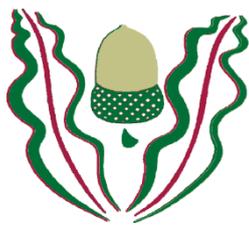




HIGHLANDS SCHOOL



Highlands School

Most Able and Talented Policy

Date of Last Review	June 2015
Next Review Due	June 2018
Governors Committee	C&B

Introduction

In June 2013 OFSTED published “**The most able students: are they doing as well as they should in our non-selective secondary schools?**”

Since that time it is clear that the focus for both OFSTED and the Department for Education is the progress of the most able students.

The Department no longer uses the term 'G&T', but does recognise the needs of academically more able students. It is up to individual schools to decide how best to cater for these students, but schools must ensure provision is in place to ensure all students make progress.

OFSTED do not focus on Gifted and Talented students, but now the progress of the most able is a clear priority. Ofsted offers no specific guidance on identifying or providing for 'G&T' students or any other similarly defined group. OFSTED have stated that it is down to a school to determine how best to provide for students it considers to be 'G&T'. Ofsted does not have set measures by which to ascertain whether a pupil is 'gifted' or 'talented'.

Previous definitions of Gifted and Talented have confused the concept of high ability across a number of subjects (Able) with some form of inherited capabilities (Gifted). Previous strategies in school have also focussed heavily on the most able and little on those with talents in a particular area, often non-academic.

This policy aims to ensure that all students with a general high level of ability or a talent in a narrow area are challenged and stretched in order that they can fully meet their potential.

Rationale:

At Highlands School we recognise that we have very able and talented students. Abilities and talents will emerge in a wide range of subjects and fields.

Individual students should be encouraged to develop their attributes, skills and potential within a learning environment that embraces equality of opportunity and provision, and a culture of ambition and aspiration

Aims:

- To enable the most able and talented to realise their potential;
- To identify early our more able and talented students;
- To promote the pupil's self-esteem;
- To recognise and meet the whole child's needs;
- To develop individual talents and abilities;
- To widen opportunities and expectations including by extending teaching and learning skills;
- To enable the most able student to access the best universities;
- To liaise with parents.

Definitions

The term "**Most able**" is used to describe students who have demonstrated a significantly higher level of achievement across at least three e-bacc subjects compared to their peers.

The term "**Talented**" is used to describe those who have demonstrated a significantly higher level of achievement than their peers in one or more specific areas of the curriculum or extra curricular activities such as:

- Physical talent;
- Artistic talent;
- Practical ability;
- Leadership;
- Academic thinking;
- Creativity.

Most able students would demonstrate a higher ability than average for the class (attainment) and would often require differentiated tasks and opportunities to learn through challenges; they will be working at least one level above the majority of others in the class and would sometimes require additional and different provision;

It is important to add that more able and talented children 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;
- Very able with short attention span;
- Very able with poor social skills;
- Keen to disguise their ability.
- An EAL speaker

THERE IS NO STEREOTYPICAL "MOST ABLE OR TALENTED" CHILD

Meeting the Needs

At Highlands we believe that it is our responsibility to meet the curriculum needs of all our children primarily through the curriculum structure we offer, the quality of classroom provision and through our extra-curricular programme. We believe that the role of a Policy and a Co-ordinator is to ensure that this happens.

We believe that provision for such children should not be a string of "bolt on's" but accept that having looked at mainstream provision, it may be necessary to "top up" the provision to ensure that the needs of all are met.

We also believe that many of the needs of our most able and talented will be met by organisations or groups beyond school and we welcome that and would not seek to unnecessarily replicate that provision.

The Register

The register will be based on records stored in the school's management information system, which will be converted to a file on the shared computer area accessible to all school staff. It will be completed in October (following the first entry of data) for each new cohort of students by the Head of Year 7, in liaison with the MA&T Coordinator, and updated annually by each Head of Year.

In addition, new or amended entries can be made at any time by the Coordinator as a result of communications from staff/students/parents.

The register will record:

- Names and tutor groups of students
- Whether they are MA or T
- Their KS2 levels
- Their half termly record of OT/BT
- Their predicted GCSE grades
- If T, the nature of their talent
- Any additional provision made outside of the mainstream curriculum
- Any external provision received that we are aware of

Identification:

We will maintain a register of our most able and talented students.

Identification will be in a number of ways, including:

Most Able:

Those who have achieved significantly above age related expectations in both English and Maths at KS2 and/or a MIDYIS score of >120

Those who have target GCSE grades 7 to 9 in English, Maths & Science and up to 3 other subjects.

WE aim to identify the top 10% in each year group.

Talented:

Those who through parental/self identification are performing in a sport / musical instrument / others at a level well above their peers

Those who are identified by staff as performing in a sport / musical instrument / others at a level well above their peers, or in a curriculum area at a level well above their peers and they are not identified amongst the most able.

Where students have been identified as talented, the area of talent will be noted, along with provision offered within school and provision offered by others.

Students can be added to the register at any time.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Most Able and Talented Coordinator (AHT) will:

- formulate and maintain a register based on the guidelines within this policy. The register will clearly indicate any additional provision offered by school, as well as provision provided by other individuals or organisations.

- monitor progress of MA students identified on the register;

- lead staff discussion and awareness raising about the aims and expectations;

- liaise with class teachers, subject leaders and in exceptional circumstances, negotiate individual More Able Plans where there is significant under achievement.

Meet with each MA&T student at least once per year to review provision.

where needed;

- offer advice and support for parents.

Higher Education Advisor will:

- Regularly check the register of MA&T students and organise a programme of activities that ensures they are aware of opportunities at the best universities, including visits and talks

Careers Adviser will:

- Regularly check the register of MA&T students and ensure that the planned programme of activities raises aspirations and meets the needs of those students

Ed-Extra- Coordinator will:

- review the register regularly and ensure that the programme provides opportunities for MA&T students where those needs are not met by external organisations.
- Ensure that activities that prepare students for top universities such as debating are included in the programme.

Class teachers will:

- ensure they are aware of the MA and T students in their classes.
- use a variety of strategies to meet the needs of MA&T students. (See Appendix 1 below);

Monitoring and Evaluation:

- The MA&T Coordinator, in consultation with the Extra-Ed Coordinator, HE Adviser, Careers Coordinator, will construct an annual plan of activities that supplement the mainstream curriculum.
- The achievement of the MA students will be monitored as part of the half termly monitoring exercise undertaken by SLT
- An annual evaluation of the achievements of the MA&T students and the outcomes of the plan will be undertaken by the Coordinator in consultation with the students and their parents.
- The Coordinator will report annually to the Curriculum and Standards Committee of the Governors.
- Heads of Year will monitor the progress of their MA&T students as part of their ongoing monitoring using the data dashboard.
- Raising Achievement Coordinators and tutors will monitor the progress of the MAT students as a group.

This policy will be reviewed once every three years by Curriculum and Standards Committee of the Governors.

Stretching the Most Able in the Classroom **(Times Educational Supplement 18/6/2013)**



How to stretch and challenge your students

Mike Gershon

18/6/2013

Mike Gershon shares his tried and tested methods

There are two ways to interpret the phrase “stretch and challenge”. On the one hand, it relates to whole-class teaching and the importance of stretching and challenging every pupil’s thinking. On the other, it relates to individuals and the importance of pushing the thinking of the most able pupils. Both interpretations are equally valid and essential components of great teaching.

Stretching and challenging all pupils

As teachers, we know it is not enough for our pupils to coast through lessons, picking up the minimum they need to get by. First, motivation and engagement are likely to sag if the work is too easy. Second, we want the very best for our pupils. We want them to love learning, to be stimulated by the lessons we teach and to develop intellectually. So it is vital that we strive to stretch and challenge all our pupils. The three key areas through which we can make this happen are planning; lesson structure and pace; and the expectations we convey.

Planning

When creating your lessons, ask yourself if the content is sufficiently demanding. How close is it to what your pupils already know? Does it include conceptual and concrete material? In what kind of language is it couched?

Ideally, you should be aiming for material that is just beyond the point pupils have already reached – something just at the edge of their capabilities. This idea arises from Lev Vygotsky’s notion of the zone of proximal development. This is the essence of education, where pupils are put in a position that enables them to move beyond their existing knowledge and understanding.

To judge whether your content is sufficiently challenging, elicit information from your pupils. When teaching and marking, observe how the class is coping with the material you present. Adjust the content of your lessons accordingly. At first, your content will

probably oscillate between slightly too easy and slightly too difficult, but through trial and error you will come to develop a sound sense of what level of content a class can handle.

Do not be averse to plunging your pupils into the realms of uncertainty from time to time. This helps to keep their thinking sharp, stops them getting complacent and discourages automatic recourse to what has been proved to work. Use content aimed at pupils who are two or three years older, that requires a high level of interpretation or challenges their received beliefs.

Lesson structure and pace

When you are planning, and teaching, keep the following questions in mind:

1. Why are we doing this?
2. What am I expecting pupils to do at each point?
3. What is the optimum amount of time for each activity?

The first question deals with purpose. If the answer is unclear, it is time to think again. Pupils are unlikely to make significant progress if there is no clear rationale.

The second question focuses on how you are intending pupils to engage with the learning. Ideally, activities should be structured so that every pupil in your class is doing something. This includes listening, reading, writing, talking and so on. Nobody should be passive or doing nothing. We must make every second count.

There needs to be a definite link between the answers to questions one and two. If an activity does not serve a specific purpose, what is it doing there? Jettison anything that does not help you achieve your aims: cutting away excess and unfocused activities will help to maintain a sense of drive and challenge.

The third question deals with pace. That does not mean rattling through a series of activities, but giving the right amount of time to each lesson segment.

It involves constantly assessing what stage each pupil is at and being flexible enough to act on these judgements.

For example, you might move half the class on to a new activity while the others continue with what they are doing; give extra time to an activity because pupils have found it difficult; and truncate an activity after realising that pupils have understood it more quickly than anticipated.

High expectations

Never underestimate the importance of having high expectations of all pupils. We know that every pupil can make progress, given the right set of circumstances (including a great teacher).

Here are five ways to convey your high expectations:

- **Reasoning:** When pupils share their opinion with you, or with a partner during discussion, push them to explain what underpins that opinion. Do not let unsupported assertions escape without asking “Why?”, “What reasons do you have for thinking that?”. You can even train your pupils to start asking these questions of each other.

- **Products:** Plan your lessons so that pupils are building up to creating some kind of product – an essay, perhaps, or an extended piece of drama or a presentation. This will imbue your lessons with purpose and show them that you believe they can create significant pieces of work.
- **Success criteria:** Make sure that every pupil knows what the success criteria are for each major piece of work you ask them to do, and that it is possible for everybody to attain them. In a positive classroom, pupils will be more likely to push themselves to excel.
- **All, most and some:** If you use the idea of “all, most and some” in your planning, do not share it with pupils. Consider how demoralising it must be for a pupil who knows they are not top of the class to see that noted down at the start.
- **Formative feedback:** Set your pupils challenging targets regularly. Forget about sharing grades for the moment. Instead, tell pupils what they need to do to improve and give them the opportunity to do it.

Challenging more able pupils

So how do you push the thinking of more able pupils in the context of whole-class teaching?

Socratic questioning

Socrates, an Athenian philosopher born in 469BC, appears in the dialogues of Plato interrogating his fellow citizens to draw out the assumptions, errors and misconceptions in their thinking. We can use Socrates’ methods in the classroom to challenge the thinking of all pupils – particularly the most able.

There are four roles that Socrates takes on when asking questions: the gadfly, the stingray, the midwife and the ignoramus. Teachers can flit between these in order to question the views, opinions and judgements held by more able pupils.

- **The gadfly:** Mimic the practice of the gadfly, which nips away at larger animals. This involves asking lots of little questions intended to push thinking and avoid sloppiness: “What do you mean by that?”; “But, what if...?”; “What evidence do you have?”; “Does that always apply?”; “How can you be certain that is true?”.
- **The stingray:** Administer a shock to pupils’ traditional way of thinking in the same way a stingray unleashes its sting: “Imagine if X was not the case, what then?”; “What if everything you’ve said was turned on its head?”; “What if a great change happened?”.
- **The midwife:** Ask questions that help give birth to ideas: “That’s an interesting idea; could you explain it a bit more?”; “How might that affect things?”; “What made you think of that idea?”.
- **The ignoramus:** Emulate a character who has never encountered the topic you are discussing and play dumb to encourage explanation: “What does that mean?”; “I don’t understand – can you start from the beginning?”; “So, do you mean that...?”.

Listen to what the pupil says and look for ways to respond in one of the above guises. Fix on to a pupil’s assertions and question them. This might help you to identify inaccurate use of a concept or over-reliance on a weak piece of analysis.

Evaluation

This is all about making judgements: “What do you think and why?”; “Is this better than that, or vice versa?”; “Which option should we go for and what reasons do you have to support your choice?”.

Really good evaluation demonstrates a mastery of the topic. Pupils will be able to highlight the strengths and limitations of the issue before making a judgement about what ought to be done or what they believe is the best perspective on the matter.

Nearly every activity you do in the classroom can be supplemented by an evaluation task, directly or tangentially associated with the topic.

Use evaluation command words – appraise, argue, assess, critique, defend, evaluate, judge, justify and value – to frame questions and tasks for pupils who finish before their peers. Or build them into your PowerPoint or interactive whiteboard slides as extensions. You will then have them to hand as soon as pupils finish the main work you have set.

If you make regular recourse to evaluation questions and tasks, pupils’ ability to make reasoned judgements will improve and this will trickle into the rest of the work that they produce.

Critical thinking

This involves analysing the issue and reflecting on the best way to tackle it. It can be challenging for more able pupils because it asks them to alter their mindsets and to think differently.

- **Analyse meaning:** Have pupils analyse the accuracy and precision of their writing and speech. When they have finished an activity, ask them to review what they have done. How accurately did they convey the meaning they intended? How precise were they in their choice and use of words? How could they have said the same thing but more simply? Get them to amend or redo their work accordingly.
- **Self-criticism:** Stretch pupils’ thinking by asking them to reread what they have written critically. Ask them to revisit the work and develop a series of questions in connection with it. These will focus on issues thrown up by the text or questions that have not been answered in the text but ought to have been.
- **Challenging debate:** Ask pupils to look through their work and identify every instance where they have put forward an argument or a view. They should then come up with two pieces of evidence and two examples (additional to anything in the text) that could be used to support their argument. This will stretch their thinking and improve their arguments.

For further ideas on how to stretch and challenge more able pupils, see Mike Gershon’s Challenge Toolkit resource at www.tes.co.uk/mikegershon. He has written seven books on pedagogy, all of which are [available on Amazon](#).

Technique checklist

Evaluation keywords:

- Appraise
- Argue
- Assess
- Critique
- Defend
- Evaluate
- Judge
- Justify
- Value

Socratic questioning roles:

- The gadfly
- The stingray
- The midwife
- The ignoramus

Stretch and challenge through planning:

- How difficult is the content?

- What are you asking pupils to do?
- Will pupils be learning actively?
- How will you adapt the length of tasks?
- Do pupils know why they are doing the work?