

Merchant Taylors' School



MTS ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Policy Custodian: *Deputy Head (Academic) and Bursar*

Approving Governors Committee: *Full Governing Body*

Approved: *June 2023*

Next Review: *June 2024*

1. **Ethos and Aims of Merchant Taylors' School (MTS).**

In this Policy 'MTS' refers to the through-school from 3 to 18 unless expressed otherwise. Both the Senior School and the Prep School aim to offer the highest quality of teaching and learning and support all pupils in the pursuit of academic and personal excellence. We have high expectations of all of our pupils, and we strive to ensure that each and every pupil can take part in the whole school curriculum. We value the diversity of our school community and appreciate the contribution that all pupils can bring to school life, including neurodivergent pupils and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities (SEND). We aim to take reasonable steps to avoid any member of the school community (including pupils, prospective pupils, staff and visitors) being at a substantial disadvantage due to a disability and the school actively promotes positive attitudes towards disability. An individual is considered disabled under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities. The School recognizes that this includes many of the pupils with SEN, particularly those with access arrangements.

Our Admissions Policy (available on our website) seeks to remove barriers to entry for pupils with SEND. We are an academically selective school that strives to be fully inclusive and welcoming. All pupils, including those with SEND, will be assessed according to the School's entry criteria. When required, a member of the Learning Support Department with relevant expertise will liaise with the parents and feeder school SENCOs who have highlighted potential support needs or reasonable adjustments. The Admissions Department will then discuss any matters arising with the Head of Learning Support. The Head Master/Head of MTP will determine any reasonable adjustments that can be offered to support the young person in benefitting from the education on offer. As part of these processes, other colleagues such as the Head of Learning Support or the School Nurse will be consulted, along with academic colleagues such as Heads of Department. If an existing pupil is identified as disabled, the School will make reasonable adjustments to enable that pupil to continue to access the curriculum.

We review our approach annually and take steps to improve the environment of the School in order to ensure its activities are accessible to all. Each year we maintain our investment in physical accessibility, specialist support services and staff training.

Recent developments include the review and adjustment of lifts, provision of adjustable furniture, procurement of an inflatable riser cushion to improve pool accessibility and annual specialist support reviews for pupils who are hard of hearing. The Geography Building at the Senior School and the Office Building at the Prep School MTP include a lift and new medical rooms with accessible hygiene facilities. The School keeps pace with best practice for accessibility and considers this

whilst planning its facilities and services.

Where physical access remains difficult, the School will introduce alternative forms of interpretation in order to extend access as far as practicable. Interpretative resources will also be used to meet the needs of pupils and visitors with cognitive and sensory impairments. Whenever necessary, we provide written information to disabled pupils in ways that are user-friendly and fully support the pupils in their learning experience. We review our signage and seek to improve its visibility for all pupils, staff and visitors. The School is also committed to developing alternative communication methods for those pupils receiving support. This is achieved through developing a greater range of access arrangements, offering training to staff to improve their understanding of accessibility and inclusion, provision of specialist exam support and the use of new systems to provide advice for individual pupil support

Teaching strategies are reviewed regularly to ensure that any potential barriers to learning and participation by disabled pupils are removed. We support our teaching and support staff with a programme of training designed to raise their understanding of neurodiversity and disabilities and to enable them to minimise barriers to learning. We actively encourage our staff and pupils to use inclusive and affirmative language, beyond the sole purpose of avoiding offence. This ensures that, wherever possible, positive examples of diversity and disability are portrayed in teaching materials.

2. **Context**

As at 1st March 2023, Merchant Taylors' School has one pupil with an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) and MTP do not have any currently. In September 2023 we will welcome another pupil with an EHCP to MTS. There are, at present, no Looked After Children (LAC) in the School. Pupils with identified needs are monitored at appropriate intervals for their needs and at least once a year, in order to assess progress and review support (including any exam access arrangements).

The Senior School has in the region of 180 pupils with learning support needs and medical disabilities; this figure is in the region of 20 for the Prep School. These include pupils with dyslexia, dyspraxia, diabetes, ADHD and visual impairments, and pupils who are autistic, hard of hearing or who have mobility or mental health needs. All our pupils are able to access all aspects of school life and have the opportunity to participate in the whole curriculum including extra-curricular activities (such as school trips).

We take a fully inclusive approach to our staff recruitment and aim to promote proactive accessibility throughout our recruitment processes. We aim to appoint the best person based on their skill set and qualifications and regardless of disability and where appropriate, reasonable adjustments are put in place. We actively implement the School's equal opportunities policy for staff in the day-to-day management and provide annual Equality and Diversity training. Support is available for staff and, as an example, has been provided for those who are hard of hearing, with diabetes, mobility differences, sight loss and specific learning difficulties which may affect their roles. In the case of staff who are neurodivergent or disabled, support is available to ensure they can fulfil their roles.

We currently have no governors with any declared disabilities. However, we review this annually and make reasonable adjustments to ensure that they can access meetings as well as providing the necessary information and equipment to enable them to undertake their role.

The MTS accessibility policy is reviewed annually by the Head of Prep, the Bursar, Deputy Head (Academic), Registrar, Head of Learning Support, Director of Sport, School Nurse, HR Manager and Buildings Manager. The terms of reference for this review are:

1. To review the School's policies, procedures and facilities as they are likely to affect disabled pupils, staff and visitors and any prospective pupils, staff and visitors who are disabled.
2. To make recommendations with a view to improving the accessibility of its education in many aspects to current or prospective disabled pupils by means of reasonable adjustments and by planning for the future.
3. To prepare the School's disability inclusion, SEND and learning support policy.
4. To prepare the School's accessibility plan.
5. To review such plans and policies as necessary and at least on an annual basis.

We will regularly monitor the success of the plan and it will also be reviewed annually by the Governors' Education Committee and the Governing Body.

3. Accessibility Action Plan

Our action plan has considered the following areas:

- Admissions
- Attainment
- Attendance
- Exclusions
- Education
- Extra-curricular activities
- Governing body representation
- Physical school environment
- Selection and recruitment of staff
- Sporting education and activities
- Staff training
- Pupil, Staff and Visitor Welfare

The results of our continuous monitoring of the above has informed the accessibility plan below which relates to Schedule 10 from The Equality Act, 2010:

Schedule 10	Description
3 (1)	The responsible body of a school in England and Wales must prepare an accessibility plan;
3 (2) (a)	Increasing the extent to which disabled pupils can participate in the School's curriculum;
3 (2) (b)	Improving the physical environment of the school for the purposes of increasing the extent to which disabled pupils are able to take advantage of education and benefits, facilities or services provided or offered by the School.
3 (2) (c)	Improving the delivery to disabled pupils of information which is readily accessible to pupils who are not disabled.
3 (2) (d)	Arrangements for pupils with disabilities sitting examinations.

The Governing Body recognises its responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act (1995), which prevents discrimination against disabled people in their access to education. Merchant Taylors' School is committed to providing a full curriculum to as many pupils as possible and aims to enable all young people to achieve their full potential, academically, emotionally, physically and spiritually. In order to meet the needs of disabled pupils, applicants will be asked to disclose their disabilities or conditions that the School should be aware of, any learning support received or the content of any educational psychologist reports. The School will remain sensitive to issues of data protection and confidentiality.

June 2023
Head of MTP, Deputy Head (Academic) & Bursar
Review Date June 2024