

Merchant Taylors' Schools, Crosby

Curriculum Policy

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1. Aims

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Teaching and Learning Policy, SEND Policy, Assessment, Feedback and Reporting Policy, PSHE Policy and the Careers Policy.

2. Curriculum design

The aim of the curriculum at Merchant Taylors' School (MTS) is to develop the skills, qualities and dispositions encapsulated in Ambition, Character and Excellence as discussed in the Assessment, Feedback and Reporting Policy, and to provide as high a quality portfolio of qualifications and skills as possible, facilitating entry into courses of further education or other post-school pathways appropriate to the individual pupil.

Our curriculum is explicitly designed to offer the full range of educational experiences (linguistic, mathematical, scientific, technological, human and social, physical and aesthetic). Indeed, the curriculum plan detailed below ensures that none of our pupils experiences a premature narrowing of educational opportunity.

3. Academic curriculum

In the Lower School, pupils study a full range of subjects, including Mathematics, English, Modern and Classical Languages, Science, History, Geography, Religion, Philosophy and Ethics, Computer Science, Music, Art, Design, Drama and Physical Education. As part of the academic curriculum, Ambition, Character and Excellence are taught alongside subject content. The individual subject curricula are set by departments and, whilst there are broad similarities between these and the National Curriculum, there is no formal alignment. However, the curricula must tie in with Middle School work and GCSE specifications.

Year 7 and 8 have specific lessons about learning skills and follow a curriculum to teach them and give them opportunities to develop the following skills: Notetaking, highlighting, summarising, mind mapping, research skills, metacognition, memory, retrieval practice, presentation skills, interleaving, dual coding. Along with planning and organising their learning.

In Year 7 pupils' study two Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish) and a Classical Language (Latin) in Year 7. Pupils can then choose which two MFLs they take in Year 8: two from French, German, Spanish and Mandarin. Pupils continue to study Latin in Year 8. The aim is to provide pupils with a strong understanding and competency in written and oral literacy, which will serve as a foundation for their future studies in all subject areas.

At the end of Year 8, pupils can shape their academic programme through the selection of three options choices that sit alongside a core curriculum of Mathematics, English, Biology, Chemistry, Physics, History, Geography and a Language. These subject choices prepare pupils to take responsibility for their academic decision making, and act as a precursor to the GCSE choices pupils make in Year 9 as they prepare to enter the Middle School.

The Middle School curriculum is designed to be broad and balanced, and to widen pupils' knowledge, understanding and experiences. It develops their academic skills and allows them to explore their own specific interests and strengths and provides a sound basis from which pupils will be able to choose their courses in the Sixth Form and beyond.

The core academic curriculum at GCSE consists of English Literature, English Language, Mathematics, and Science. Pupils make a choice of which Science route to follow:

- all three separate sciences (awarded three GCSEs)
- OR combined science (awarded two GCSEs)

Pupils then have several option subjects to select. The exact number of options depends on the choice of science route:

- if separate sciences, there are three options available
- if combined science, there are four options available

Of these options, at least one must be a language (either a modern foreign language or a classical language) and at least one must be a humanity (History, Geography, Classical Civilisation and Religion, Philosophy and Ethics).

The most able mathematicians have the opportunity to take a Further Mathematics GCSE in addition to their Mathematics GCSE. This course teaches proof-based mathematics and is an excellent stepping stone to quantitative A Level courses.

To exercise and develop their enquiry learning skills, pupils in Middle School can take the Higher Project Qualification (HPQ), worth one GCSE. The HPQ is run through the Tendo programme; pupils devise their own research question and undertake an academic research project with the support of a mentor.

In the Sixth Form, pupils may choose from a selection of A Level courses; the range of subject choices offered far exceeds that required by universities. The options available are reviewed annually to ensure that this remains the case. Most pupils choose three A Levels; some take four A Levels, typically where Further Mathematics is part of the selection. The provision of academic enhancement activities – such as the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ) or elective courses - will also be reviewed regularly. These courses run alongside taught A Level courses, often as part of the Tendo programme. The EPQ consists of a taught programme of academic research and enquiry skills, and access to an individual mentor. Pupils typically commence the EPQ in their Lower Sixth year, submitting the project in the summer of Lower Sixth or autumn of Upper Sixth. Academic elective courses that sit as part of Tendo have included Languages for Business qualifications, the CISI Securities and Investment award and the Sports Leadership award.

Academic departments, through the Head of Department, or his/her nominated Oxbridge mentor, co-ordinate provision for elite pupils aiming for Oxbridge or other very competitive institutions or courses. This is overseen by the Head of Oxbridge.

Detailed curricula for all academic courses, are the responsibility of the relevant Head of Department. Schemes of work should reference differentiation strategies for pupils of different abilities.

4. Setting

Except in Mathematics, where setting begins in Year 7, we tend not to set by ability, although there is currently some setting of English in the Lower and Middle School. Departments for whom all teaching sets of a specific year group sit within the same timetable block may, on occasion, stream where appropriate. Merchant Taylors' typically draws from the top 40% nationally. Although this still requires us to differentiate between able and extremely gifted learners, given the range of pupils' ability is narrower than for most other schools nationally, we feel the benefits of mixed ability teaching outweigh the potential pitfalls.

5. Catering for the needs of all pupils

The academic profile of pupils at Merchants is above the national average. Our curriculum is therefore designed to stretch our pupils intellectually. Over time, they should have the opportunity to gradually specialise in areas of the curriculum in which they are passionately interested. In addition to facing challenging and stimulating work in the classroom, the most academically able pupils are invited to join the academic Sophos Society. This society offers seminars, talks and projects in various areas of intellectual pursuit. Its aim is to introduce boys to new ideas and to stimulate critical and creative thinking.

We are aware of the need to equip our pupils to achieve top grades in public examinations, we have in place clear assessment protocols which track individual progress in attainment and in approaches to learning. Where an individual's progress falls below expectations, intervention occurs through, initially, class teachers and Heads of Department. This might involve a change of approach in the classroom or independent tasks the pupil completes. Departments offer academic clinics which pupils can attend to seek assistance individually or in small groups – these sessions are frequently bespoke, and pupils are encouraged to bring their own questions to explore with teaching staff.

6. SEND

The provision for pupils with Learning Support or EAL needs is detailed in the SEND policy and requires that all pupils are facilitated to access the curriculum and its delivery at all levels. The Lower School curriculum allows pupils with the most significant SEND requirements to have timetabled Learning Support lessons whilst still accessing a full range of subjects, including modern and classical languages. As these pupils progress to the Middle School, the curriculum allows for them to take the typical nine GCSE subjects if they no longer need to continue with timetabled Learning Support, or to take eight GCSEs and maintain their access to dedicated Learning Support lessons.

7. PHSE

The aim of our pastoral care is to provide a supportive, safe and challenging environment for every pupil. MTS should be a place where pupils feel safe, confident and happy. Form Tutors are the focal point of pastoral support. Virtually all members of staff are responsible for a tutor group, and it is through these meetings that the PSHE programme, is primarily delivered. Tutor groups are arranged by year group (and by house in Years 8 to 11) to help ensure appropriate topics are being covered at the right time for each pupil. Sixth Form tutor groups are vertical, consisting of pupils from the Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth. There are a range of external specialist speakers to support the tutorial program and days off timetable allow deeper exploration in topics such as e-safety, adolescent mental health, developing resilience and the understanding of others, with regard to protected characteristics. The provision of PSHE (including RSE) is explored in full in the PSHE Policy and RSE Policy.

8. Values

The total curriculum at MTS aims to provide pupils with effective preparation for their future lives as members of British society. A broad curriculum, over which pupils have increasing autonomy as they grow older, seeks to instil the values, skills and behaviours they need to get on in life. A rich provision of learning experiences both in classroom and through co-curricular activities develops a range of

character attributes, such as resilience, self-motivation, self-control and respect; these traits underpin success in education and future employment. The cultivation of such a mindset is supported by the Merchants focus on Ambition, Character and Excellence encouraging pupils to become curious, organised, engaged, respectful, collaborative, resilient, independent, creative and communicative learners.

9. Careers

MTS' Careers provision, described in more detail in the Careers Policy, ensures that impartial and broad advice and information is given to all pupils, in order that they have the best possible opportunity to access post-school options; this provision is also available to pupils after they have left the school.

10. Games and physical literacy

MTS' sporting philosophy is to ensure a safe, inclusive environment that promotes both participation across a wide number of sports as well as giving pupils the platform to excel individually and as part of a team.

Merchants has a proud history of sporting success and are well respected in the locality for the importance that the School gives to sport. Pupils are given the opportunity to try a range of different sports in lessons and during extra-curricular time with the great majority representing the School.

Pupils are involved in over four hours' worth of sporting activities during timetabled periods, as well as additional training sessions, clubs and fixtures that enhance the pupils' sporting experience.

At MTS, we are excited about giving our pupils the platform to develop physically so that they have the confidence to apply their motor skills to a range of sports. The sports staff at the school actively encourage the boys to look upon themselves as young athletes and not pigeonhole themselves within a specific sport at an early age. By focusing on the individual's physical literacy, we believe that pupils will be equipped with the skills required to excel in a range of sports and ultimately maximise their potential. Additionally, by focusing on physical literacy, it allows pupils to develop at their own speed and become more comfortable in a sporting environment.

11. Tendo – explore, enrich, extend

At MTS, we aim to develop well-educated, well-rounded and caring young people who will play a significant role in society. They will become good team members as well as leaders; above all, they will seek to be a positive influence wherever they find themselves. Our pupils are all academically able and we seek to nurture in them a spirit of enquiry and curiosity which will see them explore their chosen interests, whatever these might be. To this end, the Tendo activities programme sits at the core of the curriculum. It aims to cultivate intellectual curiosity, engagement and strong learning attributes.

There are opportunities for pupil leadership and as pupils of all ages to work together. In Year 7 and Year 8, pupils follow a carousel throughout the year giving them a breadth of enrichment activities. In Year 9, pupils take part in a variety of activities under the umbrella of leadership, teamwork and the Duke of Edinburgh award. In Year 10 to Upper Sixth, pupils choose their Tendo

activity and participate in vertical groups for these activities. There are academic, cultural, community and physical activities on offer. Some activities run for one term, some run for an entire academic year.

The activity programme's purpose is that pupils should:

- enjoy and find significance in a range of activities
- purposefully reflect upon these experiences
- identify goals, develop strategies and determine further actions for personal growth
- explore new possibilities, embrace new challenges and adapt to new roles
- actively participate in planned, sustained and collaborative activities / projects
- understand they are members of local and global communities with responsibilities towards each other and the environment

12. Remote Learning and Covid-19

From March 2020, MTS developed capacity to provide its educational offering remotely using virtual means. This provision covers synchronous and asynchronous learning activities through platforms like Office365 and Microsoft Teams. Given the development of capacity, the core business of the school can move online seamlessly in the event of a lockdown / school closure. Remote learning is also offered in a hybrid format when pupils must self-isolate so that they are able to join lessons that are taking place in school from home.

As a result of the timely and thorough introduction of remote learning at the start of the national lockdown period in 2020, MTS believe pupils have benefitted from continuity in their learning and curricula coverage. Learning audits are carried out at departmental, cohort and class level through the usual methods of assessment and tracking. Where individuals or groups of pupils are identified as making slower progress than expected, intervention measures are carried out in the typical manner e.g. through clinics or supported study sessions. Where the progress of a cohort causes concern, we prioritise the aspects of course content essential for progression in future learning whilst maintaining the breadth of subjects offered across the curriculum.

13. Future curriculum development

The review and appraisal of the School's curriculum is an ongoing task. This takes place at a school wide level and at a departmental level. For example, various departments are currently reviewing their curriculum in the Lower School and choice of GCSE / A Level optional modules to ensure the material covered is inspiring, challenging, diverse and inclusive.