

# We Count Too: Highly Able Pupils in Scottish Schools



## Foreword

In recent years Scotland has been implementing a new curriculum framework, Curriculum for Excellence (CfE). This framework seeks to *achieve a transformation in education in Scotland by providing a coherent, more flexible and enriched curriculum from 3 to 18* (Education Scotland). Within this framework it is acknowledged that some children and young people may require different or additional support to what is normally provided in Scottish schools. More specifically 'Building the Curriculum 3' provides the framework for planning a curriculum that meets the needs of all children and young people from 3 to 18, and consequently should offer amongst other things personalisation, enjoyment and depth. In theory this curricular approach is very well suited to the needs of highly able pupils. These curricular and policy developments are underpinned by legislative advances including, The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, that came into force in 2005 and was amended in 2009. This Act places a duty on local education authorities to *provide additional support where needed to enable any child or young person to benefit from education* (Education Scotland). This forward thinking Act enshrined in law, for the first time, the needs of highly able pupils. The aim of the current report is to provide a synthesis of practice from education authorities across Scotland. It will explore questions relating to identification, provision, assessment and continuing professional development. Scotland, as with all other countries, has children and young people who are capable of high achievement in one or more areas. Identifying these children and young people and fully meeting their needs can prove to be a complex and challenging task for parents and school staff alike. While we recognise that no one term is ideal, throughout this report the term "highly able" is used, as this is the current terminology adopted within Scottish Education. For the purposes of this report, we have assumed that "highly able pupil" refers to children and young people who are working or who could be working ahead of their age peers. We have also assumed that the term includes children and young people who are "highly able" across the curriculum as well as those who are "highly able" in one or more particular areas. Underpinning this report is the premise that high ability is just one factor in school and life success.

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This report will be of interest to those who seek to ensure that highly able learners are challenged and supported appropriately. We hope that all who read this document will find it valuable in their work with highly able children and young people and their families.

Dr Margaret Sutherland  
Project Director

Dr Niamh Stack  
Development Director

## Introduction

All staff in Scottish schools are expected to support learners in a way that takes account of wellbeing, inclusion, equity and fairness (Education Scotland, online). This has become known as Universal Support and should be available for every Scottish pupil. At the heart of this approach is personal learning planning. Personal learning planning aims to ensure that all pupils are offered appropriate and planned learning experiences that take account of individual needs and abilities. Regular reviews between pupils and staff should ensure that there is progress along the learning journey. However it is acknowledged that some children and young people may require support for their learning that is in addition to this Universal Support. This is known as Targeted Support. Targeted Support may be offered for short periods of time or it may be required throughout a young person's time at school.

The reasons why a child or young person may require targeted support are many and varied. A child might require additional targeted support if they are dyslexic or autistic for example but equally they may require additional targeted support if they are working, or are capable of working, in advance of their peers. It is important to note that children and young people may also present with multiple exceptionalities. In other words they might be working ahead of their peers in some areas but they may also be dyslexic. It can be particularly challenging to correctly identify the additional support needs of children with multiple exceptionalities as the intertwined layers of requirements can be difficult to untangle and prioritise. Whatever the reason for considering targeted support, the approach to offering this support is often similar. The Code of Practice explains the duties on Education Authorities (EA) and other agencies to support pupils. It also 'provides guidance on the Act's provisions as well as on the supporting framework of secondary legislation' (Scottish Government, online). The code advises a staged approach to intervention that links to the planning outlined in Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC).

Every year national statistics are gathered by the Scottish Government from schools across Scotland. These statistics are available on the Scottish Government website and are used to provide a snapshot of education across Scotland and to inform policy and practice developments. The purpose of the project reported here was to "get behind" the statistics and discover how Education Authorities in Scotland identify and provide appropriate learning experiences for their highly able children and young people. We devised a series of ten questions that we asked each participating authority about their submission

to the census data. SNAP invited all thirty-two authorities to participate with thirteen eventually taking part in telephone interviews. This report offers a summary of the discussions from these interviews and raises some interesting questions about how the presence of highly able pupils is acknowledged within the education system in Scotland.

The report is structured around the collated responses to each of the ten questions posed in the interviews.

## Definitions

1. *Does the Education Authority have an agreed definition of more able/highly able? If yes, what is it?*

The SNAP Non-Statutory Guidance for schools suggests that an agreed definition is a good starting point for providing for highly able pupils (for access to this guidance document see: [www.ablepupils.com](http://www.ablepupils.com)). However, there is no one agreed definition as to who the highly able students are and the debate as to what we mean by highly able or intelligent has remained contentious both within practice and the international research literature. With this first question we were keen to find out if authorities had developed some kind of broad definition to guide schools and staff as they plan and prepare for highly able children and young people. The table below provides a summary report of authorities' responses to the above question.

**Table 1. Definitions of Highly Able Pupils Employed by Authorities**

Definition employed	Number of Authorities using this definition
No specific definition adopted within the authority.	8
About to develop a definition.	1
Pupils who are working or have the potential to work ahead of their age peers, this includes pupils who are highly able across the curriculum as well as those who are highly able in one or more particular areas. (SNAP, Guidance for Addressing the Needs of Highly Able Pupils).	1
Child or young person with exceptional ability compared to their peer group. (Authorities' own definition).	2
A child or young person working significantly ahead of the peers in one or more curricular areas. (HMle (1993) <i>Educating Able Pupils P6-S3</i> )	1

Of the eight authorities that reported having no specific definition, four qualified their reply by saying that they would follow the *national view* from the recent Additional Support for Learning legislation. However, no definition is contained within the legislation. There was agreement across all 13 authorities that while the lack of an agreed definition in the literature caused some uncertainty, they were concerned that too restrictive a definition would not acknowledge the potential diversity of this group of learners.

While an agreed definition is not a mandatory starting point for addressing the needs of highly able pupils it can none-the-less be helpful for schools to have some kind of working definition. The definitions that educators employ will be informed by their beliefs and experiences and it is important that educators have the opportunity to discuss these. For guidance on how to explore shared beliefs among staff in schools see Guidance for Addressing the Needs of Highly Able Pupils available to download from the SNAP website ([www.ablepupils.com](http://www.ablepupils.com)).

## Assessment, Roles and Provision

- 2. The Additional Support for Learning Act states that parents can request an assessment to be undertaken. Have any requests for the assessment of more able/highly able been made? If yes, how many? What has been the outcome of the assessment?*

The Additional Support for Learning Act (ASL) states that parents can request an assessment to be undertaken. Authorities in this study were asked how many requests for assessment had been made in relation to highly able children and young people and what the outcome had been of any request.

Once again there was variation in replies. Five authorities reported having received requests from parents for assessment to be undertaken. Another authority responded that they did not keep records of the precise number of the requests made. The remaining seven authorities were not aware of any specific requests for assessment. In terms of the outcomes for assessment that were reported, no standard outcomes were applied. Each child was considered holistically and outcomes were personalised depending on the individual case.

3. *What role does Additional Support Needs (ASN) coordinators/Educational Psychologists have in assessment of, and provision for, more able/highly able in the authority?*

Generally, although not exclusively, roles in addressing the needs of highly able pupils were split between educational psychologists and school based/related posts e.g. Additional Support for Learning Coordinator (ASN). In most authorities psychologists were primarily involved in assessment and other staff were primarily involved in provision. However, one authority said it was unlikely that an Educational Psychologist would be involved in assessment because school based procedures and practice were in place and considered to be sufficient. Another authority said parents could independently, and indeed two parents had, approach an educational psychologist asking for support for their highly able child. In relation to the role of ASN coordinators and other school based posts it became clear that there were a range of titles and positions across authorities and schools all related to supporting learning. The learning of highly able pupils was relevant to all these posts. Titles included:

- Education Support Officer
- Additional Support Needs Coordinator
- Principal Teachers of Additional Support (in schools)
- Support for Learning staff (in school)
- Inclusion Officers for ASN
- Inclusion Development Manager
- Quality Improvement Officer
- Subject advisors
- Additional Support for Learning Coordinator
- Area Principal teacher of learning support
- Centrally funded pupil support teachers
- Pupil support co-ordinator

The approach to highly able pupils in all authorities was the same as for any other child deemed to require additional support. The Government initiative GIRFEC was mentioned specifically by one authority as an overarching framework for provision for highly able children. Review meetings, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), the offering of advice, extended curriculum, whole child development,

additional strategies and regular additional support meetings were all mentioned in relation to strategies for assessment and provision for highly able students.

Three authorities spoke about assessments being individual and appropriate to the case and consequently no one “test” was used in identifying highly able pupils and no one outcome was anticipated in providing for their needs. Authorities considered schools to be at the forefront of assessment. One authority reported that schools worked collaboratively with parents to address needs. Another authority was keen that schools take advantage of the existing rich assessment data already available to them and only use data from further individual tests in situations where there was doubt or complexity.

## Guidance

- 4. Does the Education Authority have specific guidance on how to identify and provide for more able/highly able? How do schools/parents access this information (e.g. leaflet, website etc)?*

Authorities were asked about specific guidance they provided relating to highly able pupils. In addition they were asked how parents and schools might access this guidance if it were available. Seven authorities indicated that they did not provide specific guidance on highly able pupils with four of the seven indicating that these pupils’ needs would be considered under the general guidance for supporting pupils. One authority said that individual schools may have developed specific guidance but this had not been done at authority level. Another authority was updating their support manual and a framework for supporting highly able pupils would be included in this. All participants indicated that guidance (whether generic or specific) was available to download from authority websites. In addition one authority had provided examples from the Code of Practice to schools and this had included an example of a highly able pupil. Three authorities had issued the SNAP guidance to all schools. Two authorities had further developed their own specific guidelines using this information as a basis and in conjunction with their SNAP authority tutors (see SNAP website for details about the Associate Tutor scheme). One authority had launched the SNAP Guidance materials at an authority wide event and they regularly emailed school staff with information about highly able pupils and flagged up at in-service events where information could be accessed. Educational psychologists in one authority produced



generic parental leaflets about supporting children at home, which although not explicitly about highly able pupils, would be relevant none-the-less.

## 2009/2010 data

5. *In the 2009 and 2010 census return each authority recorded a specific number of highly able children. How were these children identified and by whom?*
6. *Have any children been identified as having multiple exceptionalities i.e. they more able/highly able and autistic/looked after etc? If yes, how many? If yes, are these children recorded twice in the census or elsewhere i.e. in two or more categories?*

Authorities were asked to comment on the data gathered for their authority in the 2009 and 2010 school census relating to highly able pupils. All 13 authorities reported that schools would have nominated children to be included in the census and therefore it was likely that teaching staff and/or additional support for learning staff would have been involved. One authority reported using the SNAP associate tutors as part of the census procedure alongside school staff. In one authority the normal practice was to adopt a team approach incorporating consultation with the class teacher, ASN coordinator, additional support teacher and the parent/s. Head teachers and the support for learning staff were involved in the identification procedures in one authority. One authority was unclear as to who would have gathered the data as it was done at school level.

There were some differences in opinion over how a pupil with multiple exceptionalities (e.g. a pupil who was highly able and autistic) would be included in the figures for highly able pupils. It was not apparent on the census form at this time how these children would be recorded. Four authorities said these children would not be recorded as highly able as this was not generally considered a primary learning need. Three authorities said these children would be recorded twice, once for each learning category, and pointed out that this can lead to “double counting” of pupils and a failure to acknowledge the co-existence of learning needs. Three authority representatives were unsure as to how the census was recorded and so did not know the answer to these questions and one authority declined to comment in relation to these questions. Authorities were aware of the limitations of the census recording system and some had begun to consider different ways to address these limitations at school, authority and policy level.

## Individualised Education Plans (IEP)/Coordinated Support Plans (CSP) and Educational Experiences

7. *Are there children within the EA who have an (IEP)/ (CSP) because they are deemed to be more able/highly able? If yes:*

- *What are the criteria for an IEP/CSP for more able/highly able*
- *How many children have IEP/CSPs for being more able/highly able*
- *In what subject areas?*

Authorities indicated that highly able children and young people may well have an IEP and the procedure for this would be the same as for any other pupil with an additional support need. Where IEPs were in place, pupils had completed the staged intervention process within the authority. One authority stated that they felt the flexibility and personalization embedded within CfE facilitated the development of an individualised curriculum for the pupil and so school based plans had the potential to meet the needs of highly able pupils. Information about IEPs and a breakdown of the rationale for a pupil having an IEP was held at school level and so two authorities did not have detailed information about this.

In considering the criteria for an IEP/CSP one authority indicated that they were looking at additional needs in a much more interactive and inclusive way rather than looking at specific categories and labels. In one authority GIRFEC had been used to generate pupil learning plans and they felt this would allow for enhanced resources to be available for highly able pupils. Interestingly one authority considered IEPs inappropriate for highly able pupils. Their perception was that an IEP breaks learning down into small steps and they felt that this approach was not conducive to high ability. Within this authority it was considered more appropriate for a highly able pupil to have an informal, individualised learning plan.

The majority of Education Authorities considered it unlikely that a highly able pupil would require a CSP. The only instance in which an authority reported a highly able pupil having a CSP was where the CSP was in recognition of a different and separate additional support need.

8. *The census identifies three main ways of supporting children with ASN. Are any of these employed for highly able children? If yes, which ones?*

- *All the time in mainstream*
- *Some time spent in mainstream class*
- *No time in mainstream classes*
- *Other?*

*Give details*

Authorities were asked how these options applied to the education of highly able pupils. Consistently the answer was that these pupils spent “all the time in mainstream”. There were variations as to what this looked like e.g. revolving door approach to activities (where children joined other classes for some activities and then returned to their own class), working with older peers and working in groups or individually. Irrespective of the variety of approaches used, all these activities still occurred within the mainstream school. Some pupils worked across schools e.g. primary pupils working on standard grade mathematics in a secondary school, and others had links to Colleges and Universities. One authority made reference to the specialist school provision available in Scotland e.g. The Dance School of Scotland, The Glasgow School of Sport and specialist music tuition. This specialist provision makes available alternative educational routes that are specialized but located within mainstream schools. One authority felt that mainstream schools were generally excellent at looking creatively at provision for highly able pupils. They believed that the flexible nature of CfE lent itself to this creative way of working with a range of different learning needs. CfE was perceived to offer opportunities for curriculum development work across different ages and stages. Cooperative learning was not perceived to be restricted to particular year groups thus offering the opportunity for pupils to work across year groups.

### **Extra Curricular and Outside of School Experiences**

9. *Does the Education Authority offer specific learning opportunities outside of school for more able/highly able pupils? If yes, please expand your answer and give details.*

A range of extra-curricular activities was on offer in schools across Scotland. While very few were badged or aimed specifically at pupils with high ability, the opportunities on offer were clearly appropriate for some highly able pupils. Activities included:

- Additional music opportunities e.g. guitar lessons in which the primary school staff liaised with secondary staff and pupils
- Duke of Edinburgh Award
- Outdoor education
- Youth achievement
- Supported study clubs
- Specific subject tuition e.g. National Youth Orchestra, film and media classes, drama, sports coaching, music tuition
- Early access courses e.g. Distance Education courses, activities at the University of Aberdeen
- Extended work experience placements
- Interschool collaborations to meet the needs of particular groups of children because there was a dearth of Saturday clubs in some geographical areas for pupils to attend
- University visits e.g. advanced higher art, arts based project relating to fashion design, visual art and music

One authority reported offering information about extra-curricular clubs and events to a parent to help them access appropriate opportunities for their child. Another authority reported that extra-curricular activities were offered in schools but due to the geographical dispersion of the authority it was not possible for these to be centralised in one main authority location. Two authorities reported that pupils had attended events aimed at highly able pupils and organised by SNAP.

Highly able pupils are often working beyond their age expectations. When asked about the possibility of highly able pupils attending events not aimed at their chronological age group but rather aimed at their stage of learning and ability level the general opinion was that this would not happen. One authority thought it might be possible for particular activities (although not for practical activities) at primary level but generally they felt this would not happen.

## **Continuing Professional Development (CPD)**

*10. Does the Education Authority run specific courses for nursery/primary/secondary staff on meeting the needs of more able/highly able? If yes, please expand your answers and give details of content, provider etc.*

Authorities were asked what CPD events had been organised that specifically addressed how teachers might meet the needs of highly able pupils. Eight authorities reported that no specific sessions had addressed the needs of this group although highly able pupils were often mentioned in more general CPD activities and case studies including pupils with high ability were sometimes used. While many of the strategies discussed on the generic courses were applicable for highly able pupils, e.g. metacognition, higher order thinking, often no direct links were made for teachers between the strategies being discussed and high ability. It was therefore left to individual teachers to make this connection. Five of the thirteen authorities reported that they had explicitly considered the needs of this group. All five had worked closely with SNAP and had attended SNAP CPD courses and conferences, they were members of the SNAP associate tutor scheme or they had invited SNAP to provide authority based CPD. One of these authorities reported that peripatetic 'support for learning teachers' who had gained expertise over time and had an interest in the field had been more recently reassigned to schools. Thus the opportunity for sharing their knowledge across the authority had been diluted as they were now located in only one school. After attending SNAP events one authority developed further collaborations with staff from Nrich – a project that aims to enrich the mathematical experiences of all learners ([www.nrich.org](http://www.nrich.org)), and with staff from TASC – Thinking Actively in a Social Context (<http://www.tascwheel.com/>). Both Nrich and TASC are key providers of frameworks for challenge and the authority had invited the providers to work directly with schools and pupils.

### **The National Picture in Scotland**

Scottish School Statistics are used to inform the Scottish Government, monitor the overall system, individual policies and local level performance (SG, 2010). This data is also used by the Scottish Parliament, publicly funded bodies and the public to inform their wider discussions. In particular there is a legislative requirement for the Scottish Government to collect and publish data annually on those pupils deemed to require additional support for their learning. This includes the number of pupils with additional support needs, the reasons for and type of support offered to pupils and the cost of providing support.

On the following page table 1 shows the number of children and young people identified as being highly able between 2009 and 2012 in Scottish primary and secondary schools (Please note: the statistical data refers to the term 'more able' and \* denotes where there were numbers less than 5).

**Table 1:** Total number of pupils identified as more able in Scottish primary and secondary schools 2009-2012

<b>Number of pupils identified as more able 2009-2012</b>				
<b>Authority</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
Aberdeen City	5	13	14	12
Aberdeenshire	15	37	183	221
Angus	*	*	21	23
Argyll & Bute	*	*	*	*
Clackmannanshire	0	0	*	*
Dumfries & Galloway	*	*	6	9
Dundee City	*	11	18	16
East Ayrshire	*	36	42	63
East Dunbartonshire	*	17	31	68
East Lothian	*	31	30	37
East Renfrewshire	*	10	22	34
Edinburgh, City of	11	21	109	177
Eilean Siar	6	125	132	133
Falkirk	6	5	7	12
Fife	*	62	166	162
Glasgow City	202	175	258	601
Highland	*	14	49	88
Inverclyde	*	15	22	59
Midlothian	0	*	*	7
Moray	*	*	7	14
North Ayrshire	0	38	57	111
North Lanarkshire	9	15	13	21
Orkney Islands	0	*	13	14
Perth & Kinross	*	28	50	64
Renfrewshire	10	14	17	22
Scottish Borders	0	6	10	9
Shetland Islands	*	5	18	24
South Ayrshire	*	18	37	57
South Lanarkshire	5	6	9	15
Stirling	*	*	15	18
West Dunbartonshire	0	21	302	291
West Lothian	*	*	17	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>269</b>	<b>723</b>	<b>1675</b>	<b>2399</b>

Since 2006, all the reasons for additional support have been collected, rather than just a pupil's main additional support need. This has led to an increase in the reported incidence of each additional support need. In 2010 changes were again made in how the information on additional support needs was collected. Information on reasons for support and the nature of support required was collected separately for each type of additional support need and this gave rise to a further increase in the reported figures across all categories. As can be seen from Table 1 this pattern is consistent when looking specifically at the numbers of highly able pupils reported.

In 2009, six out of thirty-two authorities gave a nil return in relation to highly able pupils. In contrast in 2012, all thirty-two authorities reported having highly able pupils who required additional support. In addition in 2012 the numbers reported within particular authorities increased substantially across this timeframe. For example, Aberdeenshire reported 15 pupils in 2009 and 222 pupils in 2012. These figures would suggest, at least from a recording perspective, there is an increased awareness about this group of learners. However for some authorities these changes in reporting systems resulted in no significant alteration in the numbers reported for example, Argyle and Bute reported less than five in each of the four years between 2009 and 2012.

As stated at the start of this report there is no agreed definition in the literature as to what constitutes a highly able learner. As is apparent from the interviews participating Education Authorities were using generic terms or had not specified what schools should be looking for. While these broad definitions are helpful in that they do not restrict identification along narrowly defined stereotypes, they do give rise to individual interpretation and this may go some way to explain the inconsistent figures in this category.

The figures in Table 1 represent combined figures from primary and secondary schools. Interestingly different patterns of reporting also emerge when the data is broken down between primary and secondary schools. In the main, across authorities there was a higher instance of reporting by primary schools of highly able pupils than secondary schools. There were notable exceptions such as the Eilean Siar (The Western Isles) where in 2010 they reported 19 primary pupils and 106 secondary pupils. These between authority variations are interesting and reinforce the diversity of approaches described within the interviews.

What must be remembered is that these numbers reflect pupils who require some form of additional support. Increasingly through our work in schools, authorities and with Scottish teachers, staff report

that the personalization integral within CfE helps address the needs of pupils who are highly able without requiring “additional” forms of support. So these highly able pupils who have been identified, but who are perceived to be having their needs met by CfE and therefore not requiring additional support, will not be included in the numbers above. Consequently the numbers above may still reflect an under representation of highly able pupils in Scotland. This evidence of increased awareness is encouraging but there are still some issues to resolve.

## Emerging Issues

### 1. *Gathering the data*

Discussions with Education Authority representatives and SNAP’s on-going work with teachers in Scottish schools suggests that gathering information pertaining to highly able pupils in Scotland can be problematic. This may be due to the wide-ranging conceptualizations of who this group of learners are and what learning behaviours they might be demonstrating or have the potential to demonstrate. The participating Education Authorities indicated that schools were considering the needs of highly pupils within the relevant legislation and policy context. GIRFEC, CfE and the ASL Act were being utilized as the vehicles for support. This approach is encouraging and offers a strong basis for developing appropriate learning opportunities for highly able pupils. There are many positive aspects to the approaches being adopted. However, an inconsistent picture remains. While flexibility is important to allow for diverse needs and contexts, a picture where one Education Authority reports less than 5 highly able pupils and another 601 seems inexplicably inconsistent.

In discussion with participating authorities it became clear that important issues relating to the gathering of data included:

- The nature of the questions asked in the census;
- Where the information necessary for completion of the census is held and who has access to this
- The shared understandings between staff of particular groups of learners and their possible needs.



Participants reported that Education Authorities and schools had information about pupils who require additional support and it was felt that if this was combined with information from the census data a truer picture might emerge. The wide variation on how the census was completed and the lack of explicit guidance in relation to high ability may explain why the figures in the census are inconsistent.

## **2. *Taking a holistic perspective***

Given the complexity and uncertainty around definitions and characteristics of highly able pupils a holistic approach that considers the whole child and their needs is important, particularly when a pupil may display multiple exceptionalities. It is important to avoid prioritizing one label over another and instead adopt a balanced approach to all areas requiring support. In the interviews it was clear that some authorities were moving away from a label driven approach focusing more generally on learning requirements and support. There is a need to actively create a multiple approach to multiple exceptionalities to ensure one “need” is not more dominant than the other. Where one need is deemed to be particularly pressing e.g. social development/problem behaviour, schools should ensure that they do not press the pause button on high ability while addressing the other needs.

## **3. *CfE as a possible support solution***

Undoubtedly CfE offers the facility to provide flexibility and personalisation for learners. In principle this means the curriculum is ideally suited for meeting the needs of highly able pupils. However a lot depends on how flexibility and personalisation is interpreted and implemented in the curriculum. Some children will need targeted additional support in addition to the universal support available for all. Careful deliberation has to be given to the interpretation, articulation and execution of CfE if schools are to meet the needs of highly able pupils. As with other identified areas of support, Education Authorities should consider the ways in which CfE can be employed to meet the needs of highly able pupils to ensure tokenism is not the default setting. Schools should ensure that personalisation and challenge are consistently provided to all but with particular consideration given to the provision for, and identification of, highly able pupils. Discussion among staff as to what kind of personalisation and flexibility are appropriate and possible within their school context for individual learners should be encouraged. Help in beginning these discussions is available in the general guidelines on the SNAP website ([www.ablepupils.com](http://www.ablepupils.com)). Schools should consider how staged intervention could support highly

able pupils. This might form part of a wider consideration of universal and targeted support opportunities available through the Education Authority, external agencies or experts as they provide challenge for highly able pupils. CfE offers opportunities for cross stage collaborative learning (between staff and pupils). This kind of planned cross stage and interdisciplinary learning opportunities can offer appropriate challenge for pupils. Alternatively, schools could consider how cross schools learning opportunities might enhance learning. For example, nursery and primary schools, or primary and secondary schools, could work together on interdisciplinary topics.

## Conclusions

Key to appropriate provision for this group of learners is the school, the teacher and their understandings of the learning needs of highly able pupils. Results from this report, while encouraging, suggest that there is a need for Government, Education Authorities and schools to ensure that the needs of this group of learners has been explicitly considered. The needs of these learners must be considered if we are to ensure *“that children and young people with additional support needs benefit fully from school education directed to the development of their personality, talents and mental and physical abilities”* (Additional Support for Learning Act, 2004/2009).

One thing to emerge from our discussions is that the legislative and curricular framework in Scotland provides a strong structure for meeting the needs of highly able learners. Alongside this, the staged intervention process adopted in Education Authorities allows schools to consider the needs of this group of learners in the same way as any other group of pupils requiring additional support. It is the effective implementation of this framework that will be crucial in meeting the needs of highly able young people.

Teachers are a crucial part of any discussion about learning. Much is demanded of teachers as we ask them to support an increasingly diverse range of learners in their classrooms. It is important that they are appropriately supported in meeting the demands of this challenging task. Teachers need to be given space, time and opportunity to consider their beliefs about this group of learners and how to appropriately challenge them within their classroom.

It is clear from this report that there is increasing evidence that the profile of highly able pupils is becoming more visible in Education Authorities and schools in Scotland. This is demonstrated by the increase in numbers from 2009-2012 data in the annual census alone. It is also apparent that a wide

range of activities and opportunities which may be appropriate in meeting the needs of highly able pupils were available, however this provision is somewhat piecemeal and often geographically, age and resource dependant. Provision needs to become more firmly embedded so that such opportunities are equitable and available to all highly able young people across Scotland.

