

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HIGH LEARNING POTENTIAL

What is 'Giftedness'?

Should I have my child's IQ tested?

Are children with high learning potential exceptional in all areas?

Can children with high learning potential also have special education needs?

How are high learning potential children identified in schools?

Does the ordinary school curriculum work for children with high learning potential?

Where can I get information on grants, scholarships or bursaries available for my child with high learning potential?

Where can my child meet other children with high learning potential?

### What is 'Giftedness'?

'Giftedness' is a difficult concept to define; the very word 'gifted' can bring up a number of negative connotations based upon superiority and elitism. In a society where differences are not always easily tolerated, it can be a difficult step to take in recognising that your child is indeed different and is possibly 'gifted'.

However, it is incredibly important for parents to acknowledge and support their child's exceptional potential, abilities and talent. Most parents who contact Potential Plus UK are reluctant to use the word 'gifted' about their own child as it seems boastful to do so. Their past experiences of talking to others about their gifted child often prove to be quite negative as many people cannot understand what it is like to raise a 'gifted' child.

People may wrongly assume that everything is plain sailing when it comes to parenting a highly intelligent child. There is a distinct lack of awareness of the often intense and hypersensitive nature of gifted children. Many gifted children also have a special educational need such as dyslexia, ADHD or Asperger syndrome. This is termed Dual or Multiple Exceptionality (DME).

When parents contact Potential Plus UK for support in raising their child, they are not proclaiming that their child is perfect or is a genius. Rather, this is an important first step in realising that their child requires a distinctly different and creative approach to both parenting and education.

Potential Plus UK prefers the term 'High Learning Potential' rather than 'gifted' as a way of defining the key characteristics that we have been supporting since 1967, when Potential Plus UK was founded. We fully understand who these children are and the challenges they face.

Children with high learning potential are much more than high IQ scorers. These children are fascinating, complex, challenging, brimming with vast potential and an incredible thirst

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HIGH LEARNING POTENTIAL

for knowledge. All children with high learning potential share these traits and this is what we at Potential Plus UK support on a daily basis.

It is widely agreed that both genetics (nature) and environment (nurture) play an important role in determining intellect. However, their relative importance is debated. Current thinking suggests that the importance of the gene is greater, though without appropriate support and challenge, a child's true potential can remain unfulfilled.

Children with high learning potential frequently astound parents, teachers and other adults that are faced with a very small person who has the ability to floor them with a stunningly perceptive comment, statement of fact, mathematical skill, scientific understanding or wonderful talent for art, drama or sport.

### **Should I have my child's IQ tested?**

Parents often ask Potential Plus UK about IQ testing. Our response is that this is not always necessary as a high IQ score is only one measure of intelligence and not all children with high learning potential will score highly on standardised IQ tests.

Reasons for having your child's IQ formally assessed include the school needing and requesting impartial proof prior to providing your child with specialist gifted provision, behavioural problems that could be caused by lack of challenge, or the existence of a possible special educational need alongside high intelligence.

Potential Plus UK offers the High Learning Potential Assessment to discover the learning profile of children and to provide an action plan to ensure their continued support both in school and out. Alternatively, parents may wish to contact an Educational Psychologist for an assessment or older children can sit a Mensa Supervised IQ test. To find an Educational Psychologist, please go to [www.bps.org.uk](http://www.bps.org.uk) (website for The British Psychological Society). For further information about the Mensa Supervised IQ Test contact [British Mensa](http://BritishMensa.org).

### **Are children with high learning potential exceptional in all areas?**

Not necessarily. Like all children, children with high learning potential have interests and/or abilities in one or more subject areas. Whilst children with high learning potential are very mature intellectually, they can have the social and emotional maturity of children their own age or sometimes even younger and need to be supported accordingly.

Although some children with high learning potential seem to excel at almost anything and everything, the basis of that success is often motivation, perseverance and hard work! Children with high learning potential can be highly perfectionist as from an early age they

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HIGH LEARNING POTENTIAL

may have reached milestones well before other children their age. Hence, there can be a tendency to assume that everything else in life will follow such a smooth and seemingly effortless progression.

As a parent of a child with high learning potential, it is vital to support your child to develop realistic expectations and to understand the true relationship between perseverance, effort and outcome. In supporting your child to develop high self esteem and also providing them with a rich variety of activities; this will help your child to fully reach their potential. At Potential Plus UK, we are fully committed to help your family to achieve this positive outcome.

### **Can children with high learning potential also have special education needs?**

Some children with high learning potential may also have a special educational need in one area and be exceptional in another- a trait known as Dual or Multiple Exceptionality. Children with high learning potential who also have learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyspraxia, ADHD and autistic spectrum disorders can experience great frustration. These children are still highly intelligent, but are having to cope with an added learning difficulty which can negatively affect their learning and communication.

This can cause problems for the child as they can often struggle to display their intellectual abilities because of their special education need. Schools usually have clear guidance and support for special educational needs and sometimes for 'gifted' or 'able' provision; but it is far more uncommon to find a school that offer both types of provision for one child.

Sometimes, a dual or multiple exceptional child's learning difficulty masks their high intelligence, so that the child appears average and the source of their resulting frustration and unhappiness can often be misunderstood. A dual or multiple exceptional child can often 'coast' through school achieving average grades as their high intelligence can mask their learning difficulty.

Potential Plus UK has produced a range of fact sheets on dual or multiple exceptionality which you may find useful. Only if both areas of dual exceptionality are fully and consistently supported, can these children fulfil their true potential. Potential Plus UK is experienced in supporting parents to work with the school to ensure that all their child's needs are understood and supported accordingly.

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## How are high learning potential children identified in schools?

Not all schools identify children as being gifted and talented (also called more able, most able or able, gifted and talented), as not all schools have a gifted and talented policy. Previously (prior to 2012), the government had issued recommendations (not regulations) to state schools to keep a gifted and talented register and to have a gifted and talented lead teacher with responsibility in this area.

Many schools do identify their gifted and talented students in order to track the progress of this group. They may not always inform parents about individual children being identified though. Most schools identify their gifted and talented students using their tracking data about how the students are achieving in school or information about their attainment in national tests. Some schools also use cognitive ability scores, such as those from CATs, teacher nominations, checklists about the characteristics of gifted and talented students in certain subjects or generally, and parent or peer nominations.

Please contact your child's school for more information on whether or not they have a gifted and talented policy and how they identify children.

## Does the ordinary school curriculum work for children with high learning potential?

The normal school curriculum mostly calls for a 70/30 split between time spent on teaching basic skills and time devoted to higher cognitive learning, such as reasoning, drawing inferences and reaching conclusions.

Children with high learning potential thrive on higher cognitive learning and need far less time to grasp key concepts before they are ready to put their skills into practice. This is one of the causes of frustration and boredom for children with high learning potential in the classroom. Another common reason for such children becoming frustrated at school is frequent repetition of key concepts which is often unnecessary for them. These children have a right to an appropriate and challenging level of education, just as all children do.

## Where can I get information on grants, scholarships or bursaries available for my child with high learning potential?

There are some opportunities for children with high learning potential to receive help towards the cost of their education in the form of scholarships, grants, bursaries or other funding. For more information, please download our free advice sheet PA110 Grants, Funds and Scholarships Information.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HIGH LEARNING POTENTIAL

### Where can my child meet other children with high learning potential?

Children with high learning potential benefit greatly from meeting others like them and participating in challenging and enriching activities together. Potential Plus UK recognises this and provides several opportunities for both children and parents to meet others like them.

Our local branches are run by volunteers and provide an excellent opportunity to meet other member children and their parents.

Potential Plus UK also regularly runs events around the country, such as Big Family Weekends, which provide fantastic opportunities to participate in exciting workshops and meet new friends. Please take a look at our [Events Diary](#) to see what activities you could book for your child and/or yourself.

There are several other organisations that also organise activities for children with high learning potential. These are: [Gift Courses](#), [Tomorrow's Achievers](#), [Kilve Court](#), [Arts Award Initiative](#), [North West Gifted and Talented](#) and [The Saturday Challenge](#).