



Merchant Taylors' Schools

Learning Difficulties and Disabilities Policy

Sept 09

Aims

Merchant Taylors' Schools are academically selective and we welcome all children who can make the most of the opportunities that we offer and can flourish in the caring environment of each School. We aim to treat each child as an individual and we welcome children with learning difficulties and disabilities (LDD) providing that our Learning Support Departments can provide them with the support that they require. We do not have the facilities to offer highly specialised and intensive treatment.

We aim to ensure full entitlement and access for pupils with LDD to high quality education within a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum so that they can reach their full potential and enhance their self-esteem.

We advise parents of children with LDD to discuss their child's requirements with each School before the entrance examination/assessment so that we can make adequate provision for the child. Parents should provide a copy of an Educational Psychologist's report or a medical report to support requests for extra time or other special arrangements.

Definition

Legally a child is defined as having LDD if he or she has a learning difficulty which needs special teaching. A learning difficulty means that the child has significantly greater difficulty in learning than most children of the same age. Or, it means a child has a disability which needs different educational facilities from those generally provided by schools for children of the same age in the area.

(This policy is available on the Schools' website)

Related policies

- disability policy
- accessibility plan
- anti-bullying policy
- administration of medicines
- employment policies relating to disabilities

Terms and conditions (paras 46, 47 & 48)

Learning Difficulties: The Schools will do all that is reasonable in the case of each pupil to detect and deal appropriately with LDD. Our staff are not, however, qualified to make a medical diagnosis of conditions such as those commonly referred to as dyslexia, or of other learning difficulties.

Screening for Learning difficulties: The screening tests available to the Schools are indicative only: they are not infallible. Parents will be notified if a screening test indicates that the pupil has LDD. A formal assessment can be arranged by the Schools at the parents' expense or by the parents themselves.

Information about LDD: Parents must notify the Head in writing if they are aware or suspect that the pupil has a LDD and the parents must provide copies of all written reports and other relevant information. Parents will be asked to withdraw the pupil, without being charged Fees in lieu if, in the professional judgement of the Head and after consultation with the parents and the pupil (where appropriate), the Schools cannot provide adequately for a pupil's educational needs. Learning Support provided by the Schools may be charged as an extra.

The Learning Support Department in each School is led by a fully qualified specialist who is able to support each pupil with LDD through the following processes.

SCHOOL ACTION

On entry

Each pupil with LDD requires special consideration and treatment. If appropriate, adjustments will be put in place. We will discuss thoroughly with the parents and their medical advisors the adjustments that can reasonably be made for their child once they have accepted the offer of a place and before s/he becomes a pupil of the Schools.

A meeting is arranged as soon as possible when individual parents are invited to meet one of the LDD staff and other key staff to discuss the needs of individual pupils. The Head of Learning Support in each of the Merchant Taylors' Schools has an overview and will liaise with the teaching staff / assistants.

In general, a pupil will receive support in the classroom and a small number will be withdrawn for more individual help. LDD staff may spend a short time observing classes before decisions are made on the kind of support to be provided.

Monitoring

Each of the four Schools will assess pupils at different stages of his/her school career using year tests and/or reading and spelling tests. All teachers, but particularly those in the English and Mathematics Departments, will be on the look out for children who appear to have learning support needs which have not previously been identified. This particularly applies to children new to the Schools.

Pupils who are thought to have LDD are identified and assessed as early and thoroughly as is possible and necessary. Referral can come from a multitude of sources including:

- Subject teacher's request;
- Pupil self request;
- Parental request;
- Management request;
- GP request;
- Following information from previous school/nursery
- Following blanket testing of a year group
- Following diagnostic tests;
- Following individual interviews;
- Following a LDD teacher tracking and observing individual pupils in lessons.

Such cases will be referred to the Head of Learning Support and the relevant paperwork will be completed and filed.

- There will then be liaison between key staff, the Head of Learning Support and the parents. If the parents wish to bring in any external agencies (eg for further testing, diagnosis or prognosis, remedial teaching) it will be their responsibility to do so, but we will give appropriate advice and assistance.
- Each Head of Learning Support will monitor the progress of these pupils through the Schools and ensure that appropriate staff are kept informed.
- Each Head of Learning Support will liaise with the Examinations Officers as appropriate, to ensure that such pupils receive the maximum allowed extra time in examinations.
- Where appropriate, each child will be issued with an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) which will be reviewed regularly and the child will be encouraged to set his/her own targets.

Review

A review of a pupil's progress will take place on a regular basis (at least annually and more usually biannually) and the IEP adjusted accordingly and disseminated as necessary.

Although the co-ordinating and planning of a pupil's IEP, especially setting appropriate targets, is the responsibility of the Head of Learning Support, the Code of Practice 2001 makes it quite clear that the devising of strategies and the identification of appropriate methods of access to the curriculum should lie within the area of the expertise and responsibility of the individual subject teachers. All teaching staff should therefore be involved in providing further help to pupils through School Action. Subject leaders and individual teachers to be informed of the nature of the pupil's learning difficulty through the IEP. Suggested in-class teaching strategies are provided in addition to the type of learning support that will be in place.

Physical Accessibility

LDD includes physical disabilities and the Schools' Accessibility Plan and Disability Policy is available on the website. This shows the ways in which we plan to make our buildings progressively more accessible to pupils, parents and visitors.

Other Adjustments

- We are able to allow pupils to use their own laptops as and when necessary.
- Extra time (15minutes per 1 hour) will be given as appropriate for both internal and external examinations.
- Papers will be enlarged or produced on coloured paper as appropriate.
- On a temporary basis, classes can be relocated to allow ground floor access.
- The curriculum may be adjusted in some circumstances.

EAL

In order to cope with the high academic and social demands of the Schools, pupils must be fluent English speakers. We may recommend that some children, whose first language at home is not English, receive some tuition in English as an additional language.

Code of Practice

The communication and storage of information on children with special educational needs: This area requires sensitive handling, ready access whilst ensuring such information remains confidential to those involved and in no way stigmatises the pupils themselves. To meet this goal the following procedures will be followed:-

- i) Information on the medical, social and previous academic background of pupils with special needs will be kept in the central pupil filing area in each School office. Access should be freely available to all teachers, parents, governors and visiting consultants or invited specialists, eg Educational Psychologists helping with the programme for pupils. However, requests for access should be made via the Head.
- ii) All standardised / diagnostic assessment and minutes of staff meetings involving individual pupils should be kept in the pupil's individual school files and again should be readily accessible with the knowledge of the Head of Learning Support.
- iii) Meetings with parents and outside specialists should be minuted by the Head of Learning Support and kept on file by the Learning Support Department.
- iv) Whatever formal assessments take place the department should communicate the results to the head, parents and staff as soon as possible. Similarly, the content of meetings between staff / parents and the co-ordinator or outside agencies deemed important should also be made known to all concerned. 'Important' in this context is any information, which makes a difference to the way a pupil should be handled, understood or assessed.

The Role of the Parents

To provide effective provision for the pupil with LDD the parents must be involved from the earliest stages of diagnosis and assessment. Parents should be seen as partners in any programme. Suggested guidelines:-

- i) Thorough background briefing from parents for children already identified as having LDD on admission.
- ii) Immediate consultation with parents for any child showing signs of having LDD
- iii) Meetings with parents for children placed on a specific work programme. This is a two way process with parents providing information on current social, family, emotional circumstances of the child and Learning Support Department providing standardised diagnostic assessment.
- iv) Accessibility of the Learning Support Department for parental consultation must be made clear to parents along with details of the complaints procedure should any dissatisfaction arise.

School Action Plus: Triggered if, despite individualised programmes and/or concentrated support and a differentiated curriculum plan, the child is still making little/no progress. At this point the Learning Support Department and class teacher may benefit from support from specialists from outside the school. These may include:

- Speech & Language Therapists
- Dyslexia Institute
- GP (hearing/sight check; referral to physio/occupational therapist)
- Educational Psychologist
- ADHD clinic
- Child Psychology specialist

Charging Policy

Usual support assessments and lessons are not charged within the Schools.

Learning difficulties may be exhibited in the following ways:

- Lack of basic skills in literacy, numeracy, oracy, auracy
- A much slower than average pace of work
- Difficulties in recording work
- Poor presentation of work due to pencil/pen control
- Difficulties in organisation or completion of work
- Physical or other medical difficulties leading to incomplete or substandard work – including sensory related difficulties
- Exhibiting behavioural patterns where lack of attention span or disruptive actions hinder progress.
- Exceptionally gifted in some area
- Specific difficulties in particular subject areas although demonstrating average abilities in all other areas

Temporary learning difficulties may be exhibited which are related to social/emotional events.

Early identification, assessment and provision for any learning difficulty are very important for the following reasons:

- to minimise the difficulties that can be encountered when intervention and provision occur;
- to maximise the likely positive response of the child;
- to allow for a temporary learning difficulty to be overcome and for future learning to be unaffected;

If the child's learning difficulty proves less transient when addressed by the School alone the external agencies can be brought in earlier and very likely with more success.