



CURRICULUM POLICY

Policy Custodian: *Deputy Head (Academic)*

Approving Body: *MTS Senior Leadership Team*

Approved: *September 2026*

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

Philosophy

The curriculum at Merchant Taylors' School consists of all of those activities planned by the school to promote the development of our pupils and to prepare them for life in Britain, Europe and the World today. Merchant Taylors' School was founded in 1561 and our first Head Master was one of the great educationalists of that time – Richard Mulcaster. His writings on education contain much which still underpins our curriculum, not least its holistic ethos. As he said:

'It is not a mind, not a body, that we have to cultivate, but a man, and we cannot divide him.'

Merchant Taylors' is a selective school. Our vision is holistic, but our curriculum is academic. This academic focus exists to stretch and challenge the intelligent and enquiring minds of our pupils. Over the five or seven years a boy is with us, our curriculum challenges and engages them across the whole gamut of academic disciplines, be they linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human, social, physical, aesthetic or creative. This ensures that they emerge from Merchant Taylors' School as rounded young men of character and integrity. They will also be capable of thinking and working independently. Mulcaster wrote that a Merchant Taylors' boy should *'be best able to perform all those functions in life which his position shall require.'* Given that our pupils aspire to a wide range of future careers, our curriculum prepares them to be able to adapt to any challenges life may put in their path.

In order that pupils leave us ready for the world, our curriculum offers the following;

Challenge

All of our pupils, of whatever ability and irrespective of whether they have an educational health and care (EHC) plan, are all challenged by our stimulating schemes of work and thus afforded the opportunity to make real progress at all times. Those pupils with an EHC plan are also supported by teachers who follow the requirements of their plan. Our challenging schemes of work, along with our excellent teachers, allow all of our pupils to access material suitable to their age and needs in a given subject. However, the schemes of work allow for pupils' ability to drive their own learning. They can always go further and it is through this partnership between the pupils and their teachers that pupils' interests can be encouraged. Mulcaster wrote that a regard should be had to a boy's *'memory, his delight, his capacity and his advancement.'* The way we challenge all of our pupils allows them to make progress in all that they study.

Range

Our pupils study a wide range of subjects, only specialising when they have had an opportunity to experience and excel in a number of different areas. All of the subjects we offer help our pupils to acquire skills in speaking and listening, literacy and numeracy. In order to best facilitate the acquisition of these skills, our pupils experience a wide range of teaching styles. There is no homogenised Merchant Taylors' teacher. Save for an expectation of excellence in their work, they are encouraged to enrich the learning of our pupils however they see fit.

Balance

As pupils progress through the school, some subjects begin to be considered ‘central’ to their curriculum and are apportioned more time from that available, notably English, Mathematics, Sciences and Modern Languages - at least to the end of the Fifth Form. Other subjects are considered ‘optional’ and have less time given to them. We ensure that they are given the opportunity to choose subjects which will help them develop a variety of types of intelligence and acquire a range of skills and knowledge.

Differentiation

Our pupils are all individuals. As such, we can and do - from time to time - offer a tailored programme to some pupils. This allows us to adapt what pupils study in line with their differing abilities and any identified additional needs which they may have (including pupils with SEND). This may take the form of acceleration through courses in some cases, or doing fewer subjects more effectively in others.¹ It allows all pupils to learn and fulfil their potential.

Coherence

There is a plan for all. The different elements of our curriculum link together in a sensible and measured fashion. The academic curriculum is supported through our pastoral system and through regular communication with parents.

Choice

The curriculum takes account of pupils’ preferences. Timetables from the Fourth Form onwards are constructed around pupils’ choices and not the other way round. There are no pre-constructed ‘blocks’ for the timetable. Merchant Taylors’ tries, insofar as it can, to run any course for which there is sufficient demand.

Holism

Our curriculum is absolutely and consciously holistic. We have a vast array that our pupils do that is not part of our traditional, academic curriculum and which enhances their knowledge of themselves and each other. Be it our Activities and Societies programme, our Duke of Edinburgh Award Schemes from the Divisions onwards or our Combined Cadet Force programme – our pupils are given the chance to grow and stretch themselves in a variety of different ways. In our Sixth Form, we extend this further, with our pupils taking on Extension and Enrichment lessons, as well as taking on leadership roles in a whole School, House, Team, Subject or Tutor Group capacity.

Values

Mulcaster said, *‘Education is the bringing up of one, not to live alone, but amongst others... in the interest of his country.’* Our values remain very much at one with his Sixteenth Century ideals. Our humanism entirely complements the ‘fundamental British values’ we have been tasked with promoting.² These values inform most, if not all, of our taught academic subjects, as well as our teaching of PSHE³. Many of the subjects we teach, as well as PSHE, help to educate our pupils in the personal, social, health and economic education which is integral to their playing a full part in society and also engender in our pupils a healthy respect for other people.

Preparation

Our curriculum is designed with the world in mind. Our pupils are given outstanding careers advice which follows Mulcaster’s tenets regarding life after education. He wrote, *‘Instead of all becoming lawyers or court officials, why do not some of them... take up some other learned profession.’* We

All quotations are referenced from J. Oliphant, *The Educational Writing of Richard Mulcaster (1532-1611)*, Glasgow University Press, 1903.

¹ See Learning Support Policy and EAL Policy

² See Pastoral Curriculum Policy for further details about the promotion of fundamental British values

³ See Pastoral Curriculum Policy

maintain this desire to see pupils enter upon a range of careers. We have a dedicated Careers Department which offers our pupils an extraordinary range of information and opportunity, as well as individual pupil and parent interviews in the Middle School, along with seminars and lessons on employability in the Upper School and a grounding in Careers Education in the Lower School. This, along with the guidance given by their academic teachers, pastoral tutors and university entrance advisors, means that our pupils realise their full potential and achieve excellence in Higher Education and the world of employment.

Safety

Our pupils are, through our pastoral system and our delivery of PSHE, kept safe during their time at Merchant Taylors' School. They are also given the tools with which to keep themselves and others safe when in school. They are also equipped with the ability to protect themselves in other environments during their time at Merchant Taylors' School and after they leave us.⁴ We, as Mulcaster hoped would happen, give our pupils the '*general skill to judge things rightly*'.

Structure

Merchant Taylors' School is divided into seven year groups, from the Thirds to the Upper Sixth. The general foci of these years can be seen below. The detailed balance of the curriculum for these years and sections can be seen in Appendix One – The Curriculum Plan.

School Year	Section	N/C Year	Academic Focus
Thirds	The Lower School	7	In these years, pupils study a wide range of subjects to enthuse and engage them with the process of learning. They are inculcated with habits of independent thinking and learning to prepare them for life as they progress through Merchant Taylors' School.
Upper Thirds		8	
Fourths		9	A year in which pupils continue to study a wide range of subjects and are able to make informed choices about GCSEs based on their experiences. Towards the end of the year, pupils move on to their GCSE subjects.
Divisions	The Middle School	10	The first full GCSE year, in which pupils study 8 or 9 subjects.
Fifth Form		11	The second GCSE year, in which pupils finish their GCSE courses, leading to most pupils gaining 10 GCSEs in total.
Lower Sixth	The Upper School	12	The first year of Sixth Form study, in which pupils study 4 subjects, before most select 3 to continue to completion. All subjects are linear A Level courses.
Upper Sixth		13	The final year of Sixth Form study, in which most pupils apply to university and finish the year by taking 3 or 4 A Level exams.

⁴ See Safeguarding Policy and Pastoral Curriculum Policy