

## **SCHOOL POLICY FOR VERY ABLE AND TALENTED PUPILS**

### **Aims and Rationale**

We want the school community to consist of intellectually curious, fair minded and creative thinkers. Former pupil, the novelist Lawrence Durrell wrote, "I imagine; therefore, I belong, and I am free". We aim to connect every pupil through a love of learning, the pursuit of possibility and the challenge of being the very best they can be. Each pupil may proceed from school with the following values:

- Each other – We recognise our responsibility to create a caring and supportive community. So, we show kindness, respect and empathy for other people, prioritise the nurturing ethos of a family and community-orientated school, and have strong pastoral systems and policies
- Intellectual Curiosity & Creativity – We love learning and seek to foster creative, critical and lateral thinking. So, we provide an outstanding holistic education and realise the academic potential of each individual through inspirational teaching. We go beyond the curriculum, encourage individual research and cross-curricular approaches, develop self-study skills and reflect on our learning.
- Excellence – We commit to being the best we can possibly be in all things. So, we foster a positive culture that celebrates achievement, we set high standards and encourage individual endeavour, and we accept that taking risks and making mistakes are valuable parts of learning.
- Individuality – We recognise that everyone is different and has unique needs, strengths and aspirations, and we promote equality of opportunity. So, we provide wide-ranging opportunities for moral and social, spiritual and cultural and creative and physical development. We encourage and support every pupil to "be all they can be". We actively promote social mobility and inclusion and do not tolerate racism or any form of prejudice
- Social responsibility – We promote the idea that individuals must contribute to the greater good of society. We understand that we live in an inter-connected world where our actions can have profound consequences for others. We provide rich opportunities to develop personal resilience, leadership and communication skills. We emphasise the importance of teamwork and empathy

### **Definitions**

Recognising complexities of the term "Very Able" the School adopts a multi layered approach.

*Very Able* – pupils identified as predicted or having achieved top grades in a range of subjects (and/or in the top 5% for ability nationally)

*Very Able subject specific* - pupils identified as predicted top grades in a subject area

*Talented Co-Curricular* – pupils identified as being very talented at a subject or area outside their curriculum studies

## Leadership

The staffing structure aims to realise our ambitions for these pupils.

- The Deputy Head (Education) is responsible for the 'VAT' Policy, including overseeing the achievement and provision of VAT pupils across the school
- The Very Able and Talented Coordinator works with Very Able and Talented Pupils, harnessing pupil voice and supporting teachers in their day to day practice.
- Nominated 'stretch and challenge' teachers share good practice in teaching and learning for stretch and challenge
- Assisted by the Assessment Coordinator, Housemasters monitor the progress and have general oversight of our VAT pupils

The Deputy Head (Education) will support and monitor the provision for VAT pupils across subject areas, and lead subject and curriculum leaders in doing so. The Very Able and Talented Coordinator and the Assessment Coordinator will work with Housemasters to track progress (through termly ARC meetings) of these pupils and to ensure that enrichment or interventions have an impact on progress and achievement through support of subject skills and / or learning behaviours.

The Deputy Head (Education) and the The Very Able and Talented Coordinator will contribute to developing the quality of teaching and learning, working closely with the nominated 'stretch and challenge' teachers. They will work closely with the Assistant Head Co-Curricular, Heads of Department and Housemasters.

Designated responsibility for VAT includes:

- Managing the school programme of enrichment and VAT
- Leading on the sharing of good practice in teaching and learning for stretch and challenge
- Liaising with other schools and outside agencies on enrichment projects, good practice and curriculum provision
- Identifying pupils and their needs in consultation with pupils, parents and teachers
- Informing pupils, families and teachers about provision for stretch and challenge
- Monitoring provision, intervention and progress
- Targeted intervention and provision for individual pupils
- Allocating funding and managing the stretch and challenge budget

## Heads of Department

Ensure the provision within their department and subject area meets the needs of VAT pupils by:

- Contributing to the identification process of very able subject specific / talented pupils
- Developing and reviewing schemes of work as appropriate
- Leading staff within their department on good practice for stretch and challenge
- Allocating the Department budget appropriately
- Liaising with the Deputy Head (Education) to ensure that the school policy is implemented

The Assessment Coordinator will work closely with the pastoral team to:

- Monitor, track and implement intervention to support the progress of all pupils
- Encourage participation in a wide range of enrichment events

## Identification

The Deputy Head (Education) identifies a group of the very able and talented pupils in each Senior School year group at the start of each academic year. This is done as listed below:

- 1) Nomination through staff, parents or peers
- 2) Self-nomination
- 3) Transition information is passed on through feeder schools (for more information see 'Tracking and Assessment'.
- 4) Teacher observation and assessment based on their expert knowledge of pupil performance and likely potential (see Appendix 1 checklists of general and subject specific criteria)
- 5) Data and pupil tracking. Each pupil scoring within the top 5% nationally for their age on our benchmark MidYis and ALIS tests is automatically listed as 'Very Able'.
- 6) For Key Stage 5, GCSE level attainment is considered. All pupils achieving an average of grade 8 or above are listed as 'Very Able' and are recognised through 'Academic Exhibition' badges.

The School's VAT register is updated twice a year and is shared with all staff.

Given that we are a small school, we are able to track progress carefully and offer extension work and co-curricular enrichment sessions to VAT pupils when appropriate. At the beginning of the school year, all Very Able and Talented pupils are provided with a list of suggested enrichment activities. Many enrichment activities form special programmes and activities for the very able and talented within the academics, music, art, drama and sport.

The School closely monitors the performance of its very able pupils on an ongoing basis through the ARC Reporting system, in departmental meetings and in public examinations as an internal control process and for academic reporting to Governors. Academic reporting to governors includes a breakdown of most able pupils to identify underrepresented groups on the basis of gender, EAL, SEND, boarders etc.

### **Curriculum, Teaching and Learning**

St Edmund's always seeks to help every pupil to reach their academic potential, explore new ideas and technologies and to challenge and develop their thinking.

Within the classroom we aim to ensure that our lessons are stimulating and engaging for all pupils. This is achieved through differentiated teaching and learning strategies. To develop pupils' intellectual curiosity and love of learning, activities involving research/study skills, problem solving, decision making, analysis, synthesis, speculation and evaluation are built into the curriculum.

Pupils are encouraged to challenge themselves academically through extension tasks and enrichment activities. This includes making use of the school library and online resources and attending relevant co-curricular enrichment opportunities.

The School offers a broad, creative and flexible curriculum designed to provide a range of academic opportunities. Core subject classes are set by ability in Year 9 (based on independent benchmarking tests and on the results of Year 8 School examinations). In Year 10, setting by ability occurs in English, English Literature, Mathematics and the Sciences, with "triple Science" available to those pupils in Set 1. Year 9 and GCSE option choices enable opportunities to specialise in, for example Languages, Economics, Film Studies, Humanities and the Arts, including Expressive Arts.

At Sixth Form, the School offers an unusually large number of subject options for an institution of its size (25) and does, on an ad hoc basis, make additional provision for students seeking to take non-curricula subjects like Chinese, German, Italian and Russian. This choice and flexibility is of great benefit to our VAT pupils. The Extended Project Qualification has also been a great success in terms of promoting intellectual curiosity, research interests and original thinking among our pupils.

The School and teachers will provide a challenging and enriched curriculum to enable our Very Able pupils to emerge, be recognised and developed. Pastoral leaders, supported by the Deputy Head, will provide enrichment opportunities to challenge and stretch their cohorts further. Having high expectations means that pupils are encouraged to engage in their own learning by being active participants in lessons and taking responsibility for their own learning, grasping the initiative where possible. The emphasis is on increasing the depth of the curriculum for VAT pupils rather than providing an accelerated curriculum.

The following characteristics of high achieving learners are developed through a pupil's education at St Edmund's School, either through the curriculum (which they are taught), everyday teaching and learning (how they are taught) or through enrichment. These characteristics are additional to those listed in 'Aims'.

- Sharp and precise use of vocabulary, a good command of academic English and fluent numeracy
- Knowing what an A or A\* at A-Level or a grade 7,8,9 at GCSE requires through formative assessment
- Good speaking, listening and critical thinking skills
- Good independent study skills
- For depth, learning beyond the syllabus
- For breadth, linking learning across subjects and to the real world
- Knowing how to make sure of appropriate resources and support

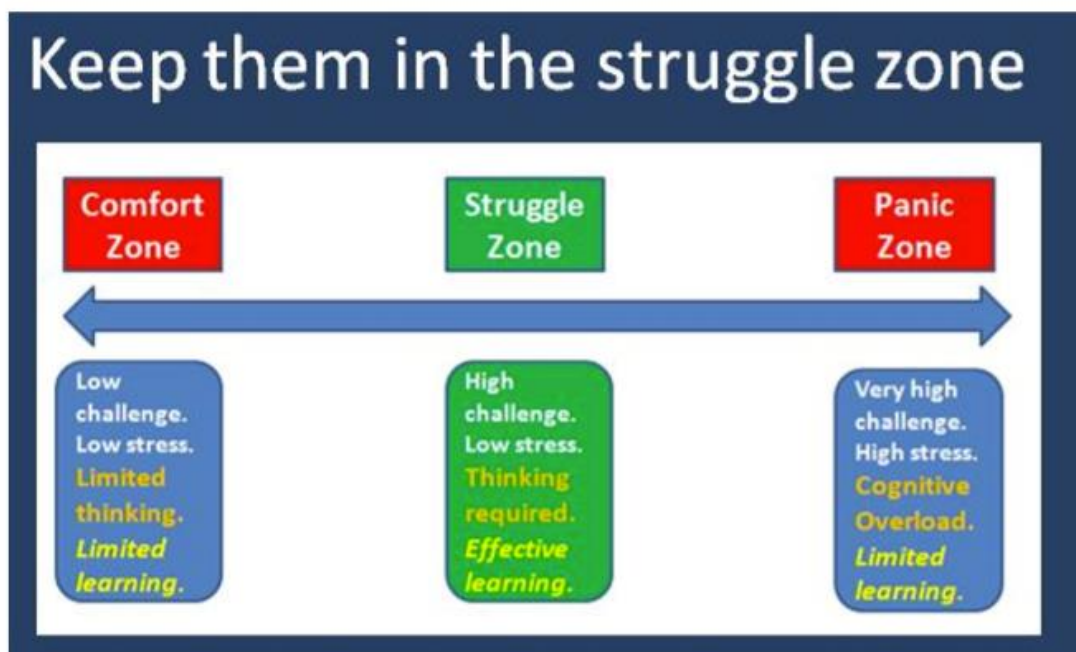
#### Teaching and Learning Strategies

Expert teaching should routinely use differentiation in the classroom such as differentiated questioning, higher order thinking skills and open-ended tasks.

We believe that challenge is the driving force of teaching, and only by giving pupils work that pushes them struggle, and has high expectations of them, will we be able to move beyond what they know and can do now.



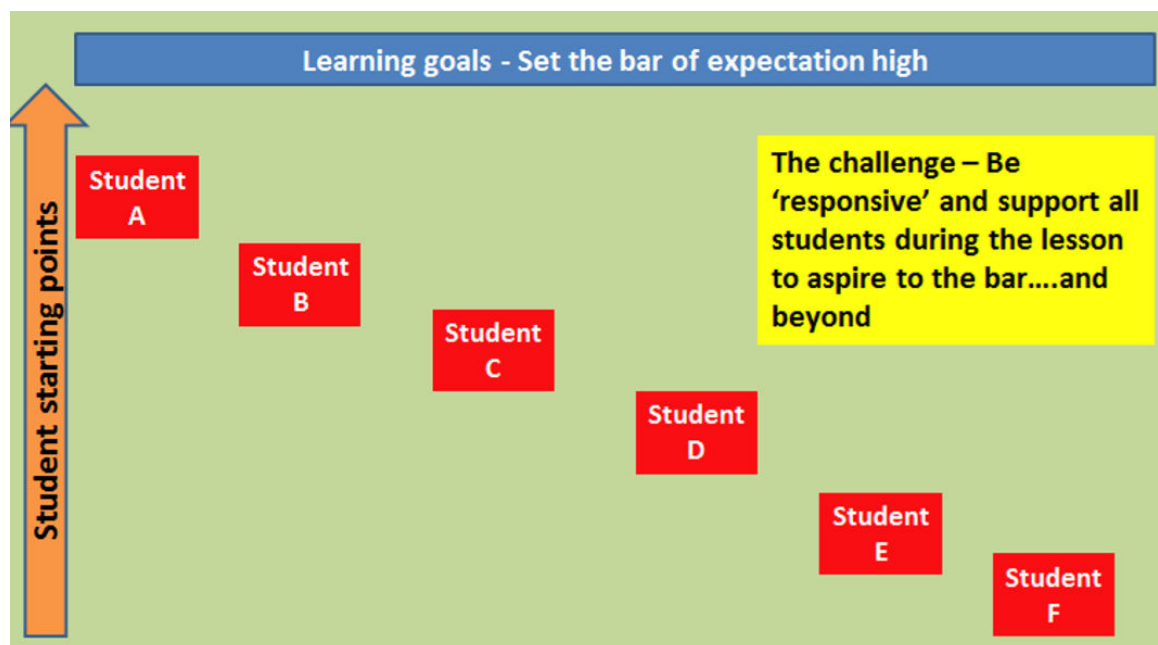
The School is committed to expert teaching that ensures challenge so that pupils have high expectations of what they can achieve. Subject teachers plan to ensure that very able pupils can reach the highest levels and are supported to succeed and fulfil their potential. Teachers will provide a task, which develops higher level and critical thinking, and which is not repetitive. Learning outcomes must provide further challenge, reflecting the breadth and depth of the subject. This means that the work we set for pupils should be sufficiently hard and should make them struggle, because we know this is when pupils are learning.



Expert teachers should identify when to intervene so that pupils are not struggling in the 'Panic Zone' and so switched off in their learning. This means:

- Knowing your pupils
- Noticing who is 'getting stuck' with the learning

- Adjusting teaching to help the pupil(s) 'get unstuck'



For more information see Appendix 3. All subject departments offer off timetable extension lessons, clinics and "open" sessions for all, including VAT, to develop interests and skills.

### Tracking and Assessment

As an institution, we believe the best way to ensure that VAT pupils meet their potential is by close tracking of their academic performance through their school careers combined with deployment of appropriate intervention strategies when necessary.

The school tracks all pupils' academic progress closely throughout each school year relative to recognised benchmark assessments and target grades. Each new entrant to the school is assessed.

To track pupil progress in vital public examination years a "Target Grade" is included on ARC cards. For all year groups, the statistical prediction emerges as a result of careful analysis of a range of data sources.

For GCSE, Target Grades are informed by MidYis and CAT4 testing. Both are nationally recognised programmes of educational testing, assessing pupils' chances in various GCSE subjects as a result of their responses to a wide range of numerical, vocabulary and spatial awareness questions.

For Sixth Form pupils, a similar approach is taken. In the early days of the Lower Sixth a similar (but harder) test is offered. The ALIS test is, again, nationally recognised and gives us grade predictions for all A level subjects. This data is used alongside pupils' GCSE scores to generate the statistical prediction prediction.



Progress data on all pupils is produced twice each term and reviewed by academic staff in the regular Pupil Progress meetings. This data is informed by our school best practice marking policy which stipulates that at least one piece of work is marked and graded every three weeks.

During reporting periods VAT pupils can be cross referenced using our VAT register and the pupil data spreadsheets produced. Action plans are devised for those who are underperforming in one or more subjects. These are implemented by Housemasters, Assessment Coordinator and the Head of Sixth Form.

Pupils who perform particularly well in each Academic Review period are recognised with prizes in assembly, including postcards home and termly academic colours which are celebrated with the award of a badge. Parents are informed formally of pupil progress through the regular Academic Review cards and reports.

Our Very Able and Talented list is used to inform teachers of the School's Very Able and Talented pupils. This information is given to teachers at the start of each school year.

Transition information is passed on through feeder schools. This process starts during the summer term of Year 8, when local feeder schools are contacted for information on incoming pupils. The primary feeder St Edmund's Junior School, to ensure a seamless transition, adopts the same processes of identification of VAT pupils. Prior to joining the school, all incoming pupils submit school reports and their cognitive and academic abilities are assessed.

Consideration will be given to all requests that take pupils out from curriculum time. Consultation with the individual pupil, parents, coaches, co-curricular staff and pastoral managers will be an important part of the decision-making process.

Once identified as 'Very Able' for co-curricular activities, a pupil will enter into a tracking process. Termly meetings with relevant HODs, overseen by the Assistant Head Co-curricular, will allow the school to evidence impact (positive and negative) when evaluated against academic targets and the co-curricular aims of the school. This process will guide support and decisions throughout the pupil's time at St Edmund's.

## **Co-Curricular Enrichment**

Beyond the classroom the School provides a wide range of co-curricular and academic enrichment activities, including clubs, talks and trips, to enrich pupils' education (See Appendix 3). These are implemented by Heads of Department, working closely with the Deputy Head and the Assistant Head Co-Curricular. The school's co-curricular and academic enrichment offer enhances our curricular provision and enables pupils to pursue their interests beyond the limits of the curriculum.



We offer opportunities for pupils to build independence in thinking and problem-solving skills, and an ability to link together concepts across the curriculum. We believe this is key to building on the knowledge-based curriculum delivered in the classroom. This is achieved through our Friday afternoon Skills and Service programme. All pupils within Year 9, 10, 12 and 13 opt into opportunities such as debating club, musical ensembles, the Duke of Edinburgh award scheme Combined Cadet Forces or through contemplation and discussion at Mindfulness.

Learning to take on roles and perspectives through the people pupils come into contact with at school. This can be historical or fictional characters met through reading, Drama lessons or our library Curiosity Shop. The successful "Curiosity Shop" lunchtime lecture programme brings in leading academics and professionals to talk on a range of non-curricular academic topics. Many Very Able and Talented Pupils participate in fortnightly scholars' lectures throughout the year. All pupils have continual access to the library, including reading and discussing books and the opportunity to be introduced to top quality dramatic and musical experiences.

There is a specialised enrichment programme for Sixth Formers, including a leadership programme, structured assistance to enter essay competitions and the Extended Project Qualification: a research qualification which has equivalent status to an AS Level.

St Edmund's is part of the East Kent Schools Together Partnership, a collaboration across state and independent schools to share resources and exchange experiences. This partnership benefits all pupils as it enriches teaching and learning by forging strong relationships and sharing professional practice. Through participation in shared competitions and initiatives pupils have a broader experience, feeling confident relating to a wide spectrum of people in a variety of situations.

Additionally, at School there is a huge variety of clubs, societies and lectures provided at St Edmund's through our Academic Enrichment Programme. The majority of our Academic Enrichment Programme is offered to all pupils at the School. Some clubs, activities and academic trips are focused on specific interests, tasks or projects and are accessible to time-limited groups. Entry and exit to these groups is contingent on such factors as interest, application and the decisions of pupils themselves.

The School provides itself on co-curricular excellence. We recognise our responsibility to track and support the progress of pupils talented in co-curricular areas, making sure that individuals are supported fully on pathways to potential careers, for example:

- Time being given to our most talented actors to participate in films, TV shows and participation in London shows
- Adapted curriculum for our most talented cricketers for their work at Kent County Council Cricket Academy

- Time being given to a talented elite runner to participate in the British Athletics Academy Pathway.
- Encouragement and support for pupils of suitable ability to attend the Saturday conservatoires in London (RAM, RCM etc)

### **Personal, Social and Emotional Issues**

The School also takes seriously its duty to monitor pupil performance carefully and to provide a dynamic and engaging academic enrichment programme beyond the classroom. We recognise our important responsibility to support, promote and enhance our VAT pupils. It is our belief that the principal means of developing such pupils is through differentiated and inspiring teaching 'to the top'. This can only be achieved through strong pastoral monitoring and systems that support while nurturing a growth mindset.

We recognise the fluidity and complexity of ability and that pupils identified as 'VAT' may require additional pastoral support. The Deputy Head (Pastoral) is responsible for the School's pastoral care systems.

- The Head of PSHEE will develop Schemes of Work for PSHEE that develop growth mindset in all pupils, challenge VAT pupils and encourage responsibility.
- The tutorial and PSHEE programme includes sessions on study skills, building resilience and mindfulness.
- Our vertical pastoral structure means that Housemasters and form tutors work with the same pupils for several years, getting to know them as individuals.
- Form tutors support their tutee's academic progress, including discussing academic report and ARC cards.
- The school council includes representation of 'VAT Pupils' and meets regularly. Minutes and discussion points are acted upon at leadership level.
- Peer support structures are in place where appropriate.
- Underperforming pupils are discussed at both an academic and pastoral level before support is put into place.

We encourage all pupils to believe that ability and potential are malleable qualities cultivated through learning and effort. For more information see Appendix 3 'Nurturing a Growth Mindset'.

### **Partnership with parents and carers**

The parents of all pupils identified as *Very Able and /or Talented* are informed of their child's status and are sent information and advice.

Regular 'very able learner voice' meetings are organised in order to provide very able and / or talented pupils with the opportunity to discuss their provision, including the need for any further support.

Parents are fully involved in decisions for pupils to take:

- additional/early GCSEs or A/AS Levels
- part in school productions and concerts

### Exceptionally Able Pupils

Some descriptions for students whose ability exceeds that of even their "very able peers" include "genius, gifted, very bright, high flyer, very or highly able and talented". The term "exceptionally able" describes pupils whose needs go beyond those of students already deemed to require opportunities for enrichment and extension in the normal curriculum.

We recognise that exceptional ability may be masked by:

- the perception that exceptionally able students are blessed with special qualities and advantages to succeed and they don't need additional consideration
- Emotional problems and adjustment issues e.g. an exceptionally able student may be chronologically aged thirteen, at the emotionally developmental age of ten, and working intellectually at a post-16 level without the life experiences to temper their thoughts.
- Dual exceptionality – a physical, intellectual, or learning disability.
- Those who, despite their exceptionality, may persistently underachieve due to boredom, lack of interest, or extreme perfectionism.
- Inability to control attention sufficiently to complete tasks he/she finds simple and repetitive.
- The child has already gone beyond the level being taught and sees connections, relationships and depths which make it very difficult to give the expected answer
- A child who is proficient at blending in is unlikely to be recognised as highly able by his teachers.
- EAL - exceptional ability may be masked by the fact that they are not being educated in their first language.
- Some from minority backgrounds may not show "traditional" signs of exceptionality, as different values and skills are prized differently in different cultures
- Exceptionality can emerge later in a school career or may not have been spotted earlier.
- Being 'all things to all people' as a talented 'all rounder' can mask the exceptional

Students with exceptional ability are just as much in need of support as their peers for their individual educational needs and for the social and emotional challenges exceptionality can bring.

We believe that the key to meeting the needs of exceptionally able pupils is through school and classroom flexibility and attention to planning and practice which reflects the individual profile of the student.

The school's assessment and monitoring systems show how the children are progressing and help staff identify any who may be underperforming. It is accepted that such children are likely to be able to perform well beyond national expectations and that normal assessment systems do not stretch their capabilities.

Classroom provision for the higher and advanced performer is monitored through observation as part of the ongoing cycle of lesson observations and work sampling (as specified in the Assessment, Recording and Reporting Policy). Observation may take the form of teaching and learning reviews, appraisal and peer observation. All schemes of work indicate appropriate extension resources and materials for use with higher and advanced performance students in lessons. All subjects share designated enrichment components for use with higher and advanced performance students in their schemes of work.

The following additional provisions are in place to meet the needs of exceptionally able pupils:

- Triple Science GCSE for those in Set 1
- A-Level Further Mathematics alongside Mathematics A-Level
- Further Mathematics GCSE taught off timetable
- English Language at AS Level taught off timetable

### Continual Professional Development

Arrangements for staff development relating to the high-quality teaching of VAT learners is as follows:

- Best practice in teaching of very able pupils is shared amongst all staff through the School's peer observation programme, termly SLT observation week, appraisal and marking scrutiny.
- Additionally, a small group of teachers are nominated 'best practice' teachers of very able and talented pupils
- Staff regularly attend external courses such as those run by NACE and other external providers.
- The School is a member of NACE. The website log-in, resources, guides and course information are regularly shared and promoted with staff

### Policy Review and Development

Provision for VAT pupils is a key part of the school development plan and departmental planning, which feeds into the appraisal process.

The impact of this policy will be assessed in the following ways:

- The outcomes for VAT pupils are presented and analysed in a report presented to Governors each September. This includes evaluation of educational performance measured against potential
- The quality of teaching for VAT learners is monitored by regular observations from Heads of Department and the Senior Leadership Team.
- The pastoral welfare of identified VAT pupils to be monitored by Housemasters and the Head of PSHEE through regular wellbeing questionnaires

AEB/LAM/EOC Sept 2022

Approved by the Governing Body in

Signed: Governor Responsible for Very Able:..... Date:.....

Signed: Chairman of Governors:..... Date:.....

Review due: Sept 2023

## Appendix 1: Checklists of general and subject specific criteria (source: NACE)

### Identifying very able learners: general characteristics

Very able learners may display a selection of the following characteristics:

#### Personal traits

- Inquisitive, curious, alert and responsive to new ideas
- Quick/agile thinkers
- High self-motivation/initiative; can work well independently
- Socially adept
- Show leadership qualities
- Good/unusual sense of humour
- Sensitive/sensitivity and empathy with others
- Socially immature/isolated; prefer computers to people

#### Learning ability

- Learn new ideas and concepts quickly/easily/readily
- Good at reasoning/logical/analytical thinking
- Good at dealing with abstractions/abstract thinking
- See relationships between things; can generalise from specific facts
- Good at understanding things/meanings; show unusual insights
- Able to memorise quickly/easily
- Follow complex directions easily
- Keen powers of observation
- Advanced vocabulary/verbally fluent/good self-expression
- Learned to read early, often before school age; rapid readers
- Good attention; concentrate and persevere for long periods if interested

#### Learning styles

- Dislike repetition of concepts and closed tasks; get bored easily
- Informed/show interest in ideas and concepts beyond their years
- Creative/imaginative; original ideas in problem-solving; may be artistic/musical
- Inclined to choose unusual but effective methods of working, perhaps using a different line of logic or jumping steps
- Many interests/hobbies; read across a wide range of subjects
- Prefer verbal expression; reluctant to record things in writing
- Resent imposed timetable restrictions if interested in a task
- Perfectionists; may lean towards being obsessive

## Art

Very able learners in art may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Think and express themselves in creative, original ways
- Want to follow a different plan to others, challenge tasks given or extend their brief in seemingly unrelated directions
- Enthusiastic and interested in the visual world; have a strong desire to create in the visual form
- Driven by ideas and persevere until they have completed a task successfully, with little or no intervention from the teacher
- Take risks without knowing what the outcome will be
- Can be quirky and display humour
- Interested in the art world, art forms and culture
- Analyse and interpret their observations and present them creatively
- Work in innovative ways
- Enjoy experimenting with materials; able to go beyond the conventional and use materials and processes in creative and practical ways
- Communicate original ideas, insights and views
- Confidence in using a wide range of tools and techniques skilfully
- Keen to extend their technical abilities; sometimes get frustrated when other skills do not develop at the same time
- Explore ideas, problems and sources on their own and collaboratively, with a sense of purpose and meaning
- Make unusual connections between their own work and others' work
- Critically evaluate visual work and other information

NB: Aptitudes in the arts may reveal themselves early given the right conditions but can also remain hidden if a learner has limited encouragement or opportunity.



## Design and technology

Very able learners in design and technology may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- High levels of technological understanding and application
- High-quality making and precise practical skills
- Readily accept and discuss new ideas; conceptualise beyond the information given
  - Have flashes of inspiration and highly original or innovative ideas
- Demonstrate different ways of working or different approaches to issues
- Identify the simple, elegant solution from complex, disorganised data
- Reflective and constructively self-critical
- Link the familiar with the novel
- See application in 2D or 3D
- Transfer and adapt ideas from the familiar to a new problem
- Sensitive to aesthetic, social and cultural issues when designing and evaluating
- Capable of rigorous analysis and interpretation of products
- Conduct independent research to solve problems
- Work comfortably in contexts beyond their own experience and empathise with users' needs and wants

## English

Very able learners in English may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Read widely, fluently and independently
- Read with meaning, drawing on inference and deduction; can “read between the lines”
- Sensitive to the nuance of language
- Use language precisely, with technical accuracy
- Delight in the meaning of words
- Use extended vocabulary
- Show pleasure and involvement in experimenting/playing with language and manipulating language to effect
- Awareness of the special features of language, such as rhyme
- Write or talk in imaginative, lucid and cogent ways, showing flair and creativity
- Can express ideas succinctly and elegantly
- Grasp the essence of particular styles and adapt them to their own purposes
- Can display a sophisticated sense and appreciation of humour; this humour can be “quirky”; understand irony etc
- Contribute with incisive, critical responses
- Can analyse own work
- Can produce written work that is substantial and the product of sustained, well directed effort
- Elaborate on content that is exceptional for their age
- Can engage seriously and creatively with moral and social themes expressed in literature
- Can justify opinions convincingly and challenge others' points of view
- Strong communicative skills
- Articulate and confident speakers
- Very good listening skills
- Show enthusiasm and enjoyment in the subject; can be sensitive

NB: Learners who are very able in English may demonstrate marked ability in reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, it is not unusual for development in one of these areas to be more pronounced than in others, e.g. children who are fluent readers may be reluctant writers.

## Geography

Very able learners in geography may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Understand concepts clearly; can apply this understanding to new situations to make interpretations, develop hypotheses, reach conclusions and explore solutions
- Understand geographical ideas and theories; apply them to real situations
- Communicate effectively using both the written and spoken word, in ways that are appropriate to task and audience
- Learn subject-specific vocabulary and use it accurately
- Reason, argue and think logically
- Able to manipulate abstract symbols and recognise patterns and sequences
- Use and apply mathematical principles and formulae to solve geographical tasks and problems
- Identify their own geographical questions and sequence investigations
- Understand, and able to explain, complex processes and interrelationships
- Enjoy using graphs, charts, maps, diagrams and other visual methods to present information
- Competent and confident in using the wide range of visual resources required
- Well-considered opinions on issues such as the environment and life in different places • Wide-ranging general knowledge about the world and topical issues
- Able to transfer knowledge from one subject to another
- Creative and original in their thinking, frequently going beyond the obvious solutions

## History

Very able learners in history may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Perform at levels of literacy that are advanced for their age
- Able to communicate effectively in different forms
- Use subject-specific vocabulary with accuracy and confidence
- Show particular skill at inference and deduction
- Able to make logical connections between events and people
- Good understanding of cause and effect
- Able to set both new and previously acquired information in a chronological framework
- Broad range of general and historical knowledge
- Can discuss the significance of events, people and changes
- Maturity in ability to analyse historical sources and organise historical information • Able to demonstrate and use a wide and growing knowledge base
- Able to use several sources simultaneously with confidence and perception, including complex and ambiguous ones
- Keen awareness of the characteristics of different historical periods
- Able to question, challenge and develop own lines of enquiry
- Good grasp and understanding of historical interpretation
- Can make imaginative links between the topics studied in multiple subject fields
- Ability to hypothesise; can make judgements and justify them
- Can take on broad concepts
- Offer unexpected insights
- Willingness to search for new information and ideas
- Enquiring mind
- Can cope with tentative conclusions
- Developed sense of empathy and imagination
- Use visits to historical sites as a basis for further investigation

NB: High ability in history can take time to emerge, as the nature of the subject can often require maturity. However, young children can display a marked interest and enthusiasm for history that can develop as they mature.

## ICT

Very able learners in ICT may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Use and learn about ICT hardware and software quickly, confidently, efficiently and independently
- Demonstrate ICT capability significantly above that expected for their age
- Use ICT to support their studies in other subjects
- Use their skills and knowledge of ICT to solve problems, design information systems and suggest improvements to existing systems
- Consider the limitations of ICT tools and information sources
- Consider social, economic and ethical issues raised by the use of ICT
- Consider the purpose for which information is processed and communicated, and how the characteristics of different kinds of information influence its use
- Use initiative to exploit the potential of more advanced features of ICT tools and skills, e.g. coding
- Explore independently beyond the given breadth of an ICT topic
- Develop systems that meet personal needs and interests
- Grasp and premeditate structures, for example structures in data and directories
- Intrigued, rather than frustrated, by problems; show tenacity and creativity when solving them
- Inclination and ability to help others, e.g. explaining the logic of required steps

NB: Many learners may enter school with well-developed skills and knowledge in aspects of IT. Some may have skills and knowledge in more advanced aspects, including coding. Teachers should be aware of this and provide opportunities for their further development and application.

## Mathematics

Very able learners in mathematics may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Rapid and sound memorisation of mathematical material
- Learn and understand mathematical ideas quickly
- Reason logically: can verify, justify and prove
- Work systematically and accurately
- More analytical
- Recognise patterns easily and see the formal structure of a problem in a way that leads to ideas for action
- Use mathematical symbols accurately and confidently as part of the thinking process
- Make jumps in reasoning
- Think flexibly, adapting problem-solving approaches
- Demonstrate curiosity and enthusiasm for mathematical problems
- Make connections between the concepts they have learned
- Can take a creative approach to solving mathematical problems
- Reverse their direction of thought – may work backwards and forwards when solving a problem
- Communicate their reasoning and justify their methods
- Sustain their concentration throughout longer tasks and persist in seeking solutions
- Enjoy working at increased depth
- Adept at posing their own questions and pursuing lines of enquiry
- Take delight in numbers and use them in other areas of the curriculum, e.g. storytelling
- Enjoy mathematical puzzles and problems

NB: Some learners who are highly able in mathematics perform at levels that are unusually advanced for their age. It is recommended to challenge the pupil with broad but challenging enrichment and extension activities, rather than accelerate through the curriculum.

## Modern foreign languages

Very able learners in modern foreign languages may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Early awareness of the second language as a separate system
- Curiosity about how language works
- Ability to extrapolate general rules from samples
- Ability to pick up new language and structures quickly
- Ability to make connections and classify words and structures, e.g. to help them learn more efficiently
- Ability to identify, memorise and reproduce new sounds
- Strong desire to put language together by themselves
- Creativity and imagination when using language
- Desire to ask further questions and seek solutions
- Awareness and use of a range of strategies for learning
- Intense interest in the cultural features of the language studied
- Ability to transfer skills across and to other languages

NB: Becoming a competent and independent language learner is a process which develops alongside intellectual maturity and familiarity with the language and culture. Linguistic development is also very dependent on input and opportunity.

Bilingualism may or may not indicate exceptional aptitude in language learning but taking account of learners' experience and expertise in another language (e.g. home language) is an important factor in planning and in building confidence and motivation.



## Music

Very able learners in music may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Captivated by sound and engage fully with music
- Select an instrument with care; may be unwilling to relinquish the instrument
- Find it difficult not to respond physically to music
- Memorise music quickly, without any apparent effort
- Able to repeat more complex rhythmical and melodic phrases given by the teacher and repeat melodies (sometimes after only one hearing)
- Sing and play music with a natural awareness of the musical phrase; the music makes sense
- Particularly sensitive to melody, timbre, rhythms and patterns
- Demonstrate the ability to communicate through music, for example to sing with musical expression and with confidence
- Show strong preferences, single-mindedness and a sustained inner drive to make music
- Have the motivation and dedication to persevere and practise; show a commitment to achieving excellence

NB: Pupils more often show their musical talent through the quality of their response than the complexity of their response. Musical quality is very difficult to define in words, as music is a different form of communication from language. Therefore, musical talent is at least as much about demonstrating a higher-quality response within levels as about attainment at higher levels. Musical talent can be seen at every level of attainment. Those with a high ability in music show a particular affinity with sound. This type of ability is sometimes difficult to identify, especially when it is not combined with more general ability.

Aptitude in music may reveal itself early given the right conditions but can also remain hidden if a pupil has had limited encouragement or opportunity. Teachers may encounter pupils whose musical skills and performance are developed to such an extent that it is difficult to provide for them in the everyday classroom – as well as pupils in whom abilities of great promise are merely latent, and who need intensive and focused development of skills.

## Physical education

Very able learners in physical education may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Use the body with confidence in differentiated, expressive and imaginative ways
- Good sense of shape, space direction and timing
- Movement is fluent and can be elegant
- High degree of control of their body; good control of gross and fine body movements and can handle objects skilfully
- High degree of motivation and commitment to practice and performance
- Use technical terms effectively, accurately and fluently
- Able to analyse and evaluate their own and others' work, using results for selfimprovement
- High level of understanding of principles of health-related exercise and their application in a variety of activities
- Particularly high levels of fitness for their age
- Specific strengths in particular areas, e.g. games or dance
- Able to perform advanced skills and techniques and transfer skills between activities
- Good decision makers: able to take the initiative; demonstrate autonomy, leadership and independence of thought
- Able to reflect on processes and outcomes to improve performance
- Take risks with ideas and approaches
- Show perseverance and commitment
- Involvement with a range of related extracurricular activities
- Understand the need for effective coaching

NB: In addition to the above characteristics, specific sports and physical activities will have their own list of skills and abilities.

## Science

Very able learners in science may display a selection of the following characteristics:

- Aware of how the context influences the interpretation of science content
- Recognise patterns and relationships in science data
- Can hypothesise/predict based on valid evidence and draw conclusions
- Decide quickly how to investigate fairly and manipulate variables
- Enjoy researching obscure facts and applying scientific theories, ideas and models when explaining a range of phenomena
- Recognise and process reliable, valid and accurate data; can explain why data is unreliable, invalid or inaccurate
- Inquisitive about how things work and why things happen
- Good observational skills
- Enjoy talking with the teacher about new information or ideas
- Think flexibly, generalise ideas and adapt problem-solving approaches
- Ask many questions
- Enjoy logical reasoning
- May be able to miss out steps when reasoning
- Strive for maximum accuracy in measurements of all sorts
- Use advanced and extensive vocabulary, including the use of appropriate language from other areas of the curriculum such as mathematics
- Put forward objective arguments, using combinations of evidence and creative ideas, and question other people's conclusions
- Extremely interested in finding out more about things around them
- Read widely on science or science fiction
- Have scientific hobbies and/or members of scientific clubs and societies
- Able to sustain their interest and concentration and go beyond an obvious answer with greater depth
- Able to evaluate findings and think critically; can be self-critical
- Easily bored by over-repetition of basic ideas; may approach undemanding work casually and carelessly

NB: Learners who are very able in science can show intense interest in one particular area of science, sometimes to the exclusion of other topics.

### Appendix 3: Teaching and Learning Strategies for VAT pupils

How can I prepare lessons that stretch and challenge every pupil? *Teach to the Top*

Teaching to the top is the best way to ensure that every pupil in every class is fully stretched and challenged. Asking yourself whether you are setting your expectations high enough for every pupil and how you would know is a good starting point.

One strategy for teaching to the top and preparing lessons that challenge every student is to avoid prescriptive use of 'All, Most and Some' learning objectives. Support all in the class to reach, or even exceed, the objectives.

How do I gauge whether lesson content is challenging or not? *Scale up*

Students often find it very motivating to be told that they are studying something intrinsically difficult. One way of ensuring that lessons are sufficiently challenging is to take into account the expected knowledge, concepts and skills in your subject and teach your classes just beyond that point so that at Key Stage Three, for example, dip into GCSE level; at GCSE dip into A-Level; at A-Level dip into undergraduate work. In doing so, the most challenging concepts they will have been exposed to.

This strategy is informed by an understanding of the anchor effect found in experimental psychology: our perceptions are unduly influenced by the first piece of information we receive on a topic. This anchoring means that we base subsequent judgements on our initial piece of information.

By exposing pupils to a content usually considered beyond national expectations, we anchor in challenge so that success is measured by adjusting up or down from this high starting point. If we set our anchor too low at the start of a lesson or topic then overall success will be adjusted relative to the starting point. Therefore, if we start the base of the learning high we are likely to achieve a higher final outcome.

Crucial for this is the strategy of setting high expectations and making pupils aware that you are doing so. Tell Key Stage Three pupils they are doing GCSE standard work, GCSE students that they are studying content found on A-Level syllabi and A-Level students that they are considering undergraduate theories. But frame your language carefully to build inspiration and confidence rather than panic.

How can I teach responsively while stretching my pupils?

Anticipate the interventions by

- considering any misconceptions pupils usually may have when covering a topic.

- Teach with these in mind in order to avoid them, planning in questions for common misconceptions.
- Put in place scaffolds such as re-explaining in smaller steps or a different way
- show a good quality example
- give sentence starters or activities broken into smaller chunks

#### Reshape the lesson by

- explaining the common misconception/difficulty to the class again
- re-modelling the area the class are stuck with
- photographing a piece of work and explaining why it is excellent
- Ask pupils to share and discuss why they are struggling and work out some 'stuck strategies'.

#### Place your lesson in the context of the previous lesson by

- circling back where necessary
- re-teaching a topic in a different way
- asking students to edit or re-draft a piece of work.
- Have a clear destination in mind but be prepared to take multiple routes and vary the pace to get there.
- Move a pupil to the front and aim to have regular dialogue with them about their work.
- Regular marking of a book or folder over a period of time, giving specific targets.
- Give specific prep tasks to work on areas of weaknesses.
- Plan discussions with pupils and/or groups into your lessons.
- Arrange a short session with a pupil at break or after school to discuss an issue.

## Nurturing a growth mindset through language to support stretch and challenge

Below is a reminder of some key phrases that can be used to communicate expectations of, and beliefs about, a child's potential.

- The power of 'yet'. When a pupil says 'I can't do it,' we should end our sentence with 'yet!'
- 'If its not excellent its not finished' is a great mantra for reinforcing the idea of continuous improvement and re-drafting
- 'If you're not struggling you're not learning'. We need to remind pupils that struggle is a good thing and not a sign of weakness.
- Pupils appreciate being told, 'this is hard, but in time I believe you can get there.'
- When a pupil is stuck, rather than give them the answer straight away, use the response 'keep thinking about it. I'll come over in a couple of minutes if you're still stuck'.
- If you believe that with extra time and thinking a pupil could cope with the task you could try asking 'What would you do/say/write if you weren't stuck?'

Below are some phrases that can be used to communicate high expectations

- I know that you (all) have the ability to do this, so I have set the bar high
- This will be a challenging concept to learn, but all of us will reach the goal
- Be sure to communicate with me about your progress so I can provide support to you
- I am going to push you all because I know if I do you will do amazing work
- Our classroom is the place to learn challenging material. I am here to help you meet that goal
- This is challenging, but rewarding
- This might be difficult right now but you will remember it for the rest of your life
- When you master the learning you can be proud because it isn't easy
- This is my challenge to you. I know you can meet it. I want you to challenge yourself.
- As you learn this, mistakes are expected. Your mistakes help me to support you. Let's make mistakes together.
- I've seen you stretch and succeed in the past. Let's do it again.

Phrases to communicate a learning goal

- New material is an opportunity to stretch
- Today's learning objective will give everybody an opportunity to stretch
- I am hoping you don't all know this already; I wouldn't waste your time
- I want you to push yourself to tackle this concept
- After we do this I will ask everyone to share one mistake so we can learn from it
- I'd like everyone to share one thing that is confusing them or their partner

- The point is learning so I want to know which parts are unclear Today I want you to challenge yourself and I am here to help you learn this challenging material
- This is the first draft and you will have lots of chances to improve it
- You won't be graded on this – it's a risk free zone
- This is very dense/challenging material. I am not going to hold you accountable for understanding all of it straight away, but I want you to give it a first try.



Phrases to support a growth mindset when 'teaching to the top'

<b>Beginning of the year or project</b>	I expect great things from all of you, and I am here to guide you in your learning and growth.
	Mistakes are expected and valuable – We can all learn from them.
	I am so glad you made that mistake, because you learned....
	I have high standards, and I know that you can meet them.
<b>Preface critical comments with</b>	The comments I provide are quite critical, but I hope helpful. Remember, I wouldn't go to the trouble of giving you this feedback if I didn't think, based on what I've seen from you so far, that you are capable of meeting the higher standard I mentioned.
<b>At the start of a new lesson</b>	I know you have the ability to learn this, so we're going to set the bar high.
	You haven't even scratched the surface of what you can do if you put your mind to it. I'm holding you to it.
	I'm going to push you all, because I know that if you stretch yourself, you can all do amazing work.
<b>When students succeed through effort</b>	I'm so proud of the effort you have made in order to improve your grade... (Make the team, stay on task, complete your homework, get along with your fellow students, etc.)
	Congratulations, you really used great strategies for studying, managing your time or behaviour, etc.
<b>When students face disappointment or failure</b>	OK, so you didn't do as well as you wanted to. Let's look at this as an opportunity to learn.
	Which parts did you do well in? Which parts were a struggle?
	What did you do to prepare for this? Is there anything you could have done differently?
<b>When students succeed with little effort</b>	It looks like you weren't really challenged by this assignment. Let's look for ways you can challenge yourself more.
	It's great that you have that skill down. Now we need to find something a bit more challenging, so you can grow.

During Learning	If you hear yourself thinking...	Tell your self...	Ask your self...
<b>Approaching challenges</b>	<p>I can't do this.</p> <p>If I don't try, I can make sure I don't look stupid.</p>	<p>This may take some time and effort.</p> <p>I can't do this yet.</p>	<p>What strategies can I use?</p> <p>What can I do to improve?</p>
<b>Hitting setbacks</b>	<p>I'm no good at this.</p> <p>It's not too late to back out, make excuses, and avoid looking stupid.</p> <p>What grade will I get?</p>	<p>I can become better.</p> <p>I'll use some of the strategies I've learned.</p>	<p>What do I know already?</p> <p>What am I missing?</p> <p>What do I need to know more about?</p>
<b>Facing criticism</b>	<p>I'm a failure.</p> <p>I haven't done it right.</p> <p>You are really disappointed in me.</p>	<p>Mistakes help me improve.</p> <p>I can learn from this feedback.</p> <p>I can always improve, I'll keep trying.</p>	<p>What can I do to improve?</p> <p>Can I learn from someone else's success with this?</p>

Can I ask a friend?	Where can I find information about that?	Can I please discuss my answer first with...?
Would you please repeat the question?	<b>Alternatives to "I don't know"</b>	May I have some more time to think?
May I have more information?	Can I have a clue?	Can you rephrase the question?

### Appendix 3: List of Co-Curricular Enrichment Sessions (2022-23)

#### Academic Enrichment Programme: Clubs, Activities and Academic Trips by Year Group

Available to all years:

- 'Curiosity Shop' programme of lunchtime lectures by visiting academics, local professionals and in-house specialists.
- Lunchtime and after school clinics in all subjects
- Skills and Services Programme
- Inter-House quiz, chess and music competitions
- Masterclasses (Music, English, Art, Geography, Maths, Drama)
- Open Art sessions on Saturday mornings
- Elite Athletes' Development programme and pre session training (sports scholars)
- Fortnightly academic enrichment talks (academic scholars)
- "The Day" online news site
- Artists' workshops
- Canterbury Youth Parliament
- European Week of Languages
- Debating Society: inter-school matches, regional and national competitions
- "The Day" online news site subscription
- Opportunity to write and edit 'The Chronicle' (school journal)
- Duke of Edinburgh and John Muir Award
- Music and Dance recitals
- St Edmund's Festival
- Leadership posts in school chapel, library and dining hall committee
- English, Drama and Dance theatre trips
- Film Music trip to the Royal Albert Hall (music scholars)
- Drama trips to New York and Auschwitz
- Geography trip to Japan
- Sport trip to Dubai
- World Challenge trip to Tanzania
- Thrupp Essay Prize competition (U5 and Sixth Form)
- Young Geographer of the Year Competition

#### Fifth Form

- U5 trip to Greenwich Royal Observatory
- L5 outdoor activity week
- L5 geography woodland fieldwork

- M5 work experience week
- U5 Geography fieldwork in Blencathra
- U5 Design Technology trip to Design Museum
- L5 Outdoor Education
- Art trips to London Galleries
- End of Year Art and Design Technology Exhibition (U5 only)
- AS English
- Royal Institution Maths masterclasses (L5 only)
- Perse Aristotelian Award (L5 only)
- East Kent Schools Together initiatives
- University of Kent

#### Sixth Form

- Lower 6<sup>th</sup> Ethics Workshop
- Leiths 'Introductory Certificate to Food and Wine'
- Further Maths A-Level
- Extended Project Qualification ("EPQ")
- EPQ Training Day (University of Kent)
- Royal Institution Maths masterclasses (L6 only)
- Gamelan Workshop (Music Department)
- Life drawing workshops (Art)
- Literary Society
- Visiting Speaker Programme (Lower Sixth General Studies)
- End of Year Art and Design Technology Exhibition
- Art department trip to Chatham Historic Dockyard
- Biology Electron Microscope trip to University of Kent
- "Carmina Burana" at the Royal Festival Hall (Sixth Form Music Scholars)
- Design & Technology Trip to London Design Week
- Film Music Trip to the Royal Albert Hall (Music Scholars)
- Geography Trip to Malham
- L6 Biology trip to Isle of Wight
- Olympiads in Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology