.
- Extensive fixture list of competitive sports fixtures and entry into Regional and National Sports tournaments.
- Prep 4 Team entered in Regional Kids Literacy Quiz Competition.
- Most able pupils were encouraged to apply for Academic, Sporting and Music Scholarships.
- Most able pupils in Pre Prep are awarded more challenging roles in Nativity, Shakespeare and End of Year productions e.g. solos, long speeches.

In the Senior School enrichment provision includes:

- Intellectual curiosity prizes are awarded at the Celebration and Prize Giving evening every year to pupils in S1-3.
- Annual London Research Trip competition for pupils in S4-L6.
- KS5 pupils can complete the Extended Project Qualification in addition to their A Level subjects.
- The Da Vinci Society is an intellectual discussion group held after school where KS5 pupils are encouraged to explore current affairs including politics, history, psychology and philosophy. Topics are discussed at undergraduate level. This group also provides interview training for prospective Oxbridge and Medicine pupils

- The Biology Olympiad competition gives A2 pupils the opportunity to compete against pupils from other schools across the country working at a level above A Level.
- Able mathematicians are entered for the UKMT team, junior, intermediate and senior maths challenges. Lower school pupils also compete in the Sheffield Pop Maths Quiz.
- A Level and GCSE Physics pupils can enter the Physics Olympiad.
- Trips to CERN, Warwick University and Jodrell Bank are organised for Physics and Science pupils.
- The Politics Forum meets regularly and provides opportunities for pupils to discuss topical issues in this area.
- Birkdale School hosts the Sheffield Historical Association lecture series each year and encourages the more able to attend.
- The Bebras UK Computational Thinking Challenge is offered to all Computing pupils from S3 to U6.
- Bronze, Silver and Gold reading challenges are offered to lower and middle school pupils in English.
- Most able pupils were encouraged to apply for Academic, Sporting and Music Scholarships.
- Extensive fixture list of competitive sports fixtures and entry into Regional and National Sports tournaments.
- Most able pupils were given more challenging roles in whole school productions.
- High performing musicians perform in a variety of different musical groups in school, local events and competitions.

5 Review and Development

5.1 Procedure

This document, together with the effectiveness of its procedures, is reviewed annually by the Deputy Heads (Academic) and the Policy Committee and as events or legislation change requires.

5.2 Links with other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Teaching and Curriculum Policy
- Trips Policy
- Careers Education, Information and Guidance
- Marking, Assessment and Reporting Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Behaviour, Sanctions and Rewards Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Curriculum Documents and Subject specific planning strategies