

## Stretch and Challenge Policy April 2021

**Reviewed By:** Sarah Fox, Charli Waller

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**Next review:** April 2022

**Related Policies:** SEND Policy, Curriculum Policy, Assessment Policy and Procedure

### Endorsement

Full endorsement is given to this policy by:

**Name:** Joel Chalfen

**Position:** Cambridge Steiner School Trustee

**Signed:**



**Date:** April 2021

### 1.0. Philosophy

At Cambridge Steiner School we believe that all children are entitled to an education that will enable them to develop to their full potential. We will support each pupil to develop their personal potential in order to achieve a balance of physical, socio-emotional, intellectual and spiritual health.

We want children to be motivated through a love of learning to explore new territory, uninhibited by a fear of failure. We believe that children come to school with a tacit expectation to learn new things and to progress. It is essential that this desire to learn is fulfilled and harnessed. We seek to find tasks that stimulate an inner striving in the child to go beyond the limits of their current knowledge and understanding. A healthy educational experience might be achieved by balancing the consolidation of existing learning with new knowledge and skills.

In this regard our main aims are as follows:

- To maintain an ethos where all abilities and talents, are identified, nourished, challenged and celebrated to the school's best endeavour.
- To provide a wide, interesting and challenging curriculum appropriate to each stage of child development in line with Steiner pedagogy.
- To include opportunities for stretch, challenge and enrichment of learning according to individual needs.

## 2.0 Stretch and Challenge for All

We embrace the notion that all children need to feel appropriately challenged by their education. This helps to create a learning buzz in the classroom and fosters enthusiastic and dynamic learners. However we recognise that a healthy approach to challenge in the classroom is one that is high challenge low threat (Myatt 2016). As well as leading children to new discoveries, Stretch and challenge can also be achieved by a deepening and a refinement of existing skills and knowledge. Teachers must endeavour to plan various tasks for different pupils so that all are challenged appropriately. Our approach is as follows:

- Give children the opportunity to demonstrate their skills and abilities
- Identify the varying needs within the class
- Offer appropriate challenge through, tasks set, appropriate questioning, greater depth and refinement/excellence.

## 3.0 Enriching Experiences

Teachers seek to provide enriching educational experiences that awaken interest and anticipation in the children. These experiences may take the form of a narrative, an observation, a practical activity, an artistic experience, a science experiment etc. The teacher then draws the learning out of these experiences and sets a range of task according to the aptitudes, talents, and interests of particular pupils.

## 4.0 Tasks Set

The nature and difficulty of the tasks set ought to be such that the pupil is fully engaged in the activity without being stressed or overwhelmed. If tasks are insufficiently challenging and children remain in their comfort zone then they may become bored and demotivated; Contrarily if tasks set are too challenging this can induce stress and panic and have a negative impact on the child's self-esteem and attitude to learning; however if children are appropriately challenged then they are more likely to be full of anticipation, develop a love of learning and engage enthusiastically with the task. (Senniger 2000) This is the most efficient form of teaching and optimises the child's capacity to learn, it is in line with what Steiner refers to as a Soul Economy in teaching.

Challenge is not only about exploring new territory; it can also entail tasks that **deepen** existing knowledge and skills and tasks that **refine** what has already been assimilated. Children can also be challenged by being set high expectations for a given task.

Tasks set should be:

- Meaningful and of interest to the child,
- High challenge low stress
- Building on previous knowledge and skills

## 5.0 An ethic of excellence

We aim to create an ethic of excellence by:

- Showing students what *excellence* looks like – what are your standards?
- Planning tasks that allow them to demonstrate *excellence* – and to want to be *excellent*.
- Using feedback to support them with getting to *excellent*.
- Not accepting anything other than *excellent* work.
- Celebrating *excellence*.
- Assign work that matters
- Study examples of excellence- Look at excellent work of former students. Unpick what makes it excellent

## 6.0 Questioning

High quality questions can help to stretch and engage children. Questions that are open and require the learner to think for themselves and be imaginative are more likely to challenge pupils than questioning that only calls on the power of memory. The right kind of questions can stimulate the pupil to think more deeply about something or lead them to develop new ideas and concepts.

These are the types of questions that might lead the pupils to a greater depth of learning:

- What's the question? (if this is the answer, what could the question have been?)
- What's wrong with this? (can you explain what is wrong and correct the error?)
- Draw a picture to explain or demonstrate what you have worked out
- Find the pattern (describe a pattern)
- Compare and contrast (what is the same? What is different?)
- Explain how you know
- Prove it (convince me that you are right)
- Have you found all the possibilities?
- Apply it (use in a different context)

## 7.0 Refinement

High quality feedback is one of the best ways of enhancing learning for all pupils. (Hattie 2000)

The rules of good critique (from teacher and peers):

1. Be Kind
2. Be Specific
3. Be Helpful
4. Look carefully, observe truthfully

Pupils should be encouraged to redraft work responding to the critique until they achieve excellence:

- Multiple drafts as a result of feedback
- Never accept the first attempt
- Is it excellent yet?

## 8.0 Opportunities for presentation:

Opportunities for presentation helps to stimulate pupils to achieve more and to give their best:

- Share work with classmates
- Share work with parents
- Classroom displays
- Share work with other teachers/students
- Share work in public places

## 9.0 Identifying 'more able' children

In order to ensure that all children are appropriately challenged, it is necessary to identify your most able children. This can be done as follows:

Children can be identified through assessment of:

- Knowledge, skills, attainment, rate of progress
- Behaviours

- Information from others – parents, peers, professionals

For a list of the characteristics of able learners and factors that inhibit stretch and challenge please see Appendix 1.

## Appendix 1

Those with a high learning potential have the following characteristics:

- are able to learn quickly
- have a rich vocabulary
- have an excellent memory
- have a long attention span
- are early or avid readers
- persevere when interested
- have a wide range of interests
- are good at puzzles
- reason well (good thinkers)
- show ability with numbers
- show compassion
- are perfectionists
- are intense
- have strong curiosity
- are emotionally sensitive (feelings hurt easily)
- are morally sensitive
- have a high level of energy
- prefer older companions/adults
- have a quirky or grown-up sense of humour
- are concerned with justice and fairness
- tend to question authority
- have judgement mature for age at times
- are highly creative
- are keen observers
- have a vivid imagination

## Factors that inhibit Stretch and challenge

- Excessive pace
- Overloading of activities/content
- Inflexible planning
- Limited time for independent work
- Concentrating too long or too early on a narrow range of information.
- Focusing on just one skill set
- Focusing on just one subject area
- Feeding lots of facts to pupils
- Only praising success