



## Westminster Tutors

# GIFTED AND TALENTED POLICY

### Introduction

It is a core aspect of the Westminster Tutors ethos that educational and welfare provision is always adapted to the needs of individual students. This policy outlines the college's academic support procedures for very able students who may be defined as either 'Gifted' or 'Talented', although it should also be noted that we have very high expectations of all of our students and expect to give all our students the stretch and challenge so that they achieve to the very best of their ability.

### Aims

We are committed to providing an environment which encourages all students at Westminster Tutors to maximise their potential, and this clearly includes students who are gifted or show some form of talent. Gifted students may have a great thirst for knowledge, and Westminster Tutors is in a particularly strong position to nurture gifted students through individualised learning programmes and the provision of highly qualified, expert teachers.

### Definition

Gifted and talented students 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).

The term 'gifted' refers to those students who are capable of excelling in academic subjects such as Maths, Science, English or History.

'Talented' refers to those students who may excel in areas requiring visio-spatial skills or practical abilities, such as in sports, drama, or art. Because of the small size of Westminster Tutors, in general the college is less well-placed to provide for talented students as facilities may not be available. However, Westminster Tutors is committed to fostering talent wherever it is identified, and offering a flexible programme which permits talented students to continue to develop their talents outside college alongside pursuing their studies. For students who are not of Compulsory School Age, the college is able to adjust timetables so that students with sporting, artistic or other talents are able to focus on these on certain designated days of the week at the same time as having a more intensive study programme at the college on other days of the week. For example, the college is able accommodate students who are talented sportspeople aged 16+ who may be spending a significant amount of their time engaged in intensive training programmes, but also wish to further their studies to A level and beyond.

## **Identification of Gifted Students**

It is recognised that it is easy to destroy the self-confidence of any child and this is particularly so when they are gifted and talented. Their experiences with their teachers, their peers and their parents are critical, and it is always important to look for indicators which suggest that a difficult, unhappy or bored child has hidden academic gifts or talents.

## **Characteristics of high ability students**

Students will display some of these behaviours:

- Unusual alertness
- Long attention span
- Inquisitive
- Ask challenging questions
- Keen sense of observation
- Sharp or quirky sense of humour
- Excellent memory
- Intensity
- Work at a level 2 or 3 years ahead of peers
- Preference for older companions
- Abstract reasoning
- Request a change to the task set
- Manipulate information
- Be highly self critical
- Use superior vocabulary and complex sentences
- Process complex ideas quickly
- Superior reasoning ability
- Be divergent thinkers – look for the unusual
- Write untidily – unwilling to record
- Have excellent reasoning skills
- Fanatical about an interest or hobby
- Find socialising with peers difficult
- Vivid imagination
- May appear disrespectful
- Challenge accepted theories

## **Provision for the Gifted and Talented**

The college asks teachers to ensure that opportunities for extension and enrichment are built into individual schemes of work and/or lesson planning.

We also aim to:

- Maintain an ethos where it is okay to be bright
- Encourage all students to be independent learners

- Recognise achievement
- Encourage participation in extra-curricular activities and clubs
- Always provide work at an appropriate level
- Where possible, provide opportunities for students to work with like-minded peers

### **Additional types of provision:**

#### Classroom differentiation if teaching in groups:

- Teachers have high expectations.
- Tasks are designed to take account of levels of existing knowledge, skills and understanding.
- There are planned extension opportunities or open-ended tasks.
- There is access to higher tier assessment papers
- A level opportunities for extension, eg AEA or some university level work
- Small group work where appropriate
- Grouping by ability
- Differentiated homework

#### Out of college provision:

- Liaison between the college and experts who may be supporting the gifted child
- National schemes/ competitions / events
- Membership of the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC), also known as Potential Plus UK

### **Staff guidance:**

The following lists might provide helpful, practical guidance for tutors:

#### The needs of very able learners

- Opportunity to work at an increased pace
- Starting points that meet their level of knowledge
- Less practice at tasks
- Less explanation of instructions
- Opportunities to work with others of similar ability
- Challenging tasks
- Challenge to the point of failure
- Development of good study skills
- Development of thinking skills and critical thinking
- More independence of study
- Access to additional reading materials and ICT resources
- Open-ended situations

- Abstract tasks
- The right to fail
- A wide variety of opportunities for experiment and application
- Creative opportunities
- Individual programmes that develop their intellect
- Greater depth not accelerated pace
- Opportunity to take risks
- Real applications for their learning
- Mentoring
- Reinforcement that giftedness is valued
- Protection from bullying or name calling
- Opportunities to experience challenges outside school eg NAGTY, work placements, courses

### Teaching strategies for very able students

It is generally understood that it is not beneficial for a student to be 'fast-tracked' through the curriculum, for instance completing a Maths GCSE at the age of 12 and then moving on to A level. Instead of moving ahead too quickly (which may also distance able students from their peer group), teachers should adjust learning so that gifted students have the opportunity to understand and explore the curriculum in greater depth, and they should be challenged by tasks which require them to apply their knowledge to new and unfamiliar situations, for example the gifted Maths student should be given age-appropriate questions from Maths Challenge/Olympiad, rather than embark on A level or tertiary level studies several years early.

- Give a starting point for the work that takes account to ability. For example if teaching in a group and the task is to work through 20 questions, able students may start at a question that begins to challenge them.
- Allow able students to jump steps needed by the majority. It can seem punitive if they are made to complete the same work as everyone else.
- Give space for students to experiment so that an original way of working is not discouraged.
- Create as many open-ended situations as possible. This makes it possible for able students to give individual responses, which may be very different from those of the other students.
- Cut short the amount of practice on a particular skill or process if the gifted student masters it quickly. Provide interesting research or experiment to extend the student in the time gained.
- Allow able students to work independently, perhaps on different or extended tasks; eg a challenging project on a novel that they have read ahead of other students in an English Literature group
- Use differentiated homework to give gifted students more challenging targets.
- If teaching in a group, get gifted students to work together for some aspects of the learning and set challenging tasks for these students.
- For other groupwork, give a gifted student a leadership role or additional responsibility

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