

Very Able and Talented Policy

Review Date: November 2027

Review By: Senior Leadership Team

Final Approval: Senior Leadership Team

Context

The Core Values of the school which specifically relate to this policy state that we are working together to form relationships based on:

- Compassion
- Justice
- Responsibility
- Truth

Such values contribute to the school's common purpose of 'striving for high quality education with a strong Christian ethos', and as such underpin marking, assessment, recording and reporting procedures within the Academy.

These Core Values, in particular, underpin provision for Very Able and Talented (VAT) students.

The National Context

This is outlined in Appendix 1 of the Policy document.

Commitment to Very Able and Talented (VAT)

VAT students need access to broad, balanced and challenging curriculum opportunities to enable them to reach their unique potential. This is achieved by offering a curriculum and enhancement activities which extend and enrich learning, and promote high aspirations, attainment and excellent progress.

Definitions

Very Able students are those who have exceptional abilities in one or more subjects in the statutory curriculum. Such students are likely to be those whose outstanding academic ability is so evident that the curriculum or teaching methodologies are modified to meet their needs.

Talented students have the ability to excel in practical or creative skills, and have exceptional performance ability in a specific area/area(s) e.g. Design and Technology, Music, Drama and P.E.

A student with Special Educational Needs can be Very Able and/or Talented.

Policy

- VAT students will be identified through a multi-faceted process (see Appendix 2)
- VAT status, once identified, will then be communicated to parents, staff and students
- Any action will be taken in conjunction and in consultation with the VAT student
- Provision will be designed to respond to individual need (see Appendix 3)
- In-class learning will be complemented with opportunities outside the main curriculum
- Opportunities will be given for students to progress in line with their ability, enabling them to
 - achieve mastery in an area or areas
 - Progress of VAT students will be monitored over time (see Appendix 4)

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- Activities undertaken by VAT students to complement in-class learning will be evaluated
- Links maintained with outside agencies

Responsibilities

The VAT Co-ordinator

- Develop and monitor the VAT register
- Ensure complementary provision for VAT students is appropriate to their needs and is effective, intervening or setting targets where necessary
- Guide VAT students in engaging with suitable extra-curricular activities
- Meet with VAT students and their parents when appropriate regarding their status and provision
- Monitor academic attainment of Very Able students via report cycles
- Disseminate information regarding VAT students to subject teachers
- Liaise with Heads of Faculty when appropriate to ensure that subject-specific identification and provision is in place
- Review and maintain the policy and school action plan

Heads of Faculty

- Consider a range of evidence to judge the effectiveness of curriculum provision for VAT students in their area
- Ensure subject-specific criteria for 'Talented' students is reviewed and updated when necessary, and that identified students are catered for with stretch & challenge in addition to VAT students
- Subject Teachers will:
- Implement strategies to stretch and challenge VAT students in lessons
- Provide evidence for identification or review of students with VAT status, when appropriate

Assistant Head (Curriculum)

- Line manage VAT Co-ordinator
- Maintain contact with link School Governor

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Appendix 1: The National Context

Research around the impact of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic continues to highlight the detrimental effect of the disruption on students' education, regardless of ability.

Ofqual reported from its findings (July 2021) that:

"For most students, their learning has suffered to at least some degree. Teacher estimations indicate that while a small proportion of students made learning gains, most students have learning losses, and sometimes this was severe. The literature indicates that the extended periods of remote learning are likely to account for most of the learning loss."

Whilst learning gaps have been addressed since 2021-22 as students have progressed through their academic journey, the long-term impact of the pandemic continues to affect all students, particularly in relation to their social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) wellbeing.

Ofsted reported within its annual review 2021/22 that:

"The impact of the pandemic on some pupils' mental health and well-being has remained a concern this year. Schools have reported that pupils are more anxious, especially about exams and socialising with peers."

This trend continues to affect demographics of students experiencing deprivation and disadvantage most profoundly.

Therefore clearly, moving forwards and in light of further research into the long-term impacts of the pandemic on students' learning, two key areas of focus for VAT students (as well as other students generally) will be:

- a) Those who also meet criteria to be in receipt of Pupil Premium
- b) Improving mental health and resilience of more able students

Even prior to the pandemic, the provision for – and progress of – the most able students within secondary schools had been highlighted as an area for national development. There were national concerns over 'wasted talent' at GCSE from this student demographic.

Referring to the two latest Ofsted reports on the subject (2013 and 2015), Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) had flagged underperformance after the age of 11 from the most highly-achieving students at Key Stage 2 – especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds – providing the following reasons for their failure to reach full potential by Key Stage 4:

- poor transition arrangements with feeder primary schools that left many academically gifted pupils treading water in their first few years of secondary school, rather than building on the gains made at Key Stage 2
- a culture of low expectations and a failure to nurture high ambition and scholastic excellence
- few checks being made on whether the teaching of mixed ability groups was challenging the brightest children sufficiently
- disproportionate effort being spent in many schools on getting pupils over the GCSE D/C borderline rather than supporting the most able to secure the top A/A* grades

(HMCI Sir Michael Wilshaw, 10 June 2016)

Appendix 2: Identification

Very able students are identified through analysis of quantitative information, primarily CAT scores (Cognitive Ability Tests – baseline assessments, carried out upon entry to the school in Year 7) and Key Stage 2 SAT scores. These will constitute the top 10-15% of the student demographic, according to DCSF guidelines. Criteria as follows:

- Students whose average CAT scaled score is greater than 125

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- Students who have a CAT score of greater than, or equal to, 128 in any of the four components (verbal, quantitative, non-verbal, spatial)
- Students whose predicated Attainment 8 score – based on both CAT scores and KS2 SAT data – is greater than 66.

Talented students are identified through subject referral in Year 7 and beyond, and monitored within subject areas

Appendix 3: Provision

To ensure that all Very Able and Talented students reach their unique potential at Bishop Stopford School, we seek to provide bespoke educational opportunities for these students, in line with their abilities:

- Subject teachers will differentiate provision in class accordingly, and pedagogical best practice will be shared regularly at faculty meetings, whole-school Continuing Professional Development sessions
- Discrete enhancement opportunities will be made available to VAT students. These will include invitation of membership with national organisations for Very Able students, and in-school coaching or mentoring for Talented students
- Intervention sessions will be arranged by the VAT Co-ordinator for those Very Able students – particularly at KS4 – whose report data indicates ‘below-target’ performance
- A comprehensive range of extra-curricular activities is offered that enrich the curriculum for our VAT students. Provision is focused on raising aspirations beyond compulsory education. These opportunities are summarized on the Aspiration Roadmap document, which will be reviewed and updated annually to reflect evolving super-curricular and subject-specific offer.
- VAT students with Special Educational Needs will be supported appropriately through liaison with the Inclusion Team
- In line with our commitment to equality of opportunity, VAT students will not receive any preferential treatment or special entitlement regarding GCSE Options or A Level choices.

Appendix 4: Monitoring

Various layers of monitoring of Very Able and Talented students are carried out:

- A working register of VAT students will be maintained and reviewed annually, by the VAT Co-ordinator
- Subject teachers will have access to the register at all times, as well as indication of VAT students on SIMS, in line with other identification systems (e.g. SEN, Pupil Premium)
- Department and faculty meetings inform aspects of identification, provision and future planning, as advised by the VAT Co-ordinator and link member of the Senior Leadership Team

Appendix 5: VAT Students and Linked Groups

It is recognised at Bishop Stopford School that the Very Able and Talented may be students whose needs, dispositions, aptitudes or circumstances require particularly perceptive teaching or support, including:

- Girls or boys
- Students for whom English is an additional language
- Ethnic minority students

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- Looked After children
- Young carers
- Students from low-income backgrounds
- Students eligible for Pupil Premium, of all criteria
- Other vulnerable groups

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