

2-9 The Mead School Gifted and Talented Policy

This policy applies to the entire setting including the EYFS.

Ethos

The school firmly believes that the terms 'gifted' and 'talented' are fundamentally detrimental to child development. We actively promote a 'Growth Mindset' through our Learning policy and Mindset of a Meadite ethos. This means we aim to avoid praising or celebrating ability and instead focus on the child specific effort that has gone into any achievement.

Praising ability and promoting talent encourages a 'Fixed Mindset'. Children who are told they are 'gifted' or 'talented' lose their motivation to learn (they are already gifted so why do they need to improve/challenge themselves?) and associate effort with a lack of talent/ability, therefore avoiding it at all costs. Consequently, they often stagnate in their progress as they become increasingly risk/challenge averse for fear of making a mistake and being seen to be not 'gifted'.

Children with a 'Growth Mindset' embrace challenge. They regularly push themselves to the point of failure and are keen to then learn from their mistakes. Any person with a 'Growth Mindset' is disinclined to judge themselves against others (i.e. I am gifted in comparison to my peers) and instead self-evaluates their own level of performance and sets clear targets for the next steps in the lifelong journey of learning and improvement.

Fostering a 'Growth Mindset' in all Meadites is seen as one of the school's core responsibilities (NB Teaching and Learning Policy). We therefore avoid all overt labelling of highly able/talented children or any bespoke 'extra' provision for the most able. This is to prevent a 'Fixed Mindset' taking hold within this select group but to also protect the self-worth of the majority of children left outside of this group who would judge themselves in an equally fixed and finite fashion, i.e. "the school doesn't think I'm clever enough to take part or ever will be". Moreover, in the same vein, we avoid creating an exclusive group as any criteria for a 'cut-off point' would be subjective and unfair. For example, why should a standardized score of 135 meet the criteria but not a score of 134. Every child has individual learning needs, abilities and preferences and young children in particular, are reliably inconsistent in their application on a day to day basis. Therefore, even if the school were inclined to begin labelling children 'gifted' it would be an impossible task to create a fair and reliable process to judge who is 'gifted' and who is not. To label a child 'gifted' on subjective criteria only to see that child naturally plateau in comparison to their peers and subsequently have their label taken away could be hugely detrimental to their well-being and development.

Provision

So, what does the school do for its most able children?

As alluded to above, one of the most important outcomes in the education of a 'gifted' child is the development of a 'Growth Mindset'. We therefore aim for two complimentary cultural norms which will grow this Mindset:

1. That we avoid celebrating the ability of 'highly able' children and instead focus on their effort and willingness to go beyond their current level and focus on their areas for development.
2. That 'highly able' children are working at their 'challenge level' as often as possible whilst also giving them an immersive and inclusive school experience.

It stands to reason that to achieve point 1, we must achieve point 2 subtly and within the normal daily running of the school. Therefore, provision for the most able is delivered through 2 separate means:

1. By providing the broadest possible curricular and extra-curricular opportunities, all delivered with the highest possible level of expertise.
2. By effectively and consistently differentiating our learning experience.

The points above are all consistent with The Mead's other key academic policies. As the breadth of opportunity and experience increases, so does the chance for inspirational and individualized (learning policy) learning to take place. The equal importance and proliferation of the school's academic, sporting and artistic strands means that any child should find an outlet for any given talent. The recruitment and training of an increasingly expert teaching staff leads to increasing levels of inspiration and effective differentiation for our 'most able' children.

The school's mission statement clearly outlines our ambition for every child to make outstanding progress in all areas. A culture of individualized target setting for each child and small group/one to one intervention sessions promotes an environment where a 'highly able' pupil will make outstanding personal progress whilst remaining humble/self-aware and included within their peer group. In addition, enrichment project work, streaming for core subjects and subject specialist teaching all contribute towards the goal to achieve highly effective differentiation for our most 'able'.

It is worth noting here that we do not advocate a 'highly able' child having exclusively different work from their peers. Effective teaching is a complex skill which requires a complex approach. Sometimes consolidation is needed; sometimes the development of collaborative or communication skills are being prioritized and the content of the work is not as relevant; sometimes, the best form of extension comes through teaching/helping a less able peer to understand a basic concept. Nevertheless, differentiation for our most able children should be clear when scrutinizing planning and pupil work over a term/year.

The school's appraisal system is focused on pupil outcomes. The SLT will therefore target 'highly able' children in this process and ask teaching staff to produce evidence to show how they are being challenged and extended. The school's CPD budget prioritizes pedagogy and within this, effective differentiation is a key aspect. Through these means, the teaching staff will become increasingly more effective at delivering outstanding outcomes for our 'most able' children. External resources such as NACE and Potential Plus are utilized by staff to support their practice.

The school aims to communicate effectively through termly reports on every child's progress, effort and attainment. The school will support parents of 'highly able' children by supplying and suggesting activities/clubs that could help to extend their child or enhance

their 'talent'. Equally, the school will also actively encourage such parents to support the ethos of this policy and aim to promote independent learning and motivation in their child, for example, by ensuring enrichment homework activities are completed independently and at a level where mistakes (e.g. spelling mistakes) are made and left in/crossed out with a single line but still visible.

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