

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 education effectively, not only for the benefit of the more able pupils but also for pupils of all abilities. It is not the aim of creating an exclusive or elitist programme but rather one which raises standards for all and challenges 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 can achieve at a high level and therefore **all** pupils require stretching and challenging.

Teaching, learning and the wider curriculum (Co-curriculum and pupil led Curiosity and Change-Maker Curriculum) should provide all pupils with the cognitive skills, transferable 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

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

- setting challenging goals, with appropriate accompanying target grades
- encouraging independent learning
- using a variety of learning techniques and approaches
- extending and deepening learning opportunities – enrichment
- 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)
- effective use of assessment (formative, self, peer and summative)

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

- CCA programme
- Curiosity and Change-Maker Curriculum societies (leading and attending)
- Enrichment programme
- Malvernian Society links and lectures
- work experience
- links with universities
- national competitions/festivals
- The Aston Society (Lower School) and Wheeler-Bennett Society (Sixth Form)
- University masterclasses
- residential experiences
- subject mentoring opportunities
- leadership opportunities

Stretch and Challenge for those specifically identified as 'more able learners'

The most academically able are identified at the start of each academic year.

The oversight of this group is the responsibility of the Director of Studies and the Head of Year of each respective group:

FY: Head of FY

Remove: Head of GCSE
Hundred: Head of GCSE
Pre-Sixth: Head of Pre-Sixth
Lower Sixth: Head of Sixth Form or IB Co-ordinator
Upper Sixth: Head of Sixth Form or IB Co-ordinator

Definition of 'more able learner'

The Department for Education recognises a group constituted of "children and young people whose progress significantly exceeds age-related expectations".

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.

The DfE emphasizes the importance of treating the progress of more-able learners as a priority issue and ensuring that appropriately differentiated work is set and tracked.

Identifying 'more able learners' in need of specific academic stretch

The strength of a boarding school is that we have a holistic view of the pupils. The need for academic stretch may become apparent in a variety of whole-school contexts and not simply in the 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 'more able learners' 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. Academic Data, such as MiDYIS, Yellis, ALIS or Cat 4 data. Typically pupils scoring in the top 10% nationally are identified with pupils scoring 120+ in standardised tests.
2. Entrance and Scholarship Examinations, internal and public examinations
3. Head of Subject 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

Heads of Subject should spend subject meeting time identifying those in need of academic stretch in their specific subject and make provision accordingly. The Director of Studies 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 Director of Studies and is made available to all staff. 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 'more able learner' register and will be required to differentiate for them in their teaching
- Heads of Subject advise colleagues on subject specific strategies to challenge pupils in need of academic stretch
- The Director of Studies advises colleagues of general strategies in the teaching of this cohort
- The College will seek to discover and use a range of strategies to improve the teaching and learning of the specifically more able learners
- 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. These opportunities are timetabled at various points, including after lessons and in the evenings.

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

The pupil led Curiosity and Change-Maker Curriculum (CCM) provides a significant opportunity for pupils to take leadership in individualizing their own curriculum. This is an important source of pupil-led enrichment for pupils of all abilities and therefore one which challenges and enthuses all pupils.

The Aston Society

The Aston Society is overseen by two members of the teaching staff who plan the academic programme for the year. Senior pupils from the Wheeler-Bennett Society assist with an academic mentoring role for pupils in the Lower School. 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 weekly meetings. Each year the Aston Society presents a series of lunchtime talks at which the pupils present their research in the form of presentations, research posters and podcasts.

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

The Wheeler Bennett Society

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

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 the Curiosity and Change-Maker Curriculum which is pupil-led and focused on providing extension for all abilities.

Pastoral Care

It is important to recognize that more able learner 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 More Able Learner programme embraces the support the pastoral system offers. The College must be aware that the identification of a pupil as a more able learner may lead to additional pressure on the pupil and therefore the College is open to strategies to support pupils within this cohort.

The Role of The Director of Studies

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

The Role of Heads of Subject

The role of the HoS, in the context of subject specific more able pupils, is:

- to communicate high expectations for all pupils being taught within their subject area
- to develop subject policy, within the framework of the Whole School Policy, for inclusion in Faculty handbooks and Schemes of Learning.
- 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 Director of Studies over the list of more able pupils in order to keep the DoS informed of any changes.
- to set aside regular meeting 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/or 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.