

## **What about me?**

*A reflection on the lack of support available for more able pupils*

*By Hannah Foster, Reception teacher*

As the children are moved to sit beside their peers,  
The differentiated piles of paper start to appear.

Each are allocated to a specific table,  
Not that we would ever give different abilities a label.

“Why has their one got pictures on?” I hear a voice ask.  
“Hey that is not fair, we have so many more questions on our task!”

“What about me?” A timid voice in the corner pleas.  
Over to his desk the teacher does breeze.

Oh, you can just carry on with your number bond making-  
you can give them the highest extension, but you know deep down, it isn't enough for their taking.

They still finish first, even with a differentiated paper,  
The work just isn't challenging enough, despite your best efforts to carefully taper.

You thrust some extra, unrelated challenges their way,  
As you move around the room helping correct pencil grips and spellings, and sound mats you lay.

Replacing rubbers with physical manipulatives and some coloured counters,  
To calm down and support some of the flappers and flounders.

“What about me? What should I do next?”  
So, I take myself to the book corner and stare at the text.

Is it lunchtime yet? Teacher hopes with a glance at the clock.  
Then rushes to sort a sensory disturbance due to a seam on a sock.

A fight breaks out, "Hey that was my pencil first!"  
You wipe away tears and realise this isn't the worst.

How can there be so much support for those who struggle?  
So many websites, wisdom and worksheets for their bubble.

Yet there's nothing online, Twinkl or not,  
for those who are capable of doing such a lot.  
No websites or games, no work schemes or lessons,  
So much time and thought must precede every session.

A juggling act with the rest of the class,  
So many different needs, it's a difficult task.

On a whiteboard something impressive has been made,  
"You really did all that at your very young age?"

You're reminded of their vast knowledge and power,  
Whilst they are sat innocently building a tower.

Blissfully unaware of just how special they are,  
They seem just like all others when viewed from afar.

A proud nod and smile for the WOW wall,  
So much potential from someone so small.

Remembering that they said don't make a big deal,  
It isn't fair on the others, how will it make them feel?

But hey what about me? Can't I celebrate being clever too?  
How many hoops do I have to jump through?

We are all good at different things,  
We all learn and grow and spread our own wings.

Is my teacher proud of me, I sometimes question?  
She never gets that excited when my work is of mention.

She even rolls her eyes when I finish by lunch,  
Never squeals with delight when I feel proud as punch.

As a teacher we are told not to ostracize or make them feel different,  
But to their talents, surely to be ignorant, isn't what's meant?

Am I doing enough, could I do more?  
I enjoy supporting him, it's never a chore.

You must get the balance of pressure just right,  
After all their future is looking so bright.

Don't push too much or they will push back,  
The last thing we need is for them to crack!

But don't push enough and you'll lose them completely,  
Their behaviour will slip, you must crack the whip.

You try so hard to find the balance in class,

Fully aware this difficult time will soon pass.

Maths, English, Science are fun,  
None of your hard work is ever undone.

The class erupts into a sea of cheer,  
So happy and proud of their clever peer.

Little E finally decoded that CVC word,  
But hey what about me? My brain whirred.

I can read all of those words on the board and around,  
Even the emails Miss leaves on the screen about an item in lost and found...

Where are my cheers and round of applause?  
But I say nothing and just sit quietly and stare at the floor.

The lack of support is what was feared,  
But to change that for the future, my teacher is geared.

For more able pupils the lines are blurred,  
It isn't enough to just label us 'nerd'.

Everyone has a right to the best education,  
So for teachers, more support needs to be in circulation.

The teacher standards quite clearly say,  
that all teachers, we must obey.

They must 'Differentiate to meet the needs of all pupils',  
But for those more able, the standard needs to quadruple.

As they move up through school, the work just gets easier,  
And the compliments for completion, just seem to get cheesier.

Other talents are celebrated at sports day and shows,  
For the first football team, I'll never be chosen.

Can't we celebrate everyone for their own unique talent?  
For my abilities I'm not trying to be gallant.

Something needs to change as I sit in the class,  
For every exam we already know I will pass.

I need fire, I need challenge, from you I need more,  
For more able pupils - resources and aids and help galore.

Daily, I watch eagerly as the worksheets are handed out,  
But work for more able pupils seems to be in a drought.

I realise I'm not getting one, once again there's nothing tailored to me.  
And for one final time I ask "what about me?"  
This isn't just a question anymore, now, it is a plea....  
So, I implore you.....  
What.about.me?

By Hannah Foster

Following my experience teaching a 4 year old Mensa registered genius and fuelled by a strong belief that more able pupils need more support, recognition and celebration both in and out of the classroom.