

## Merchant Taylors' Schools, Crosby

### Teaching & Learning Policy

<b>Policy Owner</b>	<b>Assistant Heads Teaching &amp; Learning</b>
Last reviewed by Date	Assistant Head Teaching & Learning January 2025
Last approved by <u>Date</u>	Education & Safeguarding Committee February 2025
Frequency of review	Annual
Next policy review by owner	January 2026
Next policy approved by Board of Governors (if applicable)	February 2025
Circulation:	All Staff & Governors Inspection Portal School Website Parent Portal Senior & Sixth Pupils
Related Policies:	Academic Policy SEND Policy RSE Policy Careers Policy PSHE Policy
Regulatory Body (if applicable)	Department for Education Independent Schools Inspectorate
Relevant legislation/guidelines	Independent Schools Standards Regulations 2014 (as amended) Department for Education

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## 1. Aim

The aim of this policy is to develop quality learning through effective, evidence-based teaching and to foster teaching which enables pupils to acquire new knowledge and make good progress according to their ability so that they increase understanding and skills in the subjects taught and across the curriculum, thereby allowing pupils to achieve their fullest potential.

## 2. Good Teaching

At Merchant Taylors', 'good' teaching is defined as:

- a) Setting high expectations which inspire, motivate, and challenge pupils;
- b) Enabling progress in knowledge and skills through effective teaching and pushing the child actively towards increased achievement rather than 'getting by';
- c) Fostering motivation and encouraging pupils to work hard and achieve, to question, and to debate themes which arise from the curriculum or everyday life;
- d) Following effective planning, teaching methods, and management of class time;
- e) Demonstrating a good understanding of aptitudes, needs, and prior attainment in lesson planning;
- f) Demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of the subject taught; g. drawing on a varied range of quality classroom resources;
- g) Using assessment to support teaching;
- h) Applying effective strategies to manage behaviour;
- i) Supporting Fundamental British Values [democracy, rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs];
- j) Encouraging respect for all, and specifically in regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the protected characteristics.

See also Part One of the DfE [Teacher Standards](#).

## 3. Principles of Good Teaching

Merchant Taylors' School defines 'great' teaching as teaching that is guided by the principles of the evidence review from the Great Teacher Toolkit, which serves as the foundation for continual professional development (CPD) across the school. This framework emphasises four key dimensions:

- 1.1 Understanding the Content:** Teachers have a deep knowledge of their subject and understand common misconceptions, structuring content to make learning accessible. They can explain ideas clearly, use examples effectively, and scaffold learning to support progress.
- 1.2 Creating a Supportive Environment:** Teachers foster mutual respect, care, and empathy within the classroom. They set high expectations, encourage positive relationships among pupils, and ensure that behaviour rules are consistently applied to create a safe and motivating environment.

**1.3 Maximising Opportunity to Learn:** Teachers manage time and resources effectively, plan purposeful lessons, and use routines to make learning efficient. They regularly check for understanding and give actionable feedback, ensuring that learning time is productive and meets the needs of all pupils.

**1.4 Activating Hard Thinking:** Teachers promote critical thinking by encouraging pupils to engage in deep learning tasks. They use questioning effectively, support pupils in developing self-regulation skills, and gradually move from structured to independent learning to ensure understanding and application of knowledge.

The goal is to use the toolkit to inspire teaching that challenges, supports, and motivates every pupil while fostering a growth mindset and resilience in learning.

#### 4. Learning Behaviours & Environment

Through a consistent definition of an effective approach to behaviour for learning, Merchant Taylors' Schools seeks to develop the motivation and self-discipline of pupils so that they become effective independent learners. Modelling in all we do is at the heart of promoting positive behaviour.

A learning behaviour can be thought of as a behaviour that is necessary in order for a person to learn effectively in the group setting of the classroom; they can be summarised as:

##### 4.1 Emotional

- a) Names emotions and expresses them with increasingly accurate vocabulary
- b) Manages impulses of personal behaviour
- c) Shows pride in successes

##### 4.2 Social

- a) Focuses on learning in class and can articulate this
- b) Attentive to directions, listening to the teacher
- c) Shows empathy and appreciates diversity

##### 4.3 Cognitive

- a) Organises time and space for own learning
- b) Sets goals and monitors own progress
- c) Talks purposefully with peers, valuing other opinions

At Merchant Taylors' School, we aim to develop learning behaviours that reflect **Ambition, Character, and Excellence (ACE)**. These values guide how our pupils learn, behave, and grow throughout their time with us.

#### 4.4 Ambition

Our school cultivates ambitious learners who are curious, organised, and engaged. This means encouraging pupils to take an active interest in their learning, ask thoughtful questions, and explore subjects beyond the curriculum. We promote organisation by helping pupils manage their time and tasks effectively, setting goals and demonstrating self-discipline. Engaged pupils are attentive, active participants in their learning journey, embracing challenges and striving to achieve their full potential.

#### 4.5 Character

Merchant Taylors' School values character development, fostering respect, collaboration, and resilience. We encourage pupils to be respectful towards others, appreciating diverse perspectives and showing kindness in their interactions. Collaborative skills are developed through group work and teamwork, enabling pupils to build relationships and support each other's learning. Resilience is a key trait that we instil, empowering pupils to face setbacks with a positive mindset, learn from mistakes, and persevere when encountering difficulties.

#### 4.6 Excellence

Excellence is demonstrated through independence, creativity, and communication skills. Pupils are encouraged to take ownership of their learning, becoming independent thinkers who can set their own goals and reflect on their progress. Creativity is celebrated across all disciplines, with pupils being inspired to think outside the box, explore innovative solutions, and approach problems with fresh perspectives. Effective communication is crucial to excellence, and we support pupils in developing the confidence to express their ideas clearly, listen actively, and engage thoughtfully in discussions.

By focusing on Ambition, Character, and Excellence, we create a positive learning environment where pupils can grow academically and personally.

### 5. Classroom Expectations for Pupils

To encourage positive learning behaviours, pupils are expected to:

#### 5.1 Ambition

- **Be curious:** Ask thoughtful questions and explore topics beyond the lesson.
- **Be organised:** Come prepared, complete work on time, and take pride in your achievements.
- **Be engaged:** Actively participate in class and always strive to do your best.

#### 5.2 Character

- a) **Be respectful:** Show kindness, set a good example, and respect the learning environment.
- b) **Be collaborative:** Work well with others, value different viewpoints, and support your peers.
- c) **Be resilient:** Embrace feedback positively, learn from challenges, and seek help when needed.

### 5.3 Excellence

- a) **Be independent:** Take ownership of your learning and seek ways to improve.
- b) **Be creative:** Share original ideas and explore different ways to solve problems.
- c) **Be communicative:** Use subject-specific vocabulary, express yourself clearly, and engage with others thoughtfully.

## 6. Teaching Practices & Strategies

At Merchant Taylors' School, teaching practices are shaped by the evidence-based principles of the Great Teacher Toolkit and Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction. These strategies focus on effective teaching methods that enhance pupil learning and are organised into the following themes:

### 6.1 Reviewing Material: Regular Reviews for Strengthening Retention

Teachers regularly revisit key content to strengthen retention and support connections between past and new learning. Recognising that pupils may not be seen every day; these reviews are structured flexibly to align with lesson schedules:

- 6.1.1 Lesson-Based Reviews:** Quick recaps or warm-ups at the start of each lesson to reinforce recently learned material.
- 6.1.2 Weekly or Bi-Weekly Reviews:** Revisiting key concepts covered in recent lessons to identify areas needing further clarification.
- 6.1.3 Unit / topic Reviews:** Comprehensive summaries of larger units or topics conducted periodically to reinforce long-term understanding and retention.

### 6.2 Questioning: Ask Questions and Check for Understanding

Effective questioning helps gauge pupil comprehension and encourages active participation. This includes:

- 6.2.1 Frequent, Targeted Questions:** Asking open-ended questions to stimulate thinking and assess understanding.
- 6.2.2 Checking for Understanding:** Using a variety of methods, such as quick assessments or discussions, to confirm that pupils grasp key ideas before moving forward.

### 6.3 Sequencing Concepts & Modelling: Presenting New Material in Manageable Steps

New content is introduced gradually to build understanding while providing the necessary support. This includes:

- 6.3.1 Small Steps:** Breaking down complex information into smaller, digestible chunks to avoid overwhelming pupils.
- 6.3.2 Modelling:** Demonstrating clear examples, processes, or skills, so pupils can see what success looks like.
- 6.3.3 Scaffolding:** Offering support structures, such as hints or prompts, for difficult tasks, and gradually reducing them as pupils gain confidence.

## **7. Stages of Practice: Guided Practice to Independent Application**

Structured practice opportunities help pupils move from supported learning to independent mastery. This includes:

- a) **Guided Practice:** Teachers actively support and monitor practice, offering feedback to correct misunderstandings.
- b) **Achieving High Success Rates:** Ensuring pupils are consistently successful in their practice, building their confidence and proficiency.
- c) **Independent Practice:** Providing opportunities for pupils to apply their learning independently, helping to solidify their skills and understanding.

By organising teaching practices around these themes, Merchant Taylors' School ensures that learning is systematic, supportive, and focused on helping every pupil achieve their best.

## **8. Baseline Data, Assessment, and Prior Learning/Knowledge**

For good teaching to take place, teachers must know their pupils and plan lessons accordingly; teachers must have knowledge of pupils and accurate assessment data on progress inform pupils' attainment and track performance over time.

Teaching assesses pupils systematically and teachers use assessment data to plan and modify teaching and provide regular feedback to and about pupils, identifying where pupils need extra support or intervention. Thus, we operate a continual cycle of:

- a) Assessment
- b) Tracking
- c) Intervention

## 9. Assessment & Feedback

Effective assessment and feedback are crucial to high-quality teaching and learning, aligning with the school's commitment to evidence-based practice. These elements help to identify pupil progress, inform future teaching, and support pupil development:

**9.1 Formative Assessment:** This ongoing process is used to adapt teaching and guide pupil progress. Techniques such as verbal feedback, questioning, self-assessment, and peer assessment are integrated into lessons to promote continuous learning. Formative assessment helps teachers identify areas where pupils may need additional support or challenge and fosters a culture of reflective learning.

**9.2 Summative Assessment:** Scheduled assessments provide a benchmark for pupil achievement and help track progress over time. These assessments are used to inform planning, set goals, and implement targeted interventions for individuals and groups who may need further support to meet or exceed expectations.

Feedback is timely, specific, and constructive, designed to move learning forward. It aims to reinforce strengths, address misconceptions, and guide pupils on the next steps in their learning journey. Feedback may be given in various forms, such as written comments, verbal discussions, or digital feedback, always with the intent of empowering pupils to improve and take ownership of their learning. Specific details on assessment and feedback are contained in the separate MTS Assessment, Feedback and Reporting Policy.

## 10. Staff Development

Merchant Taylors' Schools priorities the professional development of its teachers with a focus on improving and evaluating pupil outcomes, underpinned by robust evidence and expertise, includes collaboration and expert challenge, while ensuring programmes are sustained over time.

As evidence suggests, for example, that stand-alone professional-development activity without a specific focus is unlikely to have a lasting impact on pupil outcomes; when used as part of a sustained and coherent programme which includes structured, collaborative in school activities to refine ideas and embed approaches, the same activity can be used to greater effect.

Merchant Taylors' Schools Teaching Development Programme seeks to sustain and embed practice, including, but not limited to, individual and collaborative teacher activity, well designed formative assessment and evaluation, whole-school leadership, and expert input.

Alongside Continuing Professional Development and INSET, the Professional Development Review also identifies specific targets for development for members of staff. The cycle for this review is yearly.

### 10.1 Development of Subject Didactics & Departmental Development



**10.2** As subject-specific Continuous Professional Development [CPD] which focuses on enhancing teachers' understanding of the subjects they teach, how pupils learn in those subjects, and how to teach them, is more effective in terms of its impact on pupil outcomes, than generic, pedagogic CPD, a standing component of every Departmental meeting is to discuss teaching and learning, specifically discussing the impact of teaching, evaluating current practices, and identifying new approaches.

**10.3** In turn, this approach helps to develop a key focus for each term and academic year for the improvement of teaching and learning.

**10.4** Regular review of assessment data forms the basis of this approach to evaluate the impact of teaching.

### **10.5 Whole-School Development**

Our CPD strategy is centred around the core themes that are relevant to all teaching staff, from Stanfield to the Sixth Form, and across all subjects. The *Great Teacher Toolkit* supports these themes by providing evidence-based pathways that guide teachers in the following areas:

- a) **Content Mastery:** Enhances teachers' subject knowledge and their teaching methods.
- b) **Classroom Environment:** Fosters positive and respectful spaces where pupils can thrive.
- c) **Maximizing Learning Opportunities:** Positively enhances classroom management to boost pupil engagement.
- d) **Stimulating Cognitive Development:** Promotes critical thinking and deeper learning through interactive lessons.

### **10.6 Role Specific Training**

Professional growth also needs to be tailored to the specific roles of staff across the school. Therefore, in addition to the general CPD framework, MTS also focusses on developing staff in three key areas:

- a) **Academic Development:** Enhances skills in curriculum planning, instructional strategies, and assessment design.
- b) **Pastoral Care:** Provides staff with tools to support the emotional and social well-being of pupils.
- c) **Science of Learning:** Utilises the latest research in cognitive science to help teachers improve how pupils learn and retain information.

## **11. Teaching, Learning & Innovation Group**

The school also has a dedicated Teaching, Learning & Innovation Group, made up of teaching staff from across all areas of the school, primarily consisting of staff enrolled or who have completed the Evidenced based education Science of Learning program. This group meets once a half-term to discuss and develop best teaching practices and to explore ways to implement research-led strategies in classrooms. Their focus is on sharing best practices, experiences, identifying

opportunities for improvement, and ensuring that great teaching is continually refined and enhanced across the school.

## **12. Quality Assurance & Professional Development Review**

To maintain and enhance teaching quality at Merchant Taylors' School:

### **12.1 Departmental Self-Reviews**

Conducted in the first half of the Autumn Term, Heads of Department work with a member of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to identify and set development goals for the year. Progress toward these goals is monitored through regular line management meetings and supported through the CPD program.

### **12.2 Department Deep Dives / Focused Insight Reviews**

These reviews are conducted collaboratively, with department Heads of Department (HoDs) paired to support one another. The process allows the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and the HoD to gain insights into day-to-day practices, student experiences, and the effectiveness of curriculum implementation. The collaborative approach fosters shared learning and reflection between paired HoDs.

The review involves a member of SLT and the HoDs completing the following activities:

- a) Lesson observation
- b) Book reviews
- c) Pupil discussions

### **12.3 Lesson Observations & Learning Walks**

Lessons are regularly observed, with feedback provided based on the Great Teacher Toolkit dimensions. Whole school and department-specific learning walks are conducted once a term, focusing on the school's core development priorities.

## **13. Assessment Data Tracking**

Pupil progress is tracked against CEM baseline data to inform teaching practices across the school. This process is aligned with the assessment and curriculum policy and is supported by the use of the iSAMS Management Information System (MIS).

## **14. Book Reviews**

Heads of Department conduct book reviews during meetings to ensure consistency in teaching approaches and pupil work standards across the school.

## **15. Cover**

When setting cover, teachers should ensure that clear and detailed instructions are left which enable the lesson to be delivered to a high standard. This should include clear and detailed instructions for how the lesson should be delivered, and appropriate resources. Seating plans should also be provided where applicable. Heads of Department are responsible for overseeing the setting of cover within their departments.

## **16. Remote Learning**

Merchant Taylors' Schools are prepared to adapt teaching and learning practices for remote learning when necessary, ensuring that pupils continue to benefit from structured lessons and effective feedback.

## **17. Homework**

Homework is designed to reinforce learning, provide opportunities for independent practice, and encourage self-regulation skills. Specific details of homework are contained in the separate MTS Homework Policy.

## **18. SEND**

Across the school, the Learning Support Department collaborates with teaching staff to identify pupils with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. They provide strategies, support and resources for both teachers and pupils to ensure that all pupils can access the school curriculum as effectively as possible.

## **19. Conclusion**

The Merchant Taylors' School Teaching & Learning Policy reflects our commitment to fostering an environment where all pupils can achieve their fullest potential. Grounded in evidence-based practices from the Great Teacher Toolkit and Rosenshine's Principles of Instruction, our approach emphasizes the development of Ambition, Character, and Excellence (ACE) in every pupil. Through clearly defined classroom expectations, effective teaching strategies, and a structured CPD program for staff, we strive to create a supportive and challenging learning environment.

By maintaining high standards for assessment and feedback, regularly reviewing and refining teaching practices, and ensuring that every pupil's needs are met—whether through remote learning, homework, or tailored support for SEND pupils—we remain focused on delivering a holistic and engaging educational experience. This policy underscores our dedication to continuous improvement and to nurturing a community of learners who are curious, respectful, resilient, and driven to excel.