

# Differentiation and provision for the More Able and Talented.

## Preamble

“Education’s purpose is to replace an empty mind with an open one.”  
Malcolm S. Forbes (1919 –1990)

“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be lighted.”  
Plutarch (46 –120)

At Porthcawl Comprehensive School we believe that all children are entitled to an education that will enable them to develop their full potential, be that intellectual, physical, creative, emotional, spiritual or social, finding appropriate challenge in the positive learning environment we have created.

All students have individual needs, which staff endeavour to put at the heart of our teaching and learning. It is our aim to make education an enjoyable, exciting and worthwhile experience for **all** our pupils.

Porthcawl Comprehensive School is committed to providing a broad, balanced, appropriate and sufficiently challenging curriculum for all its students. We are committed to the personal, social and intellectual development of the whole child. We will provide opportunities to identify and in turn nurture those who are more able and their abilities, whilst providing additional support for those who are less able.

This policy works in conjunction with the school’s Curriculum Policy, Teaching and Learning Policy and the Merits and Rewards policy.

## Policy

Differentiation is a complex, multi-layered notion related to the ways in which teachers provide for variation in the age, interests and aptitudes, and abilities of students.

Mixed-ability teaching is one of the most demanding aspects of being a good teacher and as a result whole-class work is, usually, limited. Meeting the needs of the most able, the less able and the least able in one classroom is a challenge that teachers at Porthcawl Comprehensive School meet on a daily basis and they aim to use a variety of strategies to cater for all our pupils’ needs.

All students have an entitlement to the following:

- Staff commitment and training to develop students’ full potential at all times.
- Lessons that stimulate, engage, challenge, inform, excite and encourage through partnership and dialogue with teachers and other students and active participation in the lesson.
- Courses that lead to examinations and accreditation.
- Skilled, well-prepared and informed teachers who have a perspective and understanding of whole-school needs, problems and policies, including those concerning issues related to those students identified as more able.
- An entitlement beyond subject teaching, including preparation for adult life and preparation for the world of work. This should include extra curricular activity, personal and social education, careers guidance and counselling, visits to local industry, work experience and community service.

It is the school's aim to use differentiation to meet the students' individual learning needs for the following reasons:

- Having students working at the appropriate level of challenge increases their levels of motivation and reduces the boredom and frustration that can lead to behavioural problems.
- Students can experience different roles within the classroom via a variety of tasks/challenges/groupings etc. and thus develop their social skills.
- Targets can be agreed that meet the needs of the individual learner and ensure they are realistic and achievable, whilst still providing challenge.
- Underachievement can be targeted through differentiated work and any barriers to success can be removed.

“Two motivational states interfere with learning. One is anxiety, the other boredom. Anxiety occurs when teachers expect too much, boredom when they expect too little.”

### Process

There are many ways in which differentiation can be achieved and these can be broadly summarised as differentiation by:

- Content: depth, breadth and level of work. Staff plan lesson to cover the minimum, average or challenge.
- Task: complexity and sophistication of the different tasks that are suitably challenging. The teacher plans tasks to help pupils achieve as well as providing a variety of homework tasks.
- Outcome: a common task perhaps in which pupils achieve different levels of success but where each child is challenged at some point in the activity. All contributions are valued and achievements are celebrated. Constructive feedback is given. Quality of work expected (*sometimes* this will be 'amount' of work).
- Level of independence/support: removing scaffolding/support to help learning, planning own learning through structured research, use of reference materials/resources
- Group work: vary the groups (friendship/ability/gender) and the different roles within the group (leader/spokesperson/scribe/observer)
- Extension: providing extension work for pupils who finish work early, but not just more of the same
- Negotiation: setting targets for self-study

When differentiating by task the following points need to be considered:

- Familiarity of task
- Motivation, attitude, attention span and effort
- Concepts involved
- The language used
- Degree of “thinking” needed
- Degree of problem solving required
- Time allocated for task
- Degree of independent work involved
- Prior knowledge, skill, expertise or interest.
- Learning preferences

For more able and talented pupils the following should also be taken into account:

- It is possible to plan more complex investigations using complicated concepts.
- Such pupils should also be able to handle more stages in a task.
- Tasks can be more precise and use more sophisticated language.

### Procedures

To be able to cater for the individual needs of pupils it is vital that their abilities and aptitudes are recognised early on and any remedial action taken swiftly. This involves responsibilities for a number of key people within the school:

Senior staff should:

- create a climate of achievement for all in whatever they do
- ensure all staff challenge all pupils at whatever level
- create a culture of success – a climate of achievement – so that high achievers won’t look out of place
- constantly acknowledge all types of achievement via the school reward system and presentation evenings
- establish good links with feeder schools to ensure an effective transfer of information
- support staff in establishing an environment within the classroom that is conducive to learning – via the Duty Officer rota or Cause for Concern process
- support innovative approaches to teaching
- monitor the schemes of work of their allocated departments

Heads of department should:

- provide schemes of work that contain enrichment/extension material for more able pupils whilst offering support material for the less able
- ensure that staff within their departments are using the enrichment or support material
- ensure that staff have up to date information on pupil achievement or specific needs
- ensure someone from the department/faculty liaises with the SENCo to keep pupil details and information up to date concerning the less **and** more able pupils
- agree subject specific criteria for the identification of more able and talented pupils (Appendix 2)
- in consultation with department colleagues identify pupils who are more able or talented and supply the Learning Group with this list at specified times during the year

- in consultation with department colleagues identify pupils who are experiencing difficulties and together with the Special Needs Department take the appropriate action

Classroom teachers should:

- be aware of the preferred learning styles and Special Educational Needs of the pupils in their class
- ensure that all needs and preferences are catered for within a unit of work
- utilise enrichment and support materials within their lessons to cater for specific needs
- use a variety of teaching and learning approaches and activities within their lessons
- be aware of their role in the identification of more able students, based on subject specific criteria and the need to make the curriculum sufficiently challenging

Form teachers should:

- mentor the more able/ talented pupils within their form group once every half term
- be aware of the possible pressures upon these pupils, monitor any changes and report concerns to the Head of Year and Learning Group

The Learning Group should:

- agree and issue criteria for the identification of more able and talented pupils in all curriculum areas (See appendix)
- create a register of such pupils (the top 5-10% of each cohort) and make this available to all staff
- ensure that such a register is an integral part of the Special Needs register in school
- provide form teachers with the names of more able and talented pupils within their form classes
- review the more able and talented register on an annual basis
- monitor the provision for more able pupils
- evaluate the progress made by students and provision generally on an annual basis
- inform pupils and their parents of their inclusion on this register
- issue questionnaires to pupils and parents regarding inclusion on this register (Appendix 3)
- provide continued professional development for all staff that addresses the implications of dealing with more able and talented pupils
- provide where possible enrichment activities/team building events for the nominated group
- deliver a "Thinking Skills" programme to the group identified via a lesson once a month

The Governing Body should:

- help shape the vision and direction of the school as all inclusive
- ensure that the school has considered the needs of its children of all abilities
- act as a critical friend
- hold the school to account for the standards and quality of education it achieves
- support the implementation of this policy
- ensure curriculum targets include both low and high attainers
- support budgetary provision for resources

"In all its work, the Governing Body should focus on the key issues of raising standards of achievement, establishing high expectations and promoting effective teaching and learning."