

Pastoral Care Policy (including mental health)

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Introduction

Merchant Taylors' Boys' School aims to provide a safe and caring environment in which all pupils can express themselves freely, form friendships and learn at their own pace.

We see it as the responsibility of the Governors, all staff (teaching and non-teaching) and the parents to ensure that our school has an ethos which encourages pupils to achieve their maximum potential both socially and academically.

Within this broad framework, our pastoral care policy helps to ensure that difficulties that have their origin inside and outside the classroom do not hinder the boys' development.

Such difficulties may include

- problems at home, such as divorce, bereavement, child abuse etc.
- problems at which may hinder social or academic development, such as bullying, friendship difficulties etc.
- personal problems, such as physical and mental health, growth etc.
- special educational needs which need assistance from the school before the pupils might be free to progress, such as visual impairment, dyslexia etc.

Although all staff who come into contact with pupils have a responsibility for their pastoral care, Form Tutors are in a special position and will be able to deal with most matters that arise. General pastoral care of the boys is the responsibility of every member of staff. More specifically, each boy is cared for by his Form Tutor, who monitors academic progress and emotional well-being. Concerns about the above may be shared at the weekly staff meeting or the regular pastoral meetings. Form Tutors requiring assistance with specific pastoral problems will be supported by the Group Tutor (Head of Year) who may seek further support from either the Assistant Head Pastoral or the Head of School.

Whilst Form Tutors will be able to support the boys in most circumstances, the Group Tutors have specific training and responsibilities to monitor and supervise the pastoral care of their particular year group. Whilst their primary concern is the academic progress of the boys, they fulfil an important role in pastoral care.

To promote pastoral care they work closely with:

- Form Tutors and parents on an individual basis
- The Assistant Head Pastoral for matters of a more serious nature. (Assistant Head Pastoral is also Designated Safeguarding Lead for child protection matters)
- The School Nurse over medical conditions
- The Head of Learning Support for those boys requiring additional support
- The Head of PSHE and Form Tutors to ensure that a programme of PSHE is delivered that is relevant and timely.
- Outside Agencies and bodies as required.
- The Catering Manager for concerns over diet and health.



PARENTAL CONCERNS

The school recognises that for a boy to reach his potential, both academically and socially, there must be close co-operation between home and school. From time to time, parents may well have concerns about the way in which the school operates in relation to their son and we very much want to hear from parents in these circumstances. It is much better to talk about problems at an early stage so that issues can be resolved quickly and effectively.

Normally, the best person to approach will be the child's Form Tutor, because he or she is the person who probably knows him best and is responsible for his pastoral care and academic welfare. Form Tutors will normally be able to resolve difficulties promptly and to respond to enquiries by providing effective feedback. There may be situations when investigation and discussion with other colleagues will be required and, of course, parents will be kept fully informed of developments.

Parents may also contact their son's Head of Year or Group Tutor directly on more serious matters. If parents are dissatisfied with the way in which concerns have been handled, the matter may be raised with the Assistant Head or Head of School. In all cases, matters of concern will be treated in a confidential manner and with respect.

All data/information, telephone calls, meetings, interviews are routinely recorded by raising a pastoral record on the School database, 3Sys.

Concerns may also be communicated to the school at Parents' Evenings.

PASTORAL ORGANISATION

From September 2022, the organisation of pastoral care is as follows:

Head of Year 7	Miss J. Tarr
Head of Lower School (Years 7-9)	Mr D. O'Malley
Head of Middle School (Years 10 & 11)	Mr R. Fawcett
Head of Sixth Form	Dr M. Goodwin
Assistant Head Pastoral	Mr R. Yates

Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mr R. Yates

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead – Mr D. O'Malley

Mental Health and Wellbeing

1. Introduction

1.1 Some Facts relating to Adolescent Mental Health

- One in six children between the ages of five and fifteen has a mental health disorder.(Young Minds, July 2021)
- One in four people in the UK will experience a mental health problem each year.

1.2 This policy seeks to:

- Increase understanding and awareness of mental health issues so as to facilitate early intervention of mental health problems
 - Alert all staff to early warning signs and risk factors and provide awareness of how to promote good mental health
 - Provide support and guidance to teaching staff, support staff and governors in dealing with students who suffer from mental health issues
 - Provide support to students who suffer from mental health issues, their peers and parents/guardians
- 1.3 Mental health issues can be de-stigmatised by educating pupils, staff and parents. This is done through work in Cornerstone lessons, staff INSET and through discussion with parents. The School will occasionally invite an expert in the field to address boys, staff and parents.

1.4 The School promotes mental health and wellbeing as well as physical health and fitness. The physical, mental and emotional benefits of exercise are well documented and the School actively encourages sport for all. Other qualities which are important for good mental health are:

- Proper sleep patterns
- Eating healthily at regular times
- Time to relax
- Resilience – bouncing back
- A sense of humour



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- Firm and consistent boundaries
- Time spent outdoors
- A sense of perspective

1.5 Persons with good mental health have the following characteristics[2]:

- A sense of contentment with their lives
- A zest for living, laughing, and having fun
- Able to deal with stress and to bounce back from adversity
- Flexibility to learn new things, and adaptability to deal with change
- Able to build and maintain healthy relationships
- Self-confidence and high self-esteem
- Good balance between work and play
- A sense of meaning and purpose in life, including activities and relationships

1.6 These are characteristics which the School feels are important and desirable. It will work with boys and parents in order to develop these characteristics so that boys who study at The School have a better chance at being mentally healthy and of leaving Merchant Taylors' Boys' School with the skills and experience to remain so, into adult life.

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers working with boys, even when the activity is off the School site, for example on an educational visit.

2. Child Protection Responsibilities

2.1 The Governing body takes seriously its responsibility under section 157 of the Education Act 2002 to safeguard and promote the welfare of children; and to work together with other agencies to ensure adequate arrangements within our school to identify, assess, and support those children who are suffering harm. Those bodies must have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State in considering what arrangements they need to make for the purpose of that section. (Keeping Children Safe in Education, Department for Education, Sept 2022)



2.2 The School undertakes the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of its pupils (students under the age of 18 years of age) under the Education Act 2002 and, where appropriate, under the Children Act 1989 by:

- Creating and maintaining a safe learning environment for children and young people
- Identifying where there are child welfare concerns and taking action to address them in partnership with other organisations where appropriate.

(Working Together to Safeguard Children, HM Government, July 2018)

3. Promoting Good Mental Health

3.1 The School seeks to promote good mental health in its boys by fostering good relationships between boys, between staff and boys and between parents and the School.

3.2 A thorough and wide-ranging programme of Cornerstone lessons will deal with issues relating to good mental health. These include, but are not limited to:

- Being part of the school – what do you have to offer?
- Knowing where to turn for help
- Managing your own moods and emotions
- Developing and changing relationships
- Planning for the future
- Dealing with stress
- Healthy eating
- Dealing with peer pressure
- Using your leisure time
- Being yourself vs being cool
- Getting enough rest and sleep

3.3 The School also recognises the importance of structure and consistency in the lives of young people. Rules and boundaries are clearly defined and care is taken to seek consistency amongst staff in the application of the rules. Boys should be clear in our expectations of their behaviour in lessons, around the School site, on the games field and whilst away from the School on an educational visit.

3.4 Boys should feel involved and consulted in the development of this policy and of practices employed by the school to promote their good mental health. The School Council will be consulted from time to time and the feelings of the student body will be conveyed to the staff via this forum.

3.5 The School recognises that certain protective factors^[3] are important in enabling boys to be resilient enough to be able to cope with problems and challenges. Development of these traits will increase protection against adverse effects of risk factors on mental health.

3.5.1 In boys, these protective factors include:

- A secure attachment experience
- Good communication skills
- Sociability
- Being a planner and having a belief in control
- A sense of humour
- Problem solving skills
- A positive attitude
- Experiences of success and achievement
- Faith or spirituality
- The capacity to reflect.

3.5.2 Protective factors within the family include:

- At least one good parent-child relationship (or one supportive adult)
- Affection
- Clear, consistent discipline
- Support for education
- Supportive long term relationship or the absence of discord
- Promotion of qualities important for good mental health.



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3.5.3 Protective factors at School include:

- Clear policies on behaviour and bullying (MTBS has well-established policies on behaviour and anti-bullying that are reinforced consistently across the School)
- An open door policy for boys to raise problems (Boys can raise concerns via the School Council, with Form Tutors or via the anonymous drop box system)
- A whole school approach to promoting good mental health (The School is open about discussing mental health and raises the profile with regular Cornerstone lessons, in Parents' Evenings and by inviting eminent outside speakers to address staff, boys and parents)
- Positive classroom management (The School fosters productive relationships between boys and staff and lessons are conducted in a positive manner with humour and regular input from the boys. Behaviour, Class Management and Control and Rewards and Sanctions are covered in induction sessions for new staff at the beginning of each academic year)
- A sense of belonging (The Merchant Taylors' Community is a strong one, relying on history, tradition and a very strong public image to reinforce the sense of membership)
- Positive peer influences (Boys benefit from strong peer role models. The School celebrates academic success, sporting triumph and artistic creativity. Younger boys get to work with their older peers in the CCF, musical ensembles, dramatic productions and on the School Council. A well-established system of Prefects, Monitors and Peer Supporters gives older boys the opportunity to have a positive impact on their younger peers)

3.5.4 Protective factors in the wider community include:

- A wider support network
- Good housing
- A high standard of living
- A high morale school with positive policies for behaviour, attitudes and anti-bullying
- Opportunities for valued social roles
- A range of sport and leisure activities



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4. Identifying Boys with Possible Mental Health Problems

4.1 Form Tutors see their tutees every day. Teachers, sports coaches, music teachers etc see boys on a regular basis. Only medical professionals will be able to diagnose a mental health condition. However, as professionals who are in regular contact with boys, MTBS staff are well placed to recognise signs of a possible mental health problem or the risks of potentially developing one. The School recognises the importance of the roles of individual members of staff. All staff should be familiar with the signs of possible poor Mental Health.

These signs may include:

- sudden changes in behaviour / mood / appearance
- a dramatic decline in the standard of work
- manner becomes more subdued or excitable
- a radical alteration in dress – deliberately appearing untidy at the one extreme, excessive cleanliness or tidiness at the other
- hyperactive, attention seeking, anxious or restless behaviour
- aggressive, defiant conduct – disruptive of others' work
- unusually quiet or passive becoming evidently withdrawn
- obsessive behaviour, tending towards perfectionism (e.g. not handing in work because it is "not good enough")
- becoming overly absorbed in study
- loss of motivation for things associated with school life, missing lessons / co-curricular commitments
- irritability, impatience, anger, confusion
- tiredness, sleep disturbances, vivid dreams
- disturbed appetite
- avoidance of friends
- risk taking behaviour (e.g. self-harm, misuse of alcohol or other substances, risky sexual behaviour)
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It is important to stress that this is by no means an exhaustive list. Most often telling is a change in the behaviour or personality of a boy.

4.2 The Department for Education[3] recommends the use of Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires (SDQs) as a simple and evidence-based tool to help Schools identify the full range of a pupil's behaviour and balance protective factors and strengths with weaknesses and risks. SDQs and advice on how to score them are included in Appendix 1.

4.3 Difficult events in boys' lives may make them more prone to suffering a Mental Health problem. All staff should be vigilant for these possible triggers, which include[3]:

- loss or separation – resulting from death, parental separation, divorce, hospitalisation, loss of friendships (especially during adolescence), family conflict or breakdown which results in the boy having to live elsewhere or a parent being asked to leave the family home, being taken into care or adopted
- life changes – such as the birth of a sibling, moving house or changing schools or during transition from primary school to secondary school, or secondary school to sixth form
- traumatic events such as abuse, domestic violence, bullying, violence, accidents, injuries or natural disasters.

5. Staff Response to a Concern about a boy's Mental Health

5.1 Each case will be different, but the general guidance for staff in dealing with Mental Health problems is:

- Foster good working relationships with boys
- Support the School's rules and boundaries consistently
- Encourage boys' participation and sense of belonging
- Encourage boys to be open and talk about their feelings
- Know the signs indicating a troubled child and be alert to them
- Speak to a boy's Form Tutor & Group Tutor or the Assistant Head Pastoral.
- Do not draw attention to a boy's difficulties
- Do not talk to a boy about apparent difficulties whilst others are listening
- Do not promise confidentiality which you cannot keep
- Do not keep your suspicions to yourself



5.2 Boys may well confide in a member of staff if they have a concern about their own welfare or that of a friend. Boys must be made aware that it may not be possible for staff to offer complete confidentiality. If a member of staff considers that a boy is at serious risk of causing themselves harm, confidentiality cannot be kept.

In the case of an extremely distressed boy or one who is in immediate danger of harming himself, an adult must remain with him at all times.

5.3 Once a concern has been raised, the Assistant Head Pastoral will consult with colleagues and discuss the most appropriate course of action. This might involve:

- Contact with parents / guardians
- Arranging professional assistance (e.g GP)
- Arranging meetings with the School Counsellor
- Arranging a referral to CAMHS – with parental consent
- Arranging for immediate first aid if an injury has occurred (with the School Nurse)
- Giving advice to students, parents and teachers

5.4 Written records of discussions with boys, parents, colleagues and other professionals must be kept. CPOMS must be utilised for any safeguarding concerns.