

Most Able Children (MAC) policy

Rationale

At Wildern School we believe that effective teaching and learning takes place when all students are challenged, feel successful and are stimulated and motivated. We believe that every learner, whatever her / his current attainment and achievement, should benefit from high-quality, inspiring, innovative learning and teaching strategies which challenge all learners to push the boundaries of their potential.

We aim to maximise the potential of all of our students, including those who have the highest capacity for learning, and the importance of doing so is highlighted by economic research.

As per government guidelines, we identify students on the Most Able Children (MAC) register in order to enable teachers to meet the needs of all learners effectively. MAC refers to our most able children: those who are working, or have the potential to work, ahead of their age peers and have a high aptitude for learning.

Wildern fosters a growth mindset in all learners and members of the school community. This means that learners and staff develop and practise the belief that intelligence is not fixed and, therefore, can be grown by frequent challenge, practice and resilience. A growth mindset is particularly important for learners on the MAC Register who must be encouraged to take risks with their learning, embrace challenge and view mistakes as learning opportunities to ensure learners have the best possible chance of attaining a First at University, a wide range of career options and opportunities for personal fulfilment.

Selecting Students

Our MAC register is continuously reviewed to support students' academic development and students are identified using a multi pronged approach, including KS2 data, CATS data, Termly WAD performance, teacher and parent feedback.

This gives a list of students who should be attaining Grades 8-9 in **a suite of subjects.**

It approximately constitutes the top 10% of the year group, but it varies dependent on the ability of the cohort.

Teaching and Learning

The classroom is the main focus of stretch and challenge for all students, including those identified as MAC. Every teacher is responsible for ensuring that the learning needs of HLP learners are met, that learning is differentiated appropriately, and that under-achievement is identified swiftly so high impact and tailored interventions are implemented effectively.

Appendix 1

Evidence informed practice to improve outcomes:

- Increased depth and complexity of ideas presented
- Greater abstractness of content
- Greater ambiguity
- Opportunities to explore multiple points of view
- open -ended problem solving
- Opportunities to develop critical thinking skills beyond grade level
- Sophisticated, advanced resource materials
- Activities that require more independence
- Opportunities to make connections
- Greater choice in product and paths to production
- Accelerated pace of instruction

From 'What works in Gifted Education? A Literature Review' - Centre for Education Economics

The Thinking Hard Process

Knowledge and understanding

Reduce
Transform
Deconstruct
Derive



Reduce it



Transform it



Deconstruct it



Derive it

Analysis and application

- Prioritise
- Categorise
- Criticise
- Trends and patterns
- Practise



Prioritise it



Categorise it



Criticise it



Find Trends/
patterns

Flexibility of thinking

- Make connections
- Compare
- Extend
- Create



Connect it



Compare it



Extend it



Create it

Stretch and challenge

Stretch: *Be capable of being made longer or wider without tearing or breaking.*

Questions that unlock thinking

Explanation – Why might that be the case? How would we know that? Who might be responsible for...?

Hypothetical – What might happen if...? What would be the possible benefits/impact of X?

Evidence – How do you know that? What evidence is there to support this view?

Clarification – Can you put that another way? Can you give me an example? Can you explain that term?

Linking and extending – Can you add to what X just said? How does this idea support/challenge what we explored earlier in the lesson?

Summary and synthesis – What remains unknown at this point? What else do we need to know or do to understand this better?

Metacognition – What was the most difficult part of that task? How would you do it differently next time? How could you approach this question?

Meta questions

- **Before a Task** – How does this link to previous learning? Is this similar to a previous task? What do I want to achieve? What should I do first?
- **During The Task** – Am I on the right track? What can I do differently? Who can I ask for help?
- **After a Task** – What worked well? What could I have done better? Can I apply this to other situations? What was the most difficult aspect of this work? What made it difficult? How did I overcome this?

Able learners like to see the bigger picture: “they require context in order to be motivated to complete an activity or to put in their best effort.”
(*Potential Plus UK*)

Explain the reason for a task, what skills are being learnt through it or where it fits in the knowledge of a subject.

Give students opportunities to explore alternative viewpoints

Encourage speculation:

might, could, perhaps, may, if, possibly, arguably

Consider strategies to introduce new vocabulary (particularly tier 2 and 3 vocabulary).

Ask students to argue the reverse for a quick opportunity to challenge and extend their thinking

Appendix 2: Possible Characteristics of Most Able Learners

Learners on the MAC register are all individuals. It is difficult to generalise about behaviours and characteristics as each learner will be shaped by her experiences to date. Although some of the below might appear contradictory, look out for learners (particularly able learners) who –

1. Ask questions, often very divergent questions which may appear to have little to do with the exact topic being studied. Encourage this. If you do not know the answer, discuss how you could both explore this, show genuine interest and a delight that they want to know more about your subject.
2. Take a long time to complete work as they strive for perfection – the perfect word, punctuation mark, phrase, illustration. They may want to think about their work carefully before committing to an answer / essay / decision / opening sentence. This is why extension work is not appropriate for HLP learners – they often take longer than less capable learners. (This is less likely in Maths, Physics and Chemistry, depending on the nature of the task).
3. Learners who become very upset if anything goes wrong or want to start again if they make a small mistake. Encourage a growth mindset and model who you, as a competent, respected adult, copes when you come up against problems.
4. Challenge you and correct you! Welcome this, ponder it, ask for more information (at the end of the lesson or when the class is working independently). Never put them down or dismiss them out of hand.
5. Think divergently and creatively – have loads of possible answers!
6. Want the right answer and can get very anxious if this is not cut and dried. In subjects such as History and A&D where you are often speculating or experimenting, make it clear that you are interested in the quality of thinking, not in getting a correct answer as there might not be one.
7. Insist on including everything they know about a topic and find it hard to prioritise. Teach them strategies for identifying what is most important. Play 1 minute games (produce a 30 second radio broadcast outlining key issues, summarise in 1 sentence / 12 words / 3 words, write a text message, come up with 1 counter-argument, draw a cartoon with 1 caption). Practise timed writing and provide opportunities for learners to decide on priorities/the most important point/highest impact strategy/etc.
8. Might find mind maps impossible. Some relish the open-ended nature of mindmaps but exceptionally able learners might panic with something so wide or spend so long on one section, they get little out of it as a whole. Try offering something with more structure such as a learning mandala.
9. Are very sensitive. Home and friendship issues will feel more acute and what seems trivial to you will be overwhelming to them.
10. Find it hard to accept criticism. Be very careful to separate the learner from the work as they often see criticism as personal – avoid “**You** haven’t ...” and try, “**The essay** needs ...”
11. Are disorganised and have difficulty managing their time.
12. Might not produce neat, ordered work as the ideas come too fast – think of Leonardo Da Vinci’s!
13. Are unwilling to change their mind about an issue and be able to argue vehemently for their viewpoint. Play a game – ask them to argue for something blatantly daft, e.g. Hitler should have won the Second World War, recycling should be illegal, we don’t need to worry about extinction.
14. Have extraordinary concentration spans when the learning is inspiring.

15. Are able to draw many and wide ranging inferences.

16. Are excessively self-critical.