

More Able Learners Policy



Review Date	1.9.22
Review Frequency	2 years
Date for Next Review	1.9.24
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1. Aims

Our school aims state that we endeavour to:

- Develop each child's full potential in all areas; whether academic, artistic, physical or social.
- Celebrate children's particular talents and actively encourage achievement.

In the light of these aims we are clearly committed to providing an environment which encourages all children to maximise their potential and this includes 'More Able' or 'Gifted and Talented' children.

2. Definition of 'More Able'

According to the House of Commons Library (2020), 'In England, there is no national definition of "more able" or "gifted" students' and that Ofsted, 'evaluates whether schools "nurture, develop and stretch pupils' talents and interests".' For this reason, it is important that our school has clear definitions that all staff understand.

When looking at different sources, there are many definitions of 'More Able'. The National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE, 2019) states:

'In England and Wales, Ofsted and Estyn define the more able in terms of those whose progress and attainment significantly exceed age-related expectations.

NACE looks beyond this to include those who may be underachieving or whose skills and knowledge may extend beyond national measures of progress and attainment. This approach encompasses those learners already achieving and attaining to the highest grades/levels/outcomes, along with those who may currently be underperforming or who have barriers to their learning.

The term "exceptionally able" is used to refer to those who demonstrate or have the potential to demonstrate extremely high levels of ability, compared to their peers across the entire population. Displaying high ability across multiple domains does not automatically make an individual exceptionally able.'

Though no longer in existence and these definitions no longer being government-held views, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (2008), now Department for Education, defined specifically categorised 'Gifted and Talented' as follows:

- *'Gifted' learners are those who have abilities in one or more subjects in the statutory curriculum other than art and design, music and PE;*
- *'Talented' learners are those who have abilities in art and design, music, PE or performing arts such as dance and drama.*

The term 'Gifted and Talented' is not to be understood as referring to the most able children in the national population. The term should be seen as relative and refers to the top 5% to 10% of any school, regardless of the ability profile of pupils at the school.

More recently, The Department for Education (2013) stated the requirement in the updated National Curriculum that 'teachers set high expectations for every pupil' and 'plan stretching work for pupils whose attainment is significantly above the expected standard'. This is in line with the House of Commons Library statement discussed above.

Definitions of specific terms used:

More able – children who have the potential to or who are working above age-related expectations in academic or practical subject areas within the school (for example, working at 'Greater Depth' level in accordance with the new National Curriculum).

Gifted: The top 5-10% of age related intellectual or academic ability within the school (core subjects).

Talented – The top 5-10% of age related practical or creative power, or other natural ability or tendency within the school (foundation subjects).

'Gifted and Talented' has long been the term used at Whale Hill but, due to the term 'More Able' being the most widely used by various organisations, this is now the preferred term of use at Whale Hill.

Dual or Multiple Exceptionalities (DME) – A child with a disability or other special educational need or additional educational need, that is also gifted, talented, exceptionally able or genius in another area (e.g. An autistic child with an exceptional calculating ability).

It is important to be aware that 'More Able' children can:

- be good 'all-rounders',
- be high achievers in one area,
- be of high ability but with low motivation,
- be very capable of reasoning and verbalising but have poor recording skills,
- be very able with a short attention span,
- be very able with poor social skills,
- be keen to disguise their abilities,
- be underachieving.

3. Identification

We employ a number of methods of identification of the 'More Able' child:

- Teacher nomination

Teachers are best placed to identify 'More Able' children as they have a range of skills which enable them to do this. Judgements will be based on analysis of information from nursery schools, previous teachers, interaction with children, parents and professionals, on-going assessment, careful record keeping, collation of evidence and a range of formal and informal tests (e.g. optional SATs, SATs, reading tests, aptitude tests).

- Tests and assessments

Testing is only one tool used for identification as it tests for particular abilities. However, both summative and diagnostic, general and subject specific, they can be used to support other methods of identification. Success criteria developed for each subject can enable professionals to better identify 'More Able' children, and plan opportunities for these children to be challenged.

- Parental nomination

Whale Hill Primary School is committed to developing and maintaining good communication with parents in order to develop trust and to more thoroughly meet children's educational and social needs. The opinion of parents about their children is highly valued and will be taken into consideration but will also not be the sole method of identification. All parents consider their child to be special and believe that he or she is displaying exceptional ability but the school often recognises that ability to be similar to that displayed by many other children.

Whale Hill Primary School is committed to developing and maintaining good communication with parents in order to develop trust and to more thoroughly meet children's educational and social needs. This communication is key with 'More Able' children as motivation and aspiration are heavily influenced by home life. As Lambeth Children's University (2021) states: 'A child can only aspire to what they know exists'.

- Peer nomination

Children are usually very quick to recognise ability in others and so it is part of our inclusive philosophy to listen to the views of children about children when they are offered.

- Ongoing Monitoring and Observation

Although not a formal method of identification, monitoring of children and everyday observations are useful tools. The more that teachers are monitoring and observing children in a variety of subjects and activities, the more likely it is that 'More Able' children will be identified early and, therefore, provision can be arranged to suitably challenge and extend.

- Provision

By building challenge into our provision across the whole school (not just curriculum areas) 'More Able' children are likely to be identified. This is a concept highlighted in the National Curriculum, in particular 'Mastery' and 'Greater Depth' in Maths, English and Science as well as the foundation subjects.

4. Strategies and Provision

Findings by Ofsted on provision on the More Able in schools published By Potential Plus UK (2020) show that provision in a high percentage of schools needed improvement and that the most common changes needed were in the level of challenge for the most able pupils and in the progress made by these pupils'.

With this in mind, our school aims to provide opportunities and challenges that will meet the needs of More Able children.

Whole School Level

Opportunities for extension and enrichment are built into all aspect of our school provision.

We aim to:

- create an ethos where it is 'Alright to be bright'.
- encourage all children to become independent learners.
- be aware of the effects of ethnicity, bilingualism, gender and social circumstances on learning and high achievement,
- hold high expectations,
- use a variety of whole school strategies including:
 - planning for and allowing children to work alongside different year groups (for example, the Read Write Inc. spelling scheme and Mental Maths marking sessions).
 - giving children opportunities to be part of various working parties such as the school council.
 - recognising achievement (teacher praise and awards).
 - participation in projects, events and programmes planned both within and from outside of school.
 - recognition and challenge of 'More Able' children within intervention provision.
 - regularly updating and consulting a 'More Able' register for the core subjects of Maths, English and Science and also in the Foundation subjects.
 - Using success criteria for all subjects to identify 'More Able' children and plan opportunities in these subjects for these children to be challenged.

Classroom Level

We understand and acknowledge the importance of establishing what prior knowledge, understanding and skills children have so as to avoid unnecessary repetition of work which could demotivate 'More Able' children.

We try to raise the profile of achievement whilst at the same time recognising that peer pressure can often make children feel the need to conform to the culture of under-achievement (House of Commons Education Committee, 2014).

We are alert to the 'More Able' children, who may be underachieving, and try to look for ways to motivate and encourage this group.

Finally, we endeavour not to slip into assumptions that 'More Able' children are easier to teach than other children.

The following strategies are employed where appropriate:

- varied and flexible groupings, sometimes allowing able children to work together, sometimes allowing them to take specific roles in mixed-ability groups.
- differentiation by task (including differentiated homework)
- differentiation by outcome
- setting individual targets
- use of higher order questioning and thinking skills such as reasoning and problem solving.
- provision of challenging activities across the whole curriculum.
- encouraging **all** children to become independent learners by:
 - organising their own work,
 - carrying out unaided tasks which stretch their capabilities,
 - making choices about their work,
 - developing the ability to evaluate their own work and become self-critical.

5. Extra-Curricular Activities

These are highly valued for the Gifted and Talented children and include:

- Club activities – music, sports, dance and languages among others.
- Day and residential visits.
- The use of specialists e.g. teachers from other schools (through the Aspire Learning Partnership), visiting artists and authors, instrument teachers.
- Opportunities for involvement in school productions, including through Music, Drama, Computing and Art.
- A broad, creative curriculum, with opportunities for children to thrive.

Opportunities and Changes for 2022/2023

- Whale Hill Primary School is a member of the NACE and seeks to take advantage of training events and opportunities for children.
- Year 6 'More Able' children will be taking part in Brilliant Club which helps them to work alongside other professionals from places such as Durham University.
- The school have previously taken part in the Childnet Digital Leader Programme. Due to the cost that this incurs, new Digital Leaders will continue be trained in-school covering the same topics as were included in the Childnet programme (without, of course, the Childnet-affiliated prefix). This involves a group of Year 5/6 children who are 'More Able' in Computing and Online Safety. These children will then have opportunities to work along other children in school in order to support them with key aspects of Online Safety and Computing.
- A range of clubs and interventions will be implemented by year group teams and monitored throughout the year.
- In past years, there have been a number of events and activities run and scheduled by Inspire2Learn. As of this academic year, there have been changes which mean most of the provision is no longer available to schools. We aim to find other ways in which to provide opportunities for our 'More Able' children both inside and outside of school.
- In past years, Whale Hill was part of the Aspire Learning Partnership. It was the intention that good practice and teaching strategies be shared with other schools within Redcar and Cleveland. From September 2019, the school has undergone academy conversion and it is intended that good practice will increasingly be shared within the trust.
- The Gifted and Talented register will include children that are recognised as 'More Able' and has also, more recently, started to include children that are to be monitored as high achievers and who are potentially 'More Able'. It is hoped that this will encourage teachers to identify able children early and implement challenges without the worry of committing to classifying children as 'More Able' too early, especially when working with younger children in Lower and Middle School.

Role of the Gifted and Talented Leader

- Monitor agreed policy.
- Develop expertise, through training and research, and share this in school.
- Purchase appropriate resources.
- Work alongside subject leaders to monitor assessment and provision.
- Seek out opportunities for Gifted and Talented Children.
- Monitor provision across school.

References:

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