

## What is a highly able learner?

It is generally accepted that highly able learners tend to fit into one of 3 categories:

- ‘all-rounders’ who perform well across all or most areas of the curriculum
- those who display aptitude in a small group of related subjects e.g. science
- those whose talents lie in one single area

In Scotland we use the term highly able although you may also be familiar with other terms used internationally including gifted & talented.

It is estimated that between 10% - 20% of the school population is considered highly able at any one time. Children in the Early Years sector can also be identified as highly able.

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009, includes highly able children as a category within the spectrum of additional support needs.

For some children, their needs can be met through class teacher differentiation. However, others may require supports and adaptations beyond this. In consultation with you and your child, they may be included in the establishment’s Additional Support Needs (ASN) log.

## What are some common characteristics?

- Learns easily and readily
- Avid curiosity
- Superior powers of reasoning, abstraction, synthesis, questioning and comprehension
- Wide range of interests or a great interest in a narrow field
- Talent in the field of expressive arts (e.g. music, drama) or sport
- Superior vocabulary
- Early and/or rapid reader
- An interest in philosophical issues

Some children may have other additional support needs in conjunction with their high ability e.g. autism, dyslexia, English as an Additional Language (EAL), physical disability.

## What are the needs of highly able learners?

- The opportunity to take risks in an organised way with the facility to fail without threat
- Opportunities to work collaboratively with pupils of a similar ability
- Activities well-matched to their learning style
- Only as much instruction as is needed
- Opportunities to develop work further
- A balance of working with urgency and pace as well as time to reflect
- Work set in a way in which creativity and imagination are involved extensively

## What should I do if I think my child is highly able?

If you think your child is highly able and requires additional support your first point of contact would be to talk to staff at your child’s school/ECC.

## What supports might my child receive?

### Within the classroom:

**Enrichment** – offering breadth through a broader range of context, tasks and resources. Enrichment should reduce the pressure for learners to progress to new levels too quickly.

**Extension** – increasing depth of learning through the complexity of the task.

**Acceleration** – the speed in which the pace of learning occurs.

**Beyond the classroom:** e.g. alternative homework tasks; supporting challenges arising from attending clubs/organisations e.g. swimming club.

## Social and emotional support

*Studies show that teaching children to have a “growth mindset” which encourages a focus on effort rather than on intelligence or talent, can help their development as high achievers in school and in life.*

## How can I help?

- Encourage your child to join classes or clubs relevant to his/her talent
- Share and support their interests
- Encourage your child to discuss their views and opinions on what they read, hear and see
- Foster their general knowledge through reading non-fiction (online newspaper and magazine articles) as well as fiction, watching documentaries and keeping up to date with the news



## Who else can help?

East Ayrshire Support Team (EAST) provide support to meet the needs of highly able children by:

- Supporting with assessment and information gathering to help identify next steps
- Providing direct teaching support
- Contributing to Team Around the Child (TAC) meetings
- Developing support materials
- Providing training and support materials for staff on current best practice
- Offering advisory support and guidance e.g. signposting to resources and approaches

## What other supports are available?

The **Scottish Network for Able Pupils (SNAP)** is a national organisation supported by Education Scotland based at University of Glasgow. It has specialised in teaching and learning for highly able pupils for over 20 years.

More information can be found on:

[www.gla.ac.uk/ablepupils](http://www.gla.ac.uk/ablepupils)

There are a number of other organisations that you can access online. These offer advice, resources and support.

### For further information please contact:

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EAST AYRSHIRE SUPPORT TEAM

Information Leaflet

**Supporting  
Highly Able  
Learners**

**A Guide for  
Parents/Carers**