Gifted and Talented education

Guidance on preventing underachievement:
a focus on dual or multiple exceptionality (DME)

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department for education and skills

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Contents

Introduction

The introduction of the National Register for gifted and talented pupils has focused attention on the importance of identification through provision and has provided schools with an opportunity to focus on matching provision to the needs of those pupils identified.

The DfES booklet, Identifying Gifted and Talented Pupils – Getting Started (2006) states: the main purpose of the National Register is to support schools in the identification of their gifted and talented learners and to help them compare the attainment/performance of their gifted and talented population with that of others.

In the advice on developing strategies and approaches to countering underachievement of gifted and talented pupils, the booklet draws attention to some key questions to be considered.

• *What are the indicators of underachievement?*

• *What are the causes of underachievement?*

• *What are some ways of countering underachievement?*

• *Are there potential causes due to dual or multiple exceptionalities (DME)?*

Many schools have had success in identifying underachievement but the process of converting that underachievement into achievement is more challenging.

There are many groups at risk of underachievement within the gifted and talented cohort. Eradicating such underachievement is complex and the means to achieve this will vary from group to group and pupil to pupil. However, there is a developing body of evidence about the approaches that will enable different groups to progress and succeed: see, for example, the work of London G&T www.londongt.org/real and NAGTY www.nagty.ac.uk

These approaches include the personalisation of learning in response to needs and involving pupils in identifying learning strengths and additional needs.

The 2005 White Paper, Higher Standards, Better Schools for All, set the provision for gifted and talented pupils in the context of personalisation. Personalisation aims to ensure that provision for all children counteracts disadvantage and prevents underachievement. Improvements to the quality of provision for the most able benefit all pupils and provide strong evidence of the delivery of the 5 outcomes of Every Child Matters.

This booklet is the first of a series addressing support and provision for gifted and talented pupils who are either underachieving or at risk of underachieving. The focus of this guidance is the discussion of underachievement due to dual or multiple exceptionalities as referred to in the last of the four questions above. Pupils with gifts or talents exist within all groups of pupils. This includes those pupils who have been identified as having additional learning needs. Pupils from this group are to be considered when the gifted and talented cohort is being identified. Underrepresentation of this group within the gifted and talented population may result in considerable underachievement by pupils whose learning needs are not met.

The intention here is to raise awareness of the issues and invite responses from schools and settings to contribute to the developing body of knowledge, understanding and effective practice in relation to pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities.

What is dual or multiple exceptionality?

The term dual or multiple exceptionality (DME) is used to describe a group of educationally vulnerable pupils whose profiles are often underrepresented on schools' registers for gifted and talented learners. DME pupils are those who belong, characteristically, to both the special educational needs (SEN) and gifted and talented groups. In many such cases only one of either the gifts and talents or the special educational needs is recognised. For example, a pupil who has a specific learning difficulty in literacy may receive extra support in phonics but not have the opportunity to express a special ability in science.

For pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities to make appropriate progress, it is important to focus on what pupils can do. In many instances it is the features of SEN that are dominant and other gifts, talents or exceptional abilities may be hidden or partially hidden. Consequently, dual or multiple exceptionality pupils are at greater risk of marginalisation, stereotyping and exclusion. In the Occasional Paper No 6[1] produced by NAGTY, Investigating the Notion of Children with Multiple Exceptionalities, Carrie Winstanley reminds us that not all pupils with high ability and additional learning needs will be underachievers. However, the chances of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities being unable to express their abilities are greater than for pupils without additional learning needs.

Underachievement in this context refers to the deficit between attainment and potential and does not refer to specific assessment or examination grades. It is possible that pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities achieve at an average rate, with abilities compensating for additional needs. However, with a focus on developing the range of provision and exploring ways in which access to different aspects of the curriculum can be broadened, attainment for pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities can more readily match their abilities and potential.

Throughout this guidance, the term SEN refers to those pupils whose additional needs are recognised and defined within the SEN Code of Practice and who will typically be either at the School Action Plus (SA+) or have a statement of special needs. They are, therefore, likely to be known to the SENCo and managers in school. Such pupils may be recognised as having special educational needs linked with attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, autism or autistic spectrum disorder such as Asperger's syndrome, sensory impairment, physical disability, dyslexia or other specific learning difficulty.

Winstanley also provides a broader and more extensive overview of some of the key areas of high ability and additional needs. The paper provides a summary of the main difficulties and issues raised by each exceptionality referred to above in relation to ability.[1]

In considering who would be the appropriate person to coordinate the identification and provision for pupils with DME, it might be useful to think about the task being shared between the Inclusion coordinator, the SENCo and the coordinator for gifted and talented provision.

[1]*This can be accessed on the NAGTY website:*

http://www.nagty.ac.uk/research/occasional_papers/documents/occasional_paper6.pdf

Examples illustrating dual or multiple exceptionality

There are some famous examples of dual or multiple exceptionality. These include the highly talented Helen Keller, who was originally thought to be uneducable due to her blindness, deafness and emotional and behavioural difficulties. After identification of her learning strengths she displayed her great gifts as a writer. Another well-known example is Christy Brown, initially identified for his spastic quadriplegia or cerebral palsy, rather than his genius as an author and poet who wrote and painted with his left foot.

The following case studies illustrate the complexity of identification and provision. They fall at the extreme end of the SEN continuum and highlight the difficulties of focusing on disability rather than ability and on segregation rather than inclusion. (Names have been changed to preserve confidentiality.) These examples draw attention to the contribution required by all educational sectors to meet the needs of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities. Collaboration between mainstream and special schools will greatly enhance the inclusive approach required to enable expression of the full range of talents and abilities of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities.

Peter

Peter was born with many medical problems and was being educated in a special nursery. On various development checklists he was functioning at about one year behind his chronological age.

Peter was diagnosed as needing full-time special education, probably in a special care section of a school for pupils with severe learning difficulties. Many staff had doubts about what he might be able to do. However, Peter blossomed in his early years and, by the time he was seven years old, he had technically mastered seven keyboards. He could play an acoustic piano, an electronic piano, a games machine, a digital calculator, a computer keyboard, a Braille machine and a Eureka machine. He was so competent with his music that he was regularly asked to play pieces by Bach and Chopin in his infant school assemblies. He completed his primary and secondary education in mainstream settings, with support from units specialising in educating pupils with visual impairment. In secondary school he mastered the art of communicating through email with voice synthesisers and was one of the first pupils to benefit from using enhanced computer software as a communication aid.

Amir

Amir was born in India. Within two days of arriving in England, Amir was placed on roll in a primary school where he was given appropriate English as an additional language support to enable him to access the curriculum. Amir took a little time to adjust to his new circumstances but, after a few months, he began to show exceptional ability in mental mathematics.

Due to his family circumstances, Amir had to move schools several times, on each occasion showing increased social, emotional and behavioural needs. By Year 6 he had made exceptional and accelerated progress in English but had become so unsettled, attention-seeking and disruptive that he needed constant one-to-one support to maintain him in class. The problems persisted in secondary school and, as a consequence, Amir was transferred to a Pupil Referral Unit. Only at this point did detailed assessments take place. It emerged that Amir is exceptionally able in verbal and numerical skills and has very well-developed logical mathematical intelligence, as demonstrated, for example, in his motivation and capacity to play chess. These characteristics had not been evident from Amir's school records and all interventions had focused on his behavioural difficulties.

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Primary and Secondary *National Strategy*

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How do schools identify gifted and talented pupils with dual or multiple exceptionality?
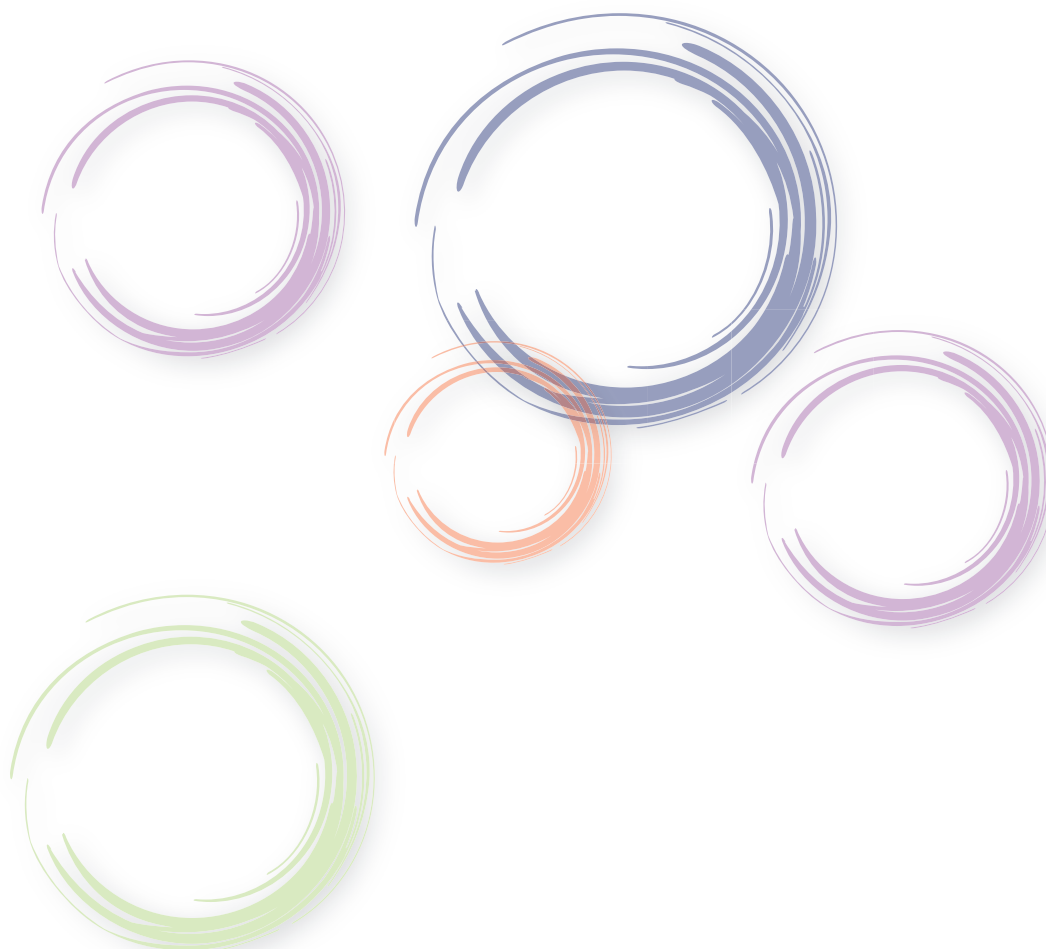
The challenge is to make provision for pupils who are endowed with special educational needs so that any gifts or talents are identified and nurtured. The work undertaken by the Youth Sport Trust provides a clear example of how pupils with additional needs can be supported and enabled to excel in sport. They employ clear principles which can be applied in all other areas of the curriculum. The Youth Sport Trust manages the gifted and talented strand of the government's Physical Education, School, Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy. Further information on this programme can be found on their website: www.talentladder.org.uk

A clear focus on learning attributes will promote pupils' self-esteem and increase the success rate of interventions. Such a focus can help target interventions and lead to a diversification of learning and teaching methods, resulting in higher attainment and increased engagement by pupils. An effective tool for identification is an analysis of provision. Schools have found that looking at the provision for pupils identified with a SEN may reveal that much of it is geared towards addressing the disability, with little or no opportunity for the pupil to reveal their abilities.

For example, a pupil identified with Asperger's syndrome may express a personal preference for using ICT. This then may be the predominant means by which the pupil is allowed to express learning, thus precluding opportunities for other learning skills and approaches to develop.

The National Strategies provide guidance on provision mapping in the Leading on intervention materials, and an example of such an approach is outlined in Appendix 1.
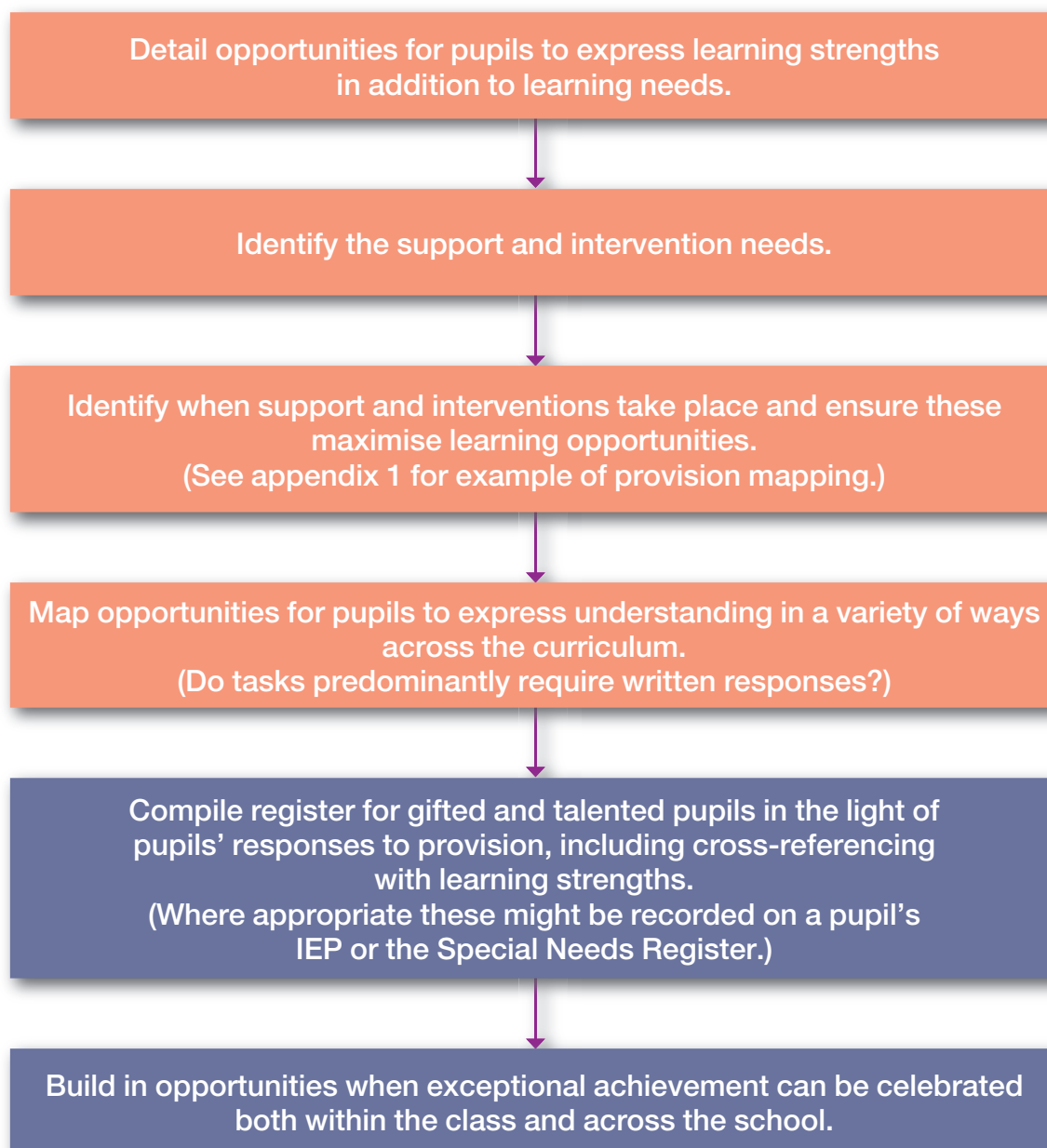
Planning provision

What steps does the school need to take?

The following represents examples of practice already in place in many schools and may be adapted and amended as appropriate.

Detail opportunities for pupils to express learning strengths in addition to learning needs.

↓

Identify the support and intervention needs.

↓

Identify when support and interventions take place and ensure these maximise learning opportunities.
(See appendix 1 for example of provision mapping.)

↓

Map opportunities for pupils to express understanding in a variety of ways across the curriculum.
(Do tasks predominantly require written responses?)

↓

Compile register for gifted and talented pupils in the light of pupils' responses to provision, including cross-referencing with learning strengths.
(Where appropriate these might be recorded on a pupil's IEP or the Special Needs Register.)

↓

Build in opportunities when exceptional achievement can be celebrated both within the class and across the school.

What questions should the school ask when compiling its G&T register to help identify pupils at risk of underachievement?

Prompts	Comments
Is there a shared understanding of underachievement?	
Is there a shared understanding of what constitutes additional educational need such as SEN?	
Is there a shared understanding of dual or multiple exceptionality?	
What opportunities have been provided for staff to reach a common understanding of dual or multiple exceptionality?	
Does the Inclusion policy or the Policy for gifted and talented pupils provide guidance on dual or multiple exceptionality?	
Is there an Intervention Policy? Is this cross-referenced with policies for SEN and gifted and talented?	
How are the Institutional Quality Standards used to support provision and identification?	
Is there opportunity for identification of gifted and talented pupils through provision? How do you know?	
What account has been taken of pupil voice?	
Is there a balance of tasks in all lessons (for example, written-verbal, written-artistic expression)?	
What support is required by the staff?	
What are the training needs of staff?	

Identification through provision

In this section a series of questions and prompts are listed which are specific to particular pupils. These have been used by schools to support interventions and provision. These prompts are consistent with the development of personalised learning approaches and can be used in conjunction with the Institutional Quality Standards for gifted and talented provision.

Use of the prompts and questions is likely to have the greatest impact when the school creates an expectation that the whole community will share the responsibility to study the needs, met and unmet, of pupils with DME as part of a whole-school approach to improving provision and outcomes.

The list overleaf is not exhaustive. It is intended to bridge the identification process with provision. It is helpful to explore the range of opportunities that pupils have to express their understanding.

Working with individual pupils - incorporating pupil voice in provision

As part of a whole-school focus on dual exceptionality the following represents a series of prompts which may be used as and when appropriate to assist with pupil-specific work in the classroom. These prompts may be used to ensure that the pupils' views of their own learning strengths and needs are incorporated into provision.

Prompts	Comments
Which times of the day are most productive for this pupil?	
Which lessons are most productive?	
Which parts of the lessons (for example, plenaries) are most productive?	
What account has been taken of the pupil's view of school, learning, preferred method of expressing understanding?	
What account has been taken of the parents' or carers' view of the pupil's learning capabilities?	
In which lessons are the pupil's difficulties most evident?	
What is the nature of these difficulties?	
Are there any other times of the day (for example, break times) in which the pupil's difficulties are made most evident?	
In the different subjects how many different ways are currently used to record answers?	
How many involve non-written methods?	
What account has been taken of the parents' or carers' view of pupils' learning capabilities?	
How would this pupil describe his or her self-esteem?	
Does the pupil have an agreed vision about his or her educational future?	
Does the pupil have a mentor, advocate or a key worker at school?	
Does the pupil offer mentoring or tutoring to other pupils?	
Is this seen as effective and valued?	
Is this pupil encouraged to take risks, with opportunities to fail?	
Are expectations appropriate across the curriculum?	
Is homework appropriate?	
Is assistive technology used effectively?	
What learning targets have been set and are these realistic, shared and valued?	
Does this pupil have a challenging curriculum, promoting higher-order thinking skills through differentiated tasks and questioning?	
What are the opportunities for independent learning?	
What contribution can out-of-school interests make to learning opportunities within the curriculum?	
Are this pupil's gifts and talents celebrated appropriately at school and in the community?	

Conclusion

The intention of this guidance has been to raise awareness of the issues relating to dual or multiple exceptionality and highlight current practice which is contributing to positive provision for gifted and talented pupils. Strategies which help prevent underachievement for this group of pupils have been highlighted. In the introduction responses were invited from schools and settings to contribute to the developing body of knowledge, understanding and effective practice in relation to pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities.

The National Strategies will be working with schools and settings to draw this body of knowledge together and provide schools within the next twelve months with materials which highlight best practice and support all schools in the identification and provision of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities. If you would like to contribute, please contact:
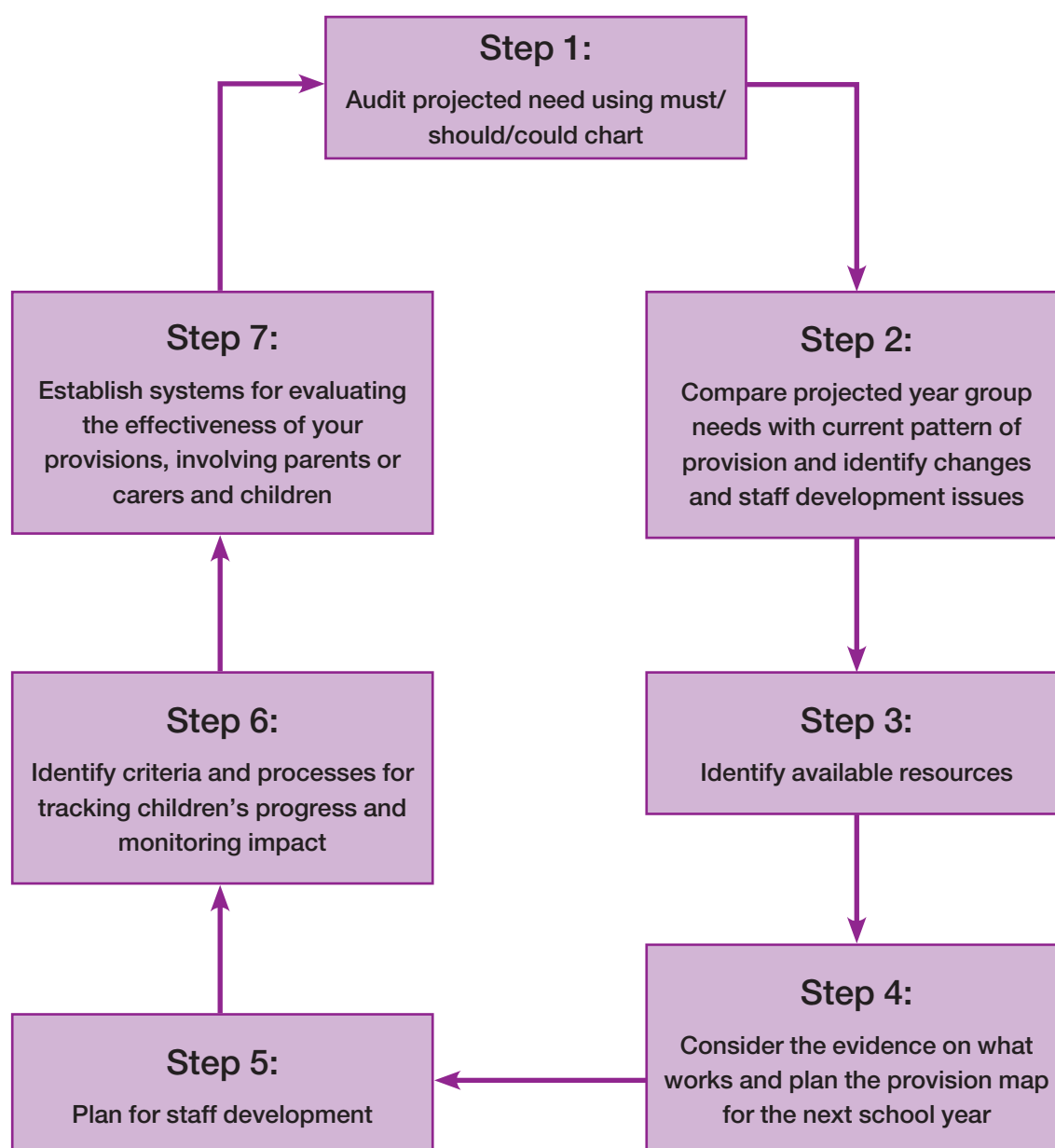
giftedandtalented@capita.co.uk

Appendices

Appendix 1

Provision map from National Strategies Leading on Intervention

Planning effective provision

Step 1:

Audit projected need using must/should/could chart

Step 7:

Establish systems for evaluating the effectiveness of your provisions, involving parents or carers and children

Step 2:

Compare projected year group needs with current pattern of provision and identify changes and staff development issues

Step 6:

Identify criteria and processes for tracking children's progress and monitoring impact

Step 3:

Identify available resources

Step 5:

Plan for staff development

Step 4:

Consider the evidence on what works and plan the provision map for the next school year

Appendix 2

Characteristics of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities who are bored

The following characteristics can apply to pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities. They may provide indicators of underachievement.

- Poor attention and daydreaming when bored.

- Low tolerance for persistence on tasks that seem irrelevant.

- Begin many projects, see few to completion.

- Development of judgment lags behind intellectual growth.

- Intensity may lead to power struggles with authorities.

- High activity level; may need less sleep.

- Difficulty restraining desire to talk; may be disruptive.

- Question rules, customs, and traditions.

- Lose work, forget homework, are disorganised.

- May appear careless.

- Highly sensitive to criticism.

- Do not exhibit problem behaviours in all situations.

- More consistent levels of performance at a fairly consistent pace.

Cline, 1999; Webb & Latimer, 1993

Appendix 3

Examples of approaches adopted by schools

Many schools have found the following approaches helpful when identifying and nurturing the gifts or talents of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities.

- Include pupils with additional learning needs in the initial screening phase for giftedness or talent.
- Be willing to accept unconventional indicators of intellectual talent.
- Look beyond test scores.
- Do not aggregate subtest scores into a composite score.
- Compare with others who have similar additional learning needs.
- Focus on the characteristics that enable the child to compensate effectively for the additional learning needs.
- Strongly highlight the areas of performance unaffected by the additional learning needs.
- Allow the pupil to participate in gifted programmes on a trial basis, incorporating the pupil's view at each stage of the programme.

Teachers have found the following prompts useful when considering interventions and support.

- Be aware of the powerful role of language; reduce communication limitations and develop alternative modes for thinking and communicating.
- Emphasise high-level abstract thinking, creativity and a problem-solving approach.
- Have great expectations: these children often become successful as adults in fields requiring advanced education.
- Provide for individual pacing in areas of giftedness.
- Provide challenging activities at an advanced level.
- Promote active inquiry, experimentation and discussion.
- Promote self-direction.
- Offer options that enable pupils to use strengths and preferred ways of learning.
- Use intellectual strengths to develop coping strategies.
- Assist in strengthening the pupil's self-image.
- Take account of classroom dynamics.
- Facilitate acceptance; model and demand respect for all.
- Model celebration of individual differences.

Appendix 4

Support for continuing professional development

The following activities have been used to support continuing professional development (CPD) focused on dual or multiple exceptionality. Schools may find these useful in planning their own development.

- Create a support network for work focused on provision and outcomes for pupils with DME which utilises the collective skills and expertise to be found in both mainstream and special schools.
- Produce a DME statement for the school showing who does what, where, when and how.
- Setting targets for implementation of new DME planning.
- Identify and report any barriers to progress for pupils with DME.
- Use the National Quality Standards for G&T Education to help focus on pupils with DME.
- Compile and publish a few case studies of successful intervention with pupils with DME.
- Devise a pupil voice programme for DME pupils.
- Compile a portfolio of evidence which supports the reduction of underachievement for pupils with DME.
- Devise strategies which celebrate the accomplishments of pupils with DME.
- Set up leadership and mentorship programmes for pupils with DME.
- Research how pupils with DME are identified before school entry.
- Carry out a comprehensive skills and needs audit of pupils with DME.
- Plan for pupils with DME to demonstrate competence other than by traditional means.
- Mapping ICT use by pupils with DME and evaluating its effectiveness.
- List and publicise strategies that staff have found to work more effectively with pupils with DME.
- List and publicise strategies that staff find less helpful with pupils with DME.
- Focused work in plenaries which involves asking questions of pupils with DME.
  - What did you learn?
  - How did you learn it?
  - Why did you learn it?
  - How have we helped you learn it?

  Evaluate the responses.

Appendix 5

Intervention: a school audit of provision on dual or multiple exceptionality

Using the IQS to audit provision for pupils with dual or multiple exceptionality

Example: using Institutional Quality Standards (IQS) to audit provision for DME. The following represents questions that could be asked when using the Quality Standards to ensure that the needs of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionality are met. The questions provide a guide and can be amended and adapted as appropriate. Three elements have been selected (1, 4 and 10). However all elements can be used to audit provision for pupils with multiple or dual exceptionality.

The complete IQS are available from: http://www2.teachernet.gov.uk/QualityStandards/

Generic Element	Entry	Developing	Exemplary
10. Staff development	Staff have received professional development in meeting the needs of the gifted and talented cohort. *Have all staff an understanding of issues relating to dual and multiple exceptionality? Has there been dedicated meeting or training time?*	The induction programme for new staff addresses gifted and talented issues. *Are new staff supported in the provision of personalised learning approaches for pupils with dual or multiple exceptionality?*	There is an ongoing audit of staff needs. *Are staff encouraged to incorporate meeting the needs of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionality into a structured CPD programme? Are all staff encouraged and enabled to share expertise on pupils with dual or multiple exceptionality?*
4. Enabling curriculum entitlement and choice	Curriculum organisation is flexible with opportunities for enrichment and increasing subject/topic choice. Pupils are provided with support and guidance in making choices. *In how many different ways can pupils with additional learning needs express their understanding within a subject, allowing for the development of expertise within a subject or topic?*	The curriculum offers opportunities and guidance to pupils which enable them to work beyond their age and/or phase. *Does the curriculum allow for specialised interests or particular interests of pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities and incorporate interests and achievements outside the classroom?*	The curriculum has personalised learning pathways for pupils to maximize their potential beyond examination requirements. *How are the exceptional abilities or learning strengths incorporated in subject areas where pupils have additional learning needs? How are pupils supported in the processes which enable exceptional achievement to take place?*
iii	The identified gifted and talented population broadly reflects the school/college's social and economic composition, gender and ethnicity. *Does the identified gifted and talented population include a representative cohort from those identified as having additional learning needs?*	Identification systems address issues of multiple exceptionality. *Is there whole school agreement on what constitutes dual or multiple exceptionality? Is this reflected in the school's policy and provision?*	Identification processes are regularly reviewed and refreshed in the light of pupil performance and value added data? *Do the identification processes represent and support a fully personalised approach to learning for all pupils including those with dual or multiple exceptionalities?*
ii	An accurate record of the identified gifted and talented population is kept and updated. *Does the accurate record contain information about learning strengths and additional needs?*	The record is used to identify underachievement and exceptional achievement. *Does the record include details of provision and allow for exceptional achievement to be celebrated and highlighted?*	The record is supported by a comprehensive monitoring progress. *Does the record draw together best practice for pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities from across the setting/school/college.*
1. Identification (i)	The school/college has learning conditions and systems to identify gifted and talented pupils in all year groups and an agreed definition and shared understanding. *Is there an ethos which promotes achievement in all pupils and structures which help identify and prevent underachievement?*	Individual pupils are screened annually against clear criteria. *Do the criteria include pupils with dual or multiple exceptionalities?*	Multiple criteria and sources of evidence are used to identify gifts and talents through the use of a broad range of quantitative and qualitative data. *Have all groups with additional needs been considered when identifying gifts and talents? Is there a clear policy on mapping provision to ensure pupils have an opportunity to express gifts or talents?*

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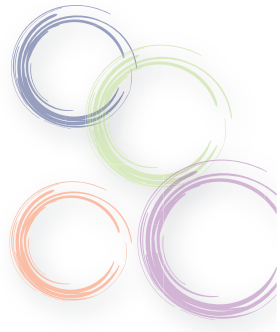
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