

Supplementary guidance for independent and additional inspectors

More able and talented learners



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- ▲ special schools;
- ▲ pupil referral units;
- ▲ independent schools;
- ▲ further education;
- ▲ adult community-based learning;
- ▲ youth support services;
- ▲ youth and community work training;
- ▲ LAs;
- ▲ teacher education and training;
- ▲ work-based learning;
- ▲ careers companies;
- ▲ offender learning; and
- ▲ the education, guidance and training elements of the Department for Work and Pensions funded training programmes.

Estyn also:

- ▲ provides advice on quality and standards in education and training in Wales to the National Assembly for Wales and others; and
- ▲ makes public good practice based on inspection evidence.

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1 Introduction

- 1 The Welsh Assembly Government aims for all learners to have the best start in life with opportunities and encouragement to achieve their full learning potential. In May, 2008, the Welsh Assembly Government published a set of Quality Standards¹ to support schools and local authorities to meet the needs of more able and talented learners.
- 2 This Supplementary Guidance for independent and additional inspectors provides information to assist the inspection of standards and provision for more able and talented learners aged 3 to 19 years of age in Wales.
- 3 In this guidance, settings for the Foundation Phase, primary, secondary and special schools and PRUs are referred to as providers. The term practitioner is used to include teachers, trainers and learning support staff.

2 The definition of more able and talented learners

- 4 There is no universally agreed definition of learners who generally would be recognised as more able. In Wales, the term 'more able and talented' is used to describe learners who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of learners.
- 5 Approximately 20 per cent of 3 to 19 year olds may be considered more able, while the top two per cent may be considered exceptionally able. A wide range of qualities, characteristics and processes contribute to high potential and achievement. The term 'more able and talented' includes learners who are more able across subjects within the curriculum as well as those who show talent in one or more specific areas, such as music, sport and drama.
- 6 It is important to recognise that the identification of more able and talented learners is linked to their context, regardless of how these learners compare to more able and talented learners in other providers. This means that in every provider, you should expect to find a group of learners identified as more able and talented as well as suitable provision for their development through the breadth and depth of their learning experiences and activities.
- 7 Ability and talent can manifest themselves in many ways, for example, learners who accelerate very quickly through early milestones or those who learn new skills easily with very little repetition and consolidation. Learners' abilities and talents can also develop over time. Some learners may be late developers or need the opportunities provided by an enriching learning environment in order to discover what they can do. You should be aware that some learners' disaffection or dislike of conformity could hide their high ability, while the talents of some other more able and talented learners may lie in unconventional areas of development.

¹ Meeting the Challenge Guidance Circular No 006/2008 Welsh Assembly Government

- 8 High ability and talent are developmental phenomena, which can rise and fall over time. Some learners may be more able and talented at a specific point in their development but not remain so permanently. In addition, there are more able and talented learners who have trouble with some of the most highly valued skills, for example, reading, but nonetheless, have strengths in particular intelligences or talents in areas such as music, art and sport.
- 9 While more able and talented learners need extended learning experiences to reach their full potential, providing an enriched curriculum can improve the quality of learning and raise standards for learners of **all** abilities and talents. Thus, making provision to meet the needs of more able and talented learners will benefit all learners and give them opportunities and encouragement to achieve their full learning potential.

3 The characteristics of more able and talented learners

- 10 You may find it helpful to become familiar with the information contained in 'A curriculum of opportunity: developing potential into performance' published by the Welsh Assembly Government. This information includes general and subject-specific checklists outlining a range of qualities to help identify more able and talented learners. In particular, the publication outlines a range of broad qualities often shown by more able and talented learners in areas of learning and attitude across the curriculum, such as:
- possessing extensive general knowledge, often know more than the teacher, and find the usual reference books superficial;
 - showing good insight into cause-effect relationships;
 - easily grasp underlying principles, and need the minimum of explanation;
 - quickly make generalisations and extract the relevant points from complex material;
 - having exceptional curiosity and constantly want to know why; and
 - being perceptive in discussion about peoples' motives, needs and frailties².
- 11 While it is highly unlikely that a more able and talented learner would portray all of the qualities identified in the guidance, many learners may exhibit a number of these traits.

² A curriculum of opportunity: developing potential into performance 2003 The Welsh Assembly Government

4 Useful lines of enquiry

- 12 You should expect to find that providers extend the breadth and depth of the work for more able and talented learners as well as provide opportunities for independent learning. In the past, provision for more able and talented learners was often restricted to out-of-hours work, such as the weekly provision of writing squads for very-able young writers. While these opportunities continue to be important, they cannot be a substitute for the enrichment and extension of learning experiences that need to occur on a day-to-day basis.
- 13 Planning and teaching across the curriculum needs to provide challenge, depth and variety of experiences for more able and talented learners. Providers should make certain that there is high-level and demanding work for these learners, particularly through the development and application of thinking, and communication, information and communications technology (ICT) and number skills across the curriculum³. While a focus on 'learning about learning' will be relevant to all learners, this aspect will be of particular benefit to those learners who are more able and talented.
- 14 You should be aware that the identification of more able and talented learners must be a flexible process involving a range of strategies, which reflects the dynamic way that ability and talent may manifest themselves. Critically, this means that providers should ensure the identification process is continuous and should avoid a 'once and for all' assessment of learners.
- 15 Improving standards in all areas of education depends vitally on the quality of leadership and management. A key feature of high performing providers is the quality of the work of leaders and managers who have high expectations, ensure there is regular and relevant up-to-date training for practitioners and undertake frequent monitoring and thorough evaluation to make certain that learning and teaching are as good as they can be for **all** learners.
- 16 The following lines of enquiry may help provide information to assist your judgements about the standards achieved by more able and talented learners and the provision for their development and attainment of high standards.
- Q** How does the provider define more able and talented learners?
- Q** How well does the provider collect, analyse and use a range of attainment data, including performance data in sport, music and the creative arts?
- Q** How has the provider involved learners, practitioners, governors, and parents where appropriate, in identifying potential?
- Q** Does the provider give due regard to equal opportunities issues for all groups of learners, for example, by including disadvantaged able learners, those with disabilities and those from minority ethnic groups?

³ Skills Framework for 3 to 19-year-olds 2008 The Welsh Assembly Government

- Q** Is the identification of more able and talented learners a flexible and continuous process involving a range of strategies?
- Q** How well does the provider use a range of data to monitor the progress of all learners, including more able and talented learners?
- Q** How does the provider organise its provision for more able and talented learners?
- Q** Is the provision flexible and challenging enough to meet more able and talented learners' needs and do practitioners avoid approaches that rely on these learners being required to do more of the same work or low-level extension work such as puzzles and quizzes?
- Q** Does the provision include enrichment and extension in class as well as opportunities for out-of-school learning?
- Q** How well do practitioners take account of learners' differing abilities and learning needs and do they provide opportunities to develop higher-order learning skills, problem-solving and thinking skills in their planning and teaching?
- Q** Is there an ethos which sets high expectations for all learners and encourages emotional, social, physical and intellectual development?
- Q** Do the provider's policies support consistent and effective practice for more able and talented learners?
- Q** Is there staff development to help practitioners develop their own expertise in identifying and meeting the needs of more able and talented learners?
- Q** Are practitioners aware that issues such as disaffection may mask high ability and that a learner's particular strengths can lie in unconventional areas of development?
- Q** Does the provider have links with schools, colleges, the local authority, outside agencies and other organisations that help to further extend and enrich learners' experiences?
- Q** Do learners have access to suitable resources, including information and communications technology and research and information sources, which interest, challenge and extend their learning and enables them to achieve their full potential?
- Q** Are governors involved in securing appropriate provision for more able and talented learners?
- Q** Is there systematic monitoring and rigorous evaluation of the provider's policies and learning and teaching to ensure that all learners achieve their full potential?

5 References

ACCAC (2003) A curriculum of opportunity: developing potential into performance

Estyn (2008) The Inspection of Educational Provision of Children before Compulsory School Age

Estyn (2008) The Common Inspection Framework for Education and Training in Wales and Guidance Handbook

Estyn (2002) Guidance on inspecting diversity and equal opportunities in schools and early year's settings

Welsh Assembly Government (2001) The Learning Country

Welsh Assembly Government (2004) Vision into Action

Welsh Assembly Government (2008) Meeting the Challenge: Circular No 006/2008