



Thomas's
LONDON DAY SCHOOLS

POLICY FOR GIFTED AND ABLE CHILDREN

1. STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY

At Thomas's London Day Schools our mission statement asserts that we will offer:

- opportunity through our broad curriculum
- expertise through our specialist teaching staff
- confidence through fulfilment
- contentment through achievement at all levels
- kindness through the practical application of moral behaviour
- openness through active partnership with parents

We believe that every child in the school has the right to receive our assistance in achieving his or her potential. This clearly includes pupils who display some form of giftedness.

2. DEFINITION OF ABILITY

We believe that gifted and able children are those who demonstrate a significantly higher level of ability than most pupils of the same age in one or more curriculum areas or in any of the following:

- high intelligence
- leadership
- physical talent
- musical talent
- dramatic talent
- artistic talent
- mechanical ingenuity
- creativity
- interpersonal skills

3. IDENTIFICATION

Our aim is actively to identify our gifted and able children. We recognise that gifted pupils may be:

- good all-rounders
 - high achievers in only 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 abilities
- (Deborah Eyre, 1993)

The attitude of the staff is a crucial element in identification, as information has to be gleaned from many different sources and some indicators will be evident only to open-minded, sympathetic and perceptive teachers. Information will be drawn from:

- Test results
- Detailed records from previous classes
- Discussion with the child
- Good communication between teachers, including the completion of our checklist for particular abilities where the teacher feels that it is appropriate
- Parental information
- Continuous assessment by the teacher of tasks which are open-ended enough to allow the child to show what he or she can do
- Teacher familiarity with the characteristics of able children
- Detailed individual assessment by an educational psychologist if the co-ordinator for able pupils feels it is appropriate

4. PROVISION

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH:

The School aims to create a climate in which success is valued by everyone and where individual differences are accepted. This will involve:

- The identification of the particular needs of able children in all our planning
- The provision of appropriate resources
- The encouragement of children to be independent in their learning. This will include the provision of opportunities for them to organise their own work, access the resources they need, work unaided, make their own choices about work, evaluate what they are doing and be self-critical
- Flexibility of organisation which might include withdrawal, setting for a particular subject, cross-curricular enrichment projects or partial acceleration, thereby providing opportunities for the able child to work with others of similar ability
- The creation and adoption of mentorship, if it is felt appropriate, for a particular able child or group of children.
- Celebration of achievement

IN THE CLASSROOM:

It is important to establish what prior knowledge, understanding and skills the pupils have so that we are not wasting time or demotivating the pupil by unnecessary repetition or duplication.

The power of peer group pressure to under-achieve will not be under-estimated. It will be confronted with sensitivity to both parties.

We are aware that the “bright but lazy” pupil requires particular challenge and motivation.

We are aware of the danger of assuming that gifted pupils are easier to teach than other pupils.

In class our aim is to:

- provide appropriate challenge through high quality tasks for enrichment and extension which will always be available (not “more of the same”) growing out of the subject/topic being studied by the whole class
- Plan work so that extension tasks are always available for able children, allowing for flexibility to adapt to changing needs/directions
- Differentiate appropriately through stimuli, resources, tasks, outcomes and responses
- Provide wide variety in what we prepare for the pupils and in what we ask them to do for us
- Set individual targets, not class targets

- Set individual homework
- Encourage pupils to become independent learners by:
 - organising their own work
 - carrying out unaided tasks which stretch their capabilities
 - making choices about their work
 - developing the ability to evaluate their work and so become self-critical

OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM:

We aim to provide:

- A wide range of extra-curricular activities including after-school clubs, instrumental lessons, choirs, orchestra, extra drama, ballet
- Scholarships and exhibitions in Years 6 to 8 for academic, artistic, sporting and dramatic arts talents
- Local and residential trips
- Opportunities for entering competitions
- The use of outside agencies and experts

5. MONITORING

We shall appoint a Co-ordinator for Gifted and Able pupils who will be responsible for monitoring how this policy is carried out and will carry out the additional duties identified in the job description.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Principals, Heads and Vice Principal.

Form tutors are responsible for maintaining documentation of pupils' progress and achievements.



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CO-ORDINATOR FOR GIFTED AND ABLE PUPILS JOB DESCRIPTION

The Gifted and Able Pupils' Co-ordinator will ensure that such pupils are receiving good quality provision in all aspects of the life of the school. To do so the Co-ordinator will:

- Produce and maintain a policy for gifted and able pupils.
- Ensure that the school has the broadest possible view of ability so that the gifted and able pupils whose particular abilities lie outside the more traditional areas are helped to achieve their potential.
- Ensure that procedures for identifying potentially gifted and able pupils are in place within the school.
- Ensure that all other policies and practices within the school have taken account of the needs of the more able.
- Ensure that the teachers are aware of the characteristics of gifted and able pupils.
- Encourage flexibility of approach within the school to the needs of individual able children.
- Monitor levels of staff subject expertise and support teachers with advice and resources so that they can provide learning experiences of sufficient depth.
- Ensure that the school as a whole provides a wide range of enrichment activities so that the more able pupils experience learning of sufficient breadth.
- Track the progress of identified gifted and able pupils so as to be able to monitor provision and progression and continuity from year to year.
- Work together with the Head, the Head of Lower School and all members of staff to raise the profile of more able pupils within the school.
- Examine the results of tests and other assessments in order to monitor the achievements of the more able and to explore any particular features such as achievement in particular year groups or gender groups.
- Liaise with parents of individual able pupils and with their teachers to encourage mutual co-operation and understanding of potential difficulties and desirable outcomes.
- Liaise with pre-school providers, senior schools and outside agencies so that the needs of individual pupils are met with consistency and continuity.
- Counsel individual children where appropriate to identify frustrations and tensions and to provide help and support to overcome them.

IDENTIFICATION OF GIFTED AND ABLE CHILDREN

METHOD

We are concerned with a wide range of abilities and recognise that some pupils' particular talents may be difficult to identify.

Therefore, a combination of a number of methods of identification is required. The following is almost certainly not a complete list:

- Teacher nomination
- Tests and assessments – summative and diagnostic

- Checklists – general and subject specific
- Educational psychologists
- Parental nomination
- Child's response to provision/opportunity
- Pupil questionnaire
- Pupils identified as Gifted and Able should be included on the SEN register

CHARACTERISTICS OF VERY ABLE CHILDREN

- Possesses superior powers of reasoning, of dealing with abstractions, of generalising from specific facts, of understanding meanings and of seeing into relationships
- Originality and initiative in intellectual and practical work.
- Information can be absorbed quickly and stored, sifted, analysed and organised to develop coherent and complex arguments.
- Has a devastating appreciation of the weakness of other people including those in positions of authority such as teachers.
- Unusually high personal standards; frustration if they cannot achieve the excellence they demand of themselves; perfectionist approach, not satisfied with approval from others.
- When interested becomes absorbed for long periods and may be impatient with interference or abrupt change.
- Keen powers of observation, noting mismatches and analogies.
- Adapts articles readily and uses them for purposes other than those for which they were intended.
- Constant repetition of skills already fluent will usually lead to loss of interest.
- Preference for the company of older children and adults; boredom with the company and interests of peers.
- Has exceptional curiosity and constantly wants to know why.
- Has ability to lead and influence others – in a positive or negative way.
- Spots the direction of a story or situation well ahead of his peers.
- Pursues subject or subjects in great depth.
- Unwilling to follow instructions for class task; prefers to do things in an individual manner.
- Wide range of interests; hobbies that are sometimes unusual and are followed with great enthusiasm and competence. Often keen collectors.
- Sees connections, relationships, inconsistencies, cause and effect, bias and the distinction between fact and opinion in the manner of the average child at least half as old again.
- Has great interest in the nature of man and the universe.

GIFTED AND ABLE PUPILS IDENTIFICATION CHECKLIST

Gifted children sometimes, but not always, are exceptionally good all-rounders. These children are easily identified and should be readily catered for in a school like Thomas's. Please meet with your year group tutors, subject teachers and run through class lists. Make a note of children in the appropriate categories bearing in mind that we would like to make provision for the top 10% of pupils in any field.

TALENT	NAME
All- round academic ability	
Analytical skills	
Intellectual curiosity	
Initiative and originality in intellectual work	
English and Humanities:	
a) Reading comprehension	
b) Written expression inc. poetry	
c) Verbal expression	
Maths	
Languages	
Science	
Logic and reasoning	
Mechanical ingenuity	
Creativity	
Artistic talent	
Dramatic talent	
Musical talent	
Sporting talent	
Interpersonal skills	
Leadership	

There are also gifted and talented children whose talent is disguised by specific difficulties or behavioural problems. Could you consider the following characteristics or models and see if any might apply to children you know who could be hiding lights under bushels.

TYPE	NAME
High ability, low motivation: disruptive, arrogant, anti-social or withdrawn, gloomy, "switched off"	
Good verbal, poor written skills or good written, poor verbal	
Problems with social relationships: precocious, impatient, dismissive, remote, aggressive	
Successful socially at expense of ability, keen to disguise talents	
Low self-esteem: highly self-critical	
Heightened sensitivity to criticism	
Obsessive: perfectionist, anxious, spends ages on h/w	
Anxious about new challenges: unwilling to take risks, must be sure of succeeding	
Low attention span: butterfly mind, odd connections made	
Unwilling to acquire learning skills: relies on memory or instinct, averse to systems, organisation and routine	
Penetrating, quirky sense of humour	

This policy will be reviewed annually.			
Reviewed: March 2010	By:	Jill Kelham Vice Principal	Changes made
Reviewed: December 2008	By:	Jill Kelham Vice Principal	No changes
Reviewed: December 2007	By:	Jill Kelham Vice Principal	No changes
Next Review: December 2010	By:	Jill Kelham, Vice Principal	