

## **NACE: National Association for Able Children in Education**

**Feedback for Sue Hackman, Chief Adviser on School Standards,**

Dept for Children, Schools and Families

**from NACE 9<sup>th</sup> National Conference for Local Authorities**

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### **General points:**

1. We need to know the differences / patterns between those G&T learners who show good progress compared to those who slow down or get stuck e.g. FSM, DME, % of sample received additional funding in areas of deprivation etc. Only then can we identify the real issues.
2. Some able pupils have fixed ideas about what work is
3. Which factors are having the greatest influence on progress? Internal – personality – propensity to take risks or external – social – school?
4. Children are disengaged because they do not see the point of what they are doing – need the 'bigger picture'. Hung up by procedures – good for the school and not good for the pupil. Need an understanding of skills
5. School ethos and leadership are likely to affect rates of progress and would not tend to be raised by pupils in these sorts of studies.
6. Similarities in G&T learners and teachers on the 'Leading from the Middle' courses. The key learning happens when the learner (teacher or G&T learner) recognises their 'style' of leadership, learning, attitudes etc.
1. How will the new approach to assessments (when pupils are ready etc) sit comfortably with the expectation that pupils will make two levels of progress in a key stage? E.g. if a G&T pupil attains L7 in Y6 where are they expected to get to at the end of KS4? – assuming the different KS curriculum objectives are flexible enough for pupils to accelerate through levels
2. There is an issue of trust between primary and secondary teachers with a view to levels of attainment. There is a problem of the 'disappeared' G&T pupils – 'missed' in Y7 and then again in Y8
3. Make the tests more appropriate!
4. Sub-divide the levels officially – you need to use points
5. Focus is too heavily on the TASK – focus should come from the variety of ways to arrive at answers – teaching strategies
6. Too much focus on teaching to levels and not enough on skills
7. Main focus on levels rather than learners and learning
8. No mention of the broad and rich curriculum – where will it leave the creative curriculum
9. Will the new assessment system put a limit on gifted children? Danger of it becoming the curriculum
10. Is there a paradox between SH's message re research from gifted pupils indicating resentment at working harder i.e. puritan work ethic YET this is exactly the strategy that educators are expected to use to raise 'standards'
11. Are the lowest 20% improving because we are using Bloom's taxonomy to set differentiated tasks with children and letting them choose with many choosing higher tasks?
12. L3 KS1 drop in figures – reticence to give a L3 because of the value added
13. PASS surveys really useful in identifying 'fragile' learners
14. The celebrity culture should be linked to achievement e.g. Josie Long the comedian went to Oxford to read English before embarking on the comedy circuit!
15. Self Actualisation – if you leave it to the last moment then lack of time covers our shortfalls!
16. Risk avoidance – important links to the SEAL agenda

17. Confidence is a big issue – self belief. Some teachers have perceptions that G&T pupils have ‘problems’
18. Accepting and knowing how to fail – it is OK!
19. KS3 tests do not cater for able children who are thinking outside the box
20. Issue of subject knowledge – especially at upper KS2 – how are able scientists, able historians supported?
21. Transition of G&T primary to secondary – what happens to those identified at primary and then not at secondary
22. Danger that the National Strategy focus is ‘dumbing’ down G&T – emphasis is on underachievement but the agenda is broader – what about the excitement / enrichment for the G&T that do achieve?
23. Interrogating data with teachers – availability of pupil level data and 2 levels of progress is supportive to the progression of able pupils – teachers have to think about this
24. Teachers need to understand progression
25. G&T treading water at KS3 e.g. science KS3 homework – worksheets – dumbing down
26. Identification of G&T for the register – very ambiguous and schools worry about it – need to ask questions about who is and who is not on the register
27. Post 16 agenda – quality of teachers at AL. Progression KS4-KS5 not addressed
28. Lack of focus on key skills (literacy) and thinking skills and more on content prevents transference across the curriculum – KS3 cross curricular needed
29. Pupil / student voice is key!
30. Primary pedagogy to feed into secondary thinking
31. What about TALENT!

### **English:**

1. Writing – KS2 Tasks: Children love writing stories but tasks are always non-fiction about predictable topics – the environment, writing a letter of complaint, writing a leaflet about your school. This is too dull for many able pupils.
2. Parents often ask for advice on suitable texts – not wanting their children to go on to inappropriate ‘teenage’ reading too soon
3. Are there some schools with teachers / headteachers who don’t really have a passion for reading. So much harder to share that passion with pupils. In one school pupils were paid £1 each time they read one of the teachers ‘favourite’ books!
4. Why do they like writing at home? – choice, draw pictures to stimulate, solitary activity so they like doing it on their own, constrained by school, formulaic at school, some tasks are boring more time at home, no disruptive behaviour at home. Need for flexibility in the timetable to take account of this
5. Some success with pairing bright Y5 with Y10 / Y11 in debating skills – mixing the ages as well as the learning
6. Progression in English may be hampered by EAL and mobility so the national picture may not be reflected in individual LAs
7. Literacy is an issue at KS3 because the tasks are too defined – writing as scientists / historians
8. The use of technology has improved reading standards for some. Are teachers giving up on computer usage too early – passive attitude to ICT. Can we harness it to support reading – need both books and ICT. We do not teach pupils to program. Are books becoming obsolete?

### **Mathematics:**

1. KS2 – teachers need to have confidence to be very open ended and play with number. Many do not have this confidence. The KS2 test papers are full of reasoning – children need to understand this as well as the maths concepts
2. Fewer fast movers in maths- why? Too much energy into writing? Not often asked for extra stretch material in maths

### **Praise:**

1. Work of Dweck on praise is important – use of ‘wise’ praise – praising the work not the person helps to avoid risk averse pupils
2. Praise used by all for all in the classroom – careful use of it as a tool for engagement. It should not be discriminatory.
3. G&T learners need critical evaluation of their work and respect
4. Answers in relation to praise need more exploration
5. P4C helps children who are reluctant to speak and engage

### **Homework:**

1. G&T learners need this to be purposeful. One Oxfordshire school is trying to differentiate homework by applying Bloom’s taxonomy and posing questions according to each of the levels of the hierarchy to different ability groups of pupils.
2. Should we debate the ‘type’ of homework we are giving? G&T learners are demonstrating the type of things they are interested in – ‘traditional’ homework is now outdated, needs re-thinking in line with pupils’ interests, social changes etc. Often homework is unchecked – so why bother doing it?
3. Link homework to AfL – clear objectives, clear success criteria – pupils need to see the point! – it becomes their ‘own learning’ not homework. Need to look at the type of homework set and the purpose. Is it only being set because it has to be done – the agenda of the SLT? To appease parents?
4. Do teachers feel free to be creative? E.g. tapping in to what children are interested in e.g. using Podcasts – made by students on what is happening in class – posted on website to help other students / or younger children
5. Does the attitude towards homework vary with age?
6. Are there homework facilities in school
7. We should ask – ‘Why do they not want the homework? How many homeworks are personal?’
8. Perhaps more private study time at home/school – perhaps we should be building this in from Y7 – we do develop independence – too much spoonfeeding
9. Some good examples in schools e.g. linked to school website – need to collect good examples.
10. Is the name the issue? Perhaps it should be called ‘Home LEARNING’
11. Parents not helping because of fear of confusing their children

Collated by Sue Mordecai, President of NACE: National Association for Able Children in Education  
 February 2008 NACE National Office 01865 861879 [info@nace.co.uk](mailto:info@nace.co.uk)  
**www.nace.co.uk**