

Exceptional Ability & Giftedness Policy

Definition and background

“An able child is one that achieves or has the ability to achieve at a level significantly in advance of their peer group. This may be in all areas of the curriculum or in a limited range” (Eyre, 1999)

- Children who are considered gifted may have been assessed by a psychologist and found to have a high level of intelligence (an IQ score of 130+, 98th Percentile)
- Giftedness is recognized as a “disability” or Special Education condition in the Education Act of 1998.

School Ethos

We are committed to providing an environment which encourages all students to maximise their potential and this clearly includes students who display some form of exceptional ability. An exceptionally able student is one who has the capacity for or demonstrates high levels of performance in an academic area or within a domain-specific ability in a non-academic area. This might include psychomotor ability such as dance or sport, mechanical aptitude, visual and performing arts ability or musical ability. The school has a wide range of curricular and extra-curricular activities which aim to identify and develop the unique talents in all children. All children will be allowed the opportunity to explore and use their inherent talents under the holistic ethos of the school. In some cases children may be given recommendations to further their abilities through relevant outside agencies.

Procedure for identification of pupils with Exceptional Ability

Before identifying any student as exceptionally able in a particular area, we aim to ensure that all students have had an opportunity to learn and succeed in this area. This makes the process of identification fair. An exceptionally able student should be identified using a variety of methods.

Criteria for Assessment

(The specific procedure will vary according to subject area but will include elements of the following)

1. A range of strategies may be used to identify exceptionally able pupils;

- Annual standardised tests (scoring in the 98th percentile or more)
- NRIT (IQ of 130+) administered at the end of second class annually
- Psychological Assessments
- Teacher observation and referral
- Parental/guardian requests
- Referral by other individuals, schools or organisations.
- Self referral
- Verbal and non-verbal reasoning tests administered at the end of third class annually

2. From first class onwards, pupils who score on or above the 98th percentile in the Drumcondra **and** Sigma tests will be identified as needing further development and challenges of their ability.

3. Where teacher observes a child displaying exceptional ability in a specific academic area then further assessment may be carried out to establish giftedness. Where it is a non academic area the parent may be informed of outside agencies more suited to the development of the pupil's giftedness.

Catering for pupils with Exceptional Ability

The pupils who meet the criteria for exceptionally able (IQ of 130+), as determined by 2nd class teacher following NRIT testing, will be catered for within the classroom based on a differentiated programme of work. Difficulties with overloaded timetables of SEN teachers makes withdrawal from class difficult but team-teaching and station teaching on specific topics may be feasible, taking into account the diverse range of special

needs pupils in the school. It may also be possible for certain members of the SEN team to designate one week per term for special project work, or for intense literacy/comprehension or Maths classes for EA group work.

Responsibility and Management

1. The class teacher is responsible for differentiation within the classroom including acquisition and distribution of teaching resources for differentiation. Parents and teachers can work together to advocate for students who are gifted and ensure they are being properly educated.
2. The SET team will be responsible for the assessment stage of this process, if necessary, organisation of extension classes including timetabling (where applicable), acquisition and distribution of information regarding referral and assessment by outside agencies. It is up to the class teacher to provide differentiated instruction based on that child's need..
3. The Principal will liaise with parents, SETs and class teachers throughout the process.
4. The Principal, SEN coordinator and senior management are responsible for the implementation of the exceptionally able policy.

Record Keeping

A record is kept of all students who have been identified as exceptionally able. This record will be made available to staff in paper form and will also be available digitally. Responsibility for record keeping primarily lies with the SEN coordinator in consultation with the principal. The area of ability is recorded with reference to which aspect(s) the student has exceptional ability in. Parents and guardians are consulted and have access to this record. These records are reviewed twice yearly at a meeting of the staff concerned (generally SEN coordinator and relevant class teacher) If a student is not reaching his or her full potential, or has achieved the set of targets, new arrangements and where necessary new targets will be set.

Provision for Exceptionally Able

Opportunities for extension and enrichment are built into all our schemes of work. During policy review we will ensure that every curriculum area will have reference to exceptionally able. We aim to:

- Maintain an ethos where it is acceptable to be bright
- Encourage all students to be independent learners
- Recognise achievement
- Be aware of the effects of ethnicity, bilingualism, gender, religion and social circumstances on learning and high achievement
- Provide a wide range of extra curricular activities and clubs
- Provide opportunities for all students to work with like minded peers

Additional Resources

The school will endeavour to provide library resources to enable particular areas of interest, identified by students, staff members and other relevant personnel

The Davidson Institute for Talent Development provides education, scholarships, advocacy and information to gifted students, educators and parents.

Hoagies' Gifted Education Page consists of over 1000 pages and links which provide students, educators and parents with information, resources and support.

Centre for Talented Youth (UL programme)

Accommodation in the regular classroom through extra work, challenging projects or accelerated lesson plans.

Since there is no law governing the identification of academically gifted children we may be doing them a disservice. Children who are not challenged in the classroom can often create a disturbance to those around them, requiring discipline. Also, teachers are expected to meet the needs of all of the students in their classroom, including gifted students as well as those with special needs. Lesson planning and curriculum creation become more of a challenge for teachers with mixed ability groups where no special gifted services are provided.

Determining Exceptionality

Parents are often told that their son or daughter has a talent or gift that outshines their peers. However, determining whether the talent or gift is exceptional can be tricky.

There are three major methods used for determining whether a child has an exceptional talent/gift.

1. Parental interview - parents know their children better than anyone does. Usually, they are aware of any extraordinary talents or gifts their son or daughter might be exhibiting. Interviewing the parent is the first step in assessing exceptionality in gifted students.
2. IQ testing - testing a child's intelligence through an IQ test can help to identify exceptionality, but it should not be the only tool used. IQ tests do not always show that a child is gifted, especially if the child is young. Other factors should be taken into consideration.
3. Portfolios - this would be a collection of the student's work from both school and home that demonstrates the talent/gift. This could be in the form of written work, videos or recordings. The parent/ teacher/ student would have input into this. Some class teachers in Milford NS use SALF (Student Assessment Learning Folder) as part of their assessment process.

Activities to use with the literature themes are as follows:

(NB: In Milford NS our literacy programme caters for exceptionally able readers by providing them with leveled readers from Junior Infants. Once children have learned to decode automatically they have access to PM+ readers from Senior Infants to 2nd class, levels 19-30.)

- *Write a newspaper article:* (For example, students can become reporters about the topic. The teacher can create an "event." The students can create a newspaper article or even an entire newspaper. Work with school newspaper – Milford Gazette)
- *Make models of a topic of research:* (For example, students could make a model of an item from kits that can be found on the Internet. They could also make their own from plaster, wood, poster board, etc.)
- *Create documentaries about the theme:* (For example, students could create a documentary about the theme from their research. They could interview experts, recreate evidence in their research, show pictures from their research, etc.)
- *Book Club*
- *Milford Quiz Team*

Activities to use with Maths themes:

Khan academy challenges

Mathletics

Scratch computing coder do-jo

Sudoku puzzles

Mensa puzzles

Mangahigh challenges

Numeracy workout enables children to advance in topics above class level)

Challenging Gifted Students in Mainstream Classrooms

Written by: Barbara • edited by: Lamar Stonecypher • updated: 7/12/2012

Diagnostic testing has shown that gifted students have exceptional academic skills in processing and applying knowledge in mainstream classrooms. For the gifted student who is being marginalized in the classroom, teachers must find challenging instructional methods to make learning rigorous and fun.

Tips to Challenge Gifted Students

The facts are definitive and conclusive that gifted students need a diversified instructional curriculum that actively engages them in the mainstream classroom. Gifted students need challenge both in academic curriculum and teacher instruction. There are tips that teachers can use in both curriculum and instruction to make learning equitable and fun for their most precocious students.

Tips for Teaching Gifted Students

- Have students work with you in selecting a diversity of learning materials that challenge and motivate their interest and academic abilities.
- Provide curriculum that challenges gifted students to understand learning in real-life applications. Once they've shown evidence of mastery, keep the learning proactive and productive.
- Use technology, field trips, interviews, science fairs and student portfolios to provide additional learning resources between the classroom curriculum and the global classroom.
- Use high leverage teaching to promote high leverage learning for gifted students.
- Make sure that curriculum provides relevancy, rigor and real-life application for students eager to process the world around them and explore learning applications of that world in their own lives.
- Have students keep an organized checklist of accomplished assignments during the week.
- Students should be provided with exciting curriculum that promotes multiple learning strategies and applications to learning outcomes.
- Allow gifted students processing time in order to reflect on their learning experiences.
- Present learning activities outside the box for gifted students who are self-motivated to challenge and evaluate their own leanings. Make sure your grade book maintains their individual assessments and current scores.
- Keep a library of interesting reading materials in the classroom.
- Create individual and group projects that promote both a social engagement and academic challenge for gifted students and their peers.
- Celebrate the academic and behavioral accomplishments of gifted students in mainstream classrooms.

The tips could go on and on, not just for gifted students, but for all students needing challenge and rigor in the learning process. The educational journey for gifted students may start in the classroom and end in the application of learning skills in every aspect of their life. Challenging gifted students shouldn't be extra work for the teacher or the other students. Gifted students can be a true gift to any classroom. Provide some instructional tips and you will create eager learners ready to share their exceptional skills and make learning fun for all students.

This policy is subject to review following the issue of the NCCA Guidelines or at least every 3 years.

Policy was drafted on _____

Ratified by the Board of Management on _____