

EXTENDED LEARNING POLICY

‘Providing for more able learners is not about labelling, but about creating a curriculum and learning opportunities which allow all children to flourish.’

NACE Core Principles

HOW AND WHY DO WE IDENTIFY STUDENTS WHO MIGHT BENEFIT FROM EXTENDED LEARNING AT SALESIAN COLLEGE?

In accordance with our mission statement, at Salesian College we endeavour to help all students to reach their full potential, while participating fully in the community of the school. This includes providing extended learning opportunities for all pupils whilst being conscious that these may be more appropriate for some.

During the Autumn Term of each year, a register of pupils who show very high ability in one or more areas of the curriculum is compiled by the Extended Learning Co-ordinator in co-operation with subject staff. The purpose of identification is to increase teachers’ awareness of the potential of highly able students in their classes, to assist staff as they plan activities, to help to prevent pupil underperformance and to direct these students to activities which might be particularly of interest to them. It must be emphasised that identification is not an end in itself; rather, it is a useful tool to assist teaching professionals in their Salesian mission ‘to walk alongside’ the pupils.

Students will be identified using a **combination** of the following methods and other appropriate information:

- Subject-teacher recommendation
- Form teacher or Head of Year recommendation (particularly important for those showing multiple intelligences)
- Standardized test scores
- Consistently very high examination results (both internal and external)
- Entrance examination results

At Salesian College students are identified in the extended learning log within the following categories:

Exceptionally Able – A pupil is exceptional in that they are well above the average academic ability of any pupils that we have taught (not just in the top 10% of one particular cohort). Exceptional ability may comprise both quantitative and qualitative aspects, but will certainly include high abstract reasoning ability and complexity of thinking.

This is not to be confused with ‘dual exceptionality’ – where a pupil may be highly academic and have other ‘exceptions’ in terms of physical or other disability, although they may of course qualify as ‘exceptional’ in both respects.

High-achieving – A pupil that is a consistently high-achiever in lesson time and is clearly very hard-working. They are therefore not defined as ‘exceptional’, but should be highlighted and monitored.

In order to be considered exceptionally able, a student is required to have very considerable natural flair and ability for the subject which significantly outstrips what might be expected from a ‘bright’ or

'able' child. Nonetheless, it is important that ability is not seen as 'fixed' by staff, parents or pupils and consequently the register is subject to ongoing reappraisal. Teaching staff are encouraged to contact the EL co-ordinator at any stage if they feel the register in their subject area should be altered. It should be noted that pupils can both be added to and removed from the register, a procedure which is likely to be fairly commonplace.

For this reason, and in order to ensure young pupils do not become complacent, disheartened or unduly pressurized, it is not College policy to communicate names on the EL register to parents or pupils in Years 7 to 9, nor will individual scores from the entrance examination or MidYis tests be released. Individual staff members may, however, recommend particular extended learning opportunities to students and their parents at any stage.

Experience has shown that as students approach public exams it can be beneficial for pupils and parents to be informed of the results of the standardized tests taken in Year 10 (YELLIS) and Year 12 (ALIS) together with predicted grades. These examinations offer a meaningful way of quantifying some aspects of pupils' abilities and are used as part of the on-going identification process of able students. It should be noted, however, that they do not test all forms of high ability, and so are not suitable for identifying able pupils in all curriculum areas. These scores, together, with a written explanation, will be communicated to parents by the Senior Deputy Head. It must be emphasised, however, that these results should not be seen as either a 'ceiling' on potential performance or a guarantee of a particular grade. While the majority of extended learning opportunities remain available to all students at this stage, from Year 10, on occasional specific enrichment activities may be focused on those of high ability only.

HOW ARE STUDENTS SUPPORTED AT SALESIAN IN THE CURRICULUM?

"Interventions to benefit the highly able should be available to all students. All classes should have built-in stretching activities" Sutton Trust, 2018

On a day-to-day basis, all students at the College are supported primarily by high-quality teaching in the classroom. Departments should discuss students with particularly high ability periodically at their meetings to ensure appropriate teaching provision is maintained and it is part of the EL Co-ordinator's role to advertise relevant teaching ideas, resources and training opportunities among his/her colleagues. Staff members are encouraged to access the wealth of resources and CPD available through the schools membership of the National Association of Able Children in Education (NACE) <https://www.nace.co.uk/>.

In all areas of the curriculum, there is an emphasis on independent learning in order to encourage students to think for themselves, take pride in their work and to seek to take responsibility for their own study. To support this, the school's Extended Learning Co-ordinator will liaise closely with library staff to discuss stock and strategies to encourage wider reading and research outside the classroom.

Additionally, staff members are encouraged to use a range of teaching techniques to ensure differentiation and challenge for learners of all abilities, including the highly able. Examples include:

- The use of open-ended tasks, enabling all learners to respond at their own level;
- Research tasks, with a particular encouragement towards more advanced reading;
- Use of ICT, especially for extended projects and research tasks;
- Encouraging evaluation and analysis;

- Problem-solving activities;
- Challenging target setting;
- Provision of differentiated homework tasks;
- Open-ended questioning, including asking pupils to justify their answers and respond in greater depth;
- High levels of stretch and challenge incorporated in schemes of work, this will benefit all pupils not just the highly able;
- Group / team work, especially with students taking a leading role;
- Use of visiting speakers/workshop leaders;
- Use of resources from universities and other high level institutions relevant to the subject;
- And participation in both internal and external competitions.

Additionally, in Sixth Form, extra challenge for some students is provided by the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ), which allows students to study and research a topic of their choice in greater depth, under the supervision of an individual member of staff.

It should be noted that this list is neither exhaustive nor prescriptive and staff are encouraged to develop alternative techniques to benefit the learning of students in their classes. As part of staff professional development, teachers are encouraged to engage in peer-observation, pay visits to other schools to observe best practice elsewhere and take part in formal training, as time and resources allow.

WHAT EXTRA-CURRICULAR OPPORTUNITIES ARE THERE FOR STUDENTS AT SALESIAN?

The Sutton trust (2018) highlights the importance of extra-curricular opportunities for highly able students *“Extracurricular activities have the potential to develop both academic skills, and essential life skills which can help highly able students to succeed – such as confidence, motivation, resilience and communication skills”*. The school provides a wide range of after school and lunchtime clubs and activities. These opportunities include, *but are not limited to*, the following:

- The Debating Society
- Chess Club
- STEM Club
- A range of sports teams with regular fixtures, including competition at county level
- The Duke of Edinburgh Awards (Bronze)
- Library activities, including reading competitions, quizzes, etc.
- Various performing arts events, including the school musical, regular music recitals and concerts and the Year 7 Drama Festival
- LAMDA exams
- A range of vocal and instrumental music lessons (for which there is an additional charge).
- Membership of the chamber choir ('Schola'), Senior Choir, Girls' Choir and Orchestra.
- Subject-specific visits both within the UK and abroad, e.g. Spanish Exchange, Battlefields Trip, etc.
- Visits to leading universities
- Tailored preparation and mentorship programme for Oxbridge/Medicine entry for Sixth Form students (organized by Sixth Form staff and the Extended Learning co-ordinator).

WHAT IS EXPECTED FROM HIGHLY ABLE PUPILS AT SALESIAN?

'For everyone to whom much is given, of him shall much be required', Luke 12:48.

"From the outside, it seems like talented people don't have to put in a lot of effort. They make it look so easy," said Ericsson in a recent interview. "But when you look closely, the opposite is actually true. The best performers are almost always the ones who practice the most. I have yet to find a talented person who didn't earn their talent through hard work and thousands of hours of practice." The Cambridge Handbook of Expertise and Expert Performance (Ericsson et al, 2006)

All pupils at Salesian are expected to work hard to realise their potential; indeed, it is anticipated that highly able pupils will make particular use of the opportunities for extended study made available to them, particularly through wider reading, extended writing and problem-solving tasks, judicious use of academic internet resources and involvement in the extra-curricular activities offered. If a subject teacher feels a very able student is consistently underperforming, then they can request additional support from the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator or the EL Co-ordinator, as well as utilizing the mainstream pastoral and behaviour management systems of the College. The nature of intervention will be determined on a case-by-case basis, and parents will be contacted if and when required. It is important for staff, students and parents to be aware, however, that some highly able students can feel very pressurized to excel and the school takes its pastoral responsibilities in this regard seriously. Staff and parents should liaise with the form tutor and Head of Year in the first instance if there are concerns regarding overwork or stress.

HOW CAN PARENTS GAIN INFORMATION ABOUT PUPILS AND HOW TO SUPPORT THEM APPROPRIATELY?

At Salesian, the partnership between parents and staff is considered very important, and we understand that parents will wish to support their children to maximise their potential in intellectual and practical pursuits, while also allowing students the space to develop on a personal and spiritual level. The following comments by Prof Deborah Eyre, the former Director of the National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY) at the University of Warwick, encapsulate the importance of the parental/guardian role in assisting exceptional ability to develop:

The role of the family in creating high performance is ... significant. Contrary to popular belief this does not involve 'hot housing' young offspring in the hope of maintaining their performance at a level that significantly exceeds that of their peers. It involves providing a stable, interested and encouraging family environment. ... Parenting for high performance is not a special skill – anyone can do it. It is about encouraging the child to develop good study habits and an interest in learning; to think for themselves and to acquire the habits of reflecting, discussing and questioning. There is no barrier to more families doing this effectively. (Eyre, 2011).

Communication between school and home regarding the progress of all students takes place via reports, Parents' Evenings and, for Years 7 to 11, via the mark system. While the College does not use parental recommendation as a form of identification of high ability, we recognize that it can be useful for parents to have access to further information about supporting very able students at home. Departments can provide additional subject specific information in lessons or via the VLE, but additionally the following websites provide information and additional activities which may be of interest:

- National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE), <http://www.nace.co.uk/> - This website is primarily aimed at teachers, but may also be of interest to pupils and parents.
- Potential Plus UK, <http://www.potentialplusuk.org/> - A charity aimed at assisting the highly able, their schools and families.
- National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), <http://www.nagc.org/>
- Family Education, <http://school.familyeducation.com/gifted-education/parenting/34390.html>
- Tomorrow's Achievers, <http://www.tomorrowsachievers.co.uk/>
- World Council for Gifted and Talented Children, <http://www.world-gifted.org/>
- KidSource Online, <http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/pages/ed.gifted.html> - Please note that this is an American website, so not all comments will be applicable to the UK education system.

It should be noted that this list is not exhaustive and that Salesian College cannot be responsible for content of external websites.

CONCLUSION:

Salesian College maintains an ethos which emphasises the importance of nurturing the intellectual, physical, moral and spiritual potential of all its students. Pupils with very high ability, or the potential to become an individual of high ability, may at times need additional support, but in the main will thrive best by grasping the opportunities offered to them in lessons and via various extra-curricular activities offered by the College. It is anticipated that staff, parents and pupils will co-operate to ensure the best outcome for the students in the College's care, in accordance with the school's Christian values.

POLICY CONTROL	
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