Educating Pupils Who Are More Able and Talented: Guidance for Local Education Authorities

Date of Issue: 8th August 2003
End of Consultation: 31st October 2003

Adran Hyfforddiant ac Addysg
Department for Training and Education

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Pupil Support Division

Consultation Document
Title of Document: Educating Pupils Who Are More Able and Talented: Guidance for Local Authorities

Audience: Schools, Local Education Authorities, parents, families, school governors and voluntary organisations.

Overview: This document is intended to act as a guidance for local education authorities. It discusses issues for consideration when planning to meet the needs of pupils who are more able and talented.

Action required: All interested parties to respond by 31 October 2003.

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LEA GUIDANCE FOR PUPILS WHO ARE MORE ABLE AND TALENTED

FOREWORD

In the paving document *The Learning Country* I proposed that all pupils in Wales should have the best start in life and be given the opportunity to reach their full potential. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to raising the standard of teaching and learning in all the schools in Wales, valuing and supporting the teaching profession to achieve this. In the move to raise standards for all pupils, the needs of pupils who are more able and talented cannot be ignored. Research shows that schools who cater for more able and talented pupils improve the quality of learning and raise standards for all pupils.

In view of this I asked that a Task and Finish Group be established with the remit of producing guidance that would offer advice to Local Education Authorities on how best to address the needs of pupils who are more able and talented. In Wales we propose to use the term ‘more able and talented’ to describe pupils who require extended opportunities across the curriculum in order to develop their abilities in one or more areas. Approximately 20% of the school population may be ‘more able’, while the top 2% could be considered ‘exceptional’. This guidance therefore offers advice on how best to support a large percentage of our pupils, acknowledging also that ability and talent can manifest itself in many different ways. For example it recognises that it is important to address the needs of the creative, able child who may struggle to achieve an ‘average’ in National Tests.

The Task and Finish Group consisted of representatives from the Welsh Assembly Government, ACCAC, Estyn, Local Education Authorities and the voluntary sector. Members of the Group have also worked closely with the All Wales Steering Group for ‘More Able’ and ‘Talented’ and the ACCAC working party tasked with producing curriculum guidance for schools. I would argue that the guidance that has been produced by the Task and Finish Group should assist Local Education Authorities in raising standards in relation to boys’ underachievement, the basic skills strategy, accelerated learning, inclusion and school improvement.

Your comments on this consultation document will be warmly welcomed and given due consideration as we aim to raise standards for all pupils in Wales.

JANE DAVIDSON
Minister for Education and Lifelong Learning
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SUMMARY

EDUCATING PUPILS WHO ARE MORE ABLE AND TALENTED: GUIDANCE FOR LOCAL EDUCATION AUTHORITIES

The consultation invites comments on a draft document which offers guidance to Local Education Authorities on how to support schools and other stakeholders in meeting the needs of ‘more able’ and ‘talented’ pupils.

It builds on the proposals in the Learning Country to develop Wales as a country in which all individuals are given the opportunities and encouragement to achieve their full learning potential.

The consultation focuses on:

- **Definition** - in terms of creating a more inclusive definition in Wales which will include over 20% of the school population.

- **Aims and Objectives of the Guidance in Relation to LEAs** - for some LEAs, the guidance will supplement existing documentation. It aims to promote inclusive practice and equality of opportunity. It seeks to clarify issues in relation to identification, assessment and provision.

- **Identification** - makes recommendations on how LEAs can support schools in this process, discussing a range of approaches and procedures.

- **Effective Provision for More Able and Talented Pupils** - examines teaching and learning style, matching provision to individual needs, extra curricular activities and partnerships.

- **Managing Provision for More Able and Talented Pupils** - discussion on roles and responsibilities in relation to LEAs, schools, governing bodies and parents.

- **Management Guidelines for LEAs** - examines ways in which LEAs can monitor their policies and makes reference to a self-evaluation checklist for LEAs.

- **Appendices** - a diagram shows the relationships, roles and responsibilities of schools, LEAs, parents/carers, pupils, and the voluntary sector. A self-evaluation checklist is designed to assist in an LEA audit of policy and provision for ‘more able’ and ‘talented’ pupils.

This draft guidance represents the work of a Task and Finish Group with an interest and expertise in supporting pupils who are ‘more able’ and ‘talented’. Its aim is to advise LEAs on how best to meet the needs of such pupils.
INTRODUCTION

The Welsh Assembly Government aims to develop Wales as ‘a learning country’ in which all individuals are given the opportunities and encouragement to achieve their full learning potential. The Welsh Assembly Government is committed to fostering high levels of achievement for all its pupils:

‘We want all our pupils to have the best start in life. The opportunity to reach their full potential, and a clear entitlement to influence the services that affect them..... We want to drive up standards of teaching and learning in all our schools, valuing and supporting the teaching profession to achieve this’.  

The Learning Country, 2001

The needs of more able and talented pupils cannot be separated from the move to raise standards for all pupils e.g. boys’ underachievement, the basic skills strategy, accelerated learning, inclusion and school improvement. Research shows that schools who cater for more able and talented pupils improve the quality of learning and raise standards of achievement for all pupils.

A Task and Finish Group consisting of representatives from the Welsh Assembly Government, ACCAC, Estyn, Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) and voluntary organisations was therefore established in order to assist LEAs in their work with more able and talented pupils. The group was given the remit of writing guidance for LEAs with regards to the education of such pupils in Wales. The guidance is intended to compliment the work that has been undertaken by ACCAC and some of the sub group members have consequently been involved with both projects.
DEFINITION

This guidance subscribes to the definitions of ‘more able and talented’ set out in the guidance that ACCAC has produced for schools entitled ‘A Curriculum of Opportunity: Developing Potential into Performance’. In Wales, the term ‘more able’ and ‘talented’ is used to describe “pupils who require extended opportunities across the curriculum in order to develop their abilities in one or more areas”. In every school there will be a group of pupils who require greater extension of breadth and depth of learning activities than is normally provided for the usual cohort of learners. In general, approximately 20% of the school population may be ‘more able’ while the top 2% could be considered ‘exceptional’. Ability and talent can manifest itself in many different ways e.g. academic, practical, creative and social fields of human activity. It should be noted that some pupils who are more able and talented could also have a specific learning difficulty. It is important therefore to recognise the needs of the creative, able child who struggles to achieve an ‘average’ in National Tests.
AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE GUIDANCE

Aims

Provision for those pupils who might be described as ‘more able’ or ‘talented’ varies across local education authorities (LEAs) in Wales. Some LEAs have working policies, others are just beginning to develop them. This guidance aims to supplement the documentation and procedures that some LEAs already have in place and assist others in the writing of a policy for the education of more able and talented pupils. It is intended to complement the ACCAC publication ‘A Curriculum of Opportunity’. It aims to promote inclusive practice; this is an equal opportunities issue as all pupils need to receive appropriate challenges and support to enable them to progress and achieve their full learning potential.

Objectives

The guidance has the following objectives:

- to clarify definitions;
- to provide specific guidance on identification;
- to highlight the characteristics of high quality provision across LEAs and within schools;
- to clarify the relationship between LEAs, schools and governing bodies in managing provision for more, able and talented pupils;
- to offer guidelines for LEA policy development, monitoring and evaluation;
- to promote effective working relationships with individual parents/carers and voluntary groups.
IDENTIFICATION

Identification of more able and talented pupils and their needs

It is the responsibility of every school to meet the needs of all its pupils. To achieve this, schools should identify the needs and abilities of each pupil, including those who are more able and talented. They should be provided with the appropriate opportunities and challenges that will enable them to learn as effectively as they can. This should be a continuous, whole school process, underpinned by classroom and curriculum arrangements.

LEAs might recommend that schools establish a range of identification processes which take into account:

- the full range of abilities and ‘intelligences’ possessed by pupils;
- the extent to which abilities can be measured through attainment and through performance and gender bias testing;
- the informed opinions of a wide range of adults, including teaching and non teaching staff, parents/carers and other adults in the community e.g. youth group leaders, team coaches; and
- relevant information from previous education providers.

Particular care should be taken to ensure that identification processes are broadly based in order to identify children including those with the potential to achieve at higher levels and those who may be underachieving.

The approaches selected could include taking into account any of the following:

- teacher observation and assessment, using agreed criteria, such as generic and subject checklists (see ‘A Curriculum of Opportunity: Developing Potential into Performance’);
- National Curriculum attainment and non attainment e.g. tests and Teacher Assessment;
- attainment in externally accredited courses e.g. GCSEs;
- standardised test scores;
- involvement and achievement in competitions;
- achievements in extra-curricular activities;
- nomination by the child’s parent(s)/carer(s);
- peer group nomination;
- external agency nomination e.g. health visitor.

Schools should recognise that if all abilities are to be identified, then a range of appropriate curricular opportunities also need to be provided to allow children to demonstrate their abilities. Schools should provide a curriculum of opportunity where pupils have the chance to ‘show off’ their diverse talents and strengths. Schools should strive to ‘catch the children being bright’ in a number of situations.
Procedures for identification need to be flexible and transparent in order that pupils from all backgrounds are given the opportunity to demonstrate their full potential. In particular, schools should be cautious when using identification and assessment processes that:

- are dependent on words, limiting the achievement of children for whom English is an additional language, or for whom language is less developed;
- fail to take into account of multi-lingual capacity;
- are culturally specific, discriminating against children who have recently moved to a country, or which may fail to recognize the pupils’ ability within their own cultural background;
- fail to take into account the pupil’s achievements outside school, overlooking children who may be underachieving in class; or
- do not motivate children to succeed.

It is good practice for each school to monitor the backgrounds and characteristics of pupils identified as more able and talented to ensure that no particular groups are under-represented.

The LEA can support schools in the identification of more able and talented pupils by:

- providing relevant guidance and training for teachers and school managers;
- providing schools with information about pupils’ attainment which will ensure identification especially after transfer between schools; and
- providing specific guidance and support in the assessment of children from minority groups and providing relevant feedback to schools to develop their practices.

In writing a policy document, LEAs should consider:

- how to raise teachers awareness and ability to identify and respond to pupils who are more, able and talented;
- how to use data which is LEA/school/individual pupil based (e.g. CATs, National Test Results, YELLIS) to assist in the identification of more able and talented pupils; and
- what training schools need to interpret the data for themselves.
EFFECTIVE PROVISION FOR MORE ABLE AND TALENTED PUPILS

The intention of educational provision for all pupils should be to help each pupil to:

- nurture skills which enable him/her to learn more effectively, such as how to carry out research and become an independent learner;
- form effective practices in learning, such as learning how to collaborate with others;
- explore their creativity;
- develop higher order learning skills and problem-solving techniques;
- develop personally, socially and emotionally;
- develop motivation and aspirations which enable them to take advantage of continuing opportunities for lifelong learning;
- recognise the enjoyment of learning; and
- secure the highest standards of attainments, including examinations and tests.

The range of provision made should take account of learning styles and offer opportunities for the child to demonstrate high ability and expert performance.

Schools should be encouraged to raise standards and match provision to pupils’ abilities, needs and aspirations. This should be supported by:

- effective classroom teaching;
- a classroom climate in which pupils are motivated to learn;
- accurate identification of abilities and needs;
- appropriate curriculum provision;
- appropriate pastoral support;
- access to relevant extra-curricular activities; and
- positive planning and partnership with the pupil and his/her parent(s).

The National Curriculum must be the starting point for planning a school curriculum that meets the specific needs of individual and groups of pupils. In meeting the needs of more able and talented pupils schools should consider:

- extending the breadth and depth and pace of study within individual subjects;
- extending opportunities using the common requirements within and across subjects e.g. problem solving, creative skills;
- drawing on materials from higher levels of study, giving careful consideration to the mode of delivery.

In planning to meet the needs of more able and talented pupils, schools will need to consider a number of organisational issues, such as mixed ability teaching,
streaming, setting and advancing a pupil to a later year group. The decision to adopt any of these approaches remains with the school, but care should be taken when implementing such an approach to consider all the issues involved in making the decision.

Good teaching of more able and talented pupils has the essential characteristics of good teaching for any pupil. It is characterized by planning more creatively, using more demanding resources, teaching pupils deliberately how to engage fully with the subject and creating a classroom climate where children are motivated to learn with increasing independence. Good teaching is often dependent on the teachers’ own specialist expertise and scholarship, in addition to their charisma and willingness to explore new learning opportunities. It is a sharing process. Schools may wish to explore these characteristics through staff discussions and planned training and support.

Good classroom provision can be complemented by school-based enrichment activities such as school clubs, visits and ‘master classes’. Schools should ensure that any activities organised by the school are safe and of a high quality. Schools should also aim to ensure that children are not barred from participation because of:

- cost, including any additional cost of travel to and from school;
- inappropriate identification of children for whom the activity is planned or for whom the activity would be of benefit; or
- any disability which results in less favourable treatment than that received by others.

The LEA can support schools and parents in making effective provision by:

- identifying and monitoring the provision available in their area and disseminating best practice;
- providing opportunities for curriculum leaders and school managers to share best practice in making provision for more able and talented pupils;
- providing training opportunities for teachers and school governors to develop their skills; and
- promoting and working in national and local partnerships to extend the range of provision available.
MANAGING PROVISION FOR MORE ABLE AND TALENTED PUPILS

Roles and Responsibilities

A summary of the roles and responsibilities of the groups discussed in this section can be found in Appendix A.

The role of the local education authority

It is the role of the LEA to support schools in helping all pupils achieve their full learning potential, including those who are considered to be more able and talented.

LEAs can help schools maintain high standards by:

• establishing an LEA policy on the education of more able and talented pupils;
• ensuring that the policy is developed in partnership with schools;
• ensuring that the policy is made available to all relevant partners in the education of more, able and talented pupils e.g. parents, voluntary organisations, the business community;
• identifying and monitoring the provision for more, able and talented pupils that is available within their geographical area;
• giving advice and support to teachers and parents in gaining access to such provision;
• monitoring its implementation;
• evaluating the impact of the policy on practice and standards; and
• reviewing the policy at regular intervals.

In order to secure high standards and promote school improvement, the LEA should:

• provide relevant information to schools to encourage them to offer appropriate challenges to more able and talented pupils;
• provide help and advice on school management, curriculum, pedagogy and transition in relation to these pupils, and disseminate best practice;
• enhance the provision for more able and talented pupils through joint work with schools and partnership with other groups and providers;
• identify sources of funding which can support the further development of provision;
• identify and promote improvements in schools in which provision for more able and talented pupils is causing concern; and
• encourage joint planning and use of resources to meet the needs of these pupils e.g. groups of schools, LEA consortia, summer school.
To ensure that the needs of more able and talented pupils from different socio-economic groups and minority groups are met, the LEA should promote arrangements for identification and assessment of needs and subsequent provision that is equally accessible to children who are:

- educated in mainstream schools;
- educated otherwise that at school;
- from minority ethnic groups;
- travellers;
- in the "looked after" system;
- special educational needs and/or who have disabilities;
- have English as an additional language;
- are educated "out of county"; or
- are excluded from school

**The role of the school**

Schools should be encouraged to:

- have a policy on teaching and learning that supports high expectations of all pupils;
- establish procedures for identification which are flexible, effective and non-discriminatory;
- be alert to groups of pupils who are underachieving, such as highly mobile children, ethnic minority groups, children in care, etc;
- to support and encourage a change in attitudes and behaviour to overcome negative stereotyped generalisations about more, able and talented pupils;
- monitor the outcomes and track the progress of such pupils, taking appropriate action to promote their interests;
- analyse attainment data, including performance data in sport and the creative arts; and
- provide training for staff as well as support for pupils and their parents.

Within Estyn's framework for inspection schools are expected to ensure that the needs of more able and talented pupils are being met. The access statement for National Curriculum subject orders should recognise provision for more able and talented pupils.

Estyn note that:

- curricular provision for such pupils could include enrichment, extension or acceleration (e.g. individual work programmes, additional subjects or projects, early entry to examination), and
- extra-curricular provision for such pupils could include local mentors, Saturday clubs, after school activities, or LEA provision such as sports teams, orchestras and residential courses.
The role of the school’s governing body

School governors have an important role to play in the introduction of a school policy for more able and talented pupils. Working together with staff, they can help to ensure that the policy fits the particular ethos of the school. The school should consider whether or not to appoint a governor with special responsibility for this area.

Governors can ensure that parents are well informed about the strategy and engage their support. They may be a useful in establishing links throughout the community.

Governors might decide:

- how the policy might be monitored;
- ensure that the monitoring is implemented appropriately; and
- evaluate the impact of the policy.

They should be aware of the possible implications for extra funding for staffing, new resources, non-contact time and staff training. The governing body should seek to increase its knowledge by arranging for one or more governors to attend training in this area.

The LEA can support governing bodies by:

- providing training opportunities and support for school governors to develop their understanding about the identification and provision for pupils who are more able and talented; and
- assisting them to develop and implement school policy.

Partnership with Parents

Parents and school working together can significantly enhance a child’s experience of education through:

- effective identification of strengths and needs, especially when starting a new school;
- recognising together that learning to learn and the enjoyment of learning are as important as passing tests and examinations;
- sharing high but realistic expectations of further success;
- agreeing on the need for a broad, balanced curriculum which provides challenges, in relevant areas but avoids the undue pressure that comes from an expectation of high ability in everything all of the time;
- building on shared knowledge; and
- sharing successes and concerns.

Effective partnership will be based on trust and on each partner valuing the other.

Research suggests that parents value schools where staff are approachable, flexible, willing to listen and discuss possible courses of action openly. Schools which have a well developed ethos and processes for involving parents in the school’s life are most likely to be successful in forming effective partnerships.
Schools should ensure that parents are aware of the school’s policy for more able and talented pupils and know whom to contact about their child’s needs or their own needs as parents. Parents should know how to make a complaint, and to whom, should they need to do so.

In return research shows that schools value parents who are willing to help and get involved, and can see different points of view and understand the ways in which schools operate. Schools may find it helpful to discuss with parents how best they can help their child within and outside the school curriculum, especially in the early years where experiences are crucial in order to develop higher order skills.

To support effective partnerships the LEA should:

- give advice and support to parents and teachers about making provision for more able and talented pupils;
- where necessary help to improve the partnership between the school and parents if this is preventing the child from receiving appropriate provision.
MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES FOR LEAS

Monitoring the policy

The LEA should monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the policy on a regular basis through:

- monitoring the extent to which objectives in the authority’s strategy are met;
- analysing the progress of high attaining pupils using a range of indicators;
- annual joint reviews of standards and school provision by performance management consultants and headteachers;
- review of Estyn’s inspection reports;
- analysis of any parental concerns or complaints about provision;
- review of participation of teachers in relevant INSET; and
- review of the additions to the range of provision made within the authority.

A self-evaluation checklist for LEAs can be found in Appendix B.
APPENDIX A: SUMMARY OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**LEA**
- Guidance
- Liaison
- Co-ordination
- Training
- Services

**SCHOOLS**
- Policy
- Management and leadership
- Curriculum Planning
- Assessment
- Teacher and Learning
- Co-ordination

**PARENTS & LEARNERS**
- Catalysts
- Mentors
- Investors

**VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS**
- Advise
- Guidance
- Publication
- Training
### APPENDIX B: SELF-EVALUATION CHECKLIST FOR LEAS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE PRESENT POSITION</th>
<th>ACTION REQUIRED/PERSON RESPONSIBLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. CONDUCTING AN AUDIT</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Has the LEA carried out an audit of need based on the definition in this guidance?</td>
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<td>Does the LEA keep a register of such pupils?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Where are the pupils educated?</td>
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<td>What are the shortfalls in the service?</td>
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<td>Could the LEA identify the pattern of needs by:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ethnicity</td>
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<td>• Age</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Additional Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>What Assessment Tools are used for identification?</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE PRESENT POSITION</td>
<td>ACTION REQUIRED/PERSON RESPONSIBLE</td>
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<td>2. INCLUSION</td>
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<td>Does the LEAs inclusion strategy refer to pupils who are more able and talented?</td>
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<td>Does the LEA have a designated officer responsible for the education of more able and talented pupils?</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE PRESENT POSITION</td>
<td>ACTION REQUIRED/PERSON RESPONSIBLE</td>
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<td><strong>3. POLICY</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the LEA have a specific policy for more able and talented pupils?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the policy clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of schools and LEAs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does the policy include:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• clarification of the roles of partner organisations involved in provision or such pupils?</td>
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<td>• realistic estimates of resource needs?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• references to teacher training on meeting the needs of more able and talented pupils?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• references to the roles and responsibilities of the LEA in relation to parents and learners?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• references the roles and responsibilities of the LEA in relation to the school governing body?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• an implementation plan?</td>
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<tr>
<td>THE PRESENT POSITION</td>
<td>ACTION REQUIRED/PERSON RESPONSIBLE</td>
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<td>(Continued 3. POLICY)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• details of any designated funding for implementing the proposals?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• details of how the policy will be monitored and evaluated?</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Details of how this information will be made available to schools and other stakeholders?</td>
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