

Teaching gifted and talented pupils
Guidance from the National Curriculum web site
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What does gifted and talented mean?

There are many definitions of gifted and talented. This guidance builds on the work of Excellence in Cities (EiC), which identifies:

- **'gifted'** pupils as those who have abilities in one or more subjects in the statutory school curriculum other than art and design, music and PE.
- **'talented'** pupils as those who have abilities in art and design, music, PE, or in sports or performing arts such as dance and drama.

Therefore the pupil who is an all-rounder will be gifted and talented. This guidance uses the phrase 'gifted and talented' to describe all pupils with gifts and talents.

EiC targets gifted and talented work at the top 5 to 10 per cent of pupils in any school, regardless of the ability profile of pupils at the school.

Characteristics to look for

Gifted and talented pupils are a diverse group and their range of attainment will be varied. However, they are more likely than most pupils to:

- think quickly and accurately;
- work systematically;
- generate creative working solutions;
- work flexibly, processing unfamiliar information and applying knowledge, experience and insight to unfamiliar situations;
- communicate their thoughts and ideas well;
- be determined, diligent and interested in uncovering patterns;
- achieve, or show potential, in a wide range of contexts;
- be particularly creative;
- show great sensitivity or empathy;
- demonstrate particular physical dexterity or skill;
- make sound judgments;
- be outstanding leaders or team members;
- be fascinated by, or passionate about, a particular subject or aspect of the curriculum;
- demonstrate high levels of attainment across a range of subjects or within a particular subject or aspects of work.

Some gifted and talented pupils do well in statutory national curriculum tests (including the extension tests) and in world class tests. However, as the list above suggests, being gifted and talented covers much more than the ability to succeed in tests and examinations; for example, pupils may demonstrate leadership qualities or a capacity for creative thought.

It is important to recognise that not all gifted and talented pupils are obvious

achievers. Many actually underachieve -- their potential is masked by factors such as frustration, low self-esteem, lack of challenge, and low teacher/parent expectations. To enable these pupils to fulfil their potential, it is vital to give everyone in a school the opportunity to excel.

How can a school identify gifted and talented pupils?

How well a school identifies gifted and talented pupils will depend to some extent on the range of learning opportunities that it offers. Pupils can only demonstrate their abilities if they are given an opportunity to do so.

Teachers will probably become aware of pupils' particular gifts and talents as a result of:

- talking to parents, carers and peers;
- observing how pupils approach routine work in class and activities outside the classroom (some children behave quite differently in the two situations);
- observing them systematically in a range of learning contexts, to identify those who demonstrate social or leadership skills, an aptitude for problem-solving or acute listening skills;
- observing pupils' responses to their work and talking with them about what they like, dislike, and what enables them to learn best;
- tracking pupils;
- observing whether they take the initiative in tackling tasks or adapting conditions to suit circumstances;
- judging the progress they make in national curriculum subjects and whether they are beyond the level of attainment expected for their age;
- monitoring pupils' performance in national curriculum and other standardised tests, for example non-verbal reasoning tests and cognitive ability tests (CATs);
- talking to form tutors (at secondary level), who see pupils in a range of contexts and know about their circumstances.

The aptitudes of pupils for whom English is an additional language are often best recognised by people who can speak to them in their native language.

Avoiding stereotyping

It is important to make sure that the full range of the school population is considered when identifying gifted and talented pupils. Coordinators, managers and teachers in general need to guard against stereotypes in their perceptions of gifted and talented pupils. Schools should check that the pupils identified as gifted and talented are broadly representative of pupils as a whole; any significant disparity might suggest that some pupils have been overlooked. If this is the case, procedures for identifying gifted and talented pupils should be carefully scrutinised.

Identifying pupils gifted in ICT

Pupils who are gifted in ICT are likely to:

demonstrate ICT capability significantly above that expected for their age for example, key stage 2 pupils may be comfortable meeting the demands of the key stage 3 curriculum

learn and apply new ICT techniques quickly for example, pupils use shortcut keys for routine tasks effectively and appropriately; they quickly apply techniques for integrating applications such as mail merge and databases

use initiative to exploit the potential of more advanced features of ICT tools for example, pupils investigate the HTML source code of a website and apply features such as counters or frames to their own web designs

transfer and apply ICT skills and techniques confidently in new contexts for example, having learned about spreadsheet modelling in a mathematical context, they recognise the potential of applying a similar model in a science investigation

explore independently beyond the given breadth of an ICT topic for example, they decide independently to validate information they have found from a website; having learned control procedures for a simple traffic light model, they extend their procedure to include control of a pedestrian crossing

initiate ideas and solve problems, use ICT effectively and creatively, develop systems that meet personal needs and interests for example, they create an interactive fan club website that sends out a monthly newsletter to electronic subscribers (either working on their own, or collaboratively with peers)

When identifying pupils who are gifted in ICT, it is important to remember that they may not be gifted in all aspects of the subject. For example, some pupils may be able to use high-level programming skills to solve control problems, but may not be as good at constructing and investigating databases.

Teaching gifted pupils

Enriching and extending pupils' experiences

It is important for teachers to have high expectations of pupils who are gifted in ICT and for classroom activities to provide opportunities for gifted pupils to develop and apply their particular capabilities. In order to break down some of the barriers that may constrain very able pupils, teachers should try to provide teaching and learning experiences that encourage all pupils to think creatively, explore and develop ideas, and try different approaches. All pupils should be encouraged to set their own questions, offer ideas, suggest solutions or explanations, and reflect on what they have heard, seen or done in order to clarify their thoughts.

Teachers should:

- use a variety of challenging questioning strategies to encourage pupils to draw on previous experiences and to apply their thinking to new situations
- set extension tasks that avoid repetition -- extension work should encourage pupils to pursue a greater depth of understanding of the subject or to apply their ICT skills in new contexts, including other subjects
- encourage pupils to use a wide range of source materials, including more complex data sets
- encourage pupils to combine evidence and/or information from a variety of sources, and to exchange and share their knowledge with a variety of audiences and for a variety of purposes
- challenge pupils about their approach to a task, in order to encourage them to justify their choices and try out alternative approaches
- provide a more complex problem as a stimulus for developing ICT systems, for example, a control problem with an increased number of inputs and variables
- encourage pupils to discuss the suitability of different approaches, the tools to be used, and the range of possible outcomes
- encourage pupils, as they are developing their ICT systems, to look for opportunities to develop greater efficiency, including automation of processes, and to consider where levels of integration can be increased. For example, pupils could be encouraged to write macros or to create mail merges that extract information from a database for integration with a word-processed document
- encourage pupils to refine their product by reviewing and evaluating the process undertaken, the ICT tools used, and the effectiveness of the end product in meeting the specified needs of the task
- discuss with pupils what they are learning, and encourage them to identify their own learning needs
- provide opportunities for gifted pupils to learn new ICT skills together and/or with older pupils, in order to accelerate their learning and give them

- an opportunity to challenge each other
- ensure that staff have the ICT expertise to challenge the most able pupils effectively
- review provision in terms of software and peripherals, to ensure that the most appropriate resources are available
- maintain a portfolio of outstanding work for teachers and pupils to look through
- use the internet and a school or local intranet to enable similarly gifted and interested pupils to collaborate on projects.

Using key skills

Pupils who are gifted in ICT benefit from enrichment and extension activities that include key skills, in particular:

- **communication** discussing relevant ideas, issues and information; speaking clearly, taking into account the audience; responding one to one and in a group. For example, pupils contribute to a class evaluation of their work, providing constructive feedback on work that they find stimulating
- **working with others** planning what needs to be done and helping to confirm understanding of the objectives and processes to be used. For example, pupils work collaboratively on a model of a theatre, creating the model itself and then developing the component parts, such as the lights, the sound and the scene changes, so that they all work smoothly together
- **numeracy** interpreting numerical and spatial data derived from a variety of sources, such as CD-ROMs and web pages. For example, pupils make adjustments to units of measurement in order to make like-for-like comparisons
- **improving own learning and performance** applying the plan-do-review cycle to set their own targets and confirm their own understanding; making and following plans; reviewing achievements and progress. For example, pupils investigate the factors that affect friction, plan the stages of the investigation and predict the results at each stage. If their predictions are incorrect, they then modify the course of the investigation. Discussion, and perhaps further investigation, of why the results were not as expected should lead to greater understanding of the scientific principles involved and perhaps to greater understanding of how to use the measuring devices.

Using thinking skills

To handle information effectively, pupils need to develop a range of thinking skills that enable them to gather, organise, store, retrieve, modify and present information. These skills include:

- **information-processing skills** the ability to use a variety of approaches to sort, search (including conventional approaches, such as contents lists and indexes, as well as more complex search techniques requiring Boolean logic), organise and present data, to understand a variety of classification systems and to identify patterns and relationships in data
- **reasoning skills** the ability to make inferences from information in a reasoned and logical way, and to interpret and identify patterns in information
- **enquiry skills** the ability to ask sensible and pertinent questions that probe the data and lead to meaningful answers, to decide what data is needed for the enquiry and what sources are appropriate
- **creative-thinking skills** the ability to generate and extend ideas, to suggest hypotheses, to apply imagination, and to look for alternative, innovative outcomes
- **evaluation skills** the ability to apply existing knowledge, to draw conclusions about what has been discovered, and to put forward a reasoned case to help explain new findings

Setting suitable learning challenges

Pupils who are gifted in ICT need to be given opportunities to develop breadth and depth in their knowledge, skills and understanding. Teachers need to find a balance between drawing on work from later key stages and planning further differentiation by extending the breadth of study. For example, pupils need opportunities to apply their data-handling skills across a range of subjects and contexts, but they also need opportunities to use more complex data sets and to design integrated systems.

It may be appropriate to extend the range of technologies and software available. For example, teachers can give pupils access to data-capture devices that provide both greater knowledge and understanding of data logging and real-world data for a problem-solving exercise.

It is also important to provide sufficient open-ended tasks to challenge all pupils, particularly those who are gifted in ICT. For example, you could challenge pupils to choose appropriate software to solve a problem and then ask them to justify their selection.

Examples of units of work

The following examples build on the QCA/DfES schemes of work for ICT and show the importance of setting open-ended tasks that are sufficiently challenging to enrich and extend the learning of gifted pupils.

Teachers will need to be particularly careful about maintaining the appropriate balance between direct intervention and encouraging pupil independence. As well as developing technical skills, the use of ICT should enable pupils to focus on more abstract concepts, promoting higher-order thinking skills and a deeper understanding of the subject.

Key stage 2 - Using control

Building on Unit 5E 'Controlling devices' and Unit 6C 'Control and monitoring -- what happens when.....?'

In unit 5E, pupils might develop a procedure to control a set of traffic lights. Gifted pupils can be given opportunities to write procedures for more complex or varied situations. For example, they might develop their procedure to include instructions to control a pedestrian crossing or the sequence of traffic lights required at a T-junction.

In addition to controlling outputs like the lights, the pupils can be encouraged to use input devices such as switches to represent pedestrians activating a button at a crossing.

As a further extension activity, pupils could use both input and output devices to investigate the incubator conditions that are needed to hatch eggs, setting upper and lower temperature limits to cause a heater to switch on and off.

Understanding the consequences of errors can encourage pupils to be more rigorous when testing their models. This activity requires pupils to use and apply their knowledge and understanding based on the key ideas and techniques in unit 6C.

Other possible contexts for control include advertising displays, public information systems, control in the home, novel inventions or control in a theatre.

As pupils become more confident and familiar with input devices and control language, they may be able to investigate more complex uses of control.

Extending and enriching computer control activities offers enormous scope for pupils to develop and apply logical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Key Stage 2 - Creating multimedia texts

Building on Unit 6A 'Multimedia presentation'

In addition to developing proficient technical skills, all pupils need to be encouraged to develop a good sense of audience. A focus on the needs of particular audiences and the conventions of types of media can provide a good starting point for additional work for pupils who are gifted in ICT.

Gifted pupils can be asked to carry out an analysis of how different forms of information are combined for particular audiences in television, websites, computer games and CD-ROMs. They can consider different types of images, typeface, layout, use of animations, voiceovers and soundtracks. The following questions might be useful:

- What images and styles of layout are used for different age groups?
- What images and styles are used for different genders?
- What type of music is used? What different effects does music create?
- What is the tone of voice of the commentary?
- How is the author trying to influence or persuade you?
- Do images and sound always complement each other?

Having carried out an analysis of different media, pupils should be given opportunities to apply these ideas to their own multimedia presentation.

Pupils should decide on the focus of their presentation. A controversial topic, such as animal testing, can provide an opportunity for them to represent two conflicting viewpoints. They should create two presentations -- one in support of the issue and one against. They should apply their knowledge and understanding of audience and purpose to select and combine images, text, commentary and soundtrack.

Pupils can be given opportunities to collect and combine a wide range of media, including video. The technology and software available to them may limit -- or expand -- their choices, but pupils should be given opportunities to use a wide range of information sources, including:

- clip art, and images and sound from CD-ROMs and the internet
- a still or video digital camera
- scanned images, charts and diagrams
- sound samples and music
- recorded speech and commentaries.

Pupils should be encouraged to:

- consider the overall structure of the information in a presentation and to design flowcharts and diagrams mapping out routes through the information (this provides a good opportunity to explore relationships and connections in the information gathered)

- consider the strengths and drawbacks of both linear and non-linear multimedia presentations
- consider the order and sequence of linear presentations and the navigational structures required when a non-linear approach to information is used
- critically review and evaluate their work
- present work to different audiences
- carry out user evaluations and use feedback to inform their future work
- apply their ICT skills in creating presentations that support and enhance their work across the curriculum.

Key Stage 3 - Control -- input, process and output

Building on work in Unit 5E 'Controlling devices', Unit 6C 'Controlling and monitoring -- what happens when.....?', and focusing on Unit 6 'Control: input, process and output'

Unit 6 takes pupils through a control activity based on a car-park barrier. The stated expectations for most pupils are that they will create the control program, understanding that the sequence of commands is important; that they will explore the effects of simple changes in a variable; and that they will be involved in some discussion of the use of ICT outside school and evaluation of their work.

The unit suggests that pupils who have progressed further will refine their program, introducing notions of efficiency and economy. These pupils will also suggest areas for improvement to their work based on criteria they have identified, and will demonstrate a deeper understanding of the impact of ICT on society.

Unit 6 is divided into four activities.

Activity one is essentially teacher-led revision and discussion. The key areas for gifted pupils are:

- the teacher describing the scope of the problem, particularly, introducing the idea of a 'full' sign to indicate when there are no more spaces in the car park
- demonstration of how counters can be constructed using inputs as variables.

Gifted pupils should be given a more complex scenario, such as a car park with two entrances. They should:

- be encouraged to describe the main parameters of the problem themselves, based on personal research such as observation and discussion with adults
- be involved in defining the scope of the problem and identifying success criteria
- discover the need for a counter system to indicate when the car park is full
- specify the inputs necessary for the counter to successfully control the 'full' sign.

Activity two is about using flow diagrams to model the system graphically and to identify success criteria. Gifted pupils should move seamlessly on to this activity from activity one. They will use flow diagrams to test their ideas on how their counters work, and will test their ideas against the success criteria. They could be given an opportunity to discuss their work with adults who have knowledge of the context.

Activity three involves pupils understanding and using the concept of a control program as a series of separate procedures. The basic activity has three main procedures: the counter check, to determine whether the 'full' sign should be on or off; the procedure that 'increments' the counter when a car comes in; and the procedure that 'decrements' the counter when a car goes out. Gifted pupils will introduce more procedures for more complex scenarios. They should consider contingencies such as the 'in' switch being pressed when the 'full' sign is lit, test their solutions rigorously, and refine their work accordingly.

Activity four involves pupils demonstrating their work. Gifted pupils will present their work to a wider audience, inviting comments and questions. They should take account of user feedback in further work. They should also provide user documentation for their system, explain the original brief and success criteria, demonstrate how their solution is efficient and robust, and make reference to similar situations in the wider world.

Key Stage 3 - Information -- reliability, validity and bias

Building on work in Unit 2 'Information and presentation', Unit 8 'Public information systems' and focusing on Unit 10 'Information: reliability, validity and bias'

Unit 10 requires students to use the internet to gather information on a particular topic and to present it from a particular viewpoint. Expected outcomes for most students are that they will use a number of sources to select information, refine it using judgments about the content and message for the intended audience, and apply criteria to determine the success of their project. Pupils who have progressed further are expected to use presentation software, convert their information into both electronic and document form, and become increasingly autonomous in their use of ICT.

The unit is divided into five activities.

Activity one involves searching the internet and search techniques, and introduces the idea that opinions can be expressed as factual information. Gifted pupils can produce a user guide for a particular search engine, showing advanced search techniques in a way appropriate for a specified audience. They could research the imbalance in the geographical distribution of websites and the impact this may have on making judgments about particular issues. For example, when considering deforestation in Brazil, they could investigate how many Brazilian websites deal with the issue.

Activity two involves pupils identifying the range and scope of their particular topic, identifying information needs, and establishing success criteria. Gifted pupils should be asked to focus on complex aspects of the topic, those that require a wider range of information sources and the use of more sophisticated skills to interpret the information. They should be asked to present their findings to an audience they are unfamiliar with, and to modify their success criteria accordingly. For example, they could research the increased use of mobile phones by children and compare information from phone companies and from organisations concerned about health issues. They should make clear connections between their information needs and their intended audience.

Activity three is concerned with searching, finding and extracting information. Gifted pupils will demonstrate understanding of URLs, quickly recognising private, commercial and educational sites. They should apply complex search techniques and be able to explain their methodology and success criteria when selecting information. They should use systematic procedures for managing extracted information, including acknowledgement of sources.

Activity four is about refining the information, and planning and preparing a presentation. Gifted pupils will recognise the strengths and weaknesses of their presentation software. They should use advanced features appropriate to the topic and audience, for example a presentation on the effects of noise pollution could include appropriate sounds. They could also integrate their presentations with other presentation media, such as video, or enhance them with their own photographs. Their presentation should reflect a deeper understanding of bias in information sources and presentation methods, including the impact of omitting information.

Activity five is concerned with the pupils' evaluation of their presentation. Gifted pupils should involve their audience in the evaluation by using oral feedback and written feedback on evaluation forms. They should apply their own success criteria to the overall project, incorporating audience feedback and making recommendations for improvements in their methodology.

Responding to pupils' diverse needs

Many pupils who are gifted in ICT have specific needs and often provide a particular challenge for teachers if they have greater knowledge or understanding of an activity than their teacher has. Schools need to consider how best to make use of pupils' advanced knowledge and understanding, and how to give them challenges that enable them to consolidate or advance their skills.

When selecting contexts for ICT activities, it is important that teachers:

- are sensitive to the needs and interests of boys and girls, as well as to pupils' social and cultural diversity
- provide positive role models and avoid stereotyping. For example, when using electronic images, care should be taken to ensure that the representations selected reflect the diversity of society.

Socio-economic factors may limit some pupils' access to ICT at home. Teachers should seek to make the most of opportunities for enrichment and extension by maximising access to out-of-hours learning opportunities.

Overcoming potential barriers to learning and assessment

In a minority of cases, the learning and assessment requirements of pupils who are gifted in ICT may go beyond the provisions described above.

Some pupils who experience difficulties in particular areas of the curriculum may achieve very high levels in other areas, where ICT is used to access the curriculum or communicate ideas. For example, pupils with English as a second language may be able to use programming language skills, which require knowledge of a small set of commands, to demonstrate high levels of ICT capability.

As in all subjects, pupils with disabilities who are gifted in ICT can use ICT to develop, demonstrate and communicate their abilities.

School organisation issues

When considering the organisation within a school for ICT, it is important to get the balance right between meeting the needs of all pupils and catering for the needs of individuals or small groups. The teaching and use of ICT will depend on school policy, the resources available and timetable arrangements. Planning should give details of how pupils and resources will be organised, and should consider the following points:

- **access to resources**

Increased access to ICT resources may be needed, but there may be timetabling constraints and conflicting demands of other groups which will need to be managed sensitively

- **balance between providing special opportunities for gifted pupils and their inclusion in the mainstream academic and social life of their class**

If a school has an ICT suite, it is often possible to plan for the diverse needs of a group of pupils through differentiated tasks, resources, processes or outcomes. However, this places greater demands on the teacher, particularly if their ICT confidence is limited. Extra adult support is helpful when catering for a wide range of pupil experience

- **accelerating the development of ICT skills**

It may be helpful to organise teaching sessions where gifted pupils can be taught together. This can be particularly useful to aid enrichment in other subjects, for example pupils could search the internet to find evidence for a history project, or pupils who are very able in English could accelerate the pace at which their ICT skills are developed to enhance their ability in English

- **short-term planning**

This should include the key elements that need to be covered, key questions, and a range of extension ideas that can be incorporated to add more depth to the area of study or the task, or increased challenge in terms of outcome. Activities should have clear goals, aim to increase pupils' ability to analyse and solve problems, and stimulate originality, initiative and self-direction

- **monitoring pupils' progress to ensure that provision is effective**

This will involve monitoring and assessing performance in a range of tasks, responses to questions, and discussions about how and why they adopted the approaches they did in problem-solving and research activities

Activities beyond the classroom

To offer enhanced access to all pupils, including gifted pupils, schools should maximise out-of-hours use of ICT resources through breakfast clubs, lunchtime sessions and after-school homework clubs.

A number of schools now offer twilight and evening sessions, where parents and pupils can learn together.

Many schools are using the internet to create school websites that provide opportunities to extend and enhance learning. School sites can include revision sites, additional units online, and links to useful education sites. Pupils can then access these from home or public libraries, but schools should be sensitive to the fact that not all pupils have equal access; schools must seek to maximise access for pupils while at school.

Many schools are developing stocks of laptop and portable devices that pupils can use at home or in remote locations.

Opportunities to visit businesses and industries can be provided for pupils. For example, a student particularly gifted in the use of ICT might benefit from a visit to, or work experience at, a digital recording studio or editing suite. Pupils particularly gifted in the area of control might benefit from visiting an organisation that uses computer-aided design and manufacture.

Some pupils who are gifted in ICT benefit from learning alongside older pupils in settings where more specialist equipment is available.

Resources

In many cases, resource provision will determine how well a school meets the ICT needs of gifted pupils. Many schools will need to make significant changes to the way they acquire and maintain resources. The New Opportunities Fund Training Initiative in ICT for Teachers and the National Grid for Learning have raised awareness of the important contribution that ICT can make to teaching and learning. It is hoped that, through the infrastructure of the National Grid, the increasing ability of teachers to use ICT effectively in their teaching and the growing awareness of how the needs of gifted pupils can be met in mainstream education, resources for gifted pupils will become accessible to all teachers and they will be encouraged to share their ideas.

Monitoring and evaluation of the school's policy

How successful is your policy for gifted pupils?

- Do you have ways to identify gifted pupils from an early stage?
- What measures are in place to ensure that all sectors of the school community are able to reach the highest levels of achievement?
- Do you have a broad, balanced curriculum for gifted individuals, as well as for the group as a whole? For example:
 - have they experienced a range of different aspects of ICT, such as researching and presenting information, experimenting to find things out and to develop their ideas?
 - are they able to use a sufficiently wide range of equipment and resources?
 - do they have opportunities to analyse the approaches used by more advanced ICT users?
- How do you challenge gifted individuals to develop their skills, knowledge and understanding? What opportunities do you give them to apply their skills, knowledge and understanding in a variety of contexts? For example, do individuals make the learning gains expected of them? Are teachers' expectations appropriately high?
- Can gifted pupils critically evaluate their own work, identify their strengths and weaknesses, and improve their own learning?
- Do parents understand and know how best to support the work that their children are doing in, and with, ICT -- at home and at school?
- How do parents, colleagues and pupils respond to the work of individuals and the whole group? Is work valued appropriately?
- Are there opportunities for displaying work, for holding exhibitions, and for involving individuals and groups in the process?
- Do you maintain records of the achievements of the most able pupils year

- on year?
- Are you aware of the performance of gifted individuals in other areas of the curriculum?
 - What happens to pupils when they move on in the school? To other schools? Beyond school?
 - How can provision be further developed, clarified or improved?

Developing a policy for gifted and talented pupils

Developing a whole-school policy

Developing an effective whole-school policy for gifted and talented pupils involves the senior management team, governors, staff, parents and pupils working together to agree key policy decisions. This process should be led and managed by the school's gifted and talented coordinator. The aim should be for provision for gifted and talented pupils to be an integral part of ongoing teaching and learning.

At an early stage, schools need to decide the form of the policy and how it will relate to other policies. Some schools choose to develop a whole-school gifted and talented policy, while others incorporate discrete statements about gifted and talented pupils within policies for particular subjects and aspects of the curriculum.

Either way, a useful starting point is to audit the extent to which the school's values, aims and existing policies support its provision for gifted and talented pupils. This may already be part of the school improvement cycle, as a precondition for developing the school plan.

Developing subject policies

Subject policies developed to meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils should present a holistic approach to provision. They should show how the different measures taken relate to each other. They should be developed in conjunction with the whole-school policy. Activities beyond the classroom should mesh coherently with pupils' classroom experience.

Subject colleagues should communicate and collaborate as much as possible, so that they appreciate the similarities and differences between their subject contexts. This can enhance the provision made and, in turn, help pupils to understand the relationship between subjects.

Subject policies for gifted and talented pupils should be set in the context of the school's approach to teaching and learning. They should cover the same areas as the whole-school policy, but give focus to subject-specific provision for gifted and talented pupils. So, for example, subject policies should describe:

- how the subject contributes to pupils' academic and personal development, and the distinctive qualities and/or context of the subject for gifted and talented pupils;
- the opportunities for acceleration, enrichment and extension in the subject, and how these work together (particularly with study support and out-of-class activities);
- the thinking skills needed for the subject;
- how pupils demonstrate their abilities through the subject;
- how teaching groups can be organised to benefit all pupils;
- how homework can be capitalised on for gifted and talented pupils;
- how teachers can work with pupils to build on their strengths and address areas of weakness;
- how to make the most of cross-curricular links;
- how to deal with transfer and transition issues;
- how the effectiveness of provision in the subject will be monitored and evaluated;
- the roles and responsibilities of different subject staff, including teaching assistants.

Case study KS3 : making a start on subject policies

A secondary school gifted and talented coordinator started the process of developing subject policies by asking each year team to nominate six to ten pupils who were beginning to stand out in lessons. These pupils were then asked to write about their preferred ways of learning for a booklet, Celebrating excellence and achievement.

The pupils were asked:

- What are your favourite subjects? What is it about these subjects that you particularly like?
- What ways of working or activities do you find most:
 - interesting?
 - enjoyable?
 - easy?
 - challenging?
 - frustrating?
- Give your reasons.
- What ways of working do you think you should have more opportunity for?
- In what circumstances do you feel you do your best work?

- Give examples of ways in which your teachers have:
 - helped you
 - helped you to help yourself
 - ensured you can make progress
 - distracted you from making progress.
- How could your teachers help you more?
- What are your short-term and long-term goals for the future?
- What are you doing to make sure you reach these goals?
- What more could the school do to help you?

The booklet was distributed among all staff, not just to alert them to the presence of gifted and talented individuals, but also to highlight issues of teaching and learning that had implications for every subject team. This prompted useful discussions about what to include in subject policies.

Roles and responsibilities of Subject teachers and co-ordinators

The roles and responsibilities of all staff involved in teaching a particular subject should be clearly defined in the whole-school or subject policy for gifted and talented. This includes the roles of:

- all those teaching the subject, including newly qualified teachers;
- the subject coordinator, subject leader or head of department;
- other professionals, for example artists in residence, managers of school projects;
- teaching and learning support assistants;
- learning mentors;
- supply teachers.

As well as formulating a subject policy, the teaching team needs to decide how to:

- liaise with colleagues who have whole-school responsibilities, such as the gifted and talented coordinator, assessment coordinator and CPD coordinator;
- disseminate information across the school and between schools, as appropriate;
- review the scheme of work to ensure that the needs of gifted and talented pupils are met through classroom management (including pupil grouping),

- materials and other resources, activities, assessment, and homework, self-study and out-of-hours learning;
- make decisions about entering pupils for end of key stage national curriculum test extension papers;
 - help support staff meet the needs of gifted and talented pupils through collaborative team preparation and discussion, team teaching, the appropriate use of ICT and other resources, familiarity with library literature, and involvement in professional development sessions on working with gifted and talented pupils;
 - identify, plan and deliver professional development and evaluate its impact on learning and teaching;
 - establish procedures for monitoring and evaluating the identification of, and provision for, gifted and talented pupils;
 - liaise with LEA advisory colleagues.