

Aims

Benenden School is committed to ensuring *every* student

- achieves the very best academic standards and qualifications for her.
- has the highest possible levels of engagement with, enjoyment of, and personal development through her learning.

Within this context, and as part of our wider remit of differentiation, we recognise that students who are most able, generally or within a specific subject area, often require a specific approach and resources to ensure they are appropriately challenged and inspired. Therefore teachers and tutors need to be able to identify and provide for the most able students.

Our aims for more able students specifically are to:

- Provide an environment which is inspiring and challenging, allows students to test their limits and which accommodates both success and failure in a climate of support.
- Foster a spirit of scholarship and intellectual enquiry and nurture a lifelong love of learning.
- Create an ethos where aspiration and excellence are celebrated with pride and respect.

Identification

It is always important to remember that ability is not fixed, and students can be inspired and nurtured to *become* more able, and conversely, a child who seems highly able from baseline data may not yet exhibit this in her learning or attitude. Therefore any “list” of more able students is necessarily fluid. It is important to remember that some highly able students may seem to be under-achieving and may lack motivation, especially if they are not being appropriately challenged.

However, the group of “more able” students will include those who:

- are achieving at a level significantly higher than their peer group in the school (ISI Handbook).
- have a standardised MidYis or ALIS scores in excess of 126 or an exceptional score (over 130) in one of the sections of this test. (The average MidYis score for Benenden is between 113-117).
- have been awarded scholarships on entry or during their time at the school (Academic, Art, Technology, Music, Drama or Sport).
- are identified by teachers/tutors as “most able”, generally or within a specific area.
- have recorded outstanding results in examinations and classwork.
- receive support in the pursuit of highly competitive university courses and are thus expected to achieve an A Level grade profile of at least 3 A grades.

Benenden teachers are likely to consider that a girl is “more able” if she displays outstanding academic performance in one or more subjects, showing initiative, curiosity and intellectual insight. The characteristics of such a mind may include the ability to:

- pursue original links
- think independently
- take an holistic overview
- analyse, evaluate and synthesise
- maintain a reflective scholarly attitude
- respond to a challenge
- risk take
- ask questions that are challenging and probing
- apply advanced concepts accurately

(NACE 2015)

The Curriculum List, held centrally and available to all staff, registers where a student is a scholar and also shows MidYis data. Teachers are expected to note where this applies to any student they teach and provide appropriately. The advice is for teachers to code their mark books with a blue dot to discreetly identify such students and it is expected that all teachers are aware of who in their classes is regarded as currently most able.

In addition, departments identify annually and hold centrally the names of students especially able within their subject area and target these students for additional opportunities and enrichment.

The Scholarship Mentors hold the names of both those students identified as more able through the Curriculum List, and those identified within departments – with subjects such as art, music, drama, sport and technologies, these students may not also have high MidYis scores but may show exceptional talent within those areas.

Provision

As with students identified as having additional SEN, "**High quality teaching, differentiated for individual pupils, is the first step**". Most provision for the needs of the very able should happen as a matter of course within lessons through differentiation of task, resource, questioning or outcome, and an atmosphere of high challenge. Occasionally, a student's entire programme of study will be personalised to allow for her ability within that area, and some curriculum options are on offer to the most able e.g. Further Maths GCSE, "Gratin" Greek and Latin course in Year 9, Dele and DELF language courses. Occasionally a student's progress will be accelerated by taking A Levels or GCSEs ahead of the normal point for their cohort: this is especially the case with languages for advanced learners.

This timetabled curriculum provision is enhanced by a huge range of enrichment opportunities for the most able students, both subject specific and cross-curricular. All girls identified as "more able" are encouraged to take part in the organised Scholarship Programme and also to take an Extended Project Qualification. Regular training is provided to staff on challenging the most able. Reading lists must be available within each department that are suitable for the most able students.

We have two members of staff who work as Scholarship Mentors, with responsibility for monitoring and supporting the students identified as most able. They run termly projects, lecture programmes and competitions alongside raising awareness amongst the students of external competitions and opportunities. An example of an annual programme can be found in the Scholarship area of the portal.

Competitive University Course Applications

A number of university courses are highly competitive due to their popularity. Most will require very high entry standards (usually a minimum of AAA at A Level). Whilst not exhaustive (or static) they include:

- Medicine, Dentistry, Veterinary Medicine, Law, English Literature, Architecture and Psychology.
- all courses at Cambridge and Oxford Universities.
- all courses at top US colleges.

A structured programme of extension and support exists for girls on the Competitive Universities Programme, coordinated by the Oxbridge Coordinator, the Careers Department and the Deputy Head Academic. Oxbridge preparation sessions happen each week and supplement department's own enrichment provision for these girls.

Monitoring

The Scholarship Mentors and the Deputy Head Academic's Office are responsible for monitoring the academic progress of the most able students to ensure they are reaching their potential and are not coasting or under-achieving. The Scholarship Mentors will also undertake student shadowing and lesson observations to ensure students are being stretched and challenged within the classroom and through prep. After summer reports and exam results, the Scholarship mentors undertake a sub-group analysis of those on their register.

Monitoring this policy

- Lesson observations
- Work scrutiny
- The Curriculum List
- Analysis of data and exam results
- Analysis of destination data
- Questionnaires to students
- Auditing of take up on enrichment opportunities.

Responsibility for monitoring this policy lies with class teachers, HoDs, Scholarship Mentors and the Academic Deputy.

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