



LEARNING SUPPORT POLICY (Special Educational Needs and Disability Policy and Procedure)

Policy Custodian: *Deputy Head (Academic) & Head of Learning Support*

Approving Body: *MTS Senior Leadership Team*

Date: *June 2025*

(This policy does not apply to Merchant Taylors' Prep.)

This policy has been written with reference to the following guidance and documents:

- Equality Act 2010: advice for schools (Department for Education, February 2013)
- SEND Code of Practice 0 – 25 (January 2015)
- Safeguarding Policy
- Accessibility Plan and policy
- This policy was created by the school's Head of Learning Support in liaison with the SLT and after consultation with the Common Room and the parents of pupils with SEND

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1. Aims of the Policy

The belief at Merchant Taylors' School is that we must encourage all pupils to develop their personal skills and to become independent learners. Every teacher is a teacher of all pupils at the school including those who are neurodivergent or have SEND. Each student will be supported towards achieving their full potential, academically, socially and emotionally. We also have a role in supporting teachers to meet the needs of the students within their classes.

While all pupils need support to learn, some face barriers to learning which calls for specific provision to be made to help them to achieve. Such pupils may include those with specific learning difficulties (SpLD), social emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH) or disabled pupils.

This Policy details how Merchant Taylors' School aims to ensure that pupils who have additional learning needs make progress. The school will ensure that teachers in the school are able to identify and provide for those pupils who require additional support for their learning.

To help fulfil these aims, the school has the following objectives:

1. To identify and provide for pupils who are neurodivergent or who have SEND
2. To work with an awareness of the guidance provided in the SEND Code of Practice
3. To operate a “whole school” approach to the management and provision of support for those pupils with SEND
4. To provide a Special Educational Needs and Disability Co-ordinator, in Merchant Taylors' School's terminology – the Head of Learning Support.
5. To provide support and advice for all staff working with disabled pupils or pupils who have additional or different learning needs

2. Definitions

Children have special educational needs if they have a learning difficulty which calls for special educational provision to be made for them.

A child has a learning difficulty or disability if they:

- have a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of others of the same age or
- have a disability which prevents or hinders them from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided for others of the same age within the school

Children are not to be regarded as having a learning difficulty solely because the language or form of language of their home is different from the language in which they will be taught. Pupils who fall into this category are covered by the school's English as an Additional Language Policy.

SEND falls into four broad areas:

- Communication and interaction e.g. Autism
- Cognition and learning e.g. Learning difficulties, including Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD)
- Social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH)
- Sensory and/or physical needs e.g. Individuals who are hard of hearing, mobility needs

Neurodiversity refers to the variation of the brain in the human population. The population is naturally neurodiverse. A neurodivergent individual has a neurology that does not fit the predominant neurotype (e.g. due to differences in attention or cognitive processing). Being neurodivergent is not a deficit or disorder, and is not in itself a SEND, however it can make an individual more likely to experience a SEND and can require adjustments to the learning environment.

3. Disability

The Equality Act 2010 makes discrimination against pupils (and potential pupils) on the grounds of their disability unlawful. This places a duty on the school to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled pupils have full access to all school services. Both the school and each individual member of staff are responsible for this. In order to meet the demands of the Equality Act, school practices, the curriculum, physical environment, organisation of teaching and the admissions process need to be considered. The school uses its best endeavours to ensure that the curriculum is accessible to all students, irrespective of ability, creed, culture or ethnic background. Where possible, this is achieved through adaptations to the environment (e.g. seating plans to minimise distractions for a pupil with ADHD) and where appropriate, exam access arrangements can also be put in place. Specialist guidance is available to support teaching. Consideration of the physical environment is detailed in the accessibility plan, and consideration of the admissions process is detailed in the disability access policy.

4. Staffing

The Learning Support Department is staffed by the Head of Learning Support, Departmental Teachers, Specialist Support Mentors and Learning Support Assistants.

Role of the Head of Learning Support

- Overseeing the day-to-day operation of the school's Learning Support Policy
- Coordinating, delivering and evaluating provision for children with learning support needs
- Leading staff in identifying the learning support needs of pupils (including carrying out screening and specialist assessment)
- Liaising with and advising school staff
- Overseeing the records of all children with learning support needs
- Liaising with pupils learning support needs and their families
- Contributing to the in-service training of staff
- Liaising with external specialists and agencies
- Leading access arrangements for exams

Role of Specialist Teacher

- Assisting the Head of Learning Support, as required, with the above
- Providing specialist support to pupils with specific learning difficulties
- Reviewing and advising on the needs of applicants with SEND
- Carrying out access arrangements assessments under the direction of the Head of Learning Support

Role of Department Support Staff

- Supporting the effective learning of pupils with learning support needs
- Maintaining pupil records and carrying out administrative tasks
- Liaising with parents regarding the progress and support of their child*
- Assisting with the development of support materials
- Assisting with the assessment and review of pupils' progress, reporting this, as required by the Head of Learning Support to relevant colleagues e.g. Heads of Section/Department*
- Offering small group support sessions at break times
- Assisting in the implementation and monitoring of support programmes
- Providing support for specific pupils inside and outside the classroom to enable them to fully access the curriculum and participate in activities through developing independence and self-confidence
- Supervising and supporting study sessions for pupils with a modified timetable*

**Specialist Support Mentor role only*

Resources

The Department keeps a supply of resources such as books and articles which are available to the staff should they feel they need to research any area. The Head of Learning Support has access to various outside agencies if further professional advice is needed. The School Library has resources that are available to staff and pupils. Resources are placed in the Learning Support Offices and electronic resources are available on Firefly and Teams. There are also resources available to parents if need be. The Head of Learning Support has access to, and uses, a range of psychometric assessments where needed.

5. Identification

The initial point of identification is information received from the pupil's Primary or Prep school. In the application process, parents and feeder schools are encouraged to pass on any information that might be relevant in the identification of special educational needs. Any records or reports that could be useful are passed to the Head of Learning Support, who then will share these with the pupil's tutor and subject teachers.

The school aims to ensure that each new entrant to the School is given a variety of short screening tests within their first term. This screening is designed to alert staff to the possible existence of a Specific Learning Difficulty. Where these assessments suggest the possibility of a Specific Learning Difficulty, monitoring will take place and, if appropriate, parents will be contacted to discuss possible next steps.

Within school, identification relies on the staff raising a concern about a particular pupil and providing feedback. After consultation and monitoring by the Learning Support Department, a decision is made whether to recommend to the parents that the pupil needs further assessment or whether the need is such that the school and the pupil can cope without having to rely on outside agencies for assessment and / or support. In some circumstances, it may be appropriate for the school to recognise and support SEND or neurodiversity in the absence of clinical identification. These steps are taken in consultation with the pupil and their parents.

Should the decision be made that external agencies should be used for further assessment, action or monitoring, the Head of Learning Support will discuss with the parents how this might be done. The cost of this will need to be met by the parents. The school reserves the right to withdraw a pupil's place if their parents choose not to cooperate with arrangements, supported by professional opinion, that are considered essential and to the benefit of the pupil.

Pupils identified as being neurodivergent, having a learning need or SEND are recorded on the school's Learning Support list. This list includes the SEND register and has different categories which relate to the level of support required. The learning support list also includes pupils who do not have an identified SEND but who are being monitored by the department or who have centre delegated access arrangements (e.g. for medical reasons)

6. Provision

The school undertakes to make whatever arrangements are reasonable and possible within the normal day to day functioning of the school to ensure that the pupil who has been identified as having SEND or being neurodivergent can fulfil their potential. The school takes an inclusive approach to SEND support, adapting the learning environment through inclusive teaching and accessible resources. Neurodivergent pupils are supported with a neurodiversity-informed approach. This means they are supported in finding effective routes to success that work with their neurodivergence, rather than being encouraged onto neurotypical pathways through interventions.

Recommendations made by an external agency or professional will be followed if they are within the boundaries of what is reasonable for the school and compatible with the school's ethos and approach of inclusivity, accessibility and neurodiversity-informed practice. Individual classroom teachers, with guidance from the Learning Support Department, are responsible for making reasonable adjustments for individual needs.

The Head of Learning Support and Learning Support staff are available to provide support both within the classroom and without. However, the school believes that, in the overwhelming majority of cases, it is detrimental to a pupil's overall education to withdraw them from lessons. For Years 7 – 11, most support will be in the classroom or in small groups outside of normal teaching time (such as lunch times). For Years 12 and 13, support can also be offered on an individual or small group basis during Supervised Private Study periods or Private Study time.

7. Individual Review

The pupil's teachers and Tutor will keep the Department informed so decisions can be made with regards to further intervention if need be. The Tutor plays a key role here and it is their responsibility to monitor reports from class teachers and to discuss these when necessary. Tutors of pupils with SEND and neurodivergent (as defined above) should use the discussions after internal grading and internal examinations as an opportunity to monitor progress and feed this information to the Department as appropriate.

The progress of pupils on the learning support list is monitored through meetings between the Head of Learning Support and Heads of Section and through the school's academic triage meetings, which are attended by the Head of Learning Support. . The Learning Support Department also aims to meet with each pupil at appropriate intervals (depending on need) to discuss the extent to which the pupil feels they is making progress. The results of this meeting are shared with Tutors, the relevant Head of School, and the Head of Examinations via the school's central record keeping systems.

Individual Education Plans (IEP's) are only used when the special educational need is regarded as *significant*. *Significant* is defined as: a difficulty which does not allow the pupil to access parts or all of the curriculum at all. This would normally mean that the pupil has an Education, Health and Care Plan. If this is the case, the procedure as set out in the SEND Code of Practice will be followed.

8. Record Keeping

The Head of Learning Support maintains a record on the school's management information system, iSAMS, for each pupil identified. A list detailing these pupils and any relevant documents is accessible to staff via iSAMS. The list is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that names are added and removed when necessary. The list is accessible to members of staff and they are prompted to review it regularly, in particular following significant amendments. Such amendments may also communicated via the Tutor to the pupil's teachers.

Departmental documents are stored by the Learning Support Department. This includes copies of relevant documents for pupils who have been identified as having a SpLD as well as those who do not have an identified SpLD but who are being monitored by the Learning Support Department. More general information with regards to Learning Support is made available to staff through online shared resources areas. Key documents, such as professional reports, fact sheets and monitoring records concerning each boy are available for staff to access via iSAMS.

9. Admission requirements for those with SpLD

All pupils wishing to enrol at Merchant Taylors' sit the entrance exam. If the pupil is already identified as having individual needs that require access arrangements, they is granted appropriate access arrangements (such as extra time or use of a laptop) in accordance with the guidelines as set down by JCQ for public examinations. Parents are encouraged to inform the School of any support that their child may need when applying to the school so that appropriate action can be taken. Supporting documentation, such as any existing Educational Psychologist report, as well as evidence of need and provision provided by the feeder school, needs to accompany the application form to ensure that the School is able to accommodate access arrangements.

Merchant Taylors' School has a very good and open relationship with our feeder schools and we encourage parents to allow the feeder school to pass on any relevant information. Should this information only become known to us after an offer of a place has been accepted or after the pupil has enrolled at the school, there is no guarantee that the school will be able to meet the needs of the pupil. If support is needed beyond what the School can normally provide, parents are informed that the cost is to be met by the parents.

10. Partnership and liaison

The school has contact and a working relationship with various outside professionals, agencies and institutions (such as PATOSS) and does not hesitate to refer parents to these or to call on these agencies to lend support when needed.

11. Policy review

The Learning Support Policy is a working document and is open to review on a regular basis. Any changes will be publicised to the staff and the parent body.

Appendix One

Particulars of the educational and welfare provision for pupils with Education Health and Care Plans.

This Appendix addresses the Independent School Standards Regulations (ISSRs) Part 6, Paragraph 32. (1) (b) Subparagraph (3) (b)

Merchant Taylors' school is an academically selective school, committed to providing a high quality of education for those pupils who have the ability the aptitude to access our academic curriculum. The aim of this policy is to help ensure that the school meets the needs of any pupils who have a statement or Education, Health and Care plan (EHC plan).

Admissions

As with a diagnosed learning difficulty or other special educational need (SEND), where a pupil has an EHC plan, we advise parents to make the school aware of this as soon as possible. This means that the pupil's needs can be discussed and appropriate provision can be made for them for entrance exams. We ask that parents provide a copy of the EHC plan, medical or psychologist report to support any exam arrangements that are made. These arrangements might include extra time, use of a word processor, provision of rest breaks, or large print exam papers.

Provision

Where a pupil has an EHC plan, the school will make all reasonable adjustments necessary to support the needs of that pupil, as detailed in their EHC plan. This is overseen by the head of Learning Support who will:

- Liaise with the pupil's tutor, head of section and any other relevant staff (e.g. school nurse) □
- Monitor the pupil's progress
- Inform and update staff of the individual's needs
- Offer support to relevant staff regarding curriculum access and delivery
- Communicate with parents and the local authority who have issued the EHC plan as needed
- Manage resources and oversee the use of any associated funding (in liaison with the school accounts department)
- Arrange an Annual Review each year (or sooner if deemed necessary), incorporating input from the pupil, parents, staff and the relevant local authority

Merchant Taylors' operates a whole school approach to SEND. It is our belief that we must encourage all pupils to develop their personal skills and to become independent learners. Every teacher is a teacher of all pupils at the school including those with SEND and each student will be supported towards achieving their full potential, academically, socially and emotionally