



**Exceptionally Able Students Policy**

**Swords Community College**

**April 2026**

**Date for review: April 2028**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairperson of the Board**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Secretary to the Board**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Date**

## **Mission Statement**

At Swords Community College, we believe there is a place for everyone. We are a welcoming, inclusive, multi-denominational school where students opinions matter and their learning and welfare are at the centre of all we do.

We support our learners to aim high and reach their full potential through strong pastoral care, engaging teaching which encourages and supports students individual learning styles, in a respectful and caring environment. Learning in our school blends traditional methods with digital technologies to create an experience that encourages curiosity and independence.

Through a rich and varied programme of extra-curricular activities, designed to cater to all interests and abilities, we encourage students to explore their passions, develop new skills and build confidence beyond the classroom.

Guided by our four pillars of Respect, Excellence, Resilience and Teamwork, we empower our students to become confident learners, active citizens and well-rounded individuals, prepared for further education and for life beyond school.

## **Introduction**

At Swords Community College, we are committed to providing an environment which encourages all students to maximise their potential and this clearly includes students who display some form of exceptional ability.

## **Definitions**

An exceptionally able student is one who is in the top range of 5-10% of the student population. An exceptionally able student is one who has the capacity for or demonstrates high levels of performance in an academic area or within a domain-specific ability in a non-academic area, including:

- Visual and performing arts and sports
- Leadership ability
- Creative and productive thinking

- Mechanical ingenuity
- Special abilities in empathy, understanding and negotiation.

### **Identification of the Exceptionally Able Students**

Before identifying any student as exceptionally able in a particular area, we aim to ensure that all students have had the opportunity to learn and succeed in this area. This makes the process of identification fair. An exceptionally able student should be identified using a variety of methods.

The specific procedure will vary according to subject area but will include elements of the following:

- Teacher referral
- Assessment results
- Peer referral
- Parental/guardian referral
- Identification by a previous teacher, previous school, external agency or organisation
- Self referral

It is worth remembering that exceptionally able students can be:

- good all-rounders
- high achievers in one area
- of high ability but with low motivation
- of good verbal ability but poor writing skills
- exceptionally able but with a short attention span
- exceptionally able but with a learning difficulty or disability which masks their achievements
- exceptionally able with poor social skills
- keen to disguise their abilities. (Eyre, 1993)

Everyone in school has a responsibility to recognise and value students' abilities. We are aware that:

- unnecessary repetition of work is de-motivating and de-motivated students will not always demonstrate potential
- there is sometimes peer pressure to underachieve
- exceptionally able students are not always easier to reach than other students.

### **Record Keeping**

A record is kept of all students who have been identified as exceptionally able which is available to staff in paper or electronic form. The area of ability is recorded with reference to which aspect(s) the student has exceptional abilities in. As with all school records pertaining to their children, parents/guardians are consulted and have access to such a record. These records are reviewed twice a year at a meeting of the staff concerned. If a student is not reaching his or her full potential, or has achieved the set targets, new arrangements and where necessary new targets will be set.

### **Provision for Exceptionally Able**

Opportunities for extension and enrichment are built into all our schemes of work. During policy review annually we shall ensure that every curriculum area will have a reference to exceptionally able. This should state what the identification procedure will be and what provision is in place. We aim to:

- maintain an ethos where it is acceptable to be bright
- encourage all students to be independent learners
- recognise achievement
- be aware of the effects of ethnicity, bilingualism, gender, religion and social circumstances on learning and high achievement
- provide a wide range of extra-curricular activities and clubs
- always provide work at an appropriate level
- provide opportunities for all students to work with like-minded peers.

## **Types of Provision**

### **Classroom differentiation**

- Teachers have high expectations.
- Tasks are designed to take account of levels of existing knowledge, skills and understanding.
- There are planned extension opportunities or open-ended tasks.
- There is access to higher tier exam entries.

### **School based provision**

This varies according to subject area and is covered using a variety of methods like:

- school based clubs and societies
- enrichment opportunities
- opportunities for performance

The school endeavours to link with other providers of opportunities for students with exceptional abilities - local, national and international organisations, competitions, festivals, partnerships with secondary schools further education institutions, and, businesses.

Students will be encouraged to fulfil their potential in those areas in which they are exceptionally able without reducing the breadth of their curriculum and personal experience.

### **Personal development**

Class work and work outside the classroom includes a number of opportunities for students to work in small and large groups, which will help develop their personal and social skills. We recognise the way that students work in teams and support each other when discussing ideas or collecting resources and materials supports their social, personal and emotional development. Some exceptionally able students find working in teams easy; others show excellent social and leadership skills but others find 'team work' more difficult. The school aims to develop all the abilities of students, including

their personal and social skills, especially if these are not strengths. We aim to create a climate in which students are taught to relate well to each other and where differences of all kinds, including ability, are accepted.

### **Leadership and management roles**

The principal and senior management are responsible overall for the implementation of the exceptionally able policy.

### **Process for review and development**

This policy will be reviewed annually. Next review: June 2027.

### **Useful publications in the school library**

The school will endeavour to provide library resources to enable particular areas of interest, identified by students, staff members and other relevant personnel.

## Appendix 1

### Audit of current school practice to support Exceptionally Able Students in School

#### Audit of current school practice to support Exceptionally able students in School:

Audit	Yes	Sometimes	No
The school has identified a teacher who is the staff lead on exceptionally able students.			
The policy is written and shared with all staff and board of management members.			
All staff, including Special Needs Assistants, are aware of the school policy and practice for exceptionally able students.			
Teachers know who the exceptionally able students are in their class or classes and are aware of the range of their abilities.			
Subject policies or departmental handbooks include guidelines for staff working with exceptionally able students.			
Lesson content is differentiated to take account of the needs of the exceptionally able student.			
Teachers use a variety of forms of differentiation in their teaching.			
High expectations are set for the exceptionally able students.			
Exceptionally able students are grouped together for specific subjects (e.g. maths) or activities as appropriate.			
Lesson pace is geared to take account of the rapid progress of some exceptionally able students.			
Exceptionally able students are given extra time to extend or complete work when required.			
The teacher liaises with the subject co-ordinator or head of department in instances where the student is providing a curriculum challenge.			
Exceptionally able students are moved into another class (of older students) for some work, if their needs cannot be met in their normal class.			
Homework is challenging for exceptionally able students.			
Specific homework is set for exceptionally able students.			
Exceptionally able students' progress is monitored and recorded by staff.			
CPD includes a focus on the needs of the exceptionally able students.			
Additional extra-curricular opportunities are provided after school or during lunchtimes in academic, creative and sporting activities.			
The school or departmental exceptionally able policy, practice and routines are kept up to date.			

## Appendix 2

### School / Year Group Record

### Exceptionally Able School / Year Group Record

*A record is kept of all students who have been identified as exceptionally able which is available to staff in paper or electronic form. The area of ability is recorded with reference to which aspect(s) the student has exceptional abilities in. Parents/guardians are consulted and have access to such a record. These records are reviewed twice a year at a meeting of the staff concerned. If a student is not reaching his or her full potential, or has achieved the set targets, new arrangements and where necessary new targets will be set.*

School Name:						
Date:						
Name of student	Class	Year Group	Date of Birth	Date	Person Identifying	Area of Ability
Monitoring Arrangements		Out of School Enrichment Activities		Area of ability (please highlight):		
				A. general intellectual ability or talent B. specific academic aptitude or talent C. visual and performing arts and sports. D. leadership ability E. creative and productive thinking F. mechanical ingenuity G. special abilities in empathy, understanding and negotiation		
Assessments:				Parent / Guardians Informed		
				Yes / No		

## Appendix 3

### Exceptionally Able / Dual Exceptional Post-primary School Self-Review

<i>Policy and Knowledge</i>				
Item	Yes	To a large extent	No	To a limited extent
1. There is a written policy on Exceptional Ability / Dual Exceptionality (or included within other policy) and it is shared with all staff.				
2. There is a general awareness of the need for specific provision for Exceptionally Able / Dual Exceptional (EA/DE) students				
3. Staff has knowledge of the concept and definitions of Exceptional Ability				
4. Staff has knowledge of the different profiles of EA/DE students				
5. Staff has knowledge of the concept of Dual Exceptionality				
6. Subject policies (if used) include guidelines for working with EA/DE students.				
7. There are general knowledge and awareness of the specific social and emotional issues related to EA/DE students.				
<i>Structure and Organization</i>				
Item	Yes	To a large extent	No	To a limited extent
8. There is a system in place for identifying EA/DE students				
9. There is a teacher or team in the staff who take a lead in relation to EA/DE				
10. The Special education teacher(s) play a role in identifying EA/DE students				
11. Mainstream teachers play a role in identifying EA/DE students				
12. The SEN / Learning Support teacher(s) advise mainstream staff in relation to the learning and teaching of EA/DE students.				
13. Most teachers know who the EA/DE				

### Exceptionally Able / Dual Exceptional Post-primary School Self-Review

students				
26. EA/DE students are given opportunities to work independently, with guidance.				
Item	Yes	To a large extent	No	To a limited extent
27. Extra-curricular enrichment opportunities for EA/DE students are linked specifically with the curriculum.				
28. EA/DE students are helped to understand their ways of learning (metacognition).				