



# SOLIHULL

## Preparatory School Stretch and Challenge Policy

**Owner:** Deputy Head (Academic) of the Preparatory School  
**Reviewer:** Assistant Head (Junior School) and Assistant Head (Alice House)  
**Last Reviewed:** September 2024

**Version 6**

# Preparatory School Stretch and Challenge Policy

## Introduction

*This policy also applies to pupils in the EYFS setting.*

Solihull Preparatory School is committed to creating a culture that enables and encourages all pupils to maximise and fulfil their potential, and one that celebrates 'bright' and 'clever' children. We believe that all pupils are entitled to an education that will enable them to develop their full potential, be that intellectual, physical, aesthetic, creative, emotional, spiritual or social, finding appropriate stretch and challenge in the classroom, in co-curricular activities and with opportunities to further their particular talents outside school at a local and national level.

We aim to provide opportunities to identify and nurture all children, including our brightest, and recognise that the majority of pupils at Solihull Preparatory School perform well above the national average in terms of academic achievement. All children have individual needs and very able pupils should be given the opportunity to study and acquire skills at a greater depth and breadth. Our aim is to provide opportunities to develop those specific skills and talents. We believe that stretch is important for all of our pupils. To this end we aim to provide an academically rigorous curriculum which allows each child to reach for their highest level of personal attainment.

We aim to maintain an ethos which recognises and celebrates achievement and excellence, encourages all children to become independent learners and ensures that the more able are sufficiently challenged in all subjects. We aim to ensure that every child achieves as highly as they can, by creating a culture of high expectations and aspirations, where talent and ability are valued.

## **1. Aims and objectives**

Through this policy and our stretch and challenge provision we aim to:

- generate a culture of intellectual excitement and curiosity.
- respond to the individual needs and interests of our pupils in order for them to reach their full potential.
- ensure that we challenge and extend children through the work that we set them.
- encourage children to think and work independently.

## **2. Identification of Able, Gifted and Talented Pupils**

### **Definitions**

*More able pupils are those pupils who achieve, or have the ability to achieve, at a level significantly in advance of the average for their year group.*

As the majority of pupils attending Solihull Prep School are working at a level '**significantly in advance of the average for their year group**', nationally many of them would be regarded as 'more able' within the state sector.

'**More able pupils**' are those who have the capacity for, or demonstrate conspicuously high levels of performance within an academic area, in comparison to their cohort, or are those with a specific ability in a non-academic area such as:

- Physical talent
- Visual / performing abilities
- Mechanical ingenuity
- Outstanding leadership and social awareness
- Creativity

### **Alice House (EYFS and Key Stage 1)**

Many pupils in EYFS are assessed as having 'exceeded expectations' in the 6 key areas of learning. These pupils are identified and tracked as 'more able' through Key stage 1, where other able, gifted and talented (AGT) pupils may be noted as they mature and develop. In Key stage 1, pupils' abilities in maths and English are assessed regularly.

Opportunities for stretch and challenge begin in Alice House, where teachers' questioning, and the provision of open-ended tasks enables more able pupils to articulate their thoughts and ideas, demonstrating their ability, knowledge and understanding from a very young age. As we lay the foundations of learning during the early years, we start to identify those who can cope with extension activities that demand higher order thinking and analysis

### **Identification of More Able Pupils**

We use a range of strategies to identify more able children. The identification process is ongoing and begins when a child joins our school. When identifying such children there is a particular need to identify ability rather than achievement so that underachievers are identified. Typical characteristics of underachievers may include low self-esteem, academic avoidance behaviour, poor study skills, poor peer acceptance and lack of concentration. It is recognised that pupils who are more able do not always demonstrate their ability, so we aim to identify any pupils who appear to be underperforming or underachieving in this regard. It is also important that teachers remember the *actual* age of the pupil, whatever their intellectual level may be.

### **A more able pupil may:**

- be a good all-rounder or be a high achiever in one specific area of his/her learning
- be an excellent/advanced reader who shows an understanding beyond his/her chronological age
- be articulate or verbally fluent
- give quick intelligent verbal responses
- possess an extensive general knowledge

- retain/recall information with ease, which enables him/her to show rapid learning
- show a mature interest in topics outside of the curriculum
- communicate on an adult level – perhaps avoiding their own peer group
- have a range of interests, some of which border on obsession
- show unusual and original responses to problem-solving activities
- possess a high ability but have poor writing skills
- prefer verbal to written activities
- be logical
- show greater independence in developing areas of interest
- be artistic, musical or excellent at sport
- have strongly considered views and opinions
- have a lively and original imagination / sense of humour
- be very sensitive and show a greater awareness of others
- have high ability but with low motivation
- focus on their own interests rather than on what is being taught
- be socially adept
- appear arrogant or socially inept
- be more able with limited interpersonal skills
- be more able with a short attention span
- be easily bored by what they perceive as routine tasks
- show a strong sense of leadership
- not necessarily be well-behaved or well-liked by others
- have SEND

Many of the AGT pupils are involved in co-curricular activities which cater for their exceptional ability, for example, Chess Club, Debating Club, Performing Arts Club, Musical Ensembles, Art Clubs, Sports Clubs, UK Maths Challenge etc.

Pupils at Solihull Prep School with particular strengths, talents and abilities will be identified by making a judgment based on an analysis of a variety of sources of information including:

- Test scores / assessment results (CEM, VR and NVR, reading age, examination grades etc)
- Teacher identification (based on classroom observation, discussions with pupils, work scrutiny)
- Predicted 11+ examination performance
- Rate of progress, including value-added data and reference to prior attainment/achievement.
- Specialist teacher identification (e.g. Music, Drama, Art, Sport)
- Information from parents/guardians

**Pupils gifted specifically in English may be identified when they:**

- demonstrate high levels of fluency and originality in their conversation
- use research skills effectively to synthesise information
- enjoy reading and respond to a range of texts at an advanced level

- use a wide vocabulary and enjoy working with words
- see issues from a range of perspectives
- possess a creative and productive mind and use advanced skills when engaged in discussion
- work confidently and competently to achieve objectives for year groups higher than their own

**Pupils gifted specifically in Mathematics may be identified when they:**

- explore a range of strategies for solving a problem
- are naturally curious when working with numbers and investigating problems
- see solutions quickly without needing to try a range of options
- look beyond the question in order to hypothesise and explain
- work flexibly and establish their own strategies
- enjoy manipulating numbers in a variety of ways
- work confidently and competently to achieve objectives for year groups higher than their own

At the start of every year Form Tutors are asked to identify, following start of year assessments and after the first half term in school, pupils who are more able or who are particularly gifted in a particular subject. This information is used by the relevant subject teachers to differentiate their responses to pupils. These pupils are also identified so that all Prep School teaching staff can have access to the information. Pupils who have the potential to be academic scholars in the Solihull 11+ examination are identified in the Junior School.

In addition, the Prep School Head of Sport, Health and Fitness, Head of Music, and Art Subject Leader are asked to identify particularly gifted and talented pupils. These are often those pupils who have the ability and talent to be considered for an 11+ Scholarship in these areas. This information is used by coaches and teachers to differentiate expectations and responses to pupils and this information is also disseminated to all staff.

All children undergo baseline assessments within the first half-term of each new academic year. For pupils from I2 to J4, standardised assessments measure reasoning, reading, maths and spelling, I1 pupils are assessed in phonics, reasoning and spelling and EYFS pupils carry out age appropriate baseline assessments. This gives information about each pupil's developing skills and aptitudes across several areas of learning.

As the pupils progress through the Prep School, teachers assess them regularly to ensure that they are making the sort of progress that we are expecting of them towards their personal targets. We identify them as very able or gifted children when they achieve extremely high levels of attainment across the curriculum, or in particular skills or aspects of subjects.

Teachers discuss the children's progress with parents at Parents' Evenings and report annually on each child's progress. The Deputy Head (Academic) and Assistant Heads maintain and update an overview of each child's progress across each section of the school and ensure Form Tutors are appraised of this at the beginning of each academic year.

### **3. Teaching and Learning**

Teachers in the Prep School plan carefully to meet the learning needs of all our pupils. We give all children the opportunity to show what they know, understand and can do, and we achieve this in a variety of ways when planning for children's learning by providing:

- a common activity that allows the children to respond at their own level.
- an enrichment activity that broadens a child's learning in a particular skill or knowledge area.
- an individual activity within a common theme that reflects a greater depth of understanding and higher level of attainment.
- the opportunity for children to progress through their work at their own rate of learning

**All Prep School teachers should expect and insist upon high standards of work as follows:**

- Teachers should address setting and grouping arrangements as appropriate.
- Teachers should stretch and challenge the more able through extension, open ended tasks, cross-curricular enrichment, and acceleration.
- Provide opportunities for independent learning and use a range of learning styles.
- Provide problem solving opportunities and application of knowledge and skills to real life situations.
- Enrich the learning experience by making links across the curriculum.
- Provide purposeful, engaging and stimulating lessons where teaching is personalised, inspirational, motivating and fun.
- Teachers need to use high-level questioning skills effectively to extend the thinking of more able pupils, teach pupils to articulate their answers and explain how/why and encourage greater risk taking. If thinking and problem-solving skills are consciously taught throughout the curriculum then the attainment levels of all pupils, including those of our able, gifted and talented, will flourish.
- Teachers discuss children's progress with parents at parents' evenings and provide written reports twice a year on each child's progress.
- Regular celebration of all pupils' achievements over a period of time, in assembly, concerts, performances, in displays, via the School's social media platforms or

newsletters enable more able pupils to see a purpose in exerting themselves to achieve the highest standards and provides a variety of ways in which pupils can all raise their expectations.

Children encounter and learn to use a variety of organisational strategies as they move through the school. Each strategy supports all children in their learning but gives due regard to the very able and gifted learners.

Pupils from I2 to J4 are set for maths, which provides able pupils with opportunities to work at an appropriate pace, to further extend their thinking, learning and mathematical knowledge and abilities, and develop higher order problem-solving skills.

Learning is also enriched through regular homework activities linked to the work being undertaken in Junior School classes. This offers teachers a further opportunity to set work at the appropriate academic level of individual pupils.

#### **4. Co-Curricular Activities**

Our extensive co-curricular programme provides many opportunities for the more able child to further develop their talents and interests. These provide opportunities for very able pupils to further develop their interest and to present and discuss ideas with other pupils and staff. Pupils also have opportunities to experience a range of trips and educational visits that further enrich and develop learning.

The current programme includes some academic clubs and covers a wide range of subject areas and interests. Some of these are listed below:

- Debating Club
- STEM Club
- Chess Club
- Drama/Performing Arts Clubs
- Puzzles and Games Club
- Book and Biscuit Club
- Spanish Language and Culture Clubs
- Coding Club
- ACE Club (art enrichment)
- Music Ensembles
- Sport Squads

We enter and hold a number of competitions (e.g. in Science week) and particular successes have been had in the UK Junior Maths Challenge, poetry competitions, local music festivals, regional sports tournaments and other events. All pupils in the Prep school also have the opportunity to experience a range of educational visits that further enrich and develop their learning.

## **5. Monitoring and Evaluation**

The Deputy Head (Academic) is responsible for overseeing the stretch and challenge opportunities within the school, working closely with the Assistant Heads.

The Deputy Head (Academic) and Assistant Heads must:

- Maintain and review the achievements and progress of all pupils in consultation with teaching staff and PMG
- Monitor the provision for pupils identified as being more able/AGT;
- Ensure that the professional development programme includes provision for all pupils, including those pupils who might be considered more able
- Monitor the progress of all pupils, ensuring they are being stretched, challenged and fulfilling their potential
- Work with HOY and Form Tutors to ensure that lessons stretch and support the most able pupils and provide advice and support to staff on teaching and learning strategies for more able and very able children
- Monitor the co-curricular programme's contribution in our provision for the most able
- Identify extension opportunities both locally and further afield
- Discuss AGT pupils' progress and any academic or pastoral concerns with PMG
- Encourage teachers to have the highest expectations, ensuring opportunities for extension and enrichment are built into all curriculum schemes of work and designed to take account of the different levels of existing knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Ensure teachers offer extension opportunities / open-ended tasks to stimulate and further enrich learning whenever possible and encourage pupils' independent learning and evaluation of their work to support them in becoming self-critical whenever possible in class and/or through homework activities.
- Provide professional development for staff that addresses the need to ensure there is appropriate provision for more able pupils and through the development of teaching and learning styles that take account of differentiation, enrichment and extension
- Organise effective assessment of pupils' potential and performance
- Monitor and report on individual pupil performance regularly
- Encourage pupils to enter local and national events and competitions
- Provide discreet pastoral care (where required) on an individual basis through close liaison between the Form Tutor, Heads of Year, Assistant Heads and Deputy Heads of the Prep School



- Provide mentoring, where appropriate
- Organise opportunities for more able pupils to work together
- Recognise, celebrate and reward the achievement of all pupils
- Liaise closely with parents
- Oversee alongside the Senior Deputy Head, a co-curricular programme that offers academic enrichment activities alongside Music, Drama, Art and Sport
- Organise specialist teaching
- Oversee setting in Maths

## **6. Inclusion**

Solihull Prep School will, as far as possible, ensure that the identification of pupils reflects the school's cohort as a whole, in terms of gender, ethnicity, SEND and EAL.

Teachers must set high expectations for all pupils and use appropriate assessment to set ambitious targets and plan challenging work for all groups, including:

- More able pupils
- Pupils with SEND
- Pupils with English as an additional language (EAL)

All children, and especially the more able, are motivated by the acquisition of knowledge and a love of learning. Solihull Preparatory School provides a supportive and intellectually stimulating environment for more able, gifted and talented pupils to develop and fulfil their potential.

Janet Humphreys  
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September 2024