

Appendix to Western Isles Inclusion Policy:

Guidelines for meeting the needs of the most able pupils

Context

Until recently, support for learning had focused primarily on the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. It had been considered that existing arrangements for grouping and, where applicable, setting along with differentiated materials was sufficient for all other pupils. However, many educationalists, including HMIE, believe that often such provision is inadequate and that many pupils, in particular the most able, are insufficiently challenged. Consequently, recent legislative changes, namely The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 requires that Education Authorities must have an explicit policy for the identification and provision for able pupils.

According to Wallace ¹, “Very able children need help as much as any other child. They need as much teaching, inspiring, guidance, reassurance, praise and encouragement as other children do. They do not automatically succeed because they are potentially very able.”

Characteristics of very able pupils

Very able pupils can demonstrate their ability in one or more curriculum areas. According to Winstanley ², “The highly able child is someone who has significantly greater aptitude for some aspect of intellectual learning than would be considered typical for their age and background.” Three groups of learners can be distinguished:

High Achievers:

These pupils are diligent. They perform well in regular assessments and are normally self motivated and well behaved.

Coasters

These pupils keep a low profile and can appear lazy and even apathetic. They perform better than expected in tests of cognitive ability and in conventional tests.

Disaffected

These pupils are often disruptive and anti- authority. Although their written work may be of poor quality, they speak well and become engrossed when their attention is gained. They perform better than expected in tests of cognitive ability.

School Policies

Each school is required to have a policy for meeting the needs of the most able pupils which takes into account the guidelines set out below for identification, recording, monitoring and evaluation. This must be fully operational by session 2009-10. An exemplar school policy is provided to accompany this document.

Identification

Primary 1 to Primary 4 teachers should identify pupils who display outstanding aptitude in one or more curriculum areas with particular attention given to numeracy and literacy. Schools, if they wish, may use diagnostic tests to supplement the procedure and, as appropriate, consult with parents.

In addition, pupils in Primary 5 onwards may be identified by achieving a score of 129 or above in one or more of the test batteries in the CATs which are carried out in Primary 5. This does not preclude the identification of pupils with lower scores.

Note: These procedures will generally lead to the identification of about 5% of the pupil population. At any time there may well be no pupils registered in small Primary schools.

Recording

Following identification, each pupil will be entered in the Additional Support Needs database and the staged intervention process will be initiated. The record will contain the evidence on which the identification has been made, eg CAT scores, teacher judgment and any resources/strategies to be employed. The information must be shared with parents and all parties should agree on suitable strategies.

Provision

For the most part this will take place, with the assistance of Learning Support teachers as appropriate, in the normal classroom setting and will commonly involve extension, depth and enrichment activities related to the core curriculum. It should be noted that resources and teaching strategies which are particularly suitable for the most able pupils provide challenge for all pupils.

In addition, schools will consider:

- The use of Mentors.
- Acceleration
- Peer coaching
- Master classes

The authority will provide occasional opportunities for pupils with similar aptitudes to undertake activities and projects both online and face to face. A selection of resources will be provided on the council website in the “Most able Pupils Resources” folder. The EA will continue to provide in-service opportunities in addition to those which individual schools avail themselves of through the devolved Inset and CPD budgets.

Monitoring

Best practice suggests that an able pupil coordinator be identified. Unless delegated to a nominated teacher, this will be the responsibility of the Headteacher. In December and in June a formal entry will be made in the IEP noting progress and further developments.

Evaluation

In the first instance schools will produce their individual policies. The procedures used will subsequently become part of the general policy review cycle. In addition, the link officer will consider the effectiveness of the school’s procedures as part of the quality assurance programme.

Implementation

- The guidelines and exemplar to all schools and on Council website, following consultative procedures, by end February 2008.
- As agenda item for Headteachers’ meetings May 2008.
- Project on meeting the needs of the most able pupils as part of school development plans for session 2008-09 - to include production of school policy and familiarisation with strategies and resources for all staff.
- Further authority based inset in August and October 2008.

References

1 Belle Wallace (2000) *Teaching the Very Able Child*, A NACE/Fulton Publication, p21

2 Carrie Winstanley (2004) *Too clever by half – a fair deal for gifted children*, Trentham Books, p 35