



EAS

Education Achievement Service
for South East Wales
Gwasanaeth Cyflawni Addysg
i Dde Ddwyrain Cymru

Regional Strategy and Guidance for More Able Learners



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1. Vision

The EAS is committed to providing support and challenge to schools and settings, to improve provision and standards for more able learners across the region. The strategy and guidance documents note that schools and settings should set high expectations for more able learners, so that they achieve outcomes commensurate with or exceeding national benchmarks of performance. The strategy encourages schools and settings to have an appropriate focus on establishing a culture in which more able learners are inspired and motivated to be ambitious and in which learners are nurtured and encouraged.

This strategy defines more able learners as:

‘Children and young people with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their peers, or with the potential to develop those abilities and to achieve at the highest levels through challenging learning opportunities and an enriched curriculum’

The definition therefore 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.

2. Purpose of the EAS strategy

The strategy has been established to support all schools and settings across the region in the development of their own policy to support this group of learners, including those who may have barriers to their learning. The strategy comprises nine features which together form the basis of effective leadership, leading to excellent progress and outcomes for more able learners. These are:



The strategy can be used as a framework for schools and settings to review and develop their own policies and practice in support of more able learners. It can also inform cluster-working arrangements, stimulate the sharing of information about this group of learners and assist with collaborative working between schools and phases.

3. Context and rationale

Meeting the needs of more able learners has been part of the national education policy agenda for many years in Wales, notably through the publication of *A curriculum of opportunity: developing potential into performance* (ACCAC, 2003), *Meeting the Challenge Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Learners* (WG/NACE, 2008), the establishment of SEREN networks and through the more able learner focus in the Estyn Inspection Framework. More recently, support for more able learners has been the subject of national reviews such as *More Able and Talented provision across Wales* (WG, 2016) and Estyn thematic reviews. A number of schools in Wales use the Quality Standards to review and improve their provision and outcomes for more able learners, and have achieved the NACE Challenge Award.

This strategy is the result of development work with schools across the region and through the EAS More Able Strategy Group, which consists of headteachers and senior leaders from a cross-section of phases and sectors. The strategy group initially worked with the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) to develop the outline of the document.

The principle underpinning this strategy is that in-depth knowledge of learners, outstanding teaching, a well-designed and enriched curriculum, high expectations and aspirations are the cornerstone of excellent provision for more able learners. The EAS Excellence in Teaching and Leadership Framework (ETLF) is a tool to support schools in the implementation of the strategy. This framework is underpinned by the National Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership.

4. Leadership

Prevalent features of schools and settings making good provision for more able learners:

- A culture of high expectations for all learners
- Recognition of more able learners as a discrete group with specific learning needs
- Leadership which ensures that curriculum pedagogy and support takes account of the learning and social needs of this group of learners
- Senior leaders know the historic and current data pertaining to more able learners' performance and the status of provision for them in their school. They ensure that aspirational targets are set at cohort and individual level against national benchmarks and the performance of similar schools
- Leaders are accountable for the performance of all learners, including more able, and allocate resources to support improvement
- More able is included as a visible strand in schools and settings' development plans and plans and school policies

- The education and support of more able learners is a senior leadership responsibility, even where there is a designated more-able coordinator (MACo) and designated staff and governors to champion the needs of disadvantaged most able learners
- The MACo should have a clear and realistic job description and be supported by and have access to senior leaders when carrying out their role

Understanding and being aware of the national picture relative to support more able learners will help to shape approaches and policies in school. Most recent and relevant national policies include:

Welsh Government Education in Wales: Our national mission 2017–21 (see p. 18 action plan)

<http://gov.wales/topics/educationandskills/allsectorpolicies/education-in-wales/?lang=en>

Welsh Government document: Quality Standards in Education for More Able and Talented Learners (2008). Includes self – evaluation toolkit.

<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/131016-meeting-the-challenge-en.pdf>

Estyn document: Supporting more able and talented learners in secondary schools June 2012

<https://www.estyn.gov.wales/sites/default/files/documents/Supporting%20more%20able%20and%20talented%20pupils%20in%20secondary%20schools%20-%20June%202012.pdf>

NACE Challenge Award

<http://www.nace.co.uk/challenge-award>

5. Who are the more able learners?

As stated earlier, for the purposes of the more able strategy, the EAS has identified the following definition of more able learners:

‘Children and young people with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their peers, or with the potential to develop those abilities and to achieve at the highest levels through challenging learning opportunities and an enriched curriculum’

The definition therefore encompasses those learners already achieving and attaining high grades / levels / outcomes along with those who may currently be underachieving or underperforming because of barriers to learning. The definition will also be contextualised to each school.

These learners often, but not always, have advanced language skills and early symbolic ability.

The characteristics and learning needs of more able learners will, of course, differ at different developmental stages and at different phases of schooling, and so there may also be some for whom potential has not yet been realised due to barriers to learning.

It is also useful to identify more able learners as:

- Those with prior high attainment
- Those identified by the school as more able in one or more subjects
- Those who may have been in the high attaining group at some point in their education and may be underperforming currently
- The highest attainers in each teaching group
- Exceptionally able learners

In addition, more able learners may demonstrate consistent attributes such as:

- Persistence and self-belief
- Effort and practice
- Dealing with setbacks
- Support and opportunities to develop to the best of their ability.

The purpose of sharing a definition of more able is that it should inform action planning, teaching and support, and be a point of reference for teachers to understand the needs of specific groups of children. It is both a starting and an end point when good teaching and assessment practices reveal what learners can do when they perform at their best.

6. Identifying more able learners

Identifying those children who may be more able is part of knowing all learners well in a school and setting, and understanding their strengths and the areas they need to develop. As such, the number of more able learners in a class or school and setting will vary and it will be an ongoing and iterative process. Above all, schools and settings need to identify their more able learners using an appropriate range of information alongside discussion with colleagues, parents and cluster schools. To do this, all schools will need to have a robust method of identifying its more able cohort and for this method to be agreed with all staff.

Leaders should use systematic practice to successfully identify more able learners, which:

- Responds to the school's social and economic composition, including gender, ethnicity, special educational needs and/or disabilities and disadvantage
- Encompasses those who may be underachieving as well as high achievers
- Includes the identification of exceptionally able learners – those who have the capacity to achieve or perform at the very highest levels
- Is based on a range of well-grounded criteria across all subjects and courses
- Utilises effectively information on attainment and other assessment and performance

In addition, as schools already hold significant data about individual learners, they should:

- Analyse existing data relating to those learners capable of high achievement in one or more domains, including data on prior attainment and achievement
- Work with cluster schools to review data relevant to transition

In transitions from Foundation Phase to key stage 2, key stage 2 to key stage 3, key stage 3 to key stage 4 and key stage 4 into key stage 5 / post-sixteen study, schools/settings should ensure that they have the most recent assessment outcomes for learners including historic information.

Following identification of more able learners, school leaders should refine performance targets to ensure that expectations are achieved.

7. Tracking and target setting

Self-evaluation and school improvement begins with an accurate analysis of historic and current data. To improve outcomes for more able learners, it is important to evaluate their performance and achievement in relation to similar schools at whole-school and cohort level as well as national benchmarks and progress measures where they exist.

Leaders should consider the data for all more able learners, including:

- Those eligible for free school meals
- By gender
- Those who also have special needs
- Those from different ethnic groups
- Those who have English as an additional language
- Exceptionally able learners who are performing significantly ahead of their year group in one or more subjects.

They should use the same measures as those used to make comparisons between schools:

- Analyse the school's most recent set of data at the higher outcomes measures: FP outcomes 6 and above, key stage levels 5+, key stage 3 levels 6 and 7+, GCSE grades A*A and A Level A*A (or equivalent)
- Examine trends in performance over time
- Evaluate provision and outcomes for more able learners, identifying strengths and areas for development as part of whole-school self-evaluation processes in order to identify accurate priorities for school development planning

Schools and settings should set aspirational learner targets. The EAS has detailed guidance on effective target setting processes and regional arrangements.

Sound monitoring and target setting systems underpin good pedagogy and learners' progress. They ensure that learners are making the progress of which they are capable and lead them to high achievement through appropriate curricula and teaching.

Schools should therefore review their existing systems to make sure that they are fit for purpose, sharing information with staff about individual more able learners' progress and to inform and shape teaching and interventions.

The following questions, regarding more able learners' progress, should be considered:

- Are historic attainment outcomes in line with or better than average for similar schools and settings?
- What actions will lead to higher attainment and what quality assurance milestones can be put in place?
- Do more able learners make the same or better progress than other learners, and is this true regardless of learner groups?
- Have targets been put in place for all year groups and for all subjects?
- Are there any subjects or year groups where progress and attainment measures lie below whole school targets, and what specific action is in place to monitor and measure improvement?
- Have the targets been communicated effectively to middle leaders, and have they acted to make changes which will lead to further improvements?

Tracking progress and raising attainment

Schools and settings should:

- Set up a system where the planning includes explicit learning objectives and success criteria
- Introduce planned and regular assessment opportunities to establish what has been learned
- Establish procedures for standardisation and moderation of standards both within school and between schools
- Refine assessment information for more able learners to distinguish between those who have achieved an expected minimum standard and those who have a greater understanding allowing them to manipulate, use and apply ideas effectively
- Introduce calendared quality assurance practices to make sure that expectations are high enough and teaching does not limit learning
- Share success criteria with learners
- Use data to monitor learners' progress and attainment at regular intervals
- Take action when attainment is not high enough for year groups, subjects or classes
- Provide additional opportunities outside classrooms to extend learning within and beyond the curriculum
- Make sure that the progress and attainment of individuals is tracked at a granular level
- Share information about attainment progress with learners
- Provide regular reports on attainment and progress for parents

8. Continuity and progression

More able learners need to experience continuity and progression in their learning at key transition points within and between key phases. Agreed strategies to support continuity and progression should be put into practice to help ensure progression in learning based on prior attainment.

Leaders should undertake early identification of more able learners' prior performance to plan effectively the transition process, accurately target set and establish learner tracking. Care should be taken not to underestimate the ability of learners at any key stage and the progress they are capable of making. This should include early introduction of learners to new or extended curriculum through cluster activities and transition arrangements with teaching staff and other learners.

Strategies should take into account plans to provide a progressive education experience which leads to GCSE A*A outcomes into the future and move on to A*A or equivalent outcomes in post-sixteen qualifications. If a learner was, at some point, in a high attaining group but has left that group, then schools need to examine strategies to remove barriers to help the learner to progress more rapidly so that a return to high performance is made possible.

On transition, knowledge of learners' prior attainment facilitates choice of teaching groups, curriculum offer, starting point and future targeted outcomes. It is important to offer a suite of courses which will lead to appropriate qualifications achieved at higher grades. This means that prior achievement and future potential is recognised.

In advance of learner transition, schools and settings should work together to:

- Share attainment information on all learners
- Identify high-attaining learners
- Identify additional learners who may have potential to attain better than the most recent outcomes suggest
- Establish a more able profile for the year group and curriculum plan
- Set targets for individual learners which will maximise progress within year and across key stage
- Set attainment targets which lead to the highest outcomes in all subjects and not just the learners' strongest subjects, wherever possible
- Communicate the expectations to middle leaders and class teachers
- Communicate the expectations to individual learners and their parents
- Establish Pupil Centred Planning (PCP) processes

9. Standards and achievement

To support more able learners to progress and achieve high levels of attainment, schools and settings should be clear about the standards and expectations within their provision offer and what constitutes exceptional or accelerated learning and achievement. Understanding outcomes and levels, use of award body guidance and formal assessment levels of achievement are key to identifying learner progress. This will, in turn, enable

extended learning and resources to be developed and delivered to meet those expectations.

Established procedures for standardisation and moderation is a key feature of validating achievement both within school and between schools in order to confirm the benchmarks and outcome levels. In addition, the tracking and accurate recording of achievement at modular and whole-qualification level must be aligned to these levels of achievement.

At classroom level, teachers and support staff should know what learners can already do and the standards they have achieved in the past, as well as their future potential. It is also important to be cognisant of when a learner excels in one area the aim should be to achieve similar standards in all other areas of the curriculum. Collaboration between teachers and subject areas is an important feature of this recognition, and planning should take place to close the gap in ability and achievement at a high level across subjects. This may be aided by providing more able learners with clear, quantitative targets for discrete elements of their learning in addition to overall achievement.

The Excellence in Teaching and Leadership Framework (ETLF) can help teachers and leaders frame this intention in the sections dedicated to Pedagogy, Advancing Learning, Progress and Standards, and Pedagogy, Influencing Learners, Subject Knowledge, Challenge, Expectations and Differentiation. The ETLF provides detailed frameworks mapped to the new professional standards, so that teachers and leaders can develop practice that meets the needs of all learners including the most able.

The current professional standards for teaching and leadership will be at the fore of any support for learners.

<http://learning.gov.wales/docs/learningwales/publications/170901-professional-standards-for-teaching-and-leadership-en.pdf>

In addition, schools and settings should have clear policies around standards and support for more able learners, to include aspects of teaching as follows:

Teachers should:

- Provide learners with an overview of the learning objectives and success criteria for a programme of study which will reflect high performance
- Provide opportunities to extend learning within each lesson.
- Provide learners with information on core tasks and more challenging tasks related to areas of learning, so that they can make choices reflecting their own progress and current attainment.
- Develop skills to self assess, peer assess, edit and improve work using the success criteria.
- Plan formal assessments which test both core and higher-order skills.
- Follow formal assessment to provide learners with opportunities to identify errors and improve work.
- Encourage peer assessment and collaboration to improve written work and extend ideas.
- Develop learners' ability to use feedback from assessments to understand personal performance and take opportunities to improve through responses to this.
- Formally recognise learning which requires additional effort from more able learners.

- Provide learners with clear, quantitative targets for discrete elements of their learning in addition to overall achievement.

10. Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

The foundation of any strategy is effective teaching and learning based on an approach to pedagogy and curriculum development that will benefit many learners, and which can be tailored to the specific needs of more able learners. The school curriculum and teaching approaches should maximise the learning and performance of more able learners, responding to their learning characteristics and developing their knowledge and skills to the highest level. Key features of good provision will include:

A curriculum designed to allow more able learners challenging and enriching learning opportunities
Teaching with planned opportunities for depth, breadth and pace in learning to explore
Learning which involves self-direction and independence
Assessment practices which pinpoint reliably learners' achievement and progress and inform teaching and support strategies.

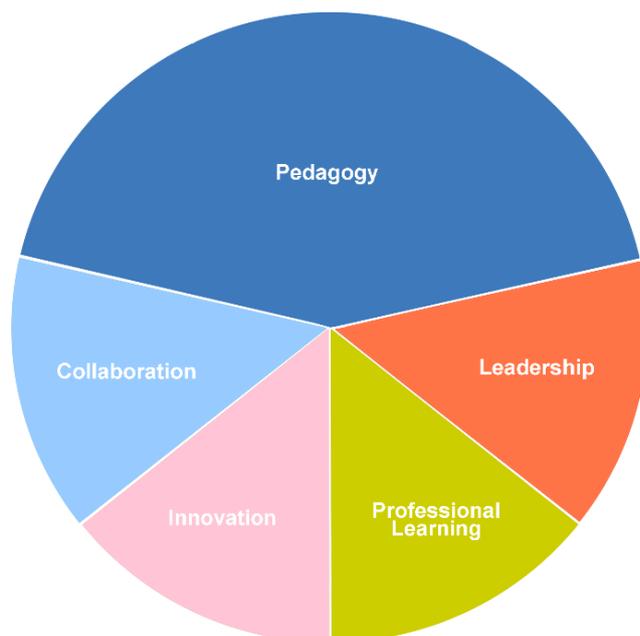
Overall, practice should be strongly aligned to the current Teaching and Leadership Standards

Professional Standards for Teaching and Leadership:

<http://learning.gov.wales/resources/collections/professional-standards?lang=en>

The Excellence in Teaching and Leadership (ETLF) Frameworks – to be rolled out across EAS region summer 17/18 onwards:

Five new standards of the ETLF



Ref: EAS handbook 1 - The Excellence in Teaching and Leadership (ETLF) Frameworks

Overall, schemes of work and lesson planning for more able learners should consider:

- Pace of learning commensurate with rapidity of learning in some areas (with implications for classroom management and learning focus in class)
- Conceptual learning to feature highly, with tasks which prioritise problem solving, enquiry, high-level analysis, application and synthesising of learning and bigger picture thinking
- Advanced material and resources, for example sources taken from contemporary developments and research
- Cross-curricular links (“interconnectedness”) and real-life exemplification
- Development of independent learning and research
- Development of metacognition
- Flexibility to allow for the pursuit of individual interests

Strategies for teaching more able learners should include:

- High-challenge independent research tasks
- Higher-order questioning, dialogue and technical/disciplinary language
- Giving learners information about additional study materials and guidance on how to use them
- Providing more challenging homework and independent learning assignments
- Giving differentiated learning objectives and success criteria
- Setting creative open-ended tasks
- Incorporating AS level units into GCSE
- Using feedback and marking to allow for progress in accordance with ability

Classroom teachers are responsible for the planning and delivery of a curriculum which reflects the current knowledge skills and understanding of the individual learners. Teachers should use formative assessment to identify gaps in learning and progression, and provide high-quality feedback to learners to ensure that they know what they need to focus on to improve and should:

- Use detailed data on prior learning to plan lessons which include appropriate starting points, step-off points and extended learning for more able learners.
- Provide a range of tasks which allow learners to acquire knowledge and develop skills and understanding, and then apply these to complex or novel situations.
- Identify when learners do not naturally work at greater depth, and make increasing demands on them to challenge themselves.
- Utilise effective questioning skills to enable learners to attain at a higher standard and to diminish gaps or misconceptions.
- Using clear objectives and success criteria checks on learners’ acquisition within the lesson, and adapt teaching in response to this.
- Record evidence of teaching, acquisition of knowledge, secure understanding and extension of learning to have an accurate understanding of individual learning needs and achievements.
- Use objective-driven and accurate marking practices to refine teaching for subsequent lessons to fill gaps or extend learning.
- Provide clear spoken and written feedback that is directly related to criteria.
- Provide guidance on next steps and areas for improvement.

- Provide opportunities to improve and develop learning.
- Use summative assessment as a diagnostic tool, and share this information with learners.

Expectations through individual targets for learners need to be known by leaders and teachers so that the quality of teaching and learning can be monitored against these expectations. This enables teachers to increase the levels of challenge to learners, and, where difficulties arise, put in place early intervention.

Schools should have a clear, detailed policy and approach to supporting more able learners set out in a separate policy document or included in the school's Teaching, Learning and Assessment policy. It should also detail the professional learning support for school staff specific to supporting more able learners through the provision of training for teachers of all key stages so that their teaching routinely challenges the most able learners.

11. Support and intervention

Schools and settings should ensure that specific and targeted support is in place for more able learners with, for example, barriers to achievement, socio-economic disadvantages, exceptional abilities and those with additional social and/or emotional needs. Such support could include:

- Learning interventions to support aspiration raising, enrichment and specific skills development (e.g. through PDG)
- Coaching or mentoring to support learning or aspirations
- Peer group opportunities inside or outside school
- One-to-one tutoring or counselling – constant encouraged and 'can do' attitude reinforcement
- External expertise to support enrichment and exceptional needs
- Additional information, advice and guidance resources

In situations where more able learners are underachieving and/or disadvantaged, they should have specific targets supported by interventions which include:

- Learner and parent involvement in setting time-specific targets and work plans
- Details of steps to be taken and skills to be learned to help learners achieve targets
- Criteria evidence of process/actions
- Evidence of impact
- Regular opportunities to review progress with the learner, amend targets, identify the support needed and refine work plans
- Regular reviews of intervention programmes to identify impact
- Learner Centred Planning (PCP)

Some exceptionally able learners may need support to help them cope with abilities which can set them apart from their peers or at odds with their social and emotional development. Provision at classroom and school level should be reviewed for its relevance, and external partnerships can often be a good resource for exceptionally able learners.

12. Partnerships and collaboration

As with other groups of learners, schools should work closely with and be aware of the importance of partnerships, opportunities provided by collaboration with other schools and organisations, and communication with parents/carers.

On a regular basis, schools should engage learners with universities, other providers and employers. In addition, partners who can train and develop school staff to provide expert advice and guidance to the most able students, especially those who may have barriers to accessing higher education, apprenticeships and other work opportunities.

Strong learner participation through aspects of learner voice can support school improvement by helping the school to identify future priorities around the strategy for more able and make more informed decisions on wellbeing, learning experiences and the quality of teaching. Through their involvement, learners can develop valuable personal and social skills such as listening skills and working with others.

Creating opportunities for more able learners to come together as a peer group or with different age learners to share particular passions and discussions will increase self-confidence and individual self-assurance. This will develop social and emotional skills as well as reinforce the normality of being a more able learner.

Communication with parents/carers, and listening to them, is an important aspect of supporting learners' progress and can be of particular importance for more able learners, including those who are disadvantaged or have barriers to learning. Engaging and guiding parents in supporting their children's learning will also contribute to the ongoing progress and raising of aspirations of more able learners. For example, parent engagement with university partners is particularly important when more able learners aspiring to higher education are the first person in a family who have taken this pathway. This action will reassure and familiarise families with this opportunity.

Partnerships examples

Cardiff University

Find out about the range of curriculum linked school engagement activities offered by Cardiff University. Search by Academic School, curriculum subject, key stage, type of activity and programme.

<http://sites.cardiff.ac.uk/curriculumsupport/>

Oxford University

Widening Access and Participation coordinate and deliver areas of the undergraduate admissions office's outreach work with young people across the UK through schools and across phases. The team works with university departments delivering a variety of projects with differing scope and scale relating to access and admissions at the University of Oxford and the wider higher education context.

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/about/increasing-access/widening-access-and-participation#>

STEM Cymru / Engineering Education Scheme Wales Ltd (EESW)

STEM Cymru has a team of ambassadors who engage with young people and teachers in schools both primary and secondary phases. EESW provides learners with the opportunity to gain practical experience working with industries, businesses and higher education. Activities include designing, making and racing a model F1 car, working with companies on real engineering problems, experiencing life as an engineering undergraduate at university, and investigating, designing and modelling an innovative solution to an environmental problem.

<http://www.stemcymru.org.uk/about/>

Royal Society of Chemistry has a lot of freely available resources on their Learn Chemistry website that are aimed at more able students.

Many of the resources from their “Chemistry for the gifted and talented” book for secondary school learners are freely available to download here:

<http://www.rsc.org/learn-chemistry/resource/listing?searchtext=gifted>

Further Mathematics Support Programme in Wales (FMSP)

FMSP provides further mathematics GCE AS/A2 level tuition for all English and Welsh awarding bodies to students who cannot access further mathematics through their local 11–18 schools or colleges in Wales. FMSP also offers training for teachers to deliver provision.

<http://furthermaths.org.uk/wales>

The Brilliant Club

The Brilliant Club exists to widen access to highly selective universities for learners from non-selective state schools. It aims to increase access by recruiting, training and placing doctoral and post-doctoral researchers in schools and sixth form colleges to deliver programmes of university-style tutorials to small groups of learners.

<http://www.thebrilliantclub.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Information-for-Schools-April-2015.pdf>