

## **ACADEMIC STRETCH AND CHALLENGE POLICY**

### **Aims**

At Malvern College we are committed to providing an environment which encourages all pupils to maximise their academic potential. The Policy of Academic Stretch and Challenge is an integral part of the school's commitment to providing an environment and framework of equal opportunity within which all pupils are entitled to have their needs recognised and addressed and are therefore, able to realise their potential.

By framing a policy of Academic Stretch and Challenge, Malvern College aims to deliver effectively not only for the benefit of the more able pupils but also for pupils of all abilities. It is not the aim to create an exclusive or elitist programme but rather one which raises standards for all and enthuses both pupils and staff alike.

### **Malvern College's definition of those requiring Academic Stretch And Challenge:**

There is an expectation that all pupils have the ability to achieve at a high level and therefore **all** pupils require stretching and challenging.

Teaching, learning and the wider curriculum should provide all pupils with the cognitive skills, qualities and attitudes needed for success and so the provision of academic stretch and challenge should be for all pupils. Teachers should regularly communicate their high expectations of all pupils and their belief that they have the potential to achieve at a high level. The provision of academic stretch and challenge at all levels is a fundamental part of this approach to education.

### **Classroom**

#### **Teachers have high expectations of all pupils**

Departments and subject teachers will generate their own subject specific ideas, but these may include some of the following guiding principles:

- setting challenging goals
- encouraging independent learning, especially through the use of group learning
- deepening learning opportunities - enrichment
- using a variety of learning techniques and approaches
- extending learning opportunities
- supporting risk-taking
- using resources effectively
- asking effective questions
- understanding the various needs of the learner
- affirming creativity
- encouraging perseverance
- identifying potential
- addressing underachievement
- encouraging pupils to mentor others (as explaining ideas to others helps the mentor's retention and understanding)

**Parallel to the classroom the following opportunities exist, and pupils should be encouraged to access these:**

- CCA programme
- Super-curriculum societies (leading and attending)
- work experience
- links with universities
- national competitions/festivals
- university masterclasses
- residential experiences
- subject mentoring opportunities
- leadership opportunities

### **Stretch and Challenge for those specifically identified as ‘able and talented’**

In order for very able pupils to receive a coherent approach, the school appoints a Head of Academic Scholarship (HAS) to oversee and co-ordinate the provision of academic stretch and challenge for this particular cohort. Each department is asked to nominate pupils, to consider their provision for this cohort and to monitor and develop that provision in line with curriculum developments and other school policies. It is necessary for all staff to provide a consistent approach in line with this policy.

### **Definition of ‘Able and talented’**

The Department for Education recognises a group constituted of “children and young people with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the potential to develop those abilities).”

The DfE recognises that

- there is no single perfect instrument for identification; institutions are advised to use a ‘best fit’ model that draws on a range of evidence including qualitative and quantitative elements;
- identification and provision are inseparable, because identification includes spotting potential through participation in learning opportunities;
- a continuous cyclical process of identification and review is recommended, rather than a one-off process;
- our collective understanding of what constitutes ability is still evolving.

### **Identifying ‘able and talented’ pupils in need of specific academic stretch**

The strength of a boarding school is that we have a holistic view of the pupils. The policy recognises that the need for academic stretch may become apparent in a variety of whole-school contexts and not simply in the academic classroom. It is also important to remember that pupils develop at different rates, and so it is vital to regularly reconsider which pupils might be ‘able and talented’ as these are likely to change over time.

Very able pupils are identified by making a judgment based on an analysis of various sources of information including:

1. MiDYIS, Yellis or ALIS data
2. Entrance and Scholarship Examinations, internal and public examinations
3. Head of Department nomination (based on classroom observation, discussions with pupils, work scrutiny)
4. Nomination by staff with pastoral roles such as Housemasters/mistresses and Tutors
5. Peer or self-nomination
6. External and internal examination results and predicted results

HoDs should spend departmental time identifying those in need of academic stretch in their specific subject. The HAS provides guidance on this.

Subject teachers should be aware of the indicators of under-achieving pupils when identifying the ‘more able’.

A register of pupils recognised to be of significantly high ability or with the potential to achieve significantly highly is maintained by the Head of Academic Scholarship and is made available to all staff on the staff Sharepoint pages. Each department should also keep a record of the pupils that are highly able within their subject disciplines.

### **The Curriculum**

- Subject teachers are made aware of those pupils on the Able and Talented register and will be required to differentiate for them in their teaching
- HoDs advise colleagues within their department on subject specific strategies to challenge pupils in need of academic stretch
- The Director of Teaching and Learning and Head of Academic Scholarship advise colleagues of general strategies in the teaching of this cohort
- Each department will have its own policy statement in its Departmental Handbook.
- The College will seek to discover and use a range of strategies to improve the teaching and learning of the specifically able and talented
- Opportunities for extension and enrichment are built into our planning and both are needed if pupils' abilities are to be monitored effectively

### **Enrichment opportunities**

Enrichment relates to breadth of study experience. It involves offering learners a wide variety of opportunities, both within and outside the curriculum, and exposing them to experiences not usually encountered as part of the standard curriculum.

Malvern College maintains two academic societies, The Aston Society in the Lower School and the Wheeler-Bennett Society in the Sixth Form.

A programme of Masterclasses is also scheduled each year, with teachers from a range of departments presenting to an audience of all pupils who elect to attend.

### **The Aston Society**

The Aston Society is overseen by the DTL with the day-to-day running of the society being the current responsibility of the IB Co-Ordinator. The Aston Society is open to all pupils in the Lower School, though membership is limited to those pupils who are actively engaged in the Society. The society provides an opportunity for pupils to explore their own academic interests which they are encouraged to share with the wider school community by giving presentations at regular meetings held in the evenings.

Aston Society members (as well as other potentially interested pupils on the Register) are also encouraged to attend other co-curricular and super-curricular activities including lectures and events principally aimed at the Sixth Form

### **The Wheeler Bennett Society**

The Wheeler-Bennett Society is co-ordinated by the teacher i/c but is run by an elected pupil committee. Potential members are asked to apply at the end of the Lent term of the Lower Sixth. Members present academic papers to their peers ~~ether~~ on a regular basis. Meetings are chaired by Upper Sixth pupils and include a question and answer time.

### **Extension**

Extension (also referred to as enrichment through depth), involves pupils following the standard curriculum but developing a deeper understanding through encountering more complex resources and materials, tackling more challenging questions and tasks, demonstrating higher levels of thinking, and presenting increasingly sophisticated responses.

Many opportunities for extension exist through pupil leadership of and contribution to a Super-curriculum which is pupil-led and focused on providing extension for all abilities.

### **Pastoral Care**

It is important to recognize that the more able and talented pupils have pastoral needs that may be complex. It is vital, therefore, that the pastoral care system is able to provide strategies to support these pupils.

It is essential that the Stretch and Challenge programme embraces the support the pastoral system is able to offer. The College must be aware that the identification of a pupil as either gifted or talented may lead to peer or self-imposed? problems, and therefore must be open to strategies to support pupils within the Stretch and Challenge cohort.

### **The Role of The Head of Academic Scholarship**

This is set out in section 5 of the Staff Handbook.

### **The Role of Heads of Department**

The role of the HoD, in the context of subject specific able and talented pupils, is:

- to communicate high expectations for all pupils being taught within their subject area
- to develop departmental policy, within the framework of the Whole School Policy, for inclusion in departmental handbooks and Schemes of Work.
- to establish a system and criteria for identifying more able pupils and ensure that they are adhered to by all members of the department.
- to liaise with the HAS over the list of more able pupils in order to keep the HAS informed of any changes.
- to set aside regular departmental time to discuss new ideas, share materials, develop teaching strategies and extension activities for the very able cohort and therefore improve the quality of teaching and learning for all.
- to monitor the achievement/attainment of more able pupils to check that they are on target and to provide the necessary evidence.

### **The Role of the Classroom Teacher**

- to communicate high expectations for all pupils regardless of their starting point
- to ensure that lesson plans reflect this policy and departmental Schemes of Learning and therefore contain class and homework activities that are differentiated to meet the needs of all pupils
- to provide pupils with opportunities to extend their talents/skills by regularly promoting problem-solving, open-ended and investigative activities
- to recognise that setting more work for pupils is often not necessarily beneficial. More able pupils are more inclined to respond to higher level work that is more challenging, rather than more work of a similar level that is likely to be resented and demotivating
- to incorporate opportunities within their subject discipline to make use of investigative work and open-ended tasks
- to foster opportunities for subject-specific academic mentoring

### **Bibliography**

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