

making space for able learners

Cognitive challenge: principles into practice

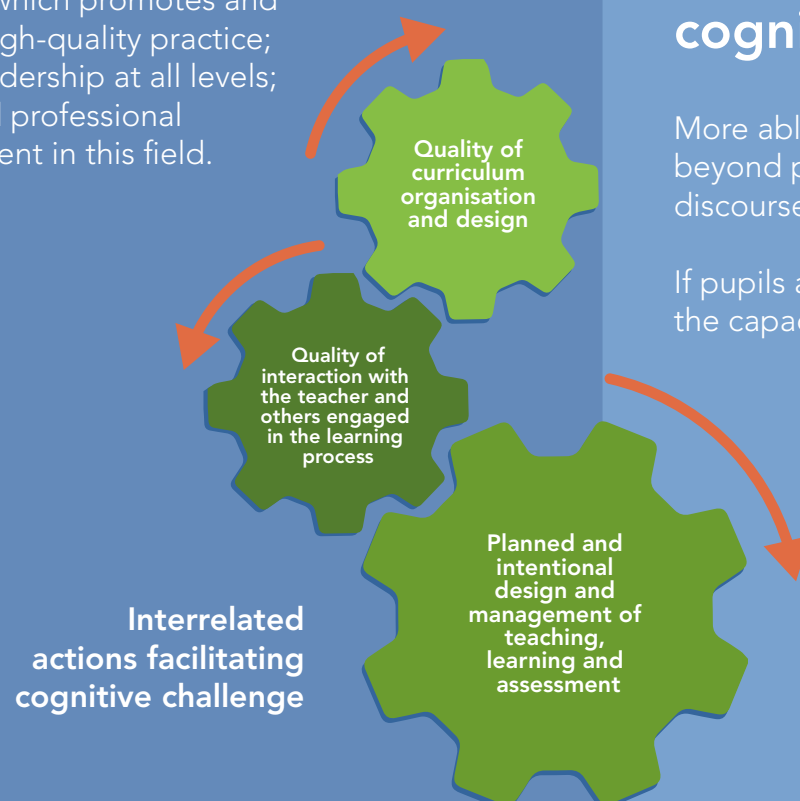
What is cognitive challenge?

- Approaches to curriculum and pedagogy which optimise engagement, learning and achievement;
- The ways in which learners become able to understand and form complex and abstract ideas and solve problems;
- Intentional and planned processes which prompt and stimulate extended and strategic thinking, analytical and evaluative processes.

What conditions are needed in school to create cognitively challenging learning environments?

A school climate for challenge which includes:

- An ambitious vision;
- A culture which promotes and sustains high-quality practice;
- Strong leadership at all levels;
- Dedicated professional development in this field.



Design and management of cognitively challenging learning opportunities

Planned and well-managed learning opportunities are most effective when there is resonance in practice.

- Whole school pedagogical models should be used consistently to underpin excellent teaching.
- Information about learning should be communicated clearly.
- Pupils need to know how to learn well and what they can achieve.
- Pupils need support to aspire and exceed their own and others' expectations.

Through intentional and well-planned management of teaching and learning the pupils can move from knowledge recipient to effective learner.

Rich and extended talk and cognitive discourse to support cognitive challenge

More able pupils have the capacity to take learning beyond planned activity. Allow talk, questioning and discourse to move the learning forward rapidly.

If pupils are shown how to use discourse effectively, they develop the capacity to work alone, with others and with the teacher.

If the teacher models high order questioning techniques pupils in turn can ask questions which expose new ways of thinking.

The nature of discourse, the types of questions and the opportunities given to pupils to practise skills must be part of planned teaching.

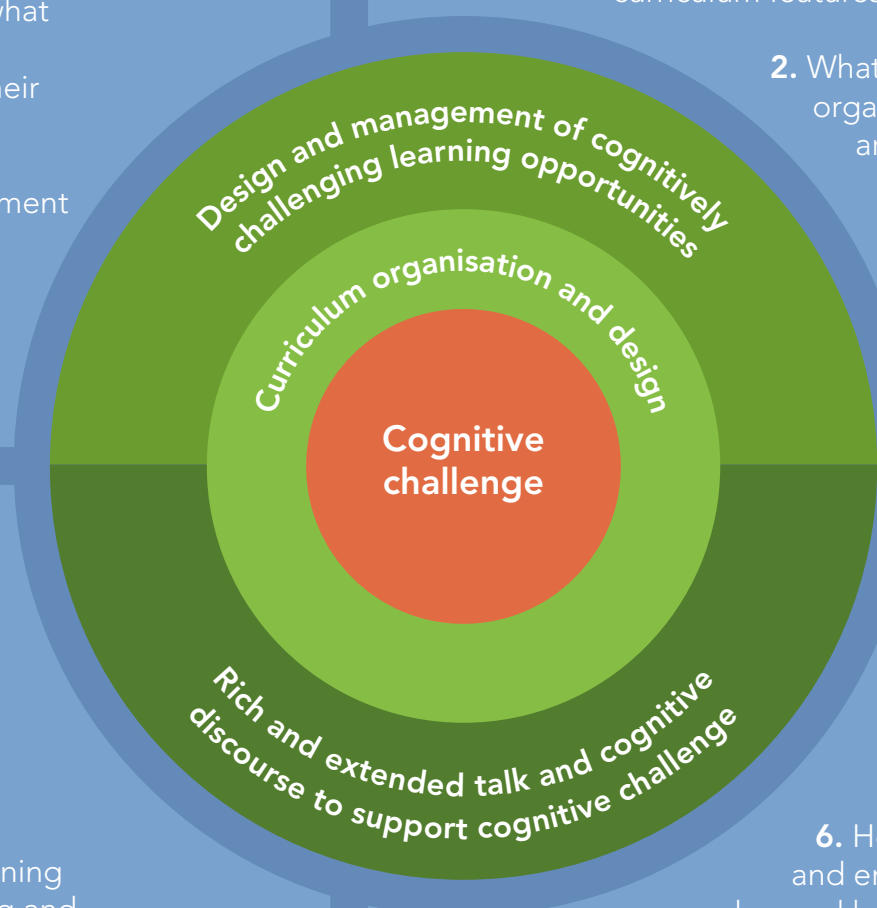
Curriculum organisation and design

This is the organisational construct in which cognitive challenge for more able pupils can exist.

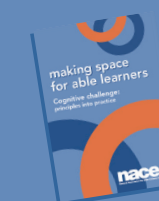
- It represents the expression of educational ideas in practice.
- Curriculum choices are underpinned by a set of values and beliefs.

Six key areas to consider:

1. How and to what extent do you ensure that the curriculum features advanced and complex content?
2. What strategies are in place for the organisation of learning? To what degree are these clear and understood by all?
3. How does your approach to teacher training ensure that teachers have the skills and knowledge needed to deliver high-quality teaching and learning?
4. What strategies are in place to develop metacognition within all practice?
5. How is assessment planned to ensure that pupils are supported in regulating their own learning across the curriculum?
6. How and to what extent is enrichment and enhancement planned within and beyond lessons to provide opportunities, excite intellectual interest and uncover potential?



An independent charity founded in 1983, the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) is dedicated to improving provision for more able learners, driving whole-school improvement and raising achievement for all. We offer practical resources, support and CPD, grounded in research.



Find out more about the "making space" project and order a copy of the report on which this poster is based:
www.nace.co.uk/making-space