



# North Somerset Policy for Gifted and Talented Pupils

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## RATIONALE

The current interest in and drive to raise standards for gifted and talented pupils, backed by research evidence from school improvement sources, has given momentum to the concern in North Somerset regarding meeting the needs of our top 5-10%. National and local data shows they are an under-achieving group.

Gifted = Academic Strengths  
Talented = Music/Sport/Art/Dance (creative ability)

The best provision for gifted and talented pupils and their peers is one that challenges them and extends their thinking, knowledge and skills. Many of the ways of extending the thinking and learning of gifted and talented children constitute good practice for all pupils, when pitched at the appropriate level of challenge and, therefore, will impact on raising standards overall.

## AIMS

- "We want to harness the talents of people of all ages in North Somerset and enable them to fulfil their potential and achieve their goals" *Learning in North Somerset - A Vision and Strategy for 2003 - 2006*.
- Pupils with particular abilities, talents and strengths will have access, where possible, to specialist knowledge and expertise, within and outside their own school provision.
- Pupil self-esteem and motivation will be consistently high, and pupils will value all others for their own strengths and attributes.

## PURPOSE

- To encourage schools to provide a rich learning environment, in which gifted and talented pupils are nurtured and valued by both adults and peers.
- To support schools to provide an education appropriate to gifted and talented pupils' needs and abilities.
- To support schools to ensure the curriculum for gifted and talented pupils provides for whole development in terms of emotional, social, spiritual and intellectual development.

## PRINCIPLES

- Every young person should have the opportunity to experience success in learning and achieve as high a standard as possible
- Teachers should set high expectations and provide opportunities for all young people to achieve their full potential

- Teachers should work to overcome potential barriers to learning and assessment for individuals and groups of young people
- Gifted and Talented children should experience a broad, balanced curriculum throughout their period of schooling which meets the requirements of the National Curriculum, including religious education
- Gifted and Talented children also have the right to leisure
- The needs of Gifted and Talented pupils can be met within North Somerset schools. However, in exceptional circumstances, it may be possible to undertake an agreed transfer to a maintained Post-16 provision from a North Somerset school or college as appropriate.

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

North Somerset Council is committed to inclusive education, underpinned by the following key values:

- Valuing diversity
- Entitlement
- Dignity
- Individual needs
- Planning
- Collective responsibility
- Professional development
- Equal opportunities

The principle of equal opportunities should be applied to all young people, respecting all abilities equally, whether academic, artistic, athletic, social or organisational.

Whilst no legal framework currently exists for the identification of and provision for Gifted and Talented young people, schools can demonstrate their commitment through policies and practice which recognise the particular needs of Gifted and Talented pupils and which are evident in curriculum, teaching and learning and assessment policies. In schools where there are well-defined and effectively implemented policies, the achievement of all young people, including those who are Gifted and Talented, is raised through higher expectation amongst staff and young people themselves.

Currently, Gifted, Talented and Able children in North Somerset are provided for in a variety of ways, including:

- enrichment/extension activities
- accelerated learning
- thinking skills
- differentiation
- summer schools

- family involvement
- specialist activities
- master classes

## WHO ARE THE 'GIFTED AND TALENTED'?

This is a complex issue from which no definitive answer has emerged to date. It is further complicated by a range of terms used both locally and nationally, e.g. 'highly able', 'more able', 'gifted and talented'.

### Definitions - Types of Ability

There is a whole range of different abilities, talents or gifts that able pupils demonstrate. It is not only academic ability that is important to identify. Although high IQ is important, children's abilities vary and include:

- intellectual (e.g. aspects of language, mathematics, science)
- creative (e.g. aspects of science, design and technology, creative writing)
- artistic (e.g. art, music, drama)
- practical (e.g. technological and 'hands-on'), vocational
- physical (e.g. sports, dance, movement)
- social (e.g. personal and interpersonal, leadership qualities)

Many pupils will have more than one of these abilities and will not only be talented or gifted in one aspect, but will have ability across a number. It is important to recognise that to be gifted and talented does not just mean to be 'intellectual'. Ability is multi-faceted.

Howard Gardner at Harvard University has developed a theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner considers there to be at least seven distinct intelligences:

- **linguistic** (has a facility with language, patterns and systems)
- **mathematical** (demonstrates a facility with number, logic and enjoys abstract and structured thinking)
- **visual and spatial** (thinks in pictures and mental images, is good with maps, charts and enjoys chess, games, art)
- **musical** (shows sensitivity to mood and emotion, enjoys playing music, enjoys rhythm and complex organisation)
- **kinaesthetic** (is good at 'doing', has keen hand-eye co-ordination and timing, as demonstrated in crafts, drama, sports and gymnastics)
- **inter-personal** (has good social and communication skills, relates well, demonstrates leadership qualities and ability to act as a mediator)

- **intra-personal** (has good self-knowledge and awareness, a strong sense of values and is highly self-motivated)

## ROLE OF SCHOOL

In order to provide effectively for Gifted and Talented young people, schools must ensure that their needs are considered in every aspect of school life. Curriculum, organisational arrangements, school ethos, resourcing, out-of-school activities, parental partnership and community links are some of the aspects which require consideration and planning. High expectation of pupils' achievements should be a major feature of the school and be reflected in its policies and procedures.

The school role, in particular, is to:

- establish an inclusive and positive school ethos where diversity is valued
- have high expectations of all pupils
- develop a whole school policy for educating Gifted and Talented pupils which is embedded in the School Improvement Plan. This must reflect established procedures for the identification of Gifted and Talented pupils
- have an annual school or departmental budget identified from within the delegated whole school budget
- identify and support a school co-ordinator for the Gifted and Talented
- develop a range of teaching and learning strategies which address the potential and individual learning styles of pupils
- ensure that young people experience a broad, diverse and balanced curriculum with appropriately challenging opportunities
- ensure that departmental policies are developed in secondary schools, which reflect the school's policy for Gifted and Talented
- identify and remove barriers to learning and assessment for young people
- set challenging individual and school targets
- identify staff training needs and provide appropriate professional development
- analyse a range of data to inform identification, planning and resourcing, in particular with regard to pupils at risk of underachievement
- develop productive working practices with partner schools to ensure continuity and progression
- forge links with other schools, agencies and external professionals to maximise the deployment of available resources

- establish partnerships with parents/carers in order to promote the achievement of young people
- be an advocate for Gifted and Talented children in care
- identify an attached governor for Gifted and Talented
- effectively prepare for transition into Post-16 education and emphasising planning and promoting vocational pathways for those Gifted and Talented pupils who demonstrate such strengths.

**Examples of curriculum provision for Gifted and Talented pupils include:**

- a starting point which is beyond the majority of the class
- less practice at tasks and encouragement to move on
- less detailed or more demanding or complex instructions
- more independence and the chance to be different in the way they work
- in-depth question and answer sessions targeted and matched to their abilities
- creative, open-ended tasks with several layers
- high-level challenge which stretches the pupil to his/her capacity and beyond
- grouping to enable contact with others of similar ability in their peer group
- the opportunity to experiment, problem solve and take chances
- a higher level of work (including extension and homework) that matches their specific needs
- the use of higher order thinking skills
- the setting of demanding individual targets
- access to high level ICT provision to promote personalised learning
- access to challenging curricular vocational provision

**Acceleration**

The following guidance is taken from an OfSTED-commissioned research project.

Acceleration (i.e. moving a pupil in advance of his/her chronological year group) should only be used when:

- a pupil is in the top 2% of ability, i.e. consistently working at two national curriculum levels above average for age in a range of subjects
- all stakeholders, including the child, believe it to be in the best interests of the child

- a pupil is exceptionally mature, both socially and physically
- it is not being considered under pressure

*(See also North Somerset guidelines on secondary transfer)*

**Please can anyone looking at placing a child into another year group involve the Admissions Team of what is happening. Such changes can:**

- **affect the date a child transfers school**
- **prevent or assist the allocation of a school place to another pupil**
- **make the LEA lose credibility at Admissions Appeals if we don't know how many children are in each year group in a school**
- **have class size implications in Key Stage 1 - and potential funding implications for the school**

## **THE IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED AND TALENTED PUPILS**

The DfES requires each school's identification strategy to make use of hard data as well as wider qualitative evidence.

**Quantitative data** includes the results of National Curriculum assessments, public examinations and other available test data such as standardised ability tests. These include music, art and sporting assessments.

**Qualitative information** includes teacher assessment and nomination, pupil observation and the scrutiny of pupils' work.

The DfES has provided 'Good Practice Guidelines' to support schools in developing their policy for identification. If good provision is to be made for Gifted and Talented young people, it is necessary to recognise their abilities in order to match work to their needs. Identifying ability is, however, an imprecise science and teachers need to employ a wide range of assessment strategies including tests, opinion and evidence from work or performance.

Schools need to ensure that under-achieving young people are included in their identification process, and this means having a robust set of criteria against which to identify potential and ability.

There is a variety of routes to identification:

- Consistent high achievement
- Rapid grasp of new concepts
- Recognised characteristics of ability
- Occasional glimmers of potential

*(from National Association of Able Children in Education)*

A range of people is likely to be involved in the identification of more able and exceptionally able pupils, including:

- Pupils
- Parents/carers and relatives
- Teachers and other school staff
- Other pupils
- Specialist external staff who work with the school, e.g. Educational Psychologist
- Adults involved in out-of-school activities
- Other professionals

It is good practice for each school to monitor the backgrounds and characteristics of children identified as Gifted and Talented to ensure that no particular groups are under-represented. If this is the case, then the school should ensure that its explanations for this are convincing and justified.

## SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS AND GIFTED AND TALENTED PUPILS

Gifted and talented pupils may experience educational needs in association with and separately to their strengths. Awareness and understanding of this is a key factor in facilitating such pupils to fulfil their potential. These pupils may find themselves experiencing a range of difficulties:

- **Isolation** from peers as a result of a particular strength or the result of being seen to be different. In addition, a pupil may feel isolated in his or her skill. It is important for both enjoyment and development for pupils to meet their like-minded peers and/or mentors.
- In the face of **adverse peer pressure**, pupils may feel self-conscious about their strengths, particularly within cultures where differences and gifts and talents are not celebrated or encouraged. Peer pressure is often such that pupils are reluctant to differ from the majority for fear of rejection.
- **Unchallenged** gifted or talented pupils may exhibit adverse reactions. These can be of an emotional/behavioural nature or exhibited through poor work.
- **Unidentified** gifted or talented pupils may suffer from frustration and/or a low self-image. This can be masked by challenging or inappropriate behaviour, which often results in significant under-achievement. In addition, such pupils need to know that creative styles of work are valued and accepted.
- Pupils who experience a **mismatch between their emotional understanding and intellectual development** may struggle with the

social expectations placed upon them. Their emotional responses and social interaction skills may be at odds with what they are capable of academically. So, whilst perhaps the most academically high ability within a class, a pupil could potentially also be one of the least mature class members and experience significant difficulty with basic social interactions.

- **Parental pressure** can be a burden and source of worry to gifted and talented pupils. Parents need to be aware of the all-round needs of their child and to be helped and guided as to how best to foster their child's strengths. Schools have an important role in providing such guidance and may act as a link between parents and supportive organisations such as NAACE (National Association for Able Children in Education).
- **Being valued for themselves** and not just for their abilities is essential for the emotional well-being of gifted and talented pupils.

Pupils with physical, sensory, emotional or other special educational needs may also have gifts and talents. When assessing such pupils, it is important to give opportunities for any such strengths to be shown and thereby recognised. This may require considerable curriculum modification and the use of specialist equipment, e.g. IT, Braille, tape-recorder.

Specific disorders may mask particular strengths, gifts and talents, e.g.:

- Autistic spectrum disorders - pupils may show great talents in specific areas, e.g. art or maths.
- Specific learning difficulties/dyslexia - pupils' talents and gifts may be masked by poor numeracy and/or literacy skills. Such pupils are likely to experience a low self-esteem and considerable frustration. Recognition of particular strengths is very important in raising self-esteem and peer credibility.
- Physical difficulties, e.g. cerebral palsy and associated difficulties may be so encompassing that an agile mind can sometimes become under-challenged. Careful learning assessment over time is particularly important in pupils with physical difficulties.
- Sensory impairment, e.g. hearing loss or vision impairment, despite some enduring misconceptions, does not in itself limit intellectual capacity. Pupils with such difficulties need to be given ample opportunity to show whatever strengths they may possess.
- Emotional and behavioural difficulties often mask a pupil's true potential. This is particularly the case of pupils who have not been identified as Gifted and Talented, may feel frustrated and experience low self-esteem.

## THE ROLE OF THE HEADTEACHER

- Formation and adoption of the school policy on provision for gifted and talented pupils.
- Appointment of a Co-ordinator for gifted and talented pupils.
- Ensure adequate provision of resources to the Co-ordinator of gifted and talented pupils.
- Monitoring teaching and learning for gifted and talented pupils through the Senior Management Team.
- Promote a positive ethos of "it's OK to do well" and celebration of success.
- Advise the Admissions Team if a child is placed in a higher year group setting.

## THE ROLE OF THE CO-ORDINATOR

It is recommended that all schools designate someone with specific responsibility for gifted and talented pupils. Ideally, this person would be a Senior Manager. If this is not the case, the importance of the role must be recognised and supported by senior management and appropriate opportunities should be found for the Co-ordinator to report back to the Headteacher and/or the Management Team.

The role of the Co-ordinator should include responsibility for:

- Drawing up or revising the school's policy for gifted and talented pupils, and agreeing its content with staff and Governors.
- Ensuring that identification and tracking procedures are in place.
- Advising subject leaders on revising subject policies to include guidance on suitable curriculum provision and resources for high ability pupils.
- Ensuring that appropriate records are kept and passed on: transition information is key.
- Supporting teachers in setting challenging targets for gifted and talented pupils.
- Ensuring that parents are kept informed of their children's progress.
- Promoting the provision of extra-curricular activities and special events that support the needs and interests of gifted and talented pupils.
- Informing the School Development Plan for appropriate professional development needs.
- Keeping Governors informed about provision within the school for gifted and talented pupils.

## THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL'S GOVERNING BODY

School Governors have a large part to play in the introduction of a school policy for Gifted and Talented children. Working with the Head and the staff, they can help to ensure that the policy fits the particular ethos of their school. They should decide whether or not to appoint a Governor with special responsibility for this area.

Governors can help to ensure that parents are well informed about the strategy and engage their support. They may be a useful resource in establishing links throughout the community.

Governors should decide:

- what type and level of monitoring of the policy is appropriate in their school
- ensure that the monitoring is implemented appropriately, and also
- evaluate the impact of the policy

They should be aware of the possible implications for extra funding for staffing, new resources, non-contact time and staff training.

## SCHOOL/PARENT PARTNERSHIP

Partnership with parents is an important foundation for any aspect of educational provision. Meeting the needs of gifted and talented pupils is no exception to this.

Effective partnership is strengthened by the assumption that parents usually know their children best and are keen to work co-operatively with schools to encourage their children to reach high standards.

Schools can offer support and guidance to parents in the following ways:

- By encouraging parents to share information about their child's particular interest and aptitudes.
- By putting parents in touch with support organisations (see *North Somerset Guidelines to Support Gifted and Talented Pupils: Resources and Organisations, and Community Opportunities*).
- By encouraging parents to extend their child's strengths outside of school, e.g. football club, French club, and to enter them for relevant competitions.
- By encouraging pupils to apply their knowledge and skills through relevant real-life experiences.
- By explaining to parents the importance of differentiated homework.

- By encouraging parents to involve their children in a range of activities, e.g. trips to libraries, theatres, and museums, which can stimulate children's thinking.
- By making available the school policy on gifted and talented pupils and ensuring that parents know who they may contact with any concerns or queries.
- Being aware of and sensitive to the pressure from parents about their gifted and talented child and having an agreed strategy for dealing with this, both when the pressure is directed at the pupil and/or the school.
- By considering what special provision might be available to support educationally disadvantaged gifted and talented children and their parents.

## THE ROLE OF THE LEA

The LEA will support the adoption, implementation and monitoring of policies for meeting the needs of gifted, talented and able children within schools by:

- encouraging partnerships with early years settings, schools, parents and the support agencies
- offering support and advice to schools in:
  - heightening awareness of the needs of these pupils
  - developing whole-school policy
  - developing strategies for identification
  - providing an appropriate, challenging curriculum
  - facilitating social and emotional development
- ensuring the recruitment and retention of specialist staff
- ensuring that appropriate professional development opportunities are available
- providing information regarding resources
- encouraging close liaison between schools, within and across phases, in making provision for gifted, talented and able pupils
- providing links with national and international organisations such as the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), the National Association for Curriculum Enrichment and Extension (NACE)
- supporting the Gifted and Talented strand within the Excellence Cluster

## MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The LEA's policy and support for schools will be monitored and evaluated through:

- Excellence Partnership Board reports
- analysis of national, local and school data
- analysis of progress, detailed in school self-evaluation reports
- reviewing the range and quality of professional development and training opportunities offered to schools
- School Improvement Plan priorities and resourcing
- OfSTED Inspection Reports
- attached Link Adviser school visits
- the Gifted and Talented Working Group