



Teaching and Learning Policy

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Mission Statement

'To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ's Gospel'

Aims:

Thornton College is committed to delivering a broad and balanced education in line with our mission statement. It seeks to provide a secure and challenging learning environment that enables students to acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding and develop their skills. It has a commitment to develop each student's fullest potential, to extend their horizons and raise their aspirations and their levels of achievement.

Enabling Progress:

Teaching throughout the school enables *all* students to acquire new knowledge, increase their understanding and develop new skills. Lessons are planned and taught to ensure that all students are actively pushed towards *increased* achievement, thereby making good progress according to their ability.

The following registers and tracking systems enable teachers to have a good understanding of the aptitudes, needs and prior attainments of the students so that these are taken into account in the planning of lessons:

- More Able and Talented register – held on iSAMS
- SEND register – held on iSAMS
- INSIGHT (Prep School)
- SISRA (Senior School)
- Intervention Log (Senior School)

See Assessment, Reporting and Recording Policy.

Fostering Motivation

Debate and discussion are fostered in all aspects of the curriculum and students are encouraged to question, form and articulate their own opinions, thereby maintaining self-motivation and through this, good behaviour and a positive learning environment for all.

Discrimination

Teaching at Thornton is inclusive and does not discriminate in relation to protected characteristics. In relation to disability discrimination especially, assessment of students and planning of lessons ensure that teaching enables all students to make progress. Furthermore, and so far as reasonable, adjustments are made to include students with disabilities on school trips and in after-school clubs.

Adaptive Teaching

To ensure that each individual student makes good progress according to their ability – and that they are encouraged to achieve - planning and teaching at Thornton College will incorporate adaptive teaching, which will involve a range of resources, approaches, strategies and delivery based on an understanding of the individual differences and needs within the class and an understanding of how students learn.

Teaching staff can seek guidance on strategies and resources from NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education) and Thornton's Learning Development Department.

More Able and Talented (MAT)

Thornton College is a member of NACE (National Association for Able Children in Education) and works with the charity in its aim to improve provision for more able learners and raise achievement for all.

The definition used by Thornton is that used by NACE and included in definition used by the DfE.
Definition of More Able and Talented (MAT): Learners who have the potential or capacity for high attainment and demonstrate high levels of performance relative to their peers.

Thornton College recognises that there are students who have a very high level of ability across the curriculum and/or who have a talent in a specific area. The school is committed to providing a sufficiently challenging curriculum in order to address the needs of these students and ensure that they are able to reach/exceed their potential. These students are identified through assessment so that they are challenged and supported appropriately. Their attainment is tracked by teachers and Form Tutors so that they make progress in relation to their level of ability.

Definitions

More Able – those children, when compared to most students of the same age in their peer group, who demonstrate a significantly higher level of ability in one or more area or with the potential to develop those abilities and to achieve at the highest levels.

Exceptionally Able – those children who show high abstract reasoning ability and complexity of thinking and whose needs go beyond those of students already deemed to require opportunities for enrichment and extension in the normal curriculum when compared to their peers across the entire population. Exceptionality is by definition scarce.

Dual or multiple exceptionality – this describes learners who are more or exceptionally able and who also have additional learning needs e.g. dyslexia, autistic spectrum disorders, developmental coordination disorder, developmental language disorder, emotional and behavioural difficulties, physical and sensory differences. These additional needs can make it difficult to identify their high intellectual ability.

The school believes that effort is a key characteristic of being a high attainer – as opposed to innate ability/talent. Thus, we use the term MAT to encompass students who show more ability or exceptional talent in their work in one or more subjects. This reflects our belief that a girl may improve and develop their ability in a subject area over time. It also captures the fact that some girls are performing at a level over and above their age-related peers, but that this situation is flexible; most MAT students will have to work hard to maintain this advantage, while other students can become MAT students through improving their performance.

Many exceptionally able young children reach developmental milestones earlier than their peers. Assessment and identification procedures for exceptionally able students are not as clearly delineated as in other areas of education. The following checklist is indicative of some of their characteristics but should be used critically and carefully, taking particular account of age, developmental milestones and the wider profile of the individual student.

Exceptionally able students may:

- Possess extensive general knowledge, often know more than the teacher.
- Show good insight into cause-effect relationships.
- Easily grasp underlying principles and need the minimum of explanation.
- Quickly make generalisations and extract the relevant points from complex material.
- Have mental speeds faster than physical capabilities.
- Show exceptional short- and long-term memory.
- Have reading ability well beyond their chronological age.

Identification:

A range of data is used to identify girls who are more able and talented. This may include:

1. PUMA 126+ (Prep)
2. PTE 126+ - where supported by classroom evidence (Prep)
3. PIRA 126+ - where supported by classroom evidence (Prep)
4. CATS 126+ (Prep)
4. MidYis 126+ (Years 7-9)
5. Yellis 126+ (Years 10-11) and/or GCSE predictions
6. GCSE Results
7. ALIS 126+ (Years 12-13)

8. Teacher Nomination – based on assessments, observations and work scrutiny

Common characteristics of more able students (which teachers may use to identify students as MAT) include (but are not limited to):

- Question readily
- Persevere when motivated
- Think divergently
- Synthesise information
- Communicate fluently
- Analyse
- Show creativity
- Engage with complexity
- Perceive patterns
- Grasp new ideas rapidly
- Take risks
- Spot illogicalities or inconsistencies
- Make links

The MAT register is located on iSAMS and includes girls who have baseline data that suggests high ability and/or teacher nomination. In keeping with the ethos of the school, that all girls are equally valued and have the opportunity to reach their potential, individuals are not notified of their place on the register and opportunities for the more able are not exclusive.

Students are entered onto the register which is reviewed regularly through staff consultation, observation and data analysis. The register is accessible to all staff and is used to inform planning.

Strategies:

There is a named individual in both the prep and the senior school, whose responsibility it is to co-ordinate the school's response to meeting the needs of more able and/or talented students.

The MAT register, as well as tracking documentation, enables teachers to plan lessons and incorporate teaching and learning strategies to ensure MAT students make good progress. It is the responsibility of all staff to address the needs of all students, including those who are more able and talented. This involves communication between Heads of Year and Heads of Department, to ensure regular monitoring and reporting of students performance.

Strategies to support and challenge those identified as more able and/or talented may include the following (but are not limited to):

- Having tasks or examples that require higher-order thinking skills
- Using open-ended questioning
- Exploiting the power of the follow-up question: 'What makes you think that?'
- Having a range of tasks based on the same text or focus
- Having high expectations
- Involving students in presenting examples if appropriate
- Asking able students to articulate explanations and principles
- Making it possible for able students to enter tasks at a higher point

- Recognising that able students are entitled to teacher time
- Ensuring that there are times when the ablest students work together
- Giving able students roles in group work that reflect their abilities
- Having group/student targets, not just class targets
- Promoting self-evaluation
- Expecting 'different' rather than just 'more'
- Focusing on qualitative outcomes
- Planning to engage with higher-order learning skills
- Instilling the habit of reflection on learning
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Each department has additional subject-specific strategies for stretching the more and exceptionally able learners in departmental handbooks.

Enrichment opportunities

Outside of lessons, the school's VLE, Firefly, hosts an Enrichment Page containing further resources and competitions across all curriculum and co-curriculum subjects. This page is open to all students and MATs especially are encouraged to seek further reading and learning opportunities here.

The school organises a programme of lunchtime and after school activities which are of benefit to all students but are particularly apt for ensuring that students who have potential are given opportunities to develop their skills including:

- School clubs and activities
- Music /drama/sporting competitions, examinations, and performances
- Opportunities to work with talented adults for example, coaching sessions and specialised workshops
- School trips and residential visits
- Opportunities to complete additional qualifications, e.g. the Higher Project Qualification, Additional Maths qualification.

Sixth Form:

Students identified as more able are supported to explore a range of pathways. This includes guidance for those wishing to apply to Oxford, Cambridge, and Ivy League and other International Universities, and/or for post-18 courses such as Medicine and Veterinary Medicine.

SEND and dual exceptionality

Thornton College recognises that there is a broad spectrum of ability and differing educational needs and talents. All students may have additional needs at different times, including those identified as more able and/or talented (dual exceptionality), and therefore a wide variety of strategies are used to meet these needs as they arise. The school believes that meeting the special educational needs of individual students is not a peripheral or external activity but the responsibility of each teacher and therefore teaching strategies need to be responsive to the needs of individuals. All teaching staff work very closely with the Learning Support department to ensure that any learning needs for all students, including those identified as more able, are identified quickly so that appropriate support can be put into place to ensure those students are able to meet or exceed their potential.

See SEND policy for further details and strategies.

See Curriculum policy for details of Curriculum Accommodation for students with exceptional talents.