Identifying gifted and talented learners – getting started

(Revised May 2008)

department for
children, schools and families

This is the second edition of core guidance on the identification of gifted and talented learners, and provides an update to initial guidance published in 2006. It is intended as a starting point for schools; further information can be accessed on the Young Gifted and Talented (YG&T) website and via the web-links provided at the end of this booklet. In issuing this guidance we seek to support schools in developing good practice in identification, particularly in relation to under-achieving gifted and talented learners, and those groups who are not traditionally well-represented in gifted and talented populations. We are aware that our collective understanding of what constitutes ability is still evolving. We are keen to share effective practice and would welcome hearing from schools about strategies you adopt to address issues encountered within your particular context.

Government policy on identification of gifted and talented learners

DCSF defines the group supported by the National Programme for gifted and talented education as:

"Children and young people with one or more abilities developed to a level significantly ahead of their year group (or with the potential to develop those abilities)."

We encourage schools in identifying gifted and talented learners to focus on:

- learners aged 11 – 19 who meet the published eligibility criteria for the top 5% nationally (available at **http://ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/Content. aspx?contentId=312&contentType=3**) including those who were members of the former National Academy for Gifted and Talented Youth (NAGTY), and others who meet the criteria;
- in addition, learners aged 4 – 19 who are gifted and talented relative to their peers in their own year group and school/college;
- a range of abilities including talent in the arts and sport; and
- ability rather than achievement, so that underachievers are amongst those identified.

There are gifted and talented learners in every year group in every school/college. All institutions are free to determine the size of their gifted and talented populations, but should be able to justify this in terms of improved standards for all learners identified. Every school/college should have some gifted and talented learners and should keep a register of those learners. Since relative ability changes over time, learners should move on and off the register when appropriate, though such movement might be expected to reduce with age. Since ability is evenly distributed throughout the population, a school's or college's gifted and talented population should be broadly representative of the whole learner population in terms of gender, ethnic and socio-economic background.

This guidance booklet:

- starts from the principle that there is no single perfect instrument for identification – institutions are advised to use a 'best fit' model that draws on a range of evidence including qualitative and quantitative elements;
- argues that identification and provision are inseparable, because identification includes spotting potential through participation in learning opportunities; and
- envisages a continuous cyclical process of identification and review rather than a one-off process.

The National Register – first announced in the 2005 White Paper 'Higher Standards: Better Schools for All' – is an amalgamation of all maintained schools' gifted and talented registers (submitted through School Census returns) and Key Stage results.

Over time, it will develop to:

- enable analysis of the national gifted and talented population – or any subset of it – by reference to all data held in the National Pupil Database and the database of the YG&T Learner Academy; and
- support the identification of learners who are not currently part of their school's gifted and talented population though they might be performing at broadly the same level.

The Institutional Quality Standards (IQS)

The Institutional Quality Standards (IQS) are designed to support schools through a cyclical process of self-review and planning to improve the various aspects of gifted and talented provision, including identification. Below are the standards that apply specifically to identification. The IQS is a self-evaluation tool, which links well with the self-evaluation form (SEF) and whole school improvement. It is based on the 5 elements of the Personalisation Framework with 14 themes and three 3 levels of competence to assist schools in self-diagnosis.

- Entry level is pitched to be within the reach of almost all schools – satisfactory.
- Developing level is designed for schools working towards exemplary provision – good.
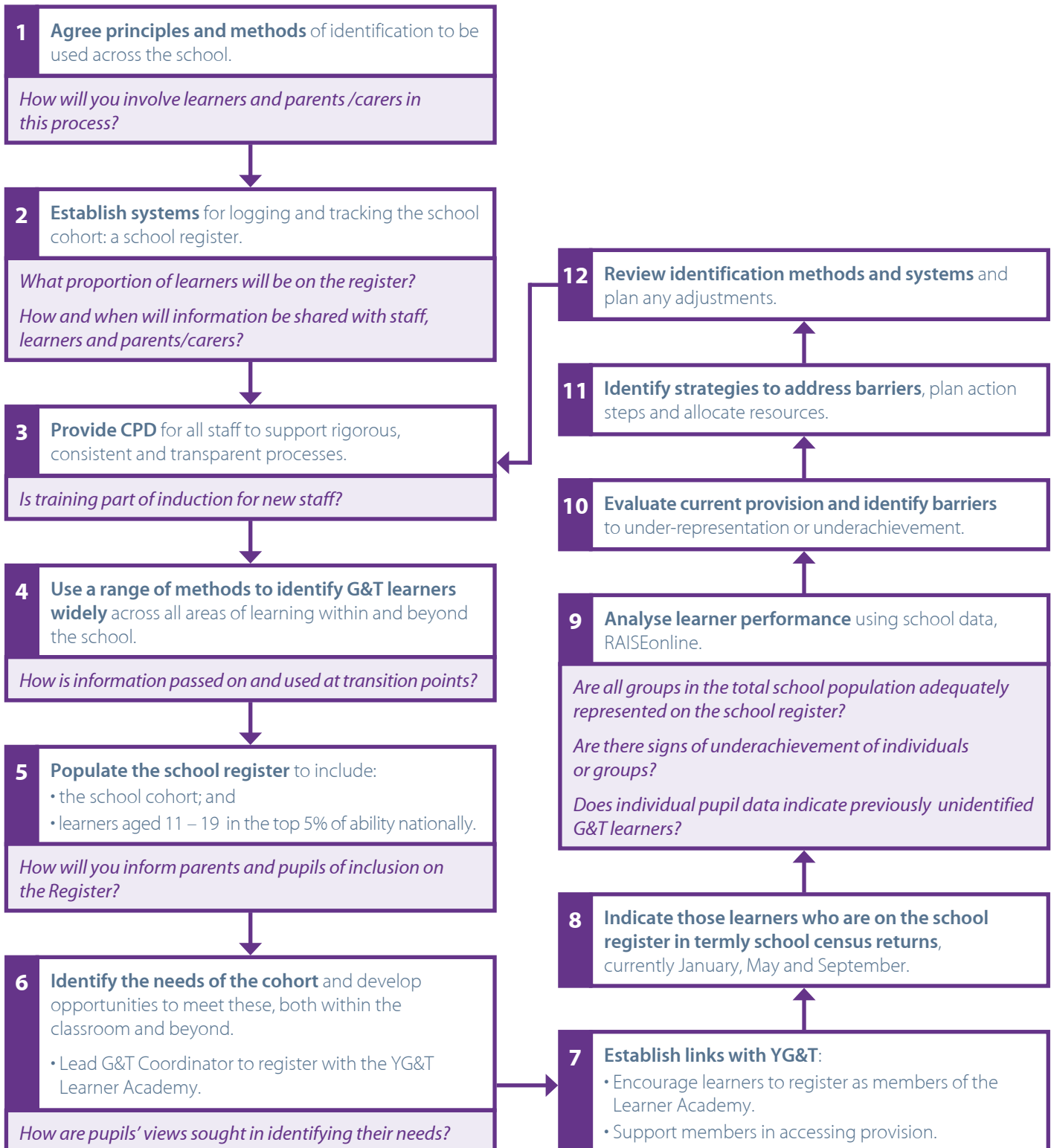- Exemplary level is demonstrating excellent practice – outstanding.

Entry	- 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 of the meaning of 'gifted and talented' within its own, local and national contexts. - An accurate record of the identified gifted and talented population is kept and updated. - The identified gifted and talented population broadly reflects the school/college's social and economic composition, gender and ethnicity.
Developing	- Individual pupils are screened annually against clear criteria at school/college and subject/topic level. - The record is used to identify under-achievement and exceptional achievement (both within and outside the population) and to track/review pupil progress. - Identification systems address issues of multiple exceptionality (pupils with specific gifts/talents and special educational needs).
Exemplary	- Multiple criteria and sources of evidence are used to identify gifts and talents, including through the use of a broad range of quantitative and qualitative data. - The record is supported by a comprehensive monitoring, progress planning and reporting system which all staff regularly share and contribute to. - Identification processes are regularly reviewed and refreshed in the light of pupil performance and value-added data. The gifted and talented population is fully representative of the school/college's population.

Classroom Quality Standards (CQS)

A set of Classroom Quality Standards (CQS) is available to support classroom practitioners in developing effective provision, including teaching and learning strategies which support the identification of gifted and talented learners.

Institution-wide identification processes

Identification should be an on-going process, feeding directly into the planning of personalised provision for learners. It will also, however, need to feed into the annual review of policy and practice and be an integral part of the wider school improvement cycle. The flow chart below shows how this might happen. (See also Prompts for Identification within the Classroom on page 8).

1 **Agree principles and methods** of identification to be used across the school.

How will you involve learners and parents /carers in this process?

2 **Establish systems** for logging and tracking the school cohort: a school register.

What proportion of learners will be on the register?

How and when will information be shared with staff, learners and parents/carers?

3 **Provide CPD** for all staff to support rigorous, consistent and transparent processes.

Is training part of induction for new staff?

4 **Use a range of methods to identify G&T learners widely** across all areas of learning within and beyond the school.

How is information passed on and used at transition points?

5 **Populate the school register** to include:
• the school cohort; and
• learners aged 11 – 19 in the top 5% of ability nationally.

How will you inform parents and pupils of inclusion on the Register?

6 **Identify the needs of the cohort** and develop opportunities to meet these, both within the classroom and beyond.
• Lead G&T Coordinator to register with the YG&T Learner Academy.

How are pupils' views sought in identifying their needs?

7 **Establish links with YG&T**:
• Encourage learners to register as members of the Learner Academy.
• Support members in accessing provision.

8 **Indicate those learners who are on the school register in termly school census returns**, currently January, May and September.

9 **Analyse learner performance** using school data, RAISEonline.

Are all groups in the total school population adequately represented on the school register?

Are there signs of underachievement of individuals or groups?

Does individual pupil data indicate previously unidentified G&T learners?

10 **Evaluate current provision and identify barriers** to under-representation or underachievement.

11 **Identify strategies to address barriers**, plan action steps and allocate resources.

12 **Review identification methods and systems** and plan any adjustments.

General characteristics of gifted and talented learners

The following characteristics (taken from the 1998 Ofsted review of research by Joan Freeman) are not necessarily proof of high ability but they may alert teachers to the need to enquire further into an individual's learning patterns and ability levels.

He or she may:

- be a good reader;
- be very articulate or verbally fluent for their age;
- give quick verbal responses (which can appear cheeky);
- have a wide general knowledge;
- learn quickly;
- be interested in topics which one might associate with an older child;
- communicate well with adults – often better than with their peer group;
- have a range of interests, some of which are almost obsessions;
- show unusual and original responses to problem-solving activities;
- prefer verbal to written activities;
- be logical;
- be self-taught in his/her own interest areas;
- have an ability to work things out in his/her head very quickly;
- have a good memory that s/he can access easily;
- be artistic;
- be musical;
- excel at sport;
- have strong views and opinions;
- have a lively and original imagination/sense of humour;
- be very sensitive and aware;
- focus on his/her own interests rather than on what is being taught;
- be socially adept;
- appear arrogant or socially inept;
- be easily bored by what they perceive as routine tasks;
- show a strong sense of leadership; and/or
- not necessarily appear to be well-behaved or well liked by others.

Underachievement

Gifted and talented underachievers may tend to:

- have low self-esteem;
- be confused about their development and about why they are behaving as they are;
- manipulate their environment to make themselves feel better;
- tend towards a superior attitude to those around them; and
- find inadequacy in others, in things, in systems, to excuse their own behaviours.

Sometimes those with abilities in one or more areas of learning may also suffer from a disability or difficulty in others. This can present a considerable barrier to the achievement of potential, as well as leading to frustration and disaffection.

Developing strategies and approaches to countering underachievement should be an integral part of the school policy for gifted and talented provision. The key aspects of underachievement that need to be taken into account and considered are:

- 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**?

Identification methods

Schools have the discretion to decide how best to identify their gifted and talented pupils but are likely to obtain the best results by drawing on a wide range of information sources, including both qualitative and quantitative information. A range of popular methods for identification are listed below.

1   **Teacher/staff nomination**
2   **Checklists**
3   **Testing- achievement, potential and curriculum ability**
4   **Assessment of children's work**
5   **Peer nomination**
6   **Parental information**
7   **Discussions with children/young people**
8   **Using community resources**

Methods can differ between age phases and between different subjects. The QCA provides detailed guidance to support assessment in different subject areas and this is a useful starting point for schools to develop their approaches to identifying and supporting gifted and talented learners, both within and across the curriculum.

Identifying the top 5% of the ability range nationally in secondary schools and colleges

Although the criteria for identification of this subset of learners are currently being reviewed, the current version remains in force. The new criteria will be available on the YG&T website from Autumn 2008.

Schools may also find useful the list of their learners attaining the highest combined SATs raw scores in Mathematics and English at KS2, available through the Keys to Success website.

Care should be taken to ensure that identification

- reflects ability, rather than achievement;
- includes talent areas; and
- does not unduly disadvantage any group of learners, including those from lower socio-economic backgrounds, children in care, children with special educational needs and particular ethnic or gender groups.

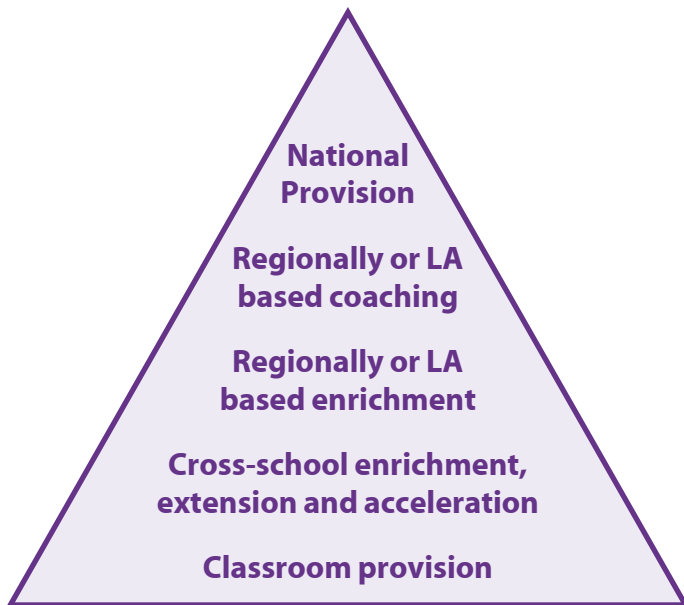## Indicators of gifts and talents related to phase

Some children display signs of high ability at an early age. However, since an individual's level of ability is not fixed and may develop significantly over time, the stage at which high potential is demonstrated will vary from one child to another. Teacher observation and informal assessment play an essential part in recognising high potential, particularly in the case of very young children. Whilst characteristics of high ability may be displayed at any age, some features may become particularly prominent during one phase of development and of schooling. Similarly, it is important that schools and colleges should meet the needs of gifted and talented learners in ways which are most appropriate for the stage of personal, social and emotional development which has been reached. The table below provides some examples of particular characteristics and needs of learners which may be most prominent, though not found exclusively, during one phase of schooling or another. These are indicative and not definitive.

Early Years	Primary	Secondary
Is it precocity or giftedness?	Needs fewer steps in process.	Questions rules/authority.
Uneven development.	Enjoys increased pace.	Non-conformity.
Gets cross if task too easy/hard.	Needs less instruction & practice.	High ability/low motivation.
Needs to own extended tasks.	Thrives on independent study.	Keen sense of justice.
May display 'unique creativity'.	Copes with abstract tasks.	Divergent thinking/creativity.
Often easily bored & disruptive.	Likes open-ended situations.	Excellent sense of humour.
Very good verbal/reasoning.	Needs to learn to fail.	Growing self-determination.
Needs enrichment more than acceleration.	Responds to a wide variety of creative opportunities.	May develop lifelong passion for field or hobby.
Can show reflection above age.	Needs to be encouraged to take risks.	Intellectual curiosity stands out.
Emotional literacy can lag behind academic work.	Needs to develop self-esteem in supportive environment.	Exceptional powers of concentration, stamina.
Identification for understanding and provision not labelling.	Whatever the intellectual level must remember *actual* age.	Needs to work with learners of similar ability in/out of school.

From identification to provision

National
Provision

Regionally or LA
based coaching

Regionally or LA
based enrichment

Cross-school enrichment,
extension and acceleration

Classroom provision

The above diagram sets out the layers of provision for gifted and talented children/young people. Stretch and challenge for gifted and talented learners in every classroom is absolutely critical. Providers at this level and at others should consider what is available at the next layer of provision that might benefit the learner. Once an individual has been identified there should be support available through the levels of the pyramid. National provision is available for all identified learners through the YG&T Learner Academy. Their website also provides links to a regional layer of provision, including Excellence Hubs.

Personalisation: from identification to practice

Personalised learning is about tailoring education to individual need, interest and aptitude so as to ensure that every learner achieves and reaches the highest standards possible, notwithstanding their background or circumstances. For gifted and talented learners this includes:

- effective assessment for learning, so that planning takes account of prior learning, stretching curricular targets are set with pupils, and differentiated learning objectives and outcomes are shared;

- learning activities in the classroom which offer additional stretch through a combination of acceleration, enrichment and extension;

- opportunities for independent learning, and use of a range of learning styles;

- learning in settings beyond the classroom, for example in real-life contexts which support problem-solving and application of knowledge and skills;

- support in specific areas, for example through language support or mentoring, alongside increased challenge in areas of strength; and

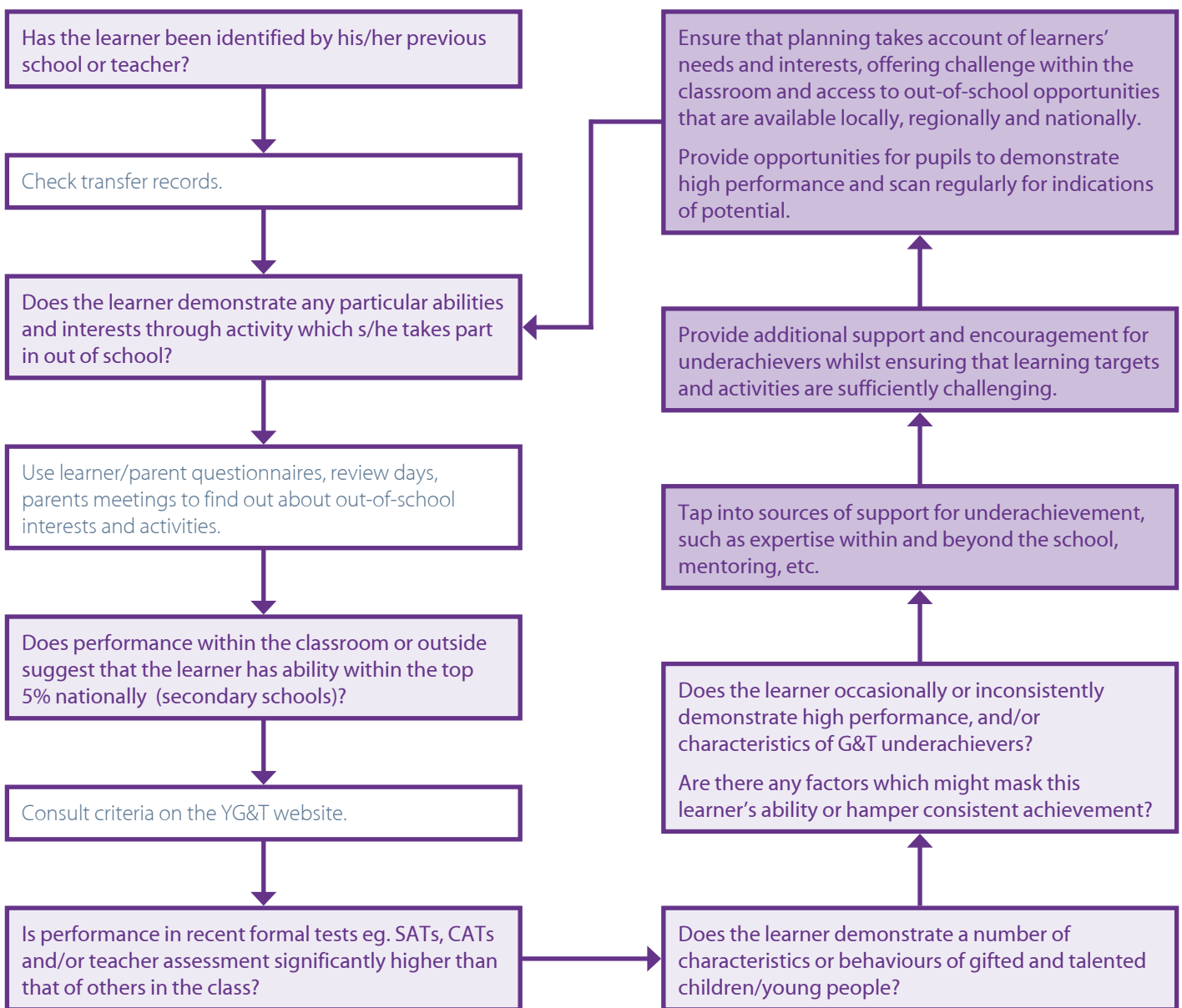- above all, a rich provision for all, which provides further opportunities for identification.

The Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics and the renewed Secondary Frameworks provide support for planning and provision to ensure challenge in the classroom.

Prompts for identification within the classroom

This diagram is intended to support classroom practitioners in identifying gifted and talented learners. The processes in it will feed into and should be informed by those in the Institution-wide Identification Cycle. Whilst it demonstrates one possible routeway, identification is not a linear process and practitioners should continuously be on the look-out for indications of high ability and previously undiscovered potential in the classes they teach. They will need to plan a range of opportunities which allow learners to demonstrate ability or potential ability.

Start

Has the learner been identified by his/her previous school or teacher?

Check transfer records.

Does the learner demonstrate any particular abilities and interests through activity which s/he takes part in out of school?

Use learner/parent questionnaires, review days, parents meetings to find out about out-of-school interests and activities.

Does performance within the classroom or outside suggest that the learner has ability within the top 5% nationally (secondary schools)?

Consult criteria on the YG&T website.

Is performance in recent formal tests eg. SATs, CATs and/or teacher assessment significantly higher than that of others in the class?

Ensure that planning takes account of learners' needs and interests, offering challenge within the classroom and access to out-of-school opportunities that are available locally, regionally and nationally.

Provide opportunities for pupils to demonstrate high performance and scan regularly for indications of potential.

Provide additional support and encouragement for underachievers whilst ensuring that learning targets and activities are sufficiently challenging.

Tap into sources of support for underachievement, such as expertise within and beyond the school, mentoring, etc.

Does the learner occasionally or inconsistently demonstrate high performance, and/or characteristics of G&T underachievers?

Are there any factors which might mask this learner's ability or hamper consistent achievement?

Does the learner demonstrate a number of characteristics or behaviours of gifted and talented children/young people?

Some key questions to help with identification

Some pointers towards provision

Web links to get started

The Young Gifted and Talented website provides resources and guidance for educators, a portal to other sites, and access to a wide range of provision for members of the Learner Academy.

www.ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/landing.aspx

The National Strategies e-learning module on identification can be accessed in their CPD learning environment.

www.nationalstrategiescpd.org.uk/course/view.php?id=81

The Youth Sports Trust provides information on identifying and developing talent in sport on the Talent Matters website.

www.talentmatters.org/

Creative Generation provides a starting point for guidance on talent identification in the performing arts. This is hosted on the YG&T site.

http://ygt.dcsf.gov.uk/Content.aspx?contentId=185&contentType=3

QCA – guidance on subject identification.

http://www.nc.uk.net/gt/

Gifted and talented education guidance on preventing underachievement: a focus on dual or multiple exceptionalities (DME).

http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00052-2008

and

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/pns_gift_talent_dme_0006107/

Gifted and Talented Education: Helping to find and support children with dual or multiple exceptionalities.

http://publications.teachernet.gov.uk/default.aspx?PageFunction=productdetails&PageMode=publications&ProductId=DCSF-00052-2008

and

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/gt_findsuportdme/

Gifted and Talented Education Guidance on preventing underachievement: a focus on children and young people in care.

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary/publications/inclusion/gt_children_in_care/

Gifted and Talented Education – Guidance on preventing underachievement: a focus on exceptionally able pupils.

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/secondary/keystage3/all/respub/gt_prevent_udrachieve0006608

Primary Framework for literacy and mathematics.

http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primaryframeworks/

The renewed Secondary Frameworks.

http://www.standards.dcsf.gov.uk/secondary/

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