



More Able Pupils Policy

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Responsible person: Deputy Head (Academic)
References: Assessment Policy (3a)
Curriculum Policy (2a 2b)

Policy number: 3b

1. Policy Statement

There is no precise, agreed, national definition of more able pupils or a specified percentage of the school population who should or do fall into this category. The DfE and Ofsted define the most able as those who exceed national expectations; for example, the DfE defines these pupils as having a level 5 or above in English and/or mathematics at the end of KS2¹. However, NACE² offers a more expansive definition to both incorporate young people who do not perform according to their abilities in national assessments and to differentiate between “more able” and “exceptionally able”.

This document uses the terms “more able” and, occasionally, “exceptionally able,” in line with NACE’s nomenclature³.

At St John’s School, we use several different methods of identifying our more able pupils who may need additional or different strategies to provide them with sufficient challenge in their learning. This is in the context of an academically selective environment in which we consider all of our pupils to be able; additionally, we believe excellent teaching and learning opportunities which challenge the more able benefit all pupils and so must be available to all⁴. However, we do offer a wide range of specific, differentiated opportunities to encourage and develop the skills, knowledge and interests of the more able.

At St John’s School, we also use the nomenclature “scholars” as our preferred term for the more able pupils in our care.

2. Identifying the more able

To enable staff to ensure that pupils are being sufficiently challenged, we use several methods to identify pupils in each year group who will particularly benefit from specific strategies and opportunities. These are:

- The admissions process which leads to the offer and award of scholarships
- Baseline assessments in years 7, 10 and 12: MidYIS, Yellis and ALIS.
- Teachers’ professional judgement.
- External assessment and/or involvement: e.g. music grades, elite sports teams, drama.

Teacher professional judgement will consider pupils’ performance in assessments and note consistently high levels of performance. However, other characteristics will be noted with an understanding that performance does not always equate to potential and more able pupils may exhibit any number or combination of the following, amongst other behaviours:

¹ The DfE and Ofsted’s most recent publications on the most able predominantly explore concerns over this pupil group’s attainment and progression within non-selective schools: <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/hmcis-monthly-commentary-june-2016>; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-most-able-pupils-still-too-much-talent-going-to-waste>. However, there is also discussion of good practice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-curriculum-for-the-most-able-through-searching-self-evaluation>; and <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/developing-quality-tuition-effective-practice-in-schools-academically-more-able>.

² National Association of Able Children in Education

³ <https://www.nace.co.uk/blogpost/1764163/327555/identifying-more-able-learners-beyond-the-numbers> NACE’s definitions are capacious, allowing for and recommending a broad range of identification strategies, as well as flexibility when applied to the wide variety of schools in the UK.

⁴ In line with Renzulli’s “A rising tide lifts all ships”, summarised here: https://gifted.uconn.edu/schoolwide-enrichment-model/rising_tide/

- frequent questions which demand increasingly complex responses;
- high levels of motivation in some/all areas of learning or, conversely, frustrated and/or disengaged responses;
- sophisticated communication skills;
- the ability to synthesise;
- the ability to conceptualise;
- skilful leadership qualities;
- outstanding talents in creative, intellectual, academic, sporting or performance fields.

Teachers also have an understanding that more able pupils from low-income families, SEND, EAL and ethnic minorities groups are more likely to perform below their potential in formal assessments than other groups. Therefore, multiple sources of information should and are used to identify more able pupils at St John's School.

3. Recording the more able in the Scholars' Register

The pupils who are within the more able group are listed in the Scholars' Register located in ISAMS; this is available to all academic staff for academic tracking and planning. These pupils are noted in columns identifying: (i) the scholars (and their area of high ability); (ii) pupils with an overall MidYIS score of 130+; (iii) more able – other. The third category lists those identified through teachers' professional judgements or additional sources with a brief justification.

Exceptionally able pupils will also appear on the Alternative Curriculum Register (as described in the Curriculum Policy) where alterations have been made to their educational provision to enable relevant events, training, teaching, participation at national level (e.g. sport, music, drama, etc.).

4. Strategies and opportunities

These opportunities will particularly benefit the more able but they are open to all of our pupils:

- Academic scholarship programme overseen by the Head of Enrichment and Academic Scholarship;
- advice and support for option choices, careers, Oxbridge, MDV and competitive degree programmes;
- debating;
- sporting opportunities;
- music and drama performances;
- participation in academic, co-curricular events, e.g. Olympiads, MUN, etc.;
- access to visiting speakers.

Teaching and learning strategies will include, as appropriate:

- extension tasks (which do not assume that completion speed is the main marker of more able pupils);
- differentiated verbal and written feedback focused on challenge;
- a full range of teaching and learning strategies;
- alternative curriculum arrangements for the exceptionally able where appropriate.

5. MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Governing Council is ultimately responsible for the effective oversight, review and amendment of this policy and understands its legal obligation to do so. Governing Council delegates this responsibility to the Education Committee.

This document is reviewed and updated annually by the Deputy Head (Academic) or as events or legislation requires.