

Able Underachievers

Some able pupils may underachieve deliberately for a variety of reasons. Some may exhibit disruptive behaviour. Others may lack confidence socially, emotionally or in their own ability. Some possible indicators of underachievement:

- ❖ day dreaming;
- ❖ boredom and restlessness, but flashes of brilliance when interested;
- ❖ high quality oral work but poor quality written work;
- ❖ poor performance in tests;
- ❖ deterioration in standard of work over time;
- ❖ dislike of routine work/unfinished routine work;
- ❖ deliberate underachievement;
- ❖ aspirations low compared to ability;
- ❖ disruptive behaviour;
- ❖ hostility;
- ❖ preferring to mix with older pupils or adults;
- ❖ low self-esteem;
- ❖ overly self-critical;
- ❖ critical of others; and
- ❖ uncooperative in group work.

What can schools do to help reduce underachievement?

- ❖ Recognise that pupils have different learning styles and ensure that planning allows for this.
- ❖ Increase challenge in work.
- ❖ Give more opportunities for pupils to demonstrate their learning.
- ❖ Encourage, and talk to, parents who may not understand/support their able child at home.
- ❖ Encourage a positive culture of achievement among pupils/teachers within school.
- ❖ Recognise that for some able pupils peer pressure, fear of teasing or bullying as well as self-consciousness about their ability, may affect their performance and they will require a sensitive but positive approach.
- ❖ Use a range of identification strategies within school.
- ❖ Be open to recognise unusual abilities.
- ❖ Recognise that non-conformity may not necessarily be equated with disruptive behaviour. In some instances it may indicate a divergent or creative thinker.

