

Rugby Free Secondary School – Supporting Higher Previous Attainers and Highly Attaining Disadvantaged Students Policy: September 2025

Background

The school's T&L vision with respect to supporting High Previous Attainers:

We intend to provide a broad, inclusive and ambitious curriculum that empowers all our students to make both academic and personal progress. As a school with a diverse demographic, our aim is to ensure that all students achieve an excellent standard of education that not only prepares them for GCSE and A-Level examinations, but ensures they are 'set for life' beyond the gates of Rugby Free Secondary School. Within this framework we ensure that all students are provided with stretch, challenge and the opportunity to fulfil their potential. For learner's that have previously *attained* highly, we strive to ensure their *achievement* matches their attainment (as with all students) and that they continue to thrive and progress.

The national picture for learners with lost potential (learners with high academic potential at the end of primary school who fall behind more affluent peers)

The Sutton Trust's "Lost Potential at Age 16" report reveals a critical social mobility failure in England. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds who show high academic potential at the end of primary school systematically falling behind their more affluent peers during secondary school. They key findings of importance for RFSS are:

- The Attainment Gap: Disadvantaged high attainers achieve GCSE grades, on average, over three-quarters of a grade lower per subject than their equally able non-disadvantaged peers.
- Dropping Out of the Top: They are almost twice as likely (37% vs. 17%) to fall out of the top third of attainment by GCSE.
- The Impact of Disadvantage: The gap is driven by socio-economic factors, not ability. Key barriers include:
 - Material Poverty: Lack of devices, study space, and access to private tutoring.
 - Home Environment: Higher rates of young carers, single-parent households, and overcrowded housing.
 - School Access: Less likely to attend the highest-performing schools or grammar schools.
 - Aspirations and Confidence More than double the proportion feel that "people like me don't have much of a chance in life."

The RFSS moral and strategic imperative; disadvantaged HPA students receive...

- Identification & Tracking: To identify "HPAs" and "high potential" early and monitor closely, especially at key transition points between key stages.
- Stretch & Challenge: Deliver a curriculum that goes beyond exam specifications, fostering deep thinking, curiosity, and intellectual resilience.
- Targeted Support: Provide academic interventions that address specific barriers, such as literacy, numeracy, and cultural capital, without being stigmatising.
- Aspirations & Advocacy: Provide exposure to future pathways, careers, and universities, alongside mentorship and advocacy from staff.
- Resource Equity: Access to the same enrichment (trips, clubs, tutoring) as their more affluent peers, subsidised where necessary.

Strategic Plans

To achieve the over-arching vision outlined, 4 pillars underpin supporting HPAs

Pillar	Objective	Lead
1. Leadership & Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To embed a culture of high expectations for all, based on research, with a strategic focus on closing the attainment gap for the most able. High Previous attainers (HPA) and Highly Able Disadvantaged (HAD) are identified, staff are made aware of students falling within relevant categories (including Complex and Expert students @ KS3). To share good practice across the school via Teaching and Learning briefings, CPD sessions and Departmental time. Ensure that DoLs are supported in the knowing the ways that HADs/HPAs are best supported and provide time for them to disseminate relevant information to their departments. 	MSK / JDH / IGR / SCR DOLs SLT
2. Quality-First Teaching	To ensure classroom practice consistently provides challenge and support tailored to student need, not just prior attainment (see below section for more details).	MSK / JDH
3. Targeted Intervention	To provide bespoke academic and pastoral support that removes barriers for disadvantaged high attainers. This includes enrichment activities as required.	MSK / BAU/ SBR / MLA /
4. Enrichment & Advocacy	To ensure all students have the cultural capital, aspirations, and self-belief to progress to competitive destinations.	PED

Adaptive Quality First Teaching

The school's adaptive approaches for HPA and HAD students:

Action	Practical implementation in the school	Lead
1. Know HPA/HAD Students: Have the HPA/HAD register to hand. Understand their specific barriers (e.g., young carer, lack of study space)	Use seating plans and mark books to inform understanding of HPA/HAD students. Plan to question and provide extension tasks with them in mind.	MSK / SCR/ JDH
2. Plan for Challenge: Use Higher Order thinking (HOTS) Move away from "more of the same" (MOTS) extension tasks	Use " Mastery " or " Expert " tasks in every lesson. Implement " Fertile Questions " that have no single right answer. Use Bloom's Taxonomy to ensure tasks require analysis and evaluation.	MSK / JDH
3. Pre-Teach & Model Academic Language: Explicitly teach the sophisticated vocabulary and discourse needed for top grades	Provide and model sentence stems for essay writing and debate. Use "word of the week" relevant to achieving at a high level.	SBR / JDH
4. Provide Impactful, Specific Feedback: Move beyond "good work."	Use feedback that focuses on how to reach the next grade boundary (e.g., "To reach a Grade 8, you need to analyse the writer's intent, not just the effect on the reader").	JDH
5. Promote Metacognition: Teach students how to learn and think critically	Use "think-alouds" to model your thought process when solving a complex problem. Implement regular reflection activities on what learning strategies worked best.	MSK
6. Use Setting Fluidly & Inclusively: Avoid setting that creates a glass ceiling	Ensure movement between sets is possible and based on current performance, not historical data. In mixed-ability classes, use differentiated tasks, not differentiated expectations.	SLT / DOLs
7. The effective use of time for HADs and HPAs in lessons	Ensure that HPA/HAD students are not kept waiting if they finish tasks – provide HOTS opportunities, not MOTS.	MSK

The school's
overarching
approach to
planning learning:

When **planning** a lesson at RFSS consider:

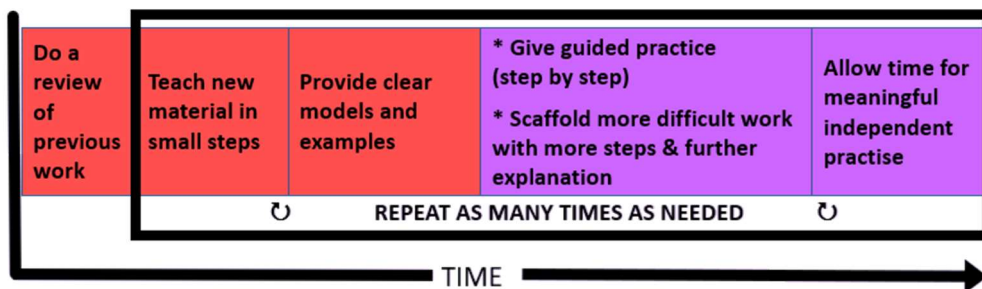
What is the reason for this lesson?	
What does this class need at this point in time?	How can you make the lesson bespoke?
How does this build on previous learning?	How will you share the lesson's purpose?
Why is it important for your subject?	How does it fit in with a wider picture?
How will you use knowledge of the students to tailor the way you teach this lesson?	Do seating plans promote productive learning behaviour?

When **starting** an RFSS lesson ensure you:

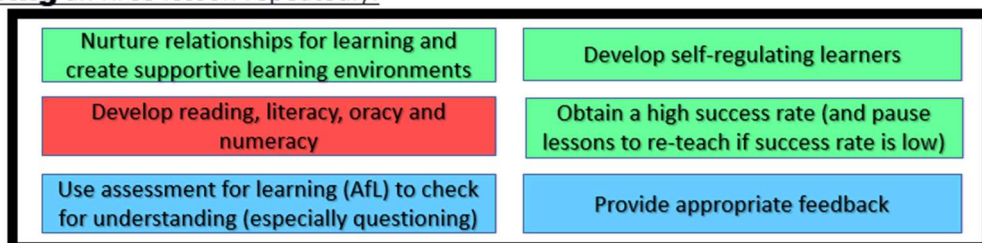
Start with high standards and do not accept mediocrity	
Greet students at the door. Politely challenge shirts, blazers, coats, footwear, earphones	Have a SET recall task ready and prepared for students to start in silence
Share the reason for the lesson – why you have planned what you have planned?	Check the learning environment supports learning (Is it tidy? Does it feel pleasant?)

During an RFSS lesson use this lesson structure:

The school's
overarching approach
to structuring learning:



During an RFSS lesson repeatedly:



The school's simplified
lesson structure:

