

Gifted and Talented Pupils in Norfolk Schools

Policy, Principles and Procedures
Guidance for Teachers and Governors

Gifted and Talented Pupils in Norfolk Schools

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Contents

Page

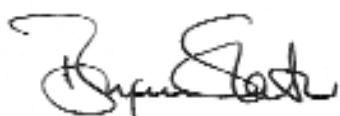
SECTION 1	Introduction	1
SECTION 2	Policy Statement	2
SECTION 3	Definitions	3
SECTION 4	Identification and Assessment	5
SECTION 5	Teaching and Learning	7
SECTION 6	Management and Organisation	10
SECTION 7	Recommended Actions	12
SECTION 8	Bibliography	13
SECTION 9	Websites	14

1 Introduction

The term 'Gifted and Talented' has replaced many of the words and phrases that have typified this area of educational development over the last 30 years. Gifted and Talented in its latest meaning encompasses a much broader range of pupil abilities than previously. All pupils have gifts and talents and all of our places of learning seek to develop the potential of every learner. However, all schools will also have pupils who are Gifted and Talented. In general terms, up to about 10% of each and every school cohort is to be viewed as being Gifted and Talented and as such will benefit from activities that enrich, extend and accelerate their learning. Research from the national Excellence in Cities initiative indicates that schools that have adopted this approach have boosted standards at a higher rate, for all in the cohort, than other schools have. Providing effectively for Gifted and Talented children should lead to a rise in standards across the whole school.

This document is based on the work of a group of primary and secondary teachers and headteachers working with members of the Psychological and Advisory Services between November 2001 and June 2002. I would like to thank them for the work they have put into this excellent guide which should provide practical support to all our schools.

A supplementary guidance document will be produced for schools later in 2003.



Dr. Bryan Slater
(Director of Education)

2 Policy Statement

Norfolk LEA is committed to providing a rich and challenging curriculum for all its learners; one that promotes the highest standards and encourages each and every individual to achieve their full potential. Every school will have pupils who are Gifted and Talented and should ensure that there is a strategy in place to meet their needs.

Principles that underpin the Policy

- There are Gifted and Talented children in all our schools.
- Provision in schools should be appropriate to the needs of all Gifted and Talented children.
- The LEA should ensure that schools cater for the needs of all Gifted and Talented children.
- The LEA should direct teachers and parents to appropriate sources of help and support.
- The LEA should promote a consistent approach across the LEA through the sharing of best practice.
- All schools should enable the potential of each and every Gifted and Talented child to be fulfilled.
- All schools should have a Policy setting out how they will provide for the needs of their Gifted and Talented pupils.

3 Definitions

Gifted and Talented Pupils - Who are we talking about?

Gifted and Talented pupils are described in the latest government thinking as being around the top 5 to 10% of the ability range in any school or class setting. As the National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE) has suggested, we must encourage teachers to believe that there are Gifted and Talented pupils in every class and every school.

It is clear that one should not be “precious” about the terminology used to describe children with high levels of ability. Throughout this publication the term Gifted and Talented will be used to cover this broad spectrum of usage.

Gifted and Talented in the Classroom

In practical classroom terms, Gifted and Talented children are likely to present themselves to teachers in one or another of three groups:

- a) those whose outstanding ability is so evident (and in some cases linked with behaviours that cause difficulties in mixed-ability settings), that they force teachers to seek to develop specific strategies to cope with their high ability, even if there is no existing whole school policy.
- b) a much larger group of children with high levels of ability (the DfES suggests about 10% of a school’s cohort), who attain high levels of achievement and would specifically benefit from a school policy targeted on providing appropriately for Gifted and Talented children.

- c) Children with high levels of ability, who do not achieve at a high level and who are in danger of being missed by those seeking to provide appropriately for Gifted and Talented children.

Broader and Narrower Than You Think - A Range of “Outstandingness”

There is amongst Gifted and Talented children a range of outstanding ability:

- 1) The reality of high ability is no longer seen as a matter of a single monolithic “Giftedness”, covering the whole spectrum of human ability. Instead, current wisdom finds it more realistic to think in terms of several distinct types of ability, which often appear relatively independently of each other, rather than seeing them as facets of a more general high ability. Howard Gardner (1999) expresses this diversity in the concept of multiple intelligences, identifying eight distinct aspects of ability:
 - Linguistic (facility with language)
 - Mathematical/Logical (reasoning, organisation, calculation, abstract and structured thinking)
 - Visual/Spatial (ability to think in pictures/mental images, use movement to assist learning)
 - Musical/Auditory (skill with rhythm, pitch and musical patterns)
 - Kinaesthetic (physical skills, hand-eye co-ordination)
 - Interpersonal (skill in communicating, leadership, sensitivity to others)

- Intrapersonal (self-awareness, self-motivation, self-directing)
 - Natural (skill in the natural sciences).
- 2) Gifted and Talented children vary enormously across this range in the extent of their outstanding ability:
- a) A relatively small number may be outstanding in many of these areas of ability;
 - b) Many have high ability across a relatively narrower range;
 - c) Some are outstandingly able in only one of these aspects of ability; for example, art or a particular sport or a specific craft skill.

This is in addition to the risk of failing to recognise the high ability of the all-round underachiever.

A particular problem in misjudging the extent of high ability, which profoundly affects decision making about specific children's giftedness, relates to academic, chronological and social age. A child who is academically years ahead of his/her peer group may have the personal maturity of an average child of his/her age - and possibly the social skills of an even younger child.

The task of identifying outstanding ability is further complicated by the fact that the opportunity to bring high ability to notice varies widely from one aspect of learning to another. High ability in some curriculum areas for example, sport, music or mathematics is much more readily noticed than it is in other, equally valid, areas of learning, for example, design technology or geographical awareness.

Schools seeking to provide appropriately for Gifted and Talented pupils therefore risk two contrasting dangers:

- i) They may assume a child's outstanding performance in one or two aspects of learning indicates a broader range of ability than is the case; or
- ii) They may identify high performance in a specific skill area and assume that the task is to provide appropriately in that one area, when in fact the pupil has unrecognised (and possibly greater) ability in other aspects of learning.

4 Identification and Assessment

Why do we need to identify Gifted and Talented children?

Reports from HMI and Ofsted inspectors over recent years have highlighted a shortcoming in much otherwise good professional practice in schools. This is that the most able children, while achieving for the most part very well compared to their peers, are not being 'stretched' by their lessons and are consequently not achieving their potential.

Many observers see in this weakness a human rights or equal opportunities issue concerned with educating each child according to her/his ability and enabling each to attain the highest possible level of educational achievement.

Many may also see the loss to the community of an outstandingly valuable resource, as its most able members fail to explore their potential for thinking deductively and creatively at a level which could lead on to benefiting their fellow human beings.

Too often, schools have only become aware of the issues surrounding the high ability of these children when a specific individual causes difficulty by outrunning the pace of normal lesson planning or reacting adversely to unchallenging classwork. However, pupils who cause these problems are only a tiny minority of those who, with more conscious planning could be working at a level and in ways beyond what the majority of their peers appear to be able to achieve.

How can we identify Gifted and Talented children?

The key factor in effective identification is to use as many sources of information as possible. In the primary phase, identification systems may

well rely heavily on the professional judgement of one teacher. However, this judgement still needs to be made using a variety of assessment criteria. In the secondary phase, where the child will be known by many different teachers, the process will entail sharing information about the child's response in different settings and in relation to different subjects. In both settings it is important that schools gather evidence from a wide range of sources.

These might include:

● Parental information

Parents know a great deal about their children's own talents and strengths. They should not be underestimated as a source of information when identifying gifted and talented children. Many schools make a point of interviewing parents before their child starts school and asking them about any particular strengths of their child.

● Teacher nomination

Teachers are in the best position to use their professional judgement when identifying gifted and talented. However, research suggests that teachers can underestimate what a child can do. Too much emphasis may be placed on neatly produced work or standard rather than divergent response.

There is a risk in not identifying Gifted and Talented children who are unable to meet the demands of targeted support or missing pupils whose ability is hidden - perhaps even from themselves - behind a mask of untidiness, disorganisation and perhaps reluctance. Identification must see past immediate impressions to locate the underachieving Gifted and Talented child as well as the conventionally high attainer.

● Checklists

Checklists can be useful in raising standards but they need to be treated with a degree of caution.

Most checklists address general issues, but some are subject specific. While such checklists facilitate judgement because they focus more specifically on the kind of cognitive behaviour to be found within curriculum subjects, they also highlight the possibility that a pupil might be outstandingly able in one subject area, or one aspect of learning, and not in another. The majority of pupils fall into this category. Identification needs to concern itself not only with the all-round highly able child, but also with outstanding ability however it manifests itself, even if restricted to a narrow range of study or activity.

● Testing

Testing alone cannot be relied on to identify the most able. However, it is a very useful way of comparing children's performance with that of others of a similar age and identifying those pupils whose high achievement demonstrates outstanding ability.

SATs are a useful indicator, which can be used to identify, say, the most successful 10% of children. It is worth remembering that children who are outstandingly divergent thinkers are likely to be able to think of ingenious alternative solutions, which could put them at a disadvantage in standardised tests. They may therefore score at a lower level than less imaginative children.

All tests are really measures of achievement rather than of potential, but some are intended to indicate potential rather than mastery of school-based subjects. In really exceptional cases, schools may wish to turn to an

educational psychologist who can administer an individual assessment of this sort. Such means cannot be used to identify a whole cohort of pupils with outstanding ability.

Some tests (or test batteries) exist which can be administered by teachers - and to pupils in class-sized groups. Though often expensive, these are a more practical means of unearthing potential in pupils who might not score highly in more conventional tests of attainment. Among such tests, the Cognitive Abilities Tests (published by NFER-Nelson) are perhaps the most popular and cover a wide age-range. A number of Norfolk secondary schools have used the University of Durham, PIPS/MIDYIS/YELLIS/ALIS tests. These give a wide range of predictive data, as well as some very specific ability data that compares each pupil to the extensive Durham data base in areas such as Literacy, Numeracy, Ability to think in 3-D and a proof reading/accuracy area.

● Children's Work

The ability of some able and talented children is easily identifiable through the quality of their work or their response to activities.

However, some children do not respond well to the school setting and, for a variety of reasons, do not show what they are capable of through the work that they are asked to produce.

● Peer Nomination

Children are themselves often very pragmatically aware of the high ability in specific areas of learning which their fellow-pupils have. Use of peer nomination can therefore serve as a useful adjunct to other forms of identification.

However, great care needs to be taken in how such an approach to identification is presented.

While children are very honest in their appraisal of each other's capabilities, their answers to direct questions about their judgements may be affected by other considerations - such as wishing to be kind to friends. Questions need to be asked in a way which does not stress categorisation, but the kind of practical situation in which their judgements will have been formed. For example, "If you needed to get someone in your class to do a really lifelike drawing of something really difficult, who would you choose?"

● **Discussions with children**

Teachers who create opportunities to talk with their pupils individually or in small groups will have formed an intuitive awareness of those who think perceptively, reflectively and evaluatively about their experience. This could come about through the day-to-day work they do and their insights into a wide range of subject matter, including current affairs and personal lifestyle. This may sometimes reveal them as more able children, whose performance in other ways does not mark them out.

5 Teaching and Learning

The Learning Environment

At the heart of the provision for Gifted and Talented pupils will be what happens in the classroom. The challenge for teachers will be meeting the needs of each individual to ensure that their potential is fulfilled. The first stage in the meeting of needs will be a supportive learning environment. Research has shown that the creation of a supportive classroom ethos is a key element in all effective teaching and learning. Gifted and Talented pupils may present challenging behaviour to teachers. The challenges may come in the form of difficult questions, refusal to complete a task or by completing it in an alternative way. A flexible and encouraging response to the challenge will help build relationships, confidence and self-esteem.

It can be a mistaken belief that Gifted and Talented pupils are able to work without adult supervision. In reality, greater emotional support is needed as such able pupils relate better to adults than their peers, and will welcome opportunities to exchange ideas with teachers. Such pupils may also lack confidence in their own ability or judgement in the same way as any other pupil might. Once a task has been set, it is important that pupils are given due attention, even if it is just to affirm what is being accomplished.

A DfES/NACE project has identified the conditions needed to create an effective learning environment for the most able. The characteristics of such an effective classroom are those that provide:

■ **Self-direction with independence of thought and action**

This will mean training in self-confidence and skills for independent learning (such as

research). It has been found that where content and the development of learning skills are addressed simultaneously, pupils make more progress. The use of "Mind Maps" can be a useful strategy.

■ **Opportunities to be involved in group work**

Pupils need to work with others of similar abilities. Gifted and Talented pupils may get a false sense of superiority by the fact that they always seem to know the answers. This can lead to feelings of embarrassment or isolation. Working with other able pupils will help them understand that there are others like them and allow them the opportunities to spark ideas off one another and so work at both deeper and broader levels. On a practical level, the grouping of pupils enables greater flexibility in enrichment or extension activities, which are described in more detail later in this section.

■ **Experience of failure or difficulty**

Gifted and Talented pupils may often find lessons and tests easy. It is important for teachers to ensure that such pupils do not suddenly find themselves reaching a point where the work becomes impossibly hard. Risking failure is an important process in the development of any pupil. Some Gifted and Talented pupils do not experience failure until very late in their educational lives, when it can be a damaging shock that needs sensitive and supportive handling. It will be helpful if pupils are taught strategies for coping with failure.

■ **Imaginative and creative work**

This is characterised by high teacher expectations and appropriate challenge. David George (1995), a leading expert on Gifted and Talented pupils, has said that,

“These pupils should do less and learn more.”

The Curriculum

The latest versions of the National Curriculum allow teachers in all subjects and at all levels to respond flexibly to the needs of Gifted and Talented pupils. Teachers are able to provide challenging materials, which can if appropriate be taken from higher levels. Pupils can progress according to their abilities and should not be held back by a curriculum straitjacket.

There are dangers in accelerating pupils too quickly through National Curriculum levels. Pupils may not get the grounding or understanding of a subject through being accelerated up through levels of content whilst their peers are progressing at their own pace. It may be more appropriate for teachers to look outside the National Curriculum framework and provide other materials and resources for such Gifted and Talented pupils.

Differentiated materials will be, in the first instance, the way to support and enrich the learning of Gifted and Talented pupils. Differentiation has many different forms including input, outcome, task, resource, support, grouping, information, pace, homework, role and dialogue. Higher order questioning in class should be included to stretch able pupils, leading them to develop higher order thinking skills.

Enrichment or Extension or Acceleration

Enrichment consists of providing extra materials at a deeper or more complex level, or providing challenging questions, which develop further pupils' understanding of a topic or subject. An advantage for the pupil is that he or she stays with their teaching group. A

disadvantage is that enrichment activities may become time consuming and self-absorbing. Enrichment gives a horizontal flexibility to the curriculum. It is a supplement, but not a replacement, for the core of work to be covered. Enrichment activities may be provided outside the classroom through after school events/weekend activities.

Extension consists of enabling pupils to move through the curriculum at a faster rate than their peers. This may mean that some core work has to be compressed or compacted or even missed out. Extension gives vertical flexibility to the curriculum. An advantage for the pupil is that he or she can make rapid progress. A disadvantage is that at transition/transfer a pupil may find that a repetition of previously covered extension work occurs. Detailed record keeping becomes an essential part of extension work for teachers. A recommended technique is the must/should/ could do approach to planning. There are many published approaches to extension work to the National Curriculum, of which Smith's (1996) "Accelerated Learning in the Classroom" is particularly helpful.

Acceleration is used rarely in schools in England at the present time. Acceleration in this sense means taking pupils ahead of their year group to be taught with older pupils.

Teaching Higher Order Thinking Skills

The recognition that pupils learn in different ways, for example visual, auditory or kinaesthetic - is of benefit to all pupils, but will particularly benefit Gifted and Talented pupils. Teachers may need to employ particular strategies to match learning styles. Schools participating in the Norfolk "Thinking Schools/Thinking Children" project will benefit from the ideas and strategies employed.

The best known approach to the teaching of higher order thinking skills is that of Bloom (1976). Bloom identified different levels of thinking which he placed in an hierarchical order:

- Evaluation (high)
- Synthesis (high)
- Analysis (high)
- Application (middle)
- Comprehension (low)
- Knowledge (low)

The Challenge of Underachievement

Ability and achievement are not the same thing. In any school there may be Gifted and Talented pupils who are not able or willing to demonstrate their true potential and abilities. These pupils will represent a considerable challenge to any school. It is puzzling that some of the most Gifted and Talented pupils should fall into this syndrome of underachievement.

Some Gifted and Talented pupils will attempt to hide their potential through a number of in-school strategies. Schools will need to ensure that such pupils are nurtured and guided to help them achieve and fulfil their true potential.

Three characteristics may typify underachievement a) low self-esteem, b) academic avoidance and c) poor study habits. Identification of under achievement in pupils can be carried out through an audit. More details will be published in the supplementary guidance.

Neuroscience has taught us much about the brain/intelligence/metacognition that schools should be more able to effectively approach the problems of underachievement. Appropriate teaching and learning environments that meet the needs of the Gifted and Talented will help towards minimising underachievement.

6 Management and Organisation

Roles and Responsibilities

The Class/Subject Teacher

The teacher in the classroom is at the heart of the school's provision for Gifted and Talented pupils.

It is the class teacher/subject teacher's enthusiasm, skill and the quality of the relationships they engender within the class, which largely determine whether Gifted and Talented pupils are able to make the progress of which they are capable.

To be truly effective, teachers need to work within a culture where there is a strong sense of shared responsibility and team effort. Their contribution needs to be set within a structure where there are systems for providing advice and support, including partnership with parents.

Teachers who are most successful with Gifted and Talented pupils:

- Look for opportunities to widen the scope of learning activities beyond the school and the classroom.
- Encourage pupils to take risks, to play with ideas and to see failure as an inherent part of problem solving.
- Are sensitive to the particular difficulties some Gifted and Talented pupils face in relationships with their peers and the stress that can be caused by teacher and parental expectation.

Such teachers also:

- Plan differentiated activities and questions to extend the core learning tasks.

- Invite pupils to plan their own work from time to time.
- Help pupils articulate and set their own goals and targets for their work, including how they will evaluate outcomes.
- Provide rigorous and constructive commentary on pupils' work.
- Seek help, where necessary, from colleagues.

The Form Tutor

Secondary form tutors/primary class teachers have a responsibility for the whole child and so a knowledge and understanding of Gifted and Talented pupils within their group would be beneficial. The form/class teacher would be at the heart of knowledge and information about Gifted and Talented pupils.

In the primary school the class teacher will work with pupils on a daily basis far more intensively than the secondary form tutor and will quickly realise the differences in both potential and ability.

In the secondary school the form tutor can be a central part of a "can do" culture offering support for Gifted and Talented pupils. The most able child may appear to be a threat at times by their knowledge, curiosity and questioning spirit. Form tutors will need to be tolerant and patient, as well as keeping an open mind. Valuing and celebrating pupil differences will help all pupils in the tutor group.

The role of the form tutor has changed considerably in the last 10 years. In an increasing number of schools tutors are becoming academic mentors of their form group. With this developing change of role the tutor will become more central in supporting the Gifted and Talented pupil in his or her form. Likewise, the amount of data held on pupils has also increased over the last 10 years. We would

recommend that data such as Key Stage 2/3 SATs results, NFER, QCA progress tests, PIPS, MIDYIS, YELLIS, GCSE results and ALIS is copied to form tutors. This data can help with the recognition and identification of Gifted and Talented pupils in the form.

Some secondary schools are also developing the use of external mentors. External mentors can help raise the personal aspirations and expectations of Gifted and Talented pupils. They can also broaden horizons and help Gifted and Talented pupils by extending their knowledge and understanding.

The Headteacher

The role of the Headteacher is almost invariably the single most significant factor which determines school effectiveness.

The Headteacher has overall responsibility for the quality of the educational provision for all pupils in the school, including the Gifted and Talented. Gifted and Talented pupils are most likely to do well in schools, where the Headteacher is committed to a culture of high achievement and the pursuit of excellence, where he or she genuinely welcomes diversity and the need to pay regard to individual needs.

The Curriculum/Subject Leader

The curriculum/subject leader is in a good position to take a lead role in developing and evaluating the curriculum provision for Gifted and Talented pupils. The curriculum/subject leader can:

- Maintain a general overview of the subject provision and identify any gaps or shortcomings.
- Support developments and assist colleagues in planning differentiated activities.

- Keep up to date with resources that can extend and enrich the core curriculum.
- Monitor the effectiveness of provision in their subject and the pupil's response to this provision.

The Gifted and Talented Coordinator

We recommend that a coordinator or named person has oversight and responsibility for all aspects of the school's work with Gifted and Talented pupils. Such a person needs to have the status and authority to take things forward, to be a member of the senior management team, or to be in a position to negotiate with senior managers in order to facilitate developments and to support colleagues.

“To do the job effectively, such a named person should have dedicated, time-tabled time for their work.”

Highly Able Pupils - House of Commons Select Committee Report - April 1999

The remit of the coordinator will vary according on his or her other roles within the school. The most likely responsibilities and tasks will cover:

- Supporting the school and staff in their identification and monitoring of Gifted and Talented pupils.
- Keeping up to date with information about resources and services and being responsible for sharing this information with colleagues and parents.
- Encouraging the development of suitable in-house enrichment opportunities as well as extra- curricular activities.
- Co-ordinating the use of external agencies or people from the community, resources and facilities.
- Contributing to all aspects of whole school planning and policy making.

- Facilitating and contributing to staff development and training.
Liaising with the named school governor.

Governors

Governors have well defined responsibilities in relation to the school. We recommend that governors are kept fully informed about developments that take place regarding the provision for Gifted and Talented pupils. With so many diverse demands on governors it can be helpful if there is to be a named person on the governing body who takes on this task as a special interest and is able to support any Gifted and Talented development in the school.

A Whole-School Policy

Effective schools will aim to provide an education for Gifted and Talented pupils that is integral to on-going teaching and learning. Some schools may wish to incorporate specific statements about identification of, and provision for, Gifted and Talented pupils, whilst others may wish to develop a whole- school Gifted and Talented policy.

7 Recommended Actions

- 1) Appoint a member of staff to take responsibility for the provision for Gifted and Talented pupils (ie the top 5 -10% of each year cohort).
- 2) Develop an appropriate Gifted and Talented Policy.
- 3) The governing body should identify a named governor to exercise an oversight of the support provided by the school for Gifted and Talented pupils.
- 4) All schools with Key Stage 1 pupils - develop target setting at level 3+ to ensure the needs of the Gifted and Talented are met.
- 5) All schools with Key Stage 2 pupils - extend target setting to include level 5+ targets.
- 6) All schools with Key Stage 3 pupils - extend target setting to include level 7+ and EP (exceptional performance) targets.
- 7) All schools with Key Stage 4 (GCSE) students - extend target setting to include A and A* targets.
- 8) All schools with Key Stage 5 (Sixth Form) students - develop target setting at the A and B grade levels of AS/A2 to ensure the needs of Gifted and Talented Sixth Form Students are met.

All schools should look carefully at how they meet the needs of Gifted and Talented pupils.

Concentrating on what happens in classrooms, through the development of effective Teaching and Learning strategies, will be the key to supporting the Gifted and Talented pupils in all Norfolk schools.

8 Bibliography and other useful Gifted and Talented texts

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9 Websites

The DfES provides a very extensive and detailed Gifted and Talented website that gives specific guidance across the key stages of the National Curriculum. The general guidance includes (a) Identification, (b) Policies, (c) Roles and Responsibilities, (d) Managing Provision, (e) Matching Teaching to Pupils' Needs and (f) Transfer and Transition.

It can be accessed at www.nc.uk.net/gt/

The National Association for Able Children in Education (NACE):
www.ox-west.ac.uk/nace

The National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC):
www.rmplc.co.uk/orgs/nagc/index

The World Council for Gifted and Talented Children:
www.WorldGifted.org

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