

St Thomas the Apostle School - Student Acceleration Policy



St Thomas the Apostle School is a school which operates with the consent of the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne and is owned, operated and governed by Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools Ltd (MACS), where formation and education are based on the principles of Catholic doctrine, and where the teachers are outstanding in true doctrine and uprightness of life.

Learning Brings Hope: A hope that is based on the experience of God's love and care for all (Vision, Horizons of Hope)

Purpose

The Student Acceleration Policy ensures that St Thomas the Apostle School responds authentically to the needs of gifted students. The Policy sets out the principles and processes to be followed when considering an accelerated learning plan for individual students. It provides a uniform approach to decision-making across all MACS Schools regarding acceleration of students who are gifted; while allowing school-based flexibility in selecting an appropriate acceleration model. To ensure the dual goals of the Melbourne Declaration (2008) of equity and excellence, gifted students must have access to appropriate opportunities to flourish in pursuit of excellence. All decisions must be based upon the specific needs of an individual student.

Scope

- This Policy applies to all students of MACS Schools who are identified as gifted.
- This Policy acknowledges that all students are different and that for some students curriculum differentiation may require the application of acceleration to meet their individual needs.
- Consultation, support and access to resources are available to assist Learning Diversity staff in the Regional Offices in identifying gifted students, assessing specific needs and in making appropriate program recommendations to teachers and practitioners

Rationale

Excellence requires all students including those who are gifted to have access to a curriculum that encourages high expectations. Students who are gifted benefit from rigorous, relevant and engaging learning opportunities (ACARA). A range of acceleration options should be considered to best meet the individual needs of these students. Acceleration generally occurs on entry into school and across year groups from Foundation to Year 10. Consideration should be given to distinctions in individual learning needs, strengths, talents, and interests and to differences in aptitudes across a variety of domains. Decisions to accelerate a student must be based on their best interest.

Acceleration options may include but are not limited to one or a combination of the following:

- Subject-based acceleration – differentiation within one or more curriculum areas
- Year level-based acceleration – for one or more curriculum areas
- Accelerated / Year 13 classes – usually partnered with a university
- Advanced placement (AP) courses – usually offered to a small group / class of students
- Compacted curriculum – usually a whole school decision
- Education courses provided by an outside organisation – usually in lieu of the regular curriculum
- Mentorship / coaching – usually within school time and subject specific
- Multiyear classes – usually two year levels together allowing students to work at either year level

Note. Additional guidelines for selecting and administering these acceleration options may be found in the document *Gifted and Talented Students: A Resource Guide for Teachers in Victorian Catholic Schools* (2019).

Definitions

Acceleration – progressing through the regular curriculum at a faster pace than other students of the same chronological age.

Giftedness – students who exhibit high ability, creativity and task commitment with an intelligent quotient ≥ 130 .

Underachievement – gifted students who are achieving less than their potential

Twice Exceptionality – gifted students who also experience a learning difficulty in one or more areas.

Principles

There are approximately 3.8 million Australians of school age ($\approx 10\%$) who are deemed to be gifted (DET, 2018). Of these, it is estimated that 14% (compared to 4% in the general population) may also have a learning disability (Wormald, 2015). To achieve to their potential, students who are gifted may require enrichment and extension activities together with learning support.

Applying a model of acceleration in addition to other appropriate supports, can empower high- ability students to achieve to excellence.

Students who are gifted are considered to display characteristics at home and school that are significantly above the average for their age. Catholic education is committed to enabling all students to achieve to their potential by providing appropriate opportunities through a range of flexible acceleration options for these students.

The Student Acceleration policy supports the Catholic faith by celebrating each student's uniqueness and embracing all students as respected and valued members of the learning community. This Policy acknowledges that local pastoral discretion is an important element of decision-making with regard to student acceleration.

The Student Acceleration policy is underpinned by the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (DDA) and the associated [Disability Standards for Education \(2005\)](#) (Cth).

Procedures

1. Establishment of Acceleration committee

- 1.1 St Thomas the Apostle School has established a Committee to review all applications for acceleration.
- 1.2 This Committee consists of the Principal, Learning Diversity Leader, the Learning and Teaching Leader, Literacy and Maths Leader.
- 1.3 Detailed minutes of all meetings of all meetings should be kept ensuring transparency of process.

2. Identification of Student as gifted

- 2.1 Evidence is to be provided of student's gifted ability in one or more curriculum areas.
- 2.2 Student must have been assessed as having a full scale intelligence quotient of ≥ 130 .
- 2.3 Additional formal assessments are to be sought if appropriate.
- 2.4 For early entry, students must meet the VRQA *Guidelines for the Minimum Standards and Requirements for School Registration* and complete the MACS Enrolment Policy Minimum Age Exemption Application.

3. Recommending decisions

- 3.1 Parents or guardians will be considered as partners during the process.
- 3.2 Where appropriate the student themselves should be involved in the decision-making process
- 3.3 Consideration must be given to any social or emotional effects and cultural needs that may transpire as an outcome of the decision.
- 3.4 A timeframe should be developed to review the effectiveness of the implementation of any acceleration program.
- 3.5 The Principal, having considered fully the views of all stakeholders and in the best interests of the student and School community will make the final recommendation about an appropriate form of acceleration.
- 3.6 Parents or guardians will be advised formally through a documented letter.
- 3.7 Parents or guardians are required to sign a consent form to confirm the proposed acceleration.

4 Right of Challenge of a decision

- 4.1 Parents or guardians should be advised of their rights if they disagree with a decision made by St Thomas the Apostle School.
- 4.2 Confidentiality, protection of privacy, respect, access, dignity and impartiality should form the basis of any complainant's resolution process.
- 4.3 Initially, concerns should be discussed with the Principal of St Thomas the Apostle School to resolve the issue (refer to the School's Complaints Handling Policy).
- 4.4 If unresolved, the complaints resolution process should be followed (St Thomas the Apostle School Complaints Handling Policy).

Note. The best interests of the school community will generally exceed those of any individual.