



Very Able & Talented Policy

**Reviewed by Governors
Approved by Governors**

**29th April 2008
20th October 2008**

National Context

The 2005 White Paper, Higher Standards: Better Schools for All set out the Government's ambition that every pupil - gifted and talented, struggling or average - should have the right personalised support to reach the limits of their capability. For gifted and talented pupils, this means better stretch and challenge in every classroom and in every school with opportunities to further their particular talents outside school at a local and national level.

Gifted and talented children are those who have one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the potential to develop these abilities).

Providing for the gifted and talented pupils in our schools is a question of equity - as with all other pupils, they have a right to an education that is suited to their particular needs and abilities. They need to be presented with work that challenges, stretches and excites them on a daily basis, in an environment that celebrates excellence and is supportive of those who may, in years to come, break the boundaries of what we know and understand today.

The Government's aims are:

- To improve gifted and talented pupils' outcomes, particularly for the most disadvantaged in terms of attainment, aspirations, motivation and self esteem
- To improve the quality of identification, teaching and support in all schools and classrooms
- To improve the coherence and quality of: out of school learning opportunities and support for pupils; and support for parents, educators and schools at local, regional and national levels

There are gifted and talented pupils in every school, but schools define their own populations. Ability is evenly distributed throughout the population, so a school's gifted and talented cohort should be broadly representative of its whole school population.

Gifted and talented children are those who have one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the potential to develop these abilities).

In England the term 'gifted' refers to those pupils who are capable of excelling in academic subjects such as English or History. 'Talented' refers to those pupils who may excel in areas requiring visio-spatial skills or practical abilities, such as in games and PE, drama, or art.

Some gifted and talented pupils may be intellectually able but also appear on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) register for behavioural, literacy or physical difficulties.

Provision for gifted and talented pupils can act to counteract disadvantage. Direct intervention is particularly critical for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds to enable them to make full use of their abilities and to raise their aspirations accordingly.

Local Context

Within the Milton Keynes LA, Bushfield is part of the Excellence in Partnerships (EIP) cluster. This group of schools is working together to raise standards for all groups of children including Very Able ('Very Able' is used in place of Gifted) and Talented. The EIP

cluster group meet regularly to organise and run events for more able children. Bushfield is participating fully in meetings and all events organised where possible.

Bushfield School

At Bushfield School we value the individuality of every child and acknowledge the importance of helping every child to recognise the spectrum of their capabilities in order to fulfil their potential. Whereas we uphold a philosophy of inclusion, we are aware that to offer all children the same opportunity is not to offer them equality of opportunity. If we are not to hamper the development of children of above average ability, it is important that we have a means of identifying such children and of encouraging them to reach for the highest level of personal achievement. This policy outlines the school's practice and procedures relating to the support of very able and talented pupils.

Aims of the Policy

The aim of this policy is to promote and encourage:

- The continued development of provision over and above that provided for more able pupils.
- Appropriate and planned learning opportunities across the curriculum for very able and talented pupils to develop their independent learning.
- The criteria and methods for identifying very able and talented pupils.
- The development of monitoring of very able and talented pupils progression in all core subjects.
- Continued staff awareness of the difference between able and very able and talented.
- Parental / carer support.
- The continued development and utilisation of outside agencies' support and initiatives.

Definitions of Very Able and Talented

The DCSF (Department for Children, Schools and Families) uses the term "gifted" to describe children at the upper end of the spectrum of academic ability (core subjects: literacy, numeracy, science and ICT) and "talented" to denote those with special ability in all other areas.

While we may encounter fewer pupils who may be categorised as "truly gifted" we firmly believe that a number of our pupils show enhanced academic capability and still more demonstrate talent in specific skill areas.

Therefore we recognise each of the following as valid fields within which children might demonstrate enhanced capability.

- Linguistic skills
- Mathematical skills
- Naturalist skills
- Visual & spatial skills
- Musical skills
- Physical skills
- Social skills
- Personal skills

The characteristics of children demonstrating each of these traits are described more fully in Appendix A. (based on Howard Gardner’s well established model)

We believe that Gardner’s model encompasses a full spectrum of abilities, thus widening access to the “gifted and talented” cohort to a broader range of children. By choosing to use such a model, and employing the term “very able” to apply to all those who demonstrate enhanced capability, we hope to encourage all children to value their own particular gifts and to appreciate those of their peers. Our aim is to help children discover “something they are good at” in order to build their self esteem, bolster their confidence and raise their aspirations.

Bushfield definition of very able pupils.

Very able pupils are identified as those pupils achieving national curriculum levels that are significantly above the national average expectations for their chronological year group. These children would benefit from extended planning and provision being implemented.

Bushfield definition of talented pupils.

Those pupils who demonstrate skills that are significantly higher than the national expectations for their chronological year group. These children would benefit from extended planning and provision being implemented.

Identification

In order to identify this rich diversity of abilities, it is essential to adopt a variety of methods.

- Tests are rule-of-thumb indicators in some instances (e.g. linguistic and mathematical skills) but we realise the limitations of testing as an accurate indicator of ability. Tests may not pick up children who are under-achieving or who lack motivation: they may not give an accurate indication of ability in children who have not been furnished with opportunity to develop innate skills (or who have not responded positively to a particular teaching style).
- Evidence from pupil work or performance. This may include work that has been completed out of class (during lunchtime or after-school clubs) or at home: some pupils produce their best work away from the distraction of the classroom – though suitable safeguards need to be taken to ensure that it is actually the pupil’s work that is presented.
- Observation by teaching staff, classroom assistants, club leaders, etc.
- The school actively participates in activities organised by various external partners aimed at developing the abilities of variously talented children. These activities are sometimes aimed at small groups of children with specific skills and provide an opportunity to identify and extend the provision for specific skill areas.

Although there may appear to be a proliferation of methods for identifying “very able and talented” pupils, this is seen as a strength rather than a weakness in that it encourages all partners in children’s education to be “on the lookout for excellence” thus promoting a positive school ethos that is geared towards success.

The children will also then be judged against a set of QCA (Qualification and Curriculum Authority) characteristic checklists. These will determine whether these children display a flair and passion for the subject over and above more able children (see appendix B for a full list of characteristic checklists).

In PE or music children may also be identified by an outside agency, such as a sports coach or music tutor. In PE, if a child is representing a sport at county level, or higher, they will automatically be entered on to the very able and talented register.

The levels that the children must achieve, are linked to our report writing criteria to show children's individual attainment. The chart below shows the levels children should achieve within each year group. Children to be considered for the very able and talented register should be consistently achieving levels from the 'much higher' column for their age group.

	SIGNIFICANTLY LOWER	BELOW AVERAGE	AVERAGE	ABOVE AVERAGE	MUCH HIGHER
Year 3	1a or lower	2c/2b	2a/3c	3b/3c	4c+
Year 4	2b or lower	2a/3c	3b	3a/4c	4b+
Year 5	2a or lower	3c//3b	3a/4c	4b/4a	5c+
Year 6	3c or lower	3b/3a	4b	4a/5c	5b+

The Very Able and Talented Register

The Very Able and Talented Register is kept by the VAT Co-ordinator.

Teaching staff may nominate a child for inclusion in the register through discussion with the Inclusion Manager. Although the class teacher is likely to be the person with best in-school knowledge of an individual child, any teacher may nominate any child. (This is because classes are sometimes swapped between teachers for teaching some subjects, e.g. maths, music, etc.) See appendix C for Very Able and Talented nomination form.

Each year the Inclusion Manager will review the Very Able and Talented register with staff. The review process may help to identify pupils who have been under-achieving.

The Role of the School's Very Able and Talented Co-ordinator

At Bushfield School, we recognise the necessity for all staff to be involved in identifying, encouraging and providing for the needs of VA&T children. However, we also recognise that having a named person with specific responsibility will ensure that the issue is kept in the forefront of staff consciousness. The VA&T Co-ordinator plays an important role in reminding the SMT (senior management team), teaching staff, non-teaching staff, club leaders etc of their responsibilities (throughout the year and especially at strategic dates.)

The VA&T Co-ordinator keeps abreast of issues relating to Very Able and Talented pupils, bringing these to the attention of appropriate staff as necessary and acting as a point of reference for colleagues who need assistance, advice etc.

The VA&T Co-ordinator will confer with class teachers to ensure that children identified as academically Very Able are provided with a curriculum that is sufficiently challenging to encourage their continued development. The VA&T Co-ordinator will advise and assist class teachers with researching, previewing and purchasing appropriate differentiation and extension materials.

The VA&T Co-ordinator will ensure that Talented children on the VA&T register are encouraged to develop their interest and skills. This may be achieved by encouraging such children to participate in present provision e.g. clubs and after-school activities. It may involve referring them towards local provision outside school e.g. local clubs and Summer-schools, etc. (It is important that, wherever possible, parents are involved - so that barriers to participation are removed.)

The VA&T Co-ordinator will liaise with external providers with regard to their provision of various activities targeted at talented pupils.

Classroom Provision

At Bushfield School, children in years 3, 4 and 5 children are taught in mixed ability groups for all subjects except maths. However in Year 6 children are taught in ability groups for maths and science. These groupings are reviewed each half-term.

Within this context, teaching staff group children into smaller sub-sets (within the classroom) based on their perceived ability in that skill area. This facilitates setting differentiated tasks, thus ensuring that pupils are suitably challenged and their motivation maintained. (Teaching staff are mindful of the need to keep these sub-sets flexible – so that “late developers” or pupils whose ability was initially misjudged are not held back.)

School-Wide Responsibilities

Senior Management Team

The head-teacher acknowledges the need to maintain a high profile for “very able and talented” issues and will ensure that these are timetabled for discussion at Governors’ Meetings and at staff meetings.

The headteacher will support the VA&T Co-ordinator in establishing appropriate systems for identifying, recording, developing, monitoring and reviewing the progress of gifted and talented pupils; and will ensure that these systems are adopted by all staff.

The SMT will encourage and facilitate the organisation of whole-school or year-group based learning opportunities that encourage the development of individual skills (such as Art-, Drama-, Dance- and Music-workshops, Sports Days, themed days, etc.)

Teaching staff

Teaching staff are mindful of the need to challenge the Very Able pupils in their class and will plan lessons and classroom activities that stimulate and encourage independent learning and a spirit of enquiry. Teaching staff will employ appropriate teaching strategies (as identified elsewhere in this policy) to ensure that Very Able pupils fulfil their potential.

Classroom support personnel

Classroom support staff and volunteer helpers will be offered access to training opportunities that relate to identifying and working with children of differing abilities and will be encouraged to identify and nominate pupils for inclusion on the VA&T Register.

Parents/Carers

Regular and consistent communication between the school and home will seek to ensure that parents and carers are aware of the importance of their role in recognising the various talents and abilities demonstrated by (and latent within) their children.

Parents and carers of all school pupils are encouraged to discuss their child's progress (or any matters of concern) with the class teacher at any time. Parents and Carers of Very Able and Talented children are reminded that this is no less applicable to them than to other parents.

Pupils

Every opportunity is taken (school assemblies, circle time, weekly review sessions, etc.) to encourage pupils to explore their own capabilities and to discover "something they are good at". Pupils are frequently reminded that they should be active participants in their own self-development; that they should not merely discover "something they are good at" but should also seek to "become better at it". Pupils are encouraged to make the most of the full range of their abilities within the framework of opportunities provided.

In keeping with the school's Equal Opportunities policy, pupils are encouraged to recognise and value the diversity of abilities, skills and qualities in their peers.

Partners and specialist providers

At various times during the year, the school employs a number of external agencies to deliver learning opportunities (e.g. Art and Music workshops). Additionally, providers are asked to aid us in identifying pupils who may demonstrate ability in their particular specialist area. School staff who arrange and oversee such provision are responsible for seeking nominations from these partners for inclusion on the VA&T Register.

General

Bushfield School is keen to foster a culture in which achievement and success are recognised and rewarded. To this end, we have adopted a positive behaviour management strategy, in which all staff are encouraged to praise pupils' positive behaviour and to commend effort. This applies not merely to classroom learning and behaviour but also includes out-of-school activities such as swimming, gymnastics, scouts, etc. Children's achievements are recognised in the weekly "golden letters" and Bushfield Citizenship awards.

Policy – Dissemination, Monitoring and Review

This policy has been written by The school's Very Able & Talented Co-ordinator).

The headteacher has overall responsibility for ensuring that the policy is implemented in the school. Issues raised during the monitoring process will be reported to the governing body and addressed through the School Development Plan.

This policy will be reviewed by the Governing Body assisted by the VA&T Co-ordinator, after it has been in place for two years (January 2010) Subsequently, it will be reviewed every three year

APPENDIX A

RECOGNISING MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES

LINGUISTIC (Linguistic intelligence)

Children with strong linguistic intelligence are likely to “always have their head in a book”. Not only do they like reading, they also write (stories, poems and letters) for pleasure. They usually mention things they have read about. They will have a wide vocabulary, be good at spelling, and are often fascinated by words and their meanings. They explain themselves well and like to teach others. They enjoy word games & puzzles (Scrabble, crosswords, etc.) and may also enjoy quizzes. They may be talkative (but not necessarily).

MATHEMATICAL (Logical-mathematical intelligence)

Children with strong logical intelligence are likely to score highly in Maths tests. They are good at mental arithmetic and most aspects of Maths. They are interested in science and how things work. They will often count things for no apparent reason. They may have particular ways of doing things (even to the point of obsession). They can become frustrated by people who cannot see their point of view or way of doing things. They are likely to be well-organised and punctual. They may make lists (perhaps of things to do). They may also enjoy jigsaws and mazes. They often prefer to work alone.

NATURALIST (Naturalist intelligence)

Children with strong naturalist intelligence like all kinds of animals and may be responsible for looking after a pet. They may be interested in gardening and the countryside and will probably prefer to be outside. They may show an interest in insects, dinosaurs or archaeology and will enjoy nature programmes on TV. They probably collect things (such as cards, etc. but especially insects, bits of rock) and may keep a scrapbook. They may be tidy and well-organised.

VISUAL-SPATIAL (Visual-spatial intelligence)

Children with strong visual-spatial intelligence are “natural artists”. They notice small differences in detail and have a good visual imagination. They will be good at drawing and enjoy drawing sketches, cartoons & doodles. They have a strong sense of colour. Given the opportunity, they will enjoy taking photo’s and making videos. They can find their way around easily. They use their hands when talking or explaining. They may also enjoy jigsaws & maze puzzles.

MUSICAL (Musical intelligence)

Children with strong musical intelligence like a wide range of music. They recognise tunes easily and quickly and are quick to learn songs. They may play a musical

instrument (if provided with opportunity). They will probably be good singers. They are likely to hum or sing to themselves (or out loud) whilst doing other things. They may tap out rhythms. They are fascinated by different sounds.

PHYSICAL (Physical / bodily / kinaesthetic intelligence)

Children with strong physical intelligence are good at sport & physical activities. They like practical activities (such as model-making, sewing, cooking, making things). They cannot help touching things and probably use their hands when talking. They have expressive facial features and may be good at drama. They are well co-ordinated with a good sense of balance, and may be good dancers.

SOCIAL (Interpersonal intelligence)

Children with strong interpersonal intelligence get on well with people. They are friendly and outgoing and relate well to people both older and younger than themselves. They are good listeners, patient – and may be a “peace-keeper” amongst their friends. They notice how people are feeling and may act as a “comforter”. They have a number of close friends and may be the “leader” of the group (albeit subtly). They prefer team games and working in groups. They are likely to be a member of a club.

PERSONAL (Intrapersonal intelligence)

Children with strong intrapersonal intelligence are “thinkers”, though they may be seen as “dreamers”. They prefer to “keep themselves to themselves” and may appear shy and withdrawn. They may not respond in class but prefer to talk to the teacher about the topic after the lesson. They usually have a clear idea about their future and will set themselves personal targets & challenges. They are interested in life stories and may keep a personal diary.

APPENDIX B – CHARACTERISTIC CHECKLISTS (QCA)

LITERACY

- Creative flair - writing or talking in imaginative and coherent ways, elaborating on and organising content to an extent that is exceptional for their age
- Stamina and perseverance - using any suitable opportunities to produce work that is substantial and obviously the product of sustained, well-directed effort
- Communicative skills - involving and keeping the attention of an audience by exploiting the dramatic or humorous potential of ideas or situations in imaginative ways, taking a guiding role in helping a group to achieve its shared goals, while showing sensitivity to the participation of others, writing with a flair for metaphorical or poetic expression, grasping the essence of particular styles and adapting them to their own purposes, expressing ideas succinctly and elegantly, in ways that reflect an appreciation of the knowledge and interests of specific audiences, using ICT to research ideas and create new text
- Ability to take on demanding tasks - researching, comparing and synthesising information from a range of different sources, including ICT, engaging seriously and creatively with moral and social themes expressed in literature
- Arguing and reasoning - creating and sustaining accounts and reasoned arguments at a relatively abstract or hypothetical level, in both spoken and written language, grasping the essence of any content and reorganising it in ways that are logical and offer new syntheses or insights, justifying opinions convincingly, using questions and other forms of enquiry to elicit information and taking up or challenging others' points of view
- Awareness of language - understanding the nature of language and showing a special awareness of features such as rhyme, intonation or accent in spoken language, and the grammatical organisation of written texts, showing an interest and enthusiasm for language study, including an awareness of the relationship between the sounds and words of different languages that are not apparent to most of their peers.

NUMERACY

- learn and understand mathematical ideas quickly
- work systematically and accurately
- be more analytical;
- think logically and see mathematical relationships
- make connections between the concepts they have learned
- identify patterns easily
- apply their knowledge to new or unfamiliar contexts
- communicate their reasoning and justify their methods
- ask questions that show clear understanding of, and curiosity about, mathematics
- take a creative approach to solving mathematical problems
- sustain their concentration throughout longer tasks and persist in seeking solutions
- be more adept at posing their own questions and pursuing lines of enquiry.

SCIENCE

- be imaginative
- read widely, particularly science or science fiction
- have scientific hobbies and/or be members of scientific clubs and societies
- be extremely interested in finding out more about themselves and things around them
- enjoy researching obscure facts and applying scientific theories, ideas and models when explaining a range of phenomena
- be able to sustain their interest and go beyond an obvious answer to underlying mechanisms and greater depth
- be inquisitive about how things work and why things happen (they may be dissatisfied with simplified explanations and insufficient detail)
- ask many questions, suggesting that they are willing to hypothesise and speculate
- use different strategies for finding things out (practical and intellectual) -- they may be able to miss out steps when reasoning the answers to problems
- think logically, providing plausible explanations for phenomena (they may be methodical in their thinking, but not in their recording)
- put forward objective arguments, using combinations of evidence and creative ideas, and question other people's conclusions (including their teacher's!)
- decide quickly how to investigate fairly and manipulate variables
- consider alternative suggestions and strategies for investigations
- analyse data or observations and spot patterns easily
- strive for maximum accuracy in measurements of all sorts, and take pleasure, for example, from reading gauges as accurately as possible (sometimes beyond the accuracy of the instrument).
- make connections quickly between facts and concepts they have learned, using more extensive vocabulary than their peers
- think abstractly at an earlier age than usual and understand models and use modelling to explain ideas and observations. For example, key stage 3 pupils may be willing to apply abstract ideas in new situations; key stage 4 pupils may be able to use higher-order mathematical skills such as proportionality, ratio and equilibrium with some complex abstract ideas when offering explanations
- understand the concepts of reliability and validity when drawing conclusions from evidence
- be easily bored by over-repetition of basic ideas
- enjoy challenges and problem solving, while often being self-critical
- enjoy talking to the teacher about new information or ideas
- be self-motivated, willingly putting in extra time -- (but they may approach undemanding work casually and carelessly)
- show intense interest in one particular area of science (such as astrophysics), to the exclusion of other topics.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- be confident in themselves and in familiar contexts
- take risks with ideas and approaches, and be able to think 'outside the box'
- show a high degree of motivation and commitment to practice and performance.
- be intelligent, independent, thoughtful performers, actively forming and adapting strategies, tactics or compositions
- be able to reflect on processes and outcomes in order to improve performance, understanding the close and changing relationship between skill, fitness and the tactics or composition of their performance
- be good decision-makers and able to take the initiative, often showing high levels of autonomy, independence and leadership
- be creative, original and adaptable, responding quickly to new challenges and situations, and often finding new and innovative solutions to them.
- have a high degree of control and coordination of their bodies
- show strong awareness of their body in space
- combine movements fluently, precisely and accurately in a range of contexts and activities.
- evaluating and improving performance through leadership
- acquiring, developing and performing advanced skills and techniques
- conceptual understanding, shown through the sophisticated selection and application of advanced skills, tactics and compositional ideas for their age

MUSIC

- be captivated by sound and engage fully with music
- select an instrument with care and then be unwilling to relinquish the instrument
- find it difficult not to respond physically to music
- memorise music quickly without any apparent effort, be able to repeat more complex rhythmical and melodic phrases given by the teacher and repeat melodies (sometimes after one hearing)
- sing and play music with a natural awareness of the musical phrase -- the music makes sense
- 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.

ART

- **think and express themselves in creative, original ways**
they want to follow a different plan to the other pupils, challenge the tasks given, or extend the brief in seemingly unrelated or fantastic direction
- **have a strong desire to create in a visual form**
they are driven by ideas, imagination, flights of fancy, humanitarian concerns, humour or personal experience; they persevere until they have completed a task successfully, with little or no intervention from the teacher
- **push the boundaries of normal processes**
they test ideas and solve problems relating to concepts and issues; they explore ways to depict ideas, emotions, feelings and meanings; they take risks without knowing what the outcome will be; they change ideas to take into account new influences or outcomes
- **show a passionate interest in the world of art and design**
they are often interested in a specific culture (possibly relating to their own cultural background or sense of identity), particular art forms, contemporary culture or youth culture
- **use materials, tools and techniques skilfully and learn new approaches easily**
they are keen to extend their technical abilities and sometimes get frustrated when other skills do not develop at the same time
- **initiate ideas and define problems**
they explore ideas, problems and sources on their own and collaboratively, with a sense of purpose and meaning
- **critically evaluate visual work and other information**
they make unusual connections between their own and others' work; they apply ideas to their own work in innovative ways
- **exploit the characteristics of materials and processes**
they use materials and processes in creative, practical and inventive ways; they explore alternatives and respond to new possibilities and meanings
- **understand that ideas and meanings in their own and others' work can be interpreted in different ways**
they use their knowledge and understanding to extend their own thinking and realise their intentions; they communicate original ideas, insights and views

APPENDIX C – VA&T NOMINATION FORM

BUSHFIELD SCHOOL VERY ABLE AND TALENTED NOMINATION FORM

The Very Able and Talented Register is a record of those children who have shown exceptional ability in various ability areas. It enables teaching staff to cater for and monitor the progress of these children. We are always keen to consider nominations for inclusion on the register.

Teaching staff, non-teaching staff and external partners may use this slip to nominate children for inclusion on the VA&T Register. Nominations will be considered by the child's class teacher and the school's Very Able and Talented Co-ordinator.

Teaching staff are always willing to offer assistance in completing these slips.

Appropriate nominations will be included in the Register.

Name of child being nominated: _____

Year / Class / Teacher: _____

Reason for nomination: _____

National Curriculum level (if appropriate): _____

Name of person making nomination: _____

Date: _____

Please return this form to the class teacher or to the Very Able & Talented Co-ordinator.

Literacy – reading or writing	Maths	Science	Music	PE	Art	Other
Nomination transferred to register?				YES	NO	
Reason						