



5.1.8 HIGHLY TALENTED PUPILS

Definition

There is an inherent difficulty with the widely-used term 'Gifted & Talented', as the latest research indicates that there is no such thing as natural talent and so the idea of someone being 'gifted' with special attributes may be misleading. We do, however, believe that pupils come to us with a range of talents and that there are some pupils who are very talented already when they arrive, and that it is important to recognise where they are and to ensure they are challenged and stretched so that they continue to develop to their full potential. For that reason we prefer to call them the 'Highly Talented', rather than 'Gifted & Talented'.

Identification

There is a clear distinction between potential and attainment. Not all very able pupils will be among the highest attainers in terms of exam grades. Equally, some pupils may come into the school very well trained for and successful in exams, but without independent problem-solving ability, which may lead teachers to make false assumptions about how that pupil will cope with deeper academic challenges. Because of this rather than rely solely on entrance, internal and external exam results and/or teacher recommendations, we look most carefully at the results of the baseline aptitude tests taken by all students on entry (MidYis, Yelis and Alis). Scores in these tests of 130 or more place students in the top 2% nationally. Although a student may have an off day and underperform in these baseline tests, a strong result is never achieved by luck so it is a good indicator of aptitude, though not the only one.

With this in mind, our system for identifying those to be entered on the Skills register as Academically Highly Talented Pupils is as follows:

1. Those who enter in Year 9 on an academic scholarship
2. Those who in the CEM MidYis, Yelis or Alis test achieve an overall score of 130 or above
3. Those who have shown consistently strong achievement and ability across the board in comparison to their peers (based on internal and external exam results, as well as Academic Progress Grades).

Some students may not be academically highly talented across the board, but may be highly talented in one or more subjects, or in the Arts or Sport. Music, Art and Sports Scholarships are available on entry to those who can prove their strength of talent through assessment, as is Drama and Design as part of the assessment for the all-rounder Roxburgh scholarships. Equally, each department, including all academic departments, will have a clear system for identifying those who prove highly talented in their fields based on baseline scores and internal assessment. If those identified by a department are not already on the Academically Highly Talented register, the Head of Department will communicate the names of the relevant pupils to the Lower or Senior School Academic Scholars Coordinator and to the Head of the Skills Department, so they can be added to Skills register.

The register of Highly Talented pupils and a review of the performance of those on the register can be adjusted at any time based on emerging evidence, however there will also be an annual audit and review led by the Head of Skills every January and June.

Our provision for the Academically Highly Talented

All teachers will be expected to check the Skills register on a regular basis to make a note of those in this category, along with any other Special Educational Needs, and differentiate accordingly in the work done in class and set as prep, with extension opportunities made available on the VLE or through academic societies.

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Author: JAP - Deputy Head (Academic)

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Because all pupils have the potential to improve on their attainment and because no pupils should feel excluded from being able to grapple with deeper academic extension, the School operates an Open Minds Programme in the Lower School. This consists of a series of extension events, some subject specific and some cross-curricular, which are open to any Lower School pupil who would like to attend.

In addition to Open Minds, Stowe also offers the Lower School Academic Scholars (LSAS) group. This is an invitation-only group designed to provide extra stretch to our most highly academically talented pupils in the Third, Fourth and Fifth Forms. Any pupil who arrives at the School on an Academic Scholarship is expected to attend. Others from these year groups can also apply to join the group through filling in an application form, and decisions will be based on the evidence from his or her baseline data, academic transcript, APGs, internal exam results and the recommendation of teachers and tutors. Those on the Academically Highly Talented register will be encouraged to apply. Commitment and contributions to the Open Minds Programme and to subject-specific extension societies is expected by all members.

In the Sixth Form, the Senior School Academic Scholars Co-ordinator oversees the running of the Headmaster's Essay Society (HMES) and Oxbridge preparation. Ambitious members of the Lower Sixth Form who are aiming to apply for the most competitive universities can apply to join the society in October. Members will be selected on the basis of an application form providing evidence of their academic performance at GCSE, evidence of self-driven extension, and teacher/tutor recommendation. As a rule of thumb, applicants are expected to have attained at least eight grades at GCSE of grade 7 or above. HMES meets every Monday in the evening and members will be expected to produce and read papers in preparation for submission to outside competitions and will also be expected to critique each other's work. The Senior School Academic Scholars Coordinator will be responsible for mentoring and monitoring the progress of all members of the group and for supporting pupils through the extra steps and deadlines that come with applications to Oxbridge, to read Medicine or Veterinary Science, or other elite institutions or courses. Further specific support for those applying to the USA is available through the Advisor for Overseas Applications.

Our provision for the Highly Talented in Sport, Art, Design and Music

The School offers specific scholarships on entry in Art, Design, Music and Sport to talented applicants on the basis of our own scholarship assessments, as well as Roxburgh scholarships to those with talents across the board, including Drama and Design. We offer a wide and in-depth range of opportunities for stretch and challenge in Art, Design, Drama, Music and Sport and those holding scholarships are expected to take an active role in performing in School teams and ensembles, or in the production of art for exhibition. The School will also endeavour where possible to allow for Scholars to participate in representative teams and competitions that will help to further their development. The respective departments are responsible for monitoring each Scholar's progress and contribution, providing detailed mentoring and guidance for the Scholar, and reporting back to the Scholarships & Bursaries Committee.

Celebration of our Highly Talented Pupils

The School aims to showcase and celebrate the achievements of all of its pupils. Those that are academically highly talented may, if not already in receipt of an Academic Scholarship, be awarded an Honorary Academic Scholarship on the basis of achieving eight or more GCSEs at grade 8 or above. Those attaining at least six grade 8 and above at GCSE, or at least eight grades of grade 7 and above at GCSE, will be awarded academic colours. The Honorary Academic Scholarships and Academic Colours are announced in assembly at the start of the year and recipients are awarded Academic Ties and Pins. We also celebrate academic attainment, as well as effort, through the APG Suppers held after each grading session. Tutors can flag up excellent achievement in

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the APG session through a Mention for Praise recorded on the database to be celebrated in House. Excellent work can be rewarded by subject teachers through Merits, Commendations and Benes, which can help determine School Prizes. Where time permits, lists of those awarded Commendations or Benes that week are read out by the Headmaster in School Assembly.

Those in receipt of any Scholarships are listed as such in the School Calendar. Highly talented pupils are also encouraged to showcase their talents in public arenas, such through debating competitions, concerts, plays, fixtures and exhibitions, and are also invited to perform or speak in School assemblies. There is a noticeboard in the Sports Department celebrating the achievements of, and providing information for, our elite level sportsmen and sportswomen.

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