



# ACADEMICALLY ABLE PUPILS POLICY

*This policy refers to Wellington Senior School*

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Wellington School has a large number of pupils who are capable of performing above average academically, and it also has a significant number of pupils who are exceptionally academically able<sup>1</sup>. The School is committed to helping all pupils reach their academic potential, whatever their ability, but it is recognised that academically able pupils have distinct needs that require addressing within the classroom, in co-curricular activities, in pastoral work and on a whole-school planning basis.

This policy outlines identification, support and monitoring of provision for these pupils.

## **Definitions**

There are many different definitions in use at the current time. 'Gifted' or 'Able' tend to be used for pupils who excel at one or more academic subjects, whereas 'Talented' tends to refer to pupils who are exceptional at specific skills in the creative arts or sport. The music, drama, art and sport departments have strategies in place to support these talented pupils through their scholarship schemes; this policy concentrates on pupils who have high learning potential in academic subjects. We refer to these pupils as 'academically able'.

## **Identification of academically able pupils**

In general, an able pupil is one who has the potential to achieve significantly above average for a pupil in their year group. This may be in one or two subjects or across the board academically. As every pupil is unique, it is important that we use a range of strategies to identify these pupils. Many will be quantitative such as performance in baseline tests or grades on reports, but it is also important to use qualitative 'clues' to identify pupils who might be able but underachieving.

## **Quantitative descriptors**

- **Performance in Cognitive Abilities Tests such as MidYIS or CAT 4** (sat in Years 7 and 9). Statistically those who score 130+ in MidYIS are in the top 2% nationally and those who score 120+ in MidYIS are in the top 10% nationally. Pupils at Wellington School who achieve 130+ in MidYIS overall will be flagged as academically able. Pupils who score 140+ in any of the MidYIS subtests will also be flagged.
- **Performance in ALIS tests** (sat in Year 12). An overall ALIS stanine score of 8+, or 9 in one or more of the sub-tests.
- **Performance in internal examinations.** Pupils who achieve 85+ UMS average in academic subjects in their end of year exams.
- **Performance in external examinations.** Pupils who achieve 8+ or grade 8/ 9 at GCSE or IGCSE (these pupils will often be in receipt of 6<sup>th</sup> form Academic Exhibitions)

## **Qualitative descriptors**

It is also important that teachers identify pupils who are particularly able in their subjects. This is vital to pick up pupils who have entered the school after Year 7, or overseas pupils whose ability becomes more apparent as their fluency in the English language improves. These pupils should be raised at departmental meetings and the Head of Department should pass details to the relevant Head of Year. Appendix 1 gives a useful list of characteristics that can be helpful in identifying able pupils.

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<sup>1</sup>All Year 7 pupils sit the MidYIS baseline test. Over the past 5 years, on average 57% were categorised as 'above the national average and 21% as 'well above the national average'.

## **Multiple Exceptionalities**

Many able pupils will also have exceptionalities such as EAL or LDD. Discussions with the Heads of Learning Support and EAL will help to gain an overview of a pupil's true ability.

## **Maintaining a list of able pupils**

The Head of Year is responsible for maintaining a list of all pupils in their year group who have been identified as academically able using one or more of the criteria listed above. The list will be reviewed and updated on an annual basis, and names will be disseminated to teaching staff via the 'star' system on iSAMS so that teachers are aware of these pupils at the start of each academic year when they receive their class lists.

## **Provision for Academically Able Pupils**

There are three main strands to the provision for academically able pupils at Wellington School:

- The organisation of the curriculum
- Provision within the classroom
- Provision beyond the classroom

### **(streamline to 3 sections)**

- **The organisation of the curriculum**

The curriculum at Wellington is organised in such a way as to allow all pupils, including the most academically able, the opportunity to pursue their interests and develop to their full potential. In some subjects (e.g. mathematics), pupils are set by ability and the curriculum is accelerated allowing the most able to progress faster than the main cohort. However, in most subjects, pupils are taught in mixed-ability groups.

In Years 7-9 all pupils follow a broad and varied curriculum, including the study of both modern and ancient languages. When selecting their GCSE subject, the most academically able pupils are able to increase the number of subjects they take by studying subjects such as Greek or Art 'off timetable'. In the Sixth Form they are able to study 4 or in exceptional cases 5 subjects at A Level and are encouraged to undertake an EPQ.

- **Provision within the classroom**

Wellington sets high standards for all pupils. It is expected that all academic teaching staff set tasks that are appropriately challenging for each member of a class, differentiating to stretch the most able.

Research suggests that the most able pupils can work:

- At a faster pace – reducing the need for unnecessary repetitious work;
- At a greater depth – capable of synoptic thought with regular higher order thinking;
- More broadly – capable of studying topics outside of the syllabi and making links across curriculum areas;
- Independently - with access to advice and support when needed;

All teachers are encouraged to employ a range of teaching and learning strategies to challenge and stretch the most able pupils, including:

- Differentiation through outcome, pace, resource, independence or task;

- Flexible Groupings with the most able pupils sometimes collaborating and sometimes taking key roles in mixed ability groups;
- Peer Teaching whereby the most able pupils, with adequate scaffolding, help to deliver the curriculum.

**Provision beyond the classroom** - At Wellington School we believe that learning happens both within and beyond the classroom. Academically able pupils should be actively encouraged by their tutors and teachers to engage actively with the many opportunities which are offered. These include:

- *Co-curricular clubs and activities:* Pupils at Wellington benefit from a wide range of academic co-curricular clubs and extension activities. These are often driven by pupil interests and demand, and many academically able pupils find these an excellent way of extending their learning or even teaching others about their specialist subjects.
- *Projects and academic enrichment opportunities:* The school is committed to providing all pupils with opportunities for independent learning, research and projects which go beyond the taught curriculum. This might be in the form of talks given to their peers (e.g. at the Raban Society or in the form of a DUKE talk), or through a more formal framework such as an EPQ or HPQ. Many academically able pupils have a particular subject or topic that they are passionate about.
- *Academic competitions:* Many departments enter pupils for national academic competitions such as Olympiads, the Philosothon and debating competitions. Academically able pupils often enjoy the challenge of going beyond the curriculum and competing against pupils from other schools.
- *Trips and Lectures:* Each year academic departments organise a vast number of trips, lectures, workshops and career advice sessions. Teachers should ensure that able pupils are encouraged to attend these, especially if in an area where they show particular ability. There is also the potential for flexibility here in terms of age range. For example, a geography teacher might encourage a particularly able Year 9 pupil to attend a workshop or lecture aimed at older pupils.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

Every member of the academic staff has a role in supporting academically able pupils, but some key responsibilities are outlined here.

### **Teaching staff**

- Should be aware of able pupils in their classes and ensure that they follow best practice in engaging and teaching these pupils, and work collaboratively with other staff to share ideas for stretch and challenge activities.
- Teachers should highlight any pupils they consider to be academically able who are not currently flagged on iSAMS. They should also be vigilant for signs of underachievement in academically able pupils and report them in the first instance to their head of department.
- Tutors should be aware of academically able students in their tutor groups and support them to make the most of the enrichment opportunities available.

## **Heads of Department.**

- Should keep track of the performance of academically able pupils and raise concerns with the relevant Head of Year if necessary.
- Should keep an up to date list of any pupils who are particularly able in their subject area.
- Should promote provision for able pupils in their departmental handbook and schemes of work.
- Should ensure that teachers in their department plan and deliver lessons which provide appropriate stretch and challenge for the most academically able pupils
- Should ensure that their department contributes to the academic enrichment opportunities provided by the school so that we have a broad range of activities on offer.
- When planning trips, lectures and other activities, thought should be given to any academically able pupils who might benefit from that particular activity.
- Where requested, should provide academic mentors for pupils in their subject specialism.
  
- Should be able to give up-to-date advice about careers or university applications related to their subject specialism.
- **Heads of Year** should maintain and update a list of academically able pupils within their year groups and share this information with the Deputy Head (Academic) Should use tracking data to follow the progress of academically able pupils as they progress through the school and share this information with the Deputy Head (Academic)
- Should identify pupils who may be academically able but underachieving and create an individual action plan for those pupils

## **Deputy Head (Academic)**

- Should work with the Heads of Department to ensure that all teaching staff have the skills, confidence and resources to support the most able pupils and where necessary to provide training opportunities so that they are confident employing strategies to stretch the most able pupils.
- Should work with the Heads of Year and the Heads of Department to monitor the provision for academically able pupils across the school.

## **Monitoring and Review of this policy**

This policy and its effectiveness will be reviewed on a yearly basis by the Deputy Head Academic. Final approval will be with MTS.

## **References**

1 Using MidYIS to identify Gifted and Talented Pupils - CEM

<http://www.cem.org/attachments/midyis-research11.pdf>

2. IGGY (International Gateway for Gifted Youth)

[www.iggy.net](http://www.iggy.net)

## Appendix 1

This list has been modified from a publication produced by the Council for Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment in Northern Ireland.

[http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/guidelines\\_general\\_strategies/sen-gifted\\_general\\_checklist.pdf](http://ccea.org.uk/sites/default/files/docs/curriculum/guidelines_general_strategies/sen-gifted_general_checklist.pdf)

### Able pupils may:

- possess extensive general knowledge, often know more than the teacher
- show good insight into cause-effect relationships easily grasp underlying principles and need the minimum of explanation
- quickly make generalisations and extract the relevant points from complex material
- have mental speeds faster than physical capabilities and so be often reluctant to write at length
- prefer to talk rather than write and often talk at speed with fluency and expression
- be reluctant to practise skills already mastered, finding such practice futile
- have exceptional curiosity and constantly want to know why
- be inventive and original when interested
- ask searching questions, which tend to be unlike other pupils' questions often see the unusual rather than the conventional relationships
- be able to pose problems and solve ingeniously
- display intellectual playfulness, fantasise and imagine and be quick to see connections and to manipulate ideas
- read rapidly and retain what is read and can recall detail
- listen only to part of the explanation and appear to lack concentration or even interest but always know what is going on
- jump stages in learning and be often frustrated by having to fill in the stages missed
- leap from concrete examples to abstract rules and general principles
- have quick absorption and recall of information, seem to need no revision and be impatient with repetition
- be keen and alert observers, note detail and be quick to see similarities and differences
- see greater significance in a story or film and continue the story
- see problems quickly and take the initiative
- have advanced understanding and use of language but sometimes be hesitant as they search for and use the correct word
- become absorbed for long periods when interested and may be impatient with interference or abrupt change
- persist in completing activities when motivated
- often set very high personal standards – are perfectionists
- be more than usually interested in 'adult' problems such as important issues in current affairs (local and world), evolution, justice, the universe etc.
- be concerned to adapt and improve institutions, objects, systems, (e.g. can be particularly critical of school)
- be philosophical about everyday problems and common-sense issues
- be perceptive in discussion about people's motives, needs and frailties
- daydream and seem lost in another world
- show sensitivity and react strongly to things causing distress or injustice
- often take a leadership role
- reflect on their own performance

- have a keen sense of humour in the unusual and be quick to appreciate nuances and hidden meanings
- appreciate verbal puns, cartoons, jokes and often enjoy bizarre humour, satire and irony
- criticise constructively, even if sometimes argumentatively
- be unwilling to accept authoritarian pronouncements without critical examination and want to debate and find reasons to justify the why and the wherefore