

## Very Able and Talented Policy

Review Date: October 2022

Review By: SLT

### 1. Context

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

- Justice – everyone is entitled to be treated fairly and to promote the self-esteem of others.
- Compassion – everyone is encouraged to be generous in their concern for others
- Responsibility – everyone is expected to understand the consequences of their actions
- Truth – everyone is required to be honest and communicate in a positive manner.

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.

### 2. Data Protection

Any personal data processed in the delivery of this policy will be processed in accordance with the Academy's Data Protection Policy.

### 3. National Context

The provision for – and progress of – the most able students within secondary schools has been highlighted in recent years as an area for national development. There are 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) has flagged under-performance 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)

Furthermore, HMCI has sought to raise the profile of VAT students nationally:

*“Of all the important issues I have put under the spotlight during my time as Chief Inspector, arguably none is as critical to the nation's success and economic fortunes as the performance of the most able children in our non-selective state schools.”*

Of particular concern is the progress of VAT students from disadvantaged backgrounds. In 2015, the Sutton Trust's *The Missing Talent* report found that 15% of previously high attaining pupils failed to achieve in the top 25% at GCSE, and that this group of 'missing talent' is more likely to include students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Indeed, high attaining pupils who are also disadvantaged (in this case, those eligible for pupil premium funding) were found to achieve on average half a grade less than

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other similar pupils. Additionally, Ofsted has previously reported that only 20% of pupils who achieved at least level 5 in English and maths, the grade generally considered as high attainment at Key Stage 2 (KS2), who were also eligible for free school meals (FSM) went on to achieve A or A\* in these subjects at GCSE. This is compared to 34% of the same pupils not eligible for FSM doing so. Internationally, the gap between students with previous high attainment from the most and the least advantaged backgrounds in reading, writing and science skills is larger in England than in several other developed countries, including Finland, Canada and Norway. England has not had a national programme for the highly able since the previous 'gifted and talented' programme was brought to an end in 2010.

### **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.

### **4. 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.

### **5. Policy**

- VAT students will be identified through a multi-faceted process (see Appendix 1)
- 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 2)
- Activities undertaken by VAT students to complement in-class learning will be evaluated
- Links maintained with outside agencies

### **6. Responsibilities**

Responsibility for VAT students falls under the wider remit of the Higher Ability (HA) co-ordinator. They will:

- 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
- Maintain contact with link member of SLT in reviewing VAT action plan
- Review and maintain the policy and school action plan

Heads of Faculty will:

- Consider a range of evidence to judge the effectiveness of curriculum provision for VAT students in their area
- Ensure subject nominations are reviewed and updated when required (bi-annually)
- Ensure that there is a teacher who acts as the VAT "link" within their Faculty

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Subject Teachers will:

- Implement strategies to stretch and challenge VAT students in lessons
- Provide evidence for identification or review of students with VAT status, termly

Assistant Head (Intervention) will:

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

Governing Body will:

- Monitor VAT policy and whole-school action plan
- Ensure that there is a designated VAT Link Governor

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## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Identification**

*Very able* students are identified by making a judgment based on an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative information:

- CAT scores (Cognitive Ability Tests – baseline assessments, carried out upon entry to the school in Year 7). These constitute the top 10% of the student demographic, according to DCSF guidelines: generally, students whose average CAT score is greater than, or equal to, 125
- Subject nominations from Year 7 Spring Term onwards, drawing upon attainment data and natural aptitude (formative assessment)

*Talented* students are identified through subject referral in Year 7 and beyond, on a termly review basis (nominations to be sent to the VAT Co-ordinator)

### **Appendix 2: 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 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
- VAT students with Special Educational Needs will be supported appropriately through liaison with the Inclusion Team

### **Appendix 4: 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
- Looked After children
- Young carers
- Students from low income backgrounds
- Students eligible for Pupil Premium, of all criteria
- Other vulnerable groups

**Author: Gerry Kirke, October 2019**

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