



**Merchant Taylors'**  
**School**

Ambition | Character | Excellence

# Curriculum Policy

**Curriculum Policy**

Author: J. M. G. Andrews

Last Amended: January 2022

Review: September 2022

## **CURRICULUM POLICY**

---

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

### **Curriculum design**

The aim of the curriculum at Merchant Taylors' Boys' School (MTBS) is to develop the skills, qualities and dispositions encapsulated by the four Attitudes to Learning (ATLs) set out in our learner profile, 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 student.

Inspired by the multiple intelligences theory of Professor Howard Gardner, 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 students experiences a premature narrowing of educational opportunity.

The implementation in 2020 of the learner profile and its ATL components was designed to reinforce Jean Piaget's principles of constructivism in teaching, learning and the curriculum. Aligned to Jerome Bruner's theories of learning, that present learning as an active process in which learners construct new ideas based upon their current knowledge, the curriculum is designed to provide appropriate progression, challenge and inspiration as students move through key stages.

MTBS believes teachers are expert practitioners who possess both subject knowledge and, as described by Shulman, pedagogical content knowledge. That is to say, teachers at MTBS know both what to teach and how to teach it most effectively to support their students' learning. The curriculum at MTBS thus provides a framework which allows teachers to construct challenging lessons that inspire intellectual curiosity and perseverance.

The curriculum was graded excellent in the School's last Educational Quality Inspection; this followed curriculum reforms in Year 7 (2014), Year 8 (2015) and then Year 9 (2016). The timetable review and implementation of 65 minute lessons through 2019 and 2020 allowed for an appraisal of curriculum structures, with some minor adjustments to form the current curriculum plan set out in this policy. The School has a reputation for academic excellence and the majority of our leavers proceed to competitive degree courses at Russell Group universities, including Oxford and Cambridge. The emphasis throughout the academic and wider curriculum remains very much on developing learners who are able to work and think independently and who have a genuine intellectual curiosity in their studies.

### **Academic curriculum**

In the Lower School, students study a full range of subjects, including Mathematics, English, Modern and Classical Languages, Science, History, Geography, Religious Studies and Philosophy, Computer Science, Music, Art, Design, Drama and Physical Education. As part of the academic curriculum, Attitudes to Learning 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.

Skills for enquiry learning are developed through seminars delivered by the Library as part of the Year 7 Tendo carousel. Introductory level skills for academic research such as finding and using scholarly resources, understanding the Library's databases, referencing and critical analysis are introduced to boys at the start of their time in the Lower School.

Following the timetable review in 2019/20, the curriculum in Year 7 and Year 8 is deliberately literacy and language heavy. Students study two Modern Foreign Languages (French and Spanish) and a Classical Language (Latin) in Year 7. Students can then choose which two MFLs they take in Year 8: two from French, German and Spanish. Students continue to study Latin in Year 8. The aim is to provide students 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, students 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 students to take responsibility for their academic decision making, and act as a precursor to the GCSE choices students 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 students' 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 students 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. Students make a choice of which Science route to follow:

- all three separate sciences (awarded three GCSEs)
- OR two of the three separate Sciences (awarded two GCSEs)
- OR a single award combined Science course (awarded one GCSE)

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

- if three separate Sciences are selected (i.e. Biology, Chemistry and Physics), there are three options available
- if two separate Sciences are selected (i.e. two from Biology, Chemistry and Physics), there are four options available
- if the single award combined Science course is selected, there are five 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 Religious Studies).

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, students in Middle School can take the Higher Project Qualification (HPQ), worth one GCSE. The HPQ is run through the Tendo programme;

students devise their own research question and undertake an academic research project with the support of a mentor.

In the Sixth Form, students 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 students 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. Students 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 students 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. In particular, schemes of work should reference differentiation strategies for students of different abilities.

### Teaching time per fortnight:

The table below illustrates the total teaching time (in minutes) per two week timetable cycle, by subject by year group.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Lower Sixth	Upper Sixth
Maths	325	325	390	390	390		
English	390	325	390	390	390		
Junior Science	325						
Chemistry		130	260				
Physics		130	260				
Biology		130	260				
Combined Science (Single)							
MFL1	195	195	195				
MFL2	195	195					
Latin	195	195					
ClassCiv							
Greek							
History	195	195	195				
Geography	195	195	195				
RP	130	130					
Music	130	130					
Art	130	130					
Design	130	130					
CompSci	130	130					
Drama	65	65					
PE	130	130					
Year 9 option			195				
GCSE option				325	325		
A Level option						650	650

## Curriculum plan

The curriculum plan shows the distribution of academic curricular time, per two week timetable cycle, as of September 2021.

	Year 7	Year 8	Year 9	Year 10	Year 11	Year 10	Year 11	Year 10	Year 11	L6th	U6th	L6th	U6th	L6th	U6th
1	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb	PSE/asmb
2															
3	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games	Games
4															
5	Tendo	Tendo													
6															
7	Maths	Maths	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo	Tendo
8															
9	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths	Maths						
10															
11										Option 1	Option 1	Option 1	Option 1	Option 1	Option 1
12	English	English													
13															
14															
15															
16															
17		Chem	English	English	English	English	English	English	English						
18															
19	Junior Science	Phys													
20															
21		Bio													
22															
23	Spanish	MFL1	Chem	Chem	Chem	Science 1	Science 1	Combined Single Science	Combined Single Science	Option 2	Option 2	Option 2	Option 2	Option 2	Option 2
24															
25															
26															
27	French	MFL2	Phys	Phys	Phys	Science 2	Science 2	Option 1	Option 1						
28															
29															
30	Latin	Latin	Bio												
31															
32															
33	History	History	Bio	Bio	Bio	Option 1	Option 1	Option 2	Option 2	Option 3	Option 3	Option 3	Option 3		
34			Language1												
35															
36	Geog	Geog													
37															
38	RS&P	RS&P	History	Option 1	Option 1	Option 2	Option 2	Option 3	Option 3					Maths and Further Maths	Maths and Further Maths
39										PS	PS				
40	Music	Music	Geog							PS	PS				
41										PS	PS				
42										PS	PS				
43	Art	Art	Option 1	Option 2	Option 2	Option 3	Option 3	Option 4	Option 4	PS	PS	Option 4	Option 4		
44	Design	Design								PS	PS				
45										PS	PS				
46	CompSci	CompSci	Option 2							PS	PS				
47										PS	PS			PS	PS
48	Dr	Dr	Option 3	Option 3	Option 3	Option 4	Option 4	Option 5	Option 5	PS	PS			PS	PS
49	PE	PE								PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS
50										PS	PS	PS	PS	PS	PS

## 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.

## **Catering for the needs of all pupils**

The academic profile of students at Merchants is above the national average. Our curriculum is therefore designed to stretch our students 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 students are invited to join the academic Sophos Society. This society offers seminars, talks and projects in various areas of intellectual pursuit. It's aim is to introduce boys to new ideas and to stimulate critical and creative thinking.

We are aware of the need to equip our students 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.

## **SEND**

The provision for students with Learning Support or EAL needs is detailed in the SEND policy, and requires that all students 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 students 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.

## **MTBS/MTGS split teaching**

In some subjects, teaching is shared between MTBS and MTGS. This is typically to broaden the subject selection available, to benefit from staffing efficiencies and to allow more combinations of students' subject choices to timetable. Lessons are taught, primarily, in the 'home' department offering the course or jointly across both sites. In shared subjects, classes are more often than not co-educational. To facilitate their subject choices, students may be assigned to a set in their 'away' school (where such a set exists in an aligned block of the timetable).

## **Cornerstone**

The aim of our pastoral care is to provide a supportive, safe and challenging environment for every pupil. MTBS 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, called Cornerstone at MTBS, 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 students from the Lower Sixth and Upper Sixth. There are a range of external specialist speakers to support the tutorial program and days off time table allow deeper exploration in topics such as e-safety, adolescent mental health, developing resilience and the understanding of

others, with particular regard to protected characteristics. The provision of PSHE (including RSE) is explored in full in the PSHE Policy and RSE Policy.

## **Values**

The total curriculum at MTBS aims to provide students with effective preparation for their future lives as members of British society. A broad curriculum, over which students 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 learner profile and its component Attitudes to Learning (ATLs): reflective, balanced, principled, open-minded, inquiring, risk-taking, knowledgeable and communicative.

## **Careers**

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

## **Games and physical literacy**

MTBS' 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. Students 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. Students 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 MTBS, 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 students 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 students to develop at their own speed and become more comfortable in a sporting environment.

## **Tendo – explore, enrich, extend**

At MTBS, 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 students 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 student leadership and as students of all ages to work together. In Year 7 and Year 8, students follow a carousel throughout the year giving them a breadth of enrichment activities. In Year 9, students 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, students 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 students 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

### **Remote Learning and Covid-19**

From March 2020, MTBS developed capacity to provide its educational offering remotely using virtual means. This provision covers synchronous and asynchronous learning activities through platforms like Office365, Microsoft Teams and, the School's virtual learning environment, Firefly. 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 have to 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, MTBS 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 students 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.

### **Future curriculum development**

In 2022, Merchant Taylors School announced its strategic plan and movement to a diamond model of school structure. The three strands of the strategic plan most pertinent to curricula matters are the aims to be: a school that fosters a passion for learning and focuses on excellence, a school renowned for its co-curricular provision, and a school that is forward-thinking and adaptable. Future developments to the total curriculum at Merchants will be taken with these aims in mind. Particular planned areas of focus are given below.

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.

Significant changes in the timetable structure were implemented in September 2020. Whilst some decisions were taken with regard to subject period allocations in the Lower School, to sharpen the focus on language and literacy, a full scale curriculum review did not occur. It is intended that a full curriculum review will take place by 2023/24.

The skills of academic enquiry form an integral part of independent learning. Since the recent establishment of a learning profile and its Attitude to Learning (ATL) competencies, more deliberate attention is being brought to the way in which students learn. There is much exciting work to do here as the ATLs are embedded consciously and explicitly across the taught curriculum, and opportunities for enquiry learning are identified and exploited.

J M G Andrews  
Deputy Head Academic

January 2022