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# **Maghull High School**

## **Very Able & Talented Policy (including Exceptionally Able)**

**Approved by Governors: May 2023  
Policy renewal: May 2024**

At Maghull High School we believe that all students are entitled to an education that will enable them to develop their full potential, be that intellectual, physical, aesthetic, creative, emotional, spiritual or social, finding appropriate challenge in our learning environment.

All students have individual needs, making personalized and adaptive learning a priority in our teaching and learning.

### **Aims**

Our aim is to provide the best provision for very able and talented students within every subject area. We aim to create a stimulating learning environment inside and outside of the classroom to ensure very able and talented students have multiple opportunities to fulfil their potential and maximise their progress. This will be achieved by offering activities that extend and enrich their learning and promote high attainment and good progress. Where appropriate, students will move through their learning at a faster rate than their peers; at other times their understanding will be developed further than their peers.

### **Objectives**

- to ensure the identification of very able and talented students in individual subject areas and in areas outside of academic work.
- to ensure very able and talented students reach their potential in academic and non-academic areas.
- to offer very able and talented students opportunities to explore more demanding work in and out of the classroom e.g. higher knowledge, abstract concepts, communication skills, mathematical skills and thinking skills including problem solving.
- to encourage independence and creativity in students in developing their own broad range of learning styles.
- to develop a consistent approach from all members of staff towards provision for very able and talented students.
- to ensure very able and talented students pastoral needs are supported

### **Identification Criteria**

Students at Maghull High School who have achieved extremely high standards in English and maths at KS2, or who fulfil additional criteria will be identified as either very able or exceptionally able in one or more subjects and will be placed on the very able and talented register. Maghull High School expects these students to make exceptional progress by Year 11, achieving grades 8 or 9 in their GCSE subjects. These students will be tracked and monitored as an identified cohort through Years 7-11.

Students who entered the school in years 2020 and 2021 without KS2 scores as a result of the COVID pandemic, will be placed on the very able or exceptionally able register based on their CATS score.

### **Very able**

These are students who achieved SAT scores at the end of KS2 equal to or above the top 10% of students nationally (or equivalent CATS scores). Students may also be identified during their

time at Maghull High School should their progress be significantly beyond the year average in a range of subjects.

The top 10% is broadly recognised as students who enter Maghull High School with an average KS2 point score (or equivalent CATS score) of 115 and above (reading and maths).

### **Exceptionally Able**

Exceptionally able students are identified in each year group. These are students who achieved SAT scores at the end of KS2 equal to or above the top 2% of students nationally.

The top 2% is broadly recognised as students who enter Maghull High School with an average KS2 point score (or equivalent CATS score) of 118 (reading and maths).

An Exceptional Educational Plan will be produced to take account of the student's exceptional needs, and the provision of an individual pathway. This will include recommendation for teaching and learning strategies. Please see Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for VA if you have an Exceptionally Able student in your class.

### **Talented**

Students who display a particular flair for an individual subject are identified as being talented in that subject area. These students would be considered to be in the top 10% nationally for the individual subject.

Teachers can nominate students to be added to the Talented Register. Specific subject criteria should be used to ensure consistency. All departments have subject specific criteria for identifying very able and talented students. (see appendix 3). These students will be classified as VA&T in the specific subject area they have been identified in. e.g. students who demonstrate musical, artistic or dramatic talent, advanced physical capabilities, advanced organisational skills or advanced leadership skills may be identified as very able, gifted and talented.

Parents can nominate their son or daughter if they perform or compete at a high level outside school e.g. If they play football at county level or play violin in a regional ensemble. See appendix 4.

### **How long do students stay on the register for?**

Students who are on the VA Register will continue to be on this register until the end of KS5.

If a student has been identified as talented, they may be removed if they no longer study the subject as part of their KS4 or KS5 curriculum. Students who compete or perform at a high level outside of school will remain on the Talented register irrespective of whether they study that particular subject at GCSE level, for example, competing for Merseyside in hockey. This allows us to help support the individual with funding for various competitions or trips they may be entered in.

Maghull High School has a culture of looking for potential to achieve. Students who demonstrate outstanding work and potential during their school career at Maghull High School can be identified as VA&T and added to the register at any time after consultation with SLT.

## **Implementation of Policy**

### **The register**

Once identified using KS2 data, students will be placed on the VA register. Students may also be placed on VA register through teacher, parent or student nomination. This will indicate the curriculum area or areas in which the student has been identified as being VA. Subject teachers, tutors and parents will be informed. The register will be updated and reviewed during data collections.

### **Banding and setting**

Full vertical sets are in place in mathematics from year 7 with additional setting in English and science at KS4. Students will be placed in the upper ability bands upon entry.

### **Subject Teachers**

Subject teachers will develop, as part of their normal planning, activities for the identified student and set targets as required by school policy and practice.

### **Department Policies**

Each department should produce a policy for VA students according to the guidance in Appendix 2.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Students**

- VA students take ownership of learning
- they catch up on any teaching that has been missed due to additional opportunities, working with the teacher to ensure they make excellent progress in their learning
- read widely across subjects
- access Firefly regularly to learn work in advance, review learning or access the wide variety of extra challenge activities available
- use the library and ICT facilities to enhance and deepen learning opportunities
- take opportunities available to them
- act on feedback given to them by staff to ensure maximum progress
- complete homework/coursework to the best of their ability

### **Parents**

The parents of every student on the very able register will be informed of their child's inclusion and that:

- departments will develop strategies to teach the very able
- their child will be asked to participate in activities aimed at the most able
- parents will therefore be kept informed of the activities that are taking place in Maghull High School and be able to keep track of their child's participation.
- in some cases, it might be necessary to inform parents that their child is underachieving or that he/she is being monitored to develop good study practices

### **Assistant Headteacher with responsibility for VA**

- be the advocate for VA students within school.
- maintain an overview of the VA students within the school. Collate information about the number of students on the register

- keep up to date with research on teaching and learning strategies for the very able and disseminate to staff and pupils.
- ensure that the VA register is available to all staff.
- promote and support the emotional well-being of all VA students.
- provide heads of department with details of VA students in their subject.
- prepare an Annual Review incorporating an analysis of progress of students at all Key Stages and an analysis of VA teaching across the school.
- advise on the revision of the school policy especially with regard to changes in local and national conditions.
- liaise with faculties on their own policies and procedures, including subject criterion checklists.
- monitor the progress of VA students, throughout the year, ensuring the implementation of strategies where there are concerns.
- make suggestions as to the in-service training needs of departments and individuals and help deliver resulting in-service training.
- promote student referral among staff.
- gather information relating to the identification of VA students from a variety of sources including National Curriculum Test results, Cognitive Ability Tests, the SEND department, information from feeder schools and parents. Maintain and update the VA register at the end of each data collection.
- communicate with the parents of VA students.
- oversee the organisation of enrichment activities where feasible. Encourage, support and advise faculties about providing enrichment activities.
- promote the use of competitions, clubs and special events in tandem with the appropriate department.
- liaise with other phases to ensure continuity and good communication for example, contacting feeder schools to establish VA students transferring.
- liaise with relevant associations and other external agencies.
- share relevant materials or initiatives with reference to any updated VA literature.
- monitor, intervene and access support when a VA student is experiencing pastoral difficulties.

### **Senior Leadership team**

- to support associated departments and year groups in implementing the policy.
- to review and evaluate the provision for VA students during QA through evaluation of schemes of work, lesson observations and scrutiny of work.
- to support the professional development of staff by sharing relevant knowledge and disseminating information.
- to support appropriate applications for further training in this field.

### **Heads of department**

- to write and implement a department policy for VA students in line with the whole school policy to set levels of expectation for the year range
- to establish criteria for identifying VA students within the subject discipline
- to inform teachers of the target grades for VA students and review their progress in department meetings and briefings
- to develop a system to monitor and support under-achieving VA students
- to add to Schemes of Work (SOW), provision for VA including opportunities for open-ended tasks which develop thinking skills and creativity
- to incorporate into SOW the development of independent learning for VA students
- to be aware of developments in the field and encourage sharing of good practice in the Department.
- to liaise with the AHT for VA regarding funding/intervention for VA students

- to ensure the work of VA students is celebrated in newsletters, social media and Headteacher's Report.

### **Subject Teachers**

- to ensure that the names of VA students they teach are highlighted in their seating plans
- to ensure that they are aware of the target grades for those students and use this when reporting on progress during data collection
- to implement appropriate support strategies for underachieving VA students
- to attempt a variety of teaching strategies to provide for the needs of VA students.
- to allow independent learning in their lessons
- to be aware of department selection criteria and apply these
- to set levels of expectations for the class being taught and the individual students within that class
- to report on the attainment and progress of VA students as part of normal school procedures.
- to celebrate work through feedback
- to identify other pupils who are high performers in their subject area and ensure they are placed on the VA Register

### **Heads of Year**

- to be aware of the VA students within the year group through the register.
- to track their progress throughout the year.
- to co-ordinate support strategies for underachieving students in a number of subjects.
- to liaise with AHT for VA about students

### **Tutors**

- to be aware of tutees who have been identified as VA.
- to review progress and motivation during academic tutoring and to set appropriate targets.
- to liaise with Heads of Year and teachers to support underachieving students.
- to be aware that a VA student may be under increasing pressure and they may need additional pastoral care, support and intervention

### **Provision**

#### **In class approaches**

Subject teachers will develop, as part of their normal planning, differentiated activities for that student and set targets as required by school policy and practice. See appendix 1 – Challenge and Differentiation Strategy

Important strategies include:

- broad and creative curriculum
- the management of student groupings (whether mixed-ability or ability sets)
- the provision of opportunities for the very Able students to work with others of the same ability.
- challenging lessons
- shared success criteria that allows for exceptional progress
- challenging questions
- walking talking mocks
- differentiated tasks/questions to stimulate higher order thinking skills

- the development of independent learning strategies to allow students to organise their own work, carry out tasks unaided, evaluate their work and become self-critical
- imaginative homework tasks
- provision of enrichment/extension tasks which develop learning
- use of technology to provide extension work such as extra reading or research
- extra support through individual discussions or interventions
- access to resources and literature that stretch and challenge
- praise and feedback (a lot of very able students will be perfectionists and often feel that their work is not good enough)
- setting in core subjects to stretch, challenge and accelerate the progress of the very able

### **Out of Class Activities**

Maghull High School also offers very able and talented students:

- study sessions
- educational trips/visits to deepen knowledge, understanding and learning
- visits to higher education
- leadership opportunities
- team building opportunities
- presentation/public speaking skills sessions
- extra-curricular opportunities
- enrichment activities
- musical and sporting activities
- national competitions
- mentoring
- skills to develop local, national and international networking opportunities
- individual funding and support

### **Tracking and assessment**

The progress of very able students will be regularly tracked and assessed via

- teacher assessment
- regular tracking of performance of individuals and sub-groups
- comparison with local and national outcomes
- student profiles
- arrangements for receiving information or passing it on at transfer and transition

Any identified underachievement will be coordinated by the leading AHT. This may involve target setting, liaising with department areas, and contacting parents. Disadvantaged students identified as underachieving will be prioritised for intervention. The needs of SEND students are made explicit through the VA&T register in addition to the inclusion register and addressed by all staff.

### **Quality Assurance of Policy**

The VA&T policy takes account of the principles of inclusion and the context of the whole-school population, and:

- encompasses all students, including those who have abilities and talents well above those found normally within the school, and which takes account of the school's

social and economic composition, gender, ethnicity, including FSM and disadvantage

- encompasses those who may be underachieving as well as high achievers
- recognises particular talents in the arts, sport, personal, interpersonal, vocational and entrepreneurial areas as well as academic subjects
- recognises that breadth of provision and widening participation and experience creates opportunities for talents and abilities to emerge and be recognised
- is based on a range of well-grounded criteria across all subjects and courses
- interrogates, analyses and acts on attainment and other assessment and performance data
- seeks the views of those involved with the student including parents or carers, teachers, mentors, the students themselves, other students and other professionals that the schools may consult
- acknowledges the need to share information about students' abilities, skills and talents, and their potential with staff, students and parents or carers
- is regularly analysed and reviewed by the AHT with responsibility for very able provision
- has an impact on practice and provision.

## **Appendices**

The following policies are to be used in conjunction with this very able policy:

- Teaching and Learning Policy
- Challenge and Differentiation
- Literacy Policy
- Homework Policy
- SEND/Inclusion Policy

## **Appendix 1**

The Challenge and Differentiation Strategy can be found here:

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## **Appendix 2**

### **Developing a Department/Subject VA Policy**

1. A rationale for the document - Refer to the rationale for the whole school policy.
2. Guidance on who constitutes the target group and on what constitutes ability in that particular area of the curriculum

Departments to draw up checklists to identify VA students within their curriculum area using the following procedure:

- brainstorm characteristics in department/subject meeting.
- define carefully what is meant by high ability within the curriculum area – as part of INSET/ meeting time.
- create a subject checklist for VA students in that area.
- use actual pieces of work from students as discussion points.



- draw upon any case studies that you have either from Maghull High School or elsewhere.
- research work already done in the field. (AHT for VA to assist and to provide subject leaders with details of relevant research and educational theory within their subject area where available).

### **3. To consider strategies for classroom provision:**

Include subject specific statements for differentiation in SOW such as:

- additional objectives and outcomes for VA students.
- strategies for teaching VA. For examples see below:
- judge the correct starting point for VA students rather than common starting point for all.
- allow VA students to miss out stages.
- give opportunity for students to experiment so that an original way of working is encouraged.
- create as many open ended situations as possible.
- be prepared to cut short time for the amount of practice of a particular skill and use time to allow for other developments in depth or breadth.
- allow and encourage students to work independently.
- take advantage of a student's particular advanced knowledge or skill by allowing them to be a partner in the delivery of the lesson.
- extension tasks designed for those who complete earlier sections easily and well.
- have available exciting and challenging materials for relatively short periods of time so that an able student finishing early has something worthwhile to do next.
- use differentiated homework.
- employ different levels of language/dialogue

### **4. Strategies for additional activities e.g. competitions, VA Clubs, More Able mentors, use of outside agencies etc.**

This does not have to be specifically aimed at the VA. Many examples are part of normal school life e.g. educational visits, clubs, visiting speakers, weekly maths puzzle

#### **Appendix 3**

Subject Specific criteria for the identification of VA&T students in a subject area  
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#### **Appendix 4**

Parental nomination form  
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