



## GRET Draft Policy for Post Primary Schools for Exceptionally Able Students

### **Rationale**

Coláiste an Chreagáin recognises the importance of enabling all students to achieve their full potential. The School is committed to providing a stimulating learning environment which enables all students to progress towards achieving their potential.

### **Focus:**

Coláiste an Chreagáin recognises that by virtue of their ability, Exceptionally Able children may require specific interventions to enable them to achieve their potential and to maximise performance. These guidelines outline the school's practice and procedures relating to the support of Exceptionally Able pupils.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this programme is to provide a framework for the identification and ongoing support of Exceptionally Able students to ensure that they have an opportunity to progress towards realising their full potential.

This document aims to act as a support to management, parents and teachers for means of

- Auditing and reviewing the support measures for Exceptionally Able students
- Use and sharing of effective strategies to resource all mainstream and Special Education Teachers on how to differentiate and extend the curriculum for these students.
- Further develop an inclusive school ethos in line with the GRET ethos.

### **Inclusion**

The school encourages and expects all students to involve themselves in the life of the school according to their abilities and subject to demand for specific activities.

Exceptionally Able pupils have equal access to all aspects of the curriculum and school life. The school promotes a culture of success and encourages respect for all achievement whether academic, cultural or sporting.

### **Definitions**

“The term exceptionally able is used...to describe students who require opportunities for enrichment and extension that go beyond those provided for the general cohort of pupils.” (NCCA,2007).

Able students as those who have the capacity for, or demonstrate high levels of performance in traditional academic areas; students show the potential to achieve at a higher level than the majority of their peers;

Exceptionally able (often referred to as ‘gifted’) students are those capable of exceptional performance: representing around 0.5% of the population nationally. Average CAT score of over 126 (Exceptionally Able) 120 (Very Able) or exceptionally high score in one battery e.g. Non Verbal score 125.

Talented students show ability through creative or physical talents. They show ability or excel in areas such as Art, Music, Drama, Sports, Technologies or the Performing Arts.

### **Identification Procedures**

The school uses a range of strategies to identify Exceptionally Able pupils. The identification process is on-going and begins when the student joins the school.

Identification procedures used by the school include:

- Observation of class-work, responses, questions, creativity, homework etc.
- Observation of social interactions with peers and adults.
- Observation in school-yard, pitches etc., when involved in extra-curricular activities
- Tests, or other assessments (eg. School passport from primary school, Drumcondra Reasoning Test, CAT4, NEPS )
- Information from parents/ guardians.

Information from teachers in the school is a vital component of identification. It is important therefore, that Exceptionally Able children can develop and demonstrate their potential through their participation in class and in extra-curricular activities.

### **Characteristics of Exceptionally Able Children**

There is no one identity that links to an exceptionally able child.

There may be a child that:

- Shows superior reasoning powers and marked ability to handle ideas; can generalise readily from specific facts and can see subtle relationships; has outstanding problem-solving ability.
- Shows persistent intellectual curiosity; asks searching questions; shows exceptional interest in the nature of man and the universe.

- Has a wide range of interests, often of an intellectual kind; develops one or more interests to considerable depth.
- Is markedly superior in quality and quantity of written and/or spoken vocabulary; is interested in the subtleties of words and their uses.
- Reads avidly and absorbs books well beyond his or her years.
- Learns quickly and easily and retains what is learned; recalls important details, concepts and principles; comprehends readily.
- Shows insight into arithmetical problems that require careful reasoning and grasps mathematical concepts readily.
- Shows creative ability or imaginative expression in such things as music, art, dance, drama; shows sensitivity and finesse in rhythm, movement, and bodily control.
- Sustains concentration for lengthy periods and shows outstanding responsibility and independence in classroom work.
- Sets realistically high standards for self; is self-critical in evaluating and correcting his or her own efforts.
- Shows initiative and originality in intellectual work; shows flexibility in thinking and considers problems from a number of viewpoints.
- Observes keenly and is responsive to new ideas.
- Shows social poise and an ability to communicate with adults in a mature way.
- Gets excitement and pleasure from intellectual challenge; shows an alert and subtle sense of humour.

[from George, 2000 ]

## **Key Understandings and Considerations specific to Exceptionally Abled Students**

### Self- Esteem

Many gifted children have very poor self-esteem - this is partly because high intelligence is not always respected in school, and partly because they fear that one day people will see them working really hard to learn something, and will start to realise they're not so bright after all (Winebrenner, 2001). It is recognised that many gifted pupils are working significantly below their potential. Youngsters may consciously decide to veil their ability because they fear peer disapproval, and so the end up acting less capable than they really are. This is a pattern that is particularly common among girls.

Some gifted and talented children may set high standards for themselves and strive for perfectionism. However, others who underachieve may lack motivation, or produce sloppy work due to boredom and lack of interest. Some students may produce work that falls far short of a best effort, as a way of protecting their self-esteem - if the work receives a poor mark they can comfort themselves that it was due to their lack of effort rather than failure due to lack of ability.

### Under Achievement

Low self-esteem often leads to unproductive behaviours based on the avoidance of work or study. This acts as a form of self-protection - the pupil can attribute failure to lack of study rather than having to question their own ability. If they study they may feel that they risk confirming their possible short-comings if they subsequently do not do

well. In such scenarios pupils might also complain that they find the curriculum work "boring" or "pointless", as a way of further vindicating their lack of study.

### Twice Exceptional Children

It is a well-kept secret that a child can be both gifted and disabled (Linda Kreger Silverman, 1989) Unfortunately, children who are both gifted and disabled are often recognised primarily for their disability, and in some cases the disability may entirely obstruct recognition of talent. Frequently, even when concurrent talent and disabilities are recognised, greater emphasis is placed on remediating the disability than on nurturing the child's individual strengths. Best practice would mean recognising and differentiating appropriately for both.

### **Programmes for Teaching, Learning and Curriculum**

Coláiste an Chreagáin is a school that delivers an enriched curriculum to mixed ability classes. The school provides a broad range of stimulating and challenging activities both within and outside the classroom. Staff are alert to gifted pupils and differentiate in the delivery of their material, allowing all pupils to attain their potential. Thus, gifted pupils are challenged academically whilst learning within their class group.

The Assessment for Learning (AfL) approach is recommended for all pupils in Coláiste an Chreagáin and is particularly pertinent for Exceptionally Able pupils as it “emphasises the child’s active role in their own learning, in that the teacher and child agree what the outcomes of the learning should be and the criteria for judging to what extent the outcome has been achieved...This level of involvement in shaping their own learning can heighten children’s awareness of themselves as learners and encourage them to take more personal responsibility for, and pride in, their learning.” [NCCA, 2007]

Teachers encourage pupils to be ‘self-regulated learners’, ask pupils to revisit completed work (with an eye on improvement or development) and support pupils in building portfolios/copy-books that show genuine progress.

To meet the needs of Exceptionally Able children, the school promotes use of a variety of strategies including differentiation, learning centres, flexible groupings, competitions, clubs and projects. Extension activities, that are more demanding of their abilities, or enrichment activities that provide new and different ways of working will be provided during class or as home-work /project-work.

Opportunities for Exceptionally Able pupils to work together may be provided, particularly in the context of competitions, Project work and extra-curricular activities.

There will be opportunities for performance, or to display talents during the school year, for example during Maths Week, Science Week, Seachtain na Gaeilge, BT Young Scientist, Scifest, Mathletes, Music performances, corridor displays etc.

The school provides an extensive range of curricular and extra-curricular activities suited to the needs of Exceptionally Able children SUCH AS Sports, Quiz club, Girls Squad, Chess, Music Club, Literacy Club, Science Club

### **Professional Involvement**

The school has liaised with the Centre for Talented Youth (CTY) Ireland with a connection to University Galway and parents are aware of their recommendations regarding Exceptionally Able children and the facilities available there. Students are encouraged to apply to the CTY programme and have been selected to attend courses.

### **In-Service Training**

The school may, from time to time as appropriate, assign staff training days or advise on Educational In-service for the Exceptionally Able to provide support to teachers (and parents) in the implementation of these Guidelines.

SUCH AS GRETB principals and deputy principals professional learning at work,

### **Organisational Strategies**

( \_\_\_\_\_ One example of an organisational structure is given here – delete or add to as appropriate \_\_\_\_\_ )

When undertaking the implementation of this policy the following steps may be beneficial.

1. Consider the best method of identification of Exceptionally Able students in your school using criteria above.
  - E.g. CAT4 test results are completed by all students in September their first year at school.
2. Complete the testing and collate the results in a shareable format.
  - E.g. While conscious that definitions vary from source to source, this school defines a CAT4 result of 125 or higher as Exceptionally Able in line with the CAT4 recommendations. Results are collected and collated in an excel file with Mean SAS scores calculated for each child.
3. Inform all stakeholders.
  - Parents
    - E.g. CAT4 results are formally shared with all parents and include a descriptor for how to interpret.
    - E.g. An email is sent out to the parents of identified exceptionally abled students highlighting the result. In this email information on the availability of relevant extension programmes outside of school are shared if known e.g. CTYI etc. Parents are told that teachers have been

informed and will endeavour to extend and challenge the student appropriately.

- Staff
  - E.g. Students identified as exceptionally able are included in the AEN information to the whole staff. Staff of individuals are informed and asked to highlight the student on their plans and grade books and provide extension material where possible. Staff are encouraged to link extra-curricular opportunities for study into their Schemes of Work and consider that these students might be particularly interested in those opportunities e.g. Science competitions or Journal article access. If possible identification is made subtly on TYRO or VSWARE as is done for other AEN students.
  - E.g. A resource bank of Extension materials is shared with all staff.
- Students
  - E.g. Students meet one to one with the T&L coordinator and are informed about their CAT4 result and it's interpretation. This is a gently conversation centred on self esteem building and motivation. At this point any learning issues the student is having can be raised as well as creating a firm point of contact with the T&L coordinator should the student have questions at a later date.

## **Open Communications**

All exceptionally able students identified in the school should have an anchor member of staff they can refer to for questions related to extra learning or issues around their academic success. The Teaching and Learning coordinator is the most likely member of staff for this role but a member of Senior Leadership would also work.

## **Resources**

A bank of resources which are both generic and can be used at any time in learning, and specific to certain common areas of learning for exceptionally abled students should be available to staff and students as needed.

There is a central source of resources in GRETB and this can be requested by email from the T&L coordinator.

## **Evaluation and review**

These guidelines in this policy are reviewed and updated on an annual basis as deemed necessary.

## **References**

(Headings Adapted from TKI, 2006)

George, D. (2000). Gifted education: Identification and provision. London: David Fulton.

Silverman, L. K. (1989). Invisible gifts, invisible handicaps. *Roeper Review*, 22 (1), 37-42.

Winebrenner, S. (2001). *Teaching gifted kids in the regular classroom: Strategies and techniques every teacher can use to meet the academic needs of the gifted and talented* (rev. ed.). Minneapolis: Free Spirit Publishing.