



nace ● **essentials**
guide

More Able,
Gifted and
Talented
Education

Guide 2

The Essential Guide for the informed
beginning teacher

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Guide 2

The Essential Guide for the informed beginning teacher

Introduction

As a beginning teacher you will be excited by the prospect of entering your Induction Year and taking responsibility for your own class/classes. At the same time, you may feel that there are a number of areas that will demand your attention and often these include developing your understanding of and your skills in meeting the more individual needs of pupils.

This 'Essential Guide' will help you to understand what's expected of you and help you to establish yourself as a confident teacher for pupils with particular strengths and abilities, providing you with responses to such questions as:

- Why is it important to meet the needs of more able pupils?
- How do I get started?
- Who are the more able pupils in my class?
- What are the regional and national expectations?
- What are the learning needs of able pupils in my class?
- What progress and goals should I expect?
- Underachieving able pupils – who are they?
- How do I communicate with parents and carers?
- Where do I get more information about A,G&T?



The informed beginning teacher

Every teacher, no matter how experienced, will be concerned about meeting the needs of all their pupils to try to ensure that they all make appropriate progress.

For the beginning teacher the desire to understand and provide for pupils of differing abilities can seem challenging. In particular, identifying and meeting the needs of the ablest of pupils in every day lessons can sometimes feel daunting.

Sections in this Essential Guide are linked to the Professional Standards for Qualified Teachers and Induction Standards or Core Standards that beginning teachers need to meet by the end of their Induction Year. This may help you to prepare or review your Career Entry Development Profile (CEDP) at transition points, or to structure a portfolio of evidence to support your professional learning journey towards gaining QTS.

Standard 1

'Set high expectations which inspire, motivate and challenge pupils'

Standard 2

'Adapt teaching to respond to the strengths and needs of all pupils'

Identifying and meeting the needs of the ablest of pupils in every day lessons can sometimes feel daunting.





You will have already discovered that every class has pupils who need high levels of challenge on a daily basis. Without that stimulus in lessons able pupils are denied the opportunity to succeed and achieve in the same way as others. As a result, pupils can become disinterested and occasionally disruptive, failing to make better than expected progress. In a secure learning environment where the teacher has high expectations and creates regular opportunities for stretch and challenge, able pupils will contribute to making learning exciting for themselves, the rest of the class and you. This often helps to raise everyone's expectations and contributes to an atmosphere where all learners are seeking to improve and 'go the extra mile'.

Demonstrating a commitment to meeting the needs of able pupils may help to support you in meeting Professional Standards for QTS (Q Standards) Q1, 2 & 3 and Core Standards C1, 3, 16 & 22.

Every class has pupils who need high levels of challenge on a daily basis.

Getting started: A,G&T survival guide

The first step is to find out who has the responsibility for 'able, gifted and talented' (A,G&T) learners in your school. Remember it may be more than one person. Talk to them to gain an overview of main methods and criteria for the identification of able pupils.

In your role as a trainee or Newly Qualified Teacher it will be essential to gain the following information:

- Who are the able pupils in your class/classes?
- Have parents and carers of A,G&T pupils in your class been informed that their child is deemed to have high ability?
- Are such parents and carers involved in discussions about their child's progress and achievement?
- How frequently does the school monitor and track A,G&T learners, along with how and where is this recorded, and by whom?

Ask for a copy of the school's most recent A,G&T policy. Read this and ask for clarification regarding your immediate responsibilities as you settle into your new role.

(Supporting Q and Core Standard 20)



Who are the more able pupils in my class?

Reflect on the learners in your class: who do you consider to be more able or have the potential to achieve highly?

How do you know?

What terminology do you use in your school to describe very able learners?

(Q standards 3b, 10, 19, 7 & 8; C standard 20)

You may have drawn on evidence from a variety of sources to support you in addressing these questions, such as observation of pupils, assessment, data and transfer documentation. You may also have found that it is a challenge to describe a clear rationale for identifying pupils.

Nationally, schools were once asked to define their own A,G&T populations. Over the last few years this has influenced the way that schools chose to identify and define their A,G&T cohorts.

This means that there will be variation between schools about the number of higher ability pupils identified. Ofsted uses terms 'more able' and 'highly able' to define cohorts of such pupils on the basis of attainment in public tests.

What's in school to help me?

The majority of schools have set some guidelines for the identification of A,G&T pupils, along with the shared terminology that staff in school are expected to use to describe pupils in this group. You'll usually find this in your school's A,G&T policy or other related policy. Remember that schools are all at differing stages of development. Some organisations will have clear guidelines for identification, whilst others will be more fluid, encouraging you to draw on a range of evidence, including your own professional judgement.

What are the main sources of information for me to draw upon?

Your school's policy statement will usually suggest the main sources of evidence to use to support identification of pupils, such as:

- Noticing above age related performance in quantitative and quantitative testing
- Prior attainment data
- Observation from teachers and also support staff, parents or carers and peers
- Subject specific criteria perhaps representing high levels of cognitive ability or key skills
- Other cognitive ability or learning behaviours such as demonstrating a high level of mental agility in problem solving or high levels of motivation.

Generally accepted good practice is that identification of able pupils is determined broadly, drawing on a range of sources, through moderating judgements with other colleagues and observing performance and learning traits over a period of time.

One of the most important ways to spot ability and talent is to provide opportunities for children to reveal them. Provision is therefore a key means of identifying learning and potential.

What are the regional and national expectations for identification?



Do ask the A,G&T Co-ordinator for an overview of what, if anything, is in place for A,G&T externally, as there may be resources, a network group or training that may interest you. Increasingly though, individual schools or groups of schools are autonomous in this respect.

Over the last few years many schools adapted the previous national guidelines for identification, which were:

'Children or young people with one or more abilities developed to a level of significantly ahead of their year group, or with the potential to develop these abilities' (former DCSF Standards Site 2008).

The then government Department for Schools and Families (DCSF) developed a suite of National Quality Standards for Gifted and Talented Education to guide schools and LAs in this area. These set out expectations for identification. Broadly these are that the school has:

- Systems to identify able pupils in all year groups
- An agreed definition and shared understanding of the meaning of 'able, gifted and talented' within its own, local and national contexts
- An accurate record of the identified pupils is kept and updated
- An identified gifted and talented population that broadly reflects the school's social and economic, gender and ethnicity composition.

In the past DCSF used the following terminology to describe pupils:

'Gifted' refers to those who are able in 'academic' subjects such as Mathematics, French, Science. 'Talented' refers to those who are more able in art, music, drama and PE (former DCSF Standards Site).

Your school may use other terminology and definitions, such as 'able' or higher ability'. The NACE website contains guidance on identification and FAQs which provide a sound basis for policy.

It will be essential for you to find out what the processes, procedures and terminology are in your school. You will need to follow these and adopt the school's approaches.

What are my priorities?

- Find out if any pupils in your class are already identified as 'more able/talented' and what they have been identified for
- Familiarise yourself with the A,G&T policy and learn about main methods of identification
- Find out what 'above age related' or 'significantly ahead' of their year group means in your class, particularly in the light of the new National Curriculum and Assessment arrangements. This may be clearly set out in your school's policy. If you're not sure, seek further advice from an experienced or senior staff member.

Finding out more about the identification of able pupils may support you in meeting Q standards 19, 20, 22, 25 & 28 and C standards 5, 10, 19, 29, 31 & 32.

Familiarise yourself with
the A,G&T policy

More able pupils have a range of individual learning needs but in general A,G&T pupils welcome challenge and often like to take a lead in shaping their own learning. They prefer to work at their own pace (which can be rapid!) and some able pupils will immerse themselves in learning, not wanting to stop or being displeased when the 'independent' learning section of a lesson ends. Able pupils have differing social and emotional needs, some may want to 'show off' their understanding and will need an audience. Others may be quiet and withdrawn and not enjoy being asked to share their abilities with a wider group.

Personalising provision

What do I do to meet the needs of these pupils in my class?

Your first priority will be find out what pupils already know. All pupils need learning or repeated learning to start at their point of readiness but able pupils are particularly frustrated by 'overlearning'. Your main sources of evidence about prior learning could come from testing, pupils' work, transition documentation and talking with other staff. Most importantly, don't be frightened of having a dialogue with pupils.

In general A,G&T pupils welcome challenge and often like to take a lead in shaping their own learning.

Example:

Before devising your medium term or unit plan, consider your school's core requirements for the content of the scheme of work that should be delivered:

1. Early years/Foundation Stage: Create an area in the class to reflect the upcoming focus; observe pupils interacting and playing. What does this tell you about what they already know?
2. KS1/2: Use photos, objects or a trip to immerse pupils – ask 'what do you know about this already? What else would you like to know and investigate?'
3. KS3/4: Pose some enquiry questions for pupils to discuss and debate to reveal their understanding of main points for learning.

Marking work

Encourage pupils to mark their own work before you do. Expect to see some of your agreed success criteria being used as a key benchmarking tool. Pupils can then set out a couple of bullet points for their next steps. For very young pupils do the same thing verbally as part of a learning review within lessons.

What are my priorities?

Gain an overview about what stage of learning pupils are at. There will be a wealth of information in school from data on attainment levels and rates of progress. Check out transition information or tracking data.

Be confident and use your findings to inform and adapt your planning for learners.

Developing your 'assessment' practices to investigate prior learning and understanding in this way may help you with supporting Q standards 11 – 13 and C standards 29b, 31 – 34.



How else can I meet the needs of able pupils in my class?

The most usual strategy is to increase the complexity of subject level difficulty and cognitive difficulty. Your school's schemes of work and assessment policy will provide some key reference points for you.

Are there other forms of differentiation?

By task

Develop open ended approaches to selecting and setting tasks. Taking away some of the instructions or success criteria can 'open' a task. For example, a closed task could be, 'sort these items into ...'. A more open-ended version could be, 'how could you group these?' and 'explain your rationale'.

By outcome

Setting 'must, should and could' differentiated success criteria or learning outcomes can help signpost expectations for learners of differing abilities, whilst maintaining a focus on the same content for the class.

Organisation

Deciding on the optimum organisation for able pupils can be a key concern whilst you are getting to grips with a new class. Draw on your conclusions about pupils' prior understanding to support your choices. A key question to ask could be:

'Does my assessment and analysis show that able pupils need the same starting points for their learning as for the majority of pupils today?'

For example, able pupils could tackle a related 'challenge task' during a lesson introduction. This could be individual, paired or group work.

Explain your expectations for successful learning and perhaps set a time limit related to the length of your lesson introduction. Reviewing the quality of learning during the lesson will help you to decide on the appropriate level of intervention. Depending on lesson content, either expect completion of the challenge task or introduce new concepts for learning to this group. Remember the plenary section of the lesson will provide a good opportunity for pupils to share and summarise learning. Encourage them to comment on how well they learn and why, whether there were any barriers and to say how they could improve or revise their thinking.

Recording

Try challenging pupils to select methods of recording and resources for themselves. Ask them to explain the appropriateness of their choices in learning reviews.

Pupil interest and expertise

Initially draw on findings from assessment and observation to help with choices about differentiation based on pupils' interest and expertise. You can also ask pupils to:

- Set a new challenge from themselves or each other based on 'marking' or self assessment activities
- Research the next area for learning and pose investigation questions for inclusion in your planning
- Self-select a group for problem solving or research, providing a rationale for their choices.

What are my priorities?

Continue to develop assessment and analysis skills so that you make informed decisions about the optimum choices for differentiation. Key questions to ask 'Are able pupils challenged in my lessons? How do I know? What's the evidence? What's the difference this makes?'

Developing your understanding about personalising provision will help you with supporting Q standards 19, 22 & 25 – 29 and C standards 19, 26 & 30.

'Are able pupils challenged in my lessons?
How do I know? What's the evidence?
What's the difference this makes?'

What should I expect of able pupils? What progress should they make?

Able pupils are often high attaining pupils. One signpost is that their performance in standardised or national testing is usually well above age-related expectations and at the highest grading levels.

What are my priorities?

You have an important role in setting 'attainment' targets for pupils. To do this for able pupils in your class, your first step will be to identify and express your expectations for attainment and other learning outcomes. Check that your expectations match the school's and national expectations for 'age related' outcomes for the achievement of pupils in your most able group.

- Ensure that you have information about previous attainment and rates of progress and use this to help you in forming interim targets and 'end of year' targets
- Share these with pupils, so that they are clear about their long term goals
- Think about how you will keep attainment and progress targets 'live' in lessons. Consider how these will be embedded in your short term planning and marking.

The school's A,G&T policy or other related policy may contain guidance regarding the school's definition of 'above age-related performance', particularly in the light of the new National Curriculum and assessment arrangements. If not, consult with the A,G&T co-ordinator or senior member of staff to find out more.

Are there progress measures for able pupils?

National and standardised benchmarking tools provide a recognised and shared approach to monitoring and measuring pupils' progress. Discuss with more experienced colleagues the schools approach to assessment in the light of the new curriculum and assessment arrangements, and with particular reference to 'mastery and depth' and the expectations for high achievement in standardised tests. Remember to consider a range of other progress measures for able pupils that may focus on monitoring the development of cognitive or other abilities.

For example:

- Do your observations show that levels of perseverance are increasing? Do you consider their patience, determination and concentration levels in measuring progress?
- Is there evidence to show that the ability to modify ideas is evolving? For example using self-correction, making adjustments as they go. Is there evidence of an ability to apply learning to unfamiliar situations?
- Do you notice that new levels of creativity and risk taking are developing? For example, forming new and unusual hypotheses; perhaps making novel connections and forming 'out of the box' type solutions
- Supporting you with Q standards 11, 13, 15, & 26 -28 and C standards 11 – 14.

What do I do about underachieving able pupils?

In your class you might already be identifying pupils at risk of underachieving as those who do not make expected progress. You may find it harder to identify 'able' pupils who underachieve. These pupils don't always stand out easily as they may present as making an acceptable level of progress or consistently 'just meet' or just exceed your expectations of outcomes. Look for guidance in your school's policy statement and talk to the A,G&T Co-ordinator or Assessment Co-ordinator in your school to find out more about this in your setting.

How do I know who they are?

Look out for pupils who appear to have the potential to perform more highly than current performance indicates. A good guide can be to look for 'mismatch' in performance and expectations for attainment. Some schools make use of cognitive profiling to assist in this process using high scores and apparent 'low' performance as a benchmark for further investigation. However, cognitive profiling is only one way to seek out certain types of 'mismatches' and good practice is to draw information from a variety of sources.

So you'll need to be able to identify which able pupils are underachieving or at risk of underachieving using a range of methods. Start by forming hypotheses about potential underachievers in your class and then test out your ideas with the A,G&T Co-ordinator or another experienced member of staff.

You might like to think about whether any of your pupils display one or all of these characteristics:

- Rushes through work, just meeting or just exceeding success criteria; inconsistent levels of concentration but may persevere when motivated
- Incomplete work
- Disorganised
- Apparently bored
- Restless and inattentive
- Asks silly or provocative questions
- Shows off
- Quiet, day dreamer, absorbed in their own world.

What else would you add to this list?

Aim to develop confidence in using a range of methods to form conclusions about whether a pupil is underperforming. What pertinent additional information can you gain from observations, dialogue with pupils, marking, formative assessment and your tracking and monitoring of progress?

How do I meet their needs?

Seek further advice from the school's A,G&T Co-ordinator to test your findings and to talk through established school systems.

Other steps may be:

- Talk with the pupil to establish a shared view and understanding of their potential
- Identify areas of strength and interest
- Negotiate short term goals for improvement so that you can re-visit these often in the early stages
- Involve parents/carers and maintain regular contact (see page 11 *Communication with parents and carers*)
- Hold regular reviews of success
- Be positive and maintain a 'solution focused' approach.

Supporting you with Q standards 3b, 4, 5, 12, 19, 20, 25 & 28 Core standards C5, 19, 21, 25, 29, 33 – 35 & 37.

You may find it harder to identify 'able' pupils who underachieve.

Communication with parents and carers

Establishing positive and open communication with parents and carers is a priority for all teachers. To do this a shared understanding about individual pupils' learning is important. If you're about to start a new job, ask if you can attend the next parents' evening to observe alongside the current class teacher.

Before you talk to any parent check your school's policy on how pupils are identified to parents as more able.

How do I build positive and respectful relationships with parents and carers of able pupils?

- Follow the guidance in the policy regarding terminology and definitions – these will be familiar to parents / carers
- Get background information from other staff; find out what level of support some parents / carers may need
- Don't wait until you have a real concern about a pupil to talk with parents / carers; be proactive
- Be certain of the pupil's strengths and successes and be precise and clear about what needs to be developed. Have some practical ideas ready for parents/carers who ask about working at home with their child.

Ask parents/carers if there's anything that they need to support them in working at home with pupils

- Keep a record of your discussion
- If you're concerned, ask if an experienced member of staff can be available nearby
- Parents and carers can often reveal information about their child's 'hidden' abilities at parents' evenings. Take note of these and talk with the A,G&T Co-ordinator.

This information may help you shape your future planning.

Some FAQs from parents' evenings

How are you meeting the needs of my son/daughter? Shouldn't my child be taught separately?

Information from the personalisation and differentiation sections may help you here.

They always finish their homework too quickly, can't they have some extra work?

Check if this is the case. Explore together the potential for breadth and extension in homework tasks.

Supporting you with Q standards 4 – 6 and core standards C4a-c, 5, 20 & 25.



Where to obtain more information about A,G&T?

NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education) is a national education charity. Established in 1983, NACE is at the forefront of providing high quality support for teachers, leading to proven impact on outcomes for more able pupils.

NACE experts have been involved in the writing and production of materials commissioned by the English and Welsh governments and have represented NACE on a number of government advisory bodies.

We are a membership led organisation, although schools can access a number of our services without becoming members. Benefits at a glance:

- Access to a community of experts
- Potential to link with other members: share good practice and network
- Online support 24/7 via the Members' zone on the website: full of information, guidance and resources
- Unique access to NACE Essentials:
 - » Guides: focusing on key aspects of provision and practice for A,G&T
 - » Policy Bites: NACE's response to topical policy and curriculum developments
 - » Case Studies: showcasing excellent provision and practice.

- Professional development support for INSET days and discount on NACE events
- Access to The NACE Challenge Award Framework
- Regular E-bulletin and termly good practice Insight newsletter
- National competitions for your students

Website: www.nace.co.uk

Email: membership@nace.co.uk

Useful publications to get you started:

The NACE Essential series resources (free online to NACE members). Practical guidance for developing your teaching practice for A,G&T.



What to do now

From this Essential Guide you have an overview of A,G&T now.

- Set aside some time to orientate yourself and gain key information about your setting
- Find out who leads A,G&T in your school and arrange a time to meet with them
- Read the school's A,G&T policy before the meeting if you can
- Use information from the policy and this Essential Guide (pages 4 &5) to help structure the questions you want to ask
- Use this understanding to help structure a personal action plan for your new role.

Consider including the following areas in your plan:

Identified groups: Find out which pupils are already identified as A,G&T, why they've been identified and the nature of any current provisions for them in school.

Planning for your first class: View any existing Schemes of Work /generic planning. Use the information from this Essential Guide (pages 5 & 6) to help you in identifying what key information is already in place to help you to shape learning experiences that will meet the needs of the able learners.

Working with parents: In a handover meeting or as part of your training meeting with your host teacher remember to ask for information about how the school involves parents and carers (page 11).

Identify areas for further support: A,G&T may be part of your Career Entry and Development Profile (CEDP) but still aim to plan time to talk with your host teacher or Induction Tutor about reviewing and developing your practice. Consider other ways that you may be able to develop your skills, perhaps ask about receiving coaching and mentoring from a Head of Department or observing and sharing planning with another experienced team member.

And finally: at this point in your career you'll be looking forward to consolidating learning from your Initial Teacher Training and taking full responsibility for guiding the learning of your pupils. This Essential Guide will continue to support you during your Induction Year as you work towards successfully meeting the needs of able learners.

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Series Editor

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Hilary Lowe has written, advised and presented widely on the education of more able pupils. She led a major national professional development programme for Gifted and Talented Co-ordinators and has designed national training and guidance materials. She is currently an Education Adviser with NACE.



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Registered Charity No.327230

Company No: 0660 4325