ST SWITHUN'S SCHOOL

SUPPORTING HIGHER-PERFORMING PUPILS POLICY (SENIOR SCHOOL)

Policy History	
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Reviewed by:

Deputy Head Academic	**Education Committee**
Charles Hammel	**Steve Bailey, Chair**
Date: September 2026	**Date: October 2026**

All pupils at St Swithun's are able. The ethos of the school is one whereby we believe that all our pupils can be high performers, and we teach and encourage all pupils to be confident learners and to develop the learning skills and behaviours that underpin high performance. This is central to our High Performance Learning (HPL) approach to learning and teaching, and throughout the school a wide range of teaching strategies are employed to this end. Consequently, we place emphasis on supporting higher-performing pupils rather than categorising the 'more able' or 'most able', while recognising the need to identify and provide appropriately for those pupils who display particularly high performance in curricular and co-curricular areas of school life.

We are always looking to challenge our highest-performing pupils through appropriate learning and teaching approaches and diverse, stimulating co-curricular and enrichment activities. Notably, our academic enrichment programme is open to all students and provides an elevated and enriching academic layer for those higher-performing students who need and are eager for rigorous academic challenges and opportunities.

Definition

Higher-performing pupils at St Swithun's display well developed learning skills and behaviours that enable them to function at a high level of efficiency and effectiveness. They have acquired and applied cognitive skills in meta-thinking, linking, analysing, creating and/or realising and combined them with positive learning behaviours of agility, hard work and empathy. They may also demonstrate advanced progression in their development of some, if not many, of the HPL skills and behaviours.

Academic departments are encouraged to establish their own subject-specific exemplification of these general principles. The school recognises that pupils may exhibit high performance in one or in a variety of areas, and it should also be borne in mind that some higher-performing students may also develop particular characteristics as they progress through school, such as:

- A tendency to question rules and authority;
- A well-developed sense of humour;
- Growing self-determination, stamina and powers of concentration.

Higher-performing pupils may also appear on the EAL register and/or learning support register, where their profiles inform provision and support for their progress and performance.

Identification

We consider the following in identifying our highest-performing students:

- Teacher identification through regular discussion in departmental meetings and annual departmental pupil identifications;
- Pupil development of the HPL learning skills and behaviours;

- Internal and external assessment results, including progress reviews; written reports; results from school examinations and assessments; results from public examinations.
- Standardised results from baseline assessments: MidYIS (L4 to L5), Yellis (M5) and ALIS (L6).
- Parent, peer and self-identification: input from parents, peers and pupils themselves.
- Involvement in our academic enrichment programme activities, which are open to all.
- Awarding of scholarships in a variety of areas: academic; art; drama; mathematics; music; and sport.

Academic departments set out their subject criteria for identification in their departmental handbooks.

Provision for higher-performing pupils

Each department develops and reviews regularly its learning and teaching provision to support high performance for all students. Specific approaches for higher-performing pupils are detailed in departmental handbooks. Heads of departments ensure that opportunities for extension and enrichment are built into departmental schemes of work and co-curricular offerings, and departmental handbooks cover approaches to adaptive teaching and personalising learning to support high performance for all students.

Most subjects at St Swithun's are taught in mixed groups throughout the school, however in certain subject areas setting is used for some year groups so that all students are taught in groups that best support their progress and performance: English language and literature (M5 and U5); mathematics (L4, U4, L5, M5 and U5); and modern languages (L5, M5 and U5, subject to timetabling). Where appropriate, grouping into divisions (sets) may be arranged such that higher-performing pupils are taught with their performance peers.

The following are examples of strategies used to support all pupils, including those who are higher-performing:

- Adaptive teaching, for example in relation to dialogue, resource, task, support, pace and independence;
- Activities that explicitly and deliberately target development of the HPL learning skill areas of meta-thinking, linking, analysing, creating and automaticity;
- Learning tasks which are creative and have an open ceiling of achievement;
- Independent learning opportunities;
- Enrichment and/or extension activities.

Within the curriculum we also provide:

- A whole-school enrichment programme, Stretch, which is followed by all year groups for one hour each week;

- In the sixth form the opportunity for all students optionally to complete the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ).

Outside of timetabled lessons we provide:

- An extensive co-curricular programme, including activities at lunchtime, after school and at weekends;
- Participation in regional and national competitions;
- Visits to school by experts, e.g. scientists, academics, authors, artists, musicians, etc.
- Access to external masterclasses, summer schools, etc.

In addition to the above, the academic enrichment programme offers many opportunities for students to explore academic ideas, engage with and participate in research, develop critical and creative thinking skills and grow intellectual confidence. Examples of academic enrichment activities include:

- Break and lunchtime activities, e.g. student-led academic lunch seminars and reading groups; academic journal club (Oracle); junior STEM club; student-led initiatives such as Philosothon, one-off projects and 'languages from scratch' taster sessions.
- Competitions, e.g. one-word essay competition; support and encouragement for entering external competitions; poster competitions; whole-school quizzes.
- Conferences and projects, e.g. academic conference event for M5 and U5; lower school critical thinking conference; family history project; TEDx St Swithun's.
- Specific courses within the Stretch programme, such as podcast research for M5.

Scholars benefit from a mentoring programme tailored to the area of their scholarship (academic; art; drama; mathematics; music; sport), with the support of a designated teacher mentor whose role is to encourage and help them to develop their interests and to take advantage of the wide-ranging provision outlined above.

Awareness, information and good practice in supporting the highest-performing pupils are shared across the school through the following arrangements:

- Information about those pupils identified as highest performing is maintained and shared with all teaching and boarding staff. This is intended to raise teachers' awareness of pupils' particular areas of high performance across many aspects of school life. Teachers are expected to note higher-performing pupils in their own and other subject areas and refer appropriately to them in their planning.
- MidYIS, Yellis and ALIS baseline data are made available to all teaching and boarding staff.
- All staff have access to pupil attainment data for internal assessments, examinations and reporting points, which is cross-referenced baseline data.

- High performance is valued and celebrated in numerous ways, including via the school rewards system (epraise), in assemblies and publicised to the wider school and community.

Related policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Curriculum policy
- EAL policy
- Learning support policy